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# THE SOCIALIST PARTY CONVENTION

By GENE DENNIS

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TWENTY CENTS

# THE SCHOOLS AND THE PEOPLE'S FRONT

BY RICHARD FRANK

**T**he public schools are *community centers*, which bring together the broadest strata of the population. They can play a role of the utmost importance in the development of a wide People's Front in the United States.

The right to an education in America was won by a popular movement, the backbone of which was formed by the trade unions. The labor movement has always been conscious of the importance of education. Today, great masses of people are aroused over the inroads which have been made upon the educational system during the years of crisis. We have recently witnessed the development of an energetic and highly promising student movement in the United States. The unity which has been achieved in this field is of tremendous importance for broadening and developing the movement around the schools. At the same time, the American Federation of Teachers has been growing and taking on new life.

## I. THE PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM AND THE STATE

That which is most immediately apparent to anyone who studies public education must be the fact that *the public school system is a part of the state machinery.*

The function of the state machinery being to subjugate the proletariat and the toiling masses in general to the rule of the bourgeoisie, the role of the public school system cannot be isolated from this general function of the capitalist state.

Nevertheless, the right to free public education was won as a result of the struggles of the masses, with the trade unions playing a leading role. Organized labor has always been thoroughly conscious of the importance of education as a weapon, and has always struggled to obtain this weapon.

At the time when the fight for popular education was undertaken, the bourgeoisie found itself in a contradictory position. Like every ruling class, it desired to keep the masses in ignorance as a means of insuring its own supremacy. However, with the development of industry, it needed literate wage slaves and also a literate public to read its advertisements. Furthermore, the "universal" Catholic church had been broken up in the processes of the bourgeois revolutions. Thus great numbers had been liberated from any well coordinated institution for the indoctrination of the minds of the populace with ideas conducive to peaceful submission to the ruling class.

The struggles of the masses for free

public education eventually forced the bourgeoisie, torn by this contradiction, to a decision in favor of free compulsory public education, which it attempted to use as a substitute for a "universal" church.

However, free public education has never been universal. There have always been sections of the population (isolated rural communities, the Negro people in the Southern part of the U.S.A.) who have been denied educational advantages. Furthermore, education has almost never been really free in view of the fact that children are rarely furnished with free textbooks, with free car or bus fare, or with free hot lunches.

We must recognize furthermore that the public school system, won in the above manner, is administered not primarily in the interest of the children who attend it, but in the interest of the bourgeoisie, into whose state machinery it has been incorporated as an integral part. The bourgeoisie has used to its own advantage this concession which it was forced to make.

The function of the bourgeois school system can be expressed very simply as being the *training of efficient and docile wage slaves*. In other words, the task of the public schools is the ideological preparation for the perpetuation of capitalism.

This does not mean that the masses do not benefit from the public schools. On the contrary, the people must fight to preserve those benefits. However, it must never be forgotten that such positive values are partially counteracted by the bourgeois propaganda injected into the schools.

In fighting to extend education, this aspect of the schools must be opposed.

Such opposition will inevitably lead sooner or later to the realization that the educational system will be administered truly for the benefit of the majority of the children only when it has been wrested completely from the hands of the bourgeoisie, and, of course, this can take place only at the time when the toilers take power into their hands completely.

The primary schools impart a minimum of technical training (reading, writing, arithmetic) with almost a complete lack of any education in the natural sciences, but generously accompanied by inculcation of bourgeois ideology and sentiments of respect for the status quo. This minimum of technical training suffices for the standard of efficiency demanded by the bourgeoisie of the majority of its workers.

In addition to the elementary schools, the bourgeoisie also administers secondary schools, whose special function is to train more advanced or "white collar" workers. Economic necessity prevents the majority of children from ever reaching or completing these schools. Some additional training is imparted here. But even that science that is taught in the high schools is imparted in so fragmentary a manner as to prevent the student from ever acquiring a genuinely scientific outlook.

Since the schools are part of the state machinery, their administration is in the hands of bureaucrats. Educational authorities are not elected by the people or answerable to the people, but are appointed from above. Students, teachers and parents are subjected to the discipline of the educational system, but have no voice in its

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administration. The bureaucrats who control the schools are carefully trained in an anti-democratic spirit of subserviency to the bourgeoisie. The administrative educational system is in fact a perfect hierarchy with semi-military discipline. The teacher is supposed to be in absolute subjection to the principal. In the same way, principals are subjected to the rule of superintendents; superintendents to state departments, and the latter in turn by hundreds and thousands of ties to the bourgeoisie (as evidenced, for instance, in a very open fashion in the aid given publishing companies, whose production and sale of textbooks and successes in bringing about frequent changes in texts constitute a genuine "racket"). Since school authorities are selected not for their ability as educators, but for political reasons, the cultural level of the public schools is appallingly low. Administrative positions frequently become means of obtaining graft. The welfare of children and the community is the last thing considered by the majority of such officials.

The present crisis in education cannot be divorced from the crisis of capitalism. Free public education is a part of bourgeois democracy. In attacking the latter, fascism also attacks popular education. One task confronting the People's Front or Farmer-Labor Party movement must, therefore, be defense of free public education. This people's movement must concern itself not only with defending and extending the material basis of education, but also with changing the content and quality of education.

The present crisis is not only a material or economic crisis, but also a

cultural crisis. Education in America has functioned largely on the basis of the philosophy of pragmatism. Pragmatism in education states, "We are confronted with certain problems, but no one knows what is the 'truth' which will solve them. There are all kinds of theories, but they are just hypotheses, one of which is no better than the other. We will try to look at some of them. We can try now one, now another, and maybe some day we'll hit on one that works to a certain extent." But in time of crisis, people grow tired of "waiting to hit on something that may work partially". Thus, as Comrade Browder stated in his debate with George Soule, the philosophy of pragmatism is now in crisis. And with it pragmatism in education is in crisis.

Thus, we see educators today turning away from pragmatism as a philosophy of education. And some of them, such as Hutchins and Adler of the University of Chicago, are, in seeking a more systematic philosophy of education, looking backward to the Middle Ages, to the scholastic university, to the *trivium* and *quadrivium*, to St. Thomas Aquinas.

We must not be oblivious to this effort to establish universities on a medieval model in the present twentieth century. We must note also that *some of the same people who are flirting with St. Thomas are at the same time also trying to flirt with the philosophy of dialectical materialism.* This wavering between opposites expresses the fact that the dissatisfaction with the present on the part of many educators may be led in either of two directions—either backward toward scholasticism or forward toward Marxism. We must not sit passively in the

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never free from worry, and often subjected to a harrowing home life where nerves are irritated by the constant strain of want, proletarian children, even when they can go to school, never have any real opportunity to obtain a genuine education.

Proletarian and the majority of petty-bourgeois children are thus faced with many real and pressing problems of their own—how to obtain a better and more comfortable life, how to find jobs after finishing school. Furthermore, all children are faced with personal problems as they grow into adolescence. Nowhere in the public school system are these immediate economic and personal problems of the children themselves subjected to study.

The children who attend school are subjected to a *rigorous discipline*, which, instead of stimulating and encouraging curiosity or the natural desire to learn, crushes every sign of intellectual initiative and tends to produce crushed and timid material for further exploitation. This discipline is necessary for the purpose of forcing a hostile culture upon the minds of the children.

Thus to the majority of children school seems dull and boring. They are full of the desire for knowledge—knowledge of those things which really interest them. But they are not interested for the most part in that which is actually taught them. In every classroom in every school in the country, the cry is heard, "But why do we have to learn these things? What good is this going to do us? What is the sense in all this?" These sensible questions of the children are regarded as manifestations of mere stubbornness by

school authorities. No effort is made to answer them. Although any genuine method of education must arouse interest in the student and must welcome and answer questions which puzzle him, there is nothing which school authorities fear more than questioning or thought on the part of students. Sincere questions tend to be met with such rebuffs that the majority of students never dare to ask them.

Those who persist in doing so are usually regarded as insubordinate or troublesome. Thus, bourgeois education really becomes a deliberate effort to stultify the native intelligence of children. Its rule is, "Learn by rote what is placed before you and do not dare to question". Brutal suppression of the natural inquisitiveness of all young minds tends to prevent that which is stupid or false in that which is taught the children from being questioned either now or in the future.

Because of the economic hardships of their home life, which unfits them for study; because of the severity of school discipline; and because of the ideas which are thrust upon them from above (ideas which answer none of the problems which immediately concern them, but which proceed from the hostile culture of an enemy class), the majority of children develop a feeling of hatred for the bourgeois public school system. This hatred develops that spirit of rebelliousness which is to be found in every public schoolroom.

Do not school children in their daily talk universally speak of school as a "jail"? This universal characterization by school children of the place where they spend the greater part of their days is deserving of the deepest consideration, for in very truth the

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pre-sixties →

midst of this wavering and confusion. We must not allow Hutchins to take the initiative in offering a solution to the present educational crisis. We must boldly counterpose to Hutchins' reactionary program a progressive philosophy of education which revitalizes the slogan which is the motto of the American Federation of Teachers, "Democracy in Education; Education for Democracy". This motto can give the slogan for a Farmer-Labor philosophy of education, which must be developed as a rallying-call to educators out of the morass of pragmatism, away from medievalism, forward toward Marxism-Leninism.

With the present crisis in education, many educators and even administrators are beginning to realize the necessity for struggle to preserve the educational system. This is one aspect of the general disintegration which begins to set in even among the old bureaucracy during the crisis of capitalism. While some go to fascism, others fight to *preserve* their places.

Because of this new attitude on the part of some administrators and educators, we must adopt a new attitude toward them. There must be no mechanical analogy drawn between the class struggle of workers and capitalists on one side and of students and administrators on the other. It must be remembered that many administrators are sincere believers in democracy and free public education. A strong movement of students, teachers and parents will actually give some of them courage to *fight* for these beliefs. This is especially true of many Negro educational administrators.

Many educators have been sincerely trying to work out progressive methods

of teaching (e.g., the new curriculum program in Virginia), but the possibility of actually achieving them (even when the program is officially adopted, as in Virginia) is contradicted by the class role of the schools and the economic handicaps suffered by the children. We must consciously seek to give progressive educators a means of working out their educational programs in conjunction with the general program of the growing Farmer-Labor movement. And in states where Farmer-Labor governments exist, as in Minnesota and Wisconsin, we must actually seek to help them put into *realization* new methods and techniques of teaching, new curricula, and new methods of administration adjusted to the actual needs of children of workers and farmers.

Such are the general functions of the bourgeois public school and some of the broad perspectives which lie ahead of us in connection with the growth of the Farmer-Labor Party movement. We must now examine the educational system in its relation to (1) the children; (2) its own wage slaves, the teachers and (3) the community as a whole.

## II. THE PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM AND THE CHILDREN

The future wage slaves trained in the public schools are for the most part children of the working class or lower middle class. As such, they do not possess the economic well being necessary for taking full advantage of educational opportunity. Coming from homes of poverty, undernourished, poorly clothed, frequently forced by economic necessity to work for a living before or after school,

never free from worry, and often subjected to a harrowing home life where nerves are irritated by the constant strain of want, proletarian children, even when they can go to school, never have any real opportunity to obtain a genuine education.

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Do not school children in their daily talk universally speak of school as a "jail"? This universal characterization by school children of the place where they spend the greater part of their days is deserving of the deepest consideration, for in very truth the

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bourgeois school is, to a considerable extent, just that—a prison. The keen judgements of children have found the correct word. Within the school many of them suffer actual torture. Many of them during their first years in school leave their homes for this prison with tears. It haunts them at night. Recesses, weekends, and summer vacations are brief moments of freedom, at the close of which the grim shadow of that prison house, the school, again rises up to haunt them. Here, day after day, they find themselves deprived of liberty, without rights, without freedom to protest or express themselves, subjected to the complete despotism of an autocratic discipline.

It is true that because of the loneliness and hardships of many homes in bourgeois society, many children prefer school to home because in the former they come in contact with other children. This contact supplements the unhealthiness of the bourgeois home. However, even in this case, the social contact afforded by the school is vitiated by its hostile discipline imposed from above.

The rebelliousness of school children, directed against a part of the state machinery itself, is something that Communists cannot afford to ignore. This, together with their desire for knowledge and social life, must form the *starting point* for our work among students in the schools.

The problem in organizing public school students is *not* to set up separate aims, to lead a separate struggle apart from this already existing rebelliousness of students. Such actions would result merely in the creation of small sects of students isolated from the

lives of students as a whole. The problem is rather to *guide and direct that spirit of rebelliousness which already exists*. This means to root ourselves in the lives of the majority of the students. It means to make the interests of the students our own, to set up for ourselves no aims separate and apart from the interests and needs of the main body of students, but to crystallize and make clear those interests, to arouse in the students a consciousness of what arouses their resentment, accordingly to give their elemental spirit of rebelliousness definite and effective direction and thus to place ourselves at the head of the students in a conscious movement to improve their conditions.

In so far as possible, the broad mass student organization for this purpose should be the American Student Union, which, as a *union* for students, must fight first and foremost for their immediate economic needs. The A.S.U. must fight for government aid for needy students (extension and democratic administration of the N.Y.A., passage of the American Youth Act) and for a really free education (free textbooks, carfare, and hot lunches). It must help students improve their home life by helping their parents fight for better conditions—by cooperating with the labor unions, by conducting education as to the importance of unions, and by educating students to be good union members in the future.

The A.S.U. must campaign against the dullness of school. Since students have a natural and healthy desire for a good time, the A.S.U. must endeavor to win the possibility for this by campaigning for the right to use school facilities and to obtain more and better facilities (the use of school rooms, the

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buildings of gymnasiums, swimming pools, athletic fields). It must itself sponsor games and parties.

It would be utopian to think that without a proletarian revolution the bourgeois content of the school curriculum could be completely changed. However, it is possible to win some changes in curriculum. Mass pressure can remove particularly vicious war or chauvinistic propaganda, can win the right of students to classes in sex education, to the inclusion of Negro history in history courses. The latter is a demand which Negro students feel with especial keenness.

The A.S.U. should conduct its own educational activity. It has already been very successful in many schools in conducting such activity on the danger of war and the method of fighting it, though it has not been so successful in high schools as in colleges. Such educational work must include the danger of fascism, the racial and national question with particular emphasis on the Negro question. However, the A.S.U. should be careful not to impose the broader slogans such as those against war and fascism from above without linking them with immediate questions.

In fighting for academic freedom, a fight which will grow out of the fight for economic needs or to vitalize the curriculum, those forces which suppress the freedom of thought and expression in the schools should be linked up with those forces which are driving toward fascism. To the students, fascism will then not be a word but will be something very concrete.

The fight for equality for all students should be carefully linked with the fight for economic needs (in-

equality expresses itself in economic discrimination) and with the fight for academic freedom. It can also be utilized as a means of throwing light on the nature of fascism and in strengthening the fight against it.

In order to win the opportunity for drawing all students into these struggles, the A.S.U. must fight consistently for democratic student government. It must point out that if schools are really to educate the people for participation in a democratic government, as is their alleged purpose, student government is the only practical means for imparting such education.

In all these struggles the A.S.U. should seek to involve in united front action all other existing student organizations. Due to the restrictions on high school students, the A.S.U. may never itself become the mass high school organization. It must find a way to stimulate the existing organizations to take a progressive stand.

The Y.C.L. must endeavor to raise the spirit of rebellion found among school children to a level of higher consciousness by educating the students, on the basis of their own experience, to a realization of the class basis for the oppressive nature of the schools and to a realization of how the school system under a workers' and farmers' government would deal with the immediate problems of the majority of students, imparting to them with the utmost solicitude for their own interests that warm and friendly culture of their own class. The task of the Communist student groups must be to coordinate and stimulate to activity all existing student groups. To the best of their ability, they must supplement the curriculum with Marxist-Leninist educa-

tion. At the present time, their most important task is to disseminate the idea of a Farmer-Labor Party and of a Farmer-Labor Junior Federation. They must give every possible aid to the organizational drives of the C.I.O.

Such are some of the chief aims of the student movement. Now how do the public schools affect the teachers and what are the chief aims of the organized teachers?

### III. THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND THE TEACHERS

The public schools as factories for the cheap production of docile and efficient wage slaves possess their own wage laborers, viz., the public school teachers. Teachers are a part of the working class. Their wages are on the average as low as those of the average wage worker, in many cases far lower.

Teachers have no more to do with the actual administration of the schools than have students, but are, like privates in an army, subjected to a semi-military type of discipline imposed by a whole hierarchy of school officials. They are not supposed to think, to stimulate thought, to bring any new ideas to their students, or to be genuinely considerate of the welfare of the latter. More than of any other section of the working class, care is taken to prevent them from exercising freedom of thought or speech. They are instruments for indoctrinating the minds of the future working class with bourgeois ideology, and the slightest sympathy on their part for the labor movement is ruthlessly suppressed.

Because of their predominantly petty-bourgeois origin and because of the intellectual character of their work, teachers tend to regard themselves as

being above the working class, even though their pay is frequently lower than that of factory workers. Their psychology tends to be petty-bourgeois. Officials deliberately try to inculcate this attitude of superiority to labor.

The task of the Communist Party must be first and foremost to arouse the teachers to class-consciousness and to organize them into the American Federation of Teachers, which is in the main current of the American Labor movement.

The American Federation of Teachers must concern itself primarily with the immediate problems of the teachers (salary, tenure, academic freedom, etc.). Only on this basis can the majority of teachers be organized. However, the task of the Party must be to draw the organized teachers into a realization of the wider problems of the labor movement.

It is gratifying that the American Federation of Teachers has taken a position as one of the most progressive unions. It is supporting the fight for industrial unionism, although it has not affiliated to the C.I.O., in order that it may more effectively fight for the unity of the American labor movement. It has correctly taken a stand against any act which might help to cause a split. It has endorsed the movement for a Farmer-Labor Party, has passed resolutions to cooperate with the American League Against War and Fascism and the American Negro Congress.

Nevertheless, a danger must be pointed out. In taking a progressive stand the American Federation of Teachers must not forget that the majority of teachers are still unorganized. It must not in its excellent

zeal for progressive measures forget to emphasize and fight for the daily immediate economic needs of the teachers. Only thus can it organize those who are still on the outside.

In the effort to organize the teachers, every care must be taken to bring together in united front actions all existing teacher organizations. Especial attention must be paid to secure such action with the American Association of University Professors, the National Educational Association and the Guild. Our Party members in these organizations must work actively toward this end.

While the danger of forgetting immediate issues must be guarded against, the opposite tendency must be fought with equal energy, *viz.*, that the organized teachers develop a narrow trade union consciousness. The danger is that the teachers may think of only their own problems and forget the social characteristics of their place of work. While teachers are part of the working class, their function differs vastly from that of the industrial worker. *Communist teachers cannot afford to ignore this fact—that they come in contact with the children of the masses, that they are responsible for training these children. They must realize that the primary function of the school is to educate these children, and this will be true to a much greater extent in a socialist society than now.* Communist teachers are, therefore, faced with a tremendous social responsibility. They must consider not merely their own teacher problems, but the problems of the children. They must fight for the latter. They must mobilize the other teachers in this fight. They must take advantage of their positions,

without exposing themselves, to give their students to the best of their ability working class education.

To enable the teachers in the Party to do the latter, the Party must take careful steps to see that all teacher comrades are given thorough education in the teachings of Marxism-Leninism. Only when teachers have really mastered Marxism-Leninism, will they be able skillfully to inject it into their teaching at the least risk of exposure and at the same time to conduct struggles around the schools in a truly Bolshevik manner. Such teachers can also be used to advantage to conduct classes in Marxism-Leninism for workers generally, and many such teachers should be assigned not to school units but to factory or industrial units, where they can be of great aid in Party education, in helping with leaflets, shop papers, etc. Others can play an important role in the educational activities of the Y.C.L.

In rural communities, teachers who are among the few educated people are looked up to with tremendous respect. They are in a position to become community leaders. As a means of mobilizing the people in the villages and countryside, steps should be taken to try to send Communist teachers into rural communities, where they should become active in all community organizations.

The resentment of children toward the oppressive nature of the schools expresses itself most directly in the form of antagonism to teachers, with whom students are in immediate contact and who are the immediate agents of the school system for indoctrinating the minds of the children with bourgeois ideology.

Being oppressed themselves from above and being unconscious and unwilling agents of oppression toward the children, teachers tend to react toward the resistance offered by students to the process of bourgeois education by antagonism toward students in return. This antagonism expresses itself in a tendency to regard students as "stupid" or "bad".

It must be the task of the Party to break down this antagonism between students and teachers by arousing both groups to the realization of their common interests, of the fact that they suffer a common oppression from the same group, and that improvement of their conditions demands joint struggle. For this reason, there must be close cooperation, although not joint meetings, between student and teacher Party and Y.C.L. units. The American Student Union and American Federation of Teachers, as well as other teacher and student groups, must be led to undertake joint activity. The American Student Union should advance slogans and undertake struggles in the interest of teachers and the American Federation of Teachers, in the interest of students.

#### IV. THE SCHOOL AND THE COMMUNITY

Although the public schools were won as a result of the struggles of the people and although the latter have a vital and immediate interest in the schools, upon which welfare of their children depends parents have no voice in the administration of the schools. Principals and school officials are not elected by the people or answerable to the people, but are appointed bureaucrats.

It is necessary to strengthen the student and teacher movements by cooperation with parent groups. This cooperation should not be difficult to obtain, for parents are natural allies in any struggle to improve the schools. The Party should work actively within Parent-Teachers Associations and all similar organizations. Efforts should be made to secure broad united front activity between them and teacher and student groups.

In this way, it is possible to launch a broad *people's movement* around the schools as focal points. Such movements, as has been indicated, can be a powerful force in creating a powerful People's Front.

The schools frequently form the only rallying point for all sections of a community. This is especially true in villages and rural communities. The movement around the schools breaks down lines of division which keep apart members of various nationalities, churches, creeds, and political parties. School buildings are frequently used for community meetings or social functions. A people's movement around the schools can thus transform the latter into popular forums for progressive social action—ultimately into forums for the revolution. ←

In tsarist Russia, at the time of the Revolution of 1905, the universities had been granted autonomy as a result of conflicts with the students. The result was that the universities became forums for the whole revolutionary movement. If this could occur in tsarist Russia, why should we in a bourgeois democracy not be able to use the schools for social progress?

Everyone is familiar with the role of students in the national liberation

movements in China and Cuba. Negro students in our own South are beginning to play the same role. Negro students should more and more go out to mobilize their people in the churches and fraternal orders.

A united people's movement developing around the schools must demand the extension of educational opportunity to the point where it becomes really free for all (demands for free textbooks, car or bus fare, lunches; demands for equal educational opportunity for Negroes and children of rural communities; for government aid to needy students).

In the South, special efforts must be made to form united fronts of Negro and white parent, teacher and student groups to struggle for equal educational opportunities for Negroes and improved educational advantages for both Negro and white. Such a movement can become a powerful weapon in breaking down antagonism between Negro and white. Many white Southerners who at present would not be induced to enter the same organization with Negroes are willing to cooperate with Negro groups in united front activity. The united front is the key for breaking down the barrier between white and Negro. Many white Southerners who today could not be induced to oppose Jim-Crowism will yet agree that Negroes should have equal, though separate, educational advantages, and will cooperate in a movement to obtain such advantages for Negroes. Communists must make unmistakably clear their unalterable opposition to Jim-Crowism. Yet a struggle in which whites participate for equal, even though separate, educational opportunity is a transitional stage to the struggle against Jim-Crow-

ism as a whole. We must look for such transitional forms of struggle. In the process of such a fight, we must point to the waste of a dual educational system, to the fact that white children also would benefit from a unified educational system which would without doubt surpass the present white school system. In this way, we will draw Negro and white together, win gains for the Negro people, and speed up the struggle when the white masses will join with the Negroes in a fight against the system of segregation as a whole.

The American Federation of Teachers is now launching a broad legislative campaign for federal aid to education in the form of five amendments to the Harrison-Black Bill now in Congress. The latter, as it stands, possesses a number of serious inadequacies. As the National Legislative Committee of the American Federation of Teachers declares, it "(1) provides for appropriations which are markedly inadequate; (2) would tend to perpetuate or increase existing inequalities among states in ability to support schools; (3) permits gross inequalities in length of school term; and (4) would make the federal government a party to the perpetuation of gross inequalities between white and Negro schools."

The American Federation of Teachers has, therefore, proposed five amendments to the Harrison-Black Bill which would remedy these defects. These amendments would provide (1) for an initial appropriation of \$250,000,000, reaching \$500,000,000 annually by the end of the fourth year; (2) that poorer states receive a larger proportion of federal funds as a result of appropriations on the basis of the number of inhabitants of school age, as well as in

accordance with the payment of taxes; (3) that each school in a state obtaining funds should remain open for not less than one hundred and sixty days each year; (4) that each state must obtain an annual increase of 2 per cent in the ratio of average daily attendance of children of school age until that ratio reaches eighty; and (5) that an equal amount of these funds be allotted to each Negro child of school age as to each white child.

This legislative program would begin to eradicate educational inequalities. As such, it is capable of rallying the broadest masses—especially in the South, which so sadly needs educational equality with the rest of the country. This legislative program of the American Federation of Teachers forms a supplement to the American Youth Act in offering an immediately realizable program in the interest of American youth. As such, it should receive equal support from such organizations as the American Youth Congress and all its many affiliates. It presents the Southern Negro Youth Conference with just that concrete program for beginning to achieve the equality in education which it has set as one of its principal objectives.

Since the people are denied a voice in the administration of the schools, a fundamental demand of any popular movement around the schools should be democratic administration of the school system by elected representatives of parents, teachers and students. No one of these groups should fail to be represented. Only thus will their interests be guarded. The inclusion of students on school boards will seem the most radical demand. But this demand is of the utmost impor-

tance. Not only will it be a guarantee that the rights of students will not be forgotten, but it will give the students who elect their representatives and to whom the latter must be accountable, as well as the students elected to the board, a thorough training in democratic procedure. It will give them practical democratic experience.

As a result of the crisis, the bourgeoisie, which seeks to maintain its profits by shifting the burden of the crisis onto the shoulders of the people through decreased wages and curtailment of public expenditures, tries among other things to reduce its budget by reducing expenditures for education. This leads to tremendous educational retrenchment, which denies more and more children the right to an education, and works ever greater hardship upon both students and the educational wage slaves, the teachers.

Thus the people's movement, which first won the right to free public education, finds itself confronted not only with the task of improving the schools, but of defending those educational advantages which it still has. It must, however, combine this defensive struggle with an offensive struggle, not only to maintain but to improve the present system. Such a popular movement must take up all the demands that have already been mentioned in connection with the student and teacher movements.

As the crisis deepens, ever greater efforts are made to introduce military training and war and fascist propaganda into the schools. A powerful people's movement must drive military training and all such propaganda completely out of the schools.

It must constantly be emphasized

that the fight against educational retrenchment and reaction is a fight against the forces driving toward fascism. In this way, the public will learn what fascism means in practice, and thus by fighting fascism concretely we can build a powerful anti-fascist movement.

The strongest efforts should be made to swing the people's movement of parents, teachers and students into alliance with the labor movement, which played the most important part in the early fight for free education. It can be seen from this how important it is to build the American Federation of Teachers. The labor movement in turn must be led to continue to advance demands in the interest of education and to increase the number and intensity of such demands. It must be emphasized that *the trade unions form the main force for improving the schools.*

The movement around the schools must finally be won for the Farmer-Labor Party, which will undoubtedly include educational demands in its platform.

In many small villages, the parent-teachers associations are the only genuine community groups and frequently the only groups to engage in struggles. Through them as parts of such a popular movement for better schools as has been described, we should be able to carry the breath of progress and the movement for a Farmer-Labor Party into the backward rural communities. In those sections where there are no trade unions, such a movement can be utilized to link the rural sections with the labor movement as a whole.

#### V. HIGHER EDUCATION

This analysis would be incomplete without some mention of higher education, although this is not the place for any detailed account of the latter.

Higher education is not always linked up directly with the state machinery, and even where it is, except in the case of a few municipal colleges, it is not free. *Higher education is essentially a commodity.* As a commodity it is sold for profit.

This means that it is not available for the children of the working class or lower petty bourgeoisie except in rare cases. It is to a large extent available only to the sons of the bourgeoisie as a luxury or to sons of the petty bourgeoisie or professionals as a means of enabling them to become skilled technicians or professionals. Only by means of the greatest hardship and by work which interferes with study can many of the latter obtain higher education.

Scientific training is offered as a commodity in the higher schools, but in accordance with the general planlessness of capitalism, no effort is made to care for the well-rounded intellectual advance of students. Subjects are offered haphazardly to be chosen at the student's discretion. Thus even in college it is almost impossible to acquire a genuinely scientific outlook.

The nature of bourgeois higher education tends to divorce students from contact with the masses, and especially the working class, by inculcating in them the feeling that they form a special aristocracy within society. Although the serious student may obtain an insight into society to the point of disillusionment with the status quo,

the general nature of bourgeois higher education is such as to turn him into a cynic or an ineffectual reformist rather than a revolutionary.

The same student and teacher organizations mentioned above must orientate themselves toward the different conditions prevailing in colleges and universities. Demands must be put forward for the economic needs of students and teachers, for academic freedom, and against racial discrimination. The American Student Union is taking steps toward making itself a real factor in the daily lives of the college students by undertaking the building of cooperatives. It should also place itself at the head of simple popular movements such as efforts to reduce admission charges to dances. It should participate in campus elections, injecting into them vital issues. At the same time, it should extend its anti-war and anti-fascist activity, finding for them new forms of expression.

Party and Y.C.L. fractions set up within classes and departments must supplement and combat by means of discussions, brochures, etc., bourgeois

omissions or distortions in the regular curriculum. Marxist-Leninist analysis must be injected into every class. In addition to this, serious education on immediate social problems and in Marxism-Leninism must be undertaken independently.

Efforts must be made to swing the college community out of its academic isolation and self-satisfaction into alliance with the working class and all progressive movements.

The ultimate demand in this realm must be to take higher education off its commodity basis, to make it an extension of the public school system, free to all, and considerate of the genuine welfare of the students, presenting its material in such a way as to synthesize knowledge, to impart a scientific outlook upon the world as a whole, Marxism-Leninism being the only such outlook, and to impart with this scientific outlook that which is inseparable from it, viz., a sense of responsibility to society and practical collective action in the interest of the proletariat.

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