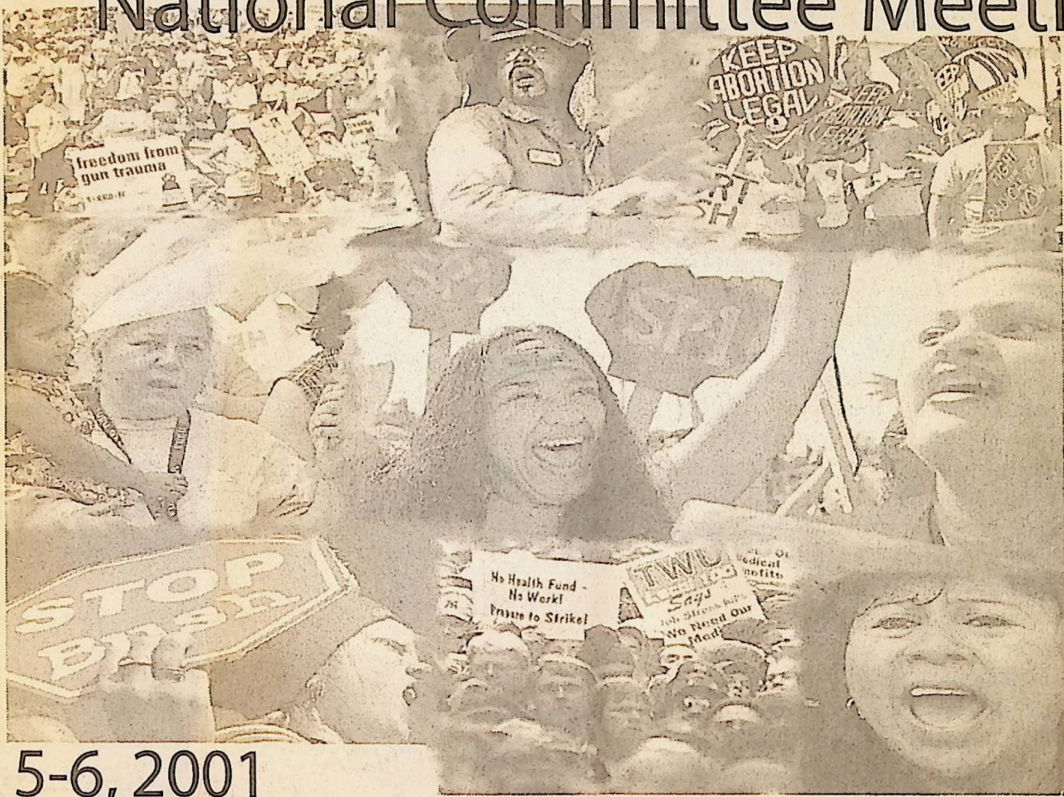


Communist Party USA National Committee Meeting



May 5-6, 2001

New York, New York

Winston Unity Center

Book 1 of 2 Reports for
Pre-Convention Discussion

About these reports

The May 5-6 meeting of the CPUSA National Committee was its last full meeting prior to the 27th National Convention of the Party, and heard a number of reports related to convention preparations.

The opening report by National Chair Sam Webb discussed the overall political situation and context for the convention.

That opening is followed by reports from a number of committees responsible for organizing discussion about key questions of policy and organization. These are: the report from the Committee on Structure and Organization, by Vice-Chair Evelina Alarcon; the report from the committee responsible for drafting a new Party Program, by Joelle Fishman, National Secretary; and a report by National Vice-Chair Scott Marshall on the work on a new Party Labor Program. A report was also given to the meeting by the chair of the committee in charge of revising the Party's constitution, which is not included here but will be published separately.

The National Committee did not vote on these important reports; rather, it discussed them and proposed that they be sent on for further discussion among the membership, in particular, at the upcoming district conventions.

Also included in this booklet are the reports by Elena Mora, National Organization Secretary and Convention Organizer, on the overall preparations for the convention and its agenda, and by National Vice-Chair Judith Le Blanc, on the work of the Pre-convention Discussion Committee.

Finally, the NC meeting heard a number of important reports on subjects other than convention preparations. These are: on developments in the Party's relations with the left, by Joe Sims, *Political Affairs* editor; on Party cadre, by Terrie Albano, Associate Editor of the *People's Weekly World*; on the work of the Young Communist League, by Libero Della Piana, YCL Co-Coordinator; and by Joelle Fishman on the 9th Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam.

All reports are available on the Party's web site (http://www.cpusa.org/National_Meetings/nc/may2001/index.html), including the report on the proposed revisions to the Party Constitution.

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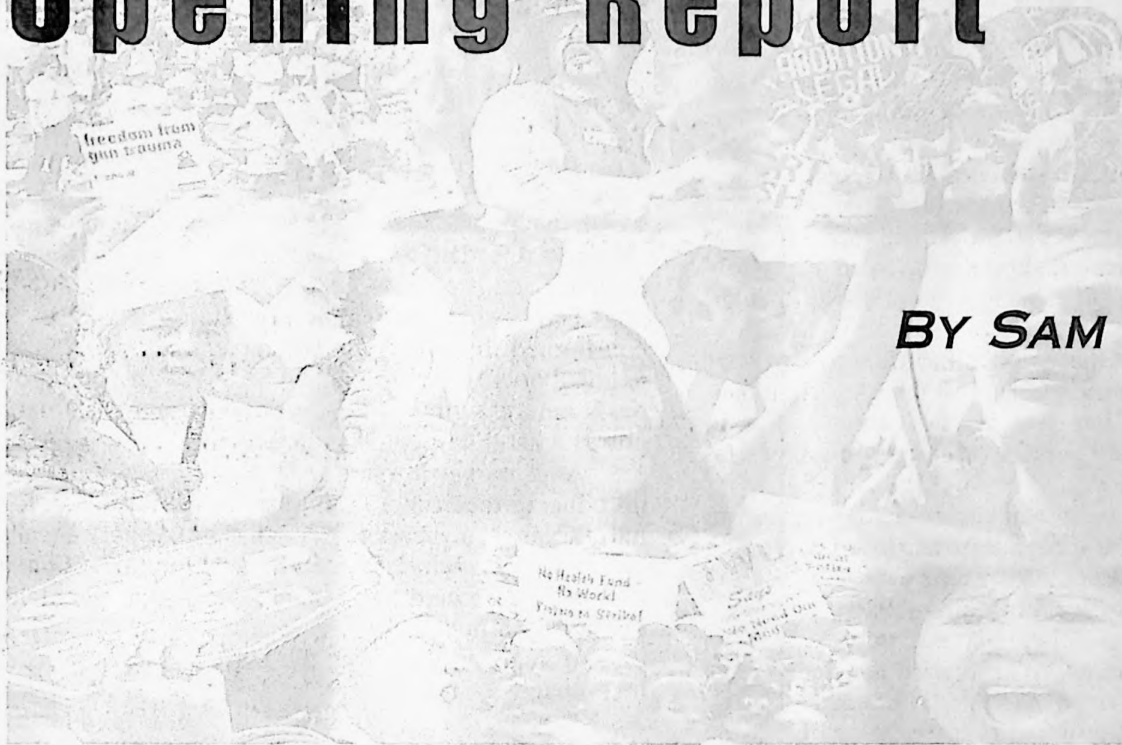
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Opening Report



BY SAM WEBB

INTRODUCTION

Good morning and welcome to Unity Center. You have arrived in our city during its most beautiful season. While we have no plans for you to enjoy the seasonal rebirth and renewal of our nation's most populous city, we do hope that you are able to catch a glimpse of New York in springtime. It's a beautiful city that houses one of the great sections of our nation's multi-racial, multi-national working class.

All of us working in our national headquarters always look with great anticipation to upcoming meetings of our National Committee. Every meeting of this leadership body is a real treat for the national staff.

I would be less than honest with you, however, if I didn't admit that we feel a special excitement and anticipation about this meeting. After all, its task is to make the final preparations for the 27th National Convention of our Party. I'm sure that you share this sense of excitement, too.

At least one of you now is probably thinking that I'm forgetting that we still have another meeting of the National Committee scheduled on the eve of the Convention in Milwaukee. Actually, I haven't forgotten despite the increasingly porous nature of my memory.

Its role, however, should be narrowly circumscribed. To the degree possible, we should strive to settle most of the outstanding issues regarding the National Convention at this weekend's meeting, while the National Committee meeting on the Convention's eve should go over final arrangements, including some proposals for the Convention committees.

Probably things won't work out exactly like that, but we should try to keep to that script as closely as possible.

At any rate, let's get started, and hopefully our agenda will allow us to adjourn on Sunday with lots of work and decisions under our belt.

SAM WEBB is the National Chair of the CPUSA.

POLITICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE CONVENTION

The political framework of the 27th Convention is shaped by the struggle against the right danger. It is an inescapable political reality that casts a long shadow over every aspect of our nation's life - politics, economics, and culture. It touches and affects nearly everything, both here and worldwide.

Political parties or social movements that ignore or sidestep this political reality are doomed to merely gnawing at politics on the edges, to political dilettantism, to irrelevance.

Thus, the defining political feature of our Convention is the struggle against the ultra right danger. Everything that we discuss and decide in Milwaukee has to be refracted through this powerful political prism.

To be sure, the right danger is not a new comer to the political scene. It's been with us since the election of Reagan twenty years. At the time Comrade Gus and other national Party leaders noted this development. And we adjusted our policies accordingly.

What is new today, as compared to twenty years ago, is that the danger from the right has grown.

To be specific, political reaction has its hands on more levers of class power now.

Most ominously, the ultra right has control over all three branches of the federal government. It is intent on using its control to move the country and the world in a reactionary direction.

We would make a mistake of enormous proportions if we underestimate even slightly this development.

At the time of our National Board meeting in January, we assessed the Bush administration this way, "Left to its own devices, a Bush administration will aggressively pursue a reactionary course of action at home and abroad.

"On the domestic front, it will turn Medicare and Social Security into vast new arenas of profit making. It will privatize our public education system. It will eliminate affirmative action, women's right to choose, and gay rights. It will severely curtail immigrant rights. It will squeeze labor out of the political-electoral arena as well as make union organizing impossible and union busting even easier than it already is. It will further tighten corporate control over the election process. It will expand the use of the death penalty. It will further fill our prisons, wink at racial profiling and police brutality. It will turn our land, air, water, forests, and other natural resources over to commercial interests while forestalling any remedial action on global warming. And it will turn a deaf ear to the critical needs of our cities and rural communities, both of which are mired in crisis.

"On the international front," the National Board report continued, "the Bush administration's foreign policy will be extremely aggressive, mirroring in this sense its domestic policy.

"This administration will show little hesitation to project American military power around the world. We can expect a hardening of relations with Cuba and a hostile attitude toward anti-imperialist movements and governments in Central and South America. It will weigh in against the cause of Palestinian statehood and rights at this dangerous juncture of the crisis in the Middle East.

"The Bush administration is determined not to be constrained by multi-lateral agreements and supra national bodies, including the UN. It is going to vigorously defend with military, economic, and diplomatic power what it calls the national interests.

"And most ominously, this administration by introducing the arms race into space breathes new life into the nuclear weapons race that in the past decade has eased somewhat. Space weapons are the administration's trump card to dominate the world. The claim that this is a necessary response to 'rogue states' is a ruse to impose a 'made in the USA' new world order on humanity.

"This aggressive posture by the Bush administration corresponds with the new stage of globalization, the new stage of imperialism, the new stage of inter-imperialist rivalry, and the new stage of state monopoly capitalism. U.S. imperialism has not given up its hegemonic aims and this administration has no intentions of overseeing the weakening of the dominant status of US imperialism in world affairs. In the past, such rivalry among capitalist powers led to world conflagrations.

"I'm not suggesting such a prospect is imminent now. It isn't. In fact, much more likely are growing tensions with Russia and China, resulting from the confrontational attitude of the new administration to these powerful states."

At the time not everyone drew such definitive conclusions regarding the reactionary character of the new administration. The American tradition of giving the new President a honeymoon took hold despite the theft of the election. Bush was given the benefit of the doubt - a noble sentiment in matters of the heart, but in politics it can come back to bite you.

That is beginning to change now. Doubts and anger are surfacing, maybe not as fast as we would like, but it is changing nonetheless.

Even on the left we are seeing a bit of distancing from the tweedledee-tweedledum attitude toward politics advocated by some during the 2000 elections. A recent issue of *The Nation*, which not so long ago whistled a "plague on both houses" tune, opined in an editorial, "So much for 'compassionate conservatism'.

During his first 100 days, George W. Bush's principal accomplishment, indeed his only one, was to demolish any too-generous illusions about who he is. The mild and moderate character who ran for President, claiming to want more or less the same things Al Gore wanted, has been replaced by a hard edged, rather maladroit right winger."

We could say "I told you so" to the editors of *The Nation*, but in so doing we would miss a more fundamental point, that is, shifts in thinking regarding the Bush administration are giving rise to broader coalition possibilities against Bush and the extreme right.

Therefore, we should welcome this change of thinking by the editors of *The Nation*. At the same time, we cannot forget the fact that many organizations on the left are still tone deaf to the new political realities in our country. At the recent opening event of the Socialist Scholars Conference in New York, for example, barely a word was said about the Bush administration.

This political myopia is not a reason for smugness on our part, but rather for frank and friendly dialogue with our brothers and sisters on the left. For sections of the left to sit out this struggle helps no one.

CHANGING ATTITUDES

What has prompted the changes in people's thinking among the broader public is easy to discern. In its first hundred days the Bush administration and the right wing-dominated Congress did the following:

- Cut off funding for international family planning groups that so much as mention abortion.
- Repealed Clinton administration's rules on ergonomics
- Repealed Clinton administration's last minute lowering of the standard for arsenic in drinking water.
- Pronounced the Kyoto treaty dead.
- Repealed Clinton administration's rule against public subsidization of logging roads.
- Pushed for \$1.35 trillion tax cut for rich.
- Cut funding for childcare and help for abused kids.
- Blew a chance to negotiate an arms treaty with North Korea and threw a wrench into the negotiations on the Korean peninsula.
- Justified the provocative and deadly action of a US spy plane over China and then announced new sales of military hardware to Taiwan.
- Authorized the resumption of bombing on Vieques.
- Winked at Sharon's brutal policy of terror and land annexation in Palestine.
- Set up a bi-partisan commission on Social Security comprised of supporters of private social security accounts.

- Sent a long list of conservative federal judges to the Senate for approval.

The honeymoon is turning into a nightmare. Millions are alarmed by these right wing initiatives and see them as a danger to democratic rights, higher living standards, race and gender equality and world peace.

The fact that this growing alarm has not yet translated into militant mass action on a national scale should not surprise us entirely.

After all, movements seldom develop at a pace that satisfies left forces. They have their own logic and rhythm. Probably we overestimated the speed with which the struggles against the right would resume in the aftermath of the election.

We expected that the labor-led movement that surfaced in the 2000 electoral arena would quickly reassemble on an even broader basis in the early post-election period to frontally challenge the new administration. But life is often more complicated than we often appreciate.

Following the election, a momentary lull seemed to set in, allowing the ultra right to gain the initiative. Now it is moving with galloping speed to impose its legislative and political program on our country. Meanwhile, the Democratic Party offered little resistance and certainly no alternative strategy.

There was no election mandate for Bush's right wing program. He corralled less than 48 per cent of the vote in the elections.

Nevertheless, his illegitimate status has not deterred Bush's aides and supporters. In fact, it accounts in part for their reactionary blitzkrieg.

NOW MARCH

Two weeks ago, the first major mass action since the inauguration took place in Washington. Tens of thousands, mainly young women organized by NOW, came to our nation's capital in defense of women's reproductive rights.

While the extreme right claims it wants a mini-



malist government, it has no hesitation about the government's usurping of a woman's control over her own private body.

Although the demonstration wasn't as big and broad as had hoped, it was in the streets, it was militant, and its target was the ultra right. Hopefully, it will be but the first of a series of protest actions against Bush and the extreme right.

Although the reassembling of the 2000 election coalition proceeds more slowly than we anticipated in early January when the National Board met, class and democratic struggles did not go into hibernation with Bush's theft of the White House.

Earlier this week, May Day actions were organized in the US. AFL-CIO President John Sweeney spoke on the Boston Commons. What a change for the head of the U.S. labor movement to speak on May Day!

In Los Angeles, Antonio Villaraigosa, a Mexican American trade union leader, is in a very close mayoral contest. Much like that of Coleman Young in Detroit and Harold Washington in Chicago, his election will be of historic dimensions. It opens up a new stage of struggle for Mexican American equality and multi-racial, working-class unity.

In New Haven, 2000 Yale workers and their supporters rallied for a just contract, soon to be negotiated with Yale Corporation. In Cleveland, House member Dennis Kucinich introduced an infrastructure and jobs bill. It enjoys the support of steelworkers and their union who are looking for a way out of a deep crisis in the steel industry.

In Chicago, protests against the gas corporations are on the rise. The South side club in that city organized one of several.

In New York, voters defeated the Edison project proposal. This privatization scheme would have turned the New York public school system into a new preserve of profit making at the expense of the city's children.

And there was a major demonstration against globalization in Quebec, where 70,000 workers and anti-globalization activists marched in spite of severe police harassment and massive civil rights infringements.

They were joined in US cities along the Canadian and Mexican borders. The immediate objective of the protests was to condemn the Free Trade of the Americas Agreement, which essentially would extend NAFTA to the whole hemisphere.

NATIONAL CHARACTER

These actions undoubtedly would have been larger had it not been for a coordinated campaign of harassment and rights violations by government and

police authorities.

We, along with other movement activists, have noted the increasingly repressive role of the state in the ghettos and barrios, on picket lines, and at demonstrations. One problem, however, is that there are no organizations whose specific mission is to defend the movement and its leaders from government and police repression. A growing movement needs such an organization, especially at this moment.

With Bush in the White House, Ashcroft at the Justice Department, and the gang of election usurpers sitting on the Supreme Court, the stage is set for repression to increase.

At any rate, my main point is that there is no lack of movements, struggles, and actions on one or another level and on one or another issue. We are living in a period in which the trajectory of class and democratic struggles is on the upswing.

Thus, it is imperative to find ways to link the ongoing economic and political struggles to a national movement whose purpose is to directly challenge the policies of the Bush administration and his ultra right counterparts.

To express the matter differently, any strategy to rebuff political reaction, let alone to go on the offensive, has to have mass struggle at its core. It's the only political language that this administration, Congress, and Wall Street will respond to.

While it is true that after Reagan's election more than a year passed before the AFL-CIO organized the first Solidarity Day demonstration, there is no reason why that pattern has to be repeated in today's new circumstances.

After all, the movement is at a different level. It's very possible to quickly widen the struggle against the extreme right and to lend this struggle a national character.

In the early going, the struggles will be largely defensive in character. But that can change, perhaps not all at once and not on every front, but on one or another issue, the movement can go on the offensive.

Defensive struggles against, say, layoffs or tax cuts for the rich or abortion curbs or police profiling or wage cuts or social security privatization can be as militant and broadly constructed as struggles for more advanced demands.

In fact, it is in the context of these struggles that the understanding, unity and broad forms of struggle can evolve to the point where the struggle shifts to higher ground.

No matter what the nature of the struggle, the right wing dominance of our nation's political structures inescapably imposes on the people's movement the necessity to search for the broadest forms of all-people's unity.

All-people's unity, however, cannot be constructed

in some mechanical way apart from the living struggles that shape people's thinking and actions. At its core is the unity of Black, Brown, and White.

Racism still remains the main instrument of the extreme right to divide and confuse the thinking of millions. It is the primary weapon to maintain disunity in the working class and people's movement as well as a source of enormous profits to the transnational corporations and a rationale for political repression.

Thus without a struggle against racism and for full equality, all people's unity will limp, it will not measure up to what is needed to setback the ultra right and the Bush administration.

From a programmatic standpoint, the most advanced demand of the center is the ground zero of left center labor unity and of broad mass unity. At the same time, we should see this as a dynamic concept, not frozen in time. Or to put it differently, the most advanced demand of the center is a point of departure of broad unity rather than a final destination point.

In today's circumstances, the more militant forces in the labor and people's movements are under no pressure "to concoct some fashionable means of helping the workers, but [rather] to bring light to into it, to assist the workers in the struggle they themselves have already begun." (*Draft and Explanation of a Programme of Social Democratic Party*)

That was Lenin's advice to the socialist movement in 1895 and though much time has passed it remains profoundly relevant. Class and democratic struggles don't have to be invented. They're happening all around us. Millions of people are beginning to move and millions more will join them in the coming period ahead.

What the more militant forces have to do is to find the forms, demands, and the grounds for common unity that will congeal these movements into militant people's majorities with the requisite strength to turn back the tide of reaction that now hangs threateningly over our country and the world.

What other course of action is possible? We don't always choose the political terrain of struggle on which we fight. In fact, we seldom do. Overall objective processes and the level of class consciousness determine it.

I'm sure everyone in this room and most of our friends in the broader movements would be more than happy to leap to a higher stage of struggle. Who in their right mind wouldn't? Nobody likes to fight defensive battles, but sometimes that's what history forces on us. Marx said that men make their own history, but, he added, not as they please.

At this moment, the strategic task is to defeat the extreme right. Nothing is of greater importance. Everything has to be subordinated to it, not in a mechanical way, but dialectically and politically.

This strategic concept brings into bold relief the

main obstacle to social progress. It also reveals the main class and social forces that have an objective interest in fighting political reaction. Needless to say, a coalition of these forces could be extraordinarily broad, ranging from the organized working class to the racially oppressed to women to sections of the business community.

Generally speaking, the Party whole-heartedly supports this strategic concept. Nevertheless, there is some confusion, as well as some opposition to it. To my mind, political clarity on this matter is absolutely imperative; therefore, I would like to address some of the common misconceptions.

One misconception is that our political focus on the right danger renders invisible the struggle against corporate America. This is not the case. A firewall does not separate the struggle against corporate power from the struggle against the extreme right. The two are interrelated, but I would characterize the relationship this way: the struggle against the right danger is the framework within which the fight against corporate power occurs.

Take, for example, the struggle against the steel crisis. Is it possible to find a solution to the steel crisis that doesn't confront the right wing domination of our nation's political structure? I don't think so, especially where an infrastructure program is such a prominent part of steel's revitalization.

Or take another example, the energy crisis in California. Is it feasible to see a way out of this crisis without the Bush administration imposing a federal cap on the price that huge energy corporations can charge to their customers? Again, I don't think so.

Thus the anti-corporate movement would make a big mistake if its sits out the struggle against Bush and the extreme right. By the same token, the nascent coalition against Bush should lend its full support to direct battles against corporate power.

Another misconception is the notion that the right danger is some amorphous amalgamation of diverse classes. On one level there is a grain of truth in this claim. Because the ultra right artfully adapts its demagoguery and program to the peculiarities of our country and specific strata of people, it is able to attract diverse social forces to its positions.

On a more fundamental level, however, the ultra right is sustained by and acts on behalf of the most aggressive and most reactionary sections of transnational capital whose size, scope and interconnections, we need to study more.

This is not simply a matter of setting the record right, but rather speaks to the way in which we influence the thinking of millions, the way in which we construct alliances. Therefore, we have to formulate this question better than we do. Sometimes we're a little sloppy.

A third misconception is that our strategic policy

of defeating the ultra right is a static concept and end game. Nothing could be further from the truth. It is rather an intermediate stage on a larger political continuum of struggle leading in the direction of socialism. It is not a final stop but an organically connected part of a larger revolutionary process. Any attempts to skip this stage will lead to political isolation.

Not until the political presence of the ultra right is greatly diminished can the labor and its allies fully move to more advanced political tasks, to the anti-transnational stage of struggle. Of course, we should not see this in a mechanical way.

A fourth misconception is we are submerging our communist identity in the broad movements. In our zeal to get into the mix, they argue, we are moderating our emphasis on the leading role of working class, the class struggle, industrial concentration and Party visibility.

My own opinion is that we correctly accented a year ago the urgency of extending and deepening our mass connections, of reaching out to wider movements. That was necessary at the time. And it continues to be ground zero of transforming our Party in terms of its size and influence.

To be more specific, our Party's future is bound up at this moment with our involvement with millions in the struggle against the right danger and we can't sever our connection to this movement.

Having said that, I would also argue that we should discuss the concern raised by comrades who, while agreeing with the main direction of the Party, feel that we've dulled our class edge a little and our visibility in broader struggles. With any correct policy, there are always dangers in application associated with it. And with our present policy, mistakes in application usually come from right pressures, from pressures to maintain and extend unity.

I have not reached a fixed opinion on this matter, but I do see why this concern might resonate with some comrades. Still, I would argue that the main form of class struggle at this moment is the struggle against the right danger.

Still another misconception is that the struggle against political reaction and more generally the struggle for democracy are a diversion from more pure, more direct forms of the class struggle.

This is a fundamental error in my judgment. A proper understanding of the relationship between democracy and the class struggle is necessary in order to build a set of alliances required for fundamental change. This understanding is also the basis for a correct attitude and practical approach to questions like the fight for full racial and gender.

The struggle for democracy, in Lenin's view, was an essential condition for social progress and socialism. From his earliest to his last writings the issue of

democracy was an interwoven thread. Pick up nearly any article and you will find fresh insights on the struggle for democracy and its relationship to political advance.

One that I have always liked that fits the present situation is the following:

"A Social-Democrat must never for a moment forget that the proletariat will inevitably have to wage a class struggle for socialism even against the most democratic and republican bourgeoisie. This is beyond doubt. Hence, the absolute necessity of a separate, independent, strictly class party of Social Democracy. Hence, the temporary nature of our tactics of 'striking a joint blow' with the bourgeoisie and the keeping of a strict watch 'over our ally, as over our enemy', etc. All this also leaves no room for doubt. However, it would be ridiculous and reactionary to deduce from this that we must forget, ignore, or neglect tasks, which although transient and temporary are vital at the present time. The struggle against the autocracy [substitute the right danger] is a temporary and transient task for socialists, but to ignore or neglect this task in any way amounts to betrayal of socialism and service to reaction." (*Two Tasks of Social Democracy*, Lenin)

Still another misconception is that the present stage of struggle inevitably postpones the struggle for political independence. To answer this concern let me begin with this observation: the Democratic, as well as the Republican Party, is a political instrument of monopoly capital. Moreover, we don't see the Democratic Party morphing into a people's party, either now or in the future. About this there is little, if any, disagreement in our ranks.

Where differences arise is on a tactical level. On this level some comrades argue that we have to break with the Democratic Party and condemn it with the same vigor that we condemn the Bush administration.

Otherwise, it is said, we are helping to sustain illusions among working people in the present electoral system and forestalling the formation of an independent 3rd political party.

I wish life was so simple, but it isn't. And I know that this rubs some comrades the wrong way. But questions of strategy and tactics cannot be settled abstractly even though some comrades desire to do so. The truth, Lenin said, is concrete.

And in this case, the two parties of capital are not identical in their policies nor constituency composition. The Republican Party is a political instrument of the most vicious reactionary sectors of transnational capital. The Democratic Party is less reactionary and more politically centrist.

Should we ignore these divisions? Is a better course of action to take on monopoly capital and its political representative as a whole even if labor, the racially and nationally oppressed, women and other

allies are not yet prepared to?

The Democratic Party will not lead the struggle against Bush and the extreme right and we should not hesitate to criticize it when it wavers, hesitates, and capitulates, but we would make a mistake if we rejected any association with the Democratic Party and its diverse currents on the basis of some higher revolutionary principle.

Our approach has to be more nuanced. On some issues, substantial sections of the Democratic Party will align themselves with a broader labor-led movement to fight the right danger; for example, on the issue of vouchers; on other issues smaller sections will.

We will always have allies that are temporary and unstable. To reject such allies on the grounds that they are temporary and unstable suggests a less than serious attitude to politics.

In short, in the battle against Bush and the extreme right, we should not rely on Democrats, nor should we write them off completely. Either would be huge mistake.

Saying this doesn't mean that we mothball the struggle for political independence and the fielding of communist and independent candidates as an integral part of that process. In fact, we have to do more in this regard in the labor movement as well as elsewhere. When we don't, some comrades get the understandable impression that we are either satisfied with the present political/electoral arrangements or that we see an alternative people's party emerging spontaneously at some distant future. Thus, we should take a fresh look at the struggle for independence in the political action field.

A final misconception is that fighting the right danger is simply a tactical adjustment. Sometimes I feel that debating this issue is more trouble than it is worth, but I'm going to disregard my own advice anyway and present my opinion on this matter.

In my view, the struggle to defeat the extreme right is a strategic task. It evolves from a particular configuration of class and social forces that arose at a particular historical moment. To put it briefly, it was the combination of a long-term slowdown in the world capitalist economy in the 1970s and, at the same time, a tilt of the world balance of forces in the direction of social progress and socialism in the 1970s that explain, in large measure, the emergence of the right danger.

Of course, the right danger always exists to one degree or another during the monopoly phase of capitalist development. In his important work, *Imperialism the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, Lenin makes precisely this fundamental point. One of the main features of monopoly capitalism, Lenin argued, is its tendency to subvert democracy and support political reaction.

Aren't the same tendencies evident today thus providing an objective basis for our policy? As Gus began to develop before his death, the incredible growth of concentrations of economic wealth and merger mania

on a global scale is the objective basis for a turn to extremism and reaction as well as the growing rivalry of competing capitalisms.

What is more, for the past 80 years the socialist project that had acted as a restraint on imperialism's aggressive and reactionary tendency, no longer exists. The USSR and the socialist community of nations were a counterweight to the 'natural' development of world imperialism.

The defeat of Hitler fascism, the Cold War stand-off, and the internationalist support for national liberation struggles, all were brakes on the natural tendency of monopoly capitalism to move towards political reaction and world domination.

Less obviously, the socialist community put a brake on political reaction and anti-democratic restrictions in the imperialist countries. In fact, there was tremendous pressure on the imperialist powers to move in the direction of the welfare state, to enact social and economic protections for working people. In a word, imperialism felt compelled to clean up its act in order to show its superiority over its rival system.

But with the collapse of the Soviet Union, this restraining influence on the imperialist states ended and the most reactionary sections of imperialism no longer felt compelled to reign in monopoly capital's inherent tendency to usurp democratic rights and dominate the global economy. Inter-imperialist rivalries took on new life.

Of course, pressures in this direction are only tendencies, meaning that the causal relationship is neither simple nor one way. Tendencies can be countered and reversed by counter tendencies.

The clash of tendencies and counter tendencies bring about tensions and conflicts. Thus outcomes are not law governed, they are not inexorably written in the stars, but rather depend, among other things, on human agency, on what people do to make their own history, on the relative strengths of competing classes and their allies.

It follows then that the growth of the extreme right danger and war pressures, while embedded in this stage of capitalist development, can be curbed by the united action of the working class and people on a global scale.

I don't know if I have convinced everyone here of the wisdom of our strategic task of striking a blow at the ultra right, but I do feel strongly that this is the only sound policy at this time and that we depart from it at our own peril.

ECONOMIC SETTING

The 27th Convention will convene in the midst of a spreading and deepening economic crisis. Signs of

economic weaknesses, mounting imbalances, and growing contradictions abound.

To name a few: profit projections, which in turn determine investment and employment levels, are gloomy.

Unemployment is inching up as well. According to Challenger, Grey and Christmas (an out placement firm that is known to keep the best figures on layoffs) March layoffs hit new record highs with 162,867, a sharp increase over February of 'only' 101,000.

Since December of last year, every month has seen layoffs of over 100,000. In the previous 15 years that Challenger, Grey and Christmas have kept records, layoffs of that size have never happened for more than one month at a time. Now, for each of four consecutive months half of a million jobs have been lost.

Besides being a tremendous tragedy for working people, this is a huge hit on the economy. Much of the real human tragedy is set to come in the autumn when unemployment benefits begin to run out for these folks and especially women on welfare, and as the shredded



safety net reality hits home.

New unemployment figures released yesterday show a sharp increase in the overall unemployment rate. Among African Americans the rate is approximately double the official rate; it is more than six percent among Latinos. It was this desperate economic situation combined with racist police repression and violence that was the powder keg for the rebellion in Cincinnati a few weeks ago.

Consumer indebtedness, which had been one of the main driving factors behind the expansion, is at record levels now and could well become a drag on any quick recovery.

The manufacturing sectors show few signs of any bounce upward, especially with auto sales faltering this past month. In steel, the crisis is worsening, with LTV declaring bankruptcy and thus affecting the livelihood and pension benefits of 40,000 workers. Meanwhile, in the technology sector, the heart of the

new economy, layoffs and spending cuts continue with few positive signs of an early rebound.

The stock market, which has lost more than a trillion dollars of value, remains unstable.

Further adding to the crisis is that the world economy shows few signs of robust growth. Even in Europe the most optimistic projections have growth this year at about 2.2%. And despite pressure from U.S. imperialism, the European bankers show little desire to reduce interest rates, fearing, they say, the growth of inflationary pressures. And Japan wallows in a stagnant economy.

Moreover, in most of the developing world, economic growth is lagging, despite the inflated claims apologists for capitalism regarding the benefits of globalization. In fact, according to a recent article in *The Economist*, income polarization within and between countries and regions is growing.

Actually, uneven development, marginalization of whole countries and entire regions, unbridled exploitation, and national and racial oppression are endemic to capitalist globalization.

GLOBAL CAPITALISM

The global economic order doesn't seamlessly issue from the unrestrained hand of the free market and trade, but rather is the result of both competition and cooperation of rival capitalisms. It is as much a political process as an economic one as the dominant imperialist countries with the assistance of their state structures construct economic relations in the interests of their transnational corporations.

For a long time this rivalry among competing imperialists was muted first by the presence of a rival social system and then by the 'lone' superpower status of the US. But now there are many signs that it is breaking out into the open.

For example, the dominant sections of the U.S. ruling class see the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) as a counterweight to the European Union and Japan.

The global economic downturn adds an even more dangerous element to this renewed rivalry.

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

In studying the new economic processes, our emphasis is on what is new, what is developing, what is changing. And yet, this emphasis should not obscure the continuity of these processes.

All of us point to the new features of present day capitalism. And we do so for good reason. After all, capitalism, in contrast to exploitative pre-capitalist societies, is a dynamic system. Marx and Engels wrote

in *The Communist Manifesto*, "The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production, and without them the whole relations of society."

In other words, the continuing changes in the productive forces and relations alter the terrain of the class struggle. Thus our emphasis on the new and changing features of capitalism are of critical importance to elaborating sound strategic and tactical concepts of struggle.

At the same time, if our focus on the new and changing aspects of capitalist development makes fuzzy the exploitative essence, the core characteristics, and the internal dynamic of the capitalist system, then we are making a mistake.

Our task is not only to communicate to millions how the internal dynamics of capitalism interact with its changing features, but also to join with others struggling for their economic rights and livelihood. Our Convention must not miss the opportunity to focus the attention of the whole Party on the fight against the economic crisis. We have up until now been slow on the uptake, beginning with the National Board.

THE 27TH CONVENTION

We should resolve to make the 27th Convention a history-making event. It should be a turning in the life of our Party. It should move us to a new political plateau.

It should consolidate our mass connections as well as give a fresh impulse to deepening and extending them. It should inspire every delegate to build a Party bigger in size, influence and visibility. It should find ways to make communists the more consistent, creative, and militant fighters against the extreme right.

Our approach should be anything but routine. Our operative slogan should not be 'steady she goes' or 'keep on keepin' on' but rather 'all hands on deck, bring up the reserves, enlist new mates, throttle forward, and stay the course' until victory against the extreme right has been secured.

Delegates should leave Milwaukee with renewed enthusiasm in our heroic cause, with a deeper understanding of the strategic underpinnings of our policies, and, above all, with fresh determination to fight the right and in the course of those struggles to widen the influence and size of our Party.

Much progress had been made in this regard. Our Party and the *PWW* have been at nearly every site of struggle over the past year. Our work in the 2000 elections was one of our finest hours in many a year.

We are an active and militant participant in the struggle against capitalist globalization. Our role in the struggle to make a Cesar Chavez holiday and the resulting mass outpouring in California and New

Mexico was exemplary. We are in the forefront of the campaign to end child poverty in Connecticut. We are in the middle of the struggle against the steel crisis. We are beginning to take initiatives on the energy crisis. And "Texas Trail," a production of *Changing America*, recently received an award from a film festival in North Carolina.

And yet, much more has to be done to immerse the Party at every level in the struggles against the ultra right and the still-developing economic crisis.

The Convention will also take a fresh and overdue look at the structure and the democratic functioning of the Party. I think everyone agrees that we have to shore up, streamline, democratize, and strengthen many aspects of the internal life of our Party. Evelina will speak more about these matters this afternoon. So with no desire to steal her thunder, I would only say that we should feel an urgency to streamline our Party structures at every level as well solve urgent personnel needs that accompany a process of restructuring.

We have to make these changes simultaneously. For instance, can we transform the clubs into centers of struggle in districts when there is no district organizer or a poorly functioning district committee?

In any event, the convention should make some decisions to how to solve this situation, including a time line because on matters like this we love to procrastinate.

The Convention must also update our constitution. Tim will speak about this matter tomorrow, but for now I want to say that the constitution should be a pliant and living document, not a straitjacket. Now don't get me wrong. I think that we have been too loose organizationally and that we have to fight for greater organizational coherence. But we would make a serious mistake if we approach this problem in a narrow and rigid way.

Giving the Party greater organizational coherence is a many-sided question. It does not pivot solely or even mainly on a few rules and procedures. It is a political and educational process.

Another task of the Convention is to begin the process of writing a new program. Joelle will make a specific proposal this evening. So without trying to steal her thunder, I only wish to say that this task is overdue. Profound changes have occurred in world politics and economics since the writing of the last program. Clearly a new Party program must reflect on these realities and elaborate a strategic policy based on them.

In sum, our Party should emerge from this convention with a politics, structure, constitution, program and culture that is fully in line with the conditions and requirements of this century. While anchored in revolutionary Marxism, capitalist exploitation, and eight decades of experience in the class struggle, our Party should be thoroughly modern, open to changes, demo-

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cratically constituted, committed to developing scientific socialism creatively and flexibly in a changing world, and above all, a Party of united mass action.

The next decade is a critical phase in our history. By decade's end, the profile of the Party must be substantially different than it is today.

We have to grow the Party among our multi-racial, multi-national working class and people, both native born and immigrant. We have to shore up and strengthen the Party organizationally from top to bottom. We have to enlarge our pool of trained and capable comrades.

With the help of the *PWW*, the Internet, and audio-visual technology, we have to reach a much wider audience with our ideas. We should have Party organizations in every state. We should have a membership counting into the tens of thousands. Our relationships to mass struggles should be on a new level. We should be publishing a daily newspaper. *Political Affairs* should have a mass circulation. Clubs with a vibrant political life should be the rule rather than the exception. And the YCL should be a major force in the youth and student movement.

And all this has to be done in the context of a determined and relentless effort to immerse the Party more deeply into struggles against the right danger. Mass struggles and connections are the ground zero, on which the Party will grow and flourish.

Of course, numerical growth and political influence are dialectically connected to the size, scope, and level of activity of the working class and broader movements.

In my opinion, the Party cannot grow in any appreciable sense in a moment of political lull in the class and democratic struggles. On the other hand, we can grow in a situation where class and democratic struggles are gaining in intensity, which is precisely the situation today.

Admittedly, it won't happen automatically, and usually growth lags behind influence. Consequently, a fundamental task of the Convention is to find new, creative, and bold ways to grow the Party, especially among workers. This will take a conscious process and planning.

In short, we have to deepen and extend our connections to masses while at the same time consolidating the Party organizationally, politically, and ideologically. We have made some progress in this regard, but we still have a long way to go if we are to make our fullest contribution to defeating the right danger.

OUR ROLE

We have been trying to reconceptualize our role in light of present day conditions and our own experience over the past year. Not everything that we have done is

right and sometimes in moving in one direction, a certain one sidedness cropped up in our work although I don't want to overstate this.

Perhaps in emphasizing the need to get into the mix, we gave too little emphasis to Party visibility and Party building. If so, that is a mistake to correct for we want to build a mass Party, not necessarily today or tomorrow, but sometime in the not too distant future.

At the same time we shouldn't rule out a sudden influx of new members into our Party nor should we act as if we are a semi-legal or underground party. Even though we aren't a mass Party now, we should, to the degree possible, conduct ourselves as if we are a mass Party. We should have a mass style of work.

What does this mean? A mass Party should be active in mass movements and organizations; it should be accessible, democratic, and transparent; it should not make people jump through hoops to join; it should publish a paper and theoretical journal that have a far bigger circulation; it should utilize all the new technological avenues to reach a mass audience; and, above all, it should project strategic and tactical concepts of struggle that will give millions of exploited and oppressed people a vision of how to win.

The cramped, semi-secretive style of work of yesteryear was a product of a particular set of circumstances, which no longer exist. Therefore we should shed that style and construct a new mass style that fits this period of intensifying class and democratic struggles against the right danger.

To do that we must stay clear of concepts of struggle that are narrow and isolating. We should assiduously avoid concepts of Party organization that turn the Party into a narrow circle or group. We should not aspire to be a cadre organization, but rather a growing Party with trained cadre.

Yes, we need to strengthen the Party, but in a way that enlarges our numbers and trains our members, many of whom are only slightly, if at all, acquainted with Marxism-Leninism. Unfortunately, some of the discussions and proposed changes that I have read or heard about go in the opposite direction. They would turn us into a cadre Party, which I am convinced is a recipe for slow extinction.

The essence of a revolutionary working class Party should not hang on standards for membership that will effectively close the door to a mass approach to recruiting. Rather, its essence lies in its understanding of its relationship to our nation's working class and people.

Elena's opening to the National Board on the role of the Party goes into this special relationship deeply and extensively and I recommend that it be read throughout the Party.

SECTION ON LEADERSHIP

Of the many tasks that our Convention has to accomplish, the election of a national leadership figures among the most important.

During the past year we have gone to great lengths and expended great energy to extend our connections to the people's movement against the ultra right. Hopefully, the Convention will not only endorse, deepen, and refine our present political direction, but will also elect a leadership committed to this political course of action.

In this discussion, our concern is with the election of a new National Committee and its officers. To be sure, other leading bodies - the National Board, the political Executive, the Organization Department, and other commissions - will have to be elected, too, but that responsibility resides with the incoming National Committee, which will be elected in Milwaukee.

So, we should set aside these questions for now. There is no rush and we have no authority to reach a decision with respect to the makeup, size, and frequency of meetings of these collective bodies; although there is nothing wrong with thinking informally with other comrades about these matters.

Generally speaking, questions of collective bodies and structures require some fresh approaches at every level of the Party. Probably more than politics, questions of structure should steer clear of timeless formulas and fixed models, supposedly appropriate for any and all.

After all, democratic centralism is a political concept not an administrative one. It is not inherently at war with flexibility and innovative approaches in terms of our collective structures and bodies. This fact is sometimes under appreciated in our own ranks.

In the case of our Party, we have inherited the structures, culture, and style of work of an earlier period. Some of it may carry over to today's conditions and needs, but not all of it will. Some aspects of our structure and style have outlived their usefulness.

We would do well, in fact, to take a page out of the playbook of the AFL-CIO. They haven't thrown out the proverbial baby with the bathwater, but they have restructured and introduced a number of innovations in their structure and the composition of their leadership that have proven their worth many times over.

NEW NATIONAL COMMITTEE

Later today Evey will report that the new National Committee should have a more deliberative and decision making function. Of course, that entails some further changes in the size, frequency of meetings, planning and preparation, and organization of our National Committee meetings, as Evey will indicate in her

report.

In the end, however, whatever changes we make will only be useful to the degree that the National Committee and officers are grappling with the application of our strategic goal of defeating the right danger. Everything, ranging from the size, makeup, and the meeting agendas, should advance this fundamental task.

If the struggle against the right danger doesn't figure strongly in the makeup and functioning of our new National Committee and the work of our national officers then all the innovations will count for little. Whatever changes we make will turn into a material force only to the extent that they facilitate our role in the struggle against the right danger.

The political bar measuring what is expected of a National Committee member is higher now. The standards for National Committee members and officers have ratcheted upward.

Those entrusted to lead the Party at the coming Convention should bring more energy, enthusiasm, creativity, modesty, and collectivity to our Party's initiatives. No one elected to the new National Committee should be self-satisfied with what they are doing now. Each of us could and must bring more to the table than we presently do.

National Committee members and officers will have to work harder and smarter in the post-Convention period. We will have to work with greater enthusiasm.

LEADERSHIP QUALITIES

What kind of leaders do we need in the period ahead? What kind of qualities should they possess? I have no intentions of trying to answer that question in any exhaustive way. Instead, I will make only two brief comments.

First of all, Party leaders at this moment should be committed to fighting for the policy direction of the Party, even in cases where they have reservations and differences. That's the bottom line to me.

My other comment is that Party leaders should strive to be team players. Team chemistry is critical to our success. In sports, even teams with the best players will make an early exit from the playoffs if team chemistry in the locker room is missing.

On any winning team, you will find players whose initial point of reference are not their individual statistics, but the team's success and morale. On the great Celtic teams every player subordinated their skills to the success of the team. As a consequence, the Celtics dominated basketball for years. The same could be said about John Wooden's UCLA teams.

Now, we aren't a basketball team. That is obvious; some of you are very short. But chemistry counts for a lot in our success as well. Our success depends upon a team effort. We want to make the playoffs, eventually we want to go to our own Super Bowl, but for that to

happen, team players and teamwork are crucial.

No one is indispensable nor should anyone think he or she is. What we want to do in Milwaukee is to elect a collective team in which the whole is greater than the sum of its individual parts. The political intelligence of the Party lies in its collective wisdom. The collective is indispensable, not the individual, even though each of us makes invaluable contributions to the work of the Party. Sometimes we forget this time-tested truth.

At the same time we should find ways to appreciate and acknowledge each comrade's contribution to our collective work. As team players we should root for and help one another. We should give each other the benefit of the doubt and political space to grow and take initiatives. When differences arise, we should take them up in a comradely and direct way. We should be each other's biggest fans.

I say these things because we are jelling as a collective in my opinion. And that makes everything else easier to deal with - problems and shortcomings - in our collectivity.

PROCEDURE

Turning to the method of electing a new National Committee, I would suggest that we employ the same method that we did at the last Convention. For that Convention we sent a document to the clubs and districts explaining in detail why a leadership list is the best and most democratic method of electing a leadership.

Some comrades may be a little uneasy with this method because on the face of it, it seems undemocratic. But on closer inspection, it does have a democratic character, particularly with the modifications that we have made in recent years.

Is it the perfect method of electing a new National Committee? Probably not, but for now it is the best method available to us. At future Conventions we may come up with a better method. In the meantime, we should figure out how to better utilize the present method of electing a new National Committee, namely how to receive the widest possible input from the Party at every level of potential candidates for leadership.

Of course, in addition to the list, there should be nominations from the floor. And each nominee should have a bio attached and we should begin the process on Saturday at the Convention rather than Sunday.

With regard to electing officers, we have to decide how, when and who to elect. I'm for keeping our present set of leadership officers more or less in tact. The new positions of leadership - the vice chairs and national secretaries - were proposed with an eye to broadening out the leadership at the top of the Party's

structure.

That remains a necessary goal. Of course, we have to do more to make these positions meaningful.

For instance, shouldn't each national officer have a specific national responsibility? Shouldn't they report to some collective regarding their work on a periodic basis?

I'm not for reverting back to the old way, but rather improving and fine-tuning our leadership structure. The old way of one or two officers representing the Party goes against the grain of our times. It collides with the political and cultural shifts in mass thinking that have occurred in recent decades. It's not a 21st-century concept or style.

There is a question as to whether we should elect our national officers at the Convention or at the first meeting of the National Committee. I would like us to elect our officers at the Convention if possible. Whatever we do, however, we shouldn't do it in a perfunctory way. The election of national officers is a serious political responsibility and has to be approached accordingly.

For now, I propose that we establish a committee that can draft a memo which would explain the process of electing a new National Committee and solicit names of comrades from district collectives and District Conventions for the leadership pool. Sending in these names would indicate that they are in a pool, not that they are going to be nominated or elected at the Convention. Precisely who is nominated is the task of the Presiding Committee, which is elected at the Convention itself.

To be more specific, I would like to propose that John, Joe, Evey, Libero, Jarvis, Bobbie, Paul, Judith, and Elena comprise this committee.

FINAL REMARKS

We have almost exactly two months before our Convention. For it to be a success, and I am convinced it will be a smashing success, all mates have to be on deck and working overtime for the next two months.

For us to leave Milwaukee a big winner, all of us have to work conscientiously over the next two months while, at the same time, conveying to the Party and our friends the great excitement of our upcoming convention.

It won't be easy, but as Bruce might say, "By God, we're going to have one hell of a Convention." Those are my sentiments and, I'm sure, yours, too. So let's get to work.

SI SE PUEDE, AVANTE, AND LET'S GIVE MILWAUKEE SOMETHING TO TALK ABOUT!

Thank you.

Committee Report: Structure and Organization

BY EVELINA ALARCON

The transition of leadership launched a process of improving organization and structure. Ongoing innovations have been adopted to improve our work. The call for every club to be wired is a goal that has already enhanced the work of the Party. The use of phone conferencing has allowed for leaders and members from around the country to participate in national meetings.

The improvements to our website not only make the website more attractive and current but make reports and discussions accessible to the public web community. The listserv for pre-convention discussion is an innovation that helps the democratic process.

The idea of working groups on questions that generally receive little attention is an innovative way of shoring up our connection to different struggles and issues.

The decision to take minutes at National Executive and Board meetings was a good check up and accountability measure, as was the log in list for those who work at the National Center.

The establishment of a Personnel Committee that will take up questions, including "personnel problems," related to full time and other staff at the National Center, is an important measure that will also relate to accountability.

The strengthening of the Finance Committee and the addition of a comptroller will improve our financial work. There are other steps that we have taken to strengthen our structure and organization, which I will refer to in this report.

Most comrades have responded really well to these changes and have been responsive to the idea that we need to take a fresh look at how we do things. So our committee was not starting from scratch. Our work is part of an ongoing discussion that has been in motion with the transition for over a year now. The process should and will continue even after the National Convention.

EVELINA ALARCON is a Vice-Chair of the CPUSA.

OUR COMMITTEE

The structure and organization committee included: Marc Brodine (WA), Bill Davis (NY), Rosita Johnson (E. PA.), Steve Noffke (MI), Brian Steinberg (CT), Shelby Richardson (Ill), and Mark Almberg (Ill). It was a very good working committee, which met six times. Four participated pretty steadily but all were present in a minimum of three meetings. Marc Brodine sent minutes to all members of the committee. We considered written contributions even when members could not participate.

The atmosphere was very good. There was exchange, debate and respectful consideration to everyone's point of view. I can say personally it was a great opportunity to work with all on the committee. It was very refreshing.

We did not have the results of the membership review so we could not consider those specifics, which would of been helpful. I think we were pretty reality based in spite of that.

Elena provided me with a picture of the national structure, which I presented to the committee. Sam gave me some information as well. Several committee members discussed structure and organization questions in their own districts and clubs. I met with comrades in the Northern California district on questions related to district functioning. That was also helpful.

Committee members were asked to read the reports that were presented to the district leadership seminar held in Chicago last May, which opened up many questions related to structure and organization. Mark Almberg provided us with a copy of a handbook on Party organization. Tim Yeager provided us with the constitution.

We agreed from the beginning that we should focus our discussion on the reality of our current structure and organization and make proposals based on that rather than framing our discussion on past guidelines of some time ago.

FRAMEWORK

We placed our discussion within the framework that we are in a period of transition of leadership moving into the 21st century. We looked at our structure and organization to see if it is in sync with being a Communist Party in the 21st century in our country.

Our goal was to make proposals that would help us to be better organized. We aimed to make proposals to streamline our structure and establish organizational methods that would facilitate our Party being more connected to the upsurge of the labor and people's movement, more action based, more responsive in a timely way, more results oriented, more based on our current Party reality, more transparent, more democratic but at the same time collective and responsible.

We discussed that democratic centralism should

not be seen as a static set of structures, but as a flexible concept that Communist Parties have applied in ways that fit their specific circumstances.

We generally think that we have been overbalanced on the centralism side. So we make proposals for democratizing the structure and organization. At the same time we think that as we move to democratize the Party we should try to be balanced, not swinging too far, especially related to directing our resources to "internal processing" versus action orientation and implementation. We also make proposals and recommendations for strengthening collectivity, check up and accountability. Our goal was to strike a balance between centralism and democracy, which fit our Party's needs today.

We realized pretty quickly that time did not allow for us to cover everything so we set priorities with the idea of covering as much as we could before having to report to the National Board, National Committee, and finally, to the Convention.

We decided to focus on the structure and functioning of the National Committee, National Board, National Executive, National Organization Committee, National Commissions, regional level organization, districts and clubs. Our goal was to discuss each body itself as well as the interaction between national bodies, interaction between the national with districts and clubs, and interaction between districts and clubs.

We attempted to identify areas that need improvement. We discussed some questions of Party culture that hold us back. We discussed how to improve communication within the structure. We discussed our methods of decision making and mobilizing the Party.

In saying all this, there is much we didn't cover and have yet to take up before the Convention. One of our primary goals was to discuss districts and clubs more thoroughly than we were able to prior to this meeting. This report reflects only a preliminary discussion. Allowing for real exchange takes time and six meetings was not enough.

So while we have come to a conclusion on many questions, this report is a work in progress. Today's report is intended to be a discussion document for the whole Party leading to the Convention. There are specific proposals in it, but they are also for pre-convention discussion. The National Board has heard the main thinking and proposals of this report. There is general agreement with the direction and proposals. We all recognize that the discussion in the NC today and the contributions from the whole Party will shape the final report to the Convention.

OUR NATIONAL PARTY BODIES

Most of our meetings were spent discussing the functioning of our national leadership bodies. We started with the National Committee (NC). There were a

number of areas that we thought needed changing.

The National Committee is the highest decision making body of the Party between national conventions. In reality, the fact that it only meets two times a year means that it does not serve in that function. It does not set the ongoing policy.

Events and struggles of today are moving swiftly. The daily attacks by the Bush administration and the extreme right; the corporate attacks, the global issues related to imperialism, peace and war; the growing battles of working people and all people in the fight for economic justice, democracy, public education, civil rights, immigrant rights, women's rights, senior, youth, gay and lesbian rights; the fight for environmental justice, etc., has put greater objective pressure on us to respond faster and more efficiently to these national, international, state and local developments. Our policymaking and assessments of the new have to be made more quickly.

A body that meets two times a year cannot possibly keep up with that pace of developments. The reality is that it is the National Board that sets the policy. More often than not, it is the Resident Board. While the Board has decision-making authority in between NC meetings, it has developed into more than that. We are used to a narrower resident national body making most national decisions.

The addition of Scottie and myself to the Resident Board and National Executive in February 2000 meant the board was no longer solely a resident body. The Midwest and West Coast were represented, which was a positive addition that added to the national input into policies. But it still does not replace the benefit of the full National Committee.

Our opinion is that to establish the leading decision making role of the NC means that we need to make certain changes. One of them is that the NC should meet more regularly.

The benefit of the National Committee meeting more often is that our national policies would have the thinking, ideas and experience of the full National Committee. National input and consideration deepens the quality of our assessments and decision-making. It is also part of democratizing our Party.

Another benefit of the entire National Committee arriving at decisions together is that it enables the leadership across the country to move the Party to implement those decisions more effectively. Each member is more prepared to mobilize the rest of the Party at all levels because they have shared in the deliberation. The NC meetings add a political, ideological and organizational boost to our national work.

Therefore, we propose that the NC meet a minimum of three times a year. We considered proposing that the NC meet quarterly but there was concern that establishing a minimum of four NC meetings a year would pull us away from district and club work. We left our proposal to a minimum of three with the idea that if four was possible without overburdening dis-

tricts, we should do it.

SIZE OF THE NC

Another change which we feel can contribute to the better functioning of the NC relates to size.

Over the years we have tended to enlarge our national bodies. At the last National Convention we elected about 130 to the NC. As time went on, we continued to add, so today we have 154 members.

Even though our committee did not have the membership review figures to consider, our estimate is that a National Committee of 154 is beyond what the current size of our Party needs.

The size of the NC relates to the question of having more meetings. Practically speaking, if the NC is to meet three or four times a year, it has to be smaller because of the resources that it takes to organize a meeting of this size, including financial cost.

Overall, our opinion is that a smaller size will allow the NC to function better. It will contribute to more effective decision making. As I said earlier, it more fits our membership size.

A main consideration for this proposal is an important political one. We see the need to decrease the size so that the NC can be more deliberative. Large size and the way we organize our meetings currently make it difficult for the NC to be more deliberative.

While larger numbers may give the appearance of more democracy because representation is greater, in fact a larger body makes it very difficult to have substantial deliberation or consideration to our estimates and proposals.

The time factor does not allow for a large number of members to have exchange. A large number inhibits debate.

More exchange takes place in the National Board than the NC. And even there, change is needed to improve the deliberation of our collective decisions.

Another consideration for making this proposal is the issue of where we allocate our cadre resources. Our tendency has been to focus on building up and growing the National Committee while other national bodies, districts and clubs are in great need.

It seems that we are trying to accomplish too many things with the NC. Representation and input can take place through participation in other national Party bodies. The process of cadre building can occur in other bodies and levels of the Party in addition to the NC. National commissions are one place. States and districts are another.

The strengthening of state and district political bodies has to be put as a higher priority. The recent proposals to build up organization in Chicago as a Midwest center was a necessary innovation that will strengthen the whole Party.

Another concern raised is that not all members of the NC are connected to the districts and clubs to which they belong. There is little check up and

accountability of NC members related to how they implement decisions. This has to be more built into the work of the NC.

The reduction in size would mean that some who are currently members of the NC would not continue to be. We know that this is a sensitive question, but our feeling is that the need for the NC to meet more often, to function more efficiently, combined with the need for greater deliberation is basic for our organization to function more effectively and collectively.

The proposal for reduction should not alter our approach related to guaranteeing worker, multi-racial, female composition. This approach enriches our National Committee and is key to uniting our Party. We believe that it is a practice that we should continue in all of our national bodies.

A LARGER ANNUAL NATIONAL MEETING

There are benefits to a larger national meeting, which we discussed. National meetings generate enthusiasm. More members can participate and hear first hand the experiences from around the country. There is clearly a democratic aspect to that.

Therefore we propose that once a year we hold a national meeting where comrades on national bodies, veteran comrades, district leaders and club leaders who are not on the NC would be invited to meet to discuss key political questions. We saw this annual meeting as an expanded meeting of the NC but organized to insure full participation of those who attend. Perhaps it would be the fourth meeting of the NC.

A couple of comrades on the committee were very concerned about the ability of the Party base nationally to participate in decision making on a more regular and substantive basis so they proposed that we hold National Conventions every two years. Most of us did not see the need for Conventions every 2 years because it would move us to be more internal.

The proposal for an annual national meeting, along with other proposals made in this report are made in consideration of concerns raised that more democratic avenues are needed for the districts and base of the Party to participate more directly in decision making.

In general, the whole committee expressed concerns at one level or another about the need to change or improve our structure and organization to encourage participation from the bottom up.

MORE DELIBERATION

Reducing the size of the National Committee does not fully address the question of more deliberation or more democracy in our decision-making. We discussed that how we prepare for and organize our meetings are also factors.

The more opportunity that comrades on the NC, in commissions, committees, districts and clubs have to voice their thinking and experience into policy before final decisions are made would strengthen our discussions. To the extent possible, sending out major proposals under consideration to NC members and state organizations in advance would better prepare NC members for the discussion and would solicit input from more of the Party before decisions are made.

Inviting the thinking of the Party on main questions as preparation for NC meetings and Board meetings is not easy; it is a big extra step. Those who give reports have to be better organized and prepared in a more timely way. But we now have the technology to make it easier. It does not have to be a full report that is sent prior to the NC meeting, but the main ideas to be considered could be communicated to NC members, districts and clubs asking for their input.

This approach would deepen our assessments and decision making with more national experience. It would also produce a refreshing, creative atmosphere where all collectives had the opportunity to participate. That input should be shared with the whole NC not just the reporter. The Internet, our website and a regularly published Partybuilder can be used for this. The wiring of the clubs and Party makes this more realizable.

The travel to districts by national leaders for discussions with members on policy questions has proven to be very dynamic and helpful in how we shape policy, strategy and tactics.

An ongoing method of creating openings for the base of the Party to share its thinking both democratizes our decision making and contributes to the transparency of the Party. It demystifies the decision making process. It also places more emphasis on drawing assessments and conclusions from the experience of the base of the Party.

We have already begun to initiate more meetings with leaders of labor and people's movements about various questions. These exchanges are invaluable preparation for our national meetings as well. They have been decisive to our assessments and proposals related to the energy crisis, labor, the fight for democracy, the struggle against racism and youth rights. This should become a natural way of our leadership functioning.

Our conclusions, assessments and decisions will be more on target if they are based on our science, tied to a Party in action. So the constant effort to base the Party at all levels on working in labor/community coalitions, in working class battles, in grassroots organizing, on mass action tied to issues, people's movements, electoral struggles, etc. within the overall framework of organizing against the right danger and corporate exploitation remains the root of correct policies.

ORGANIZATION OF NC MEETINGS

Our committee also felt that the NC meeting should be organized differently in order to allow for more deliberation and focus. The main way that we have organized our meeting agenda is to have one general report which assesses many questions, followed by sub reports on various subjects. Then NC members usually get seven minutes to give their opinion, share experiences, etc. At the end of the meeting we adopt reports. This method sometimes results in the feeling that our NC gives rubber stamp approval to reports without the ability to have real exchange. That method is not fully collective, especially when there are questions that are not quite agreed on.

It was expressed that more opportunity for focused discussions of specific issues would enhance deliberation. More reports should be given directly from committees, commissions or task forces allowing for discussion of those reports. The question of adopting specific resolutions with ability to discuss those rather than adopting general reports which cover many subjects was more needed in our style.

We also discussed the need to have our decisions made with more consideration for how those decisions are going to be implemented and who specifically is going to have responsibility. Also, the feeling was that there should be a checkup report on all decisions at the following NC meeting.

MORE GEOGRAPHIC BALANCE

The other question that we discussed was the need for the NC to be more geographically balanced in its composition. Even though we are proposing reducing the size of the NC, we think the incoming NC should be more representative of the whole country. This should be more taken into account like we consider class, racial and gender composition of the NC. This will deepen our ability to make decisions that pertain to the whole nation.

The current balance is too weighted on the East Coast. While we acknowledged that part of the reason for that is that many national cadre live on the East Coast, we still feel that the imbalance goes further than just that. The imbalance gives a tilt of opinion based on experience in one geographic area rather than the whole country.

Our national bodies must consider the experience and reality of life across the nation. This helps to sharpen our overall assessments as well as our strategic and tactical approach.

Phone conferences and other technology now make it possible to involve participation from across the country in all our national bodies. The work of the convention committees, which were made of members from coast to coast, proves that it can be done.

NATIONAL CONVENTION

In the course of our meetings, a number of concerns were raised specifically related to the National Convention. The question of how the selection process for the election to the NC takes place was a hot topic.

The opinion was that there is not enough consultation with districts or consideration of the how the process affected districts. Examples were given of districts opposing members from their area being on the NC and they were added nevertheless.

Our proposal is that final recommendations be fully consultative with district leadership. District leaders should see recommendations as a whole, not just for their own district, so they see the total picture.

We also propose that the pool of names for consideration to the NC be utilized in a broader way to include other national bodies, regional or district assignments. We recommend that we not have district caucuses at the Convention because this is too late in the process to make thoughtful proposals. The process of collecting a pool of names for consideration should be as early as possible so there is plenty of time for exchange with districts.

The other hot topic was how we have handled resolutions to the National Convention in the past. By and large, most resolutions were referred to the incoming NC and they were never addressed. Ignoring them was a big political problem. It meant that questions, which in most cases were considered carefully by commissions, district conventions or clubs, never saw the light of day.

Our suggestions for preventing this at our upcoming Convention include integrating some content of resolutions into reports or into workshops that deal with the subject of the resolution. We think that priority consideration should be given to resolutions adopted by district conventions where club delegates took the time to consider them and adopt them. We propose that all resolutions be published for national delegates to see. We also propose that the Resolutions Committee continue to function after the Convention until all resolutions are addressed by the incoming National Committee.

NATIONAL BOARDS

The National Committee established two National Boards. One is called the full National Board. It is more nationally representative and meets three or four times a year.

The other is what we have called a Resident Board because when it was first established it was made up of those from the full National Board who reside in New York or surrounding states. It meets much more regularly. Over the last period, it has met every week. Both National Boards set policy in between NC meetings.

In our initial discussion of this, there was a proposal to eliminate the Resident Board because its role

was not understood. It was seen as composed of all national full timers who supplant the policy making of the full National Board, which is more composed of workers, nationally representative, etc. This speaks to the need for something written which describes our national structure beyond what is in the constitution.

We discussed that there is an objective need for a national leadership body to meet at a minimum every two weeks. The quick pace of national developments, the right danger, and internal questions of the Party itself require more Board meetings to stay abreast, to give direction to our whole Party. The full National Board cannot meet that often because of various reasons including that many members' work schedules do not permit their participation. Therefore, the smaller Board fulfills that need.

While the committee agreed that the Resident Board was necessary, we propose that the name be changed because with the addition of Scott Marshall and myself, it no longer is just a resident body. With phone conferencing, it is now possible to add others from around the country to the smaller Board as well.

We also agreed that the full National Board which meets three or four times a year is necessary because it is composed of leaders active in the labor movement, coalitions, and in districts across the country. It draws on the broader national experience of the Party.

The committee also proposes that the size of both Boards be reduced to allow for better deliberation and shorter meetings. Our estimate is that the large size of these bodies is beyond the needs of our membership size as well. The full national board is now about 45 members and the resident board is about 30. This would mean a reallocation of leading members to other Party bodies, which we have already discussed need assistance to function up to par.

Many of the same proposals for making the NC more deliberative apply to the National Board.

NATIONAL EXECUTIVE

We also propose that the size of the National Executive be reduced. Its current size is 14, about half the size of the resident board. The main reason for this proposal is that there has been a problem of the Executive sometimes supplanting itself for the National Board by discussing out questions that really belong with the National Board. This produces a duplication of discussion with half of the members of the Board already coming to conclusion in the Executive. This pretty much assures the outcome of decisions before the Board meeting begins. This undermines the collective process and authority of the Board.

That has changed in the last month with proposals by Sam to make the Executive more of a place to propose agendas for the National Board and for referring questions to the appropriate collectives. Sam proposed that right after we had been discussing that very issue

in our committee. I thought maybe he was on our phone conference because his proposal was right in sync with our discussion.

Our proposal means that the Executive would more route where a question is to be discussed. That doesn't mean the Executive should be restricted from taking up substantive questions but it should most often refer to the National Board or other bodies.

NATIONAL ORGANIZATION COMMITTEE

Our thinking is that the Organization Committee should be more of an Organization Department which has real committees responsible to it that take up specific questions like membership, press circulation, literature, fundraising, etc. This would be in addition to mobilizing the Party around mass questions and campaigns.

We see adding more cadre to enable the Organization Committee to fulfill the many dimensions of its work as critical to the functioning of every level of the Party. As long as the Organization Committee does not have more cadre, the entire state of our organization is affected.

We cannot expect our hard working and dedicated Organizational Secretary and Organization Committee to fulfill the organizational needs of the entire Party as it is constituted. Prioritizing cadre here is basic to communication, therefore, the democratic process. It is basic to building Party districts and clubs. It relates to press building and fundraising. And most important, it is critical for implementation of NC and Board decisions. Therefore, we propose that assigning more cadre here be a top priority.

The Organization Committee is kind of a mystery to the Party. We don't know enough about how the committee functions. Most just assume that most implementation of decisions goes there. We know that the Committee is hard working. Nevertheless we need more transparency here. As with the National Board and National Executive, minutes should go out. Perhaps this will draw more help and volunteers. It will bring more understanding to the question of being real about decision-making.

INTERACTION OF BOARD, EXECUTIVE AND ORGANIZATION COMMITTEE

We felt there is a problem of many of the same leaders functioning on all the top leadership bodies. This is more a problem of lack of cadre than anything else we realize. But the problem results in an overlap of the same few comrades deliberating all major ques-

tions before the National Board meets. When it is the top officers of the Party, it can give the appearance that decisions are already arrived at by a section of the meeting before the National Board has a chance to consider it collectively. The real exchange factor and collective process of decision making can be diminished. So we have to be more considerate of the full collective.

We propose that when forming the top leadership collectives, especially the Board, Executive and Organization Committee, we should avoid having the same group of comrades on all three bodies, which is what exists now.

EDUCATION/MEDIA DEPARTMENT

We did not have an opportunity to spend much time on the question of how we organize our educational work but it is obvious that this is a huge omission in our structure and organization. As a start, we propose that we establish a 21st century Education/Media Department which coordinates our ideological/educational work in new and creative ways, including the use of new technology. It not only should organize the internal educational work of the Party but also our mass ideological work.

NATIONAL COMMISSIONS

There are national commissions which function regularly. Their contribution is substantial. In many ways, it is invaluable. The Labor, Political Action, Economics, Public Education, Farm & Rural Area Commissions do meet regularly.

The main problem is that most commissions do not meet regularly or at all. Commissions which have a full time person whose primary assignment is the Commission, do tend to function. But commissions headed by leaders who have other major national or district assignments, tend not to meet. This speaks to the need to reallocate national cadre to help commissions play their full role.

We also think that there should be some changes in how commissions work. While we should not adopt a one-size-fits-all approach to commissions, in general we think that for most commissions the primary role should be action oriented, hands on activity in the area of work, not merely advisory, which has been the way we have tended to look at commissions.

Commissions should help the NC and Board to arrive at policies and assessments related to a given area of work but we propose that helping our national organization and districts move into action in the area should become more the priority. This means helping with initiative, coalition work, developing strategy and tactics on a given issue or campaign.

It also means that the commissions should relate to the mass organizations and leaders in their given area

of work. Commissions should help to coordinate participation in national conventions and conferences related to the work.

We also think commissions should be smaller in size and composed of comrades who are really active in and responsible for the work.

Commissions are now based in different cities in the country, not just New York, which is a positive. The Labor Commission is based in Chicago. The Commission on Public Education is based in Philadelphia. The Mexican American Equality Commission is based in Los Angeles.

Now we can add the positive experiences of commissions holding meetings outside of their base cities. The Labor Commission meeting in Los Angeles, with participation of union members from the Southwest and West Coast was a huge success and enhanced our work. The Mexican American Equality Commission meeting to be held in Arizona relating to the militarization of the US/Mexico border is another example.

Commission meetings in different cities allow for members in that state to participate, share experiences and to invite leaders and friends from that area. This not only helps to democratize the Party but deepens our understanding. It deepens our relationships with mass leaders. This is part of developing policy on a more rounded national basis. Again, this would have to be done based on coordination and agreement by the National Board, Organization Committee and districts involved.

We also think that there should be more accountability of commissions. We propose that minutes of meetings should be sent out to the NC and that every Commission should report to the NC at least once a year either at the meeting or by written report.

COMMISSIONS' RELATION TO DISTRICTS

Work of the commissions related to districts would have to be done in coordination with the National Board, Organization Committee and districts. There was concern in the committee about Commissions imposing themselves on districts without consideration for the reality of a given district or the political collective. Examples were given of commissions bypassing district leadership.

It is clear that too many national bodies calling on districts would overburden districts so national coordination and reality-based decisions are critical. Commissions have to take into account that broad decisions like "every district should do this or that" are unrealistic because there are many national bodies that are saying the same thing. Proposals should be made which fit our reality, which are more specific to a given district, national mass action or issue. Then the commission would work with the Organization Committee, district and whoever it will take to make the proposal

happen. Coordination based on consultation and agreement of districts is a prerequisite. "Hands on" work should not be a free for all.

Proposals for commissions should be seen as a general guideline. Changes will be a process. Not all commissions will carry out all proposals. Each commission will have to see what fits. But we think the proposals provide a direction. The main change is related to commissions being more action- and implementation-oriented.

REGIONS

Throughout our discussion, regional meetings were pointed to as something that should continue. Experience shows that these meetings allow for more nitty gritty exchange from a wider circle representing the base of the Party. They are helpful to cadre building. More members get a sense of the whole Party. They are generally "feel good" atmosphere meetings.

Regional meetings tend to be focused discussions on specific questions that help with both understanding and implementation. They also tend to be more grounded because the discussions are based on a more common, regional, political experience.

We also think that meetings or phone conferences on specific regional questions between district leaders could be useful. For example, the western region could discuss the energy crisis, which is centered in California but has directly overlapped into surrounding states.

We do not see establishing a regional political structure with regional collectives who have decision making authority. We do propose that we more establish New York, Chicago and Los Angeles as key regional centers of Party activity. That means building up strong collectives in these centers, including full time collectives. That would be part of making our Party more nationally oriented. We are now building up in Chicago and the Midwest. We should do the same in New York and Los Angeles. These three cities play a key role in our country. Strong regional centers could assist the National with surrounding states and districts.

As we are moving to build three regional centers, we should also take specific steps to build up our organization in the South and New England. This would include regional meetings, building clubs and meeting with mass leaders in those areas. The question of organizing in the South is necessary for all the reasons that we have discussed before. A couple of members of our committee felt that the South should be our fourth priority for regional Party building. These proposals do not preclude regional meetings in other areas when needed, like in the Heartland or Rocky Mountain area.

The practice of locating national cadre with national work assignments in cities around the country

contributes to building strong collectives at a regional and district level. We think that should be continued.

The idea of regional video conferencing was suggested as something that could be done in the future as a way of enhancing our National Board, commissions or other meetings.

STATE & DISTRICT ORGANIZATION

We have to be objective about the state of our organization, our size and abilities when we make decisions about what we should do. As a number of comrades have raised in the last year, we too often decide "we have to do this or that" without much regard to whether or not we have the resources to accomplish that decision.

The fact that our decisions will not be implemented equally by all districts or clubs has to be more understood by our national bodies. We can send decision after decision down the pike but most districts, if not all, will not be implementing all of those decisions. Districts will pick and choose based on their situation.

Therefore, at a national level we have to be more thoughtful about setting national priorities. The 2000 elections were a clear priority and our entire Party was geared up and focused on that battle. Nationally, we followed up with ongoing help to the Party on that focus. We organized regional meetings, a special Elections Committee, literature, ongoing reports, ongoing check up with districts, etc. In many ways, it was a model for real prioritizing. The National Board, National Organization Committee and the Political Action/Legislative Commission worked as a real team. The more we can set priorities and facilitate that decision with organizational help to districts, the more we are going to accomplish, the more our national organization facilitates action orientation.

MORE DISTRICT-CONSCIOUS

We also have to take into account that particular issues or struggles are more of a priority in different regions or states. The steel crisis, for example, hits Ohio, Pennsylvania, Indiana, and Illinois in an emergency manner. The energy crisis hit California and other states in an emergency way. The militarization of the US/Mexican border hits Arizona, Texas, California and New Mexico in a very particular and urgent way. The farm crisis hits the Heartland very specifically.

So this reality will make these districts or regions focus on those questions. We have to be more district-conscious. Our national bodies should facilitate the reality of what faces districts as we shape our national priorities. There are also regional issues, like aerospace in the Southwest and Northwest, the steel crisis as mentioned, the auto crisis in a number of states, and longshore on both coasts. Rural areas require attention.

There have been major improvements in the relationship of the National Center with districts. The improvement is visible, especially in attitude, with more efforts to consult. But there is still a gap. Regular meetings with district organizers and district leaders need to be reestablished.

More attention is needed related to building strong, functioning district political collectives. These collectives play the central role in implementing national/local decisions, bringing those decisions down to their district reality, setting priorities, and communicating their conclusions and thinking to national bodies.

Strong state and district committees are the key link between the national and base of the Party. Therefore more attention is needed for training of district leaders. The district leaders seminar held in Chicago last May was a valuable meeting for the whole national Party. These could be organized on a regional level as well.

The need for full time district cadre is critical to states like New York and Michigan. The special approach to the building up and training of district leaders and cadre would lend itself to volunteers coming forward for full time, district and other Party work.

The recent travel of national comrades to districts to discuss policies, the labor program and other pre-convention questions has been valuable for helping to connect districts and the national more.

As I indicated earlier in the report, this is our preliminary discussion of districts.

CLUBS

I also indicated that while the question of clubs entered in some way into every discussion in our committee, we merely began our specific discussion on clubs at our last meeting. These are some initial thoughts.

We argued against the "one-size-fits-all" approach to clubs, against the "every club shall do xyz" approach. We believe that our approach to clubs must be realistic and flexible, and based on the specific realities of specific clubs.

Our clubs need to be centers of political organizing, but often that is not the case. We often say that clubs are either shop clubs or neighborhood clubs, but the reality is we have very few shop clubs and most other clubs cover huge sections of, or all of, large cities or areas of a state.

We have to give more attention to how to help our clubs transform themselves, how to give room, support and encouragement for club initiatives and experimentation. We can recruit many more members, but if we don't have activity-oriented clubs, we increase the "revolving door" aspect of people joining but not staying in the Party. The clubs are the keys to holding, consolidating and developing new members.

We, at a national level, talk about the clubs as the

heart and soul of our organization, but we don't regularly assess the status of clubs, evaluate what is changing for clubs, or provide realistic leadership to the work of clubs.

The membership review will give us a more realistic picture. But our estimate is that while there are exceptions, generally the clubs are our weakest link in the structure.

We discussed a number of possibilities to help with club building. One is a Party-wide conference on clubs. Perhaps this could be the first expanded meeting of the NC. We also need a program of training for club leaders. Also, can we shift our structure in some new ways to allow for district leaders to spend more time working politically with club leaders on the political priorities and mass orientation of clubs rather than passing on decisions from the top without thought for how to implement? We noted that having club leaders on the state and district committees is a good start, but not sufficient.

We also recognized the need for flexibility between the clubs and state organizations. In some cases, when some clubs aren't yet able to be action-oriented or to provide a useful framework for members, involving members through the state organizations is a necessary bridge. For example, members who are unionists can be members of a club, but look to their participation in district activities as the place where their contributions matter most, the place where their concerns fit and are addressed best.

We know that a deeper look at our clubs requires much more attention, which we plan for our upcoming meetings. The question of how to work with at-large members is an important one.

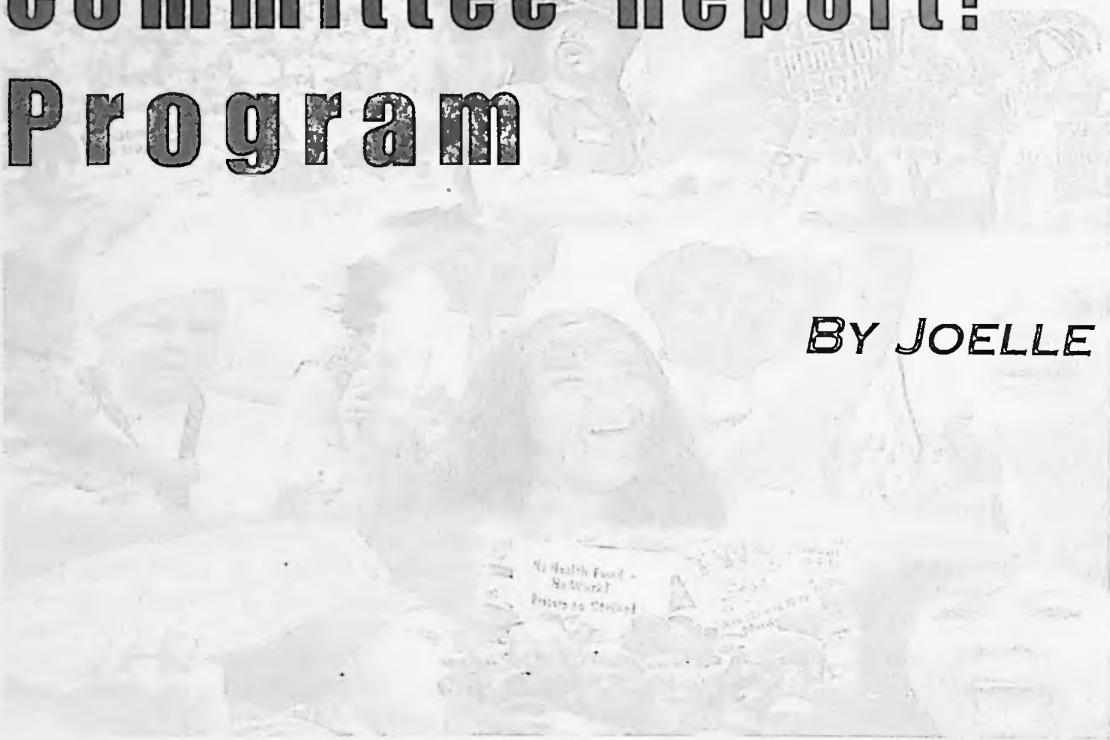
We also plan to discuss the structure and organization related to the *People's Weekly World* and any other questions that come up in the course of pre-convention discussion.

In closing, let me restate that this is a report intended for pre-convention discussion. We are trying to project a direction. We do not expect proposals in this report to happen all at once. It will be a process with adjustments made as we go.

We do want to stress that we see the proposals as one interrelated process, connecting national bodies and different levels of the Party. If one part of the proposal is eliminated, it will impact on the ability to carry out the other. They work in connection with one another.

Committee Report: Program

BY JOELLE FISHMAN



The members of the Program Committee are Joelle Fishman (chair), Pat Barile, Richard Castro, Libero Della Piana, George Edwards, Rick Nagin, Carolyn Rummel, Joe Sims, Walt Tillow, Jim Wilkerson, and Bobbie Wood.

The committee has held four meetings after receiving and reading the last existing program, which was published in 1981.

We propose making a preliminary report to the National Convention calling for the drafting of a new program. We propose that the draft be presented to the first meeting of the newly elected National Committee, and that the Convention charge the National Committee with launching a Party-wide discussion. This will allow the draft to reflect the direction determined by the convention, and will provide adequate time for full input and involvement within the Party and beyond the Party with our allies.

Tonight's report to the National Committee reflects our discussions to date in committee, with input from the National Board, and includes the why of the program, the direction of the draft outline we have developed, and points of difference.

WHY A PROGRAM

The Labor Department, the Economics Commission and some other commissions are developing specific programs to their area of work, focused on the immediate challenges. The task of the Program Committee is somewhat different. The Party Program is not a legislative program or an immediate projection for what we're doing this year. It is a longer range document, and should be more of an overview - addressing the stage of struggle at present, yet linked to more advanced stages including Bill of Rights

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socialism.

As a workingclass Party and a revolutionary Party, it is incumbent upon us to place clearly and simply what we stand for; to put forward our strategy and tactics for changing the balance of forces; and to present our long-term vision. The program guides our work, and those who agree with it should join the Communist Party. Historically, developing a program has played a defining role in the work of Communist Parties.

The Communist Manifesto, our movement's first program which has echoed down through the decades, explained capitalism; the working-class and class struggle; and the Communist Party and socialism. While some portions were specific to the time, overall it projected a long view of how to win a better world. Moreover it was a powerful call to action.

We face many complicated social, political and theoretical questions today, which our program must address.

Our program must clearly place the danger from the theft of the presidency and extreme right-wing corporate control of all three branches of the federal government, at a time of economic downturn. All basic democratic rights, social and political rights, the environment and peace are threatened. The need for ever broader and deeper unity to end this extreme right-wing corporate dominance is the central feature of this moment.

Our program must reflect the sharpening crisis of capitalism and imperialism with all that means for the lives of working class people. It must reflect the new level of struggle and fightback by labor and allies, including the formation of powerful new coalitions in our country and internationally.

The brutality of the capitalist system and its refusal to meet the basic needs of people despite increased wealth is more and more blatant. Capitalist globalization and the use of new trade agreements that supercede national and local governments are escalating the wealth gap and impoverishing many millions.

In response, the struggle for labor rights, for civil rights and human rights is emerging on a new level. The labor movement is injecting a class approach into these struggles by reaching out to workers previously unorganized and is joining with allies among youth, women, the African American and Latino people's organizations, environmentalists, and the faith-based community.

We are writing our program at a time when qualitative changes are on the horizon. There is a growing disillusionment and anger with capitalism among many sections of the people. The assault on the working class across national boundaries is giving rise to new forms and possibilities for international working class unity.

Our program should spell out the necessity for advanced democratic reforms, and should reflect the need to go further with an anti-monopoly strategy and program. It should point the way to socialism in our country.

In short, our program should be a ringing condemnation of the existing order, a confident exposition of the prospects for a bright future and a clarion call to unity in action. It should inspire working class people and allies to join and work with the Communist Party. It should explain who we are, why we are here, and how we see ending exploitation and achieving equality.

Such a program - short, popular and basic - will be a significant tool to unify thinking and action within our Party. At the same time, it should be a piece that can be used in every aspect of our work from the grass roots, to the coalition and leadership level. It should provide a framework for our day-to-day development of strategy and tactics. It should be a popular pamphlet that we use in the midst of every battle, on People's Weekly World routes and plant gate distributions, at Communist Party tables in neighborhoods and conferences, that we can bring to meetings with union leaders and elected officials, and that we can use in our classes and schools.

We need a concise program that issues a clear call for basic change in our country, which projects how to get to Bill of Rights socialism, and how we Communists see our role. In his report to the National Board on January 6, Sam Webb placed the importance of a bigger and more influential Communist Party. Our program should be a recruiting tool that states our contribution toward building unity in action; toward broadening and deepening coalitions against corporate greed and the extreme right wing; and toward expanding political independence and electing working class leaders to public office at every level.

We should draw upon the basic elements of "The People versus Corporate Power" our Party's program that was published twenty years ago in 1981. At the same time, much has changed in the world in the past two decades. It was issued at a time when, for example:

Existing socialism encompassed a large section of the world.

Imperialist globalization had not come into its own, and the extreme right had not yet consolidated its control of government.

The labor movement was not as advanced in the areas of, for example, class struggle concepts, organizing the unorganized and coalition building.

The building of multi-racial unity was not as advanced, especially black-brown-white unity, unity with immigrant workers and coalition building in general.

The number of labor, African American,

Mexican American, Latino, Asian and women elected officials was much smaller

Our concepts of projecting Bill of Rights socialism were not as developed.

For these reasons, the committee, with one dissenting vote, decided to begin its work with a completely fresh draft. Although we are drafting a new program, we are not, and should not, start from scratch. We have as a guide the recent reports and decisions of the National Committee and National Board, the existing Program, and, most importantly, the deliberations of our upcoming National Convention

We have started by creating an outline. We are now choosing writing assignments to develop each section of the outline, and to hold a discussion on each section. When we have developed the content, we will put together a unified document with a consistent style. Once we have something in writing, it will be possible to engage the entire Party in a full discussion, which will be incorporated into the final draft. That process will take more time than the weeks remaining until our national convention. I believe the discussions organized in many states around the Labor Program provide a model for discussion of the draft Party program.

Our plan is to continue working up until the convention, make a preliminary report to the convention, and, if the convention agrees, we will continue our work. Hopefully the committee can produce something in hand by the time of the first meeting of the newly elected National Committee.

DIRECTION OF THE OUTLINE

While we have developed a working outline, it is just that - a working outline. I am simply going to indicate the main topics to give a sense of the work we are embarking upon, which includes an introduction and five sections. We hope to prepare an article prior to the Convention that will develop more fully the questions we think should be addressed in the Program.

HIGHLIGHTS OF WORKING OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

1) "A Call to Action for unity to defeat extreme-right wing corporate agenda." Our country at a crossroads. Extreme right-wing assault on basic democratic, economic, social and environmental rights of working class and people - moving to gut unions, civil rights, social security, the rights of women, public education, separation of church and state. Policies of globalization to maximize U.S. corporate profits and transfer of government surplus revenues to the super-rich, readiness to resort to war to stifle dis-

sent, mobilize their base, divert attention from their domestic assault and expand their imperialist domain. Destruction of environment. Matter of survival for many. Growing alliances in the struggle for labor rights, civil rights, and human rights. Key to stopping assault and achieving new gains.

2) "Our Vision." Good job with living wages, pension, health care, child care, education, transportation, housing, equal access and opportunity, safe and clean environment are all basic human rights. Communist Party committed to educating, organizing, mobilizing and helping to build winning labor-peoples' coalition to defeat corporate right-wing control of government. With new conditions for struggle, new possibilities toward longer term goal of changing system to put people before profits, and achieving socialism.

FIRST SECTION

"It's the System"

1) Conditions working class people face under capitalism today. (Describe nature of capitalist crisis today). Downsizing, part-time/temp/casual jobs, union busting. Destruction of social safety net and entitlements. Privatization of public sector. Insecurity for most and impoverishment for many. Criminalization and incarceration of youth. Loss of family farms.

2) Capitalist Globalization. Drive for profits. Exploitation of the environment. Thrust to engulf the world. Military actions to defend transnationals. How it impacts: wealth gap pits richest few against everyone else.

3) Political economy. Source of profits. Where wealth comes from. Expropriation of wealth by capitalists. Extra profits from racism and from discrimination against women.

4) How capitalism gives rise to the class struggle. Workers have special role, because they confront monopoly directly at the point of production. Who is working class (multi-racial, multi-national, male-female, immigrant and native born, young and old, employed and unemployed, factory, farm, school, office)? Class struggle in all aspects of life.

SECOND SECTION

"Unity Can Win"

1) Key role of labor movement. Organizing the unorganized, unity within working class and building coalition with community. Unity of labor and allies. Moves whole society forward. Key force to defeat extreme right wing and build strong enough and broad enough unity to win

new gains. At the heart of fight against capitalist globalization, along with students, peace, environment etc. The re-emergence of organized labor in this critical role since 1995 is the most significant development in U.S. politics. At heart of anti-monopoly coalition.

2) Multi-racial, multi-national working class unity. Struggle against racism, and discrimination against women, key to social progress. Historic use of racism in this country to split and divide. Special measures needed to overcome historic inequality, and to protect immigrant workers' rights. Black-brown-white unity and male-female unity against discrimination wins gains for everyone, i.e., jobs, housing, health care, education, old age protection.

3) International working-class unity against capitalist globalization and for peace. More necessary for workers in all countries to join together to fight exploitation of transnational corporations. Growth of new international working class organizations, confederations, trade groups are a vital part of this struggle. When struggle for markets takes place, wars for profits, expansion, economic, political, social domination by one imperialism over another. Our responsibility to build movement against U.S. imperialism and for peace and nuclear disarmament.

4) Anti-monopoly unity. Very broad. Should be inclusive of all workers, middle class who are oppressed by monopoly and small employers, who are crushed by the monopoly corporations. Anyone who is impacted by monopoly practices should and will become part of coalition. Includes every strata of society except monopolies and ultra-right.

THIRD SECTION **"People's Politics"**

1) Struggle to defeat the extreme right wing is urgent, immediate goal. Requires broadest possible coalitions of labor and allies on issues, e.g., health care, public education, social security, energy crisis, jobs, safety net, environment, peace etc. Electoral unity to defeat Republican control of all branches of federal government. All-sided struggle: on the job, in the community, in the legislature, in elections (economic, social, political) to defeat extreme right wing.

2) Struggle for democracy. One person one vote, every vote counted, and open up electoral system. Right to organize union, etc. Repressive society makes it more difficult to develop anti-monopoly movement. Presidential election blocked whole democratic process.

3) Political independence. Unity to block extreme-right candidates. Labor and people's

and Communist candidates at local levels, independent of corporate control. Goal of anti-monopoly people's party and majority anti-monopoly government. Labor in fore with African American, Latino, women, rural, environmental, peace and all those affected by monopolies. A process, e.g., Working Families Party in New York, other forms in different states and regions. Requires strong grass roots to resist attack by ultra-right and corporate monopolies. More advanced demands e.g., public ownership of utilities, etc.

FOURTH SECTION **"Of, By and For the People"**

The source of all the main problems today is the capitalist system itself and no amount of reforms will secure the rights of the people so long as the means of production and disposition of the wealth are in private hands. The labor-led people's coalition must fully replace the corporations as the dominant power in our country.

Bill of Rights Socialism USA. A working class vision. What our country could be like if working people in charge, and resources are for general good instead of private profit. Equality. Respect and cooperation with other lands. Guaranteed living wage job, health care, housing, transportation, child care, education, vacation, pension, democratic rights. Children's needs a priority.

Based on the democratic, social and economic gains the American people have won in over 200 years of class struggle and on our own unique history, culture and traditions, flowing from the diverse contributions of the multi-racial, multi-national U.S. working class and people, a society in which the vast wealth of our great country will be used to meet the needs of the people rather than to maximize profits for private corporations.

FIFTH SECTION **"Join Us"**

Communist Party USA. Multi-racial working-class party. Economic equality, racial equality, political equality. Organize at the grass roots and work in coalition. Organize for immediate needs and long-term goals in all aspects of life - culture, politics, education, public ownership, etc. The Party with a science of class struggle, the Party of action. Basic change. A better life. People before Profits.

We are ordinary people from all walks of life, immersed in the day to day fight that our neighbors and co-workers find themselves forced to wage to defend their living standards

and rights. We have no interest apart from winning these goals on an immediate basis and securing them for the long run.

We are guided by a social science, Marxism-Leninism, which summarizes the experience and lessons of the age-old struggle between working people and those who have exploited them throughout history as slaves, serfs or wage laborers. That experience includes both triumphs and setbacks of the working-class movement throughout the world and we stand in solidarity with existing socialism and the fight of workers and progressive forces everywhere to secure civil, democratic and trade union rights, peace and socialism.

POINTS OF DIFFERENCE

Within our committee some differences emerged in the process of putting the outline together. On the one hand, a concern was expressed that we are abandoning our anti-monopoly strategy by emphasizing the immediate need for broad unity to defeat the extreme right-wing. On the other hand, the opinion was expressed that we should recognize that the Democratic Party remains for the present time the main vehicle in the electoral and legislative arena to defeat the right wing.

The majority of the committee agrees that the defeat of the right is an essential and immediate component of our anti-monopoly strategy, that one is not posed against the other; and that, in life, the anti-monopoly trend is emerging in the midst of the class and democratic struggles. The majority of the committee is of the opinion that our Program should outline what we mean by labor and people's political independence, emphasizing the class and social forces necessary to register, mobilize and get-out-the-vote to defeat the right wing.


We are working on a consensus basis wherever possible, but when necessary, we rely on majority vote. In any case, we will continue to share the nature of our discussions and the process of developing the draft for a program with the National Board, National Committee and National Convention.

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Committee Report: Labor Program

BY SCOTT MARSHALL



Producing and discussing the new Draft Labor Program has been a great experience for the Labor Commission. The response has been thoughtful and stimulating. Around the country, Party and non-Party activists have deepened our thinking and challenged us. Not only is the labor program important for our pre-convention discussion, it is timely in the face of right danger and the economic downturn. Our program is hitting the streets and shop floors as hundreds of labor activists are grappling with the questions we raise and looking for answers.

To date we have had meetings and discussions in New York, Southern California, Arizona, Connecticut, Eastern Pennsylvania, Maryland and Minnesota. On deck, we have in the works events in Washington State, Oregon, Northern California, Illinois, Indiana, Missouri, Michigan, Ohio, Western Pennsylvania and Maine. If you aren't on the list, we can fix that, too. Every member of our Executive Board has taken responsibility for meeting and discussing the program around the country.

Our meetings in Los Angeles began with a great meeting of our National Labor Commission. Five members of the commission leadership went to L.A. for what is becoming an important innovation of our work. In our determination to make the commission truly a national commission, we have decided to hold at least two of our yearly meetings outside of Chicago, on the West Coast and in other regions. This style makes it possible to involve a much greater cross section of Party and non-Party union activists in our work and deliberations. We had a fine meeting in L.A.

Our meetings have been with all levels of the trade unions: rank and file, Party and non-Party, local union presidents, district directors, regional directors, state federation presidents and other state officers, city federation officers, state AFL-CIO officials and international union officials.

For many, this was the first time they had ever agreed to sit down with the Party as the Party. Just agreeing to meet shows the changes taking place in labor. I want to stress that many of these folks are

center forces. Some were quite surprised to find themselves in so much agreement with us on a whole range of issues facing labor.

For sure all of these folks know Communists and work with us in different coalition relations. There is no doubt that they agreed to these meetings and discussions because of their respect for our comrades in the local areas.

For me the whole experience has brought home again how deeply involved much of our Party is in the day-to-day struggles of labor and the people. There is tremendous respect among left and center forces in labor for the work we do at the local level in our districts and clubs. This is where the real influence and respect for our party is built day by day with hard work.

We have had many different kinds of gatherings. Some are one-on-one meetings. Some have been quite innovative. In Tucson, the comrades came up with a great approach. They organized two dinners at a local restaurant where they invited labor leaders from around the city. It was a really interesting discussion. Instead of leading off on the program with a general presentation, we went around the room asking folks to describe the struggles they were most concerned about. Then we responded with a more focused discussion of the draft labor program; it worked very well.

Another interesting approach was a central labor council president who invited some delegates to his council for pizza and discussion just before a regular council meeting. Then we were invited to sit in and listen to the council meeting. I was also invited into a meeting of a local union's retirees organization.

And, of course, we meet with Party comrades, clubs, and in organized district meetings. I should mention that it was just such a district-wide meeting in New York that convinced us that it would be better to draft a program quickly for discussion rather than have weeks of general discussion and then a draft.

One thing that struck me in the meetings I was involved in was the changes that the inclusiveness campaign of AFL-CIO have begun to show. More African American, Latino, Asian American and women are rising to leadership levels of labor. While there is certainly a ways to go, it is fascinating to see what a conscious policy can do.

Having a program that starts off explaining why Communists and our party put so much emphasis on the labor movement puts people at ease. Once folks understand our partisanship and our interest in their struggles, the really good discussions begin. This is the kind of project where you have to be a good listener. Labor activists respond to the program in direct proportion to how it speaks to the day-to-day issues that they are grappling with and thinking about.

Left and center labor activists are worried about a myriad of problems, many of the things that the program speaks to, as they are faced in real life.

My feeling is that there is great appreciation for the draft program and the Party's initiative in getting it out for discussion. All of the criticism has been in the spirit of improving and amplifying its themes. Here are some of the critical questions addressed in these meetings:

Some of the key areas of the program that people feel need strengthening include: 1) the fight for equality and against racism, young workers, women, militarization and Star Wars, the right danger, environmental versus jobs issues, and problems of consolidating the left in labor, and labor history.

Many felt the need for more on socialism. This came also from non-Party trade unionists. One non-Party city federation official, having read the program before we met, was quite concerned by how it ended. "You make a great case through the program. You begin the discussion of socialism as the alternative, you speak of Bill of Rights Socialism, and then it ends. I was looking for you to spell it out. What is Bill of Rights Socialism? How would it work?" she wanted to know.

The discussions I participated in also convinced me that we have to pay more attention to the problems of those pockets of resistance and backwardness that still exist in labor. Some Party and non-Party activists, who fully share our estimates of what's new in labor, still find themselves in difficult internal struggles. George Meyers always warned us that no matter how good things got, the right would not give up or go away. And there are signs that the right is emboldened by Bush. We cannot ignore that the Teamsters and the Laborers have broken ranks with labor on preserving the Alaska wildlife preserve. The Carpenters apparent withdrawal from the AFL-CIO is another such symptom. And we must add that the "China" issue is not completely dead either. A global economic crisis and a Bush presidency still have grave potential for igniting jingoism and anti-communism even among some in labor.

Our estimate that a dynamic and growing left/center coalition is the dominant trend in the labor movement is correct. Still, we have to speak to the problems that real trade unionists face in real battle with the entrenched right-wing forces that remain. One sidedness, or turning a blind eye to problems, will diminish our influence, not enhance it.

We should also pay more attention to consolidating the left in labor. This is not in contradiction to our very correct policies of left/center and coalition work. Still there is a broad left in labor, much of it unaffiliated with any political party or organized movement. These forces need to be heard and they need forms for

strategic thinking and discussion. Here we need to be very flexible and creative; there is no general, 'one size fits all' solution.

Another key area of response and discussion has been how to win contracts and fights in the Bush era. How do we promote more militant responses? Or, more importantly, how do we win in the face of such a stacked deck? Many feel that we need to discuss more militant tactics, such as general strikes, sit-ins and workplace occupations.

We have also seen a great deal of uneven development of the economic crisis. Some areas, such as steel in the Midwest, are hit much worse than others. On the other hand, much of the building trades are still in boom mode. This makes for different sets of problems in specific areas and regions of the county. For example, though all are aware and wary of the economic downturn, some are more interested in organizing strategies than in job preservation.

I would say however that all agree with our emphasis on a broad, coalition and struggle approach to organizing. Many have been quite struck by our formulation that what is needed is the strategic approach of the 1930's CIO drives combined with the spirit and community involvement of the 1960's civil rights struggles. All agreed with us on the need for coalitions and broad social movement type approaches. Our discussions with some of the main organizers of the home health care workers' victory in L.A were most useful on this subject.

One last point on industrial concentration. It has really come home to me, from these discussions, that we must move ahead and decide on a new concentration policy coming out of our national convention. Elena has proposed that maybe we should have our first expanded yearly meeting of the new National Committee on industrial concentration. I think that's a great idea. I think we have been too timid about setting a policy. We are afraid we might get it wrong because

of the many changes in labor and in manufacturing. We are afraid we may not be able to exactly pinpoint where the basic power of the labor movement is in today's global economy.

We are concerned that we have so few comrades in what we have considered the key industries. This is certainly not the first time in our Party's history that we have had to go back to the drawing board and consider how to start almost from scratch. We must also consider that our Party has rich experience in concentration. We have a lot to draw on. We will probably make some mistakes in updating our policy, but the biggest mistake of all, in my opinion, would be a default policy of no industrial concentration.

