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The trade unions in the present epoch cannot simply be the organs of democracy as they were in the epoch of free capitalism and they cannot any longer remain politically neutral, that is, limit themselves to serving the daily needs of the working class. They cannot any longer be anarchistic, i.e., ignore the decisive influence of the state on the life of peoples and classes. They can no longer be reformist, because the objective conditions leave no room for any serious and lasting reforms. The trade unions of our time can either serve as secondary instruments of imperialist capitalism for the subordination and disciplining of workers and for obstructing the revolution, or, on the contrary, the trade unions can become the instruments of the revolutionary movement of the proletariat.

—Leon Trotsky (*Fourth International*, February 1940)

IN THE previous chronological survey, we have mentioned only in passing the roles and policies of the various tendencies in union leadership. But they are of key importance, and must be examined in detail.

A leadership is developed by the labor movement on the basis of that movement's entire history. It is judged in the light of the particular union's immediate problems, to which it must be able to present a program giving correct answers. Under a democratic regime the correctness of those answers determines whether the leadership stands or falls. For it does not take long for the union members to find out whether the leaders' program is correct, because when it is not, the members are daily reminded by the decline in union conditions on the job.

Unions find it difficult to preserve complete democracy within

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their ranks. They are subject to all the forces of society, and especially the pressure of the employing class, exerted through all the social institutions that class controls: the government, schools, church, press and radio. etc. Often the employers intervene directly in the life of the union through paid agents who masquerade as union members. Union leaders with a limited program and no social understanding adapt themselves to this pressure, and to ensure their position they resort to bureaucratic methods.

Even a democratically elected leadership will degenerate into a bureaucracy during a period of reaction or isolation when the union is inactive. Only a general upsurge of the working class in revolt against intolerable working and living conditions, usually with the concomitant influx of new members into the union, can blast the bureaucracy out of its position of leadership.

Even a democratically elected leadership, if it indulges in adventurist schemes and fails to solve the immediate problems of the day, will be replaced by another leadership—more practical and usually more conservative.

There is no such thing as a movement without leaders.

The Trend of Maritime Leadership

The first seamen's union in America was organized by followers of Karl Marx. These pioneer representatives of socialism developed the militancy and international outlook of the union as far as was possible in the '80s of the last century. They were succeeded by Andrew Furuseth.

He struggled to form a brotherhood of all the seas and to free the seamen from the feudal laws which hampered the fight for better union conditions. But his lack of understanding of the nature of the government led him to support the First World War, in return for which, as we have seen, the government smashed his union.

Principally in reaction against this fatal policy of collaboration with the government, the seamen widely supported a new leadership that arose in the post-war period: that of the Industrial Workers of the World. The IWW practiced militant action. But militant action alone was not enough. And the IWW's philosophy, anarcho-syndicalism proved false. It could not adjust its tactics to the specific struggles of the seamen. Its inflexible philosophy repelled the majority of seamen. And above all, its "anti-state-ism," its anarchistic bias against working-class politics, paradoxically caused its following later to fall easy prey to capitalist politicians. Its Marine Transport Workers Union withered away.

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The Communist Party, when first founded, had the correct policy of organizing all workers into the established unions and fighting within them for union democracy and class-conscious militancy. But in maritime, before much more than a beginning had been made, the degeneration of the Stalin leadership, acting through the American party, sent it on a fatal series of unrealistic zigzags. In 1929, on an ultra-left tack, the CP tried to organize "red" trade unions; in maritime, the Marine Workers Industrial Union. Sectarian, it repelled the mass of workers; adventurist, it led to severe defeats; Stalinized, it strangled all internal democracy.

The 1934 strikes forged a new leadership, opposed to both the reactionary pie-card artists of the International Seamen's Union and the adventurist and bureaucratic Stalinists. It was based on class-conscious militants, and stemmed from all the previous militant currents. Partly from IWW tradition, partly from opposition to Stalinist policies, it called itself "anti-political." The Stalinists, now on an equally exaggerated right tack, made a new bid for leadership, principally in the East Coast NMU. Thus, since 1934 the seamen's movement has followed a divided development: one wing under the "anti-politicals," the other under the CP. The latter has continued its self-contradictory zigzags, under Kremlin orders, through the fake revolutionism of the Hitler-Stalin pact period, up to the present, when it is throwing away seamen's rights with both hands. The "anti-politicals," trying, with sound instinct, to maintain the union's independence, but unable, precisely because of their "anti-politics," to formulate the one program that would achieve that end, are reduced to maneuvers and purely defensive struggles which are visibly doomed to defeat.

Thus, the majority of seamen today have still to find the program that will lead them out of the deepening impasse. The cynical Stalinist leadership has openly demonstrated its class treachery; the groping "anti-political" leadership, the practical bankruptcy of its program. A new program is urgently needed. But to understand that program it is necessary to study in detail the errors of past and present leaderships and to learn from them.

The Socialists: First Steps

The American labor movement was first organized by radicals: socialists, anarchists. American seamen are deeply indebted to socialists for the founding and building of their first stable union, which expanded to become the Sailors Union of the Pacific. These socialists were members of the First International, the "Interna-

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tional Workingmen's Association" organized by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, founders of scientific socialism. It was they who saw the need for, and formed, the first maritime union; and their ideas enriched the thinking of the immediately subsequent leaders.

On March 4, 1885, after several abortive and unsuccessful attempts to organize a union to protect themselves against shipowners, crimps, boarding-house masters, and shanghaiing skippers, seamen on the West Coast were confronted with a slashing cut in their wages. A spontaneous protest and an unorganized walkout occurred in San Francisco when notice of the wage cut was posted. On March 5, seamen were angrily but leaderlessly milling around the waterfront when events took place which led to the founding of the Coast Seamen's Union. Here is the story, in the colorful words of a participating sailor, as recorded in Paul S. Taylor's *History of the Sailors Union of the Pacific*:

At about noon Sigismund Danielwicz, a member of the International Workmen's Association [First International], who had but lately returned from the Sandwich Islands [Hawaii], where he had been vigorously engaged in the labor struggle, chanced to pass by and inquired the cause of the excitement. He was told, and advised them to form a protective union and join hands with all other labor organizations in San Francisco. This they agreed to do. Mr. Danielwicz engaged to procure the help necessary to organize the seamen and agreed to have the men at a meeting to be held the next night on Folsom Street wharf.

The next night, accordingly, a tumultuous crowd of some three or four hundred sailors gathered under the canopy of the stars alone, on the Folsom St. Wharf around piles of lumber lying there. The night was pitch dark and the faces of the speakers could not be seen. Mr. Danielwicz had procured them, however, from the organizing headquarters of the International Workmen's Ass'n and the organizer in charge called for nominations for a chairman. Mr. George Thompson was pushed forward and ascended one of the lumber piles. B. B. Carter and Joseph Kelly, of the Steamshipmen's Protective Union [should read Steamshipmen's Protective Association], P. Ross, of the Sacramento Knights of Labor, and J.J. Martin, M. Schneider, Sigismund Danielwicz, Burnette G. Haskell, of the International, all addressed the assemblage and urged them to organize at once. Lists were hastily prepared and opened, and some two hundred members signed the roll. Most of them, however, were without money to pay an entrance fee and so the amount collected was comparatively small (222 names and \$34.60). Enough, however, was collected to justify the hiring of a hall for the next night and for doing the necessary printing. At twelve p.m. the tired committee had adjourned the meeting until the following night.

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At the March 7 meeting the seamen drew up a list of demands, hammered out a plan of action, and adopted a constitution. The following officers were elected: George Thompson, president; Ed. Andersen, J. D. Murray, Michael Sweeney, John Fitzpatrick, and J. D. Thomer, vice-presidents; Rasmus Nielsen, secretary; and as advisory committee from the International, P. Ross, B. G. Haskell, Martin Schneider, S. Danielwicz, and James J. Martin.

Here is the estimate of the conservative historian Taylor of the work of the socialists in the young union:

The members of the Socialist International Advisory Committee were active through the early years of the organization. Their influence for the good of the union, particularly that of Haskell and Von Hoffmeyer cannot be overestimated.

The start had been made. But the special status of servitude under which seamen operated made progress slow and difficult.

Andrew Furuseth: Personal Leadership

Andrew Furuseth's first great contribution to maritime unionism was his sharp perception that no economic progress was possible for seamen till they had thrown off the bonds of involuntary servitude. He knew that, before his ambition of an international seamen's union could be realized, the seamen would have to gain the legal status of free men. We have seen (pp. 64 ff.) how he turned his efforts in that direction and finally won. The Seamen's Act of 1915 was his crowning achievement. Furuseth was a practical organizer, and also possessed, under the influence of the socialist founders of the union, social vision such as characterized none of his associates in the AFL bureaucracy of his day.

Furuseth's leadership has been individualized here because he was an anomaly in the American labor movement. It is not surprising that seamen should have produced such a leader. Their conditions of employment were worse than those of any other industrial workers. They had a different legal status. Their lives were then not immediately affected by social changes in the nation. They were subject to international conditions in the sense that they often went from vessels of one nationality to another, living in different countries. And this is what determined the problems of their union. Furuseth gave a better answer to these problems than anyone else. He worked to build an international union of all seamen so that a man would be protected wherever he shipped. In the days before the First World War, the union standard had to prevail on ships of all flags to meet the needs of an off-shore sailor. And the immediate struggle then was for fair treatment, not only on board ship but

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before the law courts where a sailor always found himself if he tried to get free of the crimps, leave his ship, or even demand the food rations specified by law.

Hardly had the struggle for legal emancipation been won when World War I engulfed the world. As we have seen, Furuseth realized that the Seamen's Act only *made possible* the legal conditions for a fight on the economic field; the fight itself must then be waged by the unions. But the war interrupted that.

Here appeared Furuseth's fatal weakness: his failure to understand the nature of government, hence his misplaced trust in its benevolence. War is always a period of reaction. Sacrifices are demanded of the working class: they are sent on the battlefield to die and at home their democratic rights are taken away. The whole weight of government, demanding political support in the drive for regimentation, falls upon the unions. Under such pressure a trade-union leadership with no *political* program, unable to understand the specifically *war-time problems* of the union, must accept the answers dictated by the bosses through the megaphone of the government. Such was the tragedy of Furuseth. While union wages were "stabilized" and union control of manpower usurped by the U.S. Shipping Board, the shipowners' account books showed an increase in dividends of three hundred percent and after the war they were given control of a new fleet. How wrong these answers were for the union was proved by the 1921 strike. The union was smashed by the "benevolent" government with which it had cooperated. In return for sacrificing his political independence during the war, allowing the Shipping Board to set wages, overtime rates, and conditions of employment (the Sea Service Bureaus, Fink Halls), Furuseth was rewarded with—the broken pieces of the union he had worked so many years to build.

Following the defeat of the 1921 strike, the International Seamen's Union began to sink rapidly. More than 75,000 members quit the organization between 1919 and 1922, according to a report by Thomas A. Hanson, secretary-treasurer, at the January 1922 ISU convention in Chicago. Under the open-shop conditions from 1921 to 1934 the ISU hung together, but it underwent a long, slow process of degeneration. One of the most hide-bound and reactionary leaderships of any union in America developed within its officialdom. Such men as Paul Scharrenberg, Victor Olander, David Grange, Ivan Hunter and Gus Brown formed the core of the bureaucracy. They were content to live off the union treasury and collaborate with a few shipowners who tolerated them as an antidote to more aggressive and

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militant leaders and organizations.

Faced with destruction of its hiring halls, with the debasement of wages and working conditions on board ship, the ISU officialdom turned savagely upon all opposition from within and without the union. Hundreds were expelled for criticizing the officials. The IWW, by its advocacy of more militant policies, soon became a serious rival to the ISU whose reputation had been made lobbying in the capital rather than on the picket line.

The real significance of these developments Furuseth failed to understand. Angry and uncomprehending, that aging "idealist" finally stooped to the level of slander to crush the IWW. In the same attack he makes the unsubstantiated insinuation that they are shipowners' agents and "fingers" them for the cops and courts:

There are already quite a number of men who believe that the Wobblies are carried on the vessels by the shipowners for their own purposes; that they protect them not only on the vessels but in the courts as well. I do not charge that this is so, but it certainly looks like it. They are expelled and their names are published in our official minutes, yet they keep sailing. They are arrested and are out on bail; their trials are delayed. We offer to point them out but the offer is not accepted.*

Such was the tragic degeneration of the man who in his day had unquestionably been the greatest progressive force in maritime labor. The lesson is inescapable: unless a leader clearly sees the nature of problems, and can fearlessly forge the program which genuinely solves them, he is inevitably doomed by the historic process to either impotence or degeneration, or both.

The progressive role of the ISU was finished; new organizations arose in rivalry to it.

The IWW: Revolutionary Unionism

The next movement to win support among seamen was not stamped by the individuality of any one man, though it developed such great working-class leaders as William D. Haywood, Vincent St. John, and others. This was the Industrial Workers of the World.

Well before World War I, a large section of organized labor in America, building unions on an industrial basis and finding in anarcho-syndicalism an appealing social philosophy, developed the IWW as a dual movement to the AFL. Consisting primarily of migratory workers at first, and finding its main support in sections where

*Document published by the ISU, December 1921, and printed in the *Congressional Record*, February 1922. Quoted in *Exposed*, a pamphlet published by MTWIU No. 510 of the IWW.

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conditions were worst, it was repelled by the AFL's craft divisions and impatient of the Gompers school of class collaboration. The IWW did not limit itself to the narrow aims of the craft unionists, interested only in winning slight gains in pay or conditions for *their* members, often at the expense of unorganized workers. The fighting IWW was out to conquer the world.

The Wobblies—as they were called—not only conducted militant economic fights in the harvest fields and logging camps and mines for decent wages and living conditions; they also waged political struggles for free speech and the liberation of political prisoners. They had a fiery hatred for capitalist government, as part of the whole unjust system of capitalism. but, not understanding the nature of government, they confused government with capitalism, and hence blindly opposed *all* government. Their false reasoning led them to believe that since they were anti-capitalist they ought also to be anti-political.

But their anti-political prejudices were then filled with revolutionary intentions. They wanted to ignore the boss government. They wanted to “build a new society within the shell of the old.” They thought they could educate the working class in the principles of revolutionary industrial unionism through propaganda and example. They hoped to organize revolutionary unions so strong that the AFL bureaucrats would be left in their offices with nothing but their upholstered chairs and empty desks and no membership to pay their rent. The great goal of the Wobblies was to build the industrial union movement by patient education and organization until the day of the General Strike when workers would win emancipation by simply ignoring the whole superstructure of boss-class society. They reasoned as follows:

The real power belongs to those who control the economy in any society. Once the workers learn that “the working class and the employing class have nothing in common” and are organized in every industry so that they can exercise their control over the industry, power to regulate the whole of society automatically falls into the hands of the union executive. The politicians in the government find that they represent no one but the parasitical boss class and are therefore unable to rule. And if there is any doubt on this score the General Strike will convince them.

But the Wobs could no more destroy the boss-class political machine without organizing politically than they could organize the majority of American workers into revolutionary unions. It was their failure to understand this that eliminated the IWW as an im-

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portant factor in American labor. But the heroic fights of the Wobs in many tough strikes left a vivid memory in the minds of many workers and inspired a hope for the future.

World War I interrupted the IWW dream of a new world just as it sent Furuseth's “Dawn of a New Day” into the night of imperialist reaction. The war aroused the most conscious section of the working class throughout the world to the realities of government pressure. Unable to adapt their tactics to war-time conditions, the Wobblies could give no answers to the problems of the day. Their political blindness made them easy prey for the police. Most of the leaders of the movement were rounded up and thrown into jail and those who were not caught in the first drive went to the officials and turned themselves in. This was a noble gesture of defiance . . . but it decapitated the movement.

After the First World War the IWW never regained its old vigor nationally. A new revolutionary leadership, equally militant but with sounder policies, was growing up under the inspiration of the Russian Revolution. But the IWW was yet to make another serious bid for leadership of the seamen before it passed from the scene. After the 1921 strike it was under Wobbly leadership that the Pacific Coast seamen tried to build a new union, the Marine Transport Workers Industrial Union No. 510. It called a strike in 1923 and tied up the coastwise vessels in San Pedro. The strike won wage raises and established good working conditions; and following these gains the Wobblies enjoyed a brief period of growth. But the union was hounded by the police, many of the active militants of the 1923 strike were railroaded to San Quentin under the California Criminal Syndicalism Law, and, when the membership was called out in a political strike for the freedom of Tom Mooney, the union fell apart.

Wobbly militancy is proverbial and after the dissolution of the MTWIU, it had a beneficial effect: when the Wobblies entered the ISU in 1935, they played their part in sweeping the worst pie-card artists out of the West-Coast section of that bureaucrat-ridden union. But militancy alone is not enough; it must be combined with correct policies, both trade-union and political.

The whole IWW experience conclusively proved one thing: it is impossible to build purely revolutionary unions when the mass of workers is not revolutionary. Unions, as the broad economic organizations of the working class, must necessarily concern themselves with the immediate needs of the great mass of workers. When these immediate needs reach the stage where they cannot be satisfied other

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than by revolutionary policy, the unions themselves must become revolutionary in order to survive. Meanwhile more advanced workers who can foresee the need of revolutionary policy to solve the problems confronting their class can organize themselves into parties, groups, or clubs, to influence the development of their fellow-unionists. But unions cannot be built by imposing on them a philosophy which the workers in the industry are not ready to accept. It was basically because the IWW did not understand this that it failed as a mass organization.

It failed, furthermore, as a revolutionary movement as well. Its pat formula, "Hit them in the belly!" was interpreted to mean that the one place the workers not only can, but must, lick their oppressing employers is the "point of production," the economic field. But meanwhile the bosses were applying their own version of the formula in every field. While the bosses were putting in their blows in the factories and on the ships, in the legislative halls and executive mansions of government, by organized vigilante groups and veterans' societies—which sent many an IWW organizer staggering, along with the mass of workers—while the church, radio, movies, and the whole educational system were being systematically exploited to bamboozle and beat down the workers, the IWW had only the Day of the General Strike to hold out to them as a vague hope, coupled with the injunction: Don't organize anywhere but on the point of production!

The workers have been slow to organize in all fields, also on the point of production. They are only little by little lifting their shoulders from under the weight of the whole social oppression imposed upon them by their capitalist masters. In the process, they make many mistakes, but they make a good deal of headway too, as the development of the CIO in the last great wave of organization showed. Instead of learning from this process and pitching in to help labor lift itself to its full height wherever it stirs, what is left of the IWW is content to recite from its old outlived catechism about the General Strike and the Point of Production, and to condemn as hopeless slaves those workers who cannot see the light. This line of development has converted the remnants of the IWW into a reactionary sect.

Organizationally the IWW—with the perspective of the General Strike of all workers—rejects as a matter of principle the procedure of crowning successful struggles with the signing of written contracts to hold both parties to the terms of a strike settlement for a specified period of time. Since the General Strike is

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a long time coming and since striking workers want to hang on to their gains without having to begin the whole struggle anew every day, they have come to regard the written contract as a necessary evil, so to speak. The IWW has justified its sectarian principle on the grounds that "the working class has nothing in common with the capitalist class." These grounds are perfectly acceptable to the bosses, who, experience has shown, fight more than anything else against written agreements with unions. When they do give in to a signed contract, all sides regard it as a temporary truce. To reject such truces has always meant giving the bosses the advantage in the next struggle. Militant unions have even correctly considered the mere achievement of a written contract, without any other gains, as a victory, because it is a springboard for strengthening the organization and preparing it for greater struggles and ever more important gains. But despite all the experiences of the workers, the IWW, like the Bourbons, "has learned nothing and forgotten nothing."

Thus, the IWW's dogmas, which may be summed up as anarcho-syndicalism, make it more a political than an economic organization. But its politics also includes the dogma—or rather, the prejudice—against political action. It has become an increasing anomaly: a political group aspiring to economic struggle, it has masqueraded as an economic organization crusading against . . . politics.

Due to the lack of voluntary discipline, too, the Wobblies' anarchistic prejudices have led them to failure. In every dispute each Wobbly pursues the course which *he* thinks best, whether or not that advances the common cause. As a result, in given instances where their rivals held views even less popular among the broad layers of workers, those rivals have been able to outmaneuver and defeat the IWW. The best example is the Communist Party, which—despite its Stalinization and crazy zigzags which discredited it—finally eliminated the IWW completely as a force of importance among maritime workers.

Only the tradition of past militancy remains to the credit of the IWW on the waterfront today. Among hundreds of militants who passed through its ranks, none of its ideas has left its mark—except the original anti-political bias. This bias has remained, thanks above all else to that discreditable caricature of revolutionary politics presented by the Communist Party. But, in their reaction against Stalinism, these inheritors of the IWW have merely given lip-service to their anti-political ideology and instead have—objectively speaking—made their peace with capitalist politics.

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The Stalinists: Kremlin Weather-vanes

Revolutionary workers learned much from the first imperialist war. They learned not only from their own failures but also from the brilliant success of the Russian Bolsheviks. In the U.S., the most advanced elements of the IWW and the left wing of the Socialist Party joined to form the Communist Party, U.S. section of the Communist (Third) International organized by Lenin and Trotsky, co-leaders of the Russian Revolution. Its pattern was the Bolshevik Party.

The Bolsheviks were revolutionary, not reformist: i.e., while the European Social Democrats compromised, entering coalition cabinets, obtaining limited reforms, the Bolsheviks devoted themselves to the goal of completely transforming society. Not that they rejected reforms as such. But Lenin and his co-workers refused to accept reforms as adequate and permanent or, like the European Social Democrats, to believe—let alone lull the masses into belief—that such reforms would lead by steady parliamentary growth to socialism. To achieve the gigantic task of preparing for the showdown with the capitalists, Lenin organized the party as a party of advanced workers thoroughly educated in theory and practice and thoroughly disciplined to act in almost military formation, no matter what objective they faced. Combining the most democratic discussion of policy with iron discipline in action, Lenin forged in the party a human instrument that was the real vanguard of the working class. It is these qualities which made the Party unique, *the* required instrument for labor's emancipation. It was just such a Leninist instrument that Western European labor lacked in the turbulent post-war period—for which lack they, and all the workers of the world, have paid heavily.

The first task of the U.S. Communist Party—to build a mass revolutionary working-class party—presupposed strong influence among labor. One lesson had been learned, especially by those who had been in the IWW: it is fatal to divide the workers at the point of production into dual unions. Hence the CP set out to organize all workers, not into revolutionary unions, but into the established union movement of the day, the American Federation of Labor. But in the maritime industry, the CP had taken only the most elementary steps before the 1929 depression. By that time Stalinist degeneration had already set in; and since that time the Stalinists have played, in maritime as elsewhere, the shabbiest role of any group. How, it may fairly be asked, was such a catastrophic change possible?

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The first successful workers' revolution, that in Russia, was isolated. The young socialist soviet state was fighting for its life on 22 fronts, not only against the White armies, but also against British, American, French, and Japanese armies of intervention. Its already backward economy, shattered by the imperialist war, was almost annihilated by the subsequent civil war and imperialist interventions. Lenin often said that, without the socialist revolution in an advanced European country, the Soviet Union was doomed. What happened was not doom in the sharp form of capitalist conquest, but a slow bureaucratic decay. By 1929 history had recorded a further, a worldwide, recession in the working-class movement. The USSR's isolation, and the pressure of capitalism upon it—these are the conditions that give rise to a bureaucracy in any union, and the Soviet Union, though a union in a different and higher sense, was no exception. Stalin is the symbol of this degeneration. The parties of the Comintern throughout the world are the reflection of it. Under Stalin's regime, the Communist International was transformed into a mere border patrol, the various national sections into pawns in Stalin's game of power-politics with the imperialist nations, while Stalin followed the hopeless policy of "building socialism in a single country." If the world working class had to be sacrificed, "too bad": each national section of the Comintern became a Judas-goat.

Out of these revolutionary defeats and the ensuing isolation, then, there grew up a bureaucracy under Stalin which soon engulfed the Soviet state and the Communist International. At first the bureaucracy tried adjusting itself to capitalist post-war recovery and then wildly zigzagged to an ultra-left policy familiarly known as the "Third Period."* On the basis of this theory, the Stalinists immediately saw barricades on every street corner, predicted the revolution for next Thursday. By defining the Social Democrats as "social-fascists" and refusing any united front with them, they for example so divided the German working class that Hitler was able to walk between them to power—without encountering any *concerted* opposition from the then most powerful labor movement in the capitalist world.

In the union field, the new policy showed itself in the Stalinized

*Stalinism in the American labor movement divides itself, from 1928 on, into four sharply defined periods of mutually contradictory policy; 1) the "Third Period," 1928-35; 2) The Popular Front, 1935-1939; 3) Stalin-Hitler Pact, August 22, 1939 to June 22, 1941; 4) Anglo-U.S.-Soviet war alliance, 1941-4?. The program and tactics of the CP leadership in the maritime unions coincide in every particular with these four periods. Any pretences to the contrary are simply silly.

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CP's world-wide attempt in 1929 to organize "red" trade unions. On the U.S. waterfront, this took the form of the Marine Workers Industrial Union. In its early days, it succeeded in attracting some of the best maritime militants, who had revolted against the ISU labor-skates and could no longer see any hope in the IWW. But the MWIU not only suffered from the same sectarian diseases as the IWW; it also engaged, like all Stalinist "red" unions, in adventurist actions which gained publicity for the Stalinist leaders but exposed to severe defeats those who actually had to earn their living by going to sea.

The MWIU's rank-and-file militants, by dint of heroic work against brutal repression and great personal sacrifices, succeeded in winning a following for the "red" union among seamen and longshoremen, especially in Philadelphia and New Orleans. But the Stalinist leadership's adventurism soon destroyed all the achievements of these rank-and-file organizers. The MWIU was bureaucratized along the model of the CP itself: militants who were not ready to pay full allegiance to Stalin's line were eliminated from leadership and even expelled from the union. The basic core of militants who had built the union left in anger and disgust; some of them, confusing Stalinism with Marxism, became poisoned against revolutionary politics and turned either to the IWW and the ideas of syndicalism, or became converts to "practical" (read: opportunistic) trade-union methods.

By these methods of "mechanical control" the Stalinized CP succeeded in building up a sizable "fraction" of deluded followers who, thinking they were somehow doing their revolutionary duty, could be safely employed later on to execute whatever flipflops the CP "line" made on the waterfront. But as a mass movement, the MWIU was finished. It pulled a few sporadic strikes, directed some job-action beefs, made raids on the "dog-house" at 25 South Street, ran a "stew-pot," conducted a wrangling jurisdictional fight with the MTW No. 510, sold party literature on the waterfront, and recruited some sailors to the Communist Party.

But it never succeeded in organizing any appreciable section of the seamen. The methods used in the MWIU's brief history proved that a genuine union of seamen could not be built by a combination of sectarianism and adventurism peppered with bureaucratic mechanical control. Nevertheless, the CP had sunk some roots in the industry. Once it emerged from the "Third Period," it was in a position to bid for leadership in the resurgent seamen's movement.

The CP's new "line," beginning in 1935, was "Popular Frontism," which consisted essentially in throwing all labor's strength,

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electorally and every other way, to the support of the liberal capitalist parties. This reflected the pact signed that year between the Stalin bureaucracy and the bankrupt leaders of French democracy, who four years later capitulated to Hitler and now collaborate with him. In fact, the pact was known in France, after the negotiators, as the Laval-Stalin Pact. On the waterfront, the line found enthusiastic supporters in the top committee of the CP fraction.

The main base of the Stalinist influence in the maritime industry was on the Pacific Coast in the International Longshoremen's Association. During the 1934 strike, Harry Bridges had risen to power on the basis of a militant trade-union program which called for unification of the longshoremen on a coastwise basis, uniform working conditions in all ports, a master contract between the district union and the Pacific Coast employers rather than separate port agreements, and union hiring halls with rotary shipping of jobs. In the main the striking longshoremen won these demands. The Stalinists were prominent in the fight. Conditions before the strike had not permitted the CP to organize a dual "red" union for longshoremen. They had to function within the framework of the AFL. The healthy instincts of the mass movement buried the stupid infantile leftism of the party, while its "Third Period" militancy won fame for party members among the strikers.

It was a lucky break for Bridges and the new leadership of the Pacific Coast longshoremen that even during the 1934 strike the party was beginning to be prepared for the new line by the CP leaders. When the policy was officially announced about a year later, it was a ready-made international policy of class collaboration which was tailor-fitted to the personal aspirations of an ambitious trade-union leadership. Bridges had all the answers he needed.

Among the seamen a similar process had come about in a slightly different way. We have seen how the MWIU policy of dual unionism was wiped out when the SIU ran away with the NLRB elections. Thus on the Pacific Coast the Stalinists, under Sam Darcy, actually appeared to be anticipating the switch to the Popular Front policy.

Right away the Stalinists became respectable on the waterfront. They viewed with alarm the continued job action of sailors who wanted to extend some of the gains of the 1934 strike to the ships. They attempted to high-pressure the sailors' union back into the ISU, from which it had recently been expelled, on terms dictated by the reactionary ISU official, Ivan Hunter, who also helped engineer the expulsion. They used their influence in the Maritime Federation of the Pacific to justify moving "hot cargo" when ships that had been struck by a Stalinist-controlled rank-and-file group in New

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York sailed into San Francisco. Later they repudiated the whole idea of the sympathy strike which was the cornerstone upon which the Maritime Federation had been founded, the idea of its slogan "An Injury to One Is an Injury to All." The Federation lost all its meaning, became only a shell which the Stalinists packed with small craft unions outside the maritime industry, and finally fell apart. That great chance for a real industrial union in maritime was lost.

In this manner, the Stalinists separated, cut to ribbons, and scattered the fighting organizations that were forged in the heat of the 1934 strike struggle. While they conducted their campaign against the "super-militants" among the seamen, the Stalinists continued their organizational drive in the industry. Thousands of unorganized warehousemen in the Bay Area were chartered by the ILA. On the Atlantic Coast, the CP fraction, headed by Joseph Curran, organized the rank-and-file seamen against the dictatorship of the ISU officials, trading on the militancy of the West Coast seamen and the reputation of Bridges in the 1934 strike.

But this was already two years later, on the eve of the 1936-37 strike. Bridges' trade-union tactics had changed considerably since the days of '34. How much so is recorded by the San Francisco *Chronicle* on October 28—two days before the strike:

The waterfront crisis was investigated Monday by the San Francisco center, League of Women Voters, which staged a one-hour debate at the St. Francis Hotel between Harry Bridges, local ILA head, and C. Lyn Fox, representing T. G. Plant, Waterfront Employers Association president.

Some 250 fashionably dressed members of the center, who as members of the general public would be vitally affected by a shipping tieup, were present and applauded both speakers as they stressed their principal points.

The theory of the Popular Front galloped into full action. By the time the government was ready with its program for regimenting the seamen, the Stalinists, with an eye to World War II in which they expected U.S. imperialism to be on the same side of the military line-up as the Soviet Union, were in a position to do business with it. They openly supported this program. All they asked was an opportunity to be allowed to participate *officially* in promoting the government's plans. (And that was only their asking price; they are now doing the job for much less.) They wanted to reserve for themselves the same seats on the government maritime boards in this country that are occupied by the union bureaucrats in England.

The old officialdom of the International Seamen's Union aspired to the same role as the Stalinists. But the Stalinists were far more clever. They rode demagogically on the tides of working-class mili-

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tancy that surged in waves over America in the years 1934-38. When the government came out with the Fink Book idea, more than fifty thousand American seamen signed pledge cards never to accept it. As we have seen, the Stalinists helped distribute those pledge cards. The corrupt ISU officials were agitating in their feeble way for acceptance of the Book. Paul Scharrenberg, for the ISU, couldn't get much of an audience on the waterfront. But Bridges and Curran, for the Stalinists, talked—or rather, double-talked—to thousands of seamen. Once the Fink Book became law they proved they understood better than the old-style fakers how to attempt to put it over.

Even while rank-and-file Stalinists were distributing to seamen the pledge cards against the Fink Book, the Stalinist leadership in the longshoremen's union was, in the 1936 presidential campaign, ballyhooing a resolution in support of the re-election of precisely that chief executive, Roosevelt, whose administration was bringing out the Fink Book. After the Merchant Marine Act of 1936 became law, Bridges, speaking in Dreamland Auditorium in San Francisco to striking longshoremen and seamen, said flatly: "If refusing to take the Fink Book means continuing this strike, I say take the Book." Curran, who was making a bid for seamen's support and hoped to represent the Atlantic Coast, had to be a bit more careful. He wasn't, he intimated, exactly in favor of the Book, but he cautioned: "You can't strike against the government." And so a slogan was devised to get around the whole difficult problem—by giving the seamen the Fink Book. Right in the middle of the fight, when ships were being tied up on both coasts because seamen stood by their pledge to refuse the Book, the Stalinists came out with their fantastic slogan: "Take the Fink Book and burn it on the Capitol steps on May Day." They didn't bother to explain, of course, how thousands of seamen scattered on ships in every port of the world would manage to get their Fink Books back to Washington in time for the bonfire. At best it would have been little more than a token burning. And any seamen who would have been foolish enough to participate in a mere frivolity like this would only have had to apply for another Book for his trouble.

The Stalinist tactics followed the same demagogic pattern in the seamen's struggle to retain the union hiring hall, which in 1936-1937 the shipowners threw all their resources into a three-month struggle to destroy. When J. B. Weaver, director of the Bureau of Marine Inspection and Navigation, proposed the government hall, even Jack Lawrenson, secretary of the Strike Strategy Committee in New York and at all times one of the Stalinist inner circle, on December 9, 1936 stated the issue clearly enough:

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A fundamental of this strike is our demand for union control of the assignment of workers. Without it we would return to a system under which the employers blacklist union men at will and ruin any hope of keeping high the standards of seamen.

Again on April 1, 1938 (symbolic date!) when the government attempted to open its own hiring hall, and Captain Conway announced the policy

We are not concerned with the union views or affiliation of the men. We accept all applications whether or not they are union men, and if they are in a union we do not care whether it is the CIO or the AFL union.

—the Stalinists pulled the old Machiavellian maneuver again. First NMU pickets paraded before the government hall, branding it “a shipowners’ union-breaking agency.” A makeshift AFL seamen’s union attempting to operate in the interests of the shipowners was sending a few men into the government hall. These stragglers were no match for a militant picket line in defense of the union hiring hall. *But* precisely this served the Stalinists in the NMU as an excuse to pull their pickets off. It was as if they went into a strike and, because they found some finks, called off the strike. Their position then became this: Resolved: That the CIO . . . will support the Maritime Commission fink hall and see that only NMU men are shipped out. This was an open bid to the government to recognize them as the sole representatives of American seamen.

In the union fight against the government’s training-ship program the Stalinists played the same crafty game of surface opposition and secret support. In September 1938, when the “training ships” were established, the beach was crowded with unemployed seamen—men who had years of experience and training in their trade. The Stalinists joined the general union denunciation of this scheme. At one time they would attack the insincerity of the Commission and charge that since the hiring hall had opened at the same time the training program was inaugurated, it was obviously a method for flooding merchant ships with non-union recruits. The government training program fitted in with the government hiring hall as twin instruments for destroying union control of the job and thus the unions themselves. But the Stalinists soon began limiting their protests to the Maritime Commission to the demand that

the present regulation requiring that all men who apply for training shall have had two years’ sea experience . . . be a permanent ruling. We ask for this guarantee because the industry is already over-loaded, and if there is no restriction, this will serve as a means of flooding the industry, of discrimination against and final elimination of militant union men.

Needless to say, the Maritime Commission gave no such guarantee.

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Nevertheless, on October 7, 1938, less than one month after the training-ship program was launched, the capitalist press had a story: “The U.S. Maritime Commission today won approval of the National Maritime Union, majority union of American seamen, for its seamen-training program.” The matter had been arranged at a secret meeting between the officials of the NMU and Admiral Wiley of the Maritime Commission. NMU men began entering the government training schools. These first ones acted as a kind of advance guard. The leadership of the union kept up the pretense of cautious opposition to the program, all the while printing stooge “rank-and-file” letters in the *Pilot*, official organ of the union, praising one aspect or another of the training program and conditions at the school. By December 1938, the Stalinist leadership was ready to come out with an official endorsement. Admiral Wiley of the Maritime Commission hailed the turncoats as follows:

I have read with much interest the statement issued by the National Council of the National Maritime Union in which endorsement of the Commission’s training plans is recommended to its membership. . . . I express unreserved gratification over this action.

But the government was not ready to trust these provenly slippery agents of Stalin. Recognition never got beyond the verbal stage. No new posts were created for their union representatives on any of the government’s maritime boards. After stalling around for a month the Stalinists began applying some pressure. A CIO maritime committee was set up about the middle of January. It “demanded an immediate conference to work out a ‘sound’ program for conducting the Commission’s training schools for seamen.” But there was no place for the eager Stalinists in the government bureaucracy. The Maritime Commission demanded a thoroughly domesticated—a “loyal American”—union leadership to do business with. Furthermore, the Stalinists were unable to prove that they could control the still militant seamen. And there was too much opposition from other unions in the maritime field.

The Stalinists tried hard enough to prove their loyalty. They not only supported the program of the Maritime Commission right down the line, but they gave this support political motivation. At the August 1939 convention of the NMU, just before the outbreak of World War II, they passed the following resolution:

WHEREAS: Our Democracy demands the support of all democracies in the fight against fascist aggression;

RESOLVED: that we urge upon our Congress the introduction and passage of legislation that will distinguish the aggressor from its victims and will provide for the complete stoppage of all trade relations with such aggressors. . . .

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Within the month the Stalin-Hitler pact was signed. World War II began. All the plans of the Stalinists in the maritime unions received a temporary set-back. Curran & Co. did their best but, schooled as they were in the tactics of the comfortable Popular Front, they had a pretty rough time of it with the new pseudo-revolutionary line.

Soon after hostilities began in Europe, American imperialism began to search for a way to get around some of its own laws. The Neutrality Act, which had been so useful to the U.S. government in preventing aid from going to Loyalist Spain, now stood as a barrier to cooperation with imperialist England. So the NMU *Pilot*, with heavy heart, began an attack on the Maritime Commission for facilitating the circumvention of the Neutrality Act by permitting transfer of American ships to foreign flags. A pamphlet was hastily worked up against the Maritime Commission: *The Maritime Commission's Efforts to Crush Maritime Labor*. (It took the Stalin-Hitler pact for them to make this remarkable discovery.) The class-collaboration cant persisted, however: the pamphlet's conclusion was that

This incomplete record of connivance, cooperation and collusion between the U.S. Maritime Commission and the shipowners, whose activities the Commission is supposed to police, is sufficient in our opinion to warrant an immediate, thorough and open Congressional investigation.

In a word, this question should have been taken up with some of labor's "friends" in Washington.

When the shipowners began to hedge on the question of renewing the agreement with the NMU, Curran saw a chance for demagogic militancy. He wrote in the *Pilot*, November 10, 1939:

The shipowners see in the Maritime Commission an instrument for getting rid of the militant American seamen of the NMU and replacing them with foreign seamen who will be forced to accept whatever the operators give them. In this way, the operators will be able to restore conditions prior to the advent and growth of the NMU. . . . Any attempt on the part of the shipowners to even discuss the Union Hiring Hall must be fought even if it means fighting it on the picket line . . . if it becomes necessary, we will march on Washington. . . .

This last is a brilliant suggestion in the light of that earlier "March on Washington."

The transfer or sale of American ships during the first period of the war created an unemployment problem for seamen. Thousands were thrown on the beach to compete for the dwindling number of jobs. In 1936 there were 1,178 American flag ships operating in the nearby foreign, coastwise, and intercoastal trade. In 1940, ac-

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ording to the January 10, 1941 *Pilot*, this number had declined to 1,073; and the active seagoing personnel employed, from 57,300 to 52,124. No wonder the shipowners stalled when it came time to sign a new agreement.

When one of the Standard Oil tankers, the *Charles Pratt*, flying the Panamanian flag, was sunk off the west coast of Africa in December 1940, the *Pilot* of January 3, 1941, in an editorial pointed to the collusion between shipowners and the government:

American seamen are far more loyal to our country than, say, Standard Oil, which operates its ships under a dozen foreign flags. And yet, Standard Oil has profited immensely by this war—while men who man this company's oil tanks are dying by the dozens. But Standard Oil is not the only profiteer in this war. Every company that sells a ship to a foreign company, or switches its flag to evade the neutrality act, is just as bad. . . .

American shipowners are having things too much their own way in the Nation's Capitol today. Unfortunately, the Maritime Commission is nothing less than a shipowner's lobby, and the appointment of John J. Dempsey to the Commission is a plain indication that seamen can expect nothing but hard knocks from that body.

Very true—then, and today.

When the *New York Herald Tribune* openly admitted that "more than 800,000 barrels of American oil are being shipped monthly to Japan. . . . During 1940, an average of 2,000,000 barrels of oil were shipped monthly to Japan," an allegation proved despite the Maritime Commission's denial, the Stalinists hastened to publicize these facts in the *Pilot*, something they never would have done in the pre-Stalin-Hitler pact days.

In general, a pseudo-anti-war campaign was carried on in the pages of the *Pilot* in line with the general pacifist slogans that were appearing at that time in the *Daily Worker*. And during the Russo-Finnish War they carried on some agitation in behalf of the methods of Stalin in that adventure. But all this never got much beyond the pages of the union paper, and the boys were visibly uncomfortable with the new line.

There was a political gesture occasionally. The *Pilot* of February 14, 1941, reported that Curran had spoken against the Lend-Lease bill:

On behalf of the NMU and Greater New York Industrial Union Council, Joe Curran told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that American labor was opposed to the Lend Lease bill because it was Fascist and would help drive us into war.

Or some action was proposed. According to the *Pilot* of January 17,

A mass march on Washington to halt the headlong drive towards American participation in war proposed by field organizer Freder-

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ick N. Myers recently, has struck a responsive chord in persons in all parts of the nation.

The Stalinists' program for maritime labor during this period was formally summarized by them as follows in the *Pilot* of January 24, 1941:

1. Keep America Out of war.
2. Secure higher wages and better working conditions.
3. Fight for unemployment insurance.
4. Defeat the Dirksen Bill.
5. Prevent sale and transfer of American ships to foreign flags.
6. Increase manning scale.

This was a very uncomfortable period indeed for the Stalinist labor lieutenants. They did their level best to carry out the party line and at the same time keep one foot in Washington, hoping that a new turn in events would bring better days for them. On June 20, 1941, Joseph Curran's column in the *Pilot* contained the following:

The past two weeks have clearly demonstrated to the labor movement that the shipowners and industrialists have shifted the center of attack against the unions from the economic to the legislative front. With the aid of the owned and controlled radio and press, big business is utilizing the present hysterical war situation throughout the world to smokescreen its efforts to destroy the American labor movement.

Two days after this vague demagogy appeared, Hitler began his invasion of the Soviet Union. On the morning of June 22, the top fraction of the CP waterfront section was of course as much surprised as their masters in the Kremlin. But for these lackeys in the American seamen's movement Hitler's blow was not without its recompense. The military line-up was changed around the "right way" now. No more painful "principles"; no more sacrificial swimming against the boss-current. The contradictions they faced during the period of the Stalin-Hitler pact had been wiped out by a single order from Hitler. They allowed little time to pass before—"Full support of the present struggle of Great Britain and the Soviet Union against the forces of fascism was voted at a special membership meeting at Headquarters." A Statement of Policy was drawn up: "We recognize the present struggle of Great Britain and the Soviet Union against the forces of Fascism to be sincere and requiring the full support of liberty-loving people throughout the world."

But this was not put over on the membership of the National Maritime Union without opposition. The NMU represents the majority of seamen on the Atlantic Coast and has in its ranks veterans of all the strikes since 1934. Many of them have sailed on the Pacific Coast and gone through strikes there. They helped kick out the moribund ISU officialdom. They are no cream-puffs. And some of

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them went through the last war and remember how the government broke their union in 1921. Men like that are harder to kid. No sooner was the Statement of Policy read than the motion snapped back from the floor to non-concur. But a well-oiled machine in the leadership of a Stalinized union knows how to hammer down opposition. The *Pilot* of July 4, 1941, records how this was done. Roland Perry (deck dispatcher who has always been close to the Stalinists), speaking against the motion, opened with a championship sample of disingenuity, saying "that he was one 'interventionist and war monger' who had been in favor of giving aid to Britain; now he was in favor of giving aid to the Soviet Union because the nature of the war was the same and it had only spread." Patrolman Edward Robinson carried on the torch with the more official explanation for his support of the new policy: he

asserted that it would be foolish not to change policy since the spread of war to Russia had changed the nature of the War. It was a case of Nazism vs. Socialism: of a country which took from the workers everything against a country which gave the workers everything they produced.

But it would take more than this to convince the NMU membership that imperialist Britain was fighting a "Socialist war." At the union's Cleveland convention in July, Curran had to be cautious in his formulations. He justified the new policy in the following way: "The number 1 consideration of the NMU is the preservation of our unions and the democratic process. All the other problems depend on this." Then why support the war? "We are interested in only one thing, that they, as workers, are fighting the one foe that democracy has and that is Fascism." This talk about "preserving our unions and the democratic process" disappeared, however, from the speech Curran made at the ILO conference in London one year later (see p. 115). But the line is the same. Support the war! Henceforth when they met with the Admirals in Washington to work out "sound" policies for regimenting seamen, the Stalinists could go in with the happy feeling that here at last was a real meeting of comrades-in-arms. But the Admirals even today cannot work up much enthusiasm. In their eyes the Stalinists are always suspect. They do not understand the Stalinists, are suspicious of them; and the period of the Stalin-Hitler pact remains a memory which all the ingratiating services of the Stalinists have not served to erase.

Less than a week before America's formal entry into the war, Joseph Curran, speaking as president of the National Maritime Union on the *Town Hall of the Air* radio program, promised that American seamen would "make all sacrifices necessary" for the

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so-called defense program of the American capitalists and would "deliver the goods." He was actually tipping off the bosses that "the goods" which the Stalinist clique in the NMU would deliver when the Maritime Commission called upon them, was the unions themselves, hog-tied and helpless. Indeed, the Stalinists were so anxious that they didn't even wait for the nod, but actually began to anticipate the next step. We have seen how at the December conference which set up the MWEB, Frederick Myers presented a full-blown program for government regimentation. Curran was meanwhile doing his bit at a meeting where the general labor problem was discussed and where the War Labor Board was cooked. The editors of the *Pilot* on December 10, 1941, reported that

After hearing President Roosevelt tell them they were there "to help win this" war, representatives of Labor, Industry and Government convened together Wednesday to work out a program that will bar strikes and lockouts and speed up industrial output to meet the tremendous war needs of the U.S. and its allies.

It would appear from this that labor unions are now supposed to fight *against* strikes and *for* speed-up. Not very many members of the NMU had this idea when they were on the picket lines in the spring strike and again that winter of 1936-37.

But the Stalinists are not concerned now about the rank and file. They want to be recognized by the government as the official spokesmen for all American seamen, as their proposals to the government made clear. They even went so far as to make proposals whereby this can be "innocently" brought about.

After the War Shipping Administration requisitioned the merchant fleet, the leadership of the NMU attended the April conference in Washington where the other maritime unions were fighting against the government shipping pool. The NMU representatives introduced the following finky memorandum demanding the pool:

1. The problems of recruitment, discipline and the maintenance of efficiency and safety for merchant marine personnel are important and difficult at all times; in times of war, these problems are even more difficult and more important and the maintenance of the lifeline of our merchant marine for men and supplies becomes of paramount significance to our nation's safety and must be taken care of above all other considerations.

2. More specifically, these problems are those of:

- a. Availability of personnel including manning, training and promotion;
- b. Discipline, on board ship and in domestic and foreign ports;
- c. The systematic elimination of disloyal elements;
- d. The waiving by mutual agreement of such collective bargaining provisions as may be found to interfere with the war effort; and

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e. The improved facilities for safety at sea.

3. The experience of the other nations engaged in this war, particularly Great Britain, as well as a correct analysis of the problems outlined herein, demonstrate that the situation can only be made worse by elimination or disorganization of the existing administrative set-ups and the substitution of a military regime which must be created anew. The answer lies in the improvement of the existing administration by definite fixing of responsibility as well as authority in the handling of other personnel problems for the merchant marine.

4. It is therefore proposed that by Executive Order a Maritime Personnel Board be set up under the War Shipping Administrator in cooperation with the ship operators and the organizations representing the unlicensed and licensed personnel with the full responsibility and the necessary broad powers to effectuate such steps as are found necessary to accomplish the most efficient results in the operation of the vessels of the United States merchant marine. Such Maritime Personnel Board shall consist of a chairman and vice-chairman designated by the War Shipping Administrator, one representative each for the licensed personnel deck officers, licensed marine engineers, licensed radio operators, and the unlicensed personnel with alternates from such minority organizations as may be necessary who shall act whenever problems relating to them alone shall be considered, and an equal number of members from the ship operators with such alternates as may be deemed advisable by the War Shipping Administrator.*

Apparently fearing that there had been some doubt as to the sincerity of their capitulation in December, the Stalinists advocated the same program in April—but more concretely, leaving this time no room for doubt. Section 4 of their plan, calling for the establishment of a Maritime Personnel Board, took into account the opposition they knew they would encounter from the other maritime unions. On this proposed Board there is *only one* (1) representative of rank-and-file seamen—on a packed government board of at least ten members, all except this *one* representing licensed men, shipowners, and the government. This single representative selected would be of course an official of the NMU, probably Curran himself. Seamen belonging to any other unions would be represented by the "alternate for such minority organizations as may be necessary who shall act whenever problems relating to them alone shall be considered. . . ." This maneuver was typical of the way the Stalinists always demand an edge which they think will help them along in their bureaucratic maneuvers within the labor movement. But this invariably gives rise to a juris-

*Exact text in *Seafarers' Log*, April 15, 1942. The memo is also largely quoted from in a self-justificatory article in the April 10 *Pilot*.

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dictional flare-up; and that is just what the government had to avoid during this period.

The government wants loyal labor lieutenants in the ranks of seamen. The Stalinists are eminently qualified and are daily proving their ability. But the government is playing a cautious game with them because it does not know whether tomorrow the "second front" may not turn into an Anglo-American invasion of the Soviet Union. The government wants to insure its plans on the home front and especially in the maritime industry by finding, if possible, its own labor lieutenants who have no divided loyalties.

Thus, it is unlikely that the momentarily parallel policies of the two will merge in any permanent working partnership. Meanwhile, as long as the NMU is challenged for control of the waterfront by strong opposition unions, the government does not feel compelled to make special concessions to the Stalinist maritime leaders. While Moscow's military and diplomatic needs require it, the NMU's officialdom will give the government full cooperation even without concessions.

It is completely clear how reactionary and treacherous is the role of the Stalinist leadership, in maritime as elsewhere. But to be combated, it must be thoroughly understood. It must, for example, never be supposed that the NMU and the Bridges longshoremen's organization are just simply bureaucratized unions on the old style, which depend especially on craft prejudice, plus connivance with employers and the government, goon squads of paid hirelings, etc. The Stalinists, on the other hand, came to power in the course of militant membership revolts which bowled over such encrusted leaderships. Curran, Bridges and Co. hold their power basically by other methods, though supplemented by elements of the old. They, unlike the AFL fakers, have a solid mass base in the membership.

Since they are plainly such cynical sell-out artists, just where and how do they get this mass support?

First, by the prestige of the Russian Revolution. A tremendous influence was exerted on the minds of advanced workers everywhere when for the first time they saw workers in another country definitively defeat their ruling class and seize the power. In the successful repelling of imperialist attempts at intervention from 1917 to 1921 they witnessed constantly new evidence of the viability of revolution. Despite the evidences of bureaucratic degeneration, they compared the Soviet Five Year Plans' tremendous industrial achievements with the stagnation and unemployment enveloping the capitalist world. Finally they have been stirred again by the heroic and increasingly successful stand of the armed Soviet masses which has

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for the first time turned back the Nazi juggernaut's vaunted blitzkrieg. Ever new layers of advanced workers, fired by the USSR's achievements and thus being attracted to communism, have made the natural error of assuming that it is represented in their respective countries by the Communist Party. In this manner the very bureaucrats who have degraded the Revolution still parasitically batten on its world-wide prestige.

Second, by their repulsive caricature of fraction-technique. The sound and healthy tactic of forming within a union a group, usually called a "fraction," which by its greater clarity in policy, cohesion in action, and solidity in discipline, can form the core and nucleus around which workers who approve its policies can rally, is a tradition of the Bolshevik Party. The degenerated Stalinists, in their loathsome travesty of "fraction" work, have bureaucratized the disciplinary structure while subverting all its principles. Instead of applying policies worked out by democratic discussion of those members who best know the problems of the industry and have their fellow-workers' interests most at heart, the Stalinist fractions, under undiscussed (and undiscussable) orders from above, act as a mere camorra, trying to make the union follow every dizzy flipflop of the "party line" even if it breaks its back in the process, plundering treasuries, making the union vote resolutions on matters which by no conceivable stretch of the imagination remotely concern it, and generally converting the idea of a nucleus of specially advanced, class-conscious, and principled trade unionists into a mere pressure-gang. Finally, these methods have been supplemented by both the subtler and coarser methods of organized terror.

It is by this parasitism, living off the prestige of the October Revolution, and distorting Bolshevik organization methods, that the Stalinists have succeeded so well in "taking over," temporarily, many unions. A whole apparatus of pliable-conscienced leaders is created from above on the basis of subservience to orders from the Kremlin. Since the support of the state machinery of the Soviet Union assures them considerable security in their positions, Stalinist union leaders are not lightly shaken from their allegiance. They say and do one day what devastatingly contradicts their speeches and actions the day before, confident that the party machine will, somehow, sometime, iron out all their embarrassments. Thus, as long as Stalin and Co. remain in power in Moscow, Bridges, Curran and Co. can be expected to keep up their cynical zigzagging along the CP line.

Against the Stalinist bureaucracy, only one method is, in the last analysis, effective: the *revolutionary* struggle against Stalinism, a struggle that would preserve the heritage of the Russian

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Revolution and of the Bolshevik Party that led it. In the trade unions, that means a struggle conducted on a militant program and led by a revolutionary party which can organize the fight not only against government regimentation but also against Stalinist treachery. Against the Stalinists' repulsive deformation of Bolshevik organization methods, the anti-politicals, like the IWW before them, prove ineffectual. Militant seamen will eventually have to revive *genuine* Bolshevik organization methods coupled with the one program which alone can solve the present deepening problems.

The "Anti-Politicals": Blind-Alley Militancy

In 1934, utilizing the organizational structure of the ISU to win their strike, the new young militants replaced the old bureaucracy by a new and militant leadership. This leadership called itself "anti-political," not only because it drew on the IWW heritage, but also because it developed in opposition to the Stalinists.

Strong opposition to the CP's class-collaboration policies found a voice in the Sailors Union of the Pacific as early as 1935. After the 1934 strike, West Coast seamen were working under the provisions of the vaguely worded Arbitration Award. They had no signed contract with the shipowners. They wanted to extend the gains of the 1934 strike through "job action." This meant that every ship's crew elected its own delegate and decided what changes in conditions were necessary on that particular ship. When the ship came to port, if the demands of the crew were not granted, all hands quit. The union was never able to find replacements until some adjustment of the grievances was made. In this manner overtime pay was won for all work after 5 p.m. and before 8 in the morning, various types of work were classified as overtime, better food came aboard, crew quarters were altered and improved. This action worked well on the off-shore ships. Through job action sailors won most of the conditions they enjoy today. But when this tactic was applied to the whole steamschooner fleet in the coastwise lumber trade, it precipitated a strike. On these vessels, the sailors work cargo. They demanded a six-hour day, the same demand longshoremen had just won. Job action was not a tactic suited to such a demand. The steamschooner operators simply tied up the fleet. Bridges opposed the strike on the grounds that it jeopardized the gains of the longshoremen. Harry Lundeberg, sailor, and at that time president of the newly formed Maritime Federation of the Pacific, became the spokesman for the seamen.

On the surface, this flare-up between the two Pacific Coast mari-

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time leaders appears merely as a dispute over the tactical question of job action—when and how to apply it. But it involved much more than that. It was really a question of two conflicting political theories. Bridges, guided by the CP and carrying an umbrella of pseudo-revolutionary phraseology, had set out on the road of class collaboration. Lundeberg, borrowing from the heritage of the IWW, was trying to work out a militant opposition program to advance the gains of the Sailors Union of the Pacific.

Lundeberg today remains the chief spokesman for the maritime opposition movement against Stalinist sell-out tactics led by the Sailors Union of the Pacific and the Seafarers International Union. The Stalinists discredit working-class politics. And the hatred of the "anti-politicals" for the Stalinists is so intense that they are often blinded to the bigger issues. But the main basis for this opposition is the distrust for government that seamen have acquired through twenty years' experience with government agencies. The SUP-SIU fight against the government on all the main issues—Fink Book, government hiring hall and training-ship program—has been in line with the best tradition of the seamen's movement. An element in this tradition is a fear of parliamentary politics. Seamen have learned that they can win concessions on the picket line but when they have sent their representatives to Washington they come out at best with some kind of compromise proposal.

The Lundeberg leadership in these AFL unions has played up this fear and developed it into a principle which they call "anti-politics." But their professed "anti-political" principles do not prevent them from indulging in politics. During the Russo-Finnish War, for instance, they went all out for "poor little bleeding Finland." That is a good indication of their political "understanding."

In the fight against the government for preservation of the union they have been on more familiar ground. When the threat of the Fink Book hung like a pall over the 1936-37 strike, we have seen how Joseph Curran on the East Coast led the rank-and-file "sympathy" strikers away from the center of strike action in a "march on Washington," then led them straggling back to a meeting in New York where their three months old "sympathy" strike was called off. At that meeting Curran announced that this "action of the seamen tonight demonstrates their sincere effort to cooperate with the government in a solution of our grievances." This looked crazy to the "anti-politicals" on the Coast who had a solid strike, and who did not fully understand what the Stalinists were up to. They soon learned.

The pay-off came January 20, 1937. On that day Curran an-

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nounced: "We favor the provision that seamen must qualify for certificates of efficiency and that we are ready to participate in a nation-wide poll of seamen on the provision that we must carry continuous discharge books." From the Sailors Union of the Pacific came a telegram to Washington: "There will be no settlement of the present maritime strike if the men have to return to work under the provisions of the Copeland Bill." Here appears a basic difference in trade-union policy. Curran would take the fight against the Fink Book out of the hands of the seamen and place it in the hands of anyone who would conduct a poll—presumably the government. Lundeberg, on the other hand, relied completely upon the organized power of the seamen. The shipowners on the Pacific Coast signed up with the union before any attempt was made by the government to enforce the new law.

On February 11, U.S. Shipping Commissioner Daly boarded the American-Hawaiian ship *Columbian* in New York harbor and tried to give out Continuous Discharge Books to the West Coast crew. This crew, not taken in by the finky talk that "you can't strike against the government," refused to accept the Books. The ship was tied up when the Commissioner refused her clearance papers. Similar action occurred on a number of other ships. But the seamen were not solidly enough organized at that time to smash the Fink Book threat by themselves. A compromise formula was worked out in Washington whereby seamen got the certificate of identification and Congress revised the Merchant Marine Act to make the Book optional. The Lundeberg leadership had to agree to this formula. Curran, of course, was more than willing.

The same difference in trade-union policies was apparent in the fight against the government hiring halls. When every marine union representing unlicensed seamen, with the single exception of the National Maritime Union, was picketing the government fink hall at 45 Broadway, New York City, the Stalinists in the NMU were asking for "guarantees" before they joined the picket line. They stated that if the "AFL-Sailors Union, through their contact with the I.L.A. would refuse to work any ship manned by a crew shipped through these [Commission's] hiring halls, that the NMU would be 100% in favor of throwing a picket line around the Maritime Commission at this time." Until then the Stalinists ordered seamen to "pack the fink hall."

Picketing was the only way Lundeberg and his group knew of dealing with the fink halls. Curran had a different proposal: "Put pressure on the National Labor Relations Board to decide *if* the men on Commission ships are entitled to designate a union as their

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collective bargaining agency." The same government that had launched the union-busting campaign was to decide whether crews on government-operated ships were entitled to union representation. This, to the mind of the Lundeberg group, represented "politics." It was nothing more than an attempted maneuver to have the NMU certified by the National Labor Relations Board as the sole collective bargaining agent for seamen on all government-operated ships.

The "anti-politicals" ran up against the same difficult problem in fighting the government's training-ship program. Their answer was Boycott. And as long as the union controlled the hiring hall and conditions in the industry remained unchanged, this was a pretty effective weapon. There were few ships on which the government could send its training-school graduates: Army transports, tankers that were still unorganized, and freighters such as the fleet that the Isthmian Line still operates under open-shop conditions. But there was not room here for all the young men that would be turned out of the schools. With the Stalinists supporting the training program, however, the government was given a chance to get its schools well established even as early as 1938 when there was still a great deal of unemployment in the maritime industry. With the broadening of hostilities in Europe, shipping boomed. Even though the Neutrality Act kept the U.S. flag off many American ships running into war zones, the transfer of the ships to foreign registry enabled them to sail to most ports of the world. Industry ashore began to take up some of the slack; new ships came down the ways; the Neutrality Act was repealed.

This happened during the period of the Stalin-Hitler pact. And the "anti-politicals," who more often than not choose their politics by sheer opposition to the Stalinists, began to take an openly pro-war position. All of the unions were then fighting for a War Bonus. Even then these questions were settled in Washington. Lundeberg had been there negotiating for a higher bonus rate. In arguing his point he made mention of the dangers seamen face under war-time conditions but added that sailors would man the ships. The boss press gleefully broadcast his statement:

We know the dangers . . . it was tough in the last war, but it's worse now. Then we had only submarines and mines; now we have dive bombers.

Sailors in battleships have a certain amount of protection; so do soldiers in battle. Merchant seamen have no protection at all except by convoys and sometimes those work and sometimes they don't.

We manned ships without restriction in the last war. We're ready to do it again.

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This capitulatory statement was joyfully seized on by the Stalinists inside the NMU who were then rattling along with their pseudo-revolutionary anti-war line. Their comment was: "Lundeberg may be 'ready to do it again' from his office, but the seamen aren't."* The great commotion then created by the demagogic Stalinists looks a little comic when contrasted with their present slogan: "Keep 'em sailing."

Soon after this it became apparent to everyone that there would be a shortage of seamen. This was what the Maritime Commission had been preparing for. The Stalinists had foreseen this development, but they were unable to carry out their former policy in full support of the government's training-ship program because of the Stalin-Hitler pact. The tactic of the boycott adopted by the "anti-politicals" had not taken any of this into account.

Still trying to protect itself against the flood of government-trained school boys and in an effort to supply young men to the union, the Sailors Union of the Pacific opened its own training school in seamanship. The union school made a very modest and late beginning in 1942 in San Francisco. One floor of the union hall at 59 Clay Street was given over to it. During the first year it has turned out about 500 skilled seamen. The training given by the union is far better and more practical than the government's course. But while the Sailors Union trained 500 seamen, the government schools were turning out thousands. The SUP school has demonstrated that the union is the most capable agency for training young men for the sea; but it has equally demonstrated that the union, with its limited resources, cannot hope to *compete* with the government's vast training program.

We have seen that the whole struggle for preservation of the union since 1936 has been a fight against the government. The above brief outline of the "anti-politicals'" measures indicates that the trade-union tactics borrowed from the arsenal of syndicalism are not enough to win that fight, especially now. The Sailors Union of the Pacific has used all the weapons that pure and simple trade unionism has at its command: job action, strike, boycott. Lundeberg has attempted to enlist the support of other sections of the labor movement to aid the seamen. But the government's basic program remains unchanged, constantly exercising more and more control over the life of the maritime unions.

A successful fight against government regimentation requires more than a limited trade-union opposition to one government board

**Pilot*, May 16, 1941.

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or a group of government officials. Yet this is the limitation the "anti-politicals" place upon themselves. This was one of the greatest weaknesses of the Industrial Workers of the World.

Just as it's harder to win a strike against an employers' association than against one isolated outfit, so it is harder to defeat the government which represents the entire boss class. All the methods used against the employers on the economic field must be used by the union in a fight against the government, but augmented and given meaning by other methods—political methods which expose and challenge the entire state apparatus. A strike against the government on some particular issue such as the Fink Book, the hiring hall or the training ship may succeed, but only for the moment. It does not win any substantial gains for the union membership; the fight has been primarily a negative, a defensive, one. *It is a political strike without a political program.*

When the government is dealing with what it believes is a fairly reliable union leadership, some government agent with a reputation of fair dealing will say to a trade-union official: In preparation for war we must regiment this industry. We have got to protect the nation against the uncontrollables and radicals and so we have to introduce these measures, which at first may appear to be anti-union but they really are not because we are soliciting your cooperation. Right away the politically naive union official begins to put his mind on these problems of the government, forgetting about the union's problems. He cannot consider the union problems without a program for the union which takes into account all the big issues of the day—and especially the war. But this important detail of contemporary life the "anti-politicals" leave to the discretion and decision of the boss.

Even the most conservative AFL officials have tried to guard the independence of the trade-union movement. Even Gompers always insisted that the government deal through him in all questions of labor policy. This attitude always betrays a distrust of the government. Only here the distrust was coupled with a general support of capitalism. The revolutionary content of the IWW philosophy has dropped out of the anti-political prejudices of the Lundeberg group; only the distrust of the government remains. But there is no way to escape. Whether any union leadership "believes in politics" or not, the government forces it willy-nilly to face political questions. The *immediate* answer to these questions is not found at the point of production. It is necessary for the workers to fight the boss not only on the economic field but in every sphere of social life, and especially in politics.

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The Stalinists understand this. So do the labor-skates of the Green and Murray stripe. The crooked salesmen for Stalin's foreign policy have their own brand of politics. People like Green and Murray play a smaller game, collaborating with the government at home in exchange for whatever small concessions the boss can afford. Because they are labor leaders the government is forced to enlist their aid in its drive to regiment the organized workers they control. These "leaders" would naturally prefer to keep labor organizations free from government interference. But today the one big demand of the government is just that: direct control over the unions. The present tendency of the labor bureaucracy is to go into the government apparatus.

The "anti-politicals" were primarily concerned with keeping their unions intact during the period of the war. They tried to do this by dodging a head-on fight with the government. No sooner was war declared than an agents' conference was called by officials of the Seafarers International Union for December 11 and 12. This conference passed a series of resolutions which were submitted to the membership for approval. This action, according to the *Log* for December 23, 1941, purported to "prepare the SIU for its role in the all-out war against the Axis." Part of this preparation was the following:

RESOLVED: That, as individuals, and collectively as the membership of the Seafarers' International Union of North America, Atlantic & Gulf District, an organization representing true American seamen, we unequivocally give our government, and those upon whose shoulders are placed the responsibilities of the conduct of this war, our full support and cooperation in order that our nation, our freedom and our democracy will be preserved through total victory in this war.

That is a pretty complete endorsement. They certainly appeared determined not to be outdone by the Stalinists. And, just to prove that they meant business, they handed over \$25,000 of the union's funds to buy war bonds. But that was not enough to satisfy the Maritime Commission. It is not soliciting patriotic speeches nor is it in the business of selling war bonds. Its special task, among others, is to regiment the personnel of the American merchant marine.

The "anti-politicals" had endorsed the war effort of the American boss. It is impossible for anyone to pretend that that is not a *political* act. No sooner had the SIU agents adjourned their conference than they were called into conference by the Commission. This was the December conference at which the Maritime War Emergency Board was set up, and where the Stalinists introduced their first proposal in complete conformity with the Maritime Com-

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mission's general program. (See pp. 109-110.) The "anti-politicals," shunning politics, had no proposal of their own to offer. As often happens, they formulated a program on the basis of their criticisms of the Stalinists. The criticisms were valid enough.

John Hawks and M. D. Biggs for the SIU dug the rotten heart out of the NMU proposal. This proposal, they correctly said,

would have taken away—FIRST—"OUR HIRING HALLS" as they [the Stalinists] state in their proposal, "among other things the board may wish to conduct an inventory of facilities and PERSONNEL AND RECOMMEND THEIR ALLOCATION." This would mean that all seamen, regardless of affiliation would be forced to register and ship through a central hiring hall in any port where the Board may designate. This is exactly the same as the old FINK HALL and is part of the finky program that the Maritime Commission has been trying to put over on the seamen for the past five years. SECOND—"IT WOULD HAVE TAKEN AWAY ALL OF OUR BARGAINING RIGHTS AND VOIDED EVERY AGREEMENT WE HAVE IN EXISTENCE TODAY FOR THE DURATION OF THE WAR." In other words this Board would have been invested with the power to decide any and ALL PROBLEMS in the maritime industry which means the setting of wages, overtime rate (if any), hours of labor, and living conditions aboard all American vessels. THIRD—"IT WOULD HAVE RAMMED THE COPELAND FINK BOOK DOWN THE THROATS OF ALL AMERICAN SEAMEN IN THE DISGUISE OF A PASSPORT." Our Unions have already been approached by certain individuals on the question of listing the service of each Seaman on the back of our Certificates which is nothing but a back door entrance to the Copeland Fink Book so we are prepared for this one and killed it before they had the chance to discuss the question. This is another one of the Maritime Commission's ideas which they have been trying to put over on the Seamen for a good many years and if they had been successful here the Seamen would have never gotten rid of the FINK BOOK again.

In other words, the SIU and SUP blocked every attempt made by the NMU and the Maritime Commission to put over the Maritime Commission program of FINK HALLS, FINK BOOKS AND FINK TRAINING SCHOOLS which they have tried so desperately to put over during the past five years. We demanded that our HIRING HALLS, COLLECTIVE BARGAINING RIGHTS, THE RIGHT TO MAINTAIN OUR IDENTIFICATION CERTIFICATES RATHER THAN THE FINK BOOK AND THE RIGHT TO SUE FOR DAMAGES WHEN INJURED ON BOARD A VESSEL UNDER THE JONES ACT, be respected before we would consider giving up our right to strike for the duration of the war. Our demands were granted as well as our proposal of setting up the Board instead of the finky proposal submitted by the NMU and backed by the Maritime Commission and the shipowners.

The Board as set up by our proposal is practically the same as

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the procedure laid out for settling disputes in all of our agreements in existence today, and can handle absolutely nothing but the questions of War Areas, War Bonus, and War Risk Insurance.*

The "anti-politicals" were 100% correct in their criticism of the Stalinist proposal and in their demand to retain the independence of their unions. But because of their all-out political support of the war, they were forced to give up the only weapon they have for *guaranteeing* the independence of their unions. In protesting their loyalty they said to the government, "We are not going to delay any ships, we are not going to strike any ships, but we want to retain the rights we have gained through the efforts of the United States Government [??!!] and our own efforts in the past. . . ." Here they apparently felt it necessary to blow a little smoke up the sleeve of the government. But the important thing is that they agreed not to exercise the right to strike in exchange for an ambiguous promise from one government agency.

How little this promise meant became clear four months later when another government agency operating under the Maritime Commission, the War Shipping Administration, requisitioned the merchant fleet and issued its infamous Administrative Order governing personnel. This was the Order that provided for a government-controlled shipping pool. The shock of this was a little too much even for the patriotism of the "anti-politicals." These pure and simple trade unionists, within the confines of their political limitations, do the best they can to protect the union. They were determined not to be governed by this WSA Administrative Order. The government had to back down. Another "statement of principles" similar to the one drawn up in December and signed by all unions except the NMU with the Maritime War Emergency Board was signed between the WSA and the same unions. Here once again the government chiseled a little bit more. Besides reaffirming that "Without waiving the right to strike, the unions hereby give firm assurance and guarantee, that the exercise of this right will be absolutely withheld for the duration of the war," they also agreed to "elimination of crews' mass meetings, crews' committees and other similar meetings or groups aboard ship. However, one man in each department will be recognized as the spokesman for that department, but all disputes shall be settled only upon termination of voyage in port where shipping articles are closed."

The important gain made by the unions in all these maneuvers has been a recognition by the government of the union hiring hall, but only as it operates under provisions of signed agreements be-

**Seafarers' Log*, December 23, 1941.

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tween the unions and the shipowners. Ships operated directly under the control of government agencies such as the Army or Navy do not recognize the union. And the War Shipping Administration has its own shipping pool for all ships not under union contract. Besides this a recent administrative order makes it impossible for an inexperienced man to get his seaman's Certificate of Identification without attending the government training school. Those young men who attend the schools and do not register at the pool are reported to their local draft boards. In this manner the Maritime Commission is gradually choking the union's supply of recruits at the same time that they whittle away at union conditions.

The "anti-politicals" have had to find political support in their efforts to retain the independence of the union. They could not find it in the CIO because that section of American labor in the maritime industry is dominated by the Stalinists. So they turned to the AFL. Thus this "anti-politics" policy reduces the whole choice of seamen's political attitude to one between the AFL Executive Board's crude class-collaboration program and the Stalinists' streamlined support of Roosevelt and the war—that is, between Tweedledee and Tweedledum. This is the kind of labor politics that leads in the end to success for the Maritime Commission's anti-labor program.

Thus the "anti-political" leadership has blinded itself to the need of combatting the increasingly political attack of the capitalists against the seamen by means of a corresponding counter-program of political action. On the other hand, against Stalinism, it has allowed its anti-Stalinism to drive it into dangerous dependence on the capitalist politicians who have now and then been in conflict with Moscow's hirelings. Anxious to preserve their own and the unions' independence, the "anti-politicals" have in actual fact fallen more and more into dependence on the government for compromises permitting their union a continued, if insecure, existence.

Many "anti-politicals" sincerely desire to maintain and strengthen the seamen's unions. Their past struggles on limited issues have shown they have plenty of militancy. But through their lack of political understanding, it has proved to be a blind-alley militancy. All the past struggles, which they thought had been won on one picket line or another, are looming anew in a complete program of government regimentation. The total problem is singly and sharply posed. The old "clever" policy of getting the inside track against the Stalinists by lobbying efforts in Washington has run its course: the Stalinists, willing to go the whole hog in binding the seamen in the chains of government regimentation, have far more to offer. And the endorsement which the "anti-politicals" gave the war in

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general has snarled them in a mess of contradictions which leaves them helpless when the shipowners-in-government begin to collect on this blank check in specific and practical demands that undermine the very life of the unions.

One thing is now certain: they cannot remain "anti-political" and yet preserve the unions as free and independent organizations. They are faced with the point-blank demand on both sides: give up your anti-political stand. On the one hand, the government demands that they give it up in favor of a political stand side by side with the shipowners. On the other, the interests of the seamen demand that they give it up in favor of a political program of struggle on the side of all labor against the whole ruling class. Which road to take? —that is the question confronting them, demanding a clear, unequivocal, class-conscious answer.

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