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## The First National Conference of the RCP and Its Empirical Leadership

By PIERRE FRANK

It is only several weeks since the radicalization of the laboring masses in Great Britain, together with that of the laboring masses in the whole world and most particularly on the European continent, expressed itself in the vote which gave the Labour Party an overwhelming parliamentary majority.

All the members of the Fourth International have taken note of the importance of this vote in the present period. The consequences which it will produce on the entire continent and the new level to which the class struggle is going to be raised in Great Britain will be the subject of discussions with a view to determining the tasks posed by the new situation.

The holding of a national conference by the British Trotskyists during the very days in which the Labour government was being formed, even if this event was known only to a limited number of workers, is an important element of this situation. It is evident to everyone that objective conditions will open up enormous opportunities for us, but the results will depend in great part on the relatively good functioning of the instrument of the proletarian revolution—the revolutionary party—in the course of the grandiose events which are being outlined on the horizon.

The author of these lines has been able to follow closely the life and the activities of the British Trotskyists for several years, especially since the unification. He has been in contact with numerous militants of the party and, finally, he was able to get a very good picture of the party itself, of its leadership as well as its membership, in the course of the conference discussions. Important progress has been achieved since 1939, for at the beginning of the war there only existed conflicting groups without

numerical strength and without political character. The most important progress was the unification. To be sure, it could not resolve all the problems raised by the transition from a circle existence dominated by clique struggles to the life of a revolutionary grouping seeking to open a path for itself into the working class. But at least it did eliminate a number of obstacles hanging over from the past. In such a situation, while every group participating in the unification was duty-bound to strive with all its might to merge into the new organization, the heaviest responsibility in this respect fell upon the shoulders of the majority group, of the group which because of its numerical superiority took the leadership into its hands.

Eighteen months elapsed between the unification and the first national conference. That is sufficient time to draw up a balance sheet. Without exaggerating in the least, we must say very clearly that the conference of the RCP has shown—for anyone at all familiar with workers' organizations—that the party is facing grave difficulties. Moreover, the main responsibility for these difficulties rests with the leadership which has shown great concern, not to clarify political questions, but to maintain an uncontested hold on the organization. Our article aims to arouse the international organization, whose intervention is indispensable in aiding the party to surmount this situation. It proceeds from a discussion of the party conference itself. We assume that the documents of the latter are at the disposal of those who will read what we have to say, which will permit us to dispense with lengthy and numerous quotations. Nevertheless, this article, treating with multiple aspects of the party life, will be rather long. But the subject and circumstances demand it.

## The Preparations for the Conference

The Conference suffered in the first place from absolutely insufficient preparation. The first documents of the Central Committee came out only about four weeks before the opening of the conference. The minority documents followed a little later. Consequently, there were almost no discussion articles. Not a single member of the majority of the CC wrote an article to develop a single point in any one of the resolutions. At the very last moment, three or four days before the conference met, a long reply of the Political Bureau appeared in answer to a minority article.

The most extraordinary fact to underscore is the failure to present a written organization report, examining in critical fashion the activity of the party since its formation, the political positions taken in different circumstances, the work in the various fields of activity and the state of the organization. A verbal report was, to be sure, made at the conference. But it was manifestly inadequate and could not permit the members of the party as well as the other sections of the Fourth International to form a precise opinion on this subject.

As a consequence of such faulty preparations there was: (a) extraordinary discord between the views expressed by the various delegates voting for the resolutions of the CC, notably a crying discord between most of the contributions made by the comrades from the field and those of the leaders of the party; (b) a visible weakness in the discussion as a whole, and no discussion at all to speak of, on questions on which the minority did not take the floor.

## The Reports and the Discussion upon Them

We shall take up each of the reports, one after the other.

1. **The Organization Report**, which was verbal as already noted, was above all a descriptive picture of the party, entirely divorced from any political evaluation. Consequently, the past policy of the party was not discussed at all in any of the conference sessions. On this report, the discussion consisted in the main of detailed observations on the manner of circulating of the press, on fund raising and on a campaign to double the membership in the coming year. No discussions on the positions taken and the results obtained in the strikes, in the struggle against repression, in the ILP or Labor Party work, in the elections, etc. No discussion either on the contents of the *Socialist Appeal*, which is the principal instrument in the work of the party.

2. **The International Report**, likewise verbal, was also a collection of quite superficial information material on the activity of our sections, the affirmation of the need for an international conference and a demand for the transfer of the IS to England or to the continent. Properly speaking there was no discussion on this report either.

In this report, the secretary of the party, J. Haston, undertook the defense of Comrades Morrow and Morrison against the "methods of Cannon" but did not say a word about the political differences in the American section.

In regard to the international report, we would like to go into detail here on some matters to fill out a letter we addressed to the European Secretariat and to the Central Committee of the *Parti Communiste Internationaliste* (in France) in July 1945 and in which we said that a long indictment could easily be made of the internationalist conceptions of the RCP leadership. By this we are not referring, of course, to their practice of political and material solidarity against the capitalist enemy. On the contrary. We refer precisely to their conception of the relations within the international organization. Here we will enumerate several facts bearing on the international activity of the RCP leadership in the course of the eighteen months past.

(a) When the "liberation" of Europe began and even before we had received word of the activities of our organizations under the heel of the Gestapo, several emigre comrades proposed that a commission be organized for the purpose of preparing information material and documentation destined for these sections and groups which were cut off from us for many years. In our view, this commission could not have any political power, the

IS being the only qualified body in this respect and, besides, because there were not sufficient political forces to fulfill such a function in London. The RCP leaders, who considered themselves qualified for international leadership, wanted to create a commission with political powers, that is, a substitute for the IS, on condition that the decisive vote in this commission would be allocated to the Political Bureau of the RCP. In other words, the emigre comrades were simply to be allocated the role of providing international window dressing for the positions of the PB, which at the time appeared to us to have a very poor opinion of our sections.

(b) In opposition to the IS, the leadership of the RCP contended that the Irish organization was merely a part of the British organization. No matter how weak the Irish Trotskyists might be, their organization into an independent national group is a vital condition for their development. In a country in which the national question takes on such importance, in which even the reformists themselves are organized separately from the British reformists, to belong to a national organization whose leadership is in London could very well be catastrophic for our Irish comrades.

(c) In the Neath election, the leadership organized an "international rally," which could not take place for reasons that are not relevant here. To put forward the internationalist character of our organizations, to make known in the course of an election campaign the activity of our sections all over the world, is highly laudable. Since the present circumstances do not permit our sections to be directly represented, the RCP could have denounced the measures of the bourgeois states which permit the leaders of the Stalinist and reformist parties to cooperate internationally in order to deceive the working class but deny the same right to the organizations which defend the rights of the workers and fight for the world revolution. But for this rally in Neath, preparations were made to have "representatives" of the following countries: Germany, France, Greece, Czechoslovakia, Belgium, Burma and India. The formula "countries," not "sections," was an ambiguous one, but that did not make matters better because, outside of Belgium and India, for which the given comrades could, without actually having mandates, honestly speak as militants who participated in the class struggle of these countries, the "representatives" of the other countries did not represent anything at all. It was a masquerade, a wretched caricature of the Stalinist carnivals of the past, something entirely alien to our internationalist conceptions.

(d) The most disquieting symptom is the following: the RCP leadership shows an extraordinary sensitivity to criticism directed against it inside the international organization and calls that a lack of loyalty, but it is devoid of sensitivity when opponents of our international organization publicly attempt to counterpose the RCP to another section of the Fourth International.

The article of Stuart immediately provoked a heated reply from the PB, which was, of course, perfectly within its rights. But the numerous flirtations directed by Shachtman publicly in *New International and Labor Action*, with a view toward counterposing the good RCP to the bad SWP, have never aroused the sharp public reply which they merited.

3. **The Report on the International Situation**. The document on the international situation was characterized above all by the following: It was vague on points which required the greatest precision, because different policies flowed from them depending on what answer was given to them; but it was absolutely categorical on the USSR, on questions which for the moment do not raise any differences as to slogans between comrades having divergent views on the subject. We do not mean to say that the discussion on the USSR is unimportant, but it is undeniably the question on which we have the least information; it is the most difficult to treat and we have absolutely nothing to gain from declaring that the USSR came out of the war stronger than ever. The discussion on this point, on one side and the other, was approached more from the point of view of "socialism in one country" than from that of the world revolution: military power and production figures were invoked more often than class

relationship. This weakness was due to the document presented by the CC which while affirming in its first twenty lines that "overshadowing the military and diplomatic arrangements, however, is the fear of proletarian revolution in Germany and in Europe as a whole" is consecrated in the main to the diplomatic contortions connected with the balance of power following the conclusion of the war and leaves in obscurity the principal phenomenon of the present situation, the radicalization of the masses, upon which our policy must be based for a whole period to come.

On the situation in Europe, the melange contained in this basic document was not at all disentangled in the course of the discussions except for the fact that Comrade T. Grant—for the first time to our knowledge—expressed a point of view which seems to us to touch upon the theoretical source of the differences on the European questions. He denied that the European governments at present are for the most part of the Bonapartist type. Especially in France he regards the regime there as democratic. This point of view evidently is not in contradiction with that which he formulated in the document discussed at the Conference where a small concession is made on the question of Bonapartism . . . in Greece. But in what terms! Speaking of the government of that country he informs us that "elements of Bonapartism and military dictatorship are undoubtedly present in this set-up." "Elements"! The argumentation of Comrade Grant is that there is no pure democracy and that democracy has never meant an absence of anti-working class repression. But that is entirely beside the question, because repression or the absence of repression are not the criteria by means of which we define the political form of the state. There isn't any such thing as a state without repression because every state begins with "armed groups of men who have at their disposal material means such as prisons" with the aim of assuring the domination of a class. One of the differences between Bonapartism and democracy as forms of capitalist domination lies in the role played by elections and parliamentary assemblies. In France, where political forms often take on an accelerated development, the nature of the present regime is clearly demonstrated in the coming elections. In this Bonapartist regime with a democratic cloak, there will be held on the same day an election of a parliamentary type for the convocation of a constituent assembly side by side with a referendum of the Bonapartist plebiscitary type to deprive this constituent assembly of effective rights.

In our opinion a confusion of the same kind, a similar slovenliness in Marxist terminology can be found also in an amendment presented by the PB to the text on the situation in Great Britain, owing to the new situation created by the electoral victory of the Labor Party. That's why we shall take it up in this connection. In this amendment, which was incorporated into the text adopted by the conference there is a reference to the "by-passing of a Popular Front stage in Britain" and the statement that "the Labor government is a Kerensky government." These expressions require clarification on the part of the RCP leadership. The fact that the Labor Party is in power without including the bourgeois liberals, to be sure, makes the situation different in effect from that of the Popular Front as it was practiced on the continent. But, from this to conclude that it is Kerenskyism is more than lightminded. In the People's Front governments in France and in Spain and in the Kerensky government there were elements of Bonapartism, since the democratic structure was impaired in France and never properly established in Spain or in Russia. In Britain at the present time, democracy remains, although there can be no doubt that its crisis is approaching and that its advent has been hastened by the electoral triumph of the Labor Party. We believe, furthermore, that the present government must be considered only as the first Labor government in the period opening up and that, under the pressure of the masses, it will give way to other Labor governments oriented more to the left. In any case, how can one speak of Kerenskyism in England and of democracy in France or in Italy under the present conditions? Further, how can one speak of Kerenskyism in the political analysis of the situation in England and declare at the same time, as the reporter on trade union work did, that "it would be fantastic to raise at present the question of ad hoc committees."

Apocryphal of this same political document we wrote to the European Secretariat that it contained a camouflaged polemic against the position of the latter on the partisan movement. Long quotations will be necessary to corroborate this.

In November 1944, the CC of the RCP adopted a resolution "On the National Question in Europe" from which we quote the following points:

"6. To these movements, and particularly to the leadership, the proletarian party and the proletariat must adopt an attitude of implacable hostility, opposing and exposing their class roots and anti-proletarian policy; explaining that such leaders seek national freedom only as part of their programme of subjugation of the proletariat together with other peoples; and demonstrating that there is no possibility of genuine national freedom along that road.

"7. In opposition to the military formations of the bourgeois-led and inspired Resistance Movements, the proletarian party must counterpose and organise independent military formations of the working class, as well as its own independent military formations.

"8. The mass movements of resistance are, nevertheless, important fields for revolutionary activity. Within the Resistance Movements the class contradictions manifest themselves, and in some cases are carried to the point of civil war. So also do the class conflicts express themselves between the governments and the militias. As part of its tactics the revolutionary Party must send members into these Resistance Movements to create a conscious proletarian opposition . . ."

This position was fought by several comrades of the RCP but defended obdurately by the PB at the very time when the British government was conducting an implacable armed struggle against the ELAS in Greece. Shortly afterward there arrived the resolution of the European Executive Committee of January 1945 in which everyone can read:

"But there also our sections must be capable of discerning in the existing organizations (such as the Patriotic Militias, the FFI in France, the Greek partisans, etc.) despite their reactionary names and orientations, the progressive social content, supporting them, orienting them and broadening them.

"The rabid attacks of the bourgeoisie and of foreign imperialism against the popular militias and armed partisan formations which arose from the resistance to the Nazi occupation show that the criterion of our class enemy was more correct than the political intuition of the ultra-leftists both outside and inside our ranks with regard to these formations.

"Instead of ignoring or condemning them as a whole, the partisans of the Fourth International must seek to develop their progressive social content and to orient them toward an autonomous political life in the service of the working masses and against the bourgeoisie."

The leadership of the RCP could either have renounced its position or defended it frankly in criticising the position of the European committee. Not at all! Without any either written or verbal explanation, it presents to the conference a text which is just as muddled as before:

"Despite the 'national' non-class policy of betrayal by the leadership, the movement represented the strivings and pressure of the masses for a class solution, thus the revolutionary socialists were duty-bound to give critical support to the left wing against the right . . . In opposition to the military formations of the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois-inspired resistance movement, the proletarian party has the duty to counterpose, and wherever possible to organize independent military formations of the working class as well as its own independent military formations.

"Implacable hostility to the 'Resistance Bloc' is supplemented by flexible tactics in the operation of party policy. The organizations of the Resistance were important fields for revolutionary activity. The revolutionary party had the duty to send its cadres into the Resistance movements

counterposing a proletarian to a bourgeois and petty-bourgeois programme. . ."

What we have here before us is a confusion which does not come from insufficient elaboration or from ignorance which can be dissipated in the course of discussion, but from a formulation designed to be interpreted in every way. This confused text cannot be considered under the circumstances otherwise than as the product of dishonest politics.

In these quotations, in paragraph 7 above as well as in the conference resolution, there is something altogether remarkable. The new slogan of party militias is placed on the same plane as workers' militias in the struggle for power. We cannot recall encountering the slogan, understood in this sense, either in the best days of the Comintern or in our Bolshevik-Leninist organization. The revolutionary party must have its defense groups for the protection of its headquarters, demonstrations, etc. It must also have an organization for military work in the same capacity as a trade union fraction. When the situation poses the practical task of the creation of workers' militias, it is quite normal for the militants of the defense groups and the military fractions to constitute the basic nuclei of the first proletarian combat formations. But we have never heard of party militias for the conquest of power, not even as constituent formations of the workers' militia. To conceive of such militias would be similar to launching the slogan—which everyone would consider stupid—for Trotskyist Soviets, because the armed formations cannot be separated from the organs of power. The PB ought to recall the example of Spain. In the first days of the civil war in July 1936 there were formed the independent militias of the POUM, the anarchists, the Stalinists, etc. It could not have happened otherwise because none of these organizations called for the formation of Soviets and of a workers' militia and particularly because such militias cannot be improvised within 24 hours, whereas the political organizations with members at their disposal could more rapidly draw in sympathizers. But this situation could not endure. The POUM, far from calling for Soviets, swung back and forth between the proletarian revolution and collaboration with the bourgeois democrats and wanted to maintain its own militia, particularly as a bargaining point in the maneuvers with the bourgeois of the Generalidad. The creation of Soviets would have brought in its train the creation of workers' militias and the POUM militia would have had to dissolve into this proletarian army. But, since the POUM, like the civil war in Spain as a whole, remained on the plane of bourgeois democracy, it was beaten in advance when the Stalinists demanded the dissolution of party militias and the creation of a single republican army within the bourgeois state.

Has the RCP leadership any other conceptions, any more light to throw on these questions? We must regret the glibness with which this most difficult task of a revolutionary party is treated here: the going over from the weapon of politics to the politics of weapons.

**4. The Perspectives of the RCP.** On this report the main discussion of the conference took place. It dealt with the alternative of an orientation toward future entry into the Labor Party or against this orientation. We shall not deal here with the arguments developed pro and con; they can be found in the documents of the conference. More exactly, the arguments for it may be found in the documents of the minority, while the documents of the majority contain a good many other things but arguments against it. They bear the characteristic mark of the RCP leadership. **This leadership is not Marxist but empirical.** This is not a label which we append to them arbitrarily for pure polemic reasons. It is a method which they openly proclaim as their own in tactical questions. With a certain amount of astonishment we read in the reply of the PB to the article of Comrade Healy:

"It is precisely in the field of tactics that empirical adaptation is necessary. When Comrade Healy learns this he will raise his stature as a Marxist."

This is more than a slip of the pen. The speech of the secretary of the party, Comrade Jock Haston, to the conference on the British question really deserves to be reproduced in full. On

the question of "entry" it may be summed up as follows: Yes, we are empiricists in tactical questions. Yes, there are differences in the PB on entry. T. Grant thinks we should not enter. H. thinks that we should most certainly enter.\* As for me, I think that perhaps we shall have to enter but that we cannot decide definitely today. But we have all agreed not to pose the question before the conference and to present a resolution on this point which leaves the door open for the future.

A strange methodology and a strange pedagogical method with which a leadership educates the party! On the problem of what kind of an orientation to pursue there exist, the secretary of the party informs us in a quite matter of fact way, two different lines as well as an absence of line in the leadership. But the latter has decided that a party conference is not the place to discuss and to clarify these positions. The leadership thinks in effect that the interests of the party demand a "unanimous" leadership which the membership should follow without troubling itself too much about the policy to be pursued by the leadership. To obtain this, the leadership presents a resolution which more or less amalgamates all the different points of view expressed in the PB, which permits it more easily to gather votes, but which works out to the detriment of the education of the party. Finally, when a minority raises the question in the discussion in order to obtain a clear orientation in favor of a given line instead of an amalgamation of divergent lines, it disturbs the little combination made behind the backs of the party membership and is subjected to denunciation as a bloc of the Healy clique with the agents of Frank. As a matter of fact, not even the most shameless clique could raise questions in any organization which were out of line with the situation. The problem of the Labor Party, which for several months has been placed on the order of the day of all the small organizations in Britain, must be discussed and resolved with the greatest frankness and courage by the British Trotskyists, with the aid of all the sections of the Fourth International.

As in the case of the partisan movements mentioned above, the method of the leadership has as its source the desire inherited from the old circle spirit of appearing always to have been correct, and the fear of taking a clear position on events. Most of the documents of the leadership of the RCP put forth a maximum of variants but are always imprecise when it comes to an orientation. In the sphere of tactics it proceeds by groping its way. It does not know how or does not dare to draw conclusions from political analyses. At the conference, pliged by the criticism of the minority on this point, Comrade Haston apologized for his empiricism "in tactical matters." He even went to great length to show that he learned this in a good school, in that of Marx, Lenin, Trotsky (and even Cannon), giving examples where all the latter modified their positions in view of the circumstances. To be sure, we make decisions taking into account the facts and the actual tendencies of development. To be sure, changes and turns in the situation lead us to modify our policy and our slogans. But, for all of that, we are not empiricists, because the facts and the tendencies of development are always interpreted on the basis of a theory which is the condensation of all historical experience. It is quite true that in certain cases it is difficult to judge correctly just what certain relationships of forces, certain tendencies, etc. are. We then have to intervene in a manner which presents a fairly great degree of uncertainty, empirically attributing values to certain indeterminate elements in the situation. Lenin and Trotsky often repeated, in cases of this kind, the maxim of Bonaparte, that "we will go into action and then we shall see." But even there they did not speak of empiricism, because for them political action and theory were never separated, experience serving to rectify errors or to adjust and make more precise a given orientation that was being followed. We are never empiricists, not even in tactical matters, and we have always combatted empiricism within the workers' ranks.

The political document of the leadership can be devoid of a clear political line, but it is impossible for an organization to \*In fact, he has always thought that the British Trotskyists should never have been outside the Labor Party these long years. Only when a comrade presses him with a few precise questions did he make it known in passing that at the unification his position on this point (developed in a twenty-page document) was not correct. That is all and it is all quite simple.

work in a void and an orientation must be evolved in one way or another, even empirically. At the conference of the RCP what was most striking, aside from the extreme caution of the leadership with regard to the line to be pursued, was the orientation developed by several delegates from the field quite clearly in terms recalling in many respects the old Stalinist "Third Period." They remarked, for instance, that the workers already know that the new government is a capitalist government, that the best elements were already in struggle against the Labor Party (not only against the leadership). These tendencies are encouraged when the leaders declare that "in many important areas, the Labor Party had to rely upon us (in the elections)" or that "in Neath (where it received more than 30,000 votes) the Labor Party is stone dead."

In a certain measure the appearance of such "Third Period" tendencies in our ranks need not surprise us, for the objective conditions that give rise to them exist today in Europe, including Britain. It is quite certain that among broad layers of workers clashing with the Labor government ultra-left tendencies will become manifest. We must not, of course, be indifferent to these layers, but the role of a Marxist leadership is precisely not to tail-end them empirically. It ought not only to get in contact with them and to take up their demands but also to have a policy linking them with the main body of the working class, in order to win over the best elements to the party and to seek to penetrate into the majority of the working class with their experience. It is not, to be sure, an easy task. The best means of accomplishing it, in our opinion, is to bring our ideas into what will rapidly become a center of intense political ferment, the left wing of the Labor Party, no matter how hypothetical it may seem to some today. The danger we see is not that a "Third Period" policy will be practiced by the RCP, but that it will pursue a hand-to-mouth policy which will end up by disorienting the most ardent militants.

5. The Trade Union Report was discussed in two parts. That part which dealt with the question of "nons first" (let the non-unionists be discharged from the plants first) was relatively secondary, but this was the only question which had been widely discussed in the RCP for months. The documents on this question indicate the different positions with sufficient clarity, and there is not much to add here.

The general report on trade union work aroused but little discussion. Some comrades gave reports of their activity in their region or in their trade, but no debate developed on perspectives and tasks in this important field of work. The absence of a clear political orientation of necessity had to make itself felt in the trade union work. Once again empiricism showed its head. On the one hand, there was the question of an unofficial unemployed movement, of workers seeking a different leadership, and at the same time we had the contention that it was fantastic to pose the question of committees. The refusal to face up to the question of building a left wing in the Labor Party had its complement in overlooking the need to form a left wing in the trade unions, with part of the bureaucratic apparatus of the unions reacting in order not to lose leadership of the masses engaged in a process of radicalization.

A curious incident in this debate was the insistence of the partisans of the PB that the minority take a stand against it, particularly on the question of the MWF (Militant Workers' Federation) and it is, to be sure, regrettable in our view too, that the minority was not prepared on this question. Since the discussion on this point will undoubtedly arise again in the RCP we shall give here only a brief resume of our views. The MWF—according to the reporter himself—was created "in spite of us" during the war when strike movements took place and the rank and file militants were forced to seek national coordination outside the confines of the traditional trade union apparatus. Our comrades were undoubtedly correct in participating in an organization created like this, in the course of strike movements. When the latter terminated, the RCP militants responsible for this work believed that there was a perspective of a powerful development of the MWF which, according to them, could serve as a "bridge" between the working class and our party. Here is where the mistakes began. In actual practice, far from growing, the MWF

declined and the reporter explains this fact as due above all to the absence of struggles and the IAA decree directed by the government notably against the MWF. As for the future, we find once again the habitual mixup of the empirical leadership of the RCP: the MWF can develop and serve as a bridge between the party and the revolutionary militants in the factories, it can perhaps supplant the National Council of Shop Stewards, but the Stalinists can very well revitalize the latter by a turn in policy.

In trade union work too—in spite of the many different particular forms which it may take on, and they are many—theory must not be forgotten. The MWF was created "in spite of us" by militant workers in the course of struggle in defense of the class interests and because they were deserted by their regular trade union organizations. It is a loose organization, in program as well as in structure, which served immediate needs in a given situation. This situation has passed. To maintain the organization it is necessary to give it a more precise program and objectives. Since it cannot be the program of the Fourth International, it has to be reduced infallibly to an organization of the centrist type whose existence can be prolonged for a short time on paper before its disappearance from the scene, with or without the IAA decree.

What could the future of the MWF have been? No one among us could possibly think of it as a "Red Trade Union." Can it become the center of future ad hoc committees? Such a conception would be simply puerile. As the basis of a revolutionary opposition in the unions and consequently, as a means of work for us in this field? That is the most probable course, the closest to reality, because the leadership of the MWF sends out to its members from time to time model resolutions on one question or another to be submitted in the union locals. In that case, a very grave political mistake is being made. It is that of substituting "broad tendencies" for our own fraction and for the struggle for our program in the mass organizations. These so-called broad tendencies, even when we are in control of their apparatus, become not bridges but obstacles to our work in the unions and the mass organizations. This question has a long history. The experience with "broad tendencies" was carried out on a vast scale a score of years ago by the British Communist Party with the "Minority Movement" and on an incomparably more reduced scale in 1930 by the French Trotskyists under the leadership of Rosmer with the "Unitary Opposition." The leaders of the RCP take a disdainful attitude towards the old factional struggles of the Bolshevik-Leninists and particularly towards those that took place in France. Nevertheless they could learn something from this conflict around the "Unitary Opposition" which was the first one that was bitterly fought out in the French organization. We advise the British comrades to read or reread in this connection an article by Trotsky entitled "The Mistakes of the Right Wing Elements of the Ligue in the Trade Union Question—Some Preliminary Remarks" which was published in the pamphlet "Communism and Syndicalism."

### The Voting and the New Leadership of the RCP

In all the votes on which the conference was divided, there were always the same 26 or 28 votes on one side and the same 8 or 9 votes on the other. Such a clear-cut division is all the more unfortunate because the majority did not reveal a very strong inclination to include the minority in the leadership of the organization. This can only nurture antagonisms at the cost of political clarification.

Of 15 members and 5 alternates, the majority only accorded the minority 2 members and one alternate on the Central Committee, a representation clearly out of proportion with the numerical strength of the tendencies in the party. The minority accepted this fact without raising any objections at the conference and we can well understand its reserved attitude on this point. But there is something more serious involved than an unequitable proportion in the CC. The majority had been inclined to give the minority no representation at all and there were some who did not refrain from saying so. But understanding that such a measure would shock the other sections of our international organization, the leadership wanted to maneuver, as it did on the political questions where it was wrong, and make

a concession which was in reality no concession at all. It is necessary to explain to the comrades of the RCP that what was involved was not a matter of making a concession to a minority, no matter how detestable it may have been pictured to them, but of an elementary right for a minority. It is necessary to explain to them that this is indispensable in order to include the whole of the party in daily action and that it is also one form among others of exercising the control of the party over the leadership.

The conceptions of the majority of the leadership with regard to the Central Committee are worthwhile shedding some light on. This organism, the highest authority of the party between conferences, meets only once every three or four months. Between its meetings, the leadership rests with the Political Bureau elected by the CC. Now, at the first session of the CC which resulted from the conference, the majority refused all posts in the Political Bureau to the minority, decided that the meetings of the PB would not be open to members of the CC, and that the latter are not to have access to minutes of these meetings. Under these circumstances, the members of the CC cannot really control the activity of the PB which, formally, is subordinate to it, and consequently, the control of the party itself becomes illusory.\*

The majority of the leadership is composed of the former leadership of the WIL and of H. of the former RSL.

The distinguishing features of the leadership noted above, its empiricism in particular, can be applied to the former WIL leadership. Theoretical questions are not treated seriously by them; the Fourth International for them begins only with the creation of the WIL. The daily activity centers around organizational manipulations. The real axis of the work for years has been the distribution of an agitation type of newspaper. Beside the great efforts consecrated to the latter, it is necessary to point out that almost nothing else is done by the leadership, from the political point of view as well as from the organizational, to produce and distribute the theoretical organ, the Workers International News, which appears very irregularly and with only very weak contributions from the members of the RCP.

As to H., his personal case is essentially a political question into which it is necessary to go somewhat into detail. He is the typical representative of the cliques and maneuvers of the past, juggling with a few of our ideas, yesterday within his own circle, today in a larger organization which he continues to treat as a circle, without manifesting the slightest interest in making our program live in the working class. On the eve of the unification he had to reconstitute the RSL, at least in appearance, after having been responsible for its disintegration. Several of his closest followers immediately

\* Since this article was written another session of the CC has been held, at the beginning of September. The minority took up again the question of relations between the CC and the PB and submitted the following resolution:

#### "Relationship of the PB to the CC

"1. The CC is the highest body of the party between conferences.

"2. The PB, as a sub-committee of the CC, is a subordinate party body.

"3. The institution of the PB is adopted by the party when it is not practicable for the CC to meet frequently and act as the political direction of the party because of its size and/or the dispersal of its membership in the various districts.

"4. From this it flows that the CC members have the right of access to all meetings, minutes, etc., of the PB, since the CC is called upon to ratify all decisions taken by the PB between sessions of the CC.

"5. Further, it is the normal practice, except perhaps under conditions of illegality or similar emergency, for political minorities represented on the CC to be also represented on the PB. The request of the minority, therefore, that one of its members be placed on the PB is entirely in accordance with Bolshevik procedure."

This resolution was rejected, but certain members of the majority understanding that they could not let matters rest with a merely negative attitude, requested time out for a caucus meeting, from which they came back with the following text which was then adopted by the majority of the CC:

abandoned the unified organization. Having no longer a base of his own in the party, he remains silent on political positions which he championed for years and combines with the former WIL leadership on the basis of mutual support. He has won their good graces by assuming as his sole task, in order to defend the leadership, the juggling of political problems by speeches that debase discussion to idle jests. At a time when our ranks in Europe have had to undergo such tests, when so many demands are placed upon each of our members, it is nothing less than a scandal to see the leader of a section devote to the organization only the spare moments of his leisure time. The document which he wrote on the eve of the conference is marked by the purest electoral opportunism of any in the party. Each one of us has, he says in effect, our own little ideas, but I behaved like a good boy in the leadership and I hope that the party will take this into consideration when it re-elects a CC.

The minority, although it has defended correct positions on certain points, still has much more to do before it can grow politically, which is indispensable for it if it wants to make progress in the party and help the latter to progress.

In our opinion, the minority must not enter into a struggle to obtain posts and votes at any cost. It must not permit itself to be turned aside from its part of the work in the party. The minority should refuse to engage in skirmishes on secondary questions and to engage in guerilla tactics which irritate rather than educate the comrades. Its principal task is to give clear answers to the political problems posed by the events in order to drive a wedge into the empiricism of the leadership and to animate the political life of the organization.

#### For International Intervention

We do not see how it is possible to separate the question of the British organization from the conflict in the American party, unless Comrades Morrow and Morrison—in whose behalf the leadership of the RCP has openly taken a position—dissociate themselves politically from the positions of the majority of the RCP. Be that as it may, the leadership of the RCP has come forward in the international discussion with even more pronounced views, upon which all the sections of the Fourth International must take a stand.

The documents of the RCP conference permit such an action with a full knowledge of the facts in the case. To sum up in a few lines: the analyses are confused, the political orientation is equivocal, the past of our international organization is disregarded, empiricism is prescribed for everyday work. In conclusion, the party is disarmed for the great struggles which are approaching.

#### "Duties, Rights and Composition of the PB

"1. The PB is a committee elected from the CC and is the highest body of the RCP between sessions of the CC, it has the authority of the CC between sessions of the CC.

"2. The PB is responsible to the CC as a collective body and not to individual members of the CC.

"3. The PB has the task of directing the day-to-day policy of the party between sessions of the CC and of convening regular general and special meetings of the CC to take decisions of great importance.

"4. The PB has the right to exclude individual members of the CC from its sessions but should not normally exercise that right, except in conditions where, in its opinion, it is necessary for the efficient and effective functioning of that body.

"5. In order that the day-to-day work of the Party may be carried on effectively, the PB should normally be a cohesive body consisting of members of the CC representing the majority opinion within the CC, although in exceptional cases minorities represented on the CC may be represented on the PB.

"6. To familiarise the members of the CC with its work and decisions PB reports of activities and decisions should be regularly issued to the members of the CC."

Does this resolution require comment? It speaks for itself more clearly than anything we have written about the purely factional and anti-democratic leadership of the RCP.

Now that international communications are beginning to improve, we are convinced that the question of the British section will be placed on the agenda of all our sections and that the latter will aid the British comrades to make new steps forward by taking up the defense of the fundamental positions of the Fourth International against empiricism.

PS: A "personal" word appears to me to be necessary. Intervening for the first time in an internal struggle since my readmission into the Fourth International, I can expect that

in the course of the discussion old episodes will be raised. Such an attempt was even made at the conference of the RCP. The theme is a very commodious one, in which the "methods of Cannon" are associated with the "methods" of the faction in which I fought. It will perhaps suffice to say a word about this in advance in order to expose the maneuver. But we declare right now that we shall not reply to those who will raise again the questions of the past, not because we have nothing to say on this subject, but because we will not lend ourselves to what would only be a diversion destined to sow confusion and avoid discussion. August 29, 1945.

## Letter from the Revolutionary Communist Party

### British Section of the Fourth International

National Secretary  
Socialist Workers Party  
USA

Dear Comrade,

I am forwarding to you a letter I was instructed to write arising out of the last CC meeting of the RCP held in September 1945.

The draft of this letter has long been on my desk and the delay in sending it has arisen only because of personal reluctance on my part to see the leading committees of our respective parties involved in such an unhappy correspondence. However, the issue must be worked out to the end and can only be solved by an open discussion between us.

Copies of this letter are being forwarded to the IS, to the EES and to Comrade Felix Morrow.

Yours fraternally,  
Jock Haston.

Nov. 17, 1945

Dear Comrade,

We discussed at the Central Committee of the RCP a letter from Comrade G. Healy of the RCP to leading members of the SWP. A copy of this letter was sent to us by Comrade Felix Morrow. We enclose this letter for the information of your committee.

We do not feel called upon to comment on the fake report given to leading SWP members as to what happened at the London membership meeting which the letter allegedly describes. We need only draw your attention to the fact that **neither Comrade Healy nor his faction had a single amendment to put to our written resolution which dealt with the European question. Nor did Comrade Healy speak on this question at our National Congress when it was on the agenda for discussion.**

Comrade Healy informs you that we do not want to "support Morrow 'on the record,'" and that we would like to dispose of the conflicting perspectives on the European question by "a nice little tete-a-tete behind the scenes without the responsibility of a serious international discussion." Possibly some of the leading American comrades accept this false allegation at its face value. Our political position has been established in documentary form in the Resolution adopted at the August National Congress of the RCP. If the comrades in the USA wish to take public issue with us, the record is open. The evidence proves that it is precisely Comrade Healy and his faction who are disposed to take shelter "behind the scenes."

Unfortunately, instead of branding publicly, this type of activity as inimical to the best interests of international and national party integration and cohesion, leading comrades of the SWP—recipients of Healy's letters, lend pen and tongue to keeping it alive.

Comrade Morrow has informed us at the same time that he

has seen another letter from Healy to the same source, which poses the question: "When shall we form our faction?"

In reporting this matter to the leadership of the British Party, Comrade Morrow has rendered a service to the International.

Comrade Healy has, of course, the right to correspond with leading members of the SWP if he wishes, and to say what he likes, just as you have the right to correspond with Comrade Healy. But in view of the nature of the correspondence and of the existing, to say the least, unhappy relations between leading comrades of the SWP and ourselves, we think it advisable to raise one or two points with you for discussion and clarification.

1. The correspondence of G. Healy reveals a factional relationship of a somewhat unhealthy character between leading members of the SWP and Healy and his faction.

2. The reported question to you: "When shall we form our faction?" indicates a measure of collusion with Healy in forming an open faction within the British Party. Not only a measure of collusion, but of direction by leading members of the SWP.

Comrade Healy and his associates deny that a faction exists at the moment. It seems that the calling into being of a faction by proclamation does not depend upon the logic of political relations in the RCP, but upon the word being given by certain members of the SWP via private correspondence.

If there are political differences that leading members of the SWP have with our leading committee here, then let them air the differences. And, if necessary, the comrades have the right and the duty to mobilise factional support for their ideas inside the British Party. **But first let us discuss the differences, if they exist, between the leading party committees.**

Factional relationships should be avoided if there are no deep divergent points of view. Certainly leading comrades or committees of one party of the Fourth International should not encourage factions in other sections without very pressing reasons; and only if and when a public discussion has revealed the need for such a relationship.

It is our impression, forced upon us, among other factors, by the correspondence in question, that leading comrades in the SWP are intent on maintaining factional relations—or, more precisely, clique relations with the Healy grouping in the RCP. Such a state of affairs cannot assist in international collaboration, or the best interests of our movement as a whole.

For your information, I am enclosing the extracts of the minutes of the CC September 1, 1945 dealing with this question; also the attitude towards Comrade Felix Morrow which was adopted by Comrade Healy and his faction.

The facts of this latter question as reported to the CC are as follows: In the presence of myself and several others, Comrade Healy made the serious allegation that the copy of the letter sent by Morrow to us was stolen from the SWP office, just as he (Morrow) had stolen material for the Shachtmanites. You will note that Comrade Healy denied having made that statement, **but the inference is clear.** Now this seems to us to be a very serious charge against a leading comrade, coming as it

did from one who has close factional ties with leading members of the majority of the SWP. It seems to us that the leading Committee of the SWP should issue an authoritative statement on this matter.

We await your replies to the above matters with interest.

Yours fraternally,

Jock Haston

General Secretary

For the Central Committee, RCP

**Extracts from the Minutes of the  
Central Committee of the RCP,  
September 1, 1945**

(Not ratified yet. Any inaccuracies  
will be forwarded after the next CC.)

Letter from Morrow to Grant dated July 25, read, with the enclosed letter from G. Healy to Cannon dated June 1, 1945. FW asked G. Healy for confirmation and GH assented.

H. Atkinson raised the question of G. Healy's statement outside of the National Conference that Morrow had stolen this letter, as he had stolen material for the Workers Party.

J. Deane said that Healy should bring charges in writing instead of using this method.

Healy denied that he had made the statement attributed to him that Morrow had stolen the letters for the Workers Party. What he had said was that Morrow had stolen this letter and had added that it was peculiar that letters had been stolen from the SWP for the Shachtmanites. Asked if he would withdraw, he said he had no intention of withdrawing a statement he had never made.

E. Grant moved that we write to the SWP protesting against the slanders circulating not only in London, but in the provinces where the Healy faction operates.

V. Simms drew attention to the innuendo in Healy's statement, which in his opinion, was worse than an open charge against Morrow. Dixon concurred.

Haston stressed the need to take up the question of the SWP leadership maintaining an organisational faction in the British Party, not only with the SWP leaders and members, but with the International. He dealt with H. Finch's statement to an ex-party member saying that the IS was supporting them in their objective of removing the present leadership.

Goffe said it seemed that Haston, with magnifying glass, is seeking a plot which exists only in the minds of certain comrades. If they wanted to form a faction they would do so openly. They do not deny that they have got together on the basis of certain ideas. The evidence of Stuart's letter to the ex-TO was worthless, because the TO had rejected Stuart's position, and people who supported Stuart had now changed their positions. The TO had been liquidated. On the question of Finch's statement: it was possible for individuals to claim that the IS supported them on a given point. He could claim that the IS supported him on given issues. He had been told for instance, that the SWP supported the minority on "nons." He asked how it could be deduced that a faction existed on the basis of Healy's statement on Morrow stealing the letter.

Goffe moved an amendment that the matter be referred to an International Control Commission.

Simms and Dixon spoke in opposition. The latter compared the faction to the Abern clique.

Teare: Healy did not deny that he had asked Cannon when to form the faction. The formation of the faction, it would appear, does not depend on the political situation here, but on when Cannon gives the word.

Birchall asked for confirmation from Healy as to whether he had written to Cannon along these lines. Healy replied: Not to Cannon but to a member of the SWP who goes under a pseudonym.

Lee asked Healy if he was prepared to place his correspondence at the disposal of the Central Committee and the party.

Healy refused. He said it was a personal matter—he could ask the same of the majority. (Cries of "Yes.")

Haston: All international correspondence addressed to the leading members of the party goes before the PB and CC.

Healy said he would have to place the question to the leaders of the SWP before agreeing. They did not regard the majority leadership in the same light as a Balkan country to be deposed and replaced. He was not a member of a faction. Their people got together on political questions—just as the majority did. On the question of the correspondence: any member is entitled to write to anyone they like. Mrs. Goldman writes to different people in this country and passes political comments. She is entitled to do so. The majority can pass a censure. There is nothing to stop them. The scene is set. Haston's course can be taken. But what is being dealt with are organisational matters—all questions will be resolved politically. In relation to cliques raised by Dixon, the International had laid down a statement on Dixon which no doubt he would raise at the International Conference. The Abernites strove to preserve their positions by by-passing political differences reflected in a bloc with Burnham. The minority never evinced a tendency to remove this one or that one. There were open discussions on the CC on the basis of political line.

J. Lawrence agreed with Healy that correspondence is allowed—where he differed with his conclusions. From this correspondence and from the discussions, one could only conclude that they consider themselves as the alternate leadership and that they maintain organisational cohesion. We ask for better methods in the International. There had been a ruling in the RSL that all correspondence with international sections be read at the CC. He proposed that this be done in the RCP. The situation before the fusion was different—there were open factions. True, the TO did discuss the maintenance of a faction on the basis of Stuart's letter and rejected it. Let us not go back on our position taken in the TO. We must struggle for cleanliness inside the International. Factional feeling must not dominate the party. He supported Haston's motion. Insofar as there was something concrete, let us hit it.

Grant: The correspondence before us was significant for this reason: not a single other member of the CC would refuse to show his correspondence, because it would be honest correspondence. Healy cannot show his correspondence because it is dishonest correspondence. Cannot build an international this way—referred to the poison of Abernism and characterised this as Zinovievism. Not an International Control Commission, but an International Conference is the place to burn out Zinovievism.

Dixon referred to the veiled insinuations of Healy against Morrow and asked Healy to make a written statement.

F. Ward believed the rank and file be made acquainted with our characterisation of Healy's clique activities, and moved: "That the characterisation expressed by the majority of the Healy clique be raised before the membership."

Haston opposed the motion of Ward and proposed an alternative motion:

"1. That the question of correspondence between Comrade Healy and the leading comrades of the SWP be taken up with the leaders of the SWP;

"2. That the allegations made by Comrade Healy against Morrow be taken up with Morrow and the leadership of the SWP;

"3. That the whole relation between the leading comrades of the SWP and Comrade Healy and his supporters be taken up with the IS for an international discussion."

Lawrence strongly opposed the opening up of the matter throughout the organisation because of the bad effect this would have on the members, particularly fresh workers.

After discussion the resolution was put. Healy moved an amendment to the resolution that Point 2 be deleted.

In favour of Healy's amendment: Goffe, Healy, Finch (alternate). Against 14 (including 3 alternates).

FW moved his resolution—1 in favour (Ward).  
For Haston's resolution: 14 (including 3 alternates).  
Opposed: 3.



# Reply to Letter from the Revolutionary Communist Party

By M. STEIN

New York, N. Y.  
December 8, 1945

Jock Haston  
London, England (Copies to EES; G. Healy; NC of SWP)

Dear Comrade:

I received your letter dealing with the correspondence between Comrade Healy and leading members of the SWP which, according to your opinion, "reveals a factional relationship of a somewhat unhealthy character between leading members of the SWP and Healy and his faction."

Your Central Committee minutes, attached to the letter, show that the decision to send us this letter was made on the 1st of September. The letter, however, is dated the 17th of November—that is, 2½ months later. It arrived yesterday. This means that for at least three months you have had the above-mentioned suspicions embedded in your minds. It is regrettable that we were thus deprived of the opportunity to make our reply earlier.

Frankly, I do not relish this kind of correspondence, this "plot and counter-plot" type of discussion, this game of cops and robbers. It is most profitless. It is, at best, negative.

In your letter you made a series of accusations. Even if your accusations are all false, even if all the facts are on the side of the accused, and the accused succeeds in proving this—then the most he can accomplish is to vindicate himself, prove he is "not guilty." But what is far more important is the fact that this type of discussion does not educate anybody, does not raise the level of polemics. On the contrary, it obscures political issues, it tends to discredit individuals and prejudice an objective appraisal of issues. It is precisely because of this latter point—the need of clearing the atmosphere of trivialities—that I force myself to write this letter. It is a distasteful but necessary job, like dusting furniture and sweeping the floor, in the interest of elementary hygiene.

The central point in your "case," Comrade Haston, is the charge that leading members of our party have been "in collusion with Healy in forming an open faction in the British party." You even go further and charge that the formation of this faction was done under the "direction of leading members of the SWP." I believe I can demonstrate that your "case" does not stand up, that it collapses because of its inner contradictions.

In your letter you say that "Comrade Healy has of course the right to correspond with leading members of the SWP if he wishes and to say what he likes, just as you have the right to correspond with Comrade Healy." If you grant the right to carry on such a correspondence—and that is a most elementary right which nobody can deny—then you must also grant the right to carry on this correspondence without the supervision or "inspection" of the leadership, without any censorship. In a word, individuals in the world Trotskyist movement have the same right to carry on an uncensored personal correspondence as they have within the ranks of the national parties. When Morrow stole Healy's letter to an American comrade and sent it to you he violated this right. When you pick up the stolen letter and make an issue of it, you too violate this right. This practice of intercepting or stealing private letters from one comrade to another and using them for the purpose of discrediting the authors or the recipients of the letters can only have the result of suppressing such correspondence, or of impelling comrades to suppress the free expression of their views in personal correspondence for fear of a "scandal."

I assure you, Comrade Haston, I receive not a few personal letters in which, let us say, a comrade in a branch may complain against the organizer of the branch or some other comrade. Were I to make such correspondence public, I would bring about a situation where no comrade in the party would have the confidence to speak to me freely and to voice his criticisms candidly. I can state, furthermore, that I have letters written to me in the past, which if I desired to make them public, would do serious

damage to leading individuals of our minority faction. Never for a moment would it enter my mind to do this without the consent of the authors, because here again the price paid for such a factional advantage would be too costly. It would suppress a free interchange of opinion and criticism among comrades for fear that any time someone disagreed with me I would expose their private correspondence.

Once you have established the right to correspond, I repeat, you must also establish the right to correspond freely and you must condemn anyone who interferes with such a free correspondence. Otherwise the "right" becomes meaningless.

Now, you make reference to the "nature of the correspondence." What could possibly be the nature of a correspondence between Comrade Healy and a friend or friends in the American party? Naturally, they wouldn't discuss the merits of cricket versus baseball. They discuss the life, the internal life, if you please, of their respective parties. They exchange information, views and opinions about those things with which they are most vitally concerned.

I will deal with the letter Morrow stole and sent to you later in a subordinate way. But first I wish to take up the main and far more serious charge of "collusion" and "direction" in forming an "open faction" within the British party.

This charge, according to your statement, grows out of a report sent to you by Morrow that, in addition to the stolen letter, he had seen another letter of Healy's which poses the question: "When shall we form our faction?" All your conclusions flow from this "report" of Morrow's. An objective appraisal of this type of report should have impelled you to pose the following questions:

1. Is Morrow's report correct?
2. If it is, did any leading members of the SWP reply to Healy giving him advice or "direction" on his course?
3. If so, was the advice in favor of forming an "open faction" or against it?
4. If the advice was against forming a faction, did Healy heed this advice, or did he proceed on his own in disregard of the advice or the "direction"?
5. Finally, was Healy advised or "directed" to form an "open faction" and did Healy indeed follow this "direction"?

Judging by the minutes of your Central Committee dealing with this question, you have made the effort to establish the authenticity of Morrow's report and it is asserted that Healy did not deny asking the question as to "when shall we form our open faction." But from then on you skip over all the other stages which, in order to establish the truth, you must of necessity have gone through first, and you jump to the unwarranted conclusion that leading members of our party "directed" Healy to form an "open faction."

On what basis do you arrive at such a conclusion? You do not have a shred of evidence to prove that any of us have committed this "crime." Furthermore, you do not even produce a "corpus delicti" to prove that such a crime has been committed. For, in the same breath that you accuse us of "direction" in forming a faction, you say that "Comrade Healy and his associates deny that a faction exists at the moment." You seem to place special emphasis on "open faction." You underline it in your letter. Yet what kind of "open faction" would it possibly be if the leaders of this alleged faction deny its existence?

Since no such faction exists, wouldn't it have been more logical for you to conclude that whoever replied to Healy advised him against forming a faction? And it is not excluded that this advice was along the lines of your own statement that "factional relationships should be avoided if there are no deep divergent points of view." And if this is the case, it seems to me you should be pleased with the fact that Healy is responsible enough not to plunge into a factional struggle before he consults his friends in

other parties in whom he has confidence. You ought to have some confidence that any advice leading members of the SWP would give to Healy, or any other comrades of the RCP seeking their advice, would not be detrimental to the interests of your party, at least not consciously so. As a matter of fact, we have long been of the opinion that the British section of the Fourth International has suffered far too much from unjustified factionalism and unmotivated splits, and not from the lack of them. The question whether the present RCP minority will be obliged to resort to the formation of a faction will depend, in my opinion, not on any "direction" from an American comrade but on the extent to which differences in principle may develop in further discussion and the extent to which the party leadership meets criticism in a responsible manner and assures a normal regime of democratic centralism throughout the discussion.

I wish Morrow and Goldman had shown one fraction of Healy's type of responsibility and had consulted leading comrades in the various parties, including yourself, before they formed their faction, before they embarked on their reckless course of split. Had they done so, I am confident that the internal situation in our party would have been greatly improved. I would welcome such "collusion" and such "direction" by leading comrades in the Fourth International. But both Morrow and Goldman are too arrogant to seek advice from other comrades. They put themselves in the position of telling comrades in other parties what to do and what not to do, never asking. They have embarked on a reckless course of split and they are trying desperately to mobilize International support for their irresponsible conduct. Unfortunately they are doing this not in "collusion" or at the "direction" of comrades within the International, but in collusion with an opponent party—a party that split from the International.

I am sure you are quite aware that Morrow has been carrying on a voluminous correspondence with various leading comrades in the International. Never would it occur to us to object to such a correspondence, to make an issue of it. We have succeeded pretty well in defeating and isolating them in our own party through discussion of the real issues rather than through an "exposure" of plots. We are confident that this same method of discussion will in time also isolate them in the International movement. We are confident of our position and we know, furthermore, that this is not the season in the International when splitters and disrupters can make headway.

Now let me deal for a moment with Comrade Healy's letter, which Morrow stole and sent to you. You characterize this letter as a "fake report" of a London membership meeting. By that, I presume you mean that the report was factually incorrect, and you seem to take it for granted that our opinions on affairs in the RCP are based on misinformation. You should give us more credit than that. We have built our party not on intrigue and duplicity, but in the struggle against it. If you will permit an analogy: In the 1939 struggle, the petty-bourgeois opposition in our party claimed that Comrade Trotsky supported the "regime" of the American party because of the misinformation supplied to him by the majority. It goes without saying we do not put ourselves in Trotsky's position. But we have tried to learn from him. Comrade Trotsky replied, in essence, that this type of charge was a slur on his intelligence; that, he knew how to take a critical attitude toward all kinds of information.

In your letter you state that, "in reporting this matter to the leadership of the British party, Comrade Morrow has rendered a service to the International." In my opinion, it would be more correct for you to say, that by stealing the personal letter of a comrade, and by transmitting it without the knowledge of either the sender or recipient, Morrow poisons the atmosphere of the International by a flagrant offense against common decency. Furthermore, you seem to apply a dual standard of conduct. You condemn a British comrade for corresponding with Americans and praise Morrow for corresponding with Britishers.

The most you can accuse Healy of is that he sent a report to an American comrade—whether it be accurate or inaccurate—of a London membership meeting, and that furthermore he put the question whether he should form an "open faction." The fact that he denies the existence of an "open faction" should indicate to you that the person whose advice he sought either

failed to give him advice or advised him against the formation of a faction. In any case, it is quite evident that Healy's relationship with his correspondents in the US, far from being harmful, had a moderating effect on the internal struggle in your party.

Comrade Morrow's intervention, on the contrary, was intended to poison the relationship between our party and yours, and to gain favor with you by doing a petty dishonest service as a pretended friend and informer. I am sorry to say, you swallowed this hook, line and sinker. To carry out his intrigue, Morrow had to resort to the theft of a private letter addressed to an individual, an act of itself contemptible and without precedent in our movement.

My reply to your letter is personal, but not private. You can publish it if you wish. I intend to submit it for publication in our Internal Bulletin. Whatever letters Healy sent were sent to individuals in our party, to his friends in the SWP. There has never been a formal committee consideration or action on them. I am writing this letter to you not without a sense of trepidation. I have had the impression for some time that you comrades are super-sensitive to criticism. That impression was first given to me by your reaction to the Stuart report when you made a big issue of the propriety of this report. When you finally answered it you centered most of your fire on the secondary and incidental points and alleged bad motives, with the obvious intent to discredit the author of the report, rather than dealing with his major political arguments. I have the same impression in this case.

To establish healthy fraternal relations between the parties, we must open the windows for the fresh air of criticism to circulate freely. It is not enough to recognize the formal right to private correspondence, but also to safeguard this right. It is not enough to recognize the formal right to criticize, but to answer those criticisms with dignity and not by means of character assassination. Never and no place will you find an attempt by the leadership of the SWP to denigrate anyone in the parties of the International, least of all the British. And this despite the fact that a number of them have maintained relations with our disloyal minority.

As far as I have been able to observe, we have been in agreement with the RCP on the most fundamental programmatic questions. This agreement is the firmest of ties binding us together. Most of our leading comrades, insofar as they have had discussions of the situation in the British party, have been critical of your failure to deal effectively with the tactical problem of the centrist ILP. This, too, we never discussed formally, never took a vote on; but this opinion has been shared by comrades of both the majority and minority in our party. This is the only serious political difference between us that I am aware of at the present time. Here, too, we haven't tried to intervene except insofar as Stuart has written on this question on his own responsibility, for ultimately this problem of tactics must be decided by you. But on this question, as on others, you should welcome and not resent the criticisms and opinions of the comrades of other parties.

In the light of this, Comrade Haston, I appeal to you to abandon the suspicion that we are in any way plotting against the leadership of the RCP, that we have any interest in the British party other than that it pursue a course to facilitate its speedy, healthy growth. From all I have been able to observe, I have the definite impression that the minority in your party, represented by Healy, is a loyal party minority. I wish we could say the same for our own minority. In dealing with a loyal opposition of comrades who abide by the discipline of the party, a majority has a great responsibility. It must know how to make reasonable concessions and create an atmosphere favorable to free discussion and harmonious collaboration in party work. It must know how to utilize the services and talents of the opposition comrades, place them on the highest committees, including above all the political bureau, where discussion and collaboration can best serve to reduce differences to a minimum, or else better clarify them, listen to minority criticism carefully and accept what is constructive in it.

Hoping that I have contributed to a clarification of the issues, which I sincerely desire, I remain

Fraternally yours,  
M. Stein

# Copy of a Letter from Gerry Healy to a Friend

London, England  
June 1, 1945

Dear Friend,

We had the discussion on the Morrow-Morrison dispute at a recent all-London aggregate which was well attended. From start to finish our comrades were on the offensive and the PB and its supporters simply refused to take a stand on the "economic aid" to Europe argument. They endeavoured to give the impression that the dispute was around the need for "democratic demands." We simply battered this argument to pieces.

They are refusing to support Morrow "on the record." What they would like is a nice little tete-a-tete behind the scenes without the responsibilities of serious international discussion. But it will all come out in time. The document they have received from him is entitled "The Balance Sheet." It has been "going the rounds" without being circulated with a reply from the SWP. It

is typed on loose sheets and not in an official party bulletin. Have you seen this document?

We are going along nicely here, and clarification continues especially among the youth. Enclosed you will find a copy of a letter sent by a young comrade just turned 19 years to another lad aged 23, who is one of our ardent supporters. I have not had any contact myself with this youngster and his observations have no relation to any previous faction struggles. It is indicative of the mood amongst the rank and file in the party, and it says more than ten of my letters to give you an insight into the views of the members. It is forwarded purely for your personal observations.

My document on perspectives is now complete and I will be forwarding you a copy within the next few days. Our pre-conference discussion will be marred by the election work, but I expect we shall have to do our best.

Please write to me before the conference.

All the best,  
Gerry

## Letters to England

By FELIX MORROW

New York, N. Y.  
December 10, 1945

M. Stein  
New York, N. Y.  
Dear Comrade.

I assume that we shall discuss at our next PC meeting the letter of Nov. 17 from the RCP.

In your making available copies of the relevant material to the PC members, I would like you to include the enclosed copies of my letters to the RCP dated July 25 and Dec. 10.

Comradely,  
Felix Morrow

July 25, 1945

Dear Comrade Grant,

I enclose a copy of a letter which I wrote to the European Secretariat. I do not know whether it has reached its destination. I would appreciate your forwarding a copy there. The letter is not meant for publication. I have no intention of beginning a polemic with them when we have not had an opportunity yet to exchange views.

I also enclose a letter of G. Healy to Cannon's group. This letter came into my hands quite accidentally. I have also seen two others sent by Healy. Healy and the Cannon group are, of course, entirely within their rights in corresponding with each other without the knowledge of the rest of the American PC or the British PB. But it is nevertheless pertinent to note that such a secret correspondence can only be described as a factional relationship, especially so in the light of the contents of Healy's letters. In one of his other letters, he asks the question of Cannon: "When shall we form our faction?"

I informed M. Stein and Cannon that I had seen these letters. They hastened to say that they were not in favor of any attempt to overturn the present British leadership. I informed them that it was my impression of Healy's letters that Healy does desire a new leadership. They claimed that they have written nothing to him to encourage that approach. It is amusing to note Healy's remark that my "balance sheet" is going the rounds "without being circulated with a reply from the SWP." Healy will have to wait a long, long time before the majority will reply to my

document. Their tactic is the very cynical one of conceding to us formal democracy by publishing our documents in the internal bulletin, but violating the content of genuine democracy by discouraging discussion of our documents and by failing to answer our documents.

Now, however, a question has arisen on which they can no longer avoid discussion. I enclose the minority resolution on unity with the WP. The tone of the discussion is indicated by the fact that, when Goldman and I introduced it into the PC, Cannon accused us of being agents of the WP.

We believe that it will be necessary for all co-thinkers to take a position on the unity resolution.

Fraternally yours,  
Felix Morrow

Dec. 10, 1945.

Dear Comrade Haston,

I have your letter of Nov. 17 and the copy of your letter of the same date to the National Secretary of the SWP.

As I wrote Grant in my letter of July 25, when I saw Healy's letters to the Cannon group I immediately informed M. Stein and Cannon that I had seen them.

Healy's charge that I stole the letters is a piece of political gangsterism. I demand to know what is his authority for his charge. M. Stein, who had the letters in his possession, never made such a charge either at the time he and I discussed the letters or later.

The circumstances under which I saw the letters are as follows:

I was following my usual daily or almost-daily custom of reading through the National Office correspondence, to which all Political Committee members have access (more accurately, used to have access). For many years it has been the custom to have this correspondence lie in a pile on the National Secretary's desk where we all know we can find it as we come in during the day.

Healy's letters were in this pile. They were addressed to R. Klapper. Klapper was formerly the name under which Logan received mail at 116 University Place, and latterly was used by E. R. Frank for official purposes.

No doubt the letters were not meant for my eyes. No doubt they were inadvertently in the pile instead of elsewhere. When I told him I had seen the letters, M. Stein said he had left them there by mistake. But that scarcely constitutes on my part stealing them. Nor the fact that I made a copy right there in the office.

I go into these details only at your request. For my part it is

a tenth-rate question how I saw the letters. The question at issue is the content of the letters. It takes a forehead of brass like Cannon's to try to turn the issue around to that of how I saw the letters.

Comradely,

Felix Morrow

## Comrade Stuart and the ILP -- Facts Versus Baseless Assertions

A Contribution by Bill Hunter (ILP Faction Organiser)

In a recent Bulletin, Comrade Stuart gives us what, in his opinion, is on the order of the day so far as the RCP's tactics in relation to the ILP are concerned.

Before passing on to the conclusions and general ideas raised, it is necessary to correct many errors of fact, which play no small role in his contribution. In many respects the description given of the development of the ILP, the composition of its left wing, and its present position, bear no relation to actuality. Running through the brief history of the ILP that Stuart gives, through his description of the various tendencies, there is to be seen a general exaggeration of any revolutionary content that might exist. It is evident that in painting a picture of the ILP, Stuart has liberally over-applied a revolutionary colouring. First of all, it is necessary to see the real ILP, to see its real development, and above all, to see its real left wing.

### The Real Development of the ILP

Comrade Stuart sets out in ten points (pages 9 and 10) a historical analysis of the ILP. What is most important in this analysis, is his estimate of the ILP's development since disaffiliation, and particularly since the outbreak of the war. It appears that Stuart has the conception that, since disaffiliation, the ILP has been steadily moving in a revolutionary direction. As a matter of fact, no straight line development, either right or left, can be traced. After disaffiliation the ILP did move to the left, it is true, reaching its greatest triumphs in its "workers' sanctions" policy during the Abyssinian war. But the internal crisis produced was resolved in favour of the right wing, following an ultimatum of the Parliamentary Group. Since that date (1935) the general tendency of the ILP has been to move towards the right, and back into the Labour Party. It is true that the first period of the war cut across this tendency.

In this first period we find the ILP leaders viewing the possibilities of their winning the leadership of the anti-war forces, which, they were certain, would in a very short time develop. To this period belong Brockway's slogans of the Third Front, Padley's constant quoting from Luxemburg, mild attacks upon the Labour leadership, and the "Socialist Britain Campaign." Even so, Stuart's description of the ILP: "taking a fairly consistent anti-war position, combatting the chauvinist poison with internationalist propaganda," etc. and "it served anew as a rallying centre for advanced workers" is putting the position of the ILP in a very favourable light.

However, the leadership definitely believed that the Labour Party was finished, and the ILP would take its place. They were not prepared to take the leadership of the workers alone, of course, but looked toward the Labour Lefts and to Common Wealth.

However, the "Socialist Britain Campaign" was a miserable failure. The workers did not turn in any great numbers to the ILP, and more important for the leadership, its own rank and file snubbed it when it sought to approach Common Wealth, and the Labour Lefts refused to break with the Labour Party. The ILP leadership felt the draught and headed back for the fold.

It is as we study the ILP's progression during this second period, during the last two years that Stuart's analysis is clearly shown to be completely false. He sees only a general left trend.

But a few minutes' study of the file of *New Leader* would convince any observer that this trend has been, not to the left, but to the right! The process has been one of toning down the opposition to the war, blurring over the differences between the ILP and the LP, and kow-towing to the Labour leadership in an effort to return to the haven. The comrades have analysed this development in the ILP internal discussions time out of number. Comrade Stuart flings out certain questions to underline his case that the ILP has been developing to the left. Let us take up his own questions and show beyond a shadow of a doubt how either he, or his informants, have completely distorted the real nature and policy of the ILP.

"Was the ILP stand in support of strike struggles in war time—with us and against the reformists and Stalinists—part of a progression to the right or the left?" he asks. A study of the *New Leader* during the past two and a half years would show how Brockway pushed industrial struggles further and further into the background, in line with his policy of making the paper a mere literary journal.

"What was the ILP's stand against British imperialism in India?" he asks. The ILP's stand against British imperialism in India was manifested through the Indian Freedom Campaign Committee, which was dominated by the PPU! (Peace Pledge Union—pacifist organization).

"What was the clear cut denunciation of the British white terror in Greece?" Clear cut!! The *New Leader* and McGovern both deplored violence on both sides, and the ILP leadership opposed the slogan of "Withdraw the troops" as meaning a sabotage of the military machine!

"Its attitude towards the Coalition?" At By-elections the ILP made every effort to identify itself with the Labour Party. At one ILP Conference (1944) McGovern complained that his speeches attacking the Labour leadership for their coalition policy had been censored in the *New Leader*.

"The Stalinist betrayals and the Socialist United States of Europe?" The *New Leader* welcomed the Stalinist election victories on the Continent, and accepted Stalin's pronouncements about "democracy" in good faith. Its use of the slogan of a "United Socialist States of Europe" was a pious one and meant a social-democratic Europe; it welcomed Laski's attempts to reform the Second International and the *New Leader* featured Nenni at the time of his rise in Italy.

And so on, and so on! Comrade Stuart's conception of a leftward moving centrist party which has reached a revolutionary position on almost every question is entirely erroneous.

### The Left Wing and What Comrade Stuart Makes of It

Not only in relation to the development of the ILP, but also in characterising the left wing, Comrade Stuart gives an entirely false picture.

Who and what is the ILP left wing? What was the RCP relationship to it?

The Political Bureau reply was entirely correct when it declared that so far as the "native left wing" and our attitude towards it is concerned, here it is not a question of minor concessions on questions of tactics, but an education in revolutionary policy and programme which must guide our actions. Stuart, of

course, looks at it from the point of view that the left wing in the ILP is fundamentally with us: all that is necessary is to mobilize them! His characterisation of the left wing is that "with minor tactical exceptions, the basic position of the Fourth International is already acceptable (to them)!"

Despite what Comrade Stuart would imply, the comrades in the ILP did see as part of their task, the broadening of their base! Surely, it would have been fantastic not to have attempted to draw the widest number of elements into the struggle against the ILP leadership. Yet to anyone who has followed the ILP conferences and seen how, on the main programmatic issues—affiliation to the Fourth International, the Soviet Union, the European Revolution, the Military Policy, etc., etc.—the Trotskyists could muster only their own votes, plus one or two sympathisers, it appears as absolute nonsense to say that the left wing could have been mobilised and programmatic agreement reached, were the Trotskyists prepared to drop a tactical difference on affiliation to the Labour Party.

It might surprise Stuart to know that some of the most vicious anti-Trotskyists were left wingers in the sense that they supported the Common Wealth resolution, and attacked the ILP leadership's pacifism and belly crawling to the Labour Party leadership. The article written in the Internal Bulletin which heralded the heresy hunt against Trotskyism in the ILP was written by a "left" winger.

### The Question of the Wicks-Dewar Group

Comrade Stuart includes the Wicks-Dewar Group as a central point in any approach to the left wing of the ILP. On this question also, it is necessary to correct his facts. His misconceptions of this grouping appear all the more glaring to me, insofar as I was a member of it since just prior to its entry into the ILP until the discussions with the RCP leadership last year.

The group was a very loose organization, calling itself "Trotskyists," but in actual fact it was an amalgam of viewpoints, ranging from those who gave formal adherence to Trotskyism but in actual fact quarrelled with its "jesuitical philosophy," its discipline, its theory on the Soviet Union, the method of building an international; to individuals who were separated from the RCP by the history of past disputes, and differences on "Labour to Power." When this group held one of its very rare discussions on programmatic points, opinions were bewildering in their variety and confusion. In point of fact, it boiled down to this: the group had general agreement only on two points—opposition to the "Labour to Power" tactic and slogan, and opposition to ILP affiliation to the Labour Party flowing from this.

Comrade Stuart declares that in approaching left wing groupings inside the ILP, the RCP comrades made the question of affiliation the touchstone of cooperation. This is quite untrue. Certainly in the case of the Wicks-Dewar Group, it is not true. In fact, it would be true to say that the roles were reversed. The Wicks-Dewar Group (had Dewar not been in the army at the time, by the way, it is doubtful whether any discussions would have taken place) were anti-affiliationist as a matter of principled opposition to the Labour Party. The RCP comrades, on the other hand, stressed the question of ILP affiliation as a tactical one, but quite correctly refused to give way to our point of view, flowing as it did from an entirely false approach to the Labour Party. For Stuart to say that the RCP comrades acted as though "fighting to annihilation against a political ally" is completely and entirely false.

The breaking up of the Wicks-Dewar group meant a strengthening of the ILP work, not only because it strengthened the faction, but because it greatly clarified the situation, particularly in London, by removing a competitor. Comrade Stuart lists various events: the snubbing of the ILP leadership over Common Wealth; the winning over of people from Wicks-Dewar; the dissolution of the Wicks-Dewar faction. This may be guerilla faction work, he says, but it doesn't reveal a plan. "What's the good of winning 'victories,' he says, if the delegates who are close to the RCP are going to join with the leadership in supporting affiliation?" Yet, Comrade Stuart, bearing in mind your own statement that affiliation is a tactical question: is winning people

to agreement on fundamental programmatic questions, breaking down the barriers that formerly separated them from the Fourth International, a victory or not? It appears that what Stuart is trying to say is that these conquests should have been left until the basis was there for the winning over of a majority in the ILP to our complete position. Then the victories would never have been won! These conquests were the result, not of sporadic raiding tactics, but of the seizing of opportunities in line with the general educative work inside the ILP.

### The Question of Affiliation

In line with his assertion that our first task in the ILP is that of organizing and centralising the left wing by means of uniting on the basis of programme, Comrade Stuart discusses the question of ILP affiliation. Here we find the viewpoint that the major, in fact the only obstacle on the road to that unity, is the RCP attitude towards ILP affiliation.

Again, let us correct Stuart's history. He says that at the 1944 Conference the leadership of the ILP came forward with a proposal of immediate affiliation, but were forced by the strength of the rank and file, to beat a retreat. In actual fact, the resolution on the agenda, which had the support of the NAC and which was carried, called for a special conference to discuss affiliation, should the coalition be broken. The only importance in raising this matter again here, is to demonstrate once more the one lesson that pushes itself forward on every page of Stuart's bulletin, that he has a complete lack of grasp and complete misunderstanding of the history, composition and role of the ILP.

The rank and file was moving left, against the leadership and their affiliation move, says Stuart. The Trotskyist position on affiliation, raising it almost to the status of a principle, prevented the consolidation of the left wing and strengthened the leadership. What was necessary, declaims Stuart, was to adopt a different course: line the party up against Brockway and Co., by having agreement on programme and then together determine the tactic to pursue on the question of affiliation. "Let's see if we can agree, and win the majority of the Party to an agreement between us that at least such conditions shall be placed by the ILP for affiliation as would weaken the hand of the opportunist leaders and strengthen us, the left wing — such conditions as freedom of organisation and press, of voice and vote in parliament, etc."

It is evident that Stuart has no real knowledge of the developments that took place around affiliation, otherwise he would know that, apart from the freedom to vote against LP policy in parliament—abstention is permitted, the conditions he mentions, are the ones agreed to by the ILP and LP leaderships, should affiliation take place! However, we can pass on from that, and deal with the assertion that unity of the left wing should be attained by the RCP not permitting a secondary question such as affiliation to divide the forces. What are the facts? If it was a fact that the unity of the left wing was held up merely by Trotskyist intransigence on the question of affiliation, then surely this position would have shown itself in the ILP Conferences? Yet, in actuality, the Conference where the decision to affiliate was passed by a very small majority, was to the right of previous conferences, in line with the moves of the leadership. A study of the last Conference documents will prove that this idea of an ILP left wing, aching to be organized, with the RCP erecting barriers in the way, is a pure fiction. Except in the instance of the expulsion of the Birmingham Trotskyists, we were in a minority, and sometimes a very tiny minority, on all issues we raised. The Conference rejected even discussing the question of the Fourth International. It overwhelmingly rejected the Marxist approach to the problems of the European revolution. Further than that, despite our opposition, it overwhelmingly carried the NAC plans for Britain and Peace. These documents, despite all Comrade Stuart's desires to paint the ILP in as revolutionary colours as possible, would make even his teeth stand on edge with their rehash of reformism and pacifism. A survey of ILP Conference material, and particularly the 1945 Conference, will prove that the Trotskyists were far from winning a majority for their programme, that their role was that of educating the membership on all programmatic points. The basis for the winning of a

majority, or even a substantial left wing, could only be laid by a far, far greater swing towards the ILP on the part of the workers than has been evidenced during the war.

Had the RCP dropped its attitude to affiliation and won a majority, the basis for unity would have been opposition to affiliation, and that alone. So long as we confined ourselves to that we would be together, but any discussion on war, on military policy, on the European revolution, on Bolshevik "amoralism," on the Soviet Union, on the Fourth International—would splinter the unity into a dozen parts.

For the information of Comrade Stuart, Wicks went to the last ILP Conference with the definite perspective of welding together the anti-affiliationists. But he came away without being able to get them to meet together.

The opposition to affiliation springs from various points of view, and not at all from a revolutionary mistrust of the ILP leadership. As in every other issue raised in the ILP, our position on affiliation was one of educating the ILP rank and file by posing before them exactly how a revolutionary Party would deal with the situation, exposing the manoeuvres from above, the sacrificing of the Trotskyists on the altar of affiliation, etc., but combatting the same sectarianism which opposed "Labour to Power" and dismissed the Labour Party as a "stinking corpse." Comrade Stuart says we lined up with the ILP leadership. In that case the NAC was decidedly embarrassed by its "allies." Our position was clear to the Conference. Ridley put epigrammatically what was clear to every delegate: "The NAC wanted sitting room in the House of Commons, while the RCP wanted standing room at the Barricades." Had we opposed affiliation, our "allies" would have been just as unsavoury—pacifists and sectarians, whose theories were completely falsified by events, and who were swung completely off balance by the attraction of the Labour Party during and since the general election.

So far as the general perspective of affiliation is concerned, Comrade Stuart completely fails to answer the Political Bureau's case. They stated that affiliation is entirely correct and in line with historical trends and tasks. That is perfectly correct, and the present state of the ILP outside of the Labour Party, underlines this. Of course, Stuart asks: "Why would future collusion between these two political foes against us (the ILP and LP leadership—BH) be an easier road to the masses than winning over new allies against the leadership in the ILP?"

Had Stuart proved to us in accordance with the facts, where these new allies existed to any extent in the ILP, and how they were going to be won over to our principled position, then the situation would have been different. But the choice of two roads did not exist. In accordance with our struggle for a revolutionary programme, and in accordance with the historical tendency we supported affiliation. It is true, there would be collusion between the ILP and LP leadership, but as the PB comrades declared, it would clarify the position of the ILP leadership as out-and-out reformists. As the leftward movement of the Labour workers began, it would provide us with the opportunity to gain a hundred times more new allies than ever an anti-affiliationist alliance would bring.

## The Question of Fusion

Once having settled the affiliation issue by capitulating to the "revolutionary left wing" which Stuart has discovered, he would propose a campaign for fusion of the two parties—the ILP and the RCP.

"Both objectively and subjectively the situation is ripe for a tactic aimed at fusing with the revolutionary wing of this party and at liquidating the ILP as a serious centrist competitor to Trotskyism in Great Britain."

However, once it is evident how false is his analysis of the development of the ILP, and of the revolutionary potentialities of the amorphous left wing, then the whole bottom falls out of this perspective.

Even in the leftist periods of the ILP the winning of a majority, or even of a substantial minority for our programme

(minus tactical issues if you like) has never been on the order of the day. When we realise that, we can see how unreal is Comrade Stuart's slick method of liquidating a serious centrist competitor. We could only have as an immediate perspective, the winning of a majority, during a period when a new flood of workers was washing out all the ossified channels in the ILP and giving us fresh, virile material to work on. Bearing in mind the real situation, and not that which exists in Stuart's mind, it is obvious that a campaign for fusion would not bring an immediate profit, but, looked at in the most favourable light, could result only in the gaining of isolated members over a period of months. To conceive of all our forces and energy being concentrated on such a campaign, in view of the gains that accrue from open work in this period, would be foolish in the extreme.

There could be no great gain in dwelling too long on that part of the bulletin which deals with fusion. In view of the present state of the ILP he would be a hardy follower of Stuart, who pressed his proposals today! However, this part of his bulletin cannot be passed by without a reference to his quotations from Lenin.

He admonishes those who take the point of view that an approach for fusion would exaggerate the revolutionary potential of the ILP and confuse our sympathisers on a national scale, by quoting Lenin's strictures on the left-wing Communists of Britain who adopted a sectarian approach to the Labour Party. To pause a moment and consider the two situations shows completely the falseness of Comrade Stuart's position. Lenin was dealing with a mass party putting forward a method of sharpening the contradictions between the radical phrases of the misleaders of that party, and their opportunist aims. The "support" he said, which Communists gave to these misleaders, in view of the dilemma it placed them in, could only be temporary. In the case of the ILP, here is no mass party, but a party of 1,700 or so book members, an active membership and trade union influence little more than our own. True, the potentialities of it lie in its parliamentary representation and traditions, but at the present time the masses are not being attracted to it, nor is there any sharp clash between the revolutionary wing and the leadership, forcing the leaders to make radical statements to hide opportunist aims. With the ILP in this state, and moving to the right, it is obvious that an approach to it on the lines suggested by Comrade Stuart would exaggerate its revolutionary potential and confuse our sympathisers. As such, an approach would not at all have been feared by the ILP leadership, who would have utilised it to bludgeon those who put it forward inside the ILP.

To use again another quotation from Lenin which Comrade Stuart gave:

"The whole point lies in knowing how to apply these tactics in such a way as to raise and not lower the general level of proletarian class consciousness, revolutionary spirit, and ability to fight and conquer."

## What is our Formal Perspective

Comrade Stuart is of the opinion that the incorrect methods of the RCP in dealing with the affiliation and fusion questions, and other failures or mistakes in ILP work, flow from a general perspective that is false. Comrade Stuart wants a planned perspective, organised political warfare as against guerilla tactics. It is in reading his attack upon guerilla tactics that it becomes clearer that his unreal attitude toward the ILP is based not only on misinformation, but also on a tendency to mould the facts to fit his ideas. That is made plain by the paragraph where he deals with the PB's formal perspective in the ILP. He quotes the PB document as saying: "It is possible to set a formal perspective of winning the majority of the ILP. Indeed such a formal perspective has long been discussed in our ranks." "But what is this?" he asks. "Here the perspective is fully agreed to, yet" . . . "after discussion over a period of months it (this perspective) was rejected because it would not compensate for the withdrawal from other more favourable fields of work—even if successful."

We can almost see Stuart rubbing his hands. Caught you!

But all that this supposed contradiction shows is that Comrade Stuart has not read with any measure of care the Bulletin he is discussing! By including his parenthetical (this perspective) he makes it appear that the second quotation is rejecting a perspective that the first accepted. But in actual fact, as any reader of the PB's reply should have seen, what is rejected in the paragraphs (page 13 and 14) from which the second quotation is taken, is the tactic of a campaign for fusion with the ILP.

The rejection of the fusion tactic does not at all conflict with having a formal perspective of winning a majority in the ILP although it is evident that, to Stuart, the two are interlinked. Theoretically we can set ourselves the goal of winning over a majority in the ILP, taking it directly into the RCP, or forcing the right wing to split away by a fusion of the ILP and RCP. But that doesn't mean we see the picture that Stuart sees—that of a battlefield in which A, B, and C are obstacles to the advance; history demands that the revolutionary party concentrate its forces and energy on A, eliminate it, consolidate its forces, then pass on to crush C, and ditto B, until the field is clear. Were that so, the winning of a majority in the ILP would be an iron necessity. But, unfortunately, tasks are not posed that way. Centrist and reformist parties are not Aunt Sallies to be knocked down one by one. The tasks of a revolutionary party do not wait their due turn but crowd in upon it, varying in their relative importance in accordance with the shifts in the consciousness of the masses.

ILP faction work is not carried on in isolation but has a relation to Labour Party work and independent work. This formal perspective of winning a majority does not at all mean a full concentration by the Party on ILP work, although that is not excluded under certain concrete conditions. It does not even mean that there should be no withdrawals or that our faction would not split away without winning a majority but with a large minority. The solution to these tactical questions flows from the relationship of forces and the developing tendencies at a given moment.

Comrade Stuart is horrified by such tactics as those followed in the North East, because he doesn't see that the tasks of the Party are interlinked. For him, the next task is the ILP—anything that weakens our forces there, irrespective of developments elsewhere, is hindering the removal of the first obstacle in our path. He does not see that this obstacle itself may wane in importance in relation to others. Work in the ILP, in the Labour Party and independent work are interrelated, not opposed to one another.

## What is the Position Today?

So far, we have fought Stuart on his own ground. That is, basing the criticisms of his bulletin on the situation which existed in the ILP at the time it was written. However, it is particularly when we survey the ILP today, that the nature of Stuart's ideas are shown up. We can see how fantastic is his elevation of the ILP to the heights of being a major, immediate obstacle of the British Party, against which our forces and energy must be concentrated.

Since the refusal of affiliation, the ILP has been wasting away. Our Conference document declared that if affiliation was refused, the ILP would tend to disintegrate. The process that has taken place, and is entirely in line with that perspective. The opportunist policy of the leadership, both the pro and anti-affiliationists has left its mark. The Labour Party has won recruits, not only from the right but from the "left"—the anti-affiliationist wing. Following soon after the refusal of affiliation, the General Election dealt a second blow at the ILP. The leadership left the Party floundering, without a lead; the sectarians were flung off their feet as the tide swept towards the Labour Party, the right wing straining to ride on it.

The condition of this centrist Party cannot quite accurately be called one of crisis, in the sense that the clash of opposing tendencies is producing a sharp internal struggle. But rather it is a slow wasting away. Although the NAC majority is anti-

affiliationist, the right wing preserve the initiative, with the "lefts" refusing to wage a struggle against them, but taking up an equivocal attitude which disgusts both the supporters and opponents of affiliation among the rank and file. At the NAC meeting at Bangor in August, true, the left wing did protest at the nakedly opportunist policy of the right wing, but we could have drawn the conclusion that the initiative was with the left, only if Edwards, Eaton, Ridley and Co. had carried through a struggle against Padley, Brockway and Co. and expelled them. But the NAC "left" majority capitulated miserably. This meeting voted down the suggestion of Maxton that an amendment should be tabled to the King's Speech, and also (again obviously on the initiative of the right) it decided that a six months truce should be declared on the question of the Labour Government. So Ridley, the sectarian, who had been confident that the Labour Party was a "stinking corpse," Eaton the adventurer, who fought the Labour Party at Bilston; Barton the pacifist, to whom the Labour Party and the Tory Party were as identical as black cats in the dark—these and all the other "lefts" forming the majority of the NAC, capitulated before the pleas to give the Labour Party a chance.

Reports from the areas show in general a drop in the activity and an increase in the frustration, going with the floundering of the leadership. In Glasgow, the traditional stronghold of the ILP, the leadership prepares to enter the Labour Party. In other areas, the tale is one of resignations from party offices, a growth of apathy and disillusionment. Only from London do we hear that the ILP is surviving the shocks. But in London the ILP never had roots among the workers, and its active members and influence in the trade union movement were less than that of the RCP. It is evident that the London Division is hanging together because of its complete separation from the workers' movement and because it has become the home of diversified elements, such as the remnants of the Wicks group and the elements who, two or three years ago left the Labour Party to join the ILP. This jetsam stays in the ILP, not because it has any faith in its future, but because it has nowhere else to go.

Today, as at times before in its history, the ILP clings to life on the basis of its capital. That consists not only of political capital in the sense of a parliamentary tradition, etc., but in the main literally, of economic capital—premises, club rooms, dance halls, printing works, and so on. Of course, this particular base gives the possibility that even outside the Labour Party, the ILP might not disintegrate at this stage. However, if it does not enter the Labour Party—and its chances have waned considerably—it will never play the role we prophesied for it had it entered the fold.

Our task at present is to aid every tendency towards disintegration. Although the atomisation and apathy of the rank and file do not provide a good basis for a campaign against the leadership, it goes almost without saying, that our faction will draw the lessons of the situation before the membership and expose, not only the right wing, but also the so-called "lefts," whose incapacity to wage a struggle against the out-and-out reformists, has added quite a lot to the apathy of the rank and file. But it would be foolish at this stage, to leave forces in the ILP whose main activity is the building of that party, devoting energy to bringing in fresh elements seeking to galvanise it into activity and holding it together. The main task of our small faction in this period is to act as a sounding board, as an information centre as to reactions and developments inside the ILP, aiding our party to put pressure on it from outside.

The ILP has receded in importance relative to other work. Outside of the Labour Party, with the heritage of its present sickness and with the growth of our influence and strength—which in the future will be, as it has been in the past, at a greater rate than that of the ILP, there is very little possibility that we shall have to devote the attention of our party to it in the manner Stuart suggests.

October 19, 1945.

# The Minority's Attitude Toward Theory

By S. SIMMONS, Chicago

Comrade Goldman spoke in debate with Comrade Larson in Chicago August 19th. Anticipating questions over his proposal to explore the possibility of fusion with the WP, he attempted to answer them in advance. He maintains that the question of defense of the Soviet Union has receded into the background. It is not to be considered an obstacle to unity because it is unlikely to become an issue in the next five years. Further in regard to theory, he said that theory must finally be settled by history and even the theory of a socialist society will only be settled by the establishment of a socialist society. He then raised the question of what we would do if a bureaucratic form of government similar to that in Russia should be established in the United States, a socially advanced country. Would we not be forced to reconsider our theory?

There is a weakness of theoretical principle here which no one who calls himself a socialist should ever permit. This is not criticism of theory by testing it with reality, but is an unscientific attitude toward the theoretical foundations of Marxism. Marxism is scientific socialism and the only socialist movement which has remained loyal to its principles. The theories of Marxism, like theories in other fields where careful analysis and exact fidelity to material reality is necessary, is the result of lifetimes of investigation and participation in the movement of society. They are the necessary consequences of it, and the only explanation which can be given for these facts. A theory is not "only a theory" which can be treated lightly. Advancement in scientific knowledge is not possible where a light opinion is held of the scientific theory which is its foundation. At best it could only advance amid the greatest confusion. Many things such as radio waves, planets, etc. have been predicted before they were ever known because they were the necessary conclusions to the principle of science. Theory flows logically from reality and explains it. When further advance is made it takes as its point of departure the theory out of which it grows. Advance is made from it, not apart from all that has happened in the past. Marxism derives its great power from its historical necessity. It analyzes the component parts of society and points out the driving forces, the class character of it. In spite of organized opposition, Marxism will not be destroyed. It is being

forced into existence by the nature of material reality. We accept its theoretical principles as something—not which may come into existence—but which must come. When you desert Marxist theory you must inevitably lose the historical necessity for your organization. This is what has happened to many groups in the past.

Contrary to what Comrade Goldman may expect, we are not worried about disagreement with the WP over defense of the Soviet Union in the next five years. That may or may not be true. What is important is that the WP betrayed the theoretical principles of Marxism in 1940. Comrade Goldman says he agrees to this—that he was right in 1940. Then instead of seeking peace with the WP, it is they who must make their peace with Marxism. Nobody can do that for them. It is not enough to push all that has happened to one side and go on from here, even if that were possible. There must be a crystal clear understanding of the principles involved. Goldman raises the objection that it is not necessary for them to come publicly beating their breasts and confessing their errors. No one expects them to publish it in the Chicago Tribune, but if there has been any change they must at least tell us.

What is the WP position on the nature of the state? What is their concept of party organization? Do they still accept as part of their theoretical principle that the bureaucratic government of Russia is a new class? These differences are not "possible within one party" when that party accepts Marxist theory as necessary to its very existence. Far more fundamental than insisting that they do not publish a "separate public organ" is the necessity of coming to theoretical understanding which will eliminate the need for one.

It is true that even the theory of a socialist society will only be settled by the establishment of a socialist society. It is precisely because history settles the fate of theories that we take such an exacting and careful attitude toward Marxist theory. It must first be correct, then we must conduct our activity on the basis of it. The future of the Workers Party will be affected by its theoretical foundation. If that is incorrect they cannot possibly be the party of the proletarian revolution.

Nov. 17, 1945