

spirit into the old craft unions. It is a consequence of capitalist development, that in founding new industries and in replacing skilled labor by machine power, it accumulates large bodies of unskilled workers, living in the worst of conditions. Forced at last into a wave of rebellion, into big strikes, they find the way to unity and class consciousness. They mould unionism into a new form, adapted to a more highly developed capitalism. Of course, when afterwards capitalism grows to still mightier forms, the new unionism cannot escape the fate of all unionism, and then it produces the same inner contradictions.

The most notable form sprang up in America, in the "Industrial Workers of the World." The I. W. W. originated from two forms of capitalist expansion. In the enormous forests and plains of the West, capitalism reaped the natural riches by Wild West methods of fierce and brutal exploitation; and the worker-adventurers responded with as wild and jealous a defense. And in the Eastern States new industries were founded upon the exploitation of millions of poor immigrants, coming from countries with a low standard of living and now subjected to sweatshop labor or other most miserable working conditions.

Against the narrow craft spirit of the old unionism, of the A.F. of L., which divided the workers of one industrial plant into a number of separate unions, the I.W.W. put the principle: all workers of one factory as comrades against one master, must form one union, to act as a strong unity against the employer. Against the multitude of often jealous and bickering trade unions, the I.W.W. set up the slogan: one big union for all the workers. The fight of one group is the cause of all. Solidarity extends over the entire class. Contrary to the haughty disdain of the well-paid old American skilled labor towards the unorganized immigrants, it was these worst paid proletarians that the I.W.W. led into the fight. They were too poor to pay high fees and build up ordinary trade unions. But when they broke out and revolted in big strikes, it was the I.W.W. who taught them how to fight; who raised relief funds all over the country; and who defended their cause in its papers and before the courts. By a glorious series of big battles it infused the spirit of organization and self-reliance into the hearts of these masses. Contrary to the trust in the big funds of the old unions, the Industrial Workers put their confidence in the living solidarity and the force of endurance, upheld by a burning enthusiasm. Instead of the heavy stone-masoned buildings of the old unions, they represented the flexible construction, with a fluctuating membership, contracting in time of peace, swelling and growing in the fight itself. Contrary to the conservative capitalist spirit of trade unionism, the Industrial Workers were anti-capital-

ist and stood for Revolution. Therefore they were persecuted with intense hatred by the whole capitalist world. They were thrown into jail and tortured on false accusations; a new crime was even invented on their behalf: that of "criminal syndicalism".

Industrial unionism alone as a method of fighting the capitalist class is not sufficient to overthrow capitalist society and to conquer the world for the working class. It fights the capitalists as employers on the economic field of production, but it has not the means to overthrow their political stronghold, the state power. Nevertheless, the I.W.W. so far has been the most revolutionary organization in America. More than any other it has contributed to rouse class consciousness and insight, solidarity and unity in the working class, to turn its eyes toward communism, and to prepare its fighting power.

The lesson of all these fights is that against big capitalism, trade unionism cannot win. And if at times it wins, such victories give only temporary relief. And yet, these fights are necessary and must be fought. To the bitter end? - no, to the better end.

The reason is obvious. An isolated group of workers against an isolated capitalist employer, might make equal parties. But an isolated group of workers against an employer, backed by the whole capitalist class, is powerless. And such is the case here: the state power, the money power of capitalism, public opinion of the middle class, excited by the capitalist press, all attack the group of fighting workers.

But does the working class back the strikers? The millions of other workers do not consider this fight as their own cause. Certainly they sympathize, and often collect money for the strikers, and this may give some relief, provided its distribution is not forbidden by a judge's injunction. But this easy-going sympathy leaves the real fight to the striking group alone. The millions stand aloof, passive. So the fight cannot be won (except in some special cases, when the capitalists, for business reasons, prefer to grant concessions), because the working class does not fight as one undivided unit.

The matter will be different, of course, when the mass of the workers really consider such a contest as directly concerning them; when they find that their own future is at stake. If they go into the fight themselves and extend the strike to other factories, to ever more branches of industry. Then the state power, the capitalist power, has to be divided and cannot be used entirely against the separate group of workers. It has to face the

collective power of the working class.

Extension of the strike, ever more widely, up to a general strike in the end, has often been advised as a means to avert a defeat. But to be sure, this is not to be taken as a truly expedient pattern, accidentally hit upon, and ensuring victory. If such were the case, trade unions certainly would have made of it repeatedly as regular tactics. It cannot be proclaimed at will by union leaders, as a simple tactical measure. It must come forth from the deepest feelings of the masses, as the expression of their spontaneous initiative; and this is aroused only when the issue of the fight is or grows larger than a simple wage contest of one group. Only then the workers will put all their force, their enthusiasm, their solidarity, their power of endurance into it.

And all these forces they will need. For capitalism also will bring into the field stronger forces than before. It may have been defeated and taken by surprise by the unexpected exhibition of proletarian force and thus have made concessions. But then afterwards, it will gather new forces out of the deepest roots of its power and proceed to win back its position. So the victory of the workers is neither lasting nor certain. There is no clear and open road to victory; the road itself must be hewn and built through the capitalist jungle at the cost of immense efforts.

But even so, it will mean great progress. A wave of solidarity has gone through the masses, they have felt the immense power of class unity, their self-confidence is raised, they have shaken off the narrow group egotism. Through their own deeds they have acquired new wisdom: what capitalism means and how they stand as a class against the capitalist class. They have seen a glimpse of their way to freedom.

Thus the narrow field of trade union struggle widens into the broad field of class struggle. But now the workers themselves must change. They have to take a wider view of the world. From their trade, from their work within the factory walls, their mind must widen to encompass society at large. Their spirit must rise above the petty things around them. They have to face the state; they enter the realms of politics. The problems of revolution must be dealt with.

J. H.

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PROBLEMS OF THE NEW LABOR MOVEMENT

In August 1935 the Council Correspondence published an article by our dutch comrades, dealing with the rise of a new labor movement and which was to serve as the basis of a discussion for the reorientation of the working class. The September number of the C.C. contained a series of theses which had been adopted by an international conference of council-communist groups held in Brussels. The October number of the C.C. brought out some critical remarks on the first-mentioned article, The Rise of a New Labor Movement, which were written by H.W., a member of a council-communist organization whose standpoint is very similar to ours. Finally, we published in the C.C. a reply of the dutch comrades to the Brussels theses. A large number of letters have reached us, dealing either with the Brussels conference or with H.W.'s disquisitions, as well as with the article of the dutch group. The points of view set forth in the correspondence were those which had already been expressed in the earlier contributions to the discussion as published in the C.C.; their publication could therefore be dispensed with. The Groups of Council Communists of America have stated in the last number of the C.C. that they could not be satisfied with the discussion to date, and are now presenting their own ideas on the subject, tho in regrettably condensed form. This is not, however, the end of the discussion; in further numbers of this periodical we shall again take up these questions in more detailed as well as more definite manner.

I

The work of the dutch group on "The Rise of a New Labor Movement" confines itself to a compendium of the general and essential principles of the council-communist movement. If one regards it as nothing more than this, it can no doubt be accepted with slight reservations. Still, one is then compelled at the same time to work out or convert the general principles into serviceable and concrete directives, in which connection the general principles must undergo more or less important modifications if they are not to be regarded as a utopian abstraction and lose all value.

We too are convinced that the old labor movement is objectively surpassed, however much the heads of a lot of workers may still be afflicted by its ideologies. Since there is no possibility of realizing its ideas, it is only a question of time until the old labor move-

Due to an error pages 22-26 got mixed up; in reading, please follow strictly page numbers.

of organization. During the spontaneous uprisings, committees of action (councils) take form, since the forming of anything else is out of the question; and these represent the organization of any struggle whatsoever, and their fate depends on the development of this struggle. The extension of the struggle is at the same time the unfolding and centralizing of the council organization. A defeat may destroy it, until a new outbreak again brings it into existence. The necessarily small labor groups under the conditions of illegality can at most exercise influence upon these spontaneous organizations, never determine or directly lead them. Their activity has to be carried on within the councils as they arise, and not as a special organization by the side of these latter. Under the conditions of the dictatorship of Capital they can only exist at all as a special organization when they are so small that they are incapable of becoming the decisive factor of the revolution. They form, as a matter of fact, only the conscious element in the compulsory action of the masses. But even tho we decline to overrate the ideologically conscious element of the revolution, it has to be furthered. The greater the number of workers who know what is to be done, the better for the revolution; but their number will never be sufficient to direct the overturn all by themselves. The councils remain the determining factor. The more clearly these councils recognize their tasks, the more radically will the revolution be carried thru. The conscious element must work in the councils, and not attempt to impose their policies on them from the outside.

What holds for the revolution, holds also for the dictatorship of the proletariat. The workers have no more need of a special machinery of suppression than they have of a special political organization by the side of the councils. (The special political organization is, after all, only an indication of the unripeness of the revolutionary situation - an indication of the impossibility of the overthrow of capitalism.) The councils must alone have the economic and political instruments of power in their hands -- and in fact they have those instruments, provided that they do not voluntarily turn them over to a special body. The existence of two different centers of power can only lead to the elimination of one or the other. The councils organize the dictatorship, as later on they also organize production and distribution. They can not tolerate a special power beside themselves, for such a condition is a sure sign of their future impotence. The councils can only assert themselves and become the basis of the social organization when they can assert themselves as the exclusive instrument of power. "All power to the councils" is not

ment as a council movement is the yardstick with which the conscious application of the class forces can be measured". The idea that the workers' councils arise only in the revolution itself, we too reject. In any movement proceeding from the working class the main emphasis must be laid on the formation of workers' councils. The significance of a mass movement does not consist so much in the material successes which it attains, but in whether and to what extent it succeeds in applying the class forces thru its councils.

The labor movement which is consciously interested in the development of the movement of labor and which can be denoted as new we too regard as composed of those still very small groups "which see the essential part of the struggle for emancipation in the independent movement of the masses"; the goal of whose striving is not the power for themselves, but for the class, not party power but council power. H.W. too, in his critical remarks, shares our conception, and takes a different position for the first time in his treatment of the relation of the organized labor movement to the mass movements. Of course, it is only in case the arguments of the dutch group are to be regarded as a concrete analysis of the present-day situation -- which apparently is not the case -- that they are open to H.W.'s reproach of not being concrete. As a "broad perspective" capable of dispensing with more detailed treatment, that analysis has its validity.

Furthermore, to H.W., the exposition of the dutch group regarding the mass movement were rendered "obscure" for the reason that they are not concerned with bringing forth a new "organizational apparatus", but a new "vital principle". We too regard this substitution of a "vital principle" as very much out of order. One need not always seek for something with which to replace things which one has recognized as no longer serviceable. Things are not replaced; they disappear, and new ones take form. We agree with H.W. that "any class struggle and any mastery of society is impossible without suitable organization", and we see in this "vital principle" of the dutch group nothing more than new organizational forms. The councils are the organization of the revolution and that of the new society after their victory. Though prior to the revolution they may be possible only temporarily, take form and again disappear, and have no possibility of developing a permanent apparatus, still after the taking over of power as well as in the actual revolutionary process they become the machinery of social organization. Under the capitalist dictatorship, -- the ground of the proletarian revolution, -- the working class has no possibility of shaping for itself revolutionary, permanent forms

sense of the class movement; it is of practical importance only in the narrower sense of the relation of the working-class organizations to the class struggle. The revolutionary as well as the indifferent worked for Capital, the ones willingly, the others against their will. The ones carried on the struggle against Capital, the others went along with Capital. One group waited for wage increases, the other struck for them. Both these attitudes were possible only because wage increases were possible and necessary and were in conformity with the interests of Capitalism, however strongly resisted by the individual capitalist. Reformism, even when it was aggressive and denoted the attained stage of proletarian class struggle, had to move within a capitalism the end of which was beyond the range of vision -- except in theory, which must first become actuality in order to seize the masses. The indifferent workers merely sought to safeguard their advantages and interests in another and cheaper manner -- precisely by means of their indifference -- since they were still less in a position to see beyond the mighty capitalist system. The proletarian class itself is a product of Capital; it forms and grows with the growth of Capital, it is weak and becomes stronger; in the up and down of capitalist economy it is compelled to activity and made passive; it acts revolutionary and reactionary out of necessity. But in all situations it is constantly present "in itself" and endeavors to act "for itself". One would do better, instead of making use of these limited formulas, to investigate the grounds by which the working class in different situations is moved in one case to take a revolutionary stand and in another to remain completely passive. But the passivity also is a form of action and invalidates the formulation in question, which has to restrict itself to the comparatively meaningless ideological attitude of the workers in order to justify itself at all. In reality, the class is never "lifeless", tho it often lives on its inactivity. From the isolated standpoint of ideological maturity one may work with formulas, but such a procedure does not suffice for characterizing the whole class movement.

II

With the other sections of the article on the rise of a new labor movement we are, on the whole, in agreement, and we refrain from repeating the points there brought out, in which our own views are embraced. We are in accord with the dutch group when it states that the "movement of labor assumes in the workers' councils the form whereby it is in a position to master the social forces". And to us also "the growth of the mass move-

ment, is fashioned by way of the capitalist conditions themselves.

In order to make clear the development of class consciousness, the dutch comrades adopted the formulation of the class "in itself" and the class "for itself", concepts such as had been employed by Marx and others. The use of such distinguishing methodological formulas for facilitating the understanding of many-sided problems does not, however, do away with the many-sidedness itself. And, for that matter, we read further: "Naturally, there is no complete and unbridgeable opposition between the class 'in itself' and the class 'for itself'; In reality, however, there is not even an incomplete opposition of this nature. The class is at any time both 'in itself' and 'for itself'; it merely expresses itself differently in different situations and at the different stages of its development. Its possibilities and necessities change, and thereby its tasks and its attitudes. From the viewpoint of proletarian consciousness in the sense of ideology, the class exists only 'in itself' when it renounces the representing of its specific class interests and apathetically follows Capital. The indifference of the working class with respect to its real necessities surely does not abolish it as a class. But it has no obviously revolutionary character; it exists apparently not yet for itself, but for Capital. To the dutch comrades, it then exists "like any lifeless thing, hence passively." "As a living, active being" it exists, as they see it, only when it "comes into motion and to the consciousness of itself". H.W. in his criticism of this viewpoint (C.C. Vol. I; # 12) points out correctly that it is false to denote the working class as a lifeless thing. "For the working class even today is a quite 'active' force in the social development ... This 'activity' has a quite determinate, even tho conservative, effect in capitalist reality. A revolutionary passive class is not a "lifeless thing"; tho it is true that its activity is, in the first place, relatively weak and, secondly, goes in a direction which does not consciously lead to communist struggle. Unconsciously, however, even a reformist policy in which class interests are represented contributes a certain social propulsion and drives things forward." If one conceives class-consciousness not only as ideology, but still more as the workers' acting initiative, born of necessity, then the class always exists 'in itself' and 'for itself' at the same time. It was only because 'enlightened' workers stood over against the indifferent masses that the old labor movement was able, of course, to identify the conscious part with the entire class. But this difference of ideology does not mean much in the broader

ment has disappeared from the mind as well, or until it has reached also its subjective end. The passing of the old labor movement as a tradition and as a tilting at wind-mills depends on so many different and yet interdependent factors that the point of time for it can not be definitely fixed. Our only consolation on this point is the certainty of the objective untenability of those ideas and impossibility of objective retrogression, as well as the tempo of capitalist decline, which of course is no less rapid than the capitalist upswing. The momentum attained by the capitalist movement as a result of the previous development precludes for the further development any long and relatively static periods.

We further share the view of the dutch comrades regarding the reasons of the present impotence of the labor movement and regarding its decline by reason of this impotence. The old labor movement is not only no match for the power of capital, but has itself become a part and expression of this capitalist power. The capitalist class must be opposed by the class front of the proletariat. The organized labor movement was neither interested in the forming of a genuine class front nor, even if it had been so, would have been capable of such a thing. It constantly championed group interests, and it was only to such conflicts that the movement was organizationally adapted. The end of the old labor movement was necessarily involved with the capital concentration in the decline of capitalism. The class struggle against the capitalist system, and in its most radical form, has thus become the only objective possibility.

Even tho the source of reformism - the capitalist upswing - was dried up, and the capitalist decline mirrored only the unavoidable end of the reformist movement, it was still possible to live for a time on reformist propaganda. The possibility of organization without the possibility of reform gave rise also to the neo-reformism of post-war time, until fascism came to look upon the existence of even the most incompetent working-class organizations as burdensome and dangerous, and set them aside. The indirect subordination of the workers to the interests of Capital by means of reformism has been followed by the direct subordination thru fascism. So that one may no doubt say with the dutch comrades that the organized labor movement as hitherto existing has found its historical end. It can not be formed anew. The thing with which we are concerned, in connection with the coming revolutionary conflicts, is the movement of labor. This movement of labor, which already represents the class

an empty phrase, but inexorable necessity. Any deviation from this principle is a step toward the emasculation of the councils and thereby to putting obstacles in the way of the communist struggle.

As to whether we shall succeed, -- we are, of course, only a part of the working class, and without special interests, -- in putting our principle into practice in its pure form: that is a question by which the principle itself is not affected. One does not always attain the thing that he aims for. But because too many opposite forces work counter to the objectively possible goal -- forces which may succeed in turning the goal aside -- it is well for that very reason to hold unwaveringly to the maximal program. If by reason of the situation the councils are compelled to have resort to special measures not always in conformity with the final goal, which is not clear even to themselves, in order to exist at all, or if the councils fail to take proper account of the objective situation and fall back into a policy which must bring about their own end; that is regrettable, and will compel us also to flexibility and tactical manoeuvres which can not yet be foreseen. But for the very reason that these dangers have to be reckoned with, one is obliged, prior to their occurrence, and as long as possible, to stand all the more consistently for the maximal program and to fight for it. There are enough backward forces, and there is no need to help them to victory; the more concessions are made to them, the more backward they become. To use an expression of Liebknechts's, one must "strive for the impossible in order to make the possible possible." It is only when one renounces intrusion into the real struggle, because history goes other ways than one desires, that one has forfeited the name of revolutionist. What the dutch group has had to say on these questions is no doubt insufficient: how the class is capable of asserting itself, how it can fashion in councils the instrument of suppression which assures the council dictatorship, etc. (We too must refrain from going farther into these questions at this place, but shall deal with them in special articles.) Of one thing, however, we are assured; namely, that the arguments advanced by H.V. are only stop-gap affairs which bring the solution of the problem not a single step forward. His own answer to the question which he proposes is, as a matter of fact, merely a rechristening of old things which he had already regarded as out of the way. His proposals are nothing but new names for the old party conceptions, and the considerations by which they are supported must then likewise fall back upon the old arguments of the previous labor movement. Once more a clear communist program is objected to on

the ground that, to be sure, it is fine and lovely in theory, but that practice compels to watering it. Once more the existence of the middle strata, the backwardness of the farmers, etc., must be made to bear the blame for one's own inconsistency, tho in reality it is precisely because of the backwardness and enmity of these strata that the full measure of revolutionary consistency and unambiguity must be maintained. These groups can not be hoodwinked by means of a shrewd policy; their activity can only be prevented and, if necessary, combatted by force. The more the amount of resistance, the more unambiguously must the revolutionary program be represented. The first concession compels to a series of concessions; in the end there will be nothing left of the original design. When, as will undoubtedly be the case, concessions are forced upon the revolutionary movement, that is bad enough; but to make of these possibly necessary concessions a matter of principle and set them down in a program is equivalent to drawing back from the attempt at radical solutions and is a relapse into the old leadership policy which claims to be able thru "shrewdness" to fashion history after its own desires.

H.W.'s political councils by the side of the economic ones (why separate, anyhow, what practically is quite inseparable ?) are a restoration of the previous party policy which asserted that the party dictatorship realizes that of the masses and is identical with the dictatorship of the class. On this point we reject H.W. absolutely. His warning to the effect that if we reject his position we thereby "leave the field to the other organizations which for the moment are still capable of action" does not move us, since we have no desire to compete with these organizations for following among and control over the masses. We do not wish to persuade the masses to follow us, but to promote their independent movement. We don't say: "Follow us and not the others". We say: "Follow no one, but only your own interests and necessities." These necessities are also ours, so that the framework of the council movement suffices us for our own activity. Until the councils arise, we are of course compelled to form in separate groups, but this defect can not be converted into a quality. We must disappear as a special organization as soon as the masses shape for themselves their organization in the councils. Our place is in the councils, not by the side of them.

No doubt the disquisition of the dutch comrades regarding the work groups and their relation to the mass movements have to be supplemented. The present formulation of theirs on this point often has a painfully

idealistic flavor. But this defect can be remedied, and in no case can one make concessions here to H.W.'s conception.

III

In addition to the questions discussed above, the Brussels theses (C.C.Vol.I;No.11) brought still others up for consideration: the questions of centralism and of state-capitalist tendencies. The question of centralism had already been touched upon by H.W. in his critical remarks, and the article on the new labor movement is as a matter of fact weakened owing to inadequate treatment of this problem. The practical demands of the Brussels theses for more thorough organization of the work groups and illegal formations to the end of safeguarding them and making them more effectual, for the establishment of international connections and better coordination, for the working out of programmatic directives with a view to clarification and orientation in the interest of a more unified and rational procedure—such demands are likewise represented by us in the fullest measure. The criticism directed at them by the dutch group (C.C.,Vol.II;No.1), and which takes the form of an objection to the centralization necessarily involved in this coordination, comes to us as a complete surprise. All that we have been able to gather from the Brussels theses on this point are the simplest practical and obvious steps for the solution of the tasks with which we are faced. The sceptical "Aha! a new Fifth or Sixth International" on the part of the dutch group strikes us as uncalled for and having reference to other matters not referred to, for the Brussels theses themselves do not justify such an objection. The independence of the work groups is not abolished by bringing them organizationally together; rather, without such organization any work group is sooner or later doomed to death. Independence and centralization are opposites, but nevertheless unavoidable ones, and the marxist doctrine of the unity of opposites should alone suffice to indicate the uselessness of the "for or against" argument. Practically, the dutch group also can not help doing what the Brussels theses propose, unless it should quite renounce any truly revolutionary work at all. Its fear that the following of the Brussels proposals would lead to a dictatorship of the central apparatus over the groups, thus restricting their independence, is the fear of life itself. One can not reject things merely because they involve dangers; one must work in the conditions such as they are and try to carry thru in them and in spite of them.

With the advancing monopolization of world capitalism,

the permanent crisis and the period of world wars, the national peculiarities in relation to the proletarian class struggle in the different countries vanish. The internationalizing of capital and the world-wide over-accumulation create in all capitalist countries the same objectively revolutionary conditions. In the various capitalist countries the tasks and goals of the workers are not essentially distinguishable. In the United States one has, as a matter of fact, to take the same stand as in England or Germany: the overthrow of Capitalism and the establishment of Communism. Even in the U.S.A., already the possibility of any extensive reformist activity is no longer present. The most far-going demand has here also become the most real one. Thus is given the material basis of a unified class-struggle program for all developed capitalist countries. This program, limited like any other, can contain only the more general directives of principle. The only influence which it can exercise upon the various groups is by giving them the assurance that forces everywhere are working in our direction. Practically, it can not do other than assist each individual group in its development. Under the present conditions, it is simply out of the question for a new International to develop as a copy of the previous ones. The two surpassed Internationals were, in all their aspects, bound up with the presence of democracy in several countries and thus with a relative stability of capitalist economy. Under the present economic conditions, even formal democracy is an impossibility, so that such structures as the previous Internationals also become impossible. It is for this reason that Trotsky's attempts to resolve a new International into existence strikes one as so silly. Nor are we either in a position to form an International which could exercise upon the groups the influence feared by the Dutch comrades. The question of the council international is not at all acute; the matter at issue is the making use of the possible, however limited, international cooperation of our groups. An International does not depend on the resolution to form it, nor is it prevented by an objection. The council-international can, in our opinion, only be the result of a new world-revolutionary wave, and as things stand today there is no probability of such a wave until after the on-coming new world war has run its course. Or else the international crisis would have to deepen so fast as to paralyze in almost inconceivable measure the capacity for action on the part of Capital; but such an eventuality is less likely than an early war.

We share with the authors of the Brussels theses the desire for better international cooperation to the full extent possible, and the organizational and technical

matters involved seem to us so obvious that we think they can be left to the correspondence of the different groups. What holds for better cooperation on the international scale, holds with still more force for the work groups in the different countries. If by reason of objective impossibilities the old labor movement can not arise anew, so also the dangers with which it is associated can not turn up in the new labor movement. No doubt the new labor movement will have its own dangers and unpleasantnesses, but they will not be those of the past one. Such an absolute statement of the demand for independence of the groups as has been presented by the Dutch comrades is not only unmarxist, but practically also impossible. In reality, they too can not help binding together the national and international work groups and thus giving rise to certain central functions. And practically, even if there had been such a desire on the part of the Brussels conference, it would still have been incapable of transferring to the new labor movement the centralism of the previous one. The thing that is needed is to make centralization possible, without thereby preventing the independent development of the groups; and this is not only needed, but anything else in this line is out of the question. Any central apparatus as well as the individual group is prevented in very large measure, by reason of the present situations, from forming permanent instruments of power and repeating the nauseous activity of the previous labor movement.

IV

In its reply to the Brussels theses, the Dutch group speaks of two different points of departure by which the conceptions in question are differentiated. It holds that the Brussels theses are based exclusively on the actual problems of the German illegal movement, while its own conception is based on the more far-reaching, general attitude to the problems of communism as they have received expression in the previous publications of the Dutch group. In the view of this group, the Brussels theses merely reflect the momentary German practice, which has been willfully elevated to a general theory.

Well, one can have a theory for the daily practical struggle, and one can have a theory which takes into consideration longer spaces of time and broader problems. One can also have a theory which embraces both these points of view. The union of the narrower theory of the Brussels theses with the broader one of the Dutch group would do away with the dispute as to which of the two should be given greater importance. The one does not

contradict the other, but is part of the other. Apparently, however, the disquisitions contained in the Brussels theses are not rated by the Dutch group as theory at all, but as practical work presented which speaks for itself and nothing else. And then an attempt is made to demonstrate that without theory no proper practice is possible, as if this were all that was needed to dispose of the Brussels theses. Practice appears to the Dutch group not as the necessary counterpart of theory, but as a second-rate factor completely dependent on theory. But, anyhow, this has nothing further to do with Marxian dialectic, whose doctrine of the unity of opposites shows up the problem of the priority of theory or practice as idle chatter. Theory and practice, consciousness and necessity, are inseparable. Things can be changed with false consciousness as well or as badly as with correct consciousness (always within the limits of the social necessities), but one must cease to be human in order to practice without consciousness, without theory. The degree in which theory conforms with the practical needs of the class determines its value for the class, and under certain circumstances a self-limiting theory may have more practical value than one which tries to embrace in itself more than the direct necessities. And the choice between these theories is not a voluntary, but a compulsory one. Any theory has to proceed from the actual environment, and the greater the extent to which the theory can be reduced to the direct necessities, the greater its direct effect. This direct effect conditions more than the quality of the theory; it conditions also the life of those who do the theorizing. The circumstance that the theses of the Brussels conference sprang from the straight-jacket outlook of German fascism does not diminish their value. The reproach of the Dutch group is based on the still persisting social-democratic conception of the development of human consciousness. Just as the Social Democracy rested its hopes for socialism on the development of the social-democratic ideology, so the Dutch comrades hold the communist revolution and communism as possible only when a preponderant mass of the workers have more or less clearly "comprehended" their tasks and possibilities. Here also, consciousness, conceived as ideology, makes history; man first thinks, then he comprehends and then he acts. But such a conception is in contradiction to the actual historical process, and the senselessness of the thing is shown day after day in the fact that the masses don't comprehend and nevertheless in the last instance act correctly. The revolution is not brought about consciously, if we have reference to a consciousness such as it is today generally understood. The great number of errors in relation to the connection between history and class-consciousness result from transferring the laws of the

growth of consciousness in the individual onto the class problems. (We shall soon deal with this question thoroughly.) Class consciousness, however, is something different and is subject to other laws than is the consciousness of the individual. With the neglect of this difference, the Dutch group has been deprived of the very possibility of coming nearer to the solution of the problem. The mass of workers--regardless of the extent to which its class-consciousness (as ideology) is developed--comes into situations which compel it to action. Once it has acted, the new situation arising thereby brings forth its own consequences. Whether they will or not, the workers are compelled to ever more radical steps, and each of these steps compels to the further pursuit of a goal which conceptually is not at all or but faintly recognized. The struggle for mere existence compels the workers to revolutionary actions, these actions compel to the proletarian dictatorship, the dictatorship to the construction of communism. Each separate stage of the struggle forces out of itself the next one, or the very first stage ends in defeat, which may involve the death of the strugglers. Even the capitalist economy is ideologically conditioned by commodity fetishism, and production and distribution governed by a social relation, still a progressive unfolding of capitalism was nevertheless and precisely for that reason possible. The same social relation in which the revolution has to be accomplished precludes a conscious procedure on the part of the working masses, without for that reason precluding the revolution itself. If capitalism lives and develops "blindly", so also the revolution against capitalism can only come about in the same way. Any other conception not only violates historical materialism; it is in contradiction to all historical facts. To reckon upon a point of time at which the masses know in advance exactly what they have to do in an insurrection is nonsense. It is only with the success of their compulsory action that the possibility is formed for intellectually comprehending the new situation. The compulsion to action must be stronger than the influence of the capitalist ideology in order to make the latter ineffectual. There is by no means any contradiction involved in saying that the workers begin the revolution contrary to their own conviction. And it is only the course and result of the revolution by which the convictions are changed and the consciousness adapted to the new reality. (Attempts have been made to solve this problem of consciousness by means of Sorelian mysticism and the Leninist leadership principle. It is hardly necessary to say that we have nothing to do with these attempts.)

The Dutch group is no doubt right in characterizing as a remnant of social-democratic thinking the excessive importance attributed by the Brussels theses to the

state-capitalist tendencies of the present time, even tho an equal amount of social-democratic attitudes has been taken over by the dutch group itself in its own disquisitions with reference to the problem of the development of consciousness. To us also, the Brussels theses have overrated and falsely interpreted the "planned-economy tendencies" under capitalism. All the factors brought out by these theses are tendencies actually created thru monopolization and concentration but which work in a direction exactly opposite to that assumed in the theses. Even a state capitalism after the russian model calls for the revolutionary overturn, the abolition of the present possessing class. The matter that ought to be investigated is whether the russian example can be repeated in other countries or on a world scale; in other words, whether the coming revolutions might remain stuck in a state capitalism after the russian model. We do not regard this as possible, tho the grounds for our rejection of the idea shall not be given at this place. However, on the basis of the existing capitalism, it is precisely the "state-capitalist" tendencies and the attempts at "planned economy" which demonstrate with all clarity the impossibility of planned economy on the national as well as the international plane. It is only thru a revolutionary overturn and the setting aside of the present private-property relations that a state capitalism could merit consideration. The belief that the present-day capitalism could be converted into state capitalism is opposed to Marxism and to the real turn of events. The very factors brought out by the Brussels theses are an expression of the sharpening of the capitalist contradictions. In earlier numbers of the C.C. we have endeavored to prove that the present-day capitalism and planned economy exclude each other. We do not deny the existence of the capitalist tendencies pointed out by the Brussels conference, but we repeat that these tendencies are working in a direction exactly the opposite of that toward which their sponsors claim to be striving. Capitalist planning is the magnification of planlessness. This is the paradox in which reality is figured.

By way of summary, we may say that we approve (with the stated limitations) the article on "The Rise of a New Labor Movement". At the same time, however, we should like, with H.W., to see the principles there represented worked out into concrete, serviceable directives: a task in which we too shall participate. We reject, however, that part of H.W.'s disquisitions which we have denoted as a mere renegeation of the old party ideology with new terms. As regards the desire for the concretizing of the general principles expressed in the first mentioned article we can not, in relation to our own movement do otherwise than get behind the practical demands of the Brussels conference. Yet at the same

time we reject, with the dutch group, the conceptions developed by that conference with regard to the further tendencies of capitalist development. While in this respect, however, we see eye to eye with the dutch group, still we object most strenuously to the idealism expressed by that group with reference to the question of the development of class consciousness. We ourselves want an international welding together of all council-communist groups on the basis of a unified program.

The discussion to date must be continued until sufficient clarification has been attained. In subsequent numbers of the Council Correspondence, we shall publish our own proposals, and the questions here broached will be taken up in detail.

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