

14 Charles Lane
New York, N.Y. 10014
September 19, 1977

TO ORGANIZERS AND NATIONAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Dear Comrades,

As reported at the convention, some significant changes are taking place in the Socialist Labor Party. A section of the SLP, including part of its leadership, appears to be breaking with its long tradition of abstentionism and extreme sectarianism.

One of the first indications of this was a May, 1975 Weekly People editorial which hailed "the Vietnamese victory"--a big step forward from the SLP's previous view that the Vietnam War was simply a conflict between capitalist and "Communist" imperialisms in which socialists could take no side.

Since then, articles have appeared in support of the ERA, Sadlowski, gay rights, affirmative action, and the anti-nuclear power movement. Longer articles have attempted to deal with how socialists should function in the labor movement. Recently a debate has been going on in the letters column of the Weekly People on whether or not socialists should call on a capitalist government to ban fascist activities.

These changes in the Weekly People, which can only be fully appreciated by contrast with the Weekly People of a few years ago, reflect a broad internal discussion in the SLP. At its 1976 convention the SLP withdrew its constitutional provision prohibiting SLP members from belonging to "pro-capitalist" unions except where necessary to hold their jobs, abolished its constitutional provision against participating in demonstrations, and ratified the change in its position on Vietnam. The discussion continued at the June, 1977 convention, taking in such questions as the energy crisis, and support to "national independence movements in the underdeveloped world."

This discussion is still in its beginning stages, and no clear politically defined currents have yet emerged.

The political discussion is occurring in the midst of an organizational crisis. A section of the SLP's members are aging and no longer able to sustain activity. Although the SLP's past activity has focused almost exclusively on their election campaigns, the party was only on the ballot in 10 states in 1976, and some SLP members have questioned whether or not they ought to conduct any sort of ballot drive for the 1980 elections.

Nevertheless, the SLP has succeeded in recruiting some younger activists in some parts of the country. One of them, Jim Brinning, from New York, attended our convention with the approval of the SLP national office. The New York SLP has recently assigned some of its activists to participate in NOW, NSCAR, the gay and lesbian rights coalition, and the National Committee to Re-Open the Rosenberg Case.

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SLPers are discussing questions that we have a lot to say about. Some SLPers consider the Soviet Union capitalist, while others share our view on the deformed and degenerated workers states. Articles in the Weekly People indicate that some SLPers are grappling with the need for a transitional method. The right of self-determination of nations is being discussed in the SLP, as is Carter's deportation policy, and work in unions. Many SLPers will undoubtedly be interested in our views on the Black struggle, women's rights and a host of other questions.

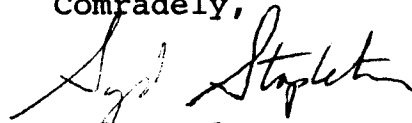
In New York one of our branches plans to invite SLP members to a short class series on the transitional program. The idea of inviting SLP members to classes on topics of interest to them may be helpful in other areas as a way of initiating discussions.

Branches should subscribe to the Weekly People and try to meet SLP members in their areas. (A one-year subscription costs \$4.00 and is available from: Weekly People, 914 Industrial Ave., Palo Alto, California 94303.) SLP members may be interested in participating in formations like NSCAR or NOW, which will increase the opportunities for political discussion and collaboration.

We are interested in political discussion with the largest possible number of members of the SLP. We want to focus on talking politics and avoid getting involved in or at all encouraging organizational disputes in the SLP. We will want to carefully think through any proposals that we make to SLP members.

I have been assigned to this area by the Political Committee, and would like to get reports on contacts we have with SLP members across the country.

Comradely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Syd Stapleton". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Syd Stapleton