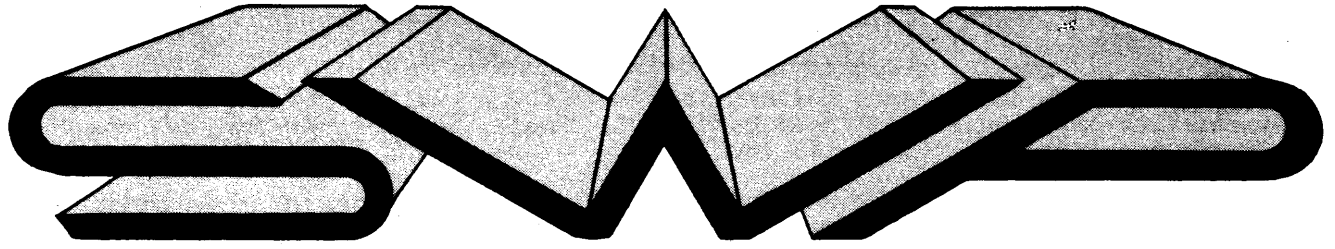


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Contents

Page

<u>THE EUROPEAN SECTIONS' ACTIVITY IN THE WORKING CLASS AND OUR TRADE UNION WORK,</u> by David Keil, Minneapolis Branch	3
<u>FOR SHARPENING OUR POLEMIC WITH THE POPULATION ALARMISTS,</u> by Hayden Perry, Los Angeles Branch	8

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THE EUROPEAN SECTIONS' ACTIVITY IN THE WORKING CLASS AND OUR TRADE UNION WORK

by David Keil, Minneapolis Branch

Introduction (April 18, 1971)

The following article was submitted for the Party Builder to print before the 1970 Activists and Education Conference. It was rejected by the Administrative Committee, "since it deals in part with policy and line questions that are not now under discussion."

The first Party Builder of 1970 said that "The discussion is not for the purpose of determining political line; its specific purpose is as a medium to aid in implementing the decisions of the previous convention." It went on to say that "Among the points taken up at the conference will be such aspects of party building and branch structure as finances, forums, election campaigns, education, Militant sales, publications, etc., and implementation of our work in the antiwar, Third World, and women's liberation movements."

My article was written in agreement with the 1969 convention decisions, i.e. the resolutions passed, and tried to aid in implementing these decisions. Not everything that the article deals with was mentioned in the Party Builder's listing of topics, but nor did everything that was said at the conference fall within these limits. In particular, the talks given by comrades Jack Barnes and George Breitman were more the development of some new political perspectives than merely the discussion of organizational aspects of party building.

Trade union work was not mentioned by the Party Builder as a topic of discussion. But there were some good, well-attended sessions on trade union work at Oberlin. So from a purely formal point of view, it seems to me, my article giving a report and some suggestions for implementing the last convention's decisions should not have been rejected.

But, says my letter from the Administrative Committee, it "deals in part with policy and line questions that are not now under discussion." And I think that perhaps my article could not have been adequately discussed without some differences over policy, political orientation, and possibly even line, arising. And these questions would best be left for the pre-convention discussion. So, although it is to be emphasized that the article was written in agreement with the 1969

convention resolutions, even avoiding discussion that might raise differences, I don't begrudge the Administrative Committee's decision to reject my article, even though it would have been good to give all the comrades a chance to read it before now.

The article, then, does not raise differences of line, policy and perspective, but it does explicitly leave open the possibility of such differences arising. And it does indicate that it agrees with the article, "Return to the Road of Trotskyism," by Peng Shu-tse (International Information Bulletin, No. 5, March 1969). So I hope that comrades who may feel that they have differences with the political line with which my article agrees, will point out their differences.

I am resubmitting this article because it includes some information that might be of interest to comrades, on the work of our co-thinkers in Europe, and because it makes some preliminary suggestions that I think may be a good start for a discussion on our orientation and activity, as well as our perspectives.

A point that should be re-emphasized is that it is not a finished plan of action. I was not in a position in Brussels to present a fully worked-out outline of activity, nor am I now. Only the leadership is capable of that.

Moreover, aside from being nine months old, the article has certain weaknesses. I hope comrades will point them out. To save some trouble, I will point some out myself:

(1) I have been told that it gave an impression too much of "learning from Europe." We do have some lessons to learn from Europe, but our European co-thinkers are also making mistakes of their own. It should be specified that, in the international discussion, the writer of the article agrees with the SWP leadership's general line on China, Latin America, and the youth question.

(2) More elaboration is needed on what is meant by "implantation" in the working class, as certain comrades have pointed out. We must certainly try to gain a firm concrete basis or implantation in the working class, but this does not mean necessarily putting people into factories. We could

do it just as well by recruiting workers, on a systematic basis, from outside the factories. So "implantation" doesn't necessarily mean "colonizing".

(3) Saying that in France, the Ligue Communiste's thrust is against the bourgeoisie rather than the Stalinist bureaucracy was not meant to imply that they developed no program to combat the Stalinists or failed to denounce their betrayals. The Ligue's struggle against the Stalinist trade union fakers seems quite effective. Rather, what was meant was that it was made clear to the workers that the main enemy is the bourgeoisie, not Stalinism, and that the Stalinists must be fought because they do not oppose the main enemy effectively. The Ligue Communiste has recently published a pamphlet, "The Trade Union, Weapon of all the

Workers".

(4) A trade union fraction may not be a hard and fast necessity. Systematic work in the direction of the working class is the goal, and the organizational means is subordinate to that. A trade union work steering committee might be enough. Trade union-related work can be done outside of the structure of a trade union fraction, as in the protest against the establishment of a scab shop by the University of Minnesota Daily. What is essential is to have experienced comrades watching the situation and keeping tabs on regular, systematic work among workers, whether done by trade union comrades, non trade union working comrades, or by students. Of course, wherever there are two or more comrades working at one place, it would seem logical to constitute a fraction.

(D.K.)

THE EUROPEAN SECTIONS' ACTIVITY IN THE WORKING CLASS, AND OUR TRADE UNION WORK

by David Keil, Minneapolis Branch

The great part of the European sections and youth groups of the Fourth International are involved in some work in factories and trade unions, giving a certain priority to this activity even though most of the organizations are small. The purpose of this article is not to give a detailed report of their work, but to briefly describe it and relate it to our work of this nature in the United States.

In France, the Ligue Communiste represents a force able to influence the student movement and, to a degree, the workers' movement, dominated by the Stalinists. Despite the fact that the organized working class has on the whole a socialist class consciousness, the French Communist Party's tight grip on the main trade union federation (the CGT) and on the workers' political allegiance makes this kind of work very difficult.

Nevertheless, the comrades make it their main orientation of work, as reflected both in their discussion preparatory to the April 1969 founding congress, and in their current unity discussions with Lutte Ouvrière.

In each city where there is a significant number of comrades, cells are created to concentrate their main activity on one or two factories. Leaflets are distributed at plant gates, and the newspaper Rouge is sold. This work is unquestionably best when there are comrades or contacts inside the factory to report the reaction and to say which issues are of most

interest to the workers. Of course, there must be a certain degree of care taken; for instance, workers can't distribute literature outside their own factory for fear of reprisals. So students and comrades outside the factory do the open work.

One example of a very successful intervention of this kind is Rouen, where the Ligue has a strong implantation in the workers' movement. There a bulletin has been distributed in quantities of fifteen thousand at up to fifteen factories, coming out every two weeks.

The Ligue Communiste opposes a purely "economist" conception of this work. The factory bulletins feature articles on political subjects, government policy, and so forth. In Vernon, there is a well-known case of three CGT members who were arrested for pasting up posters for the soldiers' rights campaign launched by the Ligue and others in January. They were later charged with threatening the discipline of the army. The Stalinists were so embarrassed by this activity by "leftist" workers that they refused to defend the three, despite the fact that two were officials or former officials in the local CGT.

This case illustrates the political work done in the factories by French Trotskyists. The soldiers campaign was also able to hold many meetings across France, speaking before factory workers, and received the endorsement of a number of union locals. The Krivine

campaign held mass meetings at factories, and the Ligue since then has continued this kind of activity.

But the work of the Ligue remains slow, patient winning of workers to its political program and action, working in the trade unions and always under the limitations imposed by the existence of a repressive bureaucracy. The success of this work, especially among young workers and apprentices should not, however, be discounted.

In Italy, the Fourth International's section, the Gruppi Comunisti Rivoluzionari, is much smaller than the Ligue Communiste, but there the comrades also carry on significant trade union work. Their activity in the delegate committees that led wildcat strikes at the Fiat and other factories is described in the April 6, 1970, Intercontinental Press. The comrades work in a national revolutionary workers' organization, "Workers' Initiative," which has been active in strike movements and which publishes a bulletin by the same name.

In Belgium, the Socialist Young Guard's work in the Limbourg miners' strike is well known. In addition to work by students of this spectacular kind, our comrades carry on regular work in the trade unions and among the workers. In Ghent, the paper l'Unité de la Lutte ("Unity of the Struggle") is distributed at factory gates and work is done even within the factories. The JGS does this kind of work in a number of cities in Belgium, especially in the Flemish part.

The International Marxist Group in Britain is also weak numerically, but carries on some trade union work in addition to their student work. In the transport union, comrades help in the publishing of a militant newspaper Target, with a circulation of thousands. The IMG participates in a teachers' caucus, Rank and File, along with the International Socialists.

In Scotland, young worker comrades helped initiate a Young Workers Committee, concentrating on economic trade-union demands, but they found that working-class youth are more politically-minded than one might expect, and by limiting propaganda work to exclusively economic or local issues, revolutionaries would make the mistake of seeming to talk on too low a level and consequently of not appealing to these youth.

In Germany our comrades of the Gruppe Internationale Marxisten and the youth group Revolutionär-Kommunistische Jugend work among factory workers and apprentices with some success. They have significant fractions in the metal workers in two factories, Mercedes in Mannheim and Standard-Electric Lorenz in Stuttgart. The perspective of the German comrades is, like ours, the elaboration of a left trade union

policy, which will be based on work both in the trade union structure and inside the plants. The GIM comrades emphasize that to separate these two tasks or to do one and not the other, must absolutely be avoided, leading to opportunist maneuvering in the bureaucracy on the one hand, or separation from the workers' organizations and working only for local plant reforms, on the other.

There are some general lessons of the work in the working class which comrades of different European sections have indicated. First is the interrelation of work in the student movement, in the high schools and among the apprentices, and in the factories and trade unions. There cannot be one single area for all activity to be concentrated in, despite an orientation in one direction or another, as many comrades have indicated. Second, the work should be political as well as being concerned with economic demands of wages and working conditions. Comrades have argued with other organizations which call themselves Trotskyist, like Lutte Ouvrière in France or International Socialists in Britain, explaining the necessity to do not only day-to-day "economist" work in factories and among apprentices, but also political work there and in the university student movement.

Some practical aspects are worth discussing also. Comrades in France have indicated that in their work, it is best to direct the thrust of the propaganda against the bourgeoisie rather than against the Stalinist bureaucrats, at this time. This will make it more possible to get the ear of workers, to show who we consider to be the main enemy, and to avoid the possibility of repression, which the bureaucrats are only too happy to exercise or to aid the bosses in bringing down.

Although the "antiwar university" can now do work in the direction of workers both in the context of support for strikes and outside this context, the real functioning of any "red university" will be on a much broader basis. A genuine close alliance between the workers and students will probably be made by our own comrades in the factories and on the campuses, because neither the bureaucrats nor our opponents have any perspective for this.

Finally, comrades have found it best, in general, to have people not working in the factories do the work of distribution and selling of literature at the gates. Equally important is to have comrades or at least contacts inside the factories, to make the propaganda relevant and effective, and to make direct contact with militant workers.

In relating the work of the European sections of the Fourth International with our work in the working class, what has to be done first of

all is to note the different conditions we work under. The main factor that makes this work easier in Europe than here is not any absence of a repressive bureaucracy, but rather the qualitatively higher class consciousness of the workers there. In Europe, there exist mass (though completely reformist) political parties of the working class, while, as has been said before in our party, the consciousness of the American workers has not yet passed the stage of trade union consciousness.

Nevertheless, as strikes become more frequent and more militant and as mass movements of a political nature become larger and begin to touch the working class as a whole, there is no reason why this difference should hold for a long time. On the contrary, our work among the workers may be decisive in creating a labor party, giving this party direct revolutionary effects, if not right away a revolutionary program.

In Frank Lovell's trade union panel report in Internal Information Bulletin No. 6 in 1969, there are many similarities that we can note between the situation and tasks in the U.S. and in Europe as they've been described here. For instance, under tactical and strategic problems, number 4, Lovell says that general propaganda and trade union work is best if non-workers are sent to a factory to distribute material, and if there are comrades inside the factory to coordinate the work. This is exactly the experience of many comrades in Europe.

What should the party do? First of all, we should continue to increase trade union coverage in The Militant giving special coverage to big events or even putting our special issues in cases like the postal strike. We should continue and expand the trade union work that we are now doing, reported on at the 1969 convention.

More concretely, and in light of European experiences and our strength in the present situation, we should try to convene a trade union fraction in branches of the party where none exists. In every branch of a significant size, one or more factory of workplace should be selected where propaganda work can be done regularly. An effort should be made to establish an implantation in certain factories, at least of contacts if not of comrades. Which workplace we choose would depend upon where we have people or know people, which places have a history of struggle, or which are the biggest factories.

Comrades in Europe have started this work where there has been no

implantation, by selling the newspaper. When it's possible, that is, when we have reliable information on grievances inside the workplace, we can launch a local bulletin. Of course, it should by no means limit itself to local or economic issues, though these issues, we must realize, will be important in creating the beginning of a political consciousness in the workers.

Orienting to this kind of work means that we have to put some forces into it. At a minimum, comrades doing trade union or factory work shouldn't be asked to turn away from it to help the student movement, except at certain specific times. Rather, some student comrades of the party should be prepared to sacrifice some of their work in the student movement in order to give aid to our workers' work. We can't set up formal criteria for this orientation, but this partial shift would generally be what's necessary. By no means, of course, does this mean pulling out of the student movement.

Our medium term aim, as stated in party documents, is to set up left caucuses on a full class-struggle, though not necessarily socialist program. The kind of work suggested here might not immediately accomplish that. But it would make a solid beginning, and it would help us in many areas of our general work, including recruitment. This benefit will not be wiped out by the restrictions on working openly and the difficulties we will have; it will only be limited by them.

The main general purpose of this work would be to base ourselves firmly in the working class in today's present situation. Comrades would also learn how work in the labor movement is to be done. But in no way can this work be separated from its relation to movements like the black struggle, the antiwar movement, the women's liberation struggle or even the student movement.

Black workers are undoubtedly the most militant in the plant, in addition to as part of the black community. We should continue to work with them in such groups as DRUM, linking trade union struggles with the black struggle. We can make clear in this way that we see no contradiction between black nationalism and the interests of all workers, while making no concessions to either backward attitudes of white workers or any anti-union sentiments that might appear.

In the antiwar movement, with the entrance of bureaucrats, we have an unprecedented opportunity to reach workers through antiwar activity. The

first priority of the "antiwar university" should be to reach the workers in the factories and in the community directly, using the bureaucrats' antiwar stands as a lever. Working regularly inside and outside factories can aid this kind of activity in a qualitative way.

The women's liberation struggle can't either be separated from the workers' struggle. Women workers' fights for equal pay with no decreases and for keeping protective laws on working conditions or extending them to men, show this directly. The demand for day-care centers is of course also a working class demand, and an addition might be day-care centers under trade-union control.

In the case of women who do not work for a wage, the idea of consumer movements is not new, and ties in with trade union work. Non-wage-working wives of striking male workers will be leaders, not of "women's auxiliaries," but undoubtedly of much broader strike support committees. This again cannot be separated from trade union work. Our work there and in the present women's liberation movement will help recruit working class women to revolutionary socialism.

Although the "antiwar university" can now do work in the direction of workers both in the context of support for strikes and outside this context, the real functioning of any "red university" will be on a much broader basis. A genuine close alliance between the workers and students will probably be made by our own comrades in the factories and on the campuses, because neither the bureaucrats nor our opponents have any perspective for this.

Finally, our election campaign gives us a chance to raise all of the issues in a political context. We should take the campaign, to whatever degree is possible, into the factories and workplaces, make a big propaganda campaign out of it there. We should even issue special leaflets concentrating on the need to break from the bourgeois parties, move toward a labor party, and vote SWP as a first step, as the main emphasis of these brochures.

In most of these political activities in which we are involved and with which we can link our trade union work, we unfortunately don't have a great deal to learn from the comrades' experience in Europe. The American situation is more unique. We'll be paving our way, and also working under conditions of the absence of a mass reformist political party of the working class. All we can

really learn from Europe is the practical day-to-day trade-union and political work. We shouldn't underestimate this. We can learn certain fundamental lessons, outlined above, from the European sections' work.

It's important that we work both in the trade unions and in the plants. We should continue our orientation of never boycotting the trade unions, even the most reactionary or inactive, but also of never diverting our work toward maneuvering inside the trade union apparatus or working only with the bureaucratic leadership.

With regard to how the YSA fits into this whole perspective, the YSA is essential to us in recruiting students in high schools and universities, where we are doing our decisive recruitment and cadre-training right now. But the extreme delicateness of beginning work in the working class in a serious way makes it necessary that all such work be directed by experienced members of the party. In addition, workers, even young workers, may find the student milieu and the composition of the YSA a little foreign to them, more so than the party. In such cases, we should open the party to them and not require that they join the YSA

* * *

The suggestions made here come mainly from discussing with European comrades or observing their activity, and from a general outlook on the American situation. Precise, well-grounded proposals for our work can only come from a concrete analysis of our national and local situations, however. So there ought to be a full discussion at our conference, and in the next pre-convention discussion it's to be hoped that there will be plenty of written material on this work.

This article is not intended as part of a pre-convention type political discussion, but a contribution to the discussion of how to implement our orientation to the working class, outlined in the 1969 party convention resolutions. It is, however, also in agreement with what Comrade Peng Shu-tse wrote in his discussion article previous to the Ninth World Congress: that it is crucial that all Trotskyist organizations take steps now to get a strong base in the working masses. A full discussion of our orientation and the political questions related to it will have to wait for the discussion previous to the next convention.

Brussels
July 14, 1970

FOR SHARPENING OUR POLEMIC WITH THE POPULATION ALARMISTS

by Hayden Perry, Los Angeles Branch

I hope that my use of the above title will make it clear that I am in agreement with the basic party position on the population question. (A) We do not consider the rapid rise in population the primary problem facing humankind today. (B) We do not believe that reducing, or even stabilizing the population would solve our basic social problems. (C) Even if it were necessary to reduce the birthrate we could never entrust this mission to the capitalist class.

The Party's basic document on this subject is "The 'Population Explosion.'" It was formerly published as "Too Many Babies?" by Joseph Hansen. Comrade Hansen does a masterful job refuting the nineteenth century Malthusians. His section on population under capitalism is particularly strong. However, I believe he misses the arguments of many of Malthus' present day descendants.

Malthus did not approach the problem of population in terms of specific numbers. Probably no one knew the world's population at that time, 1798, nor how fast it was growing. He posed the theoretical question of the ratio between the growth of population and the growth of food supplies. Geometric in terms of people and arithmetical in terms of food. Historical experience and Joseph Hansen have demolished the false premise on which Malthus' gloomy prognoses were based.

Neo-Malthusians, however, start with a set of statistics, the essence of which is expressed in the following table:

World Population Trends

<u>Year</u>	<u>Population in billions</u>	<u>No. of years it takes population to double</u>
1	0.25	1650
1650	0.50	200
1850	1.1	80
1930	2.0	45
1975	4.0	35
2010	8.0	?

It can be seen by this table that the rate of world population growth has increased dramatically in the past 100 years, and the population alarmists believe it will increase even faster in the immediate years ahead. They say the world's population will increase from 2 billion to 8 billion in 70 years. They see danger in this rapid geometric increase that Malthus talked about.

Comrade Hansen does not quote any statistics on population but speaks several times of people who express alarm at the prospect of the world being over-

populated "in a thousand years." Whether their alarm is justified or not, the zero population advocates are concerned about conditions within our own lifetimes, not a thousand years from now. We must answer them on that level.

Hansen's pamphlet puts "Population Explosion" in quotes in the title, as though there is no population explosion. Actually there is; and it is not necessarily a bad sign. There have been human population explosions in the past whenever living conditions have become more favorable for the nurture of human beings. Anthropologists say one of the most striking increases in population occurred when early humanity learned the arts of agriculture and assured himself of a vastly increased food supply.

Our present population explosion is similarly based on great advances in humankind's control over nature. Women are not bearing any more babies than they did 200 years ago: in fact they are bearing fewer. But so many childhood diseases have been conquered that many more babies are surviving to maturity and parenthood. Is this bad?

The neo-Malthusians say it is bad because the population explosion is getting out of hand and will overwhelm us. They fail to present another set of statistics that practically eliminates this fear. Unfortunately Joseph Hansen's pamphlet also fails to make this very significant point.

The point is that the rate of population increase varies significantly from country to country. The following table indicates what I mean:

Varying Rates of Population Increase

<u>Country</u>	<u>Increase per Thousand</u>	<u>Time for Population to Double</u>
Formosa	34	25 years
USA & USSR	18.4	35
Sweden & France	5 - 10	150

This indicates that, given a certain material and cultural level people voluntarily, and almost automatically limit procreation to levels they feel are supportable.

I think this is the key to the whole population furor. Given free choice people respond with the greatest sensitivity to their material prospects when deciding the size of their families. We need only refer to the low birth rate in America during the Depression; then the rise with World War II and post-war prosperity. Now

the American birth rate is falling again. I predict that by the next census in 1980 there will be far less talk of a population crisis in the United States.

That brings up the alarmists who point to the following statistics:

Proportion of the World's Races

<u>Region</u>	<u>Year 1925</u>	<u>Year 1950</u>
No. America	6.6%	6.3%
Europe	26.5%	19.6%
Latin America	5.2%	7.9%
Asia	53.5%	57.8%

White	33%	25.9%
Non White	58%	65.7%

(Some 10% of the world population is excluded here.)

Of course we cannot yield one inch to those racists who see disaster in a world populated largely by non-Caucasians. We condemn as racist proposals to sterilize the males of India when based on these considerations.

Incidentally we should take note of, and condemn a corollary policy, that leads to the opposite of birth limitation. I refer to the governments that take measures to encourage a high birth rate in their country, so that their nation can dominate its less populous neighbors. Mussolini was one of the more notorious advocates of almost forced maternity. For primitive societies, very small in numbers, and constantly faced with the possibility of extinction; this concern with a birth rate was legitimate. But they did not have oppressive governments demanding children for cannon fodder. Today enforced breeding is as odious as enforced sterilization.

But all people who advocate sterilization for the males of India are not racists. Many are genuinely concerned that India will face a terrible famine; not in some distant future, but as early as the mid-1970's. They say the balance between food and population is so close, that the present rate of increase is leading to unavoidable disaster. I don't think we should brush aside their prophecies of doom, they may be right about imminent famine. But we can point out that sterilizing Indians today would have little effect on a food crisis five years hence. There have been famines in China and in Europe in times past when the population was much smaller. It was usually due to a failure to move available food to the place of need. In India, of course, the crisis is due also to the utter inability of the bourgeois government to mobilize the increased population for increased production as China has done.

For Americans to tell Indians to get

sterilized is racist: for the Indian government to tell their male citizens to get sterilized is evading the real cause of their distress. But for Indian women or men to decide for themselves that they want to limit the size of their families is quite another matter.

Comrade Hansen does not discuss the right to abortion and other birth control measures. Yet this question belongs in any discussion of population. If Indian women are similar to their sisters in other parts of the world they will be asking for all the help they can get in gaining control over their own bodies. No one who accedes to their request can be accused of racism or anti-babyism.

There are two other aspects of the population question that should provide us with additional ammunition against the zero population people. One is the question of population distribution.

It is hard to say at what point the world might be over populated; but few would disagree with the proposition that New York City is over populated right now. So are all the other metropolitan centers on every continent on the globe. This is not a result of over population: in sparsely settled Australia most of the inhabitants crowd into a few sprawling cities. No one wants to be "buried in the country." But with radio, TV, instant communications, and fast travel the rural community today can be as much in touch with the world as a person could desire. The wealthy, with their remote country estates are well aware of this. A socialist government would have little difficulty in enticing millions of people to forsake the over crowded cities and spread themselves more evenly over this vast country. Of course this is a project for a workers state, but if we use these arguments with the population alarmists we may make some of them see that the problem is not too many people but too much capitalism.

Finally, I do not think we can ignore the pressure expanding industry is putting on finite supplies of raw materials. Today the U.S. alone uses over half the world's production of many minerals, and other resources. What will happen when China, India, Africa and South America become fully industrialized? I am not crying alarm as the neo-Malthusians do, but saying that new technologies must displace the old. Fishing and hunting supported primitive man for several millennia; agriculture supported a much greater population for several thousands of years; extracting metals from the earth, and chopping down forests, and fishing the seas, has supported a tremendous expansion of capitalism for 200 years. Now we must enter a new phase where recycling of materials will be important and planned allocation of resources on a world scale will be essential. In the ecology movement

we see the first faint beginning of this realization. Unfortunately I have not yet met an ecology buff who is not also a zero population exponent. This is an area of struggle where we could profitably use all our arguments on the population issue.

However I have heard a number of comrades say the population question is not worth talking about. Comrade Hansen's pamphlet also leads to that conclusion. The fact is the population question keeps popping up all the time: from sources

as high as the White House itself. It is not going to fade away. Certainly I do not propose any major propaganda campaign on this question, and I recognize that Dianne Feeley and others have written and spoken on the subject. But I believe they have missed some of the arguments I have presented. Alarm over population, like every other social concern, if properly dealt with, can often be transformed into concern and action against the present social order.

April 26, 1971