

its opposition to both war camps to break into heavy industry, now numbering in its ranks virtually 80% of the WP's membership. Unencumbered by loyalties, residual or otherwise, to any ruling class, the WP fought to revoke the wartime no-strike pledge, to remove labour from the War Labor Board, to push for equal pay and equal work against Jim Crow racism, both in industry and in the military, and for the immediate establishment of a US Labour Party. By 1943, the weekly paper of the Shachtmanites, *Labor Action*, carried its message with press runs of up to 40,000. Its consistent pursuit of working-class interests, including black and white unity, brought the WP into consistent loggerheads with the Stalinists and their supporters. The CP was distinguished among the labour movement factions by the virulent consistency of their support for the war. They supported the forcible confinement of Japanese-Americans, sabotaged the Double V campaign to end segregation and deployed police-like tenacity in persecuting worker-militants who threatened wartime production. These experiences stimulated a more profound understanding of Stalinism, and culminated in a unique form of anti-Stalinism theoretically consistent with the theory of bureaucratic collectivism.

The WP's anti-Stalinism represented a marked departure from Trotskyism, which held social-democratic reformism and Stalinism to be essentially symmetrical phenomena: the social-democrats were agents of their respective ruling classes and the Stalinists agents first of Russia and later of the various "workers' state 'oligarchies'." To Shachtman and his movement "none of the old designations of 'right', 'left', 'centrist' — applie[d] to Stalinism." This conclusion was an outgrowth of its developing appraisal of Stalinism as a distinct anti-working class society. In its reformism and its pro-Western defencism, social democracy reflects the conservative policies of the labour leadership, which for all its class collaborationism, is nevertheless still organically tied to the working class. Trade union bureaucracies and the labour party leaderships which rest on them can only secure and advance their bureaucratic privileges under those conditions in which bourgeois democracy is itself preserved, for these are the only circumstances conducive to the maintenance of an independent labour movement. That the social-democrats struggle to maintain an independent labour movement in an ineffectual and inconsistent manner, attempting to preserve democracy by stifling both totalitarian forces and revolution, was well understood and did not in the least detract from the general proposition.

The Stalinist parties, on the other hand, are the ideological agents, not of a conservative section of a working class movement, but of a social force whose interests are diametrically opposed to an independent workers' movement and whose triumph would be unattainable without the complete annihilation of the labour movement in all its forms. "Stalinism

is a reactionary, totalitarian, anti-bourgeois and anti-proletarian current in the labour movement but not of the labour movement..." These remain the standards against which any historical evaluation of the various national CPs must be measured.

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From this perspective, the WP oriented its day to day trade union work towards combining with progressive anti-Stalinists as well as conservative elements against the CP.

This by no means led it to endorse the government's anti-Communist witch hunts or loyalty oaths within the union movement. On the contrary, Shachtman held McCarthyism to be not only a threat to democracy but a potential harbinger of a more sweeping assault against the left. A labour movement able to oust Stalinism from its own ranks would be one fortified in struggle by a heightened democratic and class consciousness; imported from above

by the capitalist state and imposed out of fear for suppression of trade union rights, such anti-Communism would constitute a working-class debacle. The WP, to its abiding credit, exposed the vacillations of weak-kneed ex-radicals and liberals — the spiritual ancestors of today's neo-conservatives — in defence of the democratic rights of the Stalinists, despite having been on the receiving end of not a few CP frame-ups and violence in the CIO and elsewhere. Thus the Shachtmanites protested the conviction of the Stalinist Harry Bridges, protested the McCarran Act of 1950 under which Communists were sentenced, and defended university teachers being harassed and fired as subversives.

The expected working-class radicalisation failed to materialise at the termination of World War II. Indeed, the party failed to keep the workers recruited during the war, losing many in the course of just a few months after they succumbed to the grueling routines of party life. An attempted reunification with the SWP failed, having been scuttled by Cannon's concept of a monolithic party. In 1948 the WP cut its last links with the Fourth International over the Second World Congress's criminally inept position that the countries of Eastern Europe overtaken by Stalinism remained capitalist states; but that if the CPs proved capable of overturning capitalism, then Stalinism would have to be seen as revolutionary. This Shachtman argued would logically amount to saying that the International was unnecessary.

By 1949 the WP was half the size it had been coming out of the war. The revolutionary party perspective was abandoned and the WP, now renamed the Independent Socialist League identified itself as a more limited propaganda group, with its main task that of bringing the ideas of

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