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HOW THE POSITIONS OF THE
GERMAIN-MAITAN-FRANK TENDENCY HOLDS
TOGETHER AND HOW ITS METHOD LEADS
TOWARD POPULAR FRONTISM

by David Keil, Lower Manhattan Branch,
New York Local

Tony Thomas (SWP Discussion Bulletin, Vol. 31, No. 22) has pointed out the mistakes of the Ligue Communiste in the French elections of 1973 and has outlined what would have been the correct policy. The article which follows will focus on the particular mistake of supporting the Union of the Left and will relate this mistake to the political and theoretical deviations from Trotskyism which characterize the Germain-Maitan-Frank tendency.

In the course of a polemic against the electoral policy of the PST of Argentina ("In Defence . . .", International Internal Discussion Bulletin, X, 4, p. 29), Comrade Ernest Germain notes that he "would tend to agree" with a passage in the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency's "Balance Sheet" resolution which expresses opposition to "any populist, nationalist or popular-front formation that seeks to induce the workers into turning away from independent action and voting for bourgeois candidates as in the case of the Frente Amplio in Uruguay and the Unidad Popular in Chile." (Quoted from "Balance Sheet," IIDB, X, 1, p. 39.) This is a good sign.

However, other comrades of Germain's persuasion display an apparently opposite tendency, a tendency to adapt to the deadly virus of popular frontism. As this article will show, adapting to popular frontism not only is related in practice to the "new mass vanguard" theory, but is supported by the same theories that lead to denying that the Chinese and North Vietnamese leaderships are Stalinist and counterrevolutionary and to putting forth a liquidationist "strategy of armed struggle." Comrades of Germain's tendency who, like Germain, reject supporting popular front formations will have to discuss this question with members of their own tendency who wish to give political support to these formations. But in doing so, they will have to examine their own positions on the other issues just mentioned.

The Ligue Communiste's Mistake of Principle on the Union of the Left

The most important example of adapting to a popular front is the (former) Ligue Communiste majority's attitude toward the Union of the Left in France. The Ligue called for a vote in favor of this electoral bloc despite its multiclass character as expressed by the Communist Party and Socialist Party leaderships' open statements and by the presence of the bourgeois Left Radicals inside the bloc. The Central Committee of the Ligue stated, on March 5, 1973, that:

"We think that the electoral gains of the Union of the Left will still be seen by the workers as a shifting of the relationship of forces in their favor and as an encouragement to struggle.

"This is why, without in the slightest suggesting support to the content of the common program or to the reformists, traitors, and capitulationists who express it, we call for a vote for the candidates of the Union of the Left on the second round as a means of fighting the URP."

(*Interncontinental Press*, March 26, 1973, p. 347; the URP was the Gaullist coalition.)

This is not sufficient grounds to support an electoral coalition. In fact the justification given by the Ligue's Central Committee would have led to support for the popular fronts in both Spain and France in 1936. The election of both these formations directly set off strike waves and struggles by other social layers, since the workers and popular masses saw the success of the popular fronts as "a shifting of the relationship of forces in their favor and as an encouragement to struggle." Unfortunately, the popular fronts also made it impossible for the workers to bring their struggles to the political fruition of a workers and peasants government and a socialist revolution, since the masses were tied to the bourgeoisie, politically, by virtue of their support for the popular front governments. Trotskyists did not vote for these rotten blocs in the 1930s, and they do not support Allende's traitorous Unidad Popular today. Centrists, on the other hand, have joined the reformist betrayers in giving political support to the popular fronts, and Trotskyists have made their sharpest criticisms on this score.

The working masses of the world, especially of France, have had plenty of experience with popular frontism. It should therefore not be so difficult as it was in the 1930s to expose this reformist concept. But to do that, Trotskyists must understand it themselves. Trotsky wrote that "the Popular Front is the *main question of proletarian class strategy* for this epoch." (*The Spanish Revolution*, p. 220, emphasis in original.) Unfortunately, even today, and in fact within the Trotskyist movement itself, this question is not universally understood, even on a minimal level.

Some comrades of the Ligue Communiste, for example, seem to think that it makes no difference what would be the class nature of a government (or administration) resulting from the application of their electoral policy. An article by Henri Weber in an earlier issue of *Rouge* states, "We do not, however, present a Socialist Party-Communist Party government as a workers' government; we simply explain to the masses who still believe in the electoral road that the reformist traitors will not be able to use our defection to explain their future defeat." (*Rouge*, Dec. 16, 1972, p. 14; reprinted in *IP*, Feb. 12, 1973.)

This is certainly a light-minded justification for an electoral policy. As if there were no principles involved, only the need not to have anyone (such as the "new mass vanguard?") think that we were responsible for the defeat of the Union of the Left!

The former leaders and members of the Ligue Communiste will have to think through the implications of supporting the Union of the Left. The logical corollary of this support would be to support the formation of a Union of the Left government, including Left Radical ministers. The logical next step of this would be for the Ligue to offer to send its own members to take posts in this government. But Henri Weber himself admits that

this government would not be a government of the workers; therefore it can only be a government of the exploiters. There is no qualitative political difference between offering political support to an electoral bloc and offering to participate in a government; only a quantitative practical difference in the relation of forces. The former leaders of the Ligue would recoil and protest against this statement of what their position immediately implies; but that is *their* contradiction, which they must resolve as Trotskyists. As Tony Thomas pointed out, a question of principle is involved.

The Need to Recognize a Popular Front When it Is in Front of Us

The extreme seriousness of the Ligue's mistake and its implications is shown by the fact that some leaders of the Ligue Communiste, and indeed of the Fourth International, not only justified this mistake but created a whole new theory around it. Thus they became unable to recognize a multiclass electoral bloc, or popular front, when it appeared in front of them. A case in point is Comrade Pierre Frank's article in *Intercontinental Press*, April 2, 1973. He does not mention the argument that the election of the Union of the Left would have spurred workers' struggles, or even argue that it was correct to support the Union of the Left. But worse, in a footnote, he advances a shallow and misleading argument to "prove" that the Union of the Left was not a popular front. He contrasts the Left Radicals of 1973 to the Radical Party of 1936, calling the radicals of 1936 "the *main* party of the French bourgeoisie," and the 1973 Left Radicals "parasites, freeloaders," representing no social or political force at all. Because the bourgeois Left Radical group in the Union of the Left was tiny, gaining only 1.4 percent of the vote, Pierre Frank concludes that the Union of the Left was not a popular front. He thus lends support to the idea that Trotskyists could call for a vote for it.

It is true that the Union of the Left was not a popular front in the *classical* sense. This is because the employing class didn't trust it yet. But, in *essence*, it *was* a popular front, an incipient one. By supporting it in the elections, the Ligue helped to give it left cover and thus helped it move toward becoming a full-fledged popular front having the confidence of both the workers and their bosses. To say that the Union of the Left was not a popular front because the Left Radicals were only a splinter is a formal and static view. It neglects the fact that a formation need not have the *support* of the employer class in order to function as a *tool* of the capitalists, and that such untrusted tools often work so well that they gain the confidence and support of the capitalists. This is the case both with incipient popular fronts and incipient fascist movements.

Furthermore, Pierre Frank's argument leads inevitably to the idea that the Unidad Popular in Chile, which certainly seems not to have had the support of the capitalists for some time now, is a workers' government deserving our political support.

Stalinist "Hegemony" Does Not Guarantee Proletarian Class Character

Pierre Frank's argument echoes the article by Comrade Henri Weber, which states that the Communist Party of France has "hegemony" in the Union of the Left. "It is

this hegemony of the Communist Party which gives the alliance as a whole its class nature, not the presence of such and such a bourgeois politician," writes Weber. This position is not at all in the tradition or method of Marxism, any more than is Weber's idea of voting for an electoral bloc which would not form a government of proletarian character. (Comrade Weber presents us with a paradoxical combination of contradictory arguments which are both wrong no matter which one you choose.) The formal "hegemony" of a workers' party does not at all guarantee the class character of an electoral formation, just as it does not decisively determine the class character of a government or state. One might say that the Stalinists had "hegemony" in some governments of the Spanish Republic after 1936. (Trotsky even called the Spanish Popular Front an "alliance with the bourgeoisie's shadow"—*The Spanish Revolution*, p. 309.) But this guaranteed not that these popular front governments, but rather, as it turned out, that they were the most efficient enforcers of capitalist property and rule. The class character of an electoral formation is determined by the role it plays in the concrete situation, in light of its composition and origin. The role of the Union of the Left was to pose as a purely parliamentary alternative to the Gaullists, not as a workers' government (i.e., an administration composed of representatives of workers' parties and only workers' parties), but as a "left" capitalist government. It had to be combatted, not supported. The best way to combat it would have been to give critical support in the second round of voting to the major *workers' parties*, the Communist Party and the Socialist Party, as Tony Thomas suggests, sharply distinguishing between a vote for these parties and a vote for the capitalist Union of the Left.

When the Stalinists create an electoral bloc which is open to capitalist parties, this bloc must be called a capitalist electoral formation. Whether the Stalinists have "hegemony" in it or not, the role it plays in real life is to represent and stand for the political dependence of the workers on the capitalists. This is the opposite of the role played by working-class candidates when they run and campaign for votes in the name of workers' parties, even if on a reformist program.

A variation on Pierre Frank's and Henri Weber's argument, used by a speaker for the Internationalist Tendency in Lower Manhattan, is that the Left Radicals are not only insignificant, but are a *petty-bourgeois* formation. This comrade was even more confused on this principled question than the majority leadership of the Ligue Communiste; a political party, when it fights for power, can represent only one of two classes: the workers or the capitalists. If a "petty-bourgeois" party has a procapitalist program and an origin outside the workers' movement, then we must decidedly consider it a capitalist party when it comes to formulating our electoral policy.

A Sectarian Approach Must Be Rejected

It is necessary to say a few words on the position of the sectarian Spartacist League in the U.S. This group makes some telling criticisms of the electoral policy of the Ligue Communiste. However, the Spartacists advocate not only a vote against the Left Radicals in the Union

of the Left, but also a vote against the Stalinists and Social Democrats. As a condition for giving critical support to the reformist workers' parties, they demand that these parties "break their bloc with bourgeois parties." (*Workers Vanguard*, March 3, 1973, p. 12.) But this would logically rule out critical support for the mass reformist parties in all cases where they practice class collaboration, even in cases where they might run in their own name but proclaim the desire to form coalition governments with capitalist parties. In other words, the Spartacists reject critical support for reformist workers' parties unless they cease to act in a reformist way! We can see from this that their main aim is not to encourage the political independence of the working class parties (thus exposing these parties' leaderships, who oppose the political independence of the class at every turn), but to show themselves that they, the Spartacists, are dogmatically pure and different from everyone else—which they undoubtedly are.

In this connection it must be pointed out that the capitalist nature of the Union of the Left, or of any popular front type formation, is not determined primarily by its program, but by its proclaimed willingness to include capitalist parties inside it. The union of the Left's program is for reform within capitalism, to be sure. It is a bourgeois program. But it isn't any worse than the programs of most reformist workers' parties. If we rejected in principle supporting any ticket which had a bourgeois (or reformist) program, then we would have to reject the tactic of critical support completely, as the Spartacists do. Instead of supporting the Raza Unida Party and calling for a Black party and a labor party, we would have to call only for a mass revolutionary party. But, since we are not sectarians, we can see that even with a reformist program, these parties would help break the masses from their political dependence on the capitalists. We would offer them support in the elections, critically but unconditionally, while advocating that these parties should adopt a revolutionary socialist program.

The Correct Tactic: A Class Vote

The correct tactic for the Ligue Communiste would have been to offer critical support to the Socialists and the Communist Party on the second ballot, but to oppose the Union of the Left as such and to reject a vote for the bourgeois Left Radicals. In this way, the comrades could have shown what they mean by a class alternative at the same time that they exposed the reformist leaders as class collaborationists. It would have given them a chance to explain what is meant by a workers government.

About one-fourth of the delegates at the December 1972 convention of the Ligue Communiste supported a position which leads in the direction of this correct tactic and which, unlike the majority position, does not depart from Marxist principles. These comrades argued that the Ligue's position should give the workers a way to express their distrust of the Union of the Left. They called the Union of the Left a capitalist electoral formation and said that a real class vote ought to be counterposed to it. (See *Rouge*, Dec. 16, 1972, or *IP*, Feb. 12, 1973.) They urged a vote for the Communist Party alone. This position is better than that adopted by the Ligue, but it mistakenly

rejects a vote for the Socialist Party on the basis that Socialist candidates are bourgeois politicians. If such Socialist leaders as Defferre and Mitterand are "bourgeois politicians," however, in the sense that they have been willing to join bourgeois governments, then one must certainly admit that the same is true for many Communist Party leaders also. For example, in the period from 1944 to 1947, the Communist Party helped to form the governments in France. If the CP didn't actually have ministers in the capitalist Popular Front governments of 1936-38, this was not something especially to their credit. The decisive fact was the CP's support for the Popular Front governments. The CP's "nonparticipation" was, to Trotsky, "the worst most pernicious kind of participation." (*The Spanish Revolution*, p. 290.)

The decisive criterion for voting for candidates is not their record as individuals, but the class forces they represent. The "bourgeois" Socialist candidates represented the Socialist Party, a party of proletarian origin and with an organized trade-union base. If members of the Ligue Communiste want to call the Socialist Party "bourgeois," they should show how it changed and when. A reformist party does not change in its class character just by entering a capitalist government; after all, this is only a short next step, the logical result of giving support to capitalist governments under any conditions.

As these minority comrades may realize, the Ligue Communiste committed a serious error which must be corrected before it leads to more serious ones. It would be mistaken, however, to conclude that the Ligue's policy came from any faith in bourgeois parties or support to reformist programs. It is rather a result of "tactical" adaptation to the backwardness of the "new mass vanguard." The Ligue was impelled by its "tactical" adaptation to begin to revise its theory, but it still retained a Trotskyist criticism of the program of the Union of the Left. For example, Alain Krivine, speaking for the Ligue, pointed out on February 7 that "the Common Program is another blind alley, just like the program of the Popular Front or that of the Liberation." The Ligue correctly polemicized against this program and exposed it. But by voting for the bourgeois Left Radicals, the Ligue lent support to the idea of carrying out this program, since the presence of the Left Radicals in the Union of the Left was nothing more nor less than a guarantee that a Union of the Left government would base itself on the Left Radicals' program and not go beyond it under pressure from the ranks of the workers' organizations. The Left Radicals were an excuse for the reformists to keep within capitalist boundaries, a symbol of the rejection of independent labor political action by the reformists. This would be true even if the Left Radicals had received no votes at all rather than 1.4 percent; in that case, the excuse would have been even less convincing and the symbol less real. The Ligue should have exposed the absurd game of the reformist parties by calling for rejection of the Union of the Left.

The Primary Propaganda Task: "For a Workers Government," Not Simply "For Mass Struggles"

The United Secretariat majority draft resolution, "Building Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe," shows a big weakness when it fails to rule out voting for such

popular front formations as the Union of the Left. Its extreme vagueness on electoral policy is downright dangerous. Nowhere in its section on "Central Political Tasks" does the resolution discuss the need to break the workers away from their illusions in coalition governments, or how this can be done in the process of combatting the Stalinist and Social-Democratic parties and as a way of exposing these parties.

Instead, the resolution emphasizes economic struggles and "dual power" only at the plant level, and suggests using the slogan of a workers government to "project primarily the idea of a *government resulting from mass struggles and action*." (IIDB No. 5 in 1972, p. 18; emphasis in original.) It is as if the main problem was that workers think they can get socialism simply by voting for socialists. Electoralism is a problem, of course; but the *main* problem, right up until the time of the "decisive struggles" for power, will not be electoralism but rather illusions in capitalist governments, including coalition governments of the popular front type.

The workers already know that they must wage "mass struggles and action." What they need most is a political focus for their mass struggles. "Dual power" at the base is no substitute for this. "Governments resulting from mass struggles and action" have included not only workers governments, but also popular front governments, Bonapartist governments and even fascist governments. So what must be projected "primarily" is not the need for governments to result from mass struggles and action, but rather the need for such governments to be *workers* governments.

We do not enter the mass movement primarily to stimulate "action" (sometimes there is even too much "action," as in Petrograd in July 1917), but rather to build our movement and to give the action and militancy, which will be inevitable, a political direction. The very center of our propaganda, and even sometimes our agitation, everywhere in the capitalist world, should be the slogan of a workers' government or a workers' and farmers' government. We call for a workers' government to fight for workers' demands, for women's liberation, for the right of self-determination for oppressed nationalities, and so forth. This is much more important than propaganda for armed struggle, workers' control, or "mass struggles and action" in the abstract. These latter important tasks are all subordinate to the need for a clear program for creating a new state power, the workers state.

China and Vietnam: "Stalinist Hegemony" Versus Workers' States

Comrade Henri Weber's idea that the proletarian class character of a government is guaranteed by the hegemony of a workers' organization is an old one. The Stalinists used it, and more recently, General Jose Torres of Bolivia has come out with some loose talk about the predominant role of the proletariat in the "national revolution," just as his defunct Frente Revolucionario Anti-imperialista used terms like "proletarian hegemony."

Unfortunately, this concept of "proletarian hegemony" has also found its way into the Sterne-Walter resolution on Vietnam passed by the December 1972 International Executive Committee meeting. While this resolution states the Trotskyist position of opposing all coalition govern-

ments which include capitalist forces, it introduces the idea that in a coalition government situation, "if the bourgeoisie is in reality disarmed, then the bourgeois ministers are hostages of the proletarian state." (IIDB X, No. 6, p. 22.) This can, perhaps, occur—but not automatically or merely by virtue of the dominance of a Stalinist party and the loss of direct control of the military by the capitalists. We should remember that, just as a capitalist party can become a prisoner of a workers' state (Eastern Europe and North Vietnam), a workers' party can also become a prisoner of its own capitalist program. Sometimes a Stalinist party can do a better job of smashing the revolution than the bourgeoisie could, as in the Spanish Civil War; it all depends on the real situation and the policy of the Stalinist party in this situation. Perhaps, if Thieu's state is smashed in a mass upsurge, the Vietnamese Communist Party will create a workers state; but to do so, it will have to change its program and completely discard the program of the Provisional Revolutionary Government. It will not take place automatically, simply by virtue of Stalinist hegemony and the absence of a capitalist army.

This conception of the class nature of a state being determined by Stalinist hegemony combined with loss of control of the army by the capitalists contradicts the Marxist criteria for judging the nature of a state and would lead to some foolish revisions of our past analyses. The first question Marxists ask about a state is, what are the property relations? The Sterne-Walter resolution ignores this completely. The second question is, what are the relations between the classes? In the October revolution, it took a long time before all the property relations were overturned; but the workers, under the leadership of the Bolsheviks, were in full command, so the Soviet state was a workers state by the second criterion.

But Stalinist "hegemony," even when combined with the disarming of the capitalists, does not necessarily mean that the workers are in power. In China after the October 1949 revolution, for example, the Chinese Communist Party, a Stalinist party, was in power. It had full control over the army, as well as the government. But China was not yet a workers state. It was not even a dual-power situation, as Ernest Germain had characterized it in an article in the January-February 1951 issue of *Fourth International*—just as there is no dual power today in South Vietnam, contrary to the Sterne-Walter resolution.

In China, the CCP, a *peasant* party, ruled on behalf of the "bloc of four classes," i.e., in reality, the bourgeoisie, and property relations were only overturned after the U.S. forced such measures by invading Korea. In the same way, the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam cannot be called a workers' state in formation simply because there is "Stalinist hegemony" inside it—especially since it specifically guarantees the right of capitalist property ownership. (See the article by Fred Feldman and George Johnson in the July-August 1973 *ISR*.)

The method of the Sterne-Walter resolution, however, would lead us to consider the "People's Republic of China" to have been a proletarian dictatorship from the beginning, which would obviously contradict the facts. (It might be pointed out here that this theory of Sterne and Walter is not a new one, but is, in fact, more than 22 years old. See Peng Shu-tse, "Report on the Chinese Situation" (1951), *Education for Socialists, The Chinese Revolution, I*, pp.

40-43. All the more reason for the theory to be answered again now in full!)

This mistaken concept, when applied to China, has no doubt aided those comrades, such as Henri Weber (e.g., *Rouge*, October 7, 1972), who prefer to view Mao's CCP as a "revolutionary bureaucracy," a centrist rather than Stalinist party. If Mao ruled for four years before moving to create a workers state, then he could not have been a "revolutionary bureaucrat"; but if, as this incorrect theory would hold, the People's Republic of China was a workers state from its inception, then perhaps Mao was a revolutionary despite his theory.

* * *

Thus we can see the connection between the Ligue Communiste majority's adaptation to popular frontism, the theory of the "new mass vanguard," the position of the Germain-Maitan-Frank tendency on Vietnam, and even, implicitly, the position of some comrades on China. One might also point out that the overemphasis on the military question, the emphasis on disarming the bourgeoisie *militarily* without emphasizing the need to arm the workers *politically*, i.e., to break them away from the capitalist parties and create a workers government—is to be found in the "strategy of armed struggle" in Latin America, where the POR of Bolivia, with the approval of comrades of the Germain-Maitan-Frank tendency, attempted to create a guerrilla front and then, when this proved impossible, joined a popular front, the Frente Revolucionario Anti-imperialista; and where the PRT-ERP of Argentina, carrying the theories of the Germain-Maitan-Frank tendency toward their conclusion (but without getting prior approval to do so), carried out guerrilla actions and then offered support to the Campora government, withdrawing this offer only after 45 days.

Why Youth Organizations Are Rejected

One further connection can be drawn: the connection between these theories and the question of the youth organization.

All these theories of the Germain-Maitan-Frank tendency contradict Marxist methodology, so they must be applied with extreme caution so that they will not lead one to break completely from Trotskyism, practically and organizationally. The comrades who have been leaders of the Fourth International for so long (and capable leaders, one might add) don't want to liquidate Trotskyism in this way. So they apply their theories in Latin America and Asia but attempt not to apply them in Europe. Young people just joining our movement, however, will tend to want to be more consistent. If they agree with an adventurist strategy for Latin America, they will want to apply this strategy in France. We can see this by the document written by Jebrac and others in the Ligue Communiste, "Is the Question of Power Posed? Let's Pose It!"

For that reason, the leading comrades who wish to maintain legal parties engaged in mass work in Europe will tend to want to avoid recruiting too many young people or giving them too much influence before they understand the "necessary" (but, in reality, artificial) difference between the application of strategy in Europe and its application in Latin America. It would seem that that is the reason why the comrades in Europe are reluctant to create independent youth organizations. Of course, they may not realize that their Latin American strategy has dangerous implications for Europe. But as they say themselves, launching youth organizations would create enormous problems, e.g., "a sectarian (or spontaneist) tendency to underestimate and misjudge the organized workers movement. . . ." (United Secretariat majority resolution on Europe, p. 23.) This is undoubtedly because accepting the "armed struggle strategy" in Latin America would naturally lead most people to "underestimate and misjudge the organized workers movement," since the organized workers are not likely to take part in this "armed struggle strategy." Therefore, the comrades project waiting until a "critical threshold" has been attained when the organizations will be able to control youth organizations—and thus to prevent their natural extension of the guerrilla line from Latin America to Europe. In this respect, the comrades are only being realistic, even though they don't see what it is that makes their position realistic.

Unfortunately, the comrades are finding that it is not possible to control even their own organizations and their tendency to extend guerrilla warfare to Europe. "Violent minority actions" are being carried out more and more. In this respect, the comrades are finding that the European sections resemble the very same youth organizations they fear to launch. This is because the old youth organizations, such as the JCR and the JGS, were recruited to the official sections only in name. In reality, it was the tiny, inactive official sections that were recruited—to the student backwardness, guerrillism, vanguardism and Mao/Ho Chi Minh adaptationism of the youth organizations. Hence the "critical threshold" will never be reached.

Youth organizations are needed to help the Trotskyist movement grow, as Comrade Mary-Alice Waters has pointed out. But to prevent a disaster in Europe will require much more than the establishment of youth organizations; that is an entirely subordinate question, and it is correctly put in a subordinate place in Comrade Waters' document. Youth organizations created on the basis of an adventurist line would only hasten disaster. What is needed first is a turn away from the adventurist line and a complete reevaluation of theoretical questions by members of the European Trotskyist movement so that it can return to its Leninist traditions.

A reconsideration of the vote for the Union of the Left is the top priority in this area.

July 25, 1973

A FEUDAL MONARCHICAL WORKERS STATE? THE INTERNATIONALIST TENDENCY AND THE CLASS CHARACTER OF THE STATE

by Steve Clark, Chicago Branch

I. *A Fundamental Revision*

It has become clear over the course of the discussion in the Chicago branch that members of the newly formed Internationalist Tendency hold a position on the class character of the state which represents—whatever its merits or flaws—a serious revision of the conceptions of revolutionary Marxism. These comrades contend that the Fourth International committed an important scientific error at the end of World War II in not recognizing the Eastern European "buffer zone" nations as worker's states purely on the basis of the military hegemony in those areas of the Soviet Army—the armed extension of the Soviet workers state. The Chinese workers state, accordingly, was established in 1949 with the military victory of the Red Army over Chiang Kai-shek. The Vietnamese workers state was born in August 1945, the Cuban workers state in January 1959, etc.

This position fundamentally differs from the established Trotskyist analysis of the post-war socialist overturns which starts from the class nature of the property forms defended by any given state apparatus, the program of the revolutionary leadership, the political liquidation of the bourgeoisie and other factors tied to the qualitative altering of social structure and relationships. It is unfortunate that the novel position held by the comrades of the tendency has not yet been made available to the movement as a whole. The questions involved are not at all minor, especially in light of the statements by tendency members that the party's present position has led to the development of Shachtmanite and "Stalinophobic" errors in our antiwar work, our propaganda and our theoretical appreciation of the nature of the Soviet and Chinese bureaucracies, as well as other Stalinist formations. Hopefully, by the time this contribution is printed, the Internationalist Tendency (hereafter referred to as "IT") will have produced a document outlining their views for the study of the entire party and world movement.

Members of the IT admit that the error on this score does not reside with the SWP alone, but with the position of the 4th International as a whole. Nonetheless, they note approvingly that sections of the international leadership have changed their position in recent months as evidenced by the following paragraph from the Sterne-Walter resolution on Vietnam passed at the December I. E. C. plenum:

"The decisive thing is the nature of the state, that is, the class character of those who control the armed forces. If the bourgeoisie is in reality disarmed, then the bourgeois ministers are hostages of the proletarian state, whether bureaucratically deformed or not."

While this quotation and the surrounding paragraphs from the Sterne-Walter document *do suggest* agreement with the unwritten position of the IT on the question of the class character of the state, it does *indeed* seem odd that leaders of the International would seek to introduce such a *fundamental* change in Marxist theory as a paragraph in a document on another topic—and without any clear statement that a change was being made. To what extent various leaders or members of other sections of the Mandel-Maitan-Frank (MMF) tendency agree *in fact* with this position awaits further written documentation,

which hopefully will be forthcoming. Certainly, however, the Sterne-Walter resolution and Sterne's recent contribution on Indochina are both open to interpretation along the lines of the IT's theoretical innovation.

II. *The Significance of the Debate*

The question at issue in this discussion is not simply of historical interest. The correct year, month and day on which a workers state was formed in Eastern Europe, China, North Vietnam and Cuba is not the central issue raised by this discussion *by a long shot!* The real question is one of methodology. How does a Trotskyist organization analyze the processes at work in situations such as China (1948-52), North Vietnam (1945-54) or Cuba (1959-61)? To what extent does a Trotskyist organization extend political confidence to Stalinist and other petty-bourgeois leaderships which find themselves—for one reason or another—at the head of a revolution or in a position of military power over the state apparatus? What does a Trotskyist party tell the masses of workers and peasants to do in such a situation? What political, social and economic tasks are posed? What dangers are involved?

Comrades of the IT demand of the SWP that it defend to the death a year, a date, an hour when workers states sprang forth from the head of Zeus. They contend that our position is a gradualist, evolutionary conception of the transition to workers power—a conception which negates the necessity of the violent smashing of the bourgeois state apparatus and leaves open the possibility of a peaceful capitalist restoration. These charges are false, and reflective of an inability to deal with the dialectical and contradictory nature of social reality. The SWP understands *full well* the absolute necessity of a decisive dismantling of the capitalist repressive apparatus, and—unlike the IT—its *replacement by a new apparatus* dedicated to the transformation of the class character of the state through smashing bourgeois property relations, nationalization of the economy, the establishment of a monopoly of foreign trade, and the institution of a planned economy. The establishment of a new repressive apparatus which simply appropriates *to itself* the function of preserving *capitalist property relations* does not, for us, constitute a *qualitative change* in the class character of the state—especially when that new apparatus is in the hands of petty-bourgeois movements and/or agents of imperialism inside the working class such as Stalinism.

We understand, of course, that such situations set off social and political dynamics, both internally and internationally, which may facilitate the eventual abolition of capitalist property relations and the establishment of a workers state. But we place *no prior confidence* in such leaderships, and pose in a clear and unrelenting way to the masses of workers and the oppressed the tasks which they must *independently* undertake through their mobilizations—even *against* the new state apparatus, if that is necessary to advance the struggle. In this context, we unconditionally defend such regimes against imperialist intervention or counterrevolution—both of which aim at smothering the mass initiative and weakening the existing

workers states.

I will take up all of these questions in more detail further on. At this point, however, I want to deal with the question of why the IT has seen fit to introduce this revision into the present discussion. The solution to this puzzle is rather simple when viewed in the context of the discussion on Latin America, Vietnam and the European "new mass vanguard." If a political party can establish a workers state simply by dispossessing the armed power of the bourgeoisie, then why be fussy about programmatic clarity as long as we can all agree to pick up the gun? After all, the primary task from the very beginning is a military one, isn't it? And everything else just flows from there, because once that capitalist state apparatus has been smashed, the socialist measures are "inevitable." At that point in the revolutionary process, Trotskyists may perhaps play an independent role in reforming the leadership, or even overthrowing it, in order to establish real organs of proletarian democracy. But that's all in the future. Comrade Mitten of the IT summed it up quite well in discussing Vietnam when he made the categorical statement: "In the colonial countries program is important, but not decisive." In the years ahead, comrades of the IT, the *SWP* believes that program will be *extremely* decisive.

This innovation is an adaptation to ultraleft and centrist currents of every shade. But what is perhaps less obvious is the serious adaptation to reformism and Stalinism. The IT never tires of complaints about the SWP's alleged "Stalinophobia." "You don't understand the dual nature of Stalinism," they explain. "You miss its centrism (*not* reformism, but centrism). You say that Stalinism is counterrevolutionary through and through, ignoring its progressive side. . . ." Comrade Barzman of the IT informed the party that revolutionists support *every* armed invasion by a workers state of a capitalist state, and that history for the last quarter century has shown that the 4th International has been sectarian in its attitude to Stalinist leaderships engaged in military struggle. If the guerrillas in Cambodia were to take Pnomh Penh, he explained, we might be faced for a period with the return of Sihanouk to head up a "feudal monarchical workers state based on capitalist property relations"! One can only throw up your hands in despair at such a distortion of Marxism!

What is the methodology of the IT? Crude empiricism. Starting from an adaptation to workerist and Stalinoid "anti-imperialist" currents in the radicalization, they attempt to sneak in a revision of Trotskyism in order to square their theory with their proposed practice. It is not the methodology of the Socialist Workers Party.

III. Trotsky: Dialectician or Bumbling Incompetent?

The FAPO school of sterile quotation did not die out in 1971, but lingers on today as a guiding light in the political thought of FAPO's reconstituted mirror image, the Internationalist Tendency. Failing to find much of use in the works of Cannon this time around, the tendency has resorted to the more voluminous works of Trotsky. They spend long hours brooding over his works looking for all the good things he had to say about Stalinism. This time they have turned up several quotations from a variety of places which confirm the fact that Russia became a workers state in October, 1917. "Ah ha!

The coup de grace! Property was not nationalized in the Soviet Union until the fall of 1918, yet Trotsky called it a workers state in October, 1917. The SWP position on Eastern Europe, China and Cuba crumbles into tiny particles of dust! The SWP leadership does not even know that a workers state was established in the Soviet Union at the time of the Bolshevik revolution! Q. E. D."

Unfortunately, comrades, attention should be directed to several other quotations from Trotsky: one of which places the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat in *February* 1917, and several which place it in the *fall* of 1918.

"The transfer of power to the soviets meant, in its immediate sense, a transfer of power to the Compromisers. That might have been accomplished peacefully, by way of a simple dismissal of the bourgeois government, which had survived only on the good will of the Compromisers and the relics of the confidence in them of the masses. The *dictatorship of the workers and soldiers had been a fact ever since the 27th of February.* (My emphasis.) But the workers and soldiers were not to the point necessary aware of the fact. They had confided the power to the Compromisers, who had in turn passed it over to the bourgeoisie." (*History of the Russian Revolution*, Vol. II, quoted by Cannon in *Marxism or Ultraleftism.*) What was Trotsky saying here? Perhaps that the bourgeoisie was a mere "prisoner" of the workers state? I doubt it.

Elsewhere, Trotsky placed the transformation to the dictatorship of the proletariat some 18 months later in the fall of 1918. "The reference to the first period of the October Revolution is not any more fortunate. Not only up to the Brest-Litovsk peace but even up to 1918, the social content of the revolution was restricted to petty-bourgeois agrarian overturn and workers control over production. This means that the revolution in its actions had not yet passed the boundaries of bourgeois society. . . . Only toward the autumn of 1918 did the petty-bourgeois soldier-agrarian elemental wave recede a little to its shores and the workers went forward with the nationalization of the means of production. Only from this time can one speak of the inception of a real dictatorship of the proletariat." ("Class Nature of the Soviet State," *Writings* 1933-34.)

We can only draw one of two conclusions from this seeming contradiction in Trotsky's writings on the class character of the state. Either he was just as much of a bumbling theoretical incompetent as the present SWP leadership is accused of being, or his methodology was more attuned to the dialectic of historical processes than that of our tendency comrades. I'd put my money on the latter of the two. The second quotation, written in light of Trotsky's deepening understanding of the nature of the Soviet bureaucracy, highlights the centrality of the question of property relations in the characterization of the class nature of a state. The quotation from *History* should put to rest once and for all the misconception that Trotsky *ever* confused military might and programmatic clarity. And these are not isolated quotations.

In 1934 Trotsky wrote: "The anatomy of society is determined by its economic relations. So long as the forms of property that have been created by the October Revolution are not overthrown, the proletariat remains the

ruling class." ("Class Nature of the Soviet State," *Writings* 1933-34.) In 1937 in an article entitled "Not a Workers and Not a Bourgeois State?" he wrote: "The class nature of the state is, consequently, determined not by its political form but by its social content; i.e., by the character of the forms of property and productive relations which the given state guards and defends."

Anyone who takes the time to seriously read and study *The Revolution Betrayed* and *In Defense of Marxism* will have little doubt in her or his mind as to where Trotsky stood on this vital question. For reasons we know well, Lenin did not take account of many of the complex problems which today face the Marxist movement when he composed his classic work *State and Revolution*. Lenin expected that a Bolshevik-led revolution would once and for all smash the Russian bourgeois state apparatus and move quickly "to create a new organization of this kind, capable of serving not the exploiters, but the exploited." (Lenin, *State and Revolution*.) He did not expect there to be a radical discontinuity between the *smashing* of the old state apparatus which "served the exploiter" and the *establishment* of a new apparatus to "serve . . . the exploited." In the case of Russia, his expectations were well founded. In many cases since World War II the situation has not been nearly so clear. Nonetheless, Lenin always carefully specified two *separate* and vital tasks: destruction and reconstruction.

The IT often quotes the line taken from Engels and used by Lenin: "In the last analysis the state is a body of armed men." But this statement has nothing in common with the IT's adaptations to Stalinism. They conveniently forget to ask the question posed so sharply by both Engels and Lenin: What is the class character of the property forms these "armed men" defend?

Finally, one quotation from Marx himself to illustrate that *he too* saw the smashing of the state as a *vital precondition* for the reconstruction of society, but not the totality of the process. In a letter to Kugelmann dated April 12, 1871, he wrote ". . . not as in the past, to transfer the bureaucratic and military machinery from one hand to the other, but to *break it up*; and this is the *precondition* (my emphasis) of any real people's revolution on the Continent. And this is what our heroic party comrades in Paris have attempted."

On the question of the decisive and thorough destruction of the old state apparatus there is *no argument at all*. The IT is just huffing and puffing if they try to pretend that this vital principle of Marxism is being challenged by anyone! But the story does not end with this consideration. The task of constructing a proletarian apparatus to carry out the socialist tasks in the Soviet Union was assured by the program and leadership of the Bolsheviks. In this sense, it is mere nitpicking to quibble over whether or not Russia was a workers state in October 1917. Certainly Trotsky never did, as I've demonstrated above. There could be no mistaking the intentions of the revolutionary leadership in post-October Russia.

Trotsky states in *Revolution Betrayed* that: "The state assumes directly and from the very beginning a dual character: socialistic, insofar as it defends social property in the means of production; bourgeois, insofar as the distribution of life's goods is carried out with a capital-

istic measure of value and all the consequences ensuing therefrom. Such a contradictory characterization may horrify the dogmatists and scholastics; we can only offer them our condolences. The final physiognomy of the workers state ought to be determined by the changing relations between its bourgeois and socialist tendencies" (pp. 53-4).

When, as in the case of the Stalinists in post-war Eastern Europe, China and Vietnam, the new state apparatus not only defends bourgeois methods of distribution *but capitalist property relations as well* (often against the independent initiatives of the workers and peasants), the "final physiognomy" of the state *does not* suggest a proletarian character. This in no way departs from Trotsky's analysis of similar phenomena. In polemicizing against Shachtman in 1939, Trotsky patiently explained: "No one has said that the Soviet bureaucracy *always* and *everywhere* either wishes or is able to accomplish the expropriation of the bourgeoisie. We only say that no other government could have accomplished that social overturn which the Kremlin bureaucracy notwithstanding its alliance with Hitler found itself compelled to sanction in eastern Poland." Looking at Mandel's *Marxist Economic Theory* (the chapter entitled "The Soviet Economy"), we find agreement with Trotsky's position on this question. He clearly places the "qualitative overturn of the social structure of Russian economy" in 1918. Where does he stand today? Time will tell.

IV. *Why Do We Defend the Soviet Union?*

There is no question that from October 1917 on, the correct policy towards Russia was revolutionary defensism. A healthy Marxist party had smashed the state apparatus of the bourgeoisie and created its own apparatus to begin the tasks of carrying out a change in the basic social and economic foundations of Russian society. But today—in 1973—when we say that we defend the Soviet Union against imperialist attack, what do we really mean? When we explain the importance of this policy to the world working class, we *do not champion the Stalinist bureaucracy one iota*. In order to preserve itself, Stalinism will fend off imperialist and counterrevolutionary attacks, but even in the process of carrying out this progressive function, their *fundamentally reactionary* character is exposed. Their class-collaborationist "collective security" schemes, popular frontism, fear of mobilizing the Soviet masses and similar policies reveal in glaring fashion the criminal inadequacies of their defense of the historic gains of the working class in Russia. What we defend in the Soviet Union is the tremendous legacy of the October revolution and the first several years of Bolshevik leadership—the planned economy, the liquidation of the power of the bourgeoisie, the nationalization of economy, and the monopoly of foreign trade.

We defend these gains from imperialist attack unconditionally. But we must also defend these legacies from the disastrous policies of the Stalinist bureaucracy, which *in spite of itself* constantly places *even its own social base* in mortal danger.

What was the policy of the Soviet bureaucracy before and during WWII, for instance? Before the war, Stalin sought out agreements with the "democratic imperialists" in return for promises of domestic class peace achieved

through the "popular front" policies. Was this Stalinism's progressive side? For his own bureaucratic reasons he purged the highest levels of the Soviet army and replaced them with incompetent flunkies. In 1939 he junked the allied with the "democratic imperialists" and turned toward deals with Hitler. Was Stalinism showing its progressive face here? It was defending the workers state, wasn't it? During the war, Stalin followed classical chauvinist policies, reviving Great Russian heroes like Peter the Great and Ivan the Terrible, whipping up anti-German sentiment, reactivating the Orthodox Church to strengthen the national fervor to defend "Holy Russia." At terrible and unnecessary costs the Russian people *in spite* of Stalin turned back Hitler and defended the socialist property forms from which they benefit.

We *never* make the mistake of equating the workers state with the Stalinist bureaucracy. We defend the socialist property forms, *not* the reactionary caste which *stunts* their development and endangers their real defense. In the absence of those historic gains, we *would not* take a defensist attitude towards the Soviet Union. This position, once again, is in perfect conformity to the positions urged by Trotsky.

"In supporting the colonial countries or the U. S. S. R. in a war, the proletariat does not in the slightest degree solidarize either with the bourgeois government of the colonial country or the Thermidorian bureaucracy of the U. S. S. R." (*Transitional Program*, section on "Imperialist War.") Or, from *In Defense of Marxism*, the following quotation: "We must formulate our slogans in such a way that the workers see clearly just what we are defending in the U. S. S. R. (state property and planned economy) and against whom (the parasitic bureaucracy and its Comintern). We must not lose sight for a single moment of the fact that the question of overthrowing the Soviet bureaucracy is for us subordinate to the question of preserving state property in the means of production in the U. S. S. R. . . ." (Page 20.)

V. *Once Again, Once Again: Poland and Finland*

The Internationalist Tendency argues that the party position on the class character of the workers states leaves it open to Shachtmanite and Stalinophobic errors. One such error, they argue, is the party's refusal to raise the banner "Victory to the N. L. F." in the antiwar movement. They contend that this position in reality is "third campist" and avoids putting the party clearly on record in support of the Vietnamese revolution.

This accusation has not a shred of truth in it. The SWP supports *vigorously* the defeat of imperialist governments in the struggle with workers states — and colonial countries as well. But this is not enough for the IT. They contend that the SWP must also support every military action of a workers state against a capitalist state because these offensives on balance have a progressive thrust, i. e., they constitute an armed extension of the workers state. In Eastern Europe, for instance, the Soviet army near the end of WWII smashed workers uprisings, peasant rebellions and returned much expropriated property to remnants of the old bourgeoisie, with whom they were seeking coalition governments. The Soviet army expressly dedicated its efforts in Eastern Europe to the preservation

of property relations in these areas, hoping that such a policy would mollify imperialism and make possible the establishment of a capitalist "buffer zone" friendly to the U. S. S. R. The tendency contends that in spite of these actions and reactionary aims, the bourgeoisie was in fact a "prisoner of the Soviet Army," and, therefore, workers states existed throughout Eastern Europe. From this analysis, the IT draws the conclusion that the 4th International was wrong in calling for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from the occupied territories after the end of the war. One member of the tendency told me that revolutionists should have explained to the Eastern European masses that the presence of these troops was a "necessary evil" in order to prevent the restoration of capitalism and imperialist intervention. Is this the position of the IT? It sounds more like Marcy's position defending the invasion of Czechoslovakia to me.

Compare this position to the following quotation from Trotsky on the Soviet invasion of Poland — an invasion contemporaneous with the height of German Nazi expansionism in the same area.

"We do not entrust the Kremlin with any historic mission. We were and remain against seizures of new territories by the Kremlin. We are for the independence of Soviet Ukraine, and if the Byelo Russians themselves wish — of Soviet Byelo Russia. At the same time in the sections of Poland occupied by the Red Army, partisans of the 4th International must play the most decisive part in expropriating the landlords and capitalists, in dividing the land amongst the peasants, in creating soviets and workers committees, etc. While so doing, they must preserve their political independence, they must fight during elections to the soviets and factory committees for the complete independence of the latter from the bureaucracy, and they must conduct revolutionary propaganda in the spirit of distrust toward the Kremlin and its local agencies." (*In Defense of Marxism*, page 20.) And further on: "We cannot therefore either directly or indirectly take upon ourselves even a shadow of responsibility for the invasion of Finland which represents only a single link in the chain of politics of the Bonapartist bureaucracy" (page 176).

This is exactly the position held by the SWP and the 4th International on the role of Soviet troops in Eastern Europe. Comrades who are interested in this chapter in our history can go back to the 1944 and 1946 volumes of the *Fourth International* and review *European Revolution and the Tasks of the Revolutionary Party* (passed at the 1944 Socialist Workers Party convention), or *The New Imperialist Peace and the Building of the Parties of the 4th International* (passed at the 2nd World Congress in April 1946) or the *Resolution on the Withdrawal of Occupation Troops* (adopted by the June 1946 plenum of the IEC). All three of these documents clearly lay out what our policy towards the Soviet troops in Eastern Europe *really* was. We demanded the withdrawal of *all foreign armies* from occupied territories, including the Red Army, which was playing a despicable role throughout the "buffer zone." At the same time, we defended the "progressive economic measures carried out in the territories occupied by the Red Army." We pointed out that the role of the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe compromised it in the eyes of the masses, and assisted the hyster-

ical campaigns of the imperialists. We urged followers of the 4th International to play a leading role in pushing through expropriations on the land and in the cities, instituting workers control, establishing soviets or councils, etc.

At the same time, the 1946 *Resolution on Withdrawal of Occupation Troops* clearly stated: "In demanding withdrawal of the Red Army from the territory it occupies, the Fourth International nowise abandons its slogan of unconditional defense of the U. S. S. R. . . . Where, however, reactionary movements arise which, with the backing of the imperialists, attempt to overthrow the more or less statified economy and restore landlordism in order to establish a base for attack against the Soviet Union, we oppose such a movement and fight alongside the Red Army for the defeat of the imperialists and their agents, until the workers in that country are able to stand alone against the bourgeois counter-revolution."

As opposed to the sterile and one-sided approach of the IT, the resolution of the 4th International explained that our general policy towards Soviet troops in Eastern Europe should be applied with differing emphases in different sectors of the world. In the imperialist countries, the resolution stresses that propaganda around the withdrawal of *imperialist* troops from all foreign nations should be the focus of agitation. In the USSR itself, Trotskyists would denounce the criminal policies of plunder and counterrevolution being carried out by the bureaucracy, demanding the withdrawal of Red Army troops. Finally, revolutionary fraternization with the Soviet ranks would be the major task of militants in the buffer zone itself—"subordinate (to the) campaign for the withdrawal of these troops" and presented in "such a way that it cannot be used against the Soviet Union to the advantage of the imperialists."

The accusation of Stalinophobia and "Shachtmanite tendencies" falls flat along with all of the others raised by the IT. The position of the 4th International is in strict conformity to the general thrust of the policy developed by Trotsky in 1939 in his polemics *against* Shachtman. This is true throughout the period of 1944-50 *in spite* of the well-known tardiness of the majority of the world movement and the SWP to recognize the changing economic and social reality in Eastern Europe, as it was developing in response to the Marshall Plan and other imperialist and counterrevolutionary provocations.

Unlike the Internationalist Tendency, the Socialist Workers Party is more concerned with promoting the *independent self-confidence* and *revolutionary will* of the working masses than we are in seeing incidental bits and pieces of the world "sovietized" by bureaucratic methods for bureaucratic gain. Trotsky (quoting Robespierre) remarks that the oppressed don't welcome armed missionaries, as a general rule. On balance, the effect of the bureaucratic "extension" which Comrade Barzman believes we should support unconditionally is not *to strengthen* the world revolution, but to lower the morale and self-organization of the masses in liberating *themselves* from capitalist tyranny—and to compromise the defense of the Soviet Union in the eyes of masses of workers all over the globe. If we were to *support* such actions, we would be seen by the international working class as complicit with the crimes of Moscow, just as the American CP is seen by many as complicit in the present crimes

of Brezhnev and Kosygin. Trotsky writes in *In Defense of Marxism*:

"We have never promised to support all the actions of the Red Army which is an instrument in the hands of the Bonapartist bureaucracy. We have promised to defend only the U. S. S. R. as a worker's state and solely those things within it which belong to a workers state. . . . In every case the Fourth International will know how to distinguish where and when the Red Army is acting solely as an instrument of the Bonapartist reaction and where it defends the social basis of the U. S. S. R." (pp. 29-30).

And in spite of the nationalizations in Poland—Stalinism's progressive face, the IT would contend—Trotsky argued: ". . . the politics of Moscow, taken as a whole, completely retain its reactionary character and remains the chief obstacle on the road to world revolution." We believe that the above statement is as true today—and more so—than it was in 1939. Reactionary, *through and through*.

Finally, the IT contends that our analysis of the evolution of the coalition governments and workers and farmers governments in Eastern Europe, China and Cuba leaves open the theoretical possibility of a peaceful transition to socialism and a peaceful restoration of capitalism. This accusation, too, is entirely false. In each and every case the Socialist Workers Party has noted the absolutely essential smashing of the existing bourgeois repressive apparatus which has *opened the way* to the establishment of a new state apparatus based on new property forms and social relations. The Red Army victories in Eastern Europe, the Yugoslav revolution, the expulsion of Chiang Kai-shek and the arming of the Cuban masses and liquidation of the old army and police were all the necessary cornerstone for the subsequent use of governmental power to alter the foundations of productive relations, thereby decisively changing the class character of the state. The charge that the SWP ignores such considerations deserves exactly as much credence as the charge during the Latin American discussion that the SWP opposes "armed struggle."

We *do insist*, however, that while this violent surgical incision is necessary to get at the infection, it is not *sufficient* to guarantee a cure. If the property relations are not challenged and transformed in an occupied or liberated zone, it is possible that the bourgeoisie can reintegrate itself—peacefully or violently—into the state apparatus, finally regaining its hold and *without* necessitating a *social* counterrevolution in the means of production. What happened in Berlin or Eastern Austria? What happened—this time in a more violent fashion—in Algeria, Greece, or Vietnam in 1945?

If no fundamental property relations have been changed, the admission of a possibility—or *the actual fact*—of a peaceful reintegration of such a zone into the capitalist world has *nothing to do* with admitting the possibility of a peaceful restoration of capitalism in a worker's state. To the contrary, it is the change in fundamental social relations which makes the counterrevolution necessarily violent, although it is certainly true that the bourgeoisie *has* and *will* resort to violence even prior to a qualitative change in the class character of the state.

Trotsky makes this point very clearly in an article

written in 1937: "Should a bourgeois counterrevolution succeed in the U. S. S. R., the new government for a lengthy period would have to base itself upon nationalized economy. But what does such a type of temporary conflict between the economy and the state mean? It means *revolution* or *counter-revolution*." (*Writings 1937-38*, "Not a Workers and Not a Bourgeois State?")

If the bourgeoisie overthrows the bureaucratic caste in a workers state, *their* class interests dictate *clearly* the speedy transformation of property relations. Unfortunately, the class interests of Stalinism in the *opposite case* are not so clear. We can predict an outcome, but, in the last analysis, we have to wait and see. To do otherwise would be to place prior political confidence in these petty bourgeois leaderships, disarming our own forces for the vital responsibility to set out the tasks for the working masses *to secure* their future as a socialist future.

VI. *Through and Through*

The Socialist Workers Party has met the test of the post-WW II overturns. We have avoided the dogmatic schemas of Healy which reject reality to salvage preconceptions. We have never faltered in our internationalist duties to defend the Soviet Union, China, Cuba, North Vietnam and the other workers states from imperialist attack, and have made such work a central part of our activity. Most importantly, we have been able to integrate an analysis of the tortuous course of post-war history into the theory of revolutionary Marxism, while preserving the vital core of our understanding of the epoch of imperialist decay, the crisis of leadership and Stalinism. We have not mistaken aberrations for new historical trends.

Stalinism in 1973 is as reactionary and counterrevolu-

tionary "through and through" as it was in 1934, 1945 or 1956. The recent detente policies of Moscow and Peking are a dramatic confirmation of our position on this question. We know that Stalinists defeated Hitler at Stalingrad, were at the head of socialist transformations throughout Eastern Europe, and today are in the leadership of the political formations spearheading the Vietnamese revolution. Our analysis of the dual nature of Stalinism and its nationalist conservatism has prepared us well to deal with the historical surprises which have occurred over the past quarter century. The splintering of the Stalinist monolith into many "national" Stalinisms with different traits and features was easily predictable. The contributions made for the entire world movement by individuals such as Joseph Hansen on the question of the workers' and farmers' government and the overturns in Eastern Europe and Cuba have deepened our understanding of how to approach difficult questions as they arise—both on the plane of theory and practical orientation.

In order to take advantage of the tremendous opportunities facing the Fourth International today, we must wage an unrelenting battle against opportunism and ultraleftism of every variety—Stalinist, Maoist or otherwise. We *cannot* win hegemony over the working class by bending to every mood which sweeps the "vanguard." Stalinism is counterrevolutionary "*through and through*," and we must educate the masses in an understanding of that fact. The Fourth International must rid the earth once and for all of this monstrous obstacle to humanity. The innovations of the Internationalist Tendency on the class character of the state are a step *backward* in reaching that goal.

July 27, 1973

THE REAL OAKLAND-BERKELEY DISCUSSION:
A REPLY TO A LETTER OF PROTEST

by Frank Boehm, Oakland-Berkeley Branch

Writing on behalf of the local coalition of supporters of the Mandel-Maitan-Frank tendency, Comrade Celia Stodola charges the Oakland-Berkeley branch with "undemocratic procedures" in organizing its preconvention discussion.

Comrade Stodola's charge centers around the branch's decision to grant her group extended time of one-half hour on Vietnam, rather than an hour long equal time report. While this is stated as the immediate reason for the letter of protest, Comrade Stodola conveniently includes a wide range of false allegations, distortions of statements and positions, and outright lies in order to paint a rather grim picture of a malicious and factional branch leadership trying to gag the local supporters of the International Majority Tendency.

Needless to say, the letter of protest is hardly designed to evoke a response from the Political Committee of the SWP or the ranks of the party. Instead it is designed to sow suspicions about the democratic nature of the party's internal discussion among some comrades in Europe who have misconceptions and lack of information about the SWP.

The Branch Discussion

In thinking out and discussing the organization of the preconvention discussion, the branch leadership utilized as its starting point the right of the branch *as a whole* to have the clearest possible presentation of the issues under debate in the world movement and the party itself, as well as the right of the branch to have the fullest possible discussion. It is in this context that the executive committee proceeded in making proposals to the branch giving the supporters of the Mandel-Maitan-Frank tendency adequate time to present their ideas. Furthermore, the right of the branch as a whole, as well as the members of various tendencies, to the fullest possible discussion was ensured by setting aside a total of *over one hundred hours* for the preconvention discussion. This allowed for ten minute first rounds, full second rounds, and often three full rounds of discussion. It started May 16 and will end on July 31; we will have met in preconvention discussion thirty times.

Some Peculiar Considerations

Two things should be kept in mind in regards to the organization of the Oakland-Berkeley branch's discussion. First, the comrades in what is now a coalition of two separate tendencies (the Internationalist Tendency and the Supporters of the June 10 Statement, or the West Coast Tendency), known as "supporters of the International majority," were neither two distinct tendencies *nor* supporters of the IMT back in May when we opened preconvention discussion. In the beginning there was only one minority tendency, comprised of the same individuals but with a different political line, known as the Massey-Shaffer-Smith tendency.

Comrades will remember that the MSS tendency stood on a rather ambiguous statement that appeared to take its distance from both the Mandel-Maitan-Frank tendency *as well as* the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency, especially on the Latin American dispute. And on the Fourth International's discussion about Stalinism, as reflected in the Chinese and the developing Vietnam discussion, the MSS tendency thought the SWP held a "substantially more correct position." *It should be noted in regards to the dispute in the branch on the Vietnam discussion that this position on Chinese and Vietnamese Stalinism was never repudiated*, despite all the future "maturation" these comrades were to experience.

At any rate, as comrades know, the MSS tendency evolved into the Internationalist Tendency which solidarized itself with the Mandel-Maitan-Frank tendency. This caused a split on the West Coast. The comrades who did not go along with the declaration of the IT later announced the formation of the Supporters of the June 10 Statement Tendency, or the West Coast Tendency, which *also* expressed support for the Mandel-Maitan-Frank tendency.

But that was not the end of the "maturation." They "matured" to the point where both tendencies began giving joint reports. And now, while they are maintaining two distinct tendencies they are blocking the purpose of securing delegates! Such unprincipled and unprecedented antics do not, contrary to the comrades of the minority, express political growth but rather the acute degeneration and crisis of a clique.

The second point to keep in mind is that this first group (it's difficult to accurately title them) was not the only minority. Comrade Gerry Clark, who is now a member of the Revolutionary Internationalist Tendency, requested time on various reports during the discussion also. He received extended time on Latin America and the political resolutions, and will receive one-half of the equal time for the minorities on the abortion discussion and the summation debates.

That was the general context and line of development of our preconvention discussion.

The Vietnam Dispute

On June 30, *one week* before the executive committee meeting which was to take up the organization of the Vietnam discussion, I spoke with Comrade Celia Stodola. I explained that because the local supporters of the Mandel-Maitan-Frank tendency had no stated position on the Sterne document nor on the central questions raised in it, because there was no history to this discussion in the party regarding differences the minorities' held along the line of Sterne's document (in fact they held a sectarian position accusing the party of being "soft" on Vietnamese Stalinism), and because the Sterne document was not one of the resolutions forming the basis of the IMT, she would

have to explain in the executive committee on what basis they should be granted equal time.

At the July 7 executive committee meeting, the floor was turned over to Comrade Stodola. She explained the motivation for their requesting equal time was that they held "extensive criticisms" of the SWP's line in the antiwar movement, and had a few other things to say.

Comrade Stodola's account of the executive committee meeting in her letter of protest is rather incomplete and distorted. Comrades on the executive committee pursued a line of questions designed to ascertain whether or not there existed a basis, in fact, of counterposing the minorities' report with that of the majority, which was to center on the Sterne document's erroneous characterization of the Stalinist VCP, the January 27 Peace Accords, the Seven Point Peace Program, and so on.

Did the local supporters of the IMT agree with Sterne's characterization of the VCP? Comrade Stodola, to the astonishment of the executive committee, replied *she did not know!* Did her group agree with support to the Seven Point Peace Program? *She did not know!* Did her group agree with the SWP's assessment of the January 27th Accords? She replied she thought [!] they disagreed with part [!] of the SWP's position on this. Did her group agree with the general line of the Sterne contribution? "With parts. . . ." What parts? Comrade Stodola replied that they agreed with his criticisms of the SWP's antiwar work, and would we please stop asking all these questions about where they stood! After all, they were a tendency (without a position in this case) and therefore had an "automatic right" to equal time. Not so, we answered. A tendency is formed on the basis of differences it has with a position or positions of the party that it wishes to change. When discussions are held on these areas of differences, then it is traditional for tendencies to receive adequate time to present their views.

In the case before us, it was all too clear that the minorities in fact held no differences of substance with the party on the party's opposition to the major errors of the Sterne document, with the sole exception of his criticisms of the SWP's antiwar work, or at the very least had no position on these fundamental questions. And that is hardly the basis for giving a full counter report.

We emphasized to Comrade Stodola, as I had done in our meeting of a week before, that the Vietnam discussion was not a debate about the party's line in the antiwar movement. If it were projected as such, then most certainly they would be granted equal time by the branch. The focus of the discussion on Vietnam developing in the Fourth International is on the nature of Vietnamese Stalinism, the characterization of the VCP, and questions flowing from that. *This* was the debate, we pointed out. Our line in the antiwar movement was an aspect of Sterne's document to be sure, but it was not central, nor did we want to project it as the axis of the discussion or debate in the branch.

It was the opinion of the executive committee, with Comrade Stodola's exception, that to allow the minorities equal time so that they could put forward "extensive criticisms" of the party's antiwar work, while the majority reporter faced the tasks of taking up and countering Sterne's mistaken conceptions of Vietnamese Stalinism and his "ex-

tensive criticisms" of our antiwar work, could only prove to be a diversion to the clear counterposition of lines.

Comrade Stodola ends her distorted account of the July 7 executive committee meeting by stating: "I was then told that my answer was 'inadequate' and that our Tendency would be granted equal time to present our views to the branch *only* if we first stated our disagreements with the SWP on Vietnam in writing, and *only then* if that statement met with the 'approval' of the local branch executive committee!"

This distortion is built upon later on in her letter: "Since the inception of the debate the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency has charged that our politics were 'unclear' and 'inadequate.' Now the local Executive Committee made it as a condition for our receiving the right to equal time in debates, that we had to *concede* that this was true, and 'cooperate' in their efforts to 'protect' the branch by drawing up written statements which they could judge."

The combination of misconceptions and distortions contained in these two quotes belie the charges against the branch.

First of all, it should be clear, that her answers were indeed "inadequate"—but not in the sense in which she contorts it. Her answers in the executive committee were not considered inadequate based on any of their past expressions of differences, nor because we demanded they come up with "better" differences. They were "inadequate" because she expressed *no differences*, or at least refused to tell us, with the party on the central questions raised in the Sterne document, save on our antiwar work.

She charges that the executive committee then decided that they could receive equal time *only* if they wrote down their differences and *only* if that met with the approval of the committee. That is an outright lie. The executive committee decided to request of Comrade Stodola that she go back to her group and seek the answers to the questions we asked. We pinpointed only three questions we wished answered, which to us would have solved the whole problem: (1) Did they agree with Sterne's characterization of the VCP? (This alone, if answered in the affirmative, would have surely prompted the executive committee to give them as much time as they needed.) (2) Did her group support the Seven Point Peace Program? (3) Did her group agree with the SWP's assessment of the Accords, or with that of Sterne, or did they hold yet a different view?

It seemed infinitely reasonable to us. We required no elaborate statement, but simply sought "yes" or "no" answers. We did not state that their answers had to meet with our "approval," as the executive committee was only charged with organizing the discussion and not substituting for the branch's preconvention discussion.

The equation Comrade Stodola makes between comments by branch members during the preconvention discussion that their politics were "inadequate" and "unclear" and our request that they state where they stood on the Vietnam discussion being an attempt on our part to force them to "concede" that their politics are unclear and inadequate, is ludicrous to say the least. It is merely a clumsy bit of literary gymnastics.

One of the serious misconceptions permeating Comrade Stodola's letter of protest, and consistently maintained in oral discussion, is that because they are a tendency (or tendencies), they have an "automatic right" to equal time on any topic under discussion if they so choose. This

is a petty-bourgeois conception, not a Leninist one. It arises from the fact that they are not a tendency in the proper sense, that is, a group of comrades with a clearly defined point or points of difference, but a clique first and foremost hostile to the party leadership. And therefore, even when they have no position on a question, or even more despicable when they believe the party holds "a substantially more correct position" on a given question, they feel compelled to demand time to launch a frenzied diatribe against the party leadership.

Comrade Stodola's concept of "automatic right" apparently includes the notion that tendencies do not have to document their positions. This, too, is the mark of a petty-bourgeois group and not a serious political tendency. Not only do they not have to document their positions, but they don't even have to tell anyone what their positions are!! They are a "tendency" they scream, they therefore have automatic rights! They demand equal time!

It should be noted that the good majority of the local coalition of supporters of the Mandel-Maitan-Frank tendency are members of the West Coast Tendency and not the Internationalist Tendency. This West Coast Tendency has put no documents in the hopper of its own. They stand on everybody else's documents but maintain a separate existence!

It is traditional that tendencies submit written resolutions defining their position in a clear fashion. This way not only the branch or branches the tendencies are members of have the opportunity to discuss their ideas, but the entire party is appraised of the thinking of a part of the membership. Furthermore, if it is a serious tendency it hopes to win comrades in other branches to its point of view. The postal system and especially the telephone system make it possible to reach people rather quickly these days, but discussion bulletins compiled quickly in the party national office and distributed to the branches is still the only way to reach the entire membership.

The Next Day

The July 7 executive committee scheduled a special meeting two days later, July 9, to consider the request for equal time further, based on an assumed response to our request for some clarification. We were then going to take a recommendation into the branch meeting scheduled that night. The day following the executive committee meeting was an all-day preconvention discussion session around the "New Unfolding World Situation" report. Early in the discussion, however, we, along with the rest of the branch, YSAers present, and invited guests, heard the response from the IMT supporters. The response to our request was made by Comrade Wald, a member of Stodola's group but not a member of the branch executive committee. He utilized his ten minutes to report to all present what had "really happened" in the executive committee meeting. He pegged his remarks around the idea that what our rather simple request amounted to was an attempt to force them to admit that all of their previous reports had been "inadequate" and "unclear." "Frank Boehm," he stated, "and the majority of the comrades on that body had taken the position that Comrade Lew Pepper [their reporter on the world situation discussion], myself, herself [Celia], and other supporters of the International Majority Tendency did not really have any differences with the Barnes' report." Therefore, Comrade Wald went on, the

executive committee acted on that belief to "intervene" in the discussion in an organizational manner.

The truth is that the executive committee took no position, either formally or by consensus, on whether or not Comrade Pepper's report or any previous report "did not really have any differences." Nor, through the entire executive committee discussion, did the organizer express an opinion on that subject as he did not feel it was relevant to our attempts to arrive at an understanding of the basis for Comrade Stodola's request for equal time. Only two comrades on the executive committee mentioned that in their opinion, in retrospect, the report by Comrade Pepper did not constitute in fact the basis for an equal time counter report. These opinions were not elaborated further by anyone as they bore no relationship to our attempt to establish the basis on which Comrade Stodola was requesting equal time.

Following Comrade Wald's ten-minute tirade I explained to him that his version of the executive committee proceedings was a total *factual* distortion. Was he aware of that? "That is our interpretation of what happened," he responded!

The Branch Decides

The branch executive committee met prior to the branch meeting as had been scheduled. The executive committee decided to recommend to the branch that the IMT supporters be given extended time of one-half hour rather than an equal time report, and that they be given summary time if they desire it. We did so because: (1) they had taken the stance of demanding equal time on a topic but refusing to tell us that their position was, save their "extensive criticisms"; (2) we had no other source of information regarding where they stood on the central questions raised by the Sterne document except the original Massey-Shaffer-Smith tendency statement quoted earlier.

Extended time of one-half hour *was* recommended rather than no time at all because on the one area of disagreement they did express with the party, its line of work in the antiwar movement.

The proposal was brought into the branch meeting on July 9, and overwhelmingly approved. In the course of the branch's discussion of the proposal the comrades of the minorities attempted, to no avail, to invoke the doctrine of "automatic rights."

Interestingly, however, Comrade Wald, as he is wont to do at times, unwittingly put his finger on the real dilemma the supporters of the Mandel-Maitan-Frank tendency in our branch were faced with by that very simple and reasonable request that they state their political position on the Vietnam discussion. They refused to state their position, he blurted out, because "that would constitute an attack on ourselves."

The 30 Minutes in Perspective

As described earlier, when our entire preconvention discussion is through, more than one hundred hours will have been used up. We will have covered nine different areas of discussion. The supporters of the IMT, as well as Comrade Clark, received equal or extended time, *or both*, on every topic they requested time, in some cases receiving a combined time *more* than that of the majority. Furthermore, the coalition of IMT supporters received

full equal time on seven of the eight subjects where they requested it. It goes without saying that in view of the double metamorphosis and other antics of our local IMT supporters, their refusal to document their views for the party as a whole, and their refusal to acknowledge the right of the branch to know the basis of their splits, fusions, line changes, and so on, the branch was not only infinitely fair in giving these comrades as much time as possible to elaborate those views which were never to find their way into black and white print, but also extremely tolerant.

One of the ironies of Comrade Stodola's letter of protest is that there was a noticeable lack of participation from the floor on the part of the IMT supporters. Many of the minority comrades have made only rare appearances at pre-convention discussion. Some have not attended at all. Still others simply walk out after delivering their remarks. Moreover, when a comrade from the PST in Argentina came to deliver a report on the situation there, the branch set aside three hours for discussion, in addition to the regularly scheduled pre-convention discussion. To our dismay, only one comrade from any of the minorities attended, and then only to take notes on the report and leave, in what was obviously an organized boycott.

In light of all of the above, it struck us a bit strange that they had the audacity to protest and allege "undemocratic procedures."

The Real Meaning of the Letter

Comrade Stodola's unfounded letter of protest, addressed

to the United Secretariat, reflects in reality the crisis of this tiny group of petty-bourgeois radicals as we head towards the SWP convention. Rather than gaining strength through the full presentation of their ideas and their participation in the long branch pre-convention discussion, they have been weakened, thoroughly discredited politically, and cast aside by the overwhelming majority as individuals whose views represent a reactionary rejection of the theoretical conquests the Socialist Workers Party has made. Partially because of the strength of our politics, and partially because of the rather dizzying gyrations of this unprincipled grouping, they actually lost members who apparently just spun out.

Once a stronghold for the present minority, they are today a pathetic grouplet in the Oakland-Berkeley branch. The high rate of attrition they have suffered from since 1971 is not due to their former members being "driven out" of the party as they like to claim. No, the defections to opponent tendencies (Spartacist League, Vanguard Newsletter, Class Struggle League, and so on), and the resignations of many others after long periods of total inactivity is the real reason for their numerical disintegration. Admitting to this on their part would of course constitute a scathing self-indictment.

No, not a single one of them was expelled from this branch over the last two years. No organizational moves were taken to drive out any of their supporters. They merely suffered from the logic of their politics.

July 25, 1973

AGAIN AND ONCE MORE AGAIN ON THE NATURE OF THE CURRENT RADICALIZATION (IN SUPPORT OF THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE MEMORANDUM ON GAY LIBERATION)

by Terry Hillman, Upper West Side Branch, New York Local

This contribution was made during the discussion on gay liberation in the Upper West Side Branch and therefore only goes into two points concerning the resolutions on the party's attitude toward the gay liberation movement.

I support the Memorandum on Gay Liberation passed by the National Committee.

Kendall Green said in his report that the party has a "double standard" re: the gay liberation movement. He says that the party takes the women's liberation movement more seriously, for example, than the gay liberation movement. The problem with this method of thinking goes beyond the discussion on the gay liberation movement. It goes back to the discussion we have been having over the past few weeks as to the nature of the current radicalization and the party's role in it.

The supporters of the Leninist Trotskyist Tendency have

spent most of their time defending the concept that this radicalization is the deepest ever, as seen by the fact that many groups who are oppressed by this system have begun to struggle against their oppression. Movements have sprung up around all different kinds of ills created by capitalist society, including ecology, transportation, housing, etc. This position has been challenged by the comrades of the Internationalist Tendency who believe that only if the working class radicalizes such as in the 30's can the radicalization be characterized as the deepest.

Because comrades of the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency have spent most of their time debating on their position on this issue as opposed to the I. T.'s, another side of the party leadership's analysis of the current radicalization has not been discussed very much. That is, is there a difference in social weight between these various movements that have developed, and especially between strug-

gles of the oppressed? A Marxist analysis of society and therefore of the current radicalization indicates that the answer is "yes."

In answer to the I. T., comrades from the L. T. have quoted Lenin and Trotsky on the question of support by revolutionaries to struggles of *all* the oppressed. In *What Is to be Done?* Lenin says, for instance: ". . . for he who forgets that 'the Communists support every revolutionary movement'. . . is not a Social Democrat."

This is perfectly true. Marxists support the struggle of *all* oppressed against their oppressors. But it does *not* mean that Marxists think all movements of the oppressed have *equal social weight*. We must take very seriously and analyze very carefully the nature of class society, including the institutions that serve as props for this type of society. We cannot simply give a cursory glance over all the oppressed groups and say that because this or that group is *suffering* more that therefore it has more social weight, or equal social weight to another oppressed group. Likewise, we cannot say that all new movements as they arise have equal social weight. That is not a correct method of analyzing the specific weight of oppressed groups in our society. We must dig down to the bottom and get to the roots of what is holding the capitalist system together—and, specifically, the capitalist system in the U. S.

The memorandum does this very clearly, in my opinion.

The SWP has characterized the coming revolution as a *combined* revolution: that is, the struggle of oppressed nationalities against their oppression combined with the working class revolution. In previous discussions during the pre-convention discussion, the national question has been taken up. Why is this struggle so key to the American Revolution?

1) Because of the power of an oppressed nation struggling for liberty within an imperialist nation.

2) Because of the *strategic* location of the major oppressed nationalities (which are also overwhelmingly proletarian in composition)—Blacks and Chicanos, Puerto Ricans in some cities—i.e., because of their concentration in the major urban centers.

One of the main institutions holding up class society is the family. The family performs a very specific role in class society. First, it maintains class divisions through inheritance (the continuity of the bourgeois class). Second, it takes full responsibility for producing and caring for a new generation of workers. This includes feeding them, taking care of children—especially pre-school children—clothing them, finding and maintaining shelter, laundering for them, educating them in the mores of bourgeois society and their role in it, inculcating religion in them, caring for their health, and much more.

The family cannot be abolished until its social function is replaced by something else. In *Problems of Life* Trotsky discusses the problems facing the USSR in attempting to set up a counter-structure for the family in post-revolutionary times.

What role does *sexuality* have in maintaining the family? It plays no more than an auxiliary role. The reason for this is that the social function in society of the family is as an economic unit first. Sex and sexuality or male-female roles only *help* to keep this unit together. Until a substitute exists for carrying out the functions

of the family, the family will continue to exist.

The women's liberation movement has a relatively heavy social weight precisely because it attacks the family right at its heart: it attacks the main social functions that the family serves—caring for the next generation of workers. Not only are women over 50 percent of the population, not only are they a large part of the work force and one of the most economically exploited parts of the work force, but women are the ones that physically carry out the functions of the family: giving birth to and raising children, feeding, clothing, and in other ways taking care of this important economic unit.

It is for these reasons that Marxists analyze the struggles of women and the *major* oppressed nationalities as having greater social weight than other movements in the current radicalization. To accuse the party leadership of having double standards, Comrade Kendall, is to expose the fact that you do not understand, from a Marxist point of view, the nature of the current radicalization.

Once we are clear as to the relative social weight of struggles of the oppressed, we can then go on to discuss the party's role in relation to these movements.

Comrades who support the Thorstad-Green resolution misunderstand the role the Leninist party must play in the type of radicalization that presently exists. We all know and are proud of the fact that members of the SWP are armed with both organizational and political tools which make any organization or movement we decide to play a role in that much better because of the way we operate. It is very easy for comrades who are particularly interested in one or another social movement to want that movement to benefit from the work of the SWP. The subjective role of a Bolshevik party can, in many cases, play a decisive part in the development of a struggle and possibly even the winning of one or more demands of that struggle. We are all aware that this epoch of imperialism is characterized by a crisis of leadership.

However, the SWP cannot run around from movement to movement like vigilantes or trouble-shooters to try to lead and organize all the different struggles as they arise. The SWP cannot play that role. We must take time to analyze each movement as it comes along and then decide how to relate to it. The fact that we have such limited forces now makes this doubly true. But we would use the same method no matter how large the party might be.

The fact that we say the women's movement and struggles of major oppressed nationalities have greater social weight than, for instance, the gay liberation movement does not necessarily mean that we should not intervene in these other struggles. It only means that we *do* have priorities, priorities which flow from a correct analysis of the current radicalization.

* * *

I just want to say something about recruitment. The question of recruitment has been raised continually throughout the pre-convention discussion as a false argument.

Hedda, throughout her summary, kept repeating over and over about how we are missing opportunities to recruit "18-year old ultralefts" and others in the new mass vanguard, and that therefore we should orient towards

the new mass vanguard. We shouldn't have taken comrades out of the Transport Workers Union because we could have recruited more people in that union, etc. Art Maglin, in his contribution to the discussion on the Political Report, was upset because we missed out on recruiting counter-cultural people. Now the Thorstad-Green document says we are missing out on recruiting gays.

This raises two important points. One is that we do not decide to intervene into a movement or campus or plant simply to recruit, although recruitment is very important. We go into a movement to help orient that struggle towards moving masses of people against the government, armed with the Transitional Program. The second point is that it is true that we may not be recruiting as many gays as possible if we are not involved in the gay liberation movement. However, we are recruiting people with the forces we have available, from the areas that we *are* involved in, such as USLA, for example. In other words, we will recruit wherever we put our forces — and even where we don't have forces if we do a good job in getting out

our propaganda. We consider all recruits to be good recruits, and do not say that if our forces are recruiting USLA activists instead of gay activists that we must re-assign our comrades.

Another point that was raised by Kendall was "what would we say to potential gay recruits if we did not have an orientation toward intervening in the gay movement?" Comrades, we recruit on the basis of people agreeing with *our program*. We do not adapt our program or a tactic that we decide on to what "potential recruits" would like to hear. We recruit them to the line that the party is carrying out. If they wish to change that line *after* they join at the proper time, that is their right. However, the party certainly will not change *its* line so that one or more individuals feel more comfortable about joining. The SWP is not a heterogenous party like the old Socialist Party. We are a homogenous Leninist party with one program. We do not ask people to join the party if they do not agree with this program.

July 26, 1973

FOR A FULL DISCUSSION OF THE TRADE UNION QUESTION AND AGGRESSIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PC RESOLUTION

by David Keil, Lower Manhattan Branch, New York Local;
and Ninure Saunders, Chicago Branch

The Political Committee draft political resolution points out that we have "new openings" in the trade unions to which we will have to respond. It proposes "special consideration" of "regular sales in the Black community, to Black students, and at workplaces with a high percentage of Black workers." The resolution goes on to state that "regular sales should also be organized at plant gates and other areas where large numbers of workers can be reached."

The purpose of this discussion article will be to spark a discussion of trade-union work and propaganda in the direction of workers which will make certain that the tasks outlined in the resolution are carried out in the branches, and to suggest further steps. Such a discussion is necessary because of the gap between the objective tasks which are imposed on us and the general routine practice in the branches of our party.

It must be pointed out, first of all, that the party has made progress toward regularizing work in this field, relative to the period of the 1960s and even 1970-71. The delegates to the 1971 convention did not have before them a written document making the necessary concrete proposals, but the organizational report by Barry Sheppard included in it a proposal for an experimental campaign of sales of the press at plant gates and trade-union meetings. On August 30, 1971, the Political Committee launched a propaganda campaign around Nixon's "Phase II" wage controls, and this decision was reflected in *The Militant* and the SWP national election campaign.

A letter from Barry Sheppard and Frank Lovell dated

November 10, 1971, emphasized that it was "important that the propaganda campaign around a congress of labor be done in a consistent and sustained manner." ("Selected Documents on SWP Trade Union Policy," *Education for Socialists*, May 1972, p. 20.) Comrade Lovell was able to report in the *Party Builder* and at the trade-union panel at the August 1972 Socialist Activists and Educational Conference that there had been some success in getting some regular plant-gate sales going. This panel was much larger than earlier ones had been and reports were heard on a large amount of work done by comrades in trade unions. *The Militant* has given good coverage to trade-union questions, and a pamphlet has been published reprinting some of these articles. Other educational steps which have been taken include tours by Frank Lovell and Dick Roberts and the publishing of a collection of documents on trade-union policy in an *Education for Socialists* bulletin.

In addition, comrades who may have held illusions in the permanence of the high level of student political activity have been convinced by events since May 1970. Moreover, few comrades would now deny that the masses of workers will first begin to radicalize around economic questions, and that economic questions such as inflation, wage controls and strikes quickly take on a political significance today. Thus we have been able to see that such questions cannot be counterposed to or put on a qualitative level below such immediately political issues as imperialist war, national oppression, the oppression of women, or capitalist control of the universities. The high-

er understanding reached by our party in the last few years is typified by the inclusion in the 1973 political resolution of a precise definition of "workerism," replacing the general idea that many comrades once had, that anyone who put more emphasis on trade-union work than one thought was necessary is a "workerist." The resolution specifies that "by 'workerism,' we mean the rejection of the various social movements that have developed in the course of the radicalization, discounting them as peripheral or as obstacles to the proletarian revolution or workers struggles" (p. 15).

Thus, our movement has moved ahead both theoretically and in practice.

But we have a way to go yet. Faced with an end to most of the conditions which made possible especially wide recruitment on campus (primarily the draft and the presence of GIs in Vietnam), we will now be trying to find ways to focus our general propaganda activity and to participate in the mass movement, which is based on campus much less than before. We will have to change our routine and enter areas where most of us don't have much practical experience.

We have had difficulty in establishing regular, consistent sales at plant gates. Part of solving this problem will be setting priorities, explaining the necessity for the work, and putting emphasis on it. It has plainly not been enough in the last two years for us to decide to do it, because it has not been done. At what plants are we selling regularly? How many functioning trade-union fractions do we have, and how many in industry? What branches are familiar with the situations inside the factories and trade unions in their cities? The answers to these questions will not be consistent on a national scale despite the fact that the national office is encouraging this consistent work and keeping close tabs on its. The work is sporadic, inconsistent, and often depends on individual initiative. But the objective situation requires that it become regular. So we will need to have a full discussion of it at the convention—not only in the trade-union panel, but in the delegate sessions as well.

Background to this Discussion

This is not the first time that this question has been raised. For example, a number of comrades tried to construct a "Proletarian Orientation Tendency" in 1971 in order to argue for the party to send the bulk of its forces into basic industry. But this tendency never put forth a concrete program for what we should do in the factories. At the same time, it began to develop a line contrary to the party's program on a number of questions, Palestine in particular, as a number of comrades predicted it would do. The Proletarian Orientation Tendency thus became workerist and sectarian, although it would not be quite fair to say that it advocated "abandoning work in the mass movements," as some comrades said.

It is necessary to say that, even if the document "For a Proletarian Orientation" made certain valid points, along with many erroneous ones, and even if it was attractive to comrades who thought we should be doing more work in the working class, its essence and thrust were *not* correct. "F. A. P. O." was a factional document whose purpose was to falsely accuse the party of abandoning Leninism and to elevate a tactic into a principle, thus making possible a tendency formed around something other than political principles. The leaderships of the Internationalist Tendency and the Levitt tendency come from the Prole-

tarian Orientation Tendency and have not developed any more of a concrete program for intervening in the working class today than they had two years ago. Despite all the Internationalist Tendency's talk about a proletarian orientation and rooting ourselves in the working class, their resolution does not put forth an alternative program or strategy for trade-union work, other than sending people into the plants, which is exactly the sum total of what the Proletarian Orientation Tendency proposed two years ago. They are against coalitions formed around single issues, which they say are "minimalist," and they are against Black nationalism and feminism; but they don't seem to see any relation between these questions and our trade-union work. They talk about "raising motions at meetings," but they don't say what kind of motions we should raise. They say we should "popularize the demands that will make up the platform of a class-struggle caucus," but they don't say what this platform should be. Do they agree with the perspective of the party on this and the Political Committee resolution, or not? Do they agree with the party's propaganda campaign around Phase II and III? They don't say. The Levitt tendency and Gerald Clark's tendency, likewise, see trade-union and related work as only an auxiliary slogan in their attack on the party's program.

A discussion on the necessity to regularize our work in the working class will therefore have to begin by rejecting these sectarian tendencies.

But a number of other contributions to the internal discussion in 1971 are worth noting favorably. For example, Tom Leonard of Houston pointed out that "sales to workers have tended to break down. . . ." He suggested that "we should do everything possible to escalate the sale of the party press to workers despite the fact that we may not get significant recruitment in the immediate period." He called for "a consistent propaganda offensive directed toward the working class, primarily through the sales of our press. . . ." (*SWP Discussion Bulletin*, Vol. 29, No. 21, pp. 23-24.)

Jack Burton of Los Angeles suggested a more sharp and conscious intervention in the trade unions around such questions as the war. (*SWP DB*, Vol. 29, No. 28.)

George Basley and Jeff Powers of Boston urged that the party center give more encouragement to implementation of our perspectives in the union movement, since, as they wrote, "the implementation of our working class and trade union policies, to date, has been far too limited." (*SWP DB*, Vol. 29, No. 20.)

David Keil submitted an amendment to the NC political resolution which included sixteen concrete proposals for increasing the party's practical orientation to the working class. (*SWP DB*, Vol. 29, No. 20.)

Unfortunately, none of these contributions to the discussion were taken up on the floor of the convention. Thus the later attempt by the central leadership to carry out many of the proposals made by these comrades was not as successful as it might have been if it had been prepared better at the convention and before the convention.

A Brief Note on Comrade Peng's Position

A very important part of the background to this discussion is the document written by Comrade Peng Shu-tse, the Chinese Trotskyist leader, in 1969, "Return to the Road of Trotskyism." In the second section of this article,

entitled "Toward the Working Class," Peng pointed out that the student movement is neither constant nor stable and that it cannot form "a basis for building a revolutionary (mass) party." (*International Information Bulletin*, No. 5, March 1969, p. 21.) According to Peng, "the reorientation toward and integration into the working class is the most urgent task facing our movement today." This document should be read or reread by every comrade, since it is as useful today as it was in 1969.

It should be pointed out that the thrust of "Return to the Road of Trotskyism" was directed not against the SWP, but rather against the tendency represented by Germain, Maitan and Frank, and particularly against the guerrilla warfare perspective contained in the 1969 Latin America resolution and in sections on the colonial revolution in the resolution "The New Rise of the World Revolution." Peng and the SWP have fought together against the guerrilla warfare strategy as well as against tendencies to cover up the Stalinist nature of the Chinese Communist Party.

But an examination of the second section of "Return to the Road of Trotskyism" and an examination of the situation in the United States will show that Peng's proposals in relation to the necessity to reorient to and reintegrate ourselves into the working class have been applicable to the United States just as they have been to Europe.

Student Movement and Labor Movement

It would be useful to begin a discussion of our orientation to the working class by discussing the milieu in which we are presently most involved, the student milieu, or the student movement, and comparing it to the labor movement.

Andy Rose, in his May 1973 *ISR* article on the student movement, explained very well the limitations of the student movement, as shown by May 1970, so there is no need to have a long discussion of this question. However, two relatively minor errors, possibly only errors of formulation, detract from the generally correct thrust of this article. The article does not really deserve to be singled out for criticism, since it is excellent in all other respects; but pointing out the errors which were made will help to clearly illustrate some points which must be made concerning the relationship between the labor movement and the student movement. It is appropriate to begin this section of the document with a little polemic, since it is our overestimation of the student movement which has led to our weaknesses with work in the labor movement.

First: Comrade Rose states that "the labor movement has acted as a brake" on the development of movements for social change (p. 15). He also states that not only have the trade unions abstained from struggles of the new radicalization: "Nor have they taken any effective action to defend the interests of the working class" against the attacks of the bosses and the state (p. 14).

This is not quite correct. This paragraph, while recognizing that workers are affected by the new radicalization, nevertheless confuses the labor movement with its leadership. Of course, the trade-union bureaucracy has prevented the unions from taking full part in the new radicalization and responding adequately to the capitalists' economic attack. But it has not been able to make the workers' organizations play a *reactionary* role, on the whole, or a braking role. Nor has it been able to turn the unions into

passive playthings of the bosses. This is a very important distinction to make.

The millions of trade-union members in this country, and their powerful organizations, have not held back the antiwar movement, for example. Trade-union contingents have been a most important part of the antiwar movement, though not always from a numerical standpoint. The strikes of the past few years, carried out by trade unions against the real will of their leaderships, have shown that working people have not been willing to sacrifice their standard of living for the sake of the war. This has given impetus to the antiwar movement. Moreover, these strikes, while lacking a class-struggle leadership and strategy, have been "effective action to defend the interests of the working class." With a resolute leadership, they could have been much more effective.

It is the reactionary bureaucratic leadership of the labor movement, not the movement itself, which has acted as a brake on the radicalization and has done nothing effective on the economic front. It might be added that this leadership has been a brake on the politically progressive and economically combative thrust, today, of the trade unions themselves.

To be quite frank and honest, we must say that it is actually the backwardness of the leadership of the new radicalization, a leadership which came out of the student movement, which has been the greatest brake on the progress of the new radicalization and its extension into the working class. This is due to the backwardness of the student movement itself, the backwardness of its official student government organizations as well as of the majority of its radical organizations. The campus ultralefts sealed the fate of many promising struggles. The reformists and liberal Democrats on campus helped to derail others. Only the YSA had a perspective for the student movement and helped take it forward. But every single spontaneous product of the student movement quickly degenerated. Ultra-leftism and reformism both come almost spontaneously to students — much more than to workers.

The student movement acted as a major impetus to the radicalization, but it reached its limitations. We should not hold the labor movement as a whole responsible for what is in reality due to the weaknesses of the student movement and the crimes of the labor leadership. The trade unions themselves, as we have explained, remain the class organizations of the workers, despite their reactionary leadership.

Second: Comrade Rose repeats a long-held theory when he asserts that "the expansion of higher education has also given students a greater social weight than they ever previously had" (p. 15). This is true, in the sense that a force becomes stronger when it increases in size. But that is not a very significant development, since the social weight of students, no matter how numerous, is still tiny. Students in the universities have always been dispensable from the *social* point of view and they remain so. They produce no surplus value and contribute in no way to the social wealth. They perform no service. Their role, as students, is to study. Even university professors have more social weight than students, as their salaries reflect. At least they perform some social function, or service, as minor and contemptible as it often is. Thus Comrade Rose was

repeating a mistaken or meaningless theory when he wrote that students have "greater social weight."

The point here is not to ridicule students and their numerical increase. Rather it is to clarify an issue by pointing out that students, as always, remain insignificant as a *social* force, at the same time that they have become more and more important over the years as a *political* force. In this respect, what our comrades have said over the years is correct, including what Caroline Lund (for example, at the 1972 educational conference) has pointed out about the role of students in world politics.

The fact that students are growing in proportion to the population means that they have more political weight. So does the fact that they are being trained to be exploited workers and the fact that many of them are part-time workers as well as students. They are now closer to the labor movement than they once were, in many ways, and they can therefore play more of a "detonator" role, as well as a bigger auxiliary role in the class battles between labor and capital which are on the horizon.

But students, because of their declassed status, can play either a reactionary or a progressive role. In this, the student movement is different from the labor movement. Students are not, as a whole, part of the petty bourgeoisie, of course. But nor are they part of the proletariat, simply by virtue of their parents' jobs, their future jobs, or their part-time jobs. Ernest Mandel has correctly called them a layer in transition. The student milieu is a petty-bourgeois milieu.

This layer is by no means homogeneous. Like the middle classes, students can go the way of either the capitalists or the workers. Unlike the petty bourgeoisie, they have no vested interests.

Students have a tendency to be radical. But sometimes this radicalism is toward the right rather than the left. This can best be seen in other countries besides the United States. In France, for example, fascist groups have for some time found a base on the campuses, as in the law faculty of Arras. It was the rightist French students who mobilized in Algiers to make possible the *putsch* of 1958.

Indonesia is an even more striking case. As a Dutch left-wing journalist reported, "the students were essentially on the side of the new [ultraright] regime in 1965-66. They played an important role in the overthrow of Sukarno. . . ." A right-wing student movement in 1966, he reported, "was used by the generals as an important aid in securing their power. . . ." (*Intercontinental Press*, Dec. 18, 1972, pp. 1403-04.) Other examples could be given.

In the United States, the main base of the right-wing Young Americans for Freedom is the college campus. The Jewish Defense League also finds wide support on certain campuses and has even won power on student government bodies, basing itself not only on demagogy but also racism. The right in this country may not trust students, but it has made some gains in recruiting them and in using the campuses as a public base of support.

Students are not, of course, reactionary as a whole. The opposite seems to be the case today. But they are a volatile group, unstable and undependable as a social layer. We must give a good part of our forces to recruiting students and doing work in the student movement, with special emphasis on students of oppressed nationalities

and foreign students; but we should not have illusions about students as a social layer. The working class is the only true revolutionary social group; in fact, "the only progressive class in modern society." (George Novack, *Introduction to the Logic of Marxism*, p. 30.) The students, on the other hand, vary widely.

Above all, the students are not the vanguard of the working class. It is especially necessary now to reject any kind of conception of student vanguardism in light of the fact that Comrade Mary-Alice Waters, in her criticism of the United Secretariat majority draft resolution on Europe, firmly rejects the concept of orienting ourselves primarily to the "new mass vanguard" in Europe, which is, to be blunt, an adaptationist orientation to a combination of student activists and opponent currents. The PC draft resolution, likewise, indicates that we should concentrate our attention on the main issues of the class struggle, not the particular concerns of special layers. Just as we reject any idea of winning hegemony in the "new mass vanguard" before we take our ideas directly to the masses, we must reject firmly the idea of winning hegemony on campus before we take our ideas to working people. Only by becoming a force among the masses generally, especially workers, will we be able to even approach winning hegemony in the student movement. The Political Committee resolution implicitly rejects such a "vanguardist" approach, but we must be sure not to put such a theory into practice in our local areas after the convention.

Comrade Waters, in her polemic, shows that the "vanguard" can only be won to us through demonstrating a mass perspective. It is the same with larger social layers. Students can only be won over by showing them how a revolutionary workers party participates in all aspects of the class struggle, including the class struggle of the workers against the employers.

Part of our "red university" strategy is to direct student actions toward the working class and to open the universities as bases of support and organization for struggles of people off the campus. We have the idea of using the university facilities to spread student struggles beyond the campus to more powerful social layers, i.e., the workers. But in order to succeed in directing students toward the workers and the labor movement in a campus upsurge, it will be necessary for us to know in advance where the most important or most accessible groups of workers are, their shifts, etc. We will have to know meeting times and locations of union locals. We should become familiar with some of the people we will be working with, their names, their ideas, etc. Of course, this cannot be done adequately in advance of a student upsurge; but it is a job that must be begun.

So we can see that to have an effective strategy for the "red university," counting on the expectation that there will be more student explosions before an explosion of labor, we must at the same time be familiar with the situation in the labor movement from close up. Of course, if the students fail to initiate an upsurge before the workers, it is all the more necessary that we put emphasis on our trade-union work.

It is useful also to discuss the situation in the labor movement itself, and our perspectives. One idea which comrades often use to explain why we need not intervene in the labor movement is that "the working class as a whole is not in motion at this time." This is, of course, true in

a sense. It is true in the same sense that women as a group, Black people as a nationality, and students "as a whole" are not in motion at this time. Only a small minority of these groups are in motion at this time. The same is true of working people as a whole. But we don't abstain from the struggles, however limited, of important sectors of the population simply because they are "not in motion as a whole." So we should put aside completely the idea that the working class, as distinguished from other parts of the population, is not in motion as a whole.

The organized working class is a very fertile area of intervention for socialists, as it has been for more than a hundred years and in societies where workers have represented a much smaller percentage of the population than they do in the U.S. today. Not only has the new radicalization affected working people, but they have participated in this radicalization. The Black liberation movement, the antiwar movement, and the women's liberation movement have far from been limited to students and people from the middle classes. Many, many working people have participated, sometimes even under the banners of their own labor organizations despite the reactionary role of the bureaucracy. In addition, workers have carried out their own militant actions, too numerous to list. It is enough to say that not only strikes (including illegal strikes) have occurred, but also demonstrations in the streets and mass actions of a political character. Frequently it has been young Black workers who have led such actions. So how can we say that the organized working class has not yet joined the new radicalization? All we can say is that not enough workers have joined it. In other words, we hope that the new radicalization will become bigger.

It is especially ironic that some comrades feel that labor is absolutely "not in motion" when we consider that for workers, unlike students, the class struggle never really stops. Often the pace is very slow and usually the struggle is not political, but economic. But workers always have problems caused by their employers and in the labor movement as a whole there is always some motion. What Peter Camejo wrote about Latin America is true also for this country, though to a lesser degree: "The conflict between the working masses and the ruling class goes on every day of the year. At the factory level workers struggle over conditions, pay and hours. They engage in political battles to secure their needs and for democratic rights." (*International Socialist Review*, Nov. 1972, p. 30.)

Thus there are always "openings" for us. The question is not whether there are openings, but whether we have the forces to take advantage of a given opening, and how much priority we give to taking advantage of openings in the labor movement.

Other tendencies, especially workerist tendencies, have thrown all their forces into taking advantage of such openings as they see. We should not ridicule them too much for this, since our main differences with them are not over tactics but politics. Instead, we should notice the gains they have made and the impact they have had despite their political positions. For example, the recognized leader of the 1972 Mead strike in Atlanta was a member of the October League, a Maoist group. We should follow such developments closely and learn from the mistakes of our opponents, as well as noting closely the nature of the openings that exist.

One argument which is sometimes raised against the idea of doing consistent trade-union work is that there

is not *presently* much motion in the working class, especially political motion. We have already pointed out some motion that exists. In addition, we must not judge our tasks only by what we see today, but also by what we can foresee for tomorrow. It is widely understood in our movement that when the American working class radicalizes politically, it will go off like a cannon. The most powerful, militant and politically backward working class in the world can only be expected to go off like a gun when it overcomes its political and ideological backwardness. When this happens, our party may not have time to reallocate forces quickly enough to even keep up with, let alone attempt to direct, such an explosion. We will have to be on the scene when the time comes. And precisely because of its explosiveness, this event will be unpredictable. For that reason, it is all the more important for us to prepare for what is to come by carrying out consistent work among working people, gaining contacts, making recruits, establishing a base with as much determination as we are now establishing a campus base.

The possible nearness of this explosion can be gauged by examining the economic situation. The capitalists have just come out of an international recession, 1969-72, during which time there has been both unemployment and inflation in this country. According to Ernest Mandel, the employers are going to continue to impose "a stronger and stronger dose of inflation." (*IP*, Jan. 29, 1973, p. 89.) The workers, betrayed by their leaders, have been forced to pay the bill. But as the recession goes away, and unemployment decreases, according to Mandel, "outbreaks of strikes can be expected." What is in sight, then, according to Mandel, is "an upsurge of workers' struggles." Mandel may well be right about this, since there is no reason to assume that his political mistakes have destroyed his insight into economics.

This upsurge will have immediate political consequences. Mandel has recently pointed out that a wage freeze (incomes policy) implies not only the need for the trade unions to enter politics, but even leads to the suppression of political and trade-union freedoms, and eventually a strong (Bonapartist) state. (*IP*, March, 5, 1973, p. 251.)

Thus the political explosion of the American working class could come soon, with serious consequences for us and hence for its outcome. This is not to adopt the "doomsday politics" of the 1971 Proletarian Orientation Tendency, predicting immediate catastrophe if our proposals are not enacted "now." But the problem here is an important one, a serious one, and it is even possible that it is an urgent one.

As for the argument that workers are not now in motion *politically*, we know already that the government's wage policies will force militant workers to consider political action. We also know that the Black nationalist, feminist and antiwar movements have had an important effect on working people. So the workers are already undergoing a process of politicalization.

In addition to these considerations, we must understand that all people who become revolutionary do so because of their own experiences. Just as an important impetus to the student movement has been the bureaucratic manipulations of the university system and the draft, economic questions and working conditions will be important in bringing the labor movement from relative passivity to revolutionary action. Thus we must be involved in the

class struggle whatever forms it takes, whether economic or political. This is not economism, but a Leninist approach.

Preparing for the Inevitable Labor Upsurge

There are a number of good reasons why we must carry on consistent work in the trade-union movement and the working class, in addition to the immediate aim of recruitment. One reason is that only in this way can we prepare ourselves for the coming upsurge in the labor movement. Campus work is one way to prepare for this, but it isn't by any means sufficient. Our cadres must be trained in the midst of the struggle between the classes, in addition to the campus struggles, which most often reflect the class struggle only indirectly. Only in the trade unions can we come to understand the functioning of the labor movement from the rank and file to the bureaucratic tops, and obtain the indispensable experience which will prepare us for the later struggle for the leadership of the unions.

We should take some tips from Farrell Dobbs' book, *Teamster Rebellion*. This book was only possible because of a well planned strategy of intervention in a trade-union situation, sending comrades into the AFL union Local 574, gaining the confidence of workers in the process of the class struggle before it became an explosion.

It took more than three years of actual work in the union to prepare the 1934 strikes—this in addition to the initial planning, and in the context of an orientation of party work toward the working class, especially Communist Party workers. Comrade Dobbs writes, "an attempt to get the local 574 campaign started was first made in the winter of 1930-31. Carl Skoglund and Miles Dunne were sent into the union to feel out the possibilities of promoting a drive to unionize the coal industry" (p. 47).

Of course, we should avoid mechanically transposing the situation in Minneapolis in the 1930s to the present. Perhaps workers were more radical then, due to the depression, than they are today. But if today is not strictly a period of mass labor radicalization, neither were the years when the Communist League of America was sending people into the coal yards and the Minneapolis AFL. Comrade Cannon said in the recently published interview that the post-World-War-I radicalization did not pick up "until, I would say, 1934." (*Intercontinental Press*, July 16, 1973, p. 873.) Possibly the campus situation wasn't as good as it is now, although Cannon indicates that the Stalinists were recruiting hand over foot in the student movement.

But certain facts stand out which have a bearing on our general method. First, the Communist League did not wait for the working class to explode into action, to place itself directly on the political arena, before making deliberate entry into a trade-union situation. Second, a long period of preparation was required—the comrades did not expect the workers to come to them asking for leadership. Third, comrades entered a situation simply "to feel out the possibilities"—they did not insist on having immediate openings for intervention and leadership in mass struggle or opportunities for immediate recruitment before going into Local 574. It was an opening mainly because many comrades could get jobs there.

The Minneapolis truck drivers' strikes are a very important experience for our movement. We should draw

the necessary lessons and put them into action today, whether that means patient, regular propaganda work such as plant-gate sales, or the maintenance of fractions at workplaces where there are two or more comrades, or even sending comrades into promising situations with the perspective of carrying something analogous to what is described in *Teamster Rebellion* and *Teamster Power*.

In this connection, it is necessary to refute a number of theories which function to minimize the importance of carrying on consistent political work among workers. These theories have never been formally codified by our party, but for educational reasons, it must be explained why they are incorrect.

One such theory holds that it is not necessary for us to carry on trade-union work, since the key cadre recruitment and training is taking place on campus now and the workers will rush to join any organization that is sizeable and dynamic. This theory is refuted both by our own experience in the 1930s and by the experience of the Fourth International in France and Italy in recent years. It also contradicts our perspective for how the American working class will radicalize.

If this theory were correct, then one would have difficulty explaining why the Parti Communiste Internationaliste and Jeunesse Communiste Revolutionnaire did not become mass organizations and lead the French general strike of May-June 1968. The JCR was a large organization, well known among French students. It managed to recruit hundreds of students following the prerevolutionary situation; yet it was only in the long run that it began to attract worker militants, even after the 1968 experience had shown clearly the inability of the Communist Party to lead the working class to the goal of political power. Only by learning somewhat late the big lesson of May 1968, i.e., the explosive potential of the working class and the need to prepare for the explosion in advance, did the French comrades manage to begin to recruit a proletarian cadre—by orienting their work primarily to the working class.

It might be objected that the JCR had a mistaken political line, or that the PCI, unlike the JCR, was a tiny and unknown organization, and that this is why they had little impact in the working class. However, if we accept the theory that the workers will flock to an organization which is large in size and poses as a revolutionary leadership, it is not decisive whether this organization will be a youth group or a party. Nor does it make much difference to young workers in a prerevolutionary situation whether a group has an adaptationist attitude toward the Vietnamese and Chinese leaderships or an adventurist strategy for Latin America. These weaknesses, in fact, might prove to be recruitment advantages in the short run in such a situation.

One might also object that there is a mass Communist Party in France which was able to divert the workers from their course, whereas in this country the workers would bypass the labor bureaucracy entirely in such a spontaneous uprising and come straight to us. Such an objection, however, would be both too pessimistic in relation to the possibilities in France and too optimistic in relation to the prospects for American labor. In reality, the French working class has had just as much experience with the Communist Party labor bureaucrats as the Amer-

ican workers have had with their own labor fakers, and equal difficulty in bypassing them. We should not underestimate, either, the ability of sections of the conservative bureaucracy here to adapt themselves to upsurge situations.

Finally, one might assert that the Ligue Communiste missed many recruitment opportunities among students and youth by its failure to launch a youth organization and its mistaken approach to the student movement. These criticisms would be just. However, they do not show that the Ligue was wrong to make working-class work its top priority or that the JCR and PCI were justified in neglecting this work before 1968.

We can draw similar conclusions from the Italian "hot autumn" of 1969. Here what occurred was not the same explosion as we saw in France, but rather a more drawn-out but equally deep process of labor militancy and struggle. It has been called the "creeping May." In such a situation, a workers party with a clear perspective for the mass struggles and the working-class base necessary to begin to demonstrate it and propagandize it would have been able to become a very important force in a short time. But the Gruppi Comunisti Rivoluzionari, the Italian section of the Fourth International, in addition to lacking a youth group like the JCR and having undergone a crippling split in 1968, had very small forces in the working class. It was mainly composed of students and members of peripheral working sectors. Thus it was not able to take advantage of an excellent objective situation despite the dedication of its members and leaders.

The supposition that the workers will flock to us if we are a large organization on campus assumes that they will go looking around for a leadership. In reality, the leadership will come up largely spontaneously, if our perspective that the American working class will radicalize with unprecedented explosiveness is correct. Hence, those who are involved in labor struggles, are trusted by the people around them, and have enough experience to have some kind of perspective for these struggles will rise very quickly to high positions of leadership. Some of these people will be from our party, even if we keep our present orientation of giving priority to reinforcing the YSA's campus fractions. But most of them will be from Stalinist, sectarian, and Maoist groups, many of which are very skilled at adapting themselves to spontaneous trends. In addition, the labor bureaucracy cannot be expected to remain undivided under the impact of such an upsurge as we can look forward to. Some of the labor fakers will suddenly become red-hot revolutionaries. They will have the advantage of being right on the spot. We must be there too.

There is a tendency in our movement to believe that we are doing work in the working class simply by virtue of the fact that we are involved in mass movements such as the antiwar movement, the nationalist movements, and women's liberation. While these are very important movements, and a good source of recruits in the working class, it must be admitted that our work in these movements has been primarily on campus. Working-class Blacks are involved in various Black struggles and women are involved in extending the women's liberation movement to various unions and work situations, but we have not

participated enough in these aspects.

Coupled with this idea, which sometimes serves as an excuse for not directing our work more toward the working class as a whole, is the idea that many of the students that we are now working with will later be part of the working class, and that they will carry the lessons that they learned on the campus into the factories, into the unions, and into the working class, and that therefore, we are doing work in the working class when we do campus work. This is in fact true, but very misleading. The same thing might be said about young people from family farms, (since most of these young people will become workers rather than farmers.) Work on campus must never be seen as a *substitute* for work in the working class. The student movement is very different from the labor movement. While most students are not part of the petty bourgeoisie, it must be admitted that the student milieu is a petty-bourgeois milieu. (By comparison, only at its higher bureaucratic layers is the labor movement a petty-bourgeois milieu.) Work among students is in no way equivalent to work among workers.

Important as the various mass political movements of today are, they cannot substitute for the class organizations of the proletariat, the trade unions. Backward as these organizations are today, they are the organizations through which the masses of working people struggle today and will move into politics tomorrow. Black nationalism and feminism will become burning issues in the trade unions.

We should reaffirm the position of the 1954 SWP trade-union resolution, which held that because the workers will move through their trade unions, "for that reason the trade union question is the key question of revolutionary politics in the United States." ("Selected Documents on SWP Trade Union Policy," *Education for Socialists*, p. 6.) If this has changed, someone should explain how.

We should also consider how the following statement by Trotsky applies today: "The creation of Communist nuclei within the trade unions signifies that our party is rooting itself in the most active, the most class-conscious and, therefore, the most easily accessible—to us—section of the working class . . . whoever wants to engage in actions by going over the heads of the unions . . . incurs the risk if remaining a prophet in the wilderness." (*The First Five Years of the Communist International*, I, pp. 142-43.)

At the same time, of course, we should not be trade-union fetishists. We should not, for example, urge oppressed people to wait for the trade unions to move before they themselves move. Nor should we forget about the non-unionized three quarters of the working class and the unemployed workers. These significant layers of the working class should, in fact, be an important focus for our trade-union propaganda and activity. We should remember the explosive potential of the unemployed leagues of the 1930s as well as the CIO organizing drives of those years.

The Question of Our Social Composition

We should not be fetishists on the question of social composition, as the PRT(C) of Argentina seems to be. Nor should we view student activists and comrades who work outside basic industry as somehow suspect and need-

ful of cleansing of the soul.

What we do need to do is to take account of the importance of recruitment of working people to our movement, beginning immediately rather than at some future time. As the PC draft resolution states, in regard to radicalized young workers, "we should pay special attention to reaching these young workers with our ideas and recruiting them to our movement" (p. 21). "A proletarian party" is not only a description of our program and future perspectives, but an immediate task. Recruitment of workers is equally as important as recruitment of Blacks. Recruitment of Black workers—twice as important. A similar formula could be put forward for working women and youth.

The importance of a working-class composition is not therapeutic or spiritual—if fact, an intellectual milieu or a milieu of abundance and luxury is probably good for the soul. But our class composition does have *political* significance. All social environments have a certain political effect on any political person. The backwardness of the middle class, of the declassed student environment, and of the labor aristocracy all find their way into the party, as was pointed out in the Burnham-Shachtman fight in 1939-40 and again in the Cochran fight in 1953. To counteract this we must have a proletarian composition. Therefore we must recruit working people, especially of the most oppressed sectors. This has nothing to do with sending people into basic industry to "proletarianize" them.

Toward A Balance Sheet of Our Trade-Union Work

This article cannot make a full and adequate assessment of our trade-union work and our propaganda in the working class in the past few years. Only the party leadership, in consultation with comrades doing trade-union work, can do that. But such a balance sheet is needed, and this document will try to spark a discussion that would lead to a balance sheet by making a few observations.

First, we should point out our progress in the past couple of years. The thick internal information bulletin on trade-union work attests to that. So does the start made in some branches toward regular sales at workplaces, as well as our major role in such struggles as the anti-STRESS movement in Detroit and the school District 1 community control struggle in Manhattan.

But it would seem that the perspectives of the central leadership and the comrades directing trade-union work have not been fully carried out. In Comrade Frank Lovell's summary for the trade-union panel at the 1972 conference, he pointed out that a letter had been sent to organizers and NCers dated November 10, 1971, "urging sustained and consistent sales of *The Militant* at plant gates," "use of the national and local election campaigns to reach workers," and even, hopefully, "some consistent work in the unions."

As Comrade Lovell pointed out, the hopes were justified and some work was done by several branches. This was, of course, a new step ahead for the party. Among other benefits that Comrade Lovell noted was the valuable experience we gained.

However, despite the special urging of the center, and despite publication of the November 10 letter in *Education*

for *Socialists* and educational tours on trade-union work and the economic situation by Frank Lovell and Dick Roberts, only "some" of the branches had carried out these tasks. This is all Comrade Lovell was able to report, based on the information he had gotten.

Moreover, it would seem, from the trade-union comrades' reports published in *Internal Information Bulletin* No. 4 in 1972, that few except the trade-union comrades themselves had participated in this propaganda work. The branches do not seem to have seen it as their job to back up this work.

In fact, much of our trade-union work seems to be done purely on the initiative of the trade-union comrades and without adequate supervision, let alone backing-up, by the party branches. Whereas the national office tries to stay on top of trade-union work, the branches, in general, do not seem to do so adequately.

If we are correct about this, we hope that there will be a full discussion of the problem. If we are wrong, we hope comrades will take the trouble to say so.

While we do not intend in this document to discuss specific examples of trade-union openings and party interventions, we will bring in a few examples to give comrades a general idea of what we are talking about. First, we will raise some questions about whether local areas carried out national perspectives.

In *The Militant* of May 22, 1970, during the student antiwar upsurge, David Thorstad suggested that "leafletting of rank-and-file workers at plant gates should be organized." Was this carried out? To what degree did we succeed in applying this essential aspect of the Red University strategy during the most opportune situation that has appeared thusfar? How about in May 1972?

In his election campaign report to the June 1972 plenum, Larry Seigle said, "with regard to the trade union movement, in addition to the points already raised in the political report, I want to emphasize that we should be following up on every possibility, no matter how modest, to get our national and local candidates to speak to union meetings, strike rallies, plant-gate meetings, and similar events. We have had a few limited experiences with such meetings, and we think a lot more can be done especially during the candidates' summer tours." (*Party Builder*, VII, No. 3, p. 6.) How successful have we been in carrying out this emphatically made suggestion?

The 1972 election campaign issued thousands of copies of a brochure entitled, "A Program for Labor: The Fight Against Wage Controls and Inflation." What kind of systematic effort was made to get this important piece of literature out to working people?

Some comrades might say that we can do general propaganda work among workers, but that work in the trade unions themselves is not really possible because of the quiescence of the workers and the lack of opportunities. A lack of opportunities is, of course, relative to what we are looking for and how much priority we give to looking for and taking advantage of opportunities. A few examples, available to all comrades, will help show what kind of opportunities exist.

For instance, the work of one comrade in the AFSCME welfare union in Cleveland resulted in activity during the May 1972 antiwar upsurge "comparable to that of Cleveland State University and Cuyahoga Community College." (*Internal Information Bulletin*, No. 4 in 1972, p. 10.)

In Houston, a Black steelworker, "not too radical him-

self," approached us and suggested that we pass out literature at his plant, giving us full information on how to go about it. (*Ibid.*, p. 6.) This is not an entirely unique occurrence.

In Los Angeles, the state executive board of the Social Service Employees Union, Local 535, endorsed the SWP candidate for Board of Education. The candidate, we might note, had been an activist in this union. (*Militant*, Feb. 16, 1973, p. 16.) How many student governments have endorsed our candidates?

These examples show that an extremely favorable situation exists for our intervention in many trade unions. It is up to the branches, the national leadership and the trade-union comrades themselves to discuss the appropriate tactics.

What We Suggest

We need to continue our work on campus, but we also need to increase our work in the working class. The YSA can take the main responsibility for putting forces into campus work. As to the forces of the party, there are many different responsibilities to carry out. One of them should be trade-union work and propaganda work toward working people. This work must have a certain priority for the branches.

The delegates at the convention should discuss this work as a priority, so that it will not be neglected as in the past, and so that if someone in a branch objects to carrying out a national trade-union campaign because it "cuts across campus work," or because "the returns aren't big enough," the answer can be that such an objection contradicts the decision of the convention. Firmness is required here.

Trade-union comrades should participate in this discussion to the maximum in order to let the whole party know about their experiences so that a realistic perspective can be developed. It is essential that this occur in the delegate sessions. The discussion on trade-union work must not at all be limited to the trade-union panel. The effect of such a discussion at the convention would be to ensure that the part of the political resolution which we cited at the beginning of this article will be carried out adequately and that we will be prepared for the labor upsurge which is ahead.

Trade-union work is difficult in this period. The section on trade-union work in the draft political resolution notes that there are now new openings for party activity, new openings that we can utilize, that make it a little easier to do trade-union work. The resolution outlines some of the ways that we will be able to concretely take advantage of these openings.

One tool that is needed to make sure that the party is able to utilize these openings and to carry out the tasks outlined in the resolution is trade-union fractions. In cities where there are two or more comrades in a particular union, a special fraction would be set up for that particular union, such as the IUSSE union in Chicago, or the AFSCME union fraction in Cleveland. Where there are not enough comrades in any one union to form a fraction for their union, a general fraction might be set up. Such a fraction could discuss work done in various unions and cut down on the spirit of freelancing many comrades are apt to pick up when they do not coordinate their work with the rest of branch work.

In addition, permanent trade-union fractions, which would meet on a regular basis and deliver regular re-

ports to the whole branch, would help to ensure that trade-union work is systematically done and that we take advantage of all trade-union opportunities.

Comrades should be encouraged to take jobs in union situations where comrades are already present, wherever this is possible. Where this is not possible, comrades should still be encouraged to take jobs in places where there are unions and where there seems to be some motion of workers. (Comrades should keep in mind that this does not apply to comrades on campus, but to comrades who are already off of the campus and seeking employment.)

Comrades should be encouraged to write articles for *The Militant* on any actions or issues being taken up by their unions. Where a union publishes its own press, comrades should attempt to send in, on a regular basis, any articles which would be of interest to the N.O. and the party trade-union director.

As in other areas of work, the party should work towards building an optimistic, aggressive attitude about trade-union work.

As for the question of colonization, this has been used by sectarian and workerist tendencies as a cover for their lack of a clear and correct trade-union policy. Colonization is a tactic, and it should be applied only when a specific opportunity or situation appears. We should always be alert for situations where colonization would be useful, keeping in mind the experience of the Minneapolis strikes. But colonization is a subordinate question, strictly a tactic. It is too often seen as a panacea.

Concretely, we suggest that the convention launch a national campaign to mobilize support to the farmworkers' struggle. We should take this campaign into the farmworkers' boycott committees, onto the campuses, and into the whole trade-union movement. This kind of campaign would help to reorient our work in the right direction and it would help prepare us for the explosions which are ahead in the labor movement.

Other measures that we should take are to continue and expand our work in support of local strikes which take place, continue our propaganda around the government's attacks on workers, publish more pamphlets discussing specific trade-union situations and tasks, including the mistakes of our opponents, and hold forums on these questions.

The long-term aim of our trade-union work is to build a class-struggle left wing to fight for leadership in the trade unions. That is why we are rightly reluctant to get involved in a caucus which might try to take leadership of a union on the basis of a minimum program. We would only want to lead a caucus to leadership in a union under a full class-struggle program. This program is summarized in the 1971 SWP political resolution and in the Memorandum on Trade Union Policy passed at the May 1968 SWP plenum. It includes union democracy, transitional demands such as escalator clauses, full support to the Afro-American struggle in all spheres, and a complete break with capitalist politics and the formation of an independent labor party based on the trade unions.

In regard to the last point, it should be stressed that our support for a labor party would be *unconditional* and we would not insist on a *revolutionary* labor party, as such sectarians as the Spartacists and perhaps some members of the Internationalist Tendency would do. Instead, we would support even a reformist labor party

while fighting within the labor movement, especially within its class-struggle left wing, for the labor party to adopt a revolutionary program.

* * *

In addition to our sales and general propaganda work, our work on national issues such as the UFWU, and our general trade-union work, we should pay special attention to work in three sectors of the population: Blacks, GIs and high school students. Much of what is said below on Black work also applies to other national minorities.

Black Work

As the draft political resolution states, "the crisis of leadership in the Black community remains a central problem of the Black liberation struggle." However, this very real problem must not be used as an excuse for us to be anything less than audacious in doing Black work.

We have learned that it is not enough to have a correct program for the Black liberation struggle, especially if the Black community remains unaware of that program. For example, the Workers League and the Communist Party have incorrect programs on the Black liberation struggle, but they are nevertheless managing to recruit a far greater number of Blacks to their organization than we have done. Why? Because they are in places where we are not. They are not afraid of Blacks, Chicanos, or other minorities. They do not feel that only Blacks can do Black work. These are our problems.

Fortunately, we are beginning to come to grips with these problems and we are beginning to correct them. Most of the proposals outlined in "A Contribution and Some Proposals," by Ninure Saunders (*SWP DB*, Vol. 31, No. 9), could help to carry this out even further.

As always, the selling of our press in the Black community is key. (In Chicago, for example, it was found that sales in the Black community amounted to at least half of all the bundles sold during the special spring sales drive. The fact that this was done shows that there is a keen interest in socialist ideas in the Black community.)

Militant sales remain one of the best ways to reach out to the Black community.

The party might therefore consider using our press as a kind of an open forum to discuss many of the issues facing the Black community; for example, the concrete ways a Black party might be built. (This was done in 1969 and helped in the writing of the *Transitional Program for Black Liberation*.)

In our election campaign, the party must, in addition to raising the general slogan of "Black control of the Black community," address itself to whatever concrete issues are being faced by the Black community and attempt to show the "how" and "why" of the benefits to be gained from fighting for a Black party.

Finally, the party must work to promote an optimistic and audacious attitude about doing Black work. It is important for all comrades to view Black work as their responsibility, whether or not they are assigned to Black work fractions.

GI Work

Comrade Mary-Alice Waters correctly criticizes the United Secretariat majority resolution on Europe for failing to

discuss "the need for work in the armed forces." (*IIDB X*, No. 3, p. 21.) As she points out, an antimilitarist radicalization is developing in Europe. Important developments are also taking place in the U.S. military and young people remember well the GI antiwar movement. So we of the SWP, also, should discuss military work.

Now that the draft has been ended, our slogan "End the Draft" is outdated. We must therefore discuss how our approach to the question of the army will need to change in the new situation.

Has an end to the draft been a big victory, like the Supreme Court decision on abortion? Should we therefore try to defend such a victory? Should we try to extend it with a slogan such as "down with the army"? These are some questions which may arise.

The volunteer army will, in fact, create certain difficulties—perhaps for imperialism, and certainly for us and for GIs fighting for their rights. We should recognize these difficulties and adapt our tactics accordingly.

For example, it will be necessary for us to be more conscious of orienting ourselves to GI work than before, since none of us are likely to be wearing uniforms ourselves. We should try to pursue further such rights as were gained by the Jenness-Spock antiwar rally at Fort Dix just before the 1972 elections, in order to make contact with GIs. We should give full coverage to all developments in the military, as we did during the *Kitty Hawk* case. We should try to make contact with soldiers and sailors battling racism in the military. The Air Force pilots refusing to bomb Cambodia deserve attention. In the absence of a mass GI movement, we should even stay in contact with such groups as the Chicago Area Military Project.

We should keep in mind the fourth condition for membership in the Third International, passed as the Second Congress in 1920, which is worth quoting in full: "The obligation to spread communist ideas includes the particular necessity of persistent, systematic propaganda in the army. Wherever such propaganda is forbidden by exceptional laws, it must be carried on illegally. The abandonment of such work would be equivalent to the betrayal of revolutionary duty and is incompatible with membership in the Third International."

In this regard, it is necessary to review one aspect of our military policy in the past few years. In general, our GI work was a revolutionary example of great significance. But it is necessary to clarify the Leninist position on one question: the question of accepting induction.

Our national policy has been to accept induction and not to seek individual escapes from the draft. At the same time, we have demanded assurance of our rights, and often our comrades send "Joe Miles" letters to the authorities before being inducted, demanding such assurance in writing. In addition, demonstrations were sometimes held to call attention to the fact that an antiwar activist was being drafted.

This was a correct policy. "Joe Miles" letters and demonstrations on induction days helped to make it more difficult for the military to victimize our comrades.

But some comrades apparently did not understand this policy, and saw such letters and demonstrations as a way for us to alert the military authorities and thus avoid being drafted. It is quite necessary to stress for educational purposes that such an attitude is not only at vari-

ance with Leninism, but has nothing in common with a working-class attitude. It is a petty-bourgeois and bureaucratic attitude. Yet such attitudes on this particular question have not been isolated exceptions in our movement.

Anyone who has a question on this point should turn to *Writings of Leon Trotsky* (1939-40), p. 67. In answer to the question as to whether a revolutionist in the U. S. in 1940 should try to avoid the draft, Trotsky answered, "if he is draftable, then let him be drafted. I don't think he should try to avoid the draft—he must go with his generation and participate in its life. Should the party try to conserve its cadres by saving them from the army? This means conserving them in a very bad sense. When the best part of the population is mobilized, then our cadres must be among them." Trotsky was speaking of a period when there was a solid wall of patriotic support for the war and no noticeable movement inside the army around such questions as racism.

Trotsky was extremely severe in talking about "escapists—including those in our own party." He said "we must speak about them with full contempt." (*Ibid.*, p. 56.)

Thus, in general, to have the purpose in mind of escaping the draft when we write a "Joe Miles" letter or organize a demonstration at an induction center is absolutely impermissible in almost every case. We do not seek special privileges as Trotskyists. We share the fate of our class. Such a method of thinking could lead to terrible mistakes if not corrected.

For that reason it is necessary to raise this question and make sure that if the draft is brought back, everyone's understanding is correct. This is a question of principle. If there are any comrades who disagree with what

we have said here, they should make it known.

We should continue our GI work, keeping in mind that some of our best cadres and leaders have been recruited from this work in the past and that this work has great strategic importance.

High School Work

High school work is an area handled by the YSA. But because it is an area where, as YSA comrades have pointed out, we are somewhat weak, we should encourage and help the YSA in this work. Attention should be paid not only to high schools, but also to trade schools, vocational high schools, nursing schools, etc., where young people are being trained to take part in the labor force.

* * *

We think that such a shift in our practical orientation as we are suggesting would be immediately fruitful. We would begin recruiting more working people to our movement; we would aid our work in the Black movement, the women's liberation movement, and on campus; and we would even begin to have an impact in the labor movement. But the most important gains will be in the long run.

The basis for our proposal is not only the present conjuncture. For that reason, we especially need a discussion in the plenary delegate sessions of the convention. This discussion should take up the trade-union question and the question of work in the working class from many points of view, including from the standpoint of the present conjuncture.

July 25, 1973

CENTRIST ALCHEMY OR MARXISM? A CRITIQUE OF "THE LOGIC OF MASS ACTION"

by Therese Seiler, Chicago Branch

The SWP's progressive minimization of program as exemplified in the undue emphasis placed on the importance and weight of democratic demands even in the advanced capitalist sector, necessarily entails an examination of the concept of mass action. For in fact, if not officially, the SWP has defined mass action to be *the* "proletarian method of struggle," that essential ingredient which when fused with democratic demands, qualitatively transforms them into transitional demands, and imbues the movement around them with an automatic revolutionary thrust. An entire mystique has been woven around the "power of mass actions," such that mass action, which is essentially a question of tactics, has been elevated to the level of theory. It is the intent of this contribution to demonstrate how mystifications such as the SWP's particular interpretation of mass action have contributed not a little toward the miseducation of our cadre as well as the masses we are supposedly trying to reach.

Is Mass Action A Sufficient Counterposition To The Bogey of Ultraleftism?

From the highest to the lowest bodies of the SWP, a steady chorus about reaching the masses, mass actions, etc., can be heard. The SWP incessantly praises itself on having a mass perspective and boasts of the mass movements it has participated in and been the "best builder" of. The speeches, articles and interventions of the SWP are permeated with quasi-lyrical references to the necessity of mass actions. Indeed, not a few SWPers harbor the incredible illusion that building larger and larger demonstrations constitutes the quintessence of revolutionary activity and is the chief criterion distinguishing all true revolutionaries from pretenders.

Now it is a fundamental tenet of Marxism that the revolution will be made by the masses, i.e., the working class and its allies, or it will not be made at all. Thus, Marxists always prefer, and strive to reach thousands,

millions rather than mere handfuls. Why then, does the SWP take such great pains to belabor what is so obvious?

The easiest and most superficial explanation for the constant stress on mass action would be the struggle against a formidable ultraleft current in the workers movement. But the last such current in the workers movement to achieve any dimensions were the "Third Period" Stalinism and anarcho-syndicalism, both dealt death blows in Germany and Spain in the '30s. Guevarism and Maoism, in actuality diverse types of worship attached to China and Cuba, while they disattract some student youth and a segment of the peasantry, had a minimal effect on the proletariat.

If it is this petty-bourgeois ultraleftism which is being fought, *and it should be fought*, clearly the concept of mass action alone, or even as the main focus in a broader argument, is in no way sufficient to win these forces for the proletarian revolution. But in his pamphlet, *Liberalism, Ultraleftism or Mass Action*, Peter Camejo states by the very title that the *tactic* of mass action is a sufficient counterposition to the essentially political tendencies of liberalism and ultraleftism. The *tactic* of mass action is here constrained to do the work of political *theory*, of politics. And in order to do so, ultraleftism and liberalism must themselves be redefined and falsified and the struggle against them, simplified.

Camejo states, for example, that "basically an ultra-left is a liberal who has gone through an evolution. . . they don't believe that the masses can be won." But the position of anarcho-syndicalism, anarcho-communism, the (workers') council-communist movement, etc., was that the masses *could* be won, and could *only* be won through the *mass strike*, the general strike and variations thereof. Since these ultralefts believed that the masses could only be won through mass actions, they rejected all preparatory work, both in elections and in the "reactionary" trade unions. The most "revolutionary" rhetoric was combined with the most meagre actual program focused on simple "bread and butter" issues and democratic demands in an attempt to artificially bestir mass actions.

The gulf between Marxists and anarcho-syndicalists and other ultralefts does not revolve around the psychological axis of "pessimism" or "optimism" vis-a-vis the masses, but on the very laws of the revolution, on the dialectic of the motion and outcome of the class struggle. . . in short, on the *preparatory* work necessary to revolution, on the scientific revolutionary *program*, on the necessity of a *party* to conduct that work, recruit the vanguard of the class, and *prepare* the masses for the onslaught against the bourgeoisie *and* for the dictatorship of the proletariat.

While there are small groups of ultralefts more sectarian than their anarcho-syndicalist counterparts in that they deny the actual and leading role of the proletariat, babbling about student and/or "youth" abstractions, they too do not fundamentally deny the necessity of a mass revolutionary upsurge to unseat the tyrant class of bourgeoisie. All of the talk then, of "exemplary actions," "picking up the gun," etc., among all varieties of ultralefts, are primarily errors concerning class consciousness, the preparatory work necessary to revolution, and most deeply of all, the party and its program.

The struggle against ultraleftism is essentially a *political* struggle, touching on the very fundamentals of

Marxism. Mass action, as the concept itself, as a tactic, is not a sufficient response to the errors of ultraleftism. Worse yet, elevating it to the level of theory and passing it off as a programmatic point, as the SWP has done, only serves to obfuscate the essential political questions and compound confusion. Small wonder that the SWP has had so little success in attracting and winning over the advanced political elements on the left, many of whom have gone through a lengthy or at least an abbreviated stage of ultraleftism. By raving and ranting about such tactical expedients as mass action, as though in and of itself mass action were somehow a mystical solution to the problems of humanity, the SWP has failed to educate around the deeper political questions and to present an alternative to the dead-end of ultraleftism. *Tragically, the SWP has had nothing to say to ultra-lefts and other subjective revolutionaries.*

Mass Action and the Politics of Camouflage

Perhaps one of the most obvious observations to be made about the SWP on the question of mass action, is that an inverse proportion exists between the SWP's endless refrain about the "masses" and its actual, concrete activities within the working class. It has become axiomatic on the left at least, that the SWP has succeeded almost totally in isolating itself from the working class. Concomitant with this isolation and abstention from the class, the party has deleriously pursued almost every major petty-bourgeois movement which had the potential for mass support, i.e., the various nationalist movements, the feminist and gay movements, the meat boycott, etc.

In line with this new petty-bourgeois orientation which lasted nearly a decade, the term "working class" was conveniently dropped from the SWP lexicon, and in its place was substituted the term "masses." Similarly, the formulation "class struggle" was replaced by the more neutral formulation "radicalization." All of this, of course, served the very lofty purpose of attempting to conceal from everyone the fact that the SWP has about as little to do with the day-to-day struggles of the working class as Marx's nicotine habit had to do with the writing of *The 18th Brumaire*.

If the above seems like a scholastic exercise in pseudo-linguistics, it should be remembered that subtle alterations in the party line are always, sooner or later, reflected in the party lingo. As the party drifted further and further rightward, it had of necessity to change and to tone down traditional Marxist formulations lest the contradictions between words and deeds appear too great to the ranks and others. A case in point is the Militant Labor Forum, the name of which was modified to read simply, the Militant Forum. The rationale provided for this "excluded middle" was that the word labor has a sectarian (!) ring to it, that somehow it would frighten away potential forum attenders and recruits. One can only deduce from this directive that the kind of elements, the kind of "masses," the party seeks to attract are those who experience cold sweat and heart tremors at the mere mention of the working class. And all of this in a period when the "radicalization" is supposedly the "broadest and deepest" ever?

By way of a slight digression, it should be noted that

the party has recently resurrected and dusted off for use a more militant phraseology, and as a result, talk about the working class has once again become fashionable. *But only in order to present a left cover to the International. Only in order to hoodwink the International about the real nature of the SWP.*

Proletarian Methods of Struggle. . . Fact or Fiction?

To veil and to explain away its abstentionism from the class, the SWP has also revived other elaborate sophisms worthy of the Jesuits at their finest. The characterization of mass action as a "proletarian method of struggle" is such a sophism. Presumably, mass actions (read: peaceful and legal demonstrations in the streets around a democratic demand and independent of the Democratic and Republican parties) are proletarian in method and objectively revolutionary because: (1) they are independent from the ruling class parties and as such pose a threat to them; (2) such actions have a dynamic of their own, relating to the masses at their present level of consciousness (the struggle around democratic demands) and through involvement propelling them to a higher level of consciousness.

To expose the innate absurdity of independence from the ruling-class parties as a sufficient criterion for revolutionary activity, one has only to recall such events as the large demonstrations of the Chilean truck owners in 1972 or the more recent mobilizations of the fascists in Italy and France. The fact that in both cases the actions were *massive* as well as *extraparlimentary*, did not prevent them from being totally reactionary. Regarding the "automatic" revolutionary dynamic of masses mobilized around democratic demands, the SWP would do well to remember the fate of the massive popular fronts, all of which ended in defeats for the working class on a grand scale in country after country. But more on this point later.

The compulsion to emphasize the revolutionary *form* of one's practice to cover up the total absence of revolutionary *content* is a recurring aberration in the history of the Marxist movement which must once again be refuted. In *Left Wing Communism: An Infantile Disease*, Lenin polemicized against the German ultralefts whose sectarianism toward the working class expressed itself in their intransigent insistence on "proletarian methods of struggle." In response to the refusal of these revolutionary purists to participate in elections on the grounds that electoral activity was bourgeois and not proletarian, Lenin drove home the point time and again that revolutionaries use any means to further their ends.

During the first and necessarily very disorganized military period of the Russian revolution, the old army disintegrated and partisan (guerrilla) bands arose. The Tsaritsin clique of Stalin, Voroshilov and Budenny, seeking to gain factional advantage to conceal their ineptitude, blocked with Antonov-Ovseenko and other partisan leaders in resistance to the introduction of former czarist officers and military specialists into the Red Army in order to forge it into a modern army and phase out partisan activity. Their chief argument was, of course, that partisan warfare was a "proletarian method of struggle." Faced with the experienced, well armed and highly disciplined armies of Britain, France, the U.S., Germany and Japan, to name only the most formidable, Trotsky made haste to point out that on pain of defeat in civil war, as well

as in politics, the methods of conducting a struggle are determined by the nature of the enemy, and not by fidelity to some a priori idea.

Clearly then, there is no specifically proletarian method of struggle. Rather, the party of the working class uses any and all means which can best serve at a specific historic conjuncture, to advance the objective interests of the class i.e. the conquest of power. Considerations regarding the most advantageous tactics to employ at any given time must flow from the program and not vice versa. That is, the program we seek to advance, which should be a program for the destruction of capitalism and the reconstruction of society along socialist lines *in our lifetimes*, influences the tactics we choose and not the tactics, the program. The SWP has reversed this elementary truth altogether.

The Movement Is All: The End Goal is Nothing

Harboring an essentially Messianic vision of leading the grey masses out of the desert of capitalism and into the Promised Land of socialism *sometime in the distant future*, the SWP has shown itself capable of sacrificing almost everything, including the Transitional Program, in its infinite lust after mass movements. In choosing a demand for the various movements, the chief consideration of the SWP leadership has been at all times *not* which demands will best bring to the fore the property question and thus educate the working class about the necessity of a socialist revolution, *but* which demand will increase the headcount in street demonstrations. The tactic of large demonstrations (peaceful and legal, of course) has become the chief determining factor of the program the SWP advances. Novack explicated this point in a classic manner with regard to the women's movement.

In *The Role Of The Transitional Program In The Revolutionary Process* (p. 20), he states: "The purpose of transitional demands, it has been emphasized, is to further the mobilization of the masses. This is pertinent to the controversy within the feminist movement, echoed in our own ranks, over the merit of the slogan for free abortion on demand versus repeal of all abortion laws. Both of these demands are good ones and are incorporated into our tool kit. However, that doesn't solve the *tactical* question: which one is better suited to bringing the largest number of women together in the first national action of the feminist movement? This was the decisive consideration in the judgment of our comrades who selected repeal of all abortion laws. They decided on the less radical slogan at this stage of development of the movement. They didn't discard the other one. They simply put it on a different level, for propaganda rather than immediate mass action. At the same time the one slogan is advanced to mobilize the largest number of women for action in the streets, the other remains as part of our broader program."

Indeed, this different level of which Novack speaks is of course. . . the shelf. The Transitional Program is explained away into a minimum program for tactical reasons. The Transitional Program, "it has been emphasized," has for its purpose the "stimulation of mass action" only in order to justify whatever low level politics and activity are deemed superficially necessary to foment these ac-

tions.

But on the contrary, the Transitional Program has as its purpose not the mere stimulation of mass action for its own sake, but the preparation of the proletariat for their historically necessary and conscious role of overthrowing the bourgeoisie and the establishment of the dictatorship of the masses. It is necessary to emphasize once again Lenin's words of warning on this matter:

"It is often said and written that the main point in Marx's theory is the class struggle. But this is wrong. And this wrong notion very often results in an opportunist distortion of Marxism and its falsification in a spirit acceptable to the bourgeoisie. For the theory of the class struggle was created *not* by Marx, *but* by the bourgeoisie before Marx, generally speaking, it is *acceptable* to the bourgeoisie. Those who recognize *only* the class struggle are not yet Marxists; they may be found to be still within the bounds of bourgeois thinking and bourgeois politics. To confine Marxism to the theory of class struggle means curtailing Marxism, distorting it, reducing it to something acceptable to the bourgeoisie. A Marxist is solely someone who *extends* the recognition of the class struggle to the recognition of the dictatorship of the proletariat. This is what constitutes the most profound distinction between the Marxist and the ordinary petty (as well as big) bourgeoisie. This is the touchstone on which the *real* understanding and recognition of Marxism should be tested." (*State and Revolution, Collected Works, Volume 25, p. 32.*)

A Marxist is solely someone who in all activities, everywhere and at all times, brings to the fore the property question and the question of state power, who is willing to suffer all hardships, even temporary isolation if need be, to *prepare* and *lead* the proletariat. Marxists do not pass off, as the SWP has done, "democracy" and democratic backsliding as a program for revolution, attempting by this to both invoke "mass actions" and to retain a sufficient organizational base to make this appear possible while relying on a pseudoscientific "objectivist" logic to fulfill the proper tasks of the party and the Transitional Program. All of this is done, of course, against the background of obsequious prating and posturing about the revolution. . . on Sundays.

The epoch of imperialist decay is precisely the era in which democracy is fundamentally no longer compatible with continued bourgeois rule. It is the epoch of bonapartism, fascism and war, in which the bourgeoisie is no longer capable of defending democracy and has already become impatient with even maintaining its formal appearance. Two counterposed strategies have been advanced on this basis: (1) the working class must now campaign under the slogans of democracy; (2) the working class must break resolutely with democracy and launch the struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat. The first theory has been advanced by Lassalle, Bernstein, Kautsky, Stalin and a host of others. It is reformist and constitutes the strangulation of the proletarian revolution and the future prospects of humanity. The second theory has been advanced by Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky in the struggle against the first theory, most notably in the concepts of the united front and the permanent revolution.

The notion that the working class must struggle for democratic demands on the basis of democracy, when extended to its logical conclusion, inevitably leads to popular frontism. The popular front, by its very nature reformist, is a coalition of primarily proletarian and petty-bourgeois formations subordinated to the petty-bourgeois program of its constituents. Popular fronts are designed to obtain either a change of policy or the maintenance of the status quo from the bourgeoisie. With its democratic program, the popular front is quite capable of mobilizing huge numbers of people. Historically, such vast mobilizations around democratic demands *on the basis of democracy* have almost invariably led into a blind alley and have resulted in counterrevolutions and the wholesale demoralization of the working class.

Confronted with the huge popular front mass mobilizations in France, Trotsky declared them a Stalinist ploy to salvage capitalism, and not a situation most "threatening" to it. In *Whither France*, Trotsky articulated this point as follows:

"But, we are told, not without indignation, the Peoples' Front is not a cartel at all but a mass movement. There is, of course, no lack of pompous definitions, but they do not change the nature of things. The job of a cartel always consisted in putting a *brake* on the mass movement, directing it into channels of class collaboration."

Thus, the SWP's banalities concerning "mass action" around democratic demands and the tremendous threat posed to capitalism when the largest number of people are mobilized, reveal a total dismissal of the rich and bitter lessons of history.

The Meat Boycott: Massive Discontent and Massive Confusion

A recent and instructive example of the SWP's political confusion stemming in part from its mass action delirium, is the party's virtually uncritical support and evaluation of the ill-fated meat boycott. Ecstatic articles in *The Militant* celebrated the fact that during the boycott the consumption of meat dropped by approximately 40 percent with some food chains reporting 50 to 80 percent drops, an index of the action's success. *The Militant* further lauded the boycott as a "powerful expression of mass opposition to runaway prices" and "an indication of the determination of millions of people to take action to try to protect their standard of living."

As a climax to this frenzy of enthusiasm, a leading party spokesperson flew around the country characterizing the boycott as the "biggest mass action in this country since the Civil War"! When the meat boycott provided the occasion for the layoff of 75,000 meatcutters and butchers, a certain sobering process occurred and even the SWP had to attach qualifiers to its previously unqualified acceptance of such tactics as boycotting food. In the ad hoc consumers committees which had sprung up, our spokespeople slightly altered their tune and began to preach massive demonstrations against prices as opposed to massive boycotts. All of this was done, undoubtedly, with romantic images of the large bread demonstrations which preceded both the French and the Russian revolutions, looming large in their minds.

With regard to this particular fiasco, several points need

to be made. Firstly, contrary to the analysis of the party "theoreticians," ample evidence seems to suggest that the meat boycott, far from being independently initiated, was in fact advocated by Nixon himself. One has only to recall the pervasive talk of "meatless days" on the part of Nixon and such leading representatives of the ruling class as Earl Butz, Secretary of Agriculture, in the weeks preceding the boycott. The sudden proliferation of articles in the bourgeois press on multiple merits of fish and meat substitutes, also serves to corroborate this view.

Secondly, regardless of whether or not the boycott was spontaneous in origin, its content was such as to play directly into the hands of the ruling class, thus warranting only the most irreconcilable opposition of revolutionaries. For this reason: from a Marxist point of view, the widespread discontent of the vast majority of the working class over the soaring prices of the means of subsistence can only be effectively expressed in the *positive* and militant demand for an *increase in the production of both the quality and quantity of consumers' goods and social services, and not in the essentially negative and masochistic form of self-denial*. Indeed, the meat boycott by teaching working people that they must punish the profiteers by punishing themselves, absolutely fostered the spirit of belt-tightening and constituted one of many psychological preparations of the working class for its rapidly deteriorating standard of living.

The SWP, were it revolutionary in fact, rather than just in name, would have assumed the task of mercilessly exposing this trick to which so many succumbed and which marked a victory for the capitalists and not for working people. Instead, the SWP had nothing to say to the boycotters save affirm the spirit of what was being done and suggest the more effective tactic of mass demonstrations such as May 5 at which the party advanced such consciousness-raising slogans as "Nixon eats beef!" The programmatic prescriptions in *The Militant* regarding the demands for more jobs, an escalator clause in union contracts, etc., were less than empty posturing in light of the fact that the party is divorced from the actual organizations of the class within which it could begin to implement the struggle around these demands.

The Masses Are the Movers of History But Politics Is the Mover of Masses

Mobilizations of the working class for struggle, sometimes on a vast scale, do occur around democratic demands. But this is merely to say that the masses are not in themselves in any way revolutionary, and that the working class only moves in a conscious manner, in a revolutionary manner, at certain times and given particular conditions. The present leadership talks about *building* such movements to mean taking the lead in them in involving as many people as possible, simply stressing the quantitative side and ignoring the rich lesson history that

it is precisely politics which is the mover of the masses.

Revolutionaries, on the contrary, do not stand aside from such movements but support every movement of the proletariat on any demand which even in the reformist sense is in the interests of the working class, i.e., the struggle for abortion law repeal, the struggle for higher wages, etc.

But while defending and advancing the immediate interests of the working class, Marxists represent and take care of *in the present* the *future* of the movement, through the Transitional Program and its demands which in the present, bring to the fore the property question and the question of state power. In the words of Trotsky, "on whatever arena and whatever methods of functioning, they (Communists) are bound to speak in the name of unqualified principles and clear revolutionary slogans. They do not play hide and seek with the working class; they do not conceal their aims; they do not substitute diplomacy and combinations for a principled struggle. MARXISTS AT ALL TIMES AND UNDER ALL CONDITIONS OPENLY SAY WHAT IS" (*Writings 1935-36*, p. 19, original emphasis.)

A mass movement of the working class around demands which pose the question of state power is precisely a *revolutionary* situation. Partial mobilizations of the proletariat on transitional demands do of course occur outside of a general revolutionary situation. A particular section of the working class involved in a fierce struggle may fight for extremely advanced demands and even occupy their factories. But it is just in these situations that the class, through the intervention of the revolutionary vanguard on the basis of the Transitional Program organizes itself consciously, gains a clear understanding of the general line of march, the conditions and the ultimate results of the proletarian movement.

In general, working on a day-to-day basis among masses who do not yet struggle in a mass way, who conduct struggles around democratic demands, revolutionaries do not "build" movements on demands which are "democratic and transitional" (read: democratic demands) in order to momentarily increase any given head count; they do not counterpose mass action to the task of *preparing* the masses. Rather, they intervene everywhere and at all times under their own banner and with the Transitional Program and its demands to *change* and *advance* the *political* level of the struggle, which will in turn advance the breadth of the movement.

Revolutionaries advance transitional demands to become the slogans of struggle for the movement, and do not indulge in abstract propaganda which can only serve to mislead it. The objective situation and the actual level of every struggle and campaign will determine what concrete demands should be raised, without however changing the precise nature of our demands, which are transitional demands, succinct expressions of the Transitional Program.

July 14, 1973

CONTRIBUTION MADE TO PRECONVENTION DISCUSSION
TO THE BOSTON BRANCH ON JULY 24, 1973 ON THE GAY
QUESTION

by L. Paltrineri, Boston Branch

I want to say a few words on the SWP's general line regarding the gay liberation movement. This movement, the first independent movement of homosexuals, both men and women, is a unique feature of the current radicalization. The radicalization of the sixties, a radicalization which called into question all the traditions of capitalist society—especially the sharp contributions of the women's liberation movement regarding sexual oppression—inspired gay people to struggle for their basic human rights as well. And while the radicalization provided a favorable atmosphere for the rise of the gay movement, the gay movement through its own struggle has had a profound impact on this radicalization and on society as a whole. While prejudices against homosexuals in our society still run very deep, cracks in the reactionary morality of class society are apparent and we can expect these cracks to broaden. The gay movement, a movement concerned with sexist oppression, contains those fighters who most consistently confront and help break down this reactionary morality. And as the "memorandum" states, "The struggle of gay people for their rights is directed against the capitalist government, and is in the interests of socialism . . ." (SWP Discussion Bulletin, Vol. 31, No. 3). And we believe that the movement is playing a progressive role—we support the gay movement, we "identify with the aims of this struggle . . ." (from the memorandum). The political position which has been put forward in a motion from the National Committee for the consideration of the party states " . . . unconditional support to the struggles of homosexuals for full democratic rights, including full civil and human rights, and against all the forms of discrimination and oppression they suffer under capitalism."

I think that many of the written and verbal contributions that the party has organized in the past as well as the current discussion have been excellent and form the stepping stones of the process of developing the SWP position. I do not think that process is over. And I think that the majority of the SWP is in agreement with the position of the "memorandum." There are some differences, however, especially in regards to our tasks and orientation that I wish to take up.

Probably at this point in the discussion most comrades are clear on the political period we have been through and the immediate period before us. We've analyzed it as a contradictory period—where the radicalization has continued to deepen but this sentiment has failed to be translated into action. This characterization is true for all the mass movements including the gay movement. Although even in this period we have seen some motion in the gay movement in different parts of the country, and Christopher Street continues to draw large numbers of gay people, the characterization still applies. There is no national action coalition or any kind of national campaign around specific issues of gay oppression which we could support and help build. And I believe from our national gatherings in the past (at the gay work-

shops) we have seen a tremendous unevenness in the struggles of the gay movement. Some areas, such as New York, have done good work relating to specific struggles for gay rights. Other areas have not had the same opportunities before them and have therefore done less. The key element in what each branch does in relation to gay work, and many other areas of work for that matter, depends on the objective opportunities and priorities before each area. The proposed policy in the "memorandum" states that branches should be attuned to struggles on the local level and should support them. But this is quite different than a national scale orientation or intervention. The "memorandum" does not mean we will do no gay work. Just because we don't project national campaigns in the women's movement, the Black movement, the antiwar movement, does not mean we will do no work in these areas. We will continue our work in the mass movements on a local level, and we realize that we will have to be somewhat more aggressive because of the nature of the period we are in. This holds true for the gay movement. The comrades who propose a national scale intervention misjudge the objective conditions before us. There is a tremendous amount of pressure on the party from many sources to do more. While the subjective desire to do more is in all of us to some degree, we must couple this subjective desire with a sober objective look at reality—the reality of the objective political situation and the reality of the size and strength of the SWP.

I feel the comrades are mistaken on the national intervention question, although this does not preclude such an intervention in the future—when a national campaign exists. In fact we think national campaigns are good and such a struggle against anti-gay laws or other demands put forward by the gay movement is definitely a campaign that we would support and help build. But any attempt at this time to substitute our forces, in any movement, for broader forces we might like to see organized but which are not in motion would be a mistake not to mention a failure, especially in this period.

There are many activities we can carry out. For example, we will want to pay attention to the many gay campus groups and issues that arise on campus concerning their rights—their political rights on campus are far from secure. Equal rights legislation is another area we will want to keep an eye on as well as harassment by police, the church and other anti-homosexual elements in this society. Comrades on the job will want to watch out for cases of job discrimination. Perhaps our best vehicles in this period will be through our participation in the elections. Boston, and I know other areas have done the same, have taken the opportunity to run comrades who are or have been gay activists and leaders. These comrades like all our other candidates raise issues fundamental to the rights of gay people. This, in Boston, has led to certain opportunities like being invited to speak before gay organizations. These

are just a few examples of the kind of activities we can carry out. Activities that allow us to work with and speak to radicalizing gay people and to recruit the best gay militants to our movement.

You know we shouldn't forget that although the gay movement has burst onto the political scene with big strides in a short period of time, it's a movement that is basically still in its infancy. We can expect that it is a movement which is here to stay and will continue to

develop at a steady pace. We have a great deal to learn from the gay movement in certain respects. Many of the written contributions on the gay question have been excellent contributions towards what I consider an on-going process of developing and sharpening the party's position. But there is no question in my mind that the National Committee memorandum is the correct position for the SWP at this time.

July 27, 1973

AN UNPRINCIPLED GROUPING WITHIN THE SWP by Tom Scharret, Oakland-Berkeley Branch

The purpose of this article is to help describe the development of an unprincipled grouping which is now grouped into the "Internationalist" and "International Majority" tendencies within the SWP. This is not just the contention of the author but of a large layer of comrades who have had to contend with this grouping in its different forms. Properly speaking a tendency within a revolutionary party is formed around *political* aims and represents something *politically* within the party. Two examples of this would be the tendency formed around support to the counterresolution on Palestine at the 1971 convention and the Revolutionary Internationalist Tendency formed for this convention. An unprincipled grouping, however, is formed primarily around *subjective* considerations, and subordinates political aims to those subjective considerations.

General Origins

The worst example of such an unprincipled grouping in the history of the party is the Abern clique. There are many important generalizations that have been made by Comrade Hansen in the pamphlet "The Abern Clique," which shed light on the general origins of cliquism. There are generally two different types of individuals that provide the material for cliquism.

1. Building a revolutionary party with the aim of changing the course of history is certainly a worthy and ambitious goal. It has been noted, however, that this goal not only attracts sincere devotees, but it has also attracted middle-class types and "soldiers of fortune" who are only interested in basking in the "glory" of "changing history" while accepting few, if any, of the sacrifices involved. These types can be recognized by their pompous egos and intellectual disdain for the day-to-day work of building a party. They have plenty of advice on how it should be done, of course. They often draw particular joy from using their debating skills in contesting the established party leaders. They draw even greater joy from disdaining all those who reject their views as "hand raisers." This is not to say that there aren't intellectuals who

can contribute very useful skills to the party. But, as Cannon noted, American intellectuals seem to have a very poor record.

2. Members of the party must come to grips with all the pressures that capitalist society brings to bear on a small handful aspiring to build a mass party. No comrade can be indifferent to the contradiction between their recognition of the necessity for a socialist revolution, and the relative smallness of the party's forces. Sometimes this causes frustrations that are expressed politically through some variant of ultraleftism. Often, a comrade will be discouraged by an ebb or lull in the class struggle, and drop out. Then there is the type, who, on the one hand, becomes demoralized with the prospects for building a revolutionary party. On the other hand, they do not leave, because the party (or actually, "professional radicalism") had become an end in itself to them. This contradiction often produces the malcontent types that Cannon blasted in "History of American Trotskyism" and "Struggle for a Proletarian Party." Their dissatisfaction with the seemingly arbitrary norms and fruitless efforts of the party finds its focus on that body which is most responsible for carrying them out—the party leadership.

The party strives to train revolutionaries to subordinate themselves to political aims (which runs directly counter to the grain of bourgeois society). A common characteristic of the two types mentioned above is to abstract their own "individual fulfillment" and subordinate political considerations to that. This common characteristic tends to bring the different types together. Their coalescence has a dynamic which Hansen describes. He stated that Abern, the clique leader, played the role of "consoling their wounded vanities, their hurt pride, their frustrated ambitions; he organizes a little world for them in which they revolve in a sort of perpetual motion, flattering each other, sympathizing with each other, laughing, joking, nourished on bits of gossip and scandal about the political committee, the general staff—and all the while they bask in the aura of revolution and the Fourth International."

Component Parts of the Current Grouping

Since the party has been growing through the sixties, a tiny residue of the elements described above has been growing. This is inevitable; elements like these will continue to make their nests inside the party until they are finally drowned by the large entrance of working-class elements. In describing the general origins of cliquism it's important that we don't look at this question in a hot-and-cold manner. The pressures that cause some to become demoralized affect everybody to some degree, since we all live in capitalist society. Consequently, a small number of comrades became entangled in this grouping for short periods throughout the sixties. These comrades were able to see the logic of being part of such a grouping, and left it.

We have one concrete example documented of how this residue was able to gather more forces. One important component of both the 1971 FAPO grouping and the 1973 "International Majority Tendency" is located in Oakland-Berkeley. In 1971, Comrade Allan Taplin wrote a discussion article entitled "The Discussion in the Oakland-Berkeley Branch" which outlined the development of this component which was then FAPO. Comrades Levitt and Massey (who had been in the party since the early sixties) headed a small group of sectarians within the branch. Alan Wald headed a grouping that constantly opposed the branch leadership because they "weren't carrying out the national line well enough." For a whole period, Levitt's grouping gave support to Wald's on all of the organizational questions taken by that group against the branch leadership. This process of cementing the two groupings together was consummated during 1971 pre-convention discussion. In the article, Comrade Taplin noted: "We might say that the branch dissidents have found a political viewpoint to justify their opposition to the branch majority leadership—and on the other side, the comrades with a sectarian viewpoint have found a following." But he also pointed out the contradiction between those comrades who were "motivated by an attitude of sectarian resistance to the party's turn toward the radicalization" and those comrades who "insist that they support the party's basic line, but have organizational differences, some have said; or they believe the party and branch leadership is not very competent, or we should change the emphasis of our work somewhat, etc." In other words, politics were subordinate to their common opposition to the "regime." This general development took place in all of the branches where FAPO existed, and explains why all of the FAPOs in the different branches voted against each other on a number of documents. The formula that was used in each branch was based on what would best keep the *voting bloc* intact. However, this expediency produced an organizational gain for FAPO which proved to be very quickly lost at the 1971 convention. (This is documented in an article in Vol. 31, No. 17, by Jim Rousey.)

There were a number of reasons why this tiny residue, after existing in the party for a number of years, felt they could come to the surface as the leaders of the FAPO tendency in 1971.

1) In the pamphlet, "The Abern Clique," Hansen mentions that one of the characteristics of a clique is "a tendency to withdraw from what appears to be fruitless battles." This characteristic of the residue fostered a sectarian-

ism which allowed it to combine with a number of genuine, chronic sectarians within the party.

2) As the example of Oakland-Berkeley pointed out, the residue was able to "link up" with other professional dissidents.

3) The challenge was also timed to a conjuncture in the transition in leadership in the SWP. The residue hoped to cash in on the fact that the central leadership did not have the experiences of the '30s and '40s behind it. (See "What Is the Basis of the Proletarian Orientation Tendency?" by Nelson Blackstock, Vol. 29, No. 18.)

4) Uniting under the call for a "turn to the working class—now," the grouping hoped to take advantage of and cultivate frustrations on the part of newer comrades who had not yet come to understand party building as a process. The pre-convention discussion was a very educational experience in this regard.

5) During that period, virtually *all* of our opponents, sectarian and opportunist alike, were attacking the SWP for its "middle-class" orientation. They all counterposed to the SWP's work various schemas about "turning to the working class." The grouping hoped to cash in on this. During the discussion, however, the connection between the general political outlook of the opponents and their schemas were made clear.

The single-issue tactic of "turning to the working class," abstracted from the objective reality was employed to fit this situation. The fact that the FAPO tendency was at root an unprincipled grouping was the major reason why they were not accorded representation on the National Committee. In Internal Information Bulletin No. 6, 1971, Comrade Seidman's report to the nominating commission gives the reasons that the nominations made by the FAPO tendency were rejected. The most important consideration: "The feeling of the Nominating Commission was that the Proletarian Orientation Tendency is not constituted on a clear political basis. . . . It is on this basis that we feel that the Proletarian Orientation Tendency in the party is not constituted around a clear political line or that the vote of a member of this grouping who was on the National Committee would in fact represent a clear political tendency within the party." This report also documented the various FAPOs voting against each other in the different branches. Although the conclusions of the report were damning, those comrades who were leaders of the FAPO Tendency and are still in the party have never attempted to refute them.

The Grouping Since 1971

In "The Struggle For A Proletarian Party," Cannon describes the logic of an unprincipled grouping, using the Lovestoneites, a faction within the Communist Party, as an example: "The Lovestoneites were able and talented people, but they had no definite principles. They knew only that they wanted to control the party 'regime.' As with Abern, this question always occupied the first place in their calculations; the 'political' program of the moment was always adapted to their primary aim of 'solving the organizational question satisfactorily'—that is, in their favor.

"They were wild-eyed radicals and ultra-leftists when Zinoviev was at the head of the Comintern. With the downfall of Zinoviev and the violent right swing of the Comintern under Bukharin, they became ardent Bukharinites as quickly and calmly as one changes his shirt. Due to an error in calculation, or a delay in information,

they were behindhand in making the switch from Bukharin to Stalin and the frenzied leftism of the Third Period. To be sure, they tried to make up for their oversight by proposing the expulsion of Bukharin at the party convention they controlled in 1929. But this last demonstration of political flexibility in the service of rigid organizational aims came too late."

The evolution of this grouping must be seen in the light of this observation, with all proportions guarded.

Since 1971, the FAPO tendency has split into the following components:

1) One group, led by Gregorich and Passen, has left the party and formed the "Class Struggle League."

2) A number of FAPO comrades, who assured us in 1971 that their expert knowledge of Trotskyist politics could answer all questions, have since "graduated" from the grouping into an apolitical existence outside of the party.

3) A tiny handful have gathered into the Revolutionary Internationalist Tendency, based on the documents by Comrade Gerry Clark.

4) The largest component still inside the party formed the Smith-Shaffer-Massey tendency around a statement dated January 1971. This later split into two different "tendencies," both with different political lines than the original statement:

a) The Internationalist Tendency, led by Comrades Massey, Shaffer, Smith, et al.

b) The International Majority Tendency, led by Comrades Levitt, Wald, Warren, Shayne, et al., existing only on the West Coast.

Both of the latter two "tendencies" proclaim support to the Maitan-Mandel-Frank tendency. Neither one has made clear why they are in separate tendencies.

Without understanding the unprincipled nature of the IT and IM tendencies, it would be impossible for a member of the Oakland-Berkeley branch to have understood the discussion. Comrades from the majority have continuously shown their distress for the unsavory practices of these two minorities in the branch. The most commonly raised complaints are as follows:

1. The positions of the comrades are in contradiction to the positions they held in 1971 with no explanation.

2. The two different minorities have made no serious attempt to explain to the party how they differ from each other politically.

3. Comrades within each of the minorities contradict each other.

4. The minorities refuse to document their positions; they even refuse to submit their reports or comments (which would require less effort) to the discussion bulletin.

5. Their reports and comments have a consistent logic of obfuscating the political discussion.

Surprisingly, it is the former members of the FAPO tendency who have been quickest to generalize from this and who have stated the harshest conclusions: Comrades Clark, Greengold, and Cagle. None of these three comrades have become adherents of the party majority. They feel, as Comrade Clark's contributions indicate, that the experience of the reunification shows that Healy was right, and that the International should not have reunified without "more intensive discussion" if at all. And they feel that their former gurus (Massey, Levitt, Wald, et al.) have betrayed them by joining with the "Pabloites." By "Pabloites" they mean the Maitan-Mandel-Frank tendency. They are, however, comrades who had a long experience inside

the grouping, and their remarks, based on those experiences, have not been refuted by the IT or IM minorities.

Guerrilla Warfare.

In 1971, "The Meaning of a Proletarian Orientation" was one of the documents that the FAPO Tendency was based on. This document stated: "the necessity for a proletarian orientation is not just a problem for the Socialist Workers Party, but as the present discussion on Latin America should illustrate, it is a problem for the entire Fourth International." In other words the FAPO comrades felt that the deep-seated "petty-bourgeois degeneration" which they saw in the SWP was evident also in the international majority, through its position on Latin America! This is certainly a strong statement against the guerrilla warfare line of the Ninth World Congress.

When these same comrades gathered around the Smith-Massey-Shaffer tendency, their position was still the same:

"We reject the positions of the International Majority as well, but not for any pacifistic or legalistic reasons. We believe that the positions of the International Majority which envisage a continentwide strategy of armed struggle, represent an adaptation to guerrillism." This statement was dated January 1973.

In their attempt to become the "official" representatives of the Maitan-Mandel-Frank tendency, part of the grouping formed the "Internationalist Tendency" in May of 1973. In its declaration the IT deleted the passage against guerrilla warfare cited above, stating that their thinking had "evolved." This new declaration criticized the SWP for its supposed "repudiation of the Leninist strategy of the seizure of state power and the smashing of the bourgeois state, which requires the party leading the masses in the military as well as the political arena." In the concrete debate within the International, what the SWP has "repudiated" is the clear guerrilla warfare line of the Ninth World Congress and the ultraleft method that fostered such a line. In that context, the statement of the Internationalist Tendency can only mean unqualified support for the Ninth World Congress line on Latin America.

The "International Majority" could not bring themselves to make such a sharp turn. Their June 10 statement says, "to say the least there were incorrect formulations in the Ninth World Congress resolution on Latin America." This gives them a greater latitude than does the Internationalist statement; they can brush off any embarrassing criticism as a "bad formulation." It certainly is not, however, a clear explanation of why the positions of the "internationalist Tendency" were unacceptable from the standpoint of principled politics.

Comrade Clark stated in regard to this development: "I think that the debate on Latin America has achieved one very important result. That is, it has forced the Levitt-Massey tendency to address itself to politics, which has caused a split in their ranks." Unfortunately for the grouping it seems that their "political flexibility in the service of rigid organizational aims" was not quite flexible enough. Needless to say, the minorities did not respond to Comrade Clark's statement.

Comrade Levitt gave the report on Latin America for the minorities. He tried to avoid any embarrassing defense of the Ninth World Congress line on Latin America by not mentioning the real issues in his report. He de-

clined, when asked, to submit his report for publication. Comrade Levitt tried to justify this obfuscation by saying that Latin America was only a secondary issue within the International, and the real issue was "the turn towards the working class."

At this point Comrade Greengold clearly separated himself from Comrade Levitt's "tendency," and in the process stated:

"We've heard the comrades in the minority here talk about the fact that guerrilla warfare is only a secondary question. In point of fact, there's a division inside the minority; there are those who really do not like guerrilla warfare, and would like to openly criticize it. And there are others, who probably constitute a majority, or at least a good-sized plurality (!) who are pro-guerrilla warfare, and would like to adopt the whole thing, hook, line and sinker. And so this is simply a rotten compromise, a play-it-down-and-call-it-a-secondary-difference. That's why there can be no clear position of the minority in this country on that question. And it's coming out, this unprincipled bloc in the minority." In spite of the severity of this charge, coming from a former member of the grouping, no one tried to refute it! It seems that the best formula to keep the group intact in Oakland-Berkeley was to criticize those nasty elliptical formulations in the Latin American resolution but to support its general line.

Finally, the harshest and most straightforward comment on the minorities was made by Comrade Tom Cagle. Cagle was a member of the steering committee of the 1971 FAPO tendency along with Comrades Levitt, Massey, and others. Cagle stated:

"Being a part of the minority in the past, I know that it's an unprincipled amalgam, a combination, in which they all come together with their intense dislike for the leadership of the SWP." No comrade from either the Internationalist or "International Majority" tendencies tried to refute this statement.

Comrade Massey, et al., state in their "Declaration of Internationalist Tendency," that the new positions of the grouping represent a "maturing" of their thought. It's certainly true that any comrade has the right to change their political position without issuing a "self-criticism." But in this case, it would certainly be in the interests of clarity if the comrades could try to reconcile some of their past political positions with the present positions they are supporting. The fact that they have chosen to ignore any differences between their old line and their new line indicates that these comrades still have a lot of growing up to do, "maturation" notwithstanding. This fact also confirms the statement made by Comrade Cagle above.

In 1971, one of the documents that was at the center of the debate in the party was "The Worldwide Youth Radicalization and the Tasks of the Fourth International." This document analyzed the significance of the international student movement, and outlined a general program by which sections and sympathizing groups maximize the impact of their intervention. The FAPO tendency maintained that the implementation of this document would forever exclude the deepening of our roots inside of the working class. The FAPO tendency was particularly upset with the document's contention that

the student population had greater social weight and closer ties to the working class than ever before. Most of that section of the document was based on the analysis of post World-War II capitalism made by Comrade Mandel.

This compelled the FAPO tendency to try and refute or undermine Mandel's analysis. Comrades should obtain a copy of "For A Proletarian Orientation" if they are interested in seeing the "method" employed in that document. In fact, the "method" consisted of taking bits and pieces of Mandel's analysis out of context and distorting their meaning. These distortions were answered in an article written by Comrade Dick Roberts. A few quotes should suffice to show how serious the FAPO tendency viewed its criticisms of Mandel:

". . . in the last several years, Comrade Ernest Mandel has developed a theory which challenges . . . basic Marxist definitions. And the SWP leadership has neither criticized Mandel's assertions nor analyzed the implications these assertions have for the strategy of the revolutionary party. In fact, our party has been following the logic of Mandel's position without admitting it."

In one place, a conception held by Comrade Mandel "has nothing in common with Marxism."

On another point in dispute, the FAPO tendency gave Mandel a choice: either Mandel felt that "there is obviously no need for the party" or else "Mandel is siding with the crassest anti-working class petty-bourgeois hacks who maintain that workers are incapable of running the economy." "The inevitable logic of Mandel's position is that the party must orient toward this layer of the intelligentsia." "Mandel has an even softer spot in his heart for the intelligentsia to-be, the students."

The whole approach of the FAPO document was to "blame" Comrade Mandel for the analytical basis of the "Youth" document, which represented, in their view, a departure from Marxism. Comrade Massey was a co-author of the FAPO document, as well as one of the co-authors of the 1973 counterresolution, "The Building of a Revolutionary Party in Capitalist America." In the FAPO document, pages 40 and 41 from Mandel's article "The Leninist Theory of Organization" were used in attempting to "prove" Mandel's departures from Marxism. In the 1973 counterresolution, page 43 is quoted from the same article to show what the "correct method" is. Perhaps Comrade Massey didn't read the entire article in 1971. More likely, Comrade Massey, like Shachtman, can speak very well from either side of any given question.

Comrade Levitt attempted to explain away the 1971 pile of slanders against Mandel by referring to them as "comradely criticisms." Trotsky once remarked that one of the characteristics of petty-bourgeois revolutionaries is a poor sense of proportion. An example of this would be to raise "comradely criticisms" in such a way as to blow them all out of proportion, in order to scare comrades into seeing their sins and "turning to the working class—now!" But a poor sense of proportion is only one of the petty-bourgeois characteristics of this grouping which talks so much about the "workers and bosses."

Vietnamese Stalinism

One fact that was surprising about the 1973 political counterresolution was that it did not attack the SWP for

not vigorously denouncing Vietnamese Stalinism within the antiwar movement over the past decade. Yet this topic has been raised many times by members of the IT and IM tendencies. They have raised the question of Vietnamese Stalinism during YSA pre-convention discussion, at branch meetings, and other equally appropriate places. Even now, the supporters of the IT document in the Oakland-Berkeley branch continue to argue that the party should have criticized Vietnamese Stalinism much more throughout the course of the antiwar movement. They choose not to make any reference to what the IT document says on this question. On page 18, the party is criticized for "underestimation of the objectively revolutionary role of the NLF." Although phrased in an ambiguous way, the document certainly does imply that the party should encourage *political confidence* in the Vietnamese Communist Party. How can these comrades reconcile this contradiction to themselves? Politics, you see, is not as important as the "legitimacy" that this grouping would get as the "bonafide" representatives of the Maitan-Mandel-Frank tendency. This requires the "official endorsement" of Maitan-Mandel-Frank. To raise written criticisms of the Maitan-Mandel-Frank position on Vietnamese Stalinism, although it would be consistent with their past politics, would get in the way of that. Thus, we have a clear example of the unprincipled politics that we have come to expect from this grouping.

European Perspectives

In my opinion, the most glaring contradictions between the 1971 and the 1973 positions of the grouping concern the student movement. In 1971, the main reason given by the FAPO tendency for their proposal of large-scale colonization had nothing to do with the concrete political situation in the U. S. Their motivation was based on the need to "proletarianize" the students that had been recruited to the SWP. The way in which FAPO supporters argued for large-scale colonization was confused and ambiguous. On the one hand, in their written and oral presentations, quotes were used out of context in order to give the impression that the party *at all times* should have its greatest amount of resources involved in trade-union work. It would then be stated that since the party did not have that policy at this time, this "proved" that our stated aim of becoming a mass proletarian party was only a pretense. On the other hand, FAPO supporters admitted it was correct for the SWP to focus so much attention on the campuses during the early sixties. In conceding that this was correct, FAPO was implicitly saying that it was correct to take into account such considerations as:

- a) The stage that the party is at in building itself.
- b) The unevenness in the development of mass consciousness between the campuses and the factories.
- c) How best to deploy our forces in order to affect the *tempo* of the radicalization.
- d) To balance all of these considerations within the framework of our strategic perspective of becoming a mass working-class party in order to take state power.

By conceding implicitly that such criteria were valid, this raised another question: What developments had taken place, along the lines of such criteria, to suggest the dramatic change in allocation of resources prescribed by FAPO? This question FAPO never attempted to answer, instead resorting, for the most part, to a series of

distortions and slanders. This characteristic, flowing from the nature of the grouping, frustrated those who were sympathetic to FAPO at one time, but were sincerely interested in answers to those questions. Now the comrades of this grouping proclaim that, whatever mistakes the Maitan-Mandel-Frank tendency might make (which are becoming fewer and fewer as the grouping chooses to ignore them), the most important issue is the "turn to the working class" projected in the European perspectives. A greater direct involvement is certainly an important part of the European perspectives document. This is based on the concrete rise of workers struggles throughout Europe. Thus, this is a rejection of the sterile criteria put forth by FAPO, but is instead based more on the rounded criteria which has always been used by the SWP, a criteria that takes into account objective reality.

The comrades of the IT and IM also choose to ignore that the *central task* projected in the European perspectives document is to "win hegemony" within the "new mass vanguard." The largest and most politicized component of that vanguard are the students. The grouping's attempt in Oakland-Berkeley to gloss over this has been very clumsy—they have referred to the "vanguard of the working class" where the European perspectives document refers to the "new mass vanguard." This is the pathetic result of trying to glue steel and wood together in the interest of "rigid organizational aims."

One last question on this point. Since when has "the turn to the working class" ever been a substitute for a correct political program? If the IT and IM tendencies really think that the European perspectives document sets an example for the SWP on trade-union work, why must these tendencies also justify every mistaken political position of the Maitan-Mandel-Frank tendency—guerrilla warfare, Maoism, Vietnamese Stalinism, etc.? As evidenced above, there was once a time when these comrades had a different understanding of these questions.

Two Different Approaches to the Student Movement

In 1971, the FAPO tendency continuously warned the party of the negative effects that recruiting students would have on the norms and program of the party. The SWP has never denied that the student movement has weaknesses. But the majority of the party correctly refuted the panic atmosphere that FAPO tried to generate around this question. For example, to try and prove their point, FAPO supporters would compare the YSA with that notorious cesspool, YPSL of 1939. But how do the comrades who were in FAPO feel about the weaknesses of the student movement in 1973?

It cannot be denied that the international radicalization has been the deepest and most advanced on the campuses. The unevenness in the development of the radicalization has fostered many ultra-left frustrations and schemas on the part of student radicals, both in Europe and the U. S. Throughout Europe, sections of the Fourth International had no hesitation in plunging into the student movement, where they recruited a large percentage of their membership. Many of these recruits have become central leaders of the sections. However, enthusiasm in attempting to win respect and recruits from the student movement began to lead to a false consciousness that not only affected our student comrades, but began to affect the politics of entire

sections. A quote from Comrade Mandel describes this consciousness the best:

"A young leader of my section, who already has rich experience in mass work in the student milieu ended a recent report on youth work with these words: 'We will build our organization if we are able to demonstrate the necessity for its existence to the vanguard by our action itself.' These words sum up admirably the task of the International in the period now opening." (July 1969. *IP*.)

This preoccupation with the concerns of radical student youth led to a tendency to bend to some of the popular errors which students make. The fact that Maitan, Mandel and Frank have chosen to justify rather than correct these errors has led to all the major differences within the International and the sympathizing groups — Vietnamese Stalinism, electoral policy, antiwar work, guerrilla warfare, Maoism, "revolutionary violence," etc. It was this dynamic which Comrade Peng Shu-tse saw and proposed a solution for, contained in his article "Return To the Road of Trotskyism." In 1971, those comrades who now support the IT counterresolution quoted from this article quite often. Comrade Peng Shu-tse is still polemicizing against this tendency to adapt to mistaken moods of radical students, as a leading member of the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency. But those comrades who quoted him so often in 1971 are now defending *every political error* that is a product of bending to the student "vanguard." They do this in some cases while expressing reservations, of course.

The whole approach of the SWP has been to try and direct the student movement in such a way as to have a positive impact on the consciousness of the working class. It was in the antiwar movement that we had the greatest success in doing this.

The McCarthyite moods within the working class were rolled back to a great extent, and the large majority of the working class became convinced to be against the war. This laid the basis for an increased militancy, which was evidenced by the number of strikes which took place right in the middle of an imperialist war conducted by the U.S. government. This had no small meaning for us.

The party felt that it was necessary for student activists to shape the character of the antiwar movement in such a way that workers would feel that they had something in common with it, they would embrace its demands, begin to see the duplicity of the government, and ultimately participate in its mass actions in the streets and by other means (such as dockworkers in Italy and Australia). This process frustrated many of the "superradical" student activists. They opted instead for more "radical" slogans, more "radical" actions, etc. The party correctly saw these attitudes as being expressive of petty-bourgeois elitism, fostered both by the unevenness of the radicalization and the weaknesses of the social nature of the student population. The party felt that the course of trying to have an impact on and involve workers was so important that it sternly repudiated any attempts by the superradicals to alter the course of the antiwar movement.

A different approach has been defended by the Maitan-Mandel-Frank tendency. This approach is documented by Comrade Waters in the "Criticism of the European

Perspectives" document. Bending to the ultraleft prejudices of student youth was evidenced both in some of the slogans and also some of the confrontationist actions. The supporters of the IT counterresolution have characterized the approach of the SWP (which was to try and reach workers where they were at and raise their consciousness) as "minimalist tailending" in the Oakland-Berkeley discussion. The IT document itself states that the party should have bent to these superradical elements which could only have hurt the course described above. The IT document states that by refusing to bend the party lost a chance to win more respect and recruits from among this layer. But isn't it more important to recruit student youth who not only see the necessity of winning the working class in the abstract, but are willing to follow a strategy designed to do just that? In rejecting this approach Comrades Massey, Wald, Levitt, et al., take all of their stern warnings about the weaknesses of the student movement and throw them right out the window. But this is of little concern to the comrades of that grouping. They got what mileage they could out of their stern warnings in 1971. In 1973, to label such ultraleft weaknesses by their right name, rather than bending to them might hurt their chances to get the "official endorsements" of the Maitan-Mandel-Frank tendency. Through no fault of Maitan, Mandel and Frank this group is no less subservient than the Lovestone grouping was to the Stalinized Comintern.

Gregorich-Passen

On page 26 of the political counterresolution it states: "The Class Struggle League-Vanguard Newsletter is partly a result of a subjective reaction by a group of dissident SWP members to the drive them out of the party campaign conducted by the SWP leadership. Their ludicrous call for a Fifth International is a typical example of the tendency for SWP splinters to be fun-house mirror images of the SWP's current practices."

This represents a clumsy attempt by Massey, Levitt and Smith, et al., to try and explain away the evolution of Gregorich, Passen and others who were their cohorts in 1971.

We should first dispense with the contention that the SWP drove Gregorich and Passen out of the party. Why is such a serious charge against the party leadership handled in such a matter of fact way? For something as serious as this wouldn't it be more appropriate for those comrades to write a discussion article on such a flagrant violation of Leninist norms? Don't the comrades who made this charge feel it to be serious? Or is the IT so convinced of the "degeneration" of the SWP that they feel it would be no use, since the party members are merely zombies who would not respond to such carefully presented evidence? Past experience in dealing with these comrades leads to the following conclusion: if the comrades tried to present a documented account of the party's "drive them out" campaign it would be refuted, they wouldn't have a leg to stand on and they know it.

The document also implies that the present policies of the SWP are responsible for the inane politics of former FAPOs Gregorich and Passen! In the recent *ISR*, Comrade Alan Wald, IT supporter, has a book review on the Shachtmanites. Should Cannon and Trotsky be blamed for that debacle? Should Maitan, Mandel and Frank be held responsible for the Posadistas?

The current politics of the grouping have nothing to do with the current practice of the SWP. Their present positions are only a "maturing" of the implicit "anti-Paboite" position which they held in 1971, just as Tom Cagle, Gerry Clark, and other members of FAPO were "anti-Pabloite." In 1971, Massey, Levitt, et al., had no trouble accomodating themselves to this "anti-Pabloism." But the situation in 1973 is different. The situation in 1973 calls for defending entryism sui generis, as we've heard a member of this grouping do in Oakland-Berkeley!

Since the question of "fun-house splinters" from the SWP has come up we should refer to FAPO's treatment of the Bartell split in the 1971 document and how they relate to that split today. In 1971, the comrades thought that the party leadership's fight with Bartell, Cochran and Clarke was so important that they devoted four pages of their document to the question. According to the FAPO document, Bartell was trying to get the party to do what they believe the party *is* doing today: abandoning the trade unions forever and intervening in other movements as a permanent substitute. The comrades would then favorably quote Cannon, Dobbs, Breitman, and Hansen *against* Bartell, as they repudiated Bartell's attempt to dissolve the party in response to the pressures of the cold war. Now the former members of Bartell's "Liberation Union" are members of the Los Angeles branch and in the same tendency with Wald, Levitt, etc., and supporting the same political line as Massey, Smith, etc. Have these former FAPO comrades changed their analysis of the Bartell split? If so, how will this square with their proletarian pretensions? What is the analysis of the former members of Bartell's group? My understanding, although I might be mistaken, is that Bartell is still perplexed that "the Cannonites just don't admit they were wrong in '53."

Dillettantism

One striking confirmation of the contention that the current "supporters" of the Maitan-Mandel-Frank tendency represent an unhealthy, unprincipled current is the pronounced *dillettantism* of the grouping, at least in Oakland-Berkeley. On page 12 of the document "The Building of a Revolutionary Party in Capitalist America" the point is made that the SWP has recruited mostly newly radicalizing activists rather than "revolutionary" blowhards from the so-called vanguard. It states:

"The short-term effects are that the party ceases to win over the most advanced elements and compensates for the lower political level of its recruitment by increasing commitment through organizational means. The inevitable dynamic is a process of sectarianization and inability to intervene in the class struggle, accompanied by a fear of losing the apparatus because it is held together only by its organizational impetus."

That statement is the most concise expression of the fatalism and demoralization which animates these comrades. This also explains the universal abstention of those comrades who used to form the FAPO tendency from all of the party's work over the last two years: it has not been the result of any tendency-imposed discipline but is the result of a misunderstanding of what being a revolutionist involves.

When the comrades are involved in a sub drive, financing the party, sales, building a demonstration, etc., they are not building the party, according to the minority, they are just trying to hold the party together by

organizational means! They see comrades voluntarily giving more of their time and effort to the party as a substitute for political understanding rather than as the product of political understanding. In the meantime the comrades from FAPO, we are supposed to believe, have been preparing to "intervene in the class struggle" by systematically abstaining from the party's work and instead studying the classics, Mike Gold, etc. A defeated tendency that was really interested in winning the party over to its views at the next convention would have demonstrated to comrades in the meantime their seriousness in party-building. In Oakland-Berkeley, for example, there are comrades who were in FAPO who used to be YSA NCers, organizers, activists, years ago. The party certainly is not in a position where it can afford to ignore what any comrade has to offer the party. But when the party assigns a comrade to a task and he or she is simply not interested in doing the assignment, what can the party do? It certainly cannot cater to the hurt feelings of the comrades by making one a party NCer. This is not the purpose of party leadership. The most tragicomic result of this dillettantism was the nominations made by the FAPO tendency to the NC in 1971. The comrade presenting the nominations could not inform the commission what assignments the comrades had held, as if this didn't matter.

The fact of the matter is that systematic abstention from the party's work has a certain dynamic: the party, even when it is a small propaganda organization, acts like the mass party it intends to become. All the norms of the party are designed to facilitate its functioning as a team of revolutionaries. The question of "what to do next" requires the party consistently getting feedback and a sense of corrective from the masses through party activists. But if you are not active in the party, the norms begin to lose their meaning and become very arbitrary, even oppressive. Having no corrective, the importance of calculating mass consciousness is lost and this leads to a method of sterile sectarianism. The effects of both of these dynamics are to be clearly found in the document cited above. It is not the purpose of this document to give examples of that here, since I'm sure this is being done both in the oral and written discussion.

The Purpose of this Document

This document has been written late in the discussion after most comrades have already taken sides on the basis of the oral and written discussion within the party. What I have stated here, I am sure, speaks for a lot of comrades who have had to contend with this grouping for a whole period. What has been presented here can only begin to document a grouping whose interest is to bask in the most flattering aura possible. Sometimes they pose as the best implementers of the party's line (administrative efficiency). Currently they wish to be seen as the "official representatives" of the Maitan-Mandel-Frank tendency with politics as a subordinate consideration. There should be no reason for the existence of such groupings, when there are ways that comrades can present very fundamental criticisms of the party's work in a principled way. There are two basic problems with an unprincipled grouping. The first is that of what the party's line would be if such a grouping actually became the leadership of the party. What would the line of the party be if the FAPO grouping had become the leadership in 1971? Would it have been the line of Gregorich-

Passen? Of Tom Cagle? The line of the "Internationalist" Tendency? Which line is the true descendent of 1971 FAPO? The second problem is that an unprincipled grouping obfuscates clarity in a discussion. The Abern-Shachtman-Burnham grouping caused this problem in 1940. One part of the grouping had a strong defeatist line, one a defensist line, and one somewhat in between, on the question of the Soviet Union. The ambiguities which are the result of this are built into reports, documents, etc. This has also been the case in the discussion in Oakland-Berkeley, which a number of comrades have spoken to. This year the grouping has its own coordinator, Comrade Massey. Through his efforts, any embarrassing ambiguities, such as voting against each other on the various documents, should not occur, as it did in 1971. Comrades have also wondered why a minority interested in winning members to its views have submitted so little written discussion, based on the reports or comments of comrades in the various branches. The reason for this can only be understood if the nature of the minorities are clearly understood: they seek to keep any ambiguities within their ranks confined to

one branch, therefore it is necessary to centralize all contributions.

One final point. Whenever a party member objects to what they feel is an unprincipled, irresponsible, contemptuous, or disloyal act of the grouping, they always get a pat, "clever" answer. The grouping tries to compromise the party by provoking a formal disciplinary action. But, for the party, taking disciplinary measures is always a tactical question. The party always tries to handle such questions in the most patient manner, hoping to educate all or at least some members of an unprincipled grouping how to function correctly. The party can do this only by calling such misconduct by its real name. Hopefully, the members of this grouping will act as Leninists between now and the next convention—that is, submit to the rule of the majority and contribute their efforts as members of a united party. Hopefully they can be educated and regenerated in the spirit of principled politics. Whether or not this happens, other comrades should continued to be educated in this spirit.

July 24, 1973

LETTER TO THE SWP ON THE RESOLUTION
'THE GAY LIBERATION MOVEMENT AND THE
STRATEGY OF PARTY BUILDING'

Our resolution "The Gay Liberation Movement and the Strategy of Party Building" was submitted to the party as a resolution on the gay liberation movement. We are asking that it be discussed and voted on, and that the vote be for and against.

We support the draft political resolution approved by the Political Committee June 1973. To clarify the political resolution's position on the gay liberation movement we are submitting the following amendment to the draft political resolution for discussion and vote:

The paragraph on page 20 of the draft political resolution which contains the reference to the memorandum on the gay liberation movement adopted by the National Committee April 1973 ("We should continue to support . . . National Committee") should be deleted and the following paragraph should be added:

"At present there is no authoritative national action coalition and no central issue or focus of activity in the gay liberation movement although many gay groups

exist on a local level and a national date of action exists around the Christopher Street actions. We should look for openings in the gay movement such as the West Coast Lesbian Conference, the Christopher Street actions, the actions around Intro 475, etc., and intervene in them in accordance with our analysis of this radicalization and our general strategy of building the party through intervening in its component parts."

Vinnie Longo
Jo Della-Giustina
Kim Allen
Mike Priddy
Lori Adolewski
Salm Kolis
Helen Hollander
Pam Mills

San Diego

July 24, 1973

SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT ON THE ABORTION CAMPAIGN

by Susan LaMont, Lower Manhattan Branch, and Evelyn
Smith, Brooklyn Branch, New York Local

In order to bolster their claim that the Socialist Workers Party "stands at the head of a right opportunist current" in the world movement, the Internationalist Tendency, in their counter political resolution "The Building of a Revolutionary Party in Capitalist America" resorts to the use of distortions, misrepresentations, innuendos and in some cases, lies about the political positions and activities of the Socialist Workers Party.

The purpose of this contribution is to correct some of the falsifications about the SWP's positions on the women's liberation movement which are contained in the counter political resolution, and to help set the record straight about the abortion campaign. A more complete assessment of the experiences of the abortion campaign is contained in the contribution by Betsey Stone and Mary-Alice Waters entitled "The Abortion Struggle: What Have We Accomplished, Where Should We Go From Here?" (Vol. 31, No. 19.)

1. The Internationalist Tendency maintains that at some time in the past, the SWP used the formulation "self-determination for women" to show our support for the struggle of women for their liberation. This was, according to the IT, part of the SWP's "adaptation in practice to the petty-bourgeois ideologies of nationalism and feminism" (page 7, "The Building of a Revolutionary Party in Capitalist America") and an example of how the SWP "impressionistically extended its analysis of the Black movement to the women's movement." (page 8, *ibid.*)

They say: "Here is a sample of the analogy at work, taken from the party's de facto program (*Toward an American Socialist Revolution*, page 74): 'Equality is what the liberals want; self-determination is the revolutionary solution. For us, the same is true about the women's liberation movement.'" (page 8, "The Building".)

The IT neglects to quote the sentences which precede and follow this excerpt. Here is the full quote:

"Women are not fighting simply for that equality but fighting for liberation. It is like the difference, as Trotsky explained in discussing the national question, between fighting for equality and for self-determination. Equality is what the liberals want; self-determination is the revolutionary solution. For us, the same is true about the women's liberation movement. Equality is the liberal solution; liberation is the revolutionary solution. Women demand liberation from centuries-old bondage and oppression as domestic chattels. This liberation is our right—right now." (our emphasis).

This makes it clear that we are talking about *liberation* for women, not the right of self-determination. Self-determination is a scientific term which means the right of oppressed nationalities to take their destiny into their own hands, including the right to form a separate state. It does not apply to women, who are an oppressed sex.

2. The IT also states that the SWP at one time called for the formation of a women's party, but has simply

avoided raising it for tactical reasons. This charge is answered in Betsey Stone's contribution "The SWP's Position on a Women's Party" (Vol. 31, No. 25). Needless to say, it is completely false.

3. The IT falsifies the SWP's position on the Equal Rights Amendment. They say: "Regarding the E.R.A., the party has taken a stand which is only partially correct. It is necessary for the revolutionary party to stress not only legal equality but also the extension of protective legislation, to protect the interests of both male and female workers." (page 21, "The Building".)

The resolution *Toward a Mass Feminist Movement*, adopted by the SWP at our last convention, contains the following demands as part of the section titled "Economic Freedom":

"To assure full economic independence for women, we demand:

— passage of the Equal Rights Amendment. . . .

— the extension of 'protective legislation' . . . to cover men, in order to provide better working conditions for both men and women. . . ." (page 9).

In all the major pieces of literature printed by the party which have dealt with this question, the ERA is always raised in conjunction with the need to extend genuine protective legislation. The pamphlets *Sisterhood is Powerful*, *Women and the Equal Rights Amendment*, *Why Women Need the Equal Rights Amendment*, and the article "Questions and Answers on the Equal Rights Amendment" in *Feminism and Socialism* clearly outline the dual character of our approach to this question.

The Draft Political Resolution for the 1973 SWP convention says: "When the ERA first came before Congress in 1971, we were virtually the only tendency of the left that supported its passage. . . . Many of the so-called protective laws are used to discriminate against women. Those that are valid should be extended to men" (page 11).

This is, and has been for some time, the position of the Socialist Workers Party. We have argued and polemicized on the ERA with the Communist Party, the labor bureaucrats, and others who oppose passage of the ERA on the basis that it would eliminate protective legislation by explaining the need to both pass the ERA and extend real protective legislation. The IT's accusation that we had only a "partially correct" position is completely false.

4. The Internationalist Tendency says: ". . . the question of 'No Forced Sterilization' and the question of accessibility and cost of abortion and maternity care were de-emphasized out of existence." (page 21, "The Building".) WONAAC, correctly, focused on the repeal of all anti-abortion laws. The question of the cost of maternity care was never part of WONAAC's program or activity. The IT implies that it was at one time, and then subsequently "de-emphasized." This is false.

With regard to the question of the cost and accessibility of abortions, WONAAC maintained that the central obstacle to the wide availability of abortion was the fact that

it was *illegal*, and thus concentrated its fire on the need to repeal the laws which made abortion a crime. The debate in and around WONAAC over whether or not to adopt "Free Abortion on Demand" as the central demand of the abortion campaign, and the reasons why the SWP and WONAAC opposed this, are explained in the contribution to the current preconvention discussion by Betsey Stone and Mary-Alice Waters, "The Abortion Struggle: What Have We Accomplished, Where Should We Go From Here?"

What about the demand "No Forced Sterilization"? This formed an essential part of WONAAC's program from the very beginning, and the SWP supported WONAAC's policy on this issue. WONAAC understood that it was politically necessary to make it absolutely clear that the basis for the abortion campaign was the democratic right of women to decide when and if they will bear children—"The Right to Choose"—and that it had nothing in common with the population control advocates who supported abortion as a method of population control. This was particularly important in seeking the support of Black, Chicana, Puerto Rican and other women of the oppressed nationalities for the abortion campaign. The oppressed nationalities are the special target of various population control schemes, and in particular, of the practice of forced sterilization.

In addition, WONAAC wanted to bring to light, educate about, and mobilize opposition to, the practice of forced sterilization in the context of the abortion campaign. Forced sterilization did not, and could not have, become the focus for large-scale activity on the part of WONAAC. But it was a consistent part of WONAAC's educational campaign, and there were articles in the WONAAC *Newsletter* as well as a "Fact Sheet" put out on this question.

Many supporters of abortion law repeal did not believe that such a brutal and racist practice could actually be taking place. Others *agreed* with the idea of sterilizing women on welfare, women with more than a certain number of illegitimate children, etc. The Internationalist Tendency to the contrary, WONAAC has been the only organization in the abortion rights and women's movements to have raised the demand "No Forced Sterilization" in a serious, consistent fashion, despite its unpopularity in some quarters.

Recently, evidence of forced sterilization has received national attention, with the Alabama and North Carolina suits on behalf of Black women who were forcibly sterilized. New opportunities for WONAAC to educate around this practice have arisen, and WONAAC has taken and will continue to take advantage of them.

This is another aspect of WONAAC's record which should be pointed to with pride.

The Abortion Campaign

The Internationalist Tendency has nothing but contempt for the abortion campaign and the important role that the Socialist Workers Party played in it. They say that the abortion law repeal campaign is the "best example" of the "party's opportunist intervention into the sectoral movements without a class line." (page 10, *ibid.*)

They continue: "The abortion demand was invested with a transitional content, because it was felt that it would be very difficult to win, and that *if* it was granted, it

would result from a long struggle that would teach the movement the value of mass action. What happened instead was that the Abortion Coalition found itself defending semi-liberal abortion laws, petitioning for reform bills of liberal congresswoman Abzug, engaging in thinly disguised lobbying in Albany, and defending the Supreme Court against the Catholic Church." (page 11, *ibid.*)

They repeat their charges on page 21: "The party took the existing struggles around abortion and helped to organize a single-issue coalition, first around the repeal of all legislation on abortion, later, in fact, in defense of existing semi-liberal laws, and finally, in support of a bill by Congresswoman Bella Abzug.

"The possibility of an easy victory which would lead to the co-optation of the 'movement' was dismissed. . . . Lobbying at far away state capitals, whether with delegates of an allegedly massive demonstration or a few women, more and more the focus of the repeal campaign was turned away from mass actions, and toward the search for a legislative or judicial solution."

The Internationalist Tendency is saying: (1) we thought the demand for repealing the abortion laws was a transitional demand, or at least had "a transitional content," and would be difficult to win; (2) WONAAC defended "semi-liberal" abortion laws; (3) WONAAC petitioned for a "reform" abortion bill; (4) WONAAC engaged in lobbying, albeit "thinly disguised"; (5) WONAAC defended the Supreme Court against the Catholic Church; and (6) WONAAC turned away from mass action and sought a "legislative or judicial solution" to the abortion problem.

1. The right to decide when and if to bear children is a basic *democratic* right which has historically been denied to women. The SWP understands the important role that struggles around democratic demands can play in mobilizing people in action against the government and in raising consciousness about the nature of the capitalist system. They are an important component of our revolutionary strategy and program. We do not share the IT's opinion that struggles for democratic rights are "second rate" and feel no compulsion to call a democratic demand a transitional one, or to invest it with "transitional content," whatever that means.

Contrary to what the IT says, we felt that it would be possible to win victories in the abortion struggle and that this was one important reason to concentrate on this question. Here is how we analyzed it: "Victories around this issue (abortion) will be very important in showing the growing power of the women's liberation movement, in proving to masses of women that the feminist movement is serious, fighting around issues which are of concern to all women. A successful fight to make abortions available to all women would have a tremendously liberating effect and help to raise the whole movement to a higher level. It could serve as an inspiration and an example for struggles over other issues and enable the movement to take the next, powerful step forward around further demands." ("Towards a Mass Feminist Movement" page 18.)

The IT's concern that "an easy victory. . . would lead to co-optation of the 'movement'" and their assertion that activists in the abortion rights movement "became firmly convinced that the capitalist system was essentially 'good' and 'reformable'" (page 11, "The Building") has a familiar ring. It is nothing more than a rehash of the old ultra-

left formula that defeats are better than victories in radicalizing people. After all, defeats expose the "real" nature of the system, while victories simply create illusions and lead to co-optation. According to this infantile line of reasoning, it is incorrect to fight for demands that you might win. Simon-pure revolutionaries only raise demands that cannot possibly be met under capitalism. Therefore, instead of organizing a large-scale campaign around the demand for repeal of all abortion laws — one that had the potential for involving masses of women and men and winning a concrete victory — we should have organized small propaganda groups (which is all they would have become) around "Free Abortion on Demand" and the other demands of August 26, 1970. The IT is right — no "easy victory" lay at the end of this road! It would have been a dead-end, contributing to the isolation of the women's liberation movement. We rejected that perspective, and followed the method of the Transitional Program.

2. What about the charge that WONAAC "defended semi-liberal abortion laws"? We assume that this refers to the role that WONAAC played in helping to defend the New York abortion law against the "Right to Life" forces and their friends in the legislature who were trying to repeal this law.

The passage of the New York abortion law in 1970 was a tremendous gain for women. It meant, for the first time in American history, that women could get safe, legal, low-cost abortions. Over 500,000 women — 60 percent of whom came from other states — got abortions in New York during the first two years this law existed. This means, in human terms, that countless lives were saved and thousands of women were spared the anguish of unwanted pregnancy or butcher abortions. Should we have gone back to the days of back-alley abortions without a fight? Apparently the IT thinks so.

What would the political consequences of such a course have been? The reactionary opponents of abortion were focusing their efforts on the attempt to repeal the New York law — the struggle to defend it was becoming a national test of strength between the "Right to Life" forces and the pro-abortion movement. We knew — and so did they — that if they succeeded in repealing the New York law, it would represent a terrible defeat for the women's movement. It would have been much more difficult to win abortion law repeal in other states or nationally. Large numbers of women, who were inspired by the passage of the New York law and who felt that it was possible and necessary to fight for abortion in their state, would have become demoralized. If there had been no struggle to defend the New York law, the masses of women for whom the right to abortion is so important would have felt — and correctly so — that the abortion rights movement was not a serious movement struggling in their interests.

It was a real possibility that the New York law could have been lost. WONAAC understood this, and tried to mobilize the forces necessary to save it, and the SWP supported them in this effort. The biggest error that WONAAC could have made would have been to stand aside from this battle, to give up without a fight. As part of the leadership of WONAAC, we would have shared in the res-

ponsibility for politically miseducating the women's movement and contributing to a serious setback for the movement. We did just the opposite.

3. The alleged "reform bills" that WONAAC petitioned for was, as everyone knows, the Abortion Rights Act. (What were the other bills, IT?) If passed, it would *repeal*, not "reform," all the anti-abortion laws in the country. WONAAC helped draft the wording of this bill and it was introduced, under pressure from WONAAC, into Congress by Bella Abzug. On this point, the IT is simply echoing the criticism raised by the International Socialists who claimed that WONAAC would become tainted by supporting the ARA. Especially because Bella Abzug introduced it.

One way that abortion could have been legalized was through the passage of federal legislation to repeal the state abortion laws. That's what the ARA represents. Of course, in the never-never land inhabited by the IT, such practical considerations never arise because the struggle never gets to that point. In fact, it's not designed to.

WONAAC, in supporting the ARA, never placed any confidence in Congress. On the contrary, WONAAC organized its activities through large-scale campaigns of action independent of the Democratic and Republican parties and of the institutions of the government. WONAAC knew that this was the only way its goal could be achieved. Petitioning for the ARA, which was a regular but not central, part of the abortion campaign was one way of showing the mass support which existed for abortion law repeal.

4. One of the most serious charges raised by the IT is that WONAAC engaged in "thinly disguised" lobbying in Albany. Like the others, this charge is completely false, and is presented without one shred of evidence to back it up.

During the spring of 1972, and again in the fall election period, the overwhelming majority of organizations and individuals concerned with abortion wanted to concentrate their energies on lobbying in Albany to try to persuade the legislators not to vote for repeal of the New York law, and later to work for candidates who would vote the "right" way. We saw this repeated again in the winter of 1972-73 as preparations began to be made to lobby the new session of the legislature.

WONAAC was *the only* abortion rights organization to counterpose a strategy of mass independent action to this lobbying and election fever. The fact that WONAAC did not do lobbying and in fact opposed it as a strategy for the movement was well established throughout the abortion movement. The truth is that WONAAC was under constant attack from other abortion organizations for not participating in lobbying. Hardly a day went by without some other abortion organization calling up the WONAAC office and pleading with WONAAC to turn out its "troops" for one or another lobbying scheme. This WONAAC consistently refused to do.

After the near-repeal of the New York abortion law in the spring of 1972, an article appeared in *New York Magazine* called "The Case of the Missing Abortion Lobbyists" by Hope Spencer. This article reflected the thinking of a large sector of the abortion movement — its point was that the reason the New York law was almost lost

was that not enough lobbying was done. It contained a specific attack on WONAAC for organizing the May 6 demonstration instead of lobbying. In the June issue of the WONAAC *Newsletter*, WONAAC took up this question and answered it this way: "We should have no faith whatsoever in our ability to convince them (the legislators) of the justice of our demand. The only thing we can depend on is the power of women. There are no shortcuts to organizing women throughout New York State. What we need is a strong and independent movement of women united for the right to abortion." During this period, the May 6 demonstration organized by WONAAC was the only visible opposition to the Donovan-Crawford bill.

During the July 1972 national conference of WONAAC, lobbying and related issues were part of the debate that occurred there. Some people inside WONAAC had become upset that WONAAC refused to do lobbying or engage in electoral activity. In fact, several national coordinators and staff members of WONAAC resigned over WONAAC's refusal to carry out this type of activity.

During the fall of 1972, the election/lobbying fever hit again. Only this time, WONAAC was in a stronger position to present its mass action alternative, and began to assume a more and more central role in the fight to defend the New York law and in the national abortion rights movement. WONAAC's development during this period is outlined in the contribution by Comrades Stone and Waters. Again, the fall Tribunals which were held around the country were the only visible, large-scale abortion law repeal activities organized during the pre/post election period. They were extremely successful. The projected International Tribunal was to play the same role. In both cases these actions were *counterposed* to lobbying and electioneering.

5. The charge that WONAAC "defended the Supreme Court against the Catholic Church" reflects the same kind of thinking that sees something wrong in defending the New York abortion law against right-wing attack. WONAAC does not defend the Supreme Court as an institution of the government. WONAAC does, however, defend the right to abortion embodied in the January 22 Supreme Court

decision, and will fight any attempts to overturn that decision by the "Right to Life" forces or anyone else.

There is a tug of war going on now around the country between the reactionary forces who want to prevent the right to abortion from becoming a reality and eventually take away this right if they can, and women and women's organizations who are demanding the implementation of the Supreme Court decision. Should WONAAC stand aside from this struggle? Or does the IT think that the Supreme Court decision will be implemented without a fight? If so, *they* have illusions about the Supreme Court and the government that the newest abortion rights activists do not share. Or perhaps the IT doesn't think it is all that important to force the national and state governments, hospitals, etc., to make abortion available. Since they don't think that WONAAC should have defended the New York law or the Supreme Court decision, it certainly seems so.

6. Finally, the IT says that the abortion campaign "turned away from mass actions, and toward the search for a legislative or judicial solution." The truth is that WONAAC never relied on either the courts or legislative bodies to bring about abortion law repeal. It consistently organized activities aimed at involving the largest number of people possible in independent action against the capitalist state, around a concrete demand relating to the needs of the masses of women. At its conventions, in its *Newsletters*, in the ongoing debate within the women's movement, WONAAC polemicized against the liberals who saw lobbying and electioneering as the solution, against the counter-institutionalists, the ultralefts, the sectarians, and everyone else who sought to turn the abortion campaign away from the road of mass independent action.

Everyone in the abortion rights movement knows where WONAAC stands on the important question of "what strategy for the movement." Most importantly, the activists in and around WONAAC—the ones who supposedly became such firm supporters of the capitalist system in the course of this campaign—became convinced of the correctness of this class-struggle perspective. Many of them, in fact, joined the SWP and YSA in the course of this fight.

July 27, 1973

THE THORSTAD-GREEN COUNTERRESOLUTION: A POLITICAL STEP IN THE WRONG DIRECTION

by Fred Feldman, Brooklyn Branch, New York Local

Our party has an extraordinary record of achievement. Unlike any other revolutionary party in history, it has lived through 25 years without having a radicalization of our class to participate in. This has also meant a quarter century without the opportunity to carry out our goal, the overturn of capitalist society. It is a tribute to the leadership and ranks of our party that it has been able to maintain a revolutionary line, comprehending new phenomena and understanding how they fit into our fundamental goals. Throughout this quarter century, the party has been able to maintain its revolutionary course, rejecting sectarian, ultraleft, and reformist deviations.

This long delay in the working-class radicalization inevitably produced deep frustration in some cadres. Some reacted by blaming the party for the long delay. If the party would only desert the "petty-bourgeois movements" and implant the cadres in "key plants," we could turn the situation around and end our "isolation from the working class." This view ignores the fact that our relative isolation from the workers is political, and not geographic. That isolation can only be ended by the radicalization of the class itself, and not by on-the-job propaganda by the party. By its work in the key social struggles, the party is making a big contribution to the molecular radicalization of the class. In demanding that the party orient toward the industrial proletariat *right now* or be convicted forever of hopeless petty-bourgeoisification, these comrades present us with a mirror image of their growing doubts about whether the American workers are ever going to radicalize at all. The result of adopting their line would be a rapid sectarian degeneration, characterized by conservatism (and even cynicism) about the ongoing forms of the class struggle.

Their error is not the only one that can be made, however. It is also possible, because of the long delay in the working-class radicalization, to begin to view the existing forms of the radicalization as ends in themselves. We can fall into the error of viewing ourselves primarily as the "best builders" of the movements for social change and not as Trotskyists carrying out a systematic strategy aimed at building a revolutionary working-class party. The progressive character of all the different social movements can be identified directly with party tasks, leading to the conception that discrimination between them in the assignment of cadres is "unfair" or reflective of hidden "prejudices" against oppressed groups in struggle. The end result of such a conception is that comrades can lose sight of the relationship between our tactics and strategy, losing sight of ultimate objectives in their identification with day-to-day struggles as they exist around us. Their conception of the SWP could then be gradually transformed from that of a *revolutionary party* relating its activities in the present situation to its central goal, to a *radical organization* which sees its central task as building all struggles against social injustice.

In my opinion, the arguments made by supporters of

the Thorstad-Green counter-memorandum on the gay movement drift in the direction of the latter error. The party has been carrying out in the recent past large-scale interventions into the Black, Chicano, women's, and anti-war movements. The YSA has concentrated much of its attention on the campuses, where these movements have most generally had their most active bases and their left wings.

Recruitment has been a major goal of the party in these movements. However, this is not the only goal. The party viewed the Black, Chicano, women's and anti-war movements as social struggles with the capacity to directly challenge capitalist property and power and as movements capable of bringing key sections of the working class into motion, even if this did not happen overnight.

The Black, women's, and Chicano struggles raise minimum, democratic, and transitional demands which, taken as a whole, challenge the very existence of capitalist society. This challenge is not merely ideological, nor is it restricted to throwing into question capitalism's distorted norms of private life. These movements have the potential to mobilize millions in action with a revolutionary dynamic against the government and the capitalist state. Our participation in these movements, whether on or off campus, is part and parcel of our proletarian orientation and not an amendment or an exception to it. We are in these movements because we have concluded that they are part of the main highway to the American workers for the revolutionary party. If we did not view them in this way, our orientation to them would be qualitatively different. Their struggle would be no less just, their oppression no less severe. But their place in the party's strategy for overturning capitalism would be qualitatively reduced.

Contrary to the sectarians, we believe that large-scale implantation in the unions would be a diversion from the road to the working class, given the political passivity at the present time of the bulk of the organized workers. However, large-scale implantation of our cadres into social movements like the gay movement, progressive movements which are peripheral to the main course of the American revolution, would be no less a diversion. It would harm our party and not build it.

The problem our party faces is to dialectically combine these tasks: (1) systematic party-building activity focusing on the key issues of the class struggle; (2) recruitment; (3) deepening the impact of the party on the masses as a whole, especially the working class; and (4) deepening the impact and expansion of the radicalization as a whole, particularly with regard to the working class. The Black, women's, Chicano, and antiwar movements allowed a dialectical unity of these tasks.

Looked at from this point of view, there is no justification whatever for an intervention into the gay movement on the scale of our early work in the women's movement (or for such interventions into the Native American move-

ment or the welfare rights movement). There is no concrete evidence to date that the gay movement has the capacity to bring any significant section of the workers into struggle against the system, although it is quite likely that the working class as a whole (gay and straight) will become convinced of the correctness of the civil liberties demands of the movement. There is no evidence that the gay movement raises any demands which challenge the existence of the capitalist government, its repressive apparatus, or capitalist relations of production. It raises democratic demands of modest scope. Although these may or may not be granted under capitalism (and can only be *secured* by socialism), they do not directly confront the system as such. The party should fully identify itself with these demands, including carrying out balanced interventions on a local level, consistent with our priorities. The National Committee memorandum, contrary to what has been charged in the heat of debate, specifically provides for such interventions, including the allocation of cadres to such struggles where the branches think that it is possible and useful. It does not, of course, project

the party taking central organizational responsibility for the gay movement, which clearly flows from the wide range of tasks imposed on the party by the Thorstad-Green proposal. Nor does the party make gay liberation work a major priority for the party in the coming two years, which the counter-memorandum clearly does.

The party branches can be counted on to carry out their responsibilities under the memorandum, as they have faithfully carried out party decisions in the past. Charges that supposedly "anti-interventionist" or "antigay" branches (the terms "antigay" and "anti-interventionist" seem to be used almost interchangeably by some backers of the counter-memorandum) will sabotage party policy are slanderous in fact and should be dropped. The discussion in the party on this question is not between "progay" and "anti-gay" comrades or between old and young comrades or between "sexually liberated" and "sexually repressed" comrades. It is a discussion of what is, at present, a nuance of difference over the character of a proletarian strategy in the ~~coming~~ two years.

July 28, 1973