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INTERNAL BULLETIN #4

Communist League of America (Opp)

Issued by the National Committee

FOR MEMBERS ONLY

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Statements by Weisbord

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OF THE COMMUNIST LEAGUE OF AMERICA (OPPOSITION)---STATE-  
MENT OF THE COMMUNIST LEAGUE OF STRUGGLE (adhering to  
the International Left Opposition)

The recent statement of the National Committee of the Communist League of America (Opposition) on the Letter of Comrade Trotsky and the reply of the Communist League of Struggle, in spite of the disagreements we have with it, has brought us a step nearer to unification. We note that in the opinion of the "National Committee" our reply to Comrade Trotsky constitutes a "turn in the direction of the Left Opposition on the most important principle questions," and that "We can be assured that some, if not all, of the Weisbord group (THE Communist League of Struggle is designated here note) will find their way to complete fusion with us. And it goes without saying that the National Committee" will do: all in its power to facilitate and hasten this process, without putting unnecessary obstacles in the way or imposing unreasonable conditions." Further the "National Committee" declares: "The general direction of Weisbord and the comrades associated with him, over a period now of several ... has been toward the Left Opposition."

Yet we note, that in spite of this step forward, the "National Committee" rejects our offer for both organizations to come together on the basis of principles of the International Left Opposition, and on Comrade Trotsky's letter and our reply to it. "The "National Committee" states: "We do not regard its letter to Comrade Trotsky as adequate...we deem a restatement by the Weisbord group (the Communist League of Struggle is meant here) an essential preliminary to further steps of unifications."

We do not intend to enter here and now into the many secondary questions raised by the "National Committee". We intend to stick to the principle issues. Nor do we intend to engage in a long series of letters each running into many pages. Long ago we declared our willingness to meet with the Committee of the Communist League of Am. Our offers have been steadily rejected. We regard this "long-range" tactic of endless letter-writing as a maneuver to delay discussions that could lead to unity.

In his last letter to us, Comrade Trotsky raised three principle points: 1. The question of the Labor Party. 2. The question of Centrism and 3. The question of mass work. As the "National Committee" evidently has no basic differences with us on our position on the Labor Party we shall turn to the other two points.

#### 1. The Question of Centrism.

We believe that our statement that "on the general question of centrism we feel that our differences are not very great and in some respects are not very great and in some respects are only of a formal character" will be agreed to by Comrade Trotsky himself. What is the specific question involved here? It is whether the term "centrism" shall be given to a Communist wing as well as to a left-Socialist deviation, or should the term be confined only to the latter type (as represented for example by Kautsky, Adler et al.). Comrade Trotsky answers that the word "centrism" should cover ALL deviations both of a Socialist and Communist character, between the official camp of reformism (Social-Democracy and Communism (the Left Opposition). This means that not only the S.A.P. in Germany but the Lovestone group and the bureaucratic centrist groups, which differ among themselves, which one is the "nearest to us, the Left Opposition depends above all not on the formulae of these groups but on their dynamics. And for this a

concrete study of each group as part of its actual historic environment is necessary. We believe Comrade Trotsky's analysis has very little in common with the formulae often bandied about in the Communist League of America, such as "We can unite with centrists but not with the Right" "Centrists are nearer the Left than the Right" etc., when by the term "Right" is meant Communist groups whom Trotsky also places in the broad category "centrist groups". In this respect our views were closer to Comrade Trotsky's than those of the American League. That is why it is correct to say our differences with Comrade Trotsky on this general question were mainly formal.

We find this analysis of Comrade Trotsky on Centrism very helpful and an analysis which we are quite ready to accept as it gives us a better understanding of actuality than before and corresponds better to the needs of the moment. We are no longer in the period of 1919 when it was necessary to split sharply all Communists from the Socialists. This process has been done. What is necessary now is to raise clear and high the banner of the Left Opposition as separate from all the other groups. That is why we are ready to change the terminology by which Centrism meant a socialist trend, a terminology followed by Lenin ~~AT THAT TIME?~~ for the one proposed by Comrade Trotsky. In this respect Comrade Trotsky only continues the method of Lenin under new circumstances that call for different conclusions.

The "National Committee" states that on this question of centrism we have not taken a self-critical attitude. This is not quite so. In our reply to Comrade Trotsky we declared: "We do not wish to deny that in the course of existence we have made some serious errors both in our general program (for example on the Labor Party question, OUR MISTAKE IN ALLOWING THE IMPRESSION TO GET ABROAD THAT WE WISHED A BLOC WITH THE RIGHT WING (our emphasis) and our mistake in ignoring on certain questions the great critical activity already done by the Left Opposition, etc.) and in our practice."

The "National Committee" again affirms, in spite of our denial, that we were for a Bloc, that is a general vague alliance, with the Right Wing. And to prove this the "National Committee" quotes, not from the theses of the Communist League of Struggle but from an article of Weisbord BEFORE THE COMMUNIST LEAGUE OF STRUGGLE WAS ORGANIZED. Knowing the false interpretation that the leadership of the American League had previously placed on this draft article, the group deliberately changed the original formulation so as not to allow this false interpretation to gain ground. It is significant of the method of the "National Committee" that it does not take the formulation of the whole group but of a previously written "DRAFT" (it was marked "DRAFT") statement of one of its members. And in this connection we must point out how the "National Committee" has constantly slurred and underestimated our organization and its entire membership by constantly insinuating that it consists of only one person. It is a mystery to us ~~just~~ to find out just how these methods can raise the influence of the International Left Opposition in America.

What was the point in essence of Comrade Weisbord's draft statement since it is this draft that is given as proof that the Communist League of Struggle and the American League cannot get

together? Comrade Weisbord stated in essence what we have stated in our reply to the letter of comrade Trotsky, namely that it is quite possible that circumstances may arise where it will be advantageous for us to form a united front including the right wing even where the Party refuses to join or even fights it, and that the results of such a united front could be to reestablish mass work and even to help reform the Communist Party. Is this denied by the "National Committee"? But the "National Committee" itself organized such a United front with the Right Wing (Lovestone, Muste and Co.) in the Marine Case!

Here is what the "National Committee" thought of the work of this united front with Lovestone on the Marine case: "The meeting is expected to be the starting point for a really popular development of the movement through public agitation." (Militant, Dec. 26, 1931). In the same issue of the Militant, according to J. P. Cannon, this united front with the "Right" was having the result that "the honest and class-conscious elements in all workers organizations are asserting themselves in favor of a united movement to defend the victims of the frame-up...Every day sees new forces recruited for the fight."

In the Militant of Jan. 2, 1932, we read: "All the activity of the committee has been carried on under the banner of the united front of labor against the frame-up system. The correctness of this policy and the effectiveness of the appeal for the imprisoned workers was indicated by the response that has already been gained. Organizations and groups having the widest differences on many questions of principle and tactics are uniting for a common fight for the imprisoned marine workers. FOR THE FIRST TIME IN YEARS WE SEE THE SIGNS OF A GENUINE UNITED FRONT MOVEMENT TAKING SHAPE." (Our emphasis).

Here is what the Militant of Jan. 6, 1932 had to say about the work of this united front with Lovestone and Muste without and against the Communist Party: "For the first time in years New York workers belonging to various political tendencies met together, swayed by a feeling of genuine working class solidarity in the face of the vicious class enemy...All speakers were well received. Despite the manifold political shades and colors all appeared to be united to prevent the capitalist class from taking advantage of the dissensions within the working class for their own ends. The meeting represents a commendable attempt to close the ranks in warding off the blows of government oppression of workers and workers institutions...The absolute necessity of action in cases such as that of the three marine workers will not fail to awaken the workers, Communist and non-Communist to proletarian solidarity...The force of united working class defence is irresistible."

And in the very same issue J. P. Cannon wrote about this meeting of the united front with the right centrists: "No single event in recent years has done so much to raise the hopes of the radical workers that a way can be found despite all the differences between the various organizations and groups for the radical workers to get together for a united fight against the class enemy.

"This meeting like the defence committee which sponsored it was an experiment in cooperation on a single issue of the class struggle, the defence of persecuted workers. No one can deny that it made a good showing. The hall was packed to the doors and the sentiment for unity resounded in the applause which greeted speaker after speaker who dwelt on this theme. Militant unionists,

Communists, anarchists, syndicalists and Socialists were represented on the platform as well as in the audience. The chief feature of the whole affair and the one that determined its enthusiastic spirit was the formal appearance of a united front. There is every reason for the partisans of the united front among whom we belong to regard the demonstration as a significant step forward."

This was the flowery language used by the "National Committee" members at their first attempt to form a tiny united front movement. We do not wish at this moment to go into the case of the Marine Defence Committee and the manner in which the "National Committee" conducted their end of this united front. At the proper time we intend to show that in this affair the American League was forced to act as the red paint to cover the naked treachery and vicious adventurism of the Lovestone Right wing group on the waterfront and that on no occasion did the American League leadership distinguish itself from the Right wing elements in the Defence Committee. We do not wish to show here that the "National Committee" even tried to use the Defence Committee to build a sort of new labor defence body as a counterweight to the International Labor Defence, but what we do want to point out is that HERE WE HAVE THE "NATIONAL COMMITTEE" ITSELF DECLARING THAT A UNITED FRONT WITH THE RIGHT CAN BE FORMED ON A GIVEN ISSUE THAT WILL AROUSE MASSES AND REBUILD A MASS DEFENCE MOVEMENT ON CORRECT LINES AND REFORM THE PARTY IN SPITE OF THE PARTICIPATION OF THE RIGHT WING.

Since the American League is interested in self-criticism we would like to ask if the "National Committee" still believes it was correct not to form united front committees for the release of Morgenstern and Goodman, that it should not have participated in the united front called by the I. W. W. on the Centralia case and by the Socialist Party on the Mooney case. Does not the "National Committee" know that it was OUR GROUP ALONE THAT UPHELD THE BANNER OF THE LEFT OPPOSITION IN THESE CONFERENCES AND THAT WE ALONE FOUGHT THE RIGHT WING LOVESTONE GROUP? Constantly distorting the statements of Comrade Weisbord and going back to plain gossip for quotations from articles written before our group was organized, the "National Committee" uses this method to cover up all its errors on the united front work, errors that have cost the whole Left Opposition dearly and left the movement stagnant for a long time.

## II. The Question of Mass Work

On the question of mass work we do not wish to repeat what we have said in our reply to Comrade Trotsky but we cannot help noting the resistance on the part of the "National Committee" to this part of Comrade Trotsky's letter and to its lack of self-criticism when it blames its lack of mass work solely upon the lack of means. Always people have blamed their failure to do their duty upon "lack of resources, the concrete situation of the moment, the relation of forces", etc. However the "National Committee" actually goes much further than this. It declares in its statement: "We always considered the question as part and parcel of the means of the organization, its resources, the concrete situation of the moment, the relation of forces and ABOVE ALL THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF OUR FACTION" (our emphasis). What does this mean? It can only mean that if no mass work was done it was because mass work was against the "FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF OUR FACTION". It means

that in the program of the American League and of the International Left Opposition, the "National Committee" has discovered "fundamental principles" which militated against its entrance into this or that phase of mass work. If this is not the essence of sterile sectarianism then we do not know what constitutes it in principle. We wish to remind the "National Committee" again of the words in the letter of Comrade Trotsky that declare: "The Left Opposition ... puts forth propaganda not in a sectarian but in a Marxist manner, that is to say upon the basis of participation in all the life of the proletariat..." In this letter Comrade Trotsky intimated that if the American League had not done mass work we must remember that mass work depends upon NATURAL CAPACITY, EXPERIENCE AND INITIATIVE. In this way Comrade Trotsky gave a characterization of the leadership of the American League by tracing to its roots why the American League had not engaged in mass work. It is too bad that the "National Committee" overlooked this warning.

We are happy to note that the "National Committee" has decided to make a turn in this direction. It is this that makes us feel even still more that a unification between both organizations should take place. It will be one of the contributions of our group to all in this new turn.

The Communist League of Struggle is criticized for the actions of Comrade Weisbord in the Textile Unity Committee WHICH WAS CREATED AND WHICH WAS LIQUIDATED BEFORE OUR ORGANIZATION WAS FORMED, and which, by the way, never appeared or worked in Paterson. As for the Marine Case, our organization never took official action upon it, nor were we ever asked to do so by the Defence Committee which, against the wishes of the prisoners actually prevented mail from reaching us, one of the members of the Defence Committee even stealing the mail from the letter-box! We do not wish to discuss here these two matters. However we shall not let them drop. Once unification is effected, we shall demand a full hearing on the action of Comrade Weisbord on the Textile Unity Committee, and on the whole affair of the Marine Case.

### III. Other questions.

We turn now to other questions mentioned in the statement of the "National Committee". The "National Committee" actually defends its turning over the names and addresses of its members and subscribers to the United States government. First of all the "National Committee" calls our criticism exaggerated and says this is a question of "second" or "tenth" order. Here we have a terribly patent example of the amateurishness of the "National Committee" and amateurishness that could lead to the veritable boehding of the movement. Is the question of the protection of the members of a vanguard Communist organization from the police a "secondary" question, or worse still, one of a "tenth" order? Even the slightest acquaintance with Leninism should teach one that THE CREATION OF AN ILLEGAL APPARATUS EVEN IN TIMES OF LEGALITY is a capital question. We shall not rest until this exposure of revolutionists to the U. S. capitalist government (which already has deported and removed over 100,000 "foreigners and reds" last year alone) is completely ended.

The "National Committee" defends their act by declaring: "He (meaning the Communist League of Struggle, note) could just as legally object to the filing of Communist petitions to put candidates on the ballot for they are signed with names and addresses by thousands of workers sympathetic with the radical movement." It seems that we must patiently explain to the "National Committee" that

THOUSANDS OF WORKERS do not mean HUNDREDS OF COMMUNISTS, that in the one case the Communists are protected by the mass, in the other, the Communists are thoroughly exposed; that in the one case we are dealing with the parliamentary illusions which the masses have so that there are different traditions concerning the ballot papers, on the other hand we are dealing with a DELIBERATE CONTRIVANCE OF THE GOVERNMENT TO CATCH THE VANGUARD; that in the one case the workers know when they sign that the papers will be turned over to the state and for that very reason many workers refuse to sign, while in the other case, no one is told that their names, which in most cases they want kept secret, will be turned over to the state. Finally, if we do not get ballot papers signed we lose something very valuable, THE RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN while in the other case we lose ONLY A FEW CENTS.

The "National Committee" argues that this has been always done by the "labor movement". But the "National Committee" knows very well that the American League is not the broad labor movement but a small part of the Communist group, a narrow group, especially attacked by the government. We do not wish to give the impression that our political estimate of the American situation is that we shall soon be driven underground, but we would be rank amateurs if not worse to facilitate the work of the U. S. government in registering and tracking down every Communist and sympathizer. It is true that when some of the members of the "National Committee" were at the head of the Communist Party and Young Communist League this was done also; but when will the "National Committee" learn that the American League is not a reconstituted Cannon (or Shachtman) faction of the party but part of the International Left Opposition headed by L. D. Brotsky whose principles represent in the U. S. a BREAK WITH THE PAST?

We wish to emphasize this point. We shall fight in the sharpest manner against any theory that tells us we are only joining an enlarged and developed "Cannon (or Shachtman) faction". This is the best way to kill the Left Opposition in America. All of us who reach the principles of the Left Opposition ~~in America~~ can declare that in one way or another we were prepared by our past for our entrance into the Left Opposition.. However it is not this phase that must be stressed, but rather how incorrect we were in the Party, and how we now make a break from all the old bureaucratic methods of which we were more or less a part. This is the side that must be stressed, this is the honest critical way by which we can win the best workers of the Party to us.

Finally, the "National Committee" states: "We do not like the official regulations" Is it a matter of LIKES? Has the American League really protested against the regulations? Quite the contrary. When the U. S. government deprived the Class Struggle of Second Class mailing rights in May the Militant waited till July 18th 1931 to say a word about it (months after the N. Y. Times, N. Y. World, the Nation and even the Revolutionary Age of the Lovestone group); then the Militant hid the true issues of the case and declared that our paper was suspended anyway just at a time when we were going to press with our next issue. Not likes and dislikes but STRUGGLE determines events and incidentally the character of the "National Committee".

The second question which we have raised is the Negro question. We must not hide the fact that on this question the sharpest struggle can break out in the American Communist movement. The American League has been in existence over four whole years. In all this time it has seen fit to be quiet officially on such an important question as

the Negro question in America. We declare this very "quiet" is a token of rank white chauvinism. What kind of a question is it that its solution can be delayed for so long, that the "National Committee" can find time to solve this or that question but not the Negro question? Is it true that the "National Committee" was "studying" this question all the time? This is NOT TRUE. To whom did it assign this work in 1928, in 1929, in 1930, in 1931, in 1932? Why have they not brought in reports? If the matter is so serious they should be the reason for the greatest attention to be paid to it and full and open discussions held. But the "National Committee" seems to be too busy for this. Instead, the "National Committee" is carrying on a factional fight that, according to their own words, turned the last plenum into a "scene of the sharpest struggle" (see Internal Bulletin No. 1 pg 2) over such "vital" questions as: Why should Easky, Gordon and Clarke be co-opted on the National Committee and what did Carter write on Engels in the Young Spartacus? We quote from the resolution presented by George Saul, a member of the American League: "Along its present lines, failing completely to consider the several political issues that have to do with the eradication of the barriers to further growth of the League (...Marxian analysis of the many social questions on which the League has not yet taken a stand--NEGRO QUESTION, agrarian question, etc.)...the present factional fight does not does not contain an answer to the needs of the League." (our emphasis)

There are some other questions which we do not wish to enter into now but which we shall take up when both organizations get together. We cannot let go unchallenged the statement that the nucleus of our group originated in the Right Wing of the Party. We shall put to the membership the facts of how the "National Committee" broke collaboration with Comrades Weisbord, Buch and others and set up artificial barriers to drive them away from the Left Opposition. We shall demand that the American League go into the roots of the matter as to the raid on our headquarters and the protection of the culprits by the "National Committee."

Finally, we want to deal briefly with the statement that we have been guilty of "paltry maneuvers" instead of sincere efforts for unity. The charge is made that we have gone over the heads of the "National Committee" to the branches. This is positively not so, as the National Committee knows for we sent copies of all letters sent to the branches of the American League to the National Committee itself and asked for the cooperation of the National Committee. If we wrote to the branches and held an open meeting, it was because for months the National Committee never answered our letters, indeed some letters it never showed to the membership. Is it any wonder that we had to address the membership directly? In this connection we must expose the fact that the "National Committee" dared to order its membership not to attend our open meeting and threatened to expel those members attending. So great was the reaction of the membership to this typical Stalinist decree, reminiscent of the days of Lovestone, that the membership of the N. Y. Branch actually passed a motion condemning the National Committee for withholding the documents and ~~being~~ ~~material~~.

It is not for the "National Committee" to accuse us of "maneuvers". We retort that this itself is only a maneuver, a maneuver to side-track the discussion from principle ones raised by Comrade Trotsky to secondary ones. That the "National Committee" is capable of this, we get from their own writings. In their "Internal Bulletin No. 1" "the National Committee declares that a document submitted by Abern, Glotzer and Shachtman was "larded with personal accusations and slanders" (pg 2) and the "National Committee" call on the member-



ship "to condemn and repudiate these unprincipled methods and this irresponsible trifling with the responsibilities of leadership" (page 3). In "Bulletin No. 2" Shachtman is accused by the "National Committee" of issuing a "venomous polemic" and later the statement is made (pg 15) that "The Statement of Shachtman, Abarn and Giotzer speaks a great deal about unity and the avoidance of faction struggle, but the contentions in the document and their actions since the plenum speak a different language" and again that Shachtman "poisoned the atmosphere" with his "foul accusations" (pg 15).

In "Bulletin No. 3" Shachtman accuses Cannon and Swabeck of using language that is used by Stalin in inner party disputes and a also of "underhand insinuations" (pg 10) and on the same page he states that Cannon is guilty of "patent falsehoods" and of "frame-ups". On page 11 Shachtman writes: "It is very clear what Cannon is aiming at. I know it all too well. To talk CONSTANTLY ABOUT 'COLLABORATION' AND TO DO EVERYTHING TO RENDER IT AS DIFFICULT AND POSSIBLE IF NOT IMPOSSIBLE" (page 10, our emphasis). We feel that both Cannon and Shachtman and the other members of the National Committee should know each other very well by this time, far better than we know them. Can we be blamed for being cautious in our dealings and seeing to it that all the members know the issues directly ESPECIALLY WHEN THE LETTER OF COMRADE TROTSKY TO US WRITTEN IN MAY AND PRINTED IN GERMAN AND FRENCH WAS NOT PRINTED HERE UNTIL SEPTEMBER?

We feel that the charges of the National Committee to us on the question of "unity maneuvers" deserve that we print what George Saul stated in his resolution: "The truth is that neither has there been or is there at present enough genuine Bolshevik self-criticism within the League as a whole and within the National Committee of the League especially. There has been and is a shrinking from responsibilities, nihilism instead of leadership, criticism in the other fellow instead of self-criticism, flippancy rather than persistency, sensitiveness that borders on childishness."

Here is the language that the leaders of the American League employ about each other. Here is expressed what they think of each other. Far from discouraging us, however, such an exposure of the true facts makes us only more determined to do all in our power to effect a fusion, SO AS TO SAVE THE INTERNATIONAL LEFT OPPOSITION IN AMERICA from disaster. We urge the "National Committee" not to delay our unification further.

We do not intend to let our fusion with the American League start such a factional fight, in spite of these statements of the "National Committee" so as to paralyze all work. Far from it. We are convinced that our fusion will mark the good growth of the League and place it on a new plane of development.

Let our joint committees meet without delay. There exists no valid reason for continued separation of the two groups adhering to the International Left Opposition in America.

COMMUNIST LEAGUE OF STRUGGLE  
(Adhering to the International Left  
Opposition)

This is the reply of the National Committee to the statement of Comrade Weisbord:

October 31, 1932.

Dear Comrade Weisbord:

In The Militant of October 1st and 8th, the National Committee made public a statement of its views on the letter sent by the Communist League of Struggle in reply to the letter of Comrade Trotsky. Our statement was aimed at facilitating the fusion of the Communist League of Struggle with the American section of the International Left Opposition on the basis of a clearly and honestly established agreement in principle, and without permitting matters of secondary importance to constitute an insurmountable obstacle. The National Committee must regretfully establish that the reply to its statement made by the Weisbord group, even less than its first letter, meets with the requirements which we consider necessary for a solution of the question. Instead of a clear statement of its point of view in the sense we indicated, the reply of the Weisbord group takes a step backward in this respect and attempts to defend the errors which have separated it from us. This is carried a barrage of minor issues, real and alleged, with which is combined that petty, false and outrageously exaggerated criticism of our league, against which Weisbord has been cautioned before, especially in Comrade Trotsky's letter. Finally the whole tone of the reply in no way indicates a desire or intention to engage in a loyal and comradely collaboration with the Communist League of America. On the contrary. For these reasons the National Committee is compelled to suspend any further negotiations with the Weisbord group until such a time as the latter shall have established its position in a manner, as laid down in our statement of October 1st and 8th, which we consider a minimum for the fusion of the two groups and the future discussion inside of the united organization of any serious differences of a secondary character which may have arisen or will arise.

National Committee  
Communist League of America (Opposition)

Secretary.

Copy of letter from comrade Trotsky to Weisbord.  
dates October 13th, 1932/

Dear Comrade Weisbord:

This is in answer to your letter, and through your mediation to the letter of your group. My delay in answering was due to my assurance that the "Militant", contrary to your premature assumption, would answer your request. And, in point of fact, I find in the last issues my letter to you and your answer published integrally and even without any criticism in the same issue.

This procedure is very accommodating, perhaps a little too much so. If you still remember our discussion about the possibilities and methods of fusion, you will understand without any comment from me that I cannot find your steps very happily chosen for the purpose, if the purpose remains that of fusion.

It is scarcely necessary to go into the details of your letter, but I feel obliged to emphasize the fact that your treatment of the question of centrism appears to me absolutely unsatisfactory. It is not a question of name, but of the political content of the Stalinist faction.

It is superfluous to repeat that I would be glad to observe a real coming-together between your group and our American section, but it is evident that in the present stage this procedure cannot be seriously influenced from abroad. It is a task between yourself and the League.

With Communist greetings,  
(signed) L. Trotsky.

Prinkips. October 10th, 1932.

(Excerpt of letter from Trotsky to the National Committee dated October 22nd, 1932, and in regard to the above).

"It appears that you were not sent a copy of my reply to Comrade Weisbord. This reply I wrote before I had the opportunity to become acquainted with your comprehensive reply to the Weisbord group. You will notice, however, that our parallel actions quite well supplement one another. I am sure that we can also in the fields case find a good basis of agreement."

(Signed) L. Trotsky.

Letter from Weisbord to the National Committee.

November 4th, 1932

National Committee,  
Communist League of America (Opposition)  
Arno Swabeck, Secretary,

Dear Comrade:

We have received your letter of October 31st, in which you declare that you suspend all negotiations with us for unity. In your letter you give no concrete reasons for such an important action. You merely state vaguely that our second letter is a backward step; that we did not make a clear restatement as to our position on Centrism which to you evidently is still ambiguous; that we have raised a barrage of minor issues; that our criticism has been outrageously exaggerated and that our tone shows that we have no desire to engage in a loyal and cordial collaboration with the American League.

All these charges, so vaguely stated, we emphatically deny. From it all, even the most backward worker, can see that it is the leadership of the American League that places its own private interest

and fears in the way of the growth of the Left Opposition in this country; that it is the leadership of the American League that places minor, vague, petty obstacles in the way of unification. It may be possible that the American League leadership really has differences of a serious nature with us and thus with the International Left Opposition with whom basically we are in full agreement. In that case it would be the honest thing to state these differences openly so that all may see that in the American League we have not a section of the Left Opposition, but a reconstituted faction of some particular individuals.

We wish to declare that the responsibility for the breaking off of unity negotiations, so pleasing to the Party and to the Lovestone Right Wing group, rests entirely upon your shoulders. On our part, we stand ready, as we have done before to meet with you and to unify our forces, on the basis of the principles of the Left Opposition, on which fundamentally we stand.

On Wednesday, November 9th, at the Stuyvesant Casino, we are holding an Open Meeting on the question of THE COMMUNIST LEAGUE OF STRUGGLE AND THE COMMUNIST LEAGUE OF AMERICA at which we intend to discuss our reply to your organization and your letter to us. We invite you to send an accredited representative capable of presenting your views. He will be given ample time. We feel we owe it to all revolutionary workers, especially those who have sincerely wanted both our organizations to get together, to state the true facts of the situation.

Communist League of Struggle  
Albert Weisbord  
Secretary.

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In preparation for the discussion for the International Left Opposition conference we received from comrade Trotsky an introduction on the world economic developments and together with that some additional material elaborated by comrade Fields from Prinkipo. This was accompanied by a postscript of comrade Trotsky reading as follows:

The American comrade Field who is familiar with the problems of world economy has prepared at my request, the first sketch of an evaluation of the immediate cyclic tendencies of the world war, et. The conclusions of comrade Field are very carefully stated. Everyone who takes account of the complexity of the factors which determine changes in the business cycle will understand and approve the caution of the prognosis. The task is not to make guesses but to pose the question correctly, follow the development of the facts and to draw the conclusions in time.

I request the International Secretariat to forward these lines together with the statement of Comrade Field to all the sections as discussion material. It is perfectly clear that our international conference will have to express itself on this most important question.

Comrade Field had a conflict with the American League which led to his removal from our American section. My collaboration with comrade Field is of a completely personal character and has no connection with the inner life of the American League.

Prinkipo. August 18th. 1932

To Trotsky

The National Committee then addressed the following letter to Comrade Trotsky and to the International Secretariat:

Dear Comrades:

We have received the circular proposing an international discussion of the perspectives of the economic crisis. The National Committee will prepare a contribution to the discussion. This will be printed in the Militant and a copy will be sent to you for transmission to the other national sections for publication in their press as they see fit.

We have noted with surprise and astonishment the proposal to open this discussion in the international organization with the articles of B.J. Field, who was recently expelled from the New York Branch of the American League. The fact that comrade Field now writes from a point of view directly opposite to that with which he began his criticisms of our Conference thesis and the first Comrov letter on the subject of a possible upturn of capitalist economy, is not sufficient to convince us of the wisdom of assigning this role to him.

Certainly the National Committee cannot ignore the action of the New York Branch in this case, and proceed as if nothing had happened, without bringing disorganization into the League. We are in no way disposed to do this. On an international scale such a procedure seems to us to be all the more irregular and to contradict the tendency--which we have always supported--toward the formation of the International Left Opposition into a definite organization regulated by uniform organizational principles, and with the rights as well as the duties of the national sections clearly defined and universally applied.

Perhaps a discussion of organization questions will also be in order in preparation for the International Conference. The actions in the present case, following the Weisbord affair, cause us some concern. If the whole matter is a misunderstanding it can be cleared up. If there is a real difference of viewpoint on the organization question it should be squarely put. We hope it is only a misunderstanding. If so we will do all we can to dispose of it in short order.

We do not object to an intervention of the International Organization in any question concerning the policy and activity of the League. The advice we have received on important questions has always been welcomed and has aided us in correcting errors and strengthening our political position.

We recognize the right of the International Organization also to review organization decisions of national sections, including expulsions. But such interventions ought to proceed according to certain formal rules. Appeal should be taken in regular order, full information secured, etc. In the absence of such a formal intervention based on full information, political collaboration of one section with persons expelled from other sections can only lead to confusion and demoralization.

We do not of course call into question here the right of comrade Trotsky to engage in a personal collaboration with Field:

the extent that he may be able to assist him in his work. But we find most objectionable in the present proceedings regarding comrade Field is what amounts to an informal disregard of the decision taken in the American League. When comrade Trotsky protested against the publication of an article by Landau in the French magazine Le Lutte de Classes we fully agreed with him—on organizational as well as on political grounds. Again when he criticized the Spanish section for allowing the name of one expelled by the French section to appear as a collaborator in its paper when he asked how they would react if the French League were to print articles from the expelled Gorkin, we thought the right and the logic were all on comrade Trotsky's side. In these fundamental questions of organization principle also, we do not see any ground for the well-known "American exceptionalism".

Like nearly all the other sections we have taken a position against the proposal to allow the various expelled groups and individuals to participate in the International Conference. But if we take this point of view in regard to the Conference itself, how can a leading role—or any serious role whatever for that matter—in the preparation of one of the important questions of the Conference be assigned to an expelled member of the American League which has been in existence for four years and has some solid accomplishments to its credit?

We hope you will understand that it is not a matter of narrow-minded fanaticism on our part which regards as non-members and expelled members as renegades, and excludes every form of collaboration with them. As a matter of fact it was suggested to comrade Field, who—like many others who do not fit in a Communist organization—undoubtedly has some special knowledge and talents which would be useful, that he remain a sympathizer of the League for the time being and enter into a limited collaboration with us in that capacity. His refusal to do this; his failure to make a formal appeal to the Plenum of the National Committee against the action of the New York Branch; his attempt to circumvent the League by a personal excursion to Europe—in all this is to be seen only added illustrations of the petty bourgeois free-lance spirit which was at the bottom of his hopeless conflict with the League.

In New York, as well as in Paris, there are sufficiently numerous casual elements in and around the League who are inclined to play with questions of organization, with political ideas, with the problems of "leadership" and everything else. Such people would like to disregard everything that has been done up till now in America and begin all over again. To allow even a small concession in the Field case would only strengthen such elements as a proletarian organization. We are pulling in the opposite direction. That is the way we understand the progressive and revolutionary standpoint in the internal conflicts in Europe and interpret it at home. In this we believe we are fully entitled to the support of the International Organization of the Left Opposition.

National Committee  
Communist League of America (Opposition)

Secretary

P.S. About the Weisbord matter we will write separately.

This is the reply of comrade Trotsky to the N.C. letter printed  
p. 14.

To the Leadership of the Communist League of America (Opposition)

Buyukada, Oct. 20, 1932

Dear Comrades:

I am replying herewith to your letter of Oct. 7, concerning the  
Fields question.

1. It appears that you give the Fields question a certain connec-  
tion with the Weisbord question. I will therefore begin with the  
~~the Weisbord~~ letter.

The Weisbord group addressed itself formally to the International  
Secretariat, with the request to intervene. Weisbord, upon his  
own initiative came to me. The International Secretariat asked for  
my opinion in regard to this question and I had no formal possibi-  
lity of withholding such an expression of opinion and could also  
see no political reason for such a procedure. Naturally I held it  
to be my duty in this especially delicate case, to do everything  
possible to strengthen the position and the authority of the League  
as against the Weisbord group. Meanwhile I see no grounds to regret  
all that was done in this question in Principo. The Weisbord  
group had to recognize the erroneousness of its own position in the  
most important questions as against the League. This is a consi-  
derable political gain. Moreover, your reply to the Weisbord  
statement can only strengthen your position and authority. I no-  
ticed that already, for example with comrade Fields: He recognized  
that your reply was tactful and correct. Over what can you then  
complain in this case?

2. The case of Fields is an entirely different one--simpler and  
more complicated. Simpler--because it is here a case of a single  
comrade. More complicated--because our practical objectives thereby  
appear not entirely to harmonize.

After conversations with comrade Glotzer, after articles bearing  
upon this in The Militant and after personal conversations with  
comrade Fields I have received the specific impression that the  
collaboration of comrade Fields in the League is not made more  
difficult or impossible because of your looking upon him as a  
somewhat politically or morally unworthy person or as an alien type,  
but rather, while he, during his past, has not become developed  
for a leading capacity in a revolutionary organization, but through  
his intellectual qualities nevertheless is pushed onto that road.  
This contradiction, which in general does not happen so seldom, can  
be overcome in a big organization. But as the League remains yet  
a small pioneer organization, it thereby feels itself compelled  
to take sharper measures to protect its own existence. This is  
about the way the case appears to me.

On the other hand, it appears to me that comrade Fields can be of  
considerable service to the Left Opposition as a whole because of  
his expertness of economic and statistical data. We need some one  
who follows the facts of world economy thoroughly from day to day  
and who is in a position to render account of these facts to himself  
and to others. I have already for some period of time looked  
around for such an economic expert of the Left Opposition. But  
without result. I hardly believe we can find another with the qua-  
lifications of Fields.

I have, of course, given myself an account of the importance of the fact that comrade Fields is expelled from the New York branch. But such a formal act as the expulsion must not only be judged formally but also politically. One can expel someone because of being a spy, another because of being totally corrupted, a third because he represents a principled enemy tendency. But one can also expel someone, because the one in question--honestly and fully worthy by itself--under the existing conditions, disturbs the unity of the organization and threatens its ability of action. In this latter case (and that is the case of Fields) it would perhaps have been better from the very beginning to call upon the assistance of the International organization in order to neutralize such a comrade as far as the national organization is concerned and nevertheless not to lose him. This is not a complaint but rather a proposal for the future.

These are the general reasons from which I have proceeded. The case of Landau, Gorkin, etc. which you cite and which you utilize with great polemical skill (which I personally enjoyed) is not a measure in this case. Landau was not expelled; he attempted to expel the majority of his own organization. When this was objected to he constituted his own faction. Two rival "Left Opposition" struggled for the affiliated membership. In this case to accept Landau would mean to betray our German organization.

Gorkin left the Left Opposition in order to engage in a fighting collaboration with the most suspicious political organizations; also with the Right opposition. According to the charges of the Spanish comrades, Gorkin also engaged in personal dirty deals (money questions).

The Waishord group can in a certain sense be considered as a rival organization. Com. Fields is not at all. Also, com. Fields did not establish connections with the Musteites, or the Lovestonites against the League. The difference is really great. That he went over the heads of the leadership of the League, is, from an organizational standpoint, not correct. That he went to Europe, seeking the way to the Left Opposition, does not speak against Fields but for him. This proved that he meant it seriously.

All this moved me, after quite serious consideration, to send the contributions of Fields on America to the sections as material for discussion. His contributions contain important thoughts and proposals and deserves to be read and discussed. And even if it should come to an international decision in the case of Fields, these contributions could nevertheless serve as important material for the information of the sections.

The fact that the article of com. Fields appeared in the Opposition press without a previous agreement with you was really not correct. For this I will assume the major responsibility and I am ready, if you consider it useful, to submit a corresponding excuse to all of the sections.

I maintain however, that the question of Fields must be decided individually; not only from the standpoint of the organization conflict in New York, but also from the standpoint of the international organization.

I will remain very thankful if you will translate this letter into English and make it available for all the members of your leadership.

With the best and most friendliest greetings and wishes,

Yours,

I. Trotsky



Page 16.

A further letter from com. Trotsky on the c. so of com. Fields:  
Buyukada, Nov. 13, 1932

To the Leadership of the Communist League of America (Opposition)  
Dear Comrades:

I wrote you that we had in mind here to "legalize" comrade Fields in one of the European sections for the duration of his work here. It was with the understanding then that he would remain here for a considerable period of time. But it now appears that this is impossible for him because of financial reasons and that he will soon have to return to America. With this the plan mentioned above is eliminated, which we, of course, aimed to carry out only in collaboration with you.

In regard to the future in America, the plans of Fields are, insofar as it appears to me from conversations with him, the following: He returns fully determined to work for the Left Opposition and to find the way back to the League. But in any case not by the methods attempted by Weisbord. He will propose his services to the League without simultaneously raising the question of his reinstatement. I believe he can be of good service in the field of winning the intellectual Marxists (an activity for example in the sense of my letter to Calverton). Through our theoretical and political superiority as against the party we will be able to count on certain sympathies from the "academicians" and these sympathies we can utilize materially and intellectually, without, of course, delivering the organization to these elements. During the course of this work it will perhaps be proven that Fields himself belongs in the organization. But this you will be able to judge better than we can from this distance. What I want to insist upon is that the relationship with Fields be as much as possible so arranged that he can in the future also be utilized for our international theoretical works.

Please let me once more assure the leadership of the New York organization that I was and still am very far from wanting to take its organizational decision lightly. My motive in this whole question was only the necessity of obtaining qualified forces for our international activities.

With best Communist greetings,  
Yours, L. Trotsky

Upon receipt of these letters the National Committee decided to consider the question satisfactorily concluded insofar as there was any misunderstanding at all between the League and comrade Trotsky, and to defer action on the question of the status of comrade Fields until his return.

The National Committee  
Communist League of America (Opposition)