

POLITICAL COMMITTEE MEETING No. 16, April 12, 1979

Present: Barnes, Britton, Clark, Horowitz, Jaquith, D. Jenness, Kramer, Morell, Ring, Sedwick, Seigle, Stone, Waters

Guests: Brundy, Gannon, Garza, Jones, LaMont, Leonard, Miah, Prince, Rodríguez, Zimmermann

Chair: Waters

AGENDA: 1. Plenum Reporter
2. Membership
3. World Movement
4. Control Commission Report
5. Pittsburgh-Morgantown District

1. PLENUM REPORTER

Barnes reported on proposal that Miah be reporter for Organization and Labor Report to plenum.

Motion: To approve.

Carried.

2. MEMBERSHIP

D. Jenness reported on recommendation of Capital District branch that W.S. be readmitted to the party.

Motion: To concur with the recommendation of the Capital District branch.

Carried.

D. Jenness reported on recommendation of Portland branch that F.A. be readmitted to the party.

Motion: To concur with the recommendation of the Portland branch.

Carried.

D. Jenness reported on recommendation of Portland branch that B.C. be readmitted to the party.

Motion: To concur with the recommendation of the Portland branch.

Carried.

3. WORLD MOVEMENT

(Baumann, Feldman, and Pérez invited for this point.)

Horowitz reported.

Feldman reported.

Discussion

4. CONTROL COMMISSION REPORT

Ring presented written report of Control Commission.
(See attached.)

Discussion

Motion: To adopt the general line of the proposals of Part II and circulate the Control Commission report to the National Committee.

Carried.

5. PITTSBURGH-MORGANTOWN DISTRICT

Seigle reported on proposal to approve Pittsburgh-Morgantown District bylaws as adopted by the joint membership meeting of the Pittsburgh-Morgantown District March 25. (See attached.)

Motion: To approve bylaws as adopted by Pittsburgh-Morgantown District joint membership meeting.

Carried.

Meeting adjourned.

PITTSBURGH-MORGANTOWN DISTRICT BYLAWS as approved by the joint membership meeting of the branches in the Pittsburgh-Morgantown District, March 25, 1979

1. The governing body of the Pittsburgh-Morgantown District of the party shall be the district executive committee.
2. The district executive committee shall be elected by a delegated district convention where three or more branches exist in the district and shall be subordinate to the district convention. The district executive committee may be elected by a joint membership meeting when two branches exist in the district and shall be subordinate to the joint membership meeting.
3. It shall be the duty of the district executive committee to direct the activities of the district and to act with full power for the district between district conventions or joint membership meetings.
4. District conventions or joint membership meetings shall be held at least once a year.
5. Special conventions or joint membership meetings may be called by the district executive committee or on demand of the branches representing one-third of the district membership.

Control Commission Report

At a November 30, 1978, meeting of the Political Bureau, then a subcommittee of the Political Committee, Comrade Doug Jenness reported that the national office had received a number of letters which raised questions regarding the norms of the party's provisional membership category. The letters were prompted by a decision of the Upper West Side branch of the New York Local to terminate the provisional membership of Hedda Garza.

The Political Bureau voted that "the Control Commission be asked to review the party's norms in implementing our provisional membership category."

The committee also designated Harry Ring as the fifth member of the Control Commission. The four members elected by the 1977 party convention are Virginia Garza of Los Angeles, Wayne Glover of San Francisco, Helen Scheer of Minneapolis, and Larry Stewart of Newark.

During the National Committee plenum in December 1978, the Control Commission had a number of meetings. All members were present except Comrade Glover, who was unable to attend the plenum.

Larry Stewart and Harry Ring were assigned by the commission as a subcommittee to interview Hedda Garza; Michael Maggi, the Upper West Side organizer; Linda Jenness, then the New York Local organizer; and other comrades whose views on either or both aspects of the question would help to illuminate the commission's work.

All of the interviews were taped and copies sent to the commission members.

The commission gave extensive consideration to the issue of Comrade Garza's provisional membership being terminated. There had been a significant division in the branch on the question, and other members of the New York Local had voiced concern. More than a dozen letters were written to the national office or Control Commission expressing the view that the branch action had been unjustified and/or improper. They contended Comrade Garza was well qualified for membership, that she had been treated unfairly, and that her democratic rights had not been respected.

The chronology of events immediately preceding the termination of Comrade Garza's provisional membership was as follows. A former member of the party who had been part of the Internationalist Tendency split, she had been accepted into provisional membership by the Chelsea branch of the New York Local on Sept. 11, 1978.

That same night, as part of a reorganization of the New York Local, the Chelsea branch was dissolved and its members reassigned to other branches. Comrade Garza was assigned to the Upper West Side branch.

There, seven weeks later, on Oct. 30, the branch voted to terminate her provisional membership. The vote was 24 in favor of termination, 12 opposed, and one abstaining. The branch acted on the basis of a motion brought in by its executive committee. The vote in the executive committee was eight in favor of termination, one opposed, and one abstaining. The branch heard majority and minority reports from the executive committee.

The executive committee motion was sparked by a dispute which had occurred in the branch the previous week relating to Comrade Garza's branch assignment. Several weeks previous Comrade Maggi had proposed to her that she work with Columbia University YSA members in a campus antinuclear organization, an assignment with which Comrade Garza felt greatly pleased.

Shortly after, he asked her to instead take two other assignments. One was to seek support for Leo Harris, the Miami comrade whose frameup case was then about to come up for trial. The second was to handle the emergency campaign initiated on behalf of Héctor Marroquín at the point when the INS was about to rule on his deportation.

Comrade Garza strongly objected to being taken out of the antinuclear assignment. She told Comrade Maggi she was convinced that she was being withdrawn because Jean Savage, the citywide antinuclear director, was opposed to her having the assignment and that Savage's opposition stemmed from purely subjective considerations. She also felt Comrade Maggi was hostile to her and that this was also a factor in the proposed assignment change.

After an apparently heated exchange, she agreed to accept the Marroquín and Harris assignments and Maggi then brought the proposal to the branch meeting. This evoked an extensive discussion, with several comrades arguing that because of her particular qualifications, Comrade Garza should not be removed from the antinuclear assignment. Initially, Comrade Garza did not participate in the discussion. After a period she took the floor to state that she felt she could do all three assignments. After further discussion, a motion was adopted to refer the entire matter to the executive committee.

In his report to the branch the following week, proposing that Comrade Garza's provisional membership be terminated, Maggi said that the assignment dispute culminated a body of experience which persuaded the executive committee majority that Comrade Garza was so hostile to the party leadership, and so deeply distrustful of it, that she could not be effectively reintegrated into membership.

He asserted she had repeatedly engaged in corridor discussion attempting to persuade comrades that she was the target of subjective treatment by branch and local leaders and that she had been particularly unrestrained in her accusations regarding the alleged ulterior motivation for the proposed change in her branch assignment.

He cited, additionally, a conversation between Comrade Garza and another branch member, Steffi Brooks. The conversation, he argued, indicated the extent of Comrade Garza's alienation from the party leadership generally.

Comrade Brooks, he said, had told him that she had had a conversation with Comrade Garza about the issue of her assignment change. Comrade Brooks said she had advised Comrade Garza that if she felt she was being treated unfairly by the branch leadership, she should discuss the problem with Linda Jenness, the local organizer.

When Comrade Garza responded that she felt this would not be fruitful, Comrade Brooks suggested various na-

tional party leaders she might talk to. In each case, she said, Comrade Garza gave one or another reason why she would not be able, or wish to, discuss with the particular comrade.

Comrade Maggi said that if there were not a single party leader that Comrade Garza felt she could discuss a problem with, this indicated the extent of her hostility to the leadership.

He proposed that her provisional membership be terminated, but that the branch seek political collaboration with her.

In a minority report from the executive committee, Comrade Diane Phillips argued that the termination motion was hasty and ill-advised. She felt there had been subjectivity on both sides and that Comrade Garza was a talented and valuable revolutionary who should not be dropped.

In a letter to the branch, Comrade Garza asked that she be permitted to participate in the discussion before the branch acted. Such a motion was made on the branch floor but defeated. After some four hours of discussion, the branch voted to terminate Comrade Garza's provisional membership.

The branch action posed a number of questions, including the following:

- Did it have the right to terminate before the three-month provisional membership period was up?
- Did the branch violate Comrade Garza's democratic rights in not permitting her to be present to respond to the accusations against her?
- Even assuming the branch had the full right to terminate her provisional membership before the three months were up, did it exercise poor judgment in doing so?
- Was the branch in fact mistaken in its judgment that Comrade Garza should not be a member?

The Control Commission considered these questions and more in seeking to arrive at a judgment regarding the branch action and, also, in thinking through more adequately the meaning of provisional membership.

The formally approved proposal establishing the category of provisional membership is sketchy.

The motion to establish the category was adopted by a plenary meeting of the National Committee January 3, 1976. It simply stated that each applicant for membership, on majority vote of a branch, would be accepted into provisional membership for a period of three months and then the branch would decide, in accordance with constitutional provisions, if the applicant should become a member. It stipulated that provisional members would have the right to attend branch meetings with voice, and to receive internal bulletins. That was all.

A brief political motivation and a few more specifications were offered in a January 16, 1976, report to the Political Committee by Doug Jenness. (See attached text of plenum motion and PC report.)

The purpose of provisional membership, the report said, "is to provide a bridge to draw people closer who are

considering joining, but aren't necessarily willing to make that final commitment. It will help ease people into party membership . . . and give people an opportunity to learn from the inside the full meaning of membership."

The report specified that it apply to *all* applicants for party membership.

It further specified that branches shall vote on applications for provisional membership "in the absence of the applicant."

To return to the case of Comrade Garza.

The first issue that the Control Commission had to address itself to was whether or not the branch action violated any of the party's norms and if Comrade Garza's democratic rights had been transgressed. The commission finds no evidence that the branch acted improperly on either count.

A member of the party cannot have their membership terminated without charges, trial, the opportunity to be heard, and, if judged guilty, the right to appeal.

But a provisional member is not a member of the party and cannot be extended the same rights. We believe that in applying the provisional membership concept, the fundamental distinction between a member and an *applicant* for membership has become blurred. Yet the distinction is decisive. If a provisional member—who does not pay dues, cannot vote, cannot hold party office—had the same rights as a member, the concept of membership obviously would be negated.

In Comrade Garza's case, three issues were posed in terms of procedure.

The first is whether the branch had the right to terminate her membership before the three-month period expired. While neither the National Committee motion nor the PC-approved Jenness report deal explicitly with this question, it seems apparent that the branch does and should have such a right.

Example: A branch accepts someone into provisional membership and then finds the applicant is violating our antidrug policy. Clearly the branch has the right to terminate the provisional membership at the next meeting. A branch cannot vote a provisional member into full membership before the three months are up. But if it feels there is good and sufficient reason to terminate a provisional membership before the three months, it can and should have the right to do so.

Was the Upper West Side branch executive committee obligated to notify Comrade Garza of the specific reasons it was proposing to terminate her membership? Was it a violation of her rights, or that of the branch, that she was not present when the discussion on the executive committee proposal was acted on?

In a situation where an executive committee is recommending not to accept someone into provisional membership, it is a matter of concrete judgment if the person should be informed of the reasons. But, again, it is not a trial to remove someone from membership, where it is

obligatory that a written copy of charges be given the person.

Should Comrade Garza have been invited to the meeting where her provisional membership was discussed? In such a situation, it is a matter for the branch to determine whether or not it wishes to hear from the person involved before discussing and acting on the motion to terminate provisional membership. But the PC-approved report by Comrade Jenness specifies that applications for provisional membership shall be acted on in the absence of the applicant. The reason, of course, is to ensure that there be no inhibition of the right of the membership to discuss so important a matter.

Certainly, if this policy applies in acting on a motion to approve an applicant, it is equally necessary with a motion to terminate an application.

Having considered the procedural questions involved, what then about the substantial issue? Did the branch make a political mistake in terminating Comrade Garza's provisional membership?

Before considering that question, the Control Commission wishes to express an opinion on a related question—an opinion admittedly not based on direct involvement with the issue.

That question is whether the branch acted wisely in terminating Comrade Garza's membership before the three-month period was up.

In considering this, a brief review is necessary.

From the outset, a number of comrades in the New York Local were convinced Comrade Garza could not be successfully reintegrated into the party.

During the IT faction fight in the early 1970s, as Comrade Garza freely concedes, she was among the most virulent of the ITers in her hostility to the party leadership. In addition, many comrades were convinced, she had been an inveterate cliquist who worked incessantly to surround herself with a circle of newer members on an antileadership basis.

In early 1976, a year and a half after the July 1974 IT split, Comrade Garza applied for readmission to the party. As with all other former members of the IT, it was proposed that she work for a period as a sympathizer and her application would then be considered.

But, after a short period, she dropped away.

A few months later, in April 1976, she participated in an act of public hostility to the SWP. This was a press conference organized by the Revolutionary Marxist Organizing Committee. RMOC included people who left with the IT and people who left the party earlier. It is led by Milt Zaslow, a former Cochranite.

Despite the sharpest advance protest from the SWP and opposition from the leadership of the Fourth International, Comrade Garza acted as a spokesperson for the grouping at a New York press conference.

Shortly after, she joined RMOC. She broke with it in November of 1976 when it openly declared its view that the SWP was a non-Trotskyist, reformist organization.

In March of 1977, she applied again for readmission into the SWP.

It was proposed by the New York Local leadership that she work for a period with the Chelsea branch and, if the branch considered the experience positive, it would act on her application for provisional membership.

A year went by, during which the branch leadership was not persuaded that she should be recommended for provisional membership. According to Comrade Maggi who was Chelsea branch organizer during nine of the twelve months, her activity was sporadic and she continued, in informal discussions, to voice cynicism and hostility to the local leadership of the party.

Finally, Maggi said, in March of 1978 in response to Comrade Garza's insistence that her application be acted on, a motion was brought into the Chelsea branch by the executive committee that she *not* be taken into provisional membership, but that the branch should seek continued political collaboration with her.

That motion was carried 35 to 1.

Then, all agree, Comrade Garza intensified her effort to be readmitted to the party. She increased her activity measurably, improved her financial contribution and, in the view of comrades, moderated her expressions of anti-leadership views.

A number of comrades in the Chelsea branch, including several newer ones, became persuaded she had now earned the right to be readmitted and should be accepted into provisional membership. Finally, this past September, Comrade Maggi proposed to the Chelsea executive committee that she be accepted into provisional membership. The executive committee recommended this to the branch, which approved the proposal without discussion or dissent.

Comrade Maggi told the Control Commission that he and other leading comrades were still not persuaded that Comrade Garza could be successfully reintegrated into the party. But, he said, the issue had become increasingly prominent among branch members and there was the reality that a number of comrades including valued new members were convinced she should be in the party. It was for these reasons only, Maggi said, that the proposal to bring her into provisional membership was made. He added that the motion itself was precisely worded, and deliberately minimal. It stated that her application should be accepted because "it would be in the best interest of the party" to do so.

Maggi said that in his view, the majority of the branch would not have voted for the motion on any other basis.

But while the motion was patently less than an endorsement of Comrade Garza, the thinking of the executive committee in making the motion was not explicitly stated to the branch. It has since been argued that it was unprincipled for the branch leadership to recommend someone for provisional membership who they were not persuaded would make a good member.

In our view, what the executive committee did was quite permissible. If, on a question like this, a section of the branch is not persuaded, and is not likely to be without a certain body of experience, then it is legitimate to seek to resolve the problem by going through the necessary experience.

But having decided to do so, in our view, it would have been much better to have fully spelled out the motivation so that all would understand. And then it would be necessary to bend over backwards, so to speak, to assure that comrades could have the fullest possible opportunity to draw conclusions from the experience.

The executive committee should have explained to the

branch why it thought she should not be a member, but that it was ready to open all doors and let the branch's experience determine the outcome.

Similarly, in our opinion, there might have been more clarity and less division in the branch if it had waited the full three months before acting on the application.

The point is made, in response, that the discussion which swirled around the issue and occupied so much of the branch's attention would have escalated further if action had been delayed.

In our view, this could not be avoided and the discussion, in fact, escalated anyway.

But, again, having said all this, was it incorrect not to bring Comrade Garza into membership?

There is no question that this is a matter for the branch to decide. The constitution specifies that applications for membership must be acted upon by the branch of which the applicant will become a member. And there is good reason for the constitutional stipulation. It is the branch that will work with the prospective member and it is the branch that is in the best position to determine if the applicant will prove an asset to the party.

In the case of a former member, the branch decision would be subject, constitutionally, to approval by the National Committee. The NC delegates this authority to the PC. The PC may in one or another particular case elect not to approve a former member recommended by the branch.

But it does not have the authority to instruct a branch to accept someone into membership.

If it felt a branch had made a mistake of sufficient magnitude, it could, of course, recommend that it reconsider. And the Control Commission could, where it deemed proper, make such a recommendation to the National Committee. But still, the final decision on accepting someone into membership would rest with the branch. The only exception to this is in cases of groups or organizations which meet the qualifications for membership. There the constitution authorizes the National Committee to accept them en bloc and assign them to branches.

In its initial discussions, the Control Commission was generally of the view that it could not arrive at an opinion on whether or not Comrade Garza should in fact have become a member. We felt we could not go much beyond the questions related to procedures and norms and to determine if there had been any violation of these.

But as part of our investigation, we conducted two interviews with Comrade Garza. These taped interviews totaled six hours and afforded her the opportunity to present her point of view quite extensively.

On the basis of those interviews, we believe we were able to arrive at an opinion on whether or not she should have been taken into membership.

We concluded that regardless of the difference we might have with the branch on the general handling of Comrade Garza's application, the final decision to terminate her provisional membership was politically in the best interest of the party.

We do not base this opinion on what other comrades told us happened, or on what other comrades think of Comrade Garza. We base ourself on *her* account of what happened, *her* description of the events leading up to it, and *her* account of her political evolution over more than a decade.

Like the branch majority, we believe that she is the victim of deep-rooted subjectivity. And, perhaps without even fully realizing, she evinces a rather astonishing degree of political cynicism.

Perhaps the most revealing thing to emerge from the six-hour interview with Comrade Garza was the extent of her subjectivity.

Throughout, she insisted that the main reason she had been dropped from provisional membership was because of an unreasoned vendetta conducted against her by Michael Maggi, the branch organizer. He had, she insisted, a phobic hatred of former IT comrades, he focused this hatred on her, and this was the root of all her problems.

This was not politically persuasive.

To begin with, she volunteered the opinion that apart from his "phobia" about her, Comrade Maggi was in fact an unusually good organizer. (This view was expressed by others, including comrades critical of the branch action.)

Her comments about Comrade Maggi can only be characterized as ugly and vitriolic. And, in many respects, her assertions were patently contradictory.

To bolster her thesis that the problem was Maggi and Maggi alone, she suggested that the leadership of the New York Local, and the national party, were not really aware of what he was doing.

This seemed difficult to accept in light of her assertions about the scope of Comrade Maggi's alleged campaign against her.

For instance, asked why a majority of the branch voted to terminate her provisional membership, she responded, "I think a sort of an hysteria was whipped up. I think Maggi deliberately whipped up an hysteria."

The commission queried Linda Jenness, then the local organizer, to determine if the question of Comrade Garza's membership had been left in Comrade Maggi's hands and if, in fact, the local leadership was unaware of what was happening.

Comrade Jenness said that from the outset, Maggi had conferred regularly and frequently with her on the question and that Comrade Garza had come to her several times with her unhappiness about the situation.

On several occasions, Comrade Jenness said, she had given informational reports to the local executive committee.

In sum, she said, Comrade Maggi had proceeded in full consultation with her and that the local leadership was fully informed throughout.

We checked through about the point in Comrade Maggi's report to the branch regarding Comrade Garza's conversation with Steffi Brooks. If what Maggi had reported was correct, we felt it was a weighty point for the branch to consider in determining if Comrade Garza could be reintegrated into the party.

This was the assertion that when Comrade Brooks suggested a series of central party leaders to discuss her problem with, Comrade Garza responded in each case with why she would find it difficult or impossible to talk with them.

It seemed to us that if a former member feels that alienated from the party leadership, it hardly bodes well for successful reintegration.

When we questioned Comrade Garza about this, she insisted that Maggi had not reported the conversation

correctly. She had merely told Comrade Brooks that she didn't think it advisable to go to the central leadership with what was essentially a dispute over a branch assignment.

We interviewed Comrade Brooks. She said that, excepting details, Comrade Maggi's account of the conversation was correct and Comrade Garza's recollection was not.

(Comrade Brooks's testimony was given added weight by her expression of strong personal sympathy for Comrade Garza and her statement that she had sided with her in the assignment dispute. She also said that while she had voted to terminate Comrade Garza's provisional membership, she felt it was a mistake to act before the three months were up.)

Comrade Garza offered the commission her opinion of why Comrade Brooks had a different recollection of their conversation than she did: "I think Michael broke her spirit and used her."

According to Comrade Garza, Maggi's power went beyond Comrade Brooks.

She told the commission that the night her provisional membership was terminated, Comrade Maggi had packed the branch meeting with party members who work in various departments at the national headquarters.

The Control Commission regarded this as a serious charge.

Certainly every branch member had a full right to be there and participate. Further, while their hours often prevent nationally assigned comrades from attending branch meetings, it is politically entirely correct that they should make a special effort to attend meetings where matters of special importance are coming up. Where necessary, national departments have adjusted their schedules so that comrades could attend, for example, a preconvention discussion, or a meeting where convention resolutions and delegates were being voted on.

Any suggestion that these comrades do not have the fullest right to participate in branch life to the extent that they are able contradicts our conception of what a party staff is.

Needless to say, it's assumed that comrades with sufficient consciousness to qualify for the party staff are not going to pop in on branch meetings to debate and vote on issues they're unfamiliar with.

And it would be an astonishing, grave situation if a branch organizer could simply phone West St. and pack a meeting with uninformed staff workers ready to vote as directed.

The commission was provided a list of West St. comrades who participated in the meeting. We checked with each of them to determine what their attendance record and general level of branch participation had been prior to the night of voting on Comrade Garza's membership.

These were the results: Twenty-three members of the Upper West Side branch work at West St. Of these, 13 attended the meeting where the vote was taken. Five of the 13 comrades said they attended branch meetings regularly. Two said they attended "fairly regularly," five "occasionally," and one, "not at all."

One of the 13 is a member of the branch executive committee. Two are members of the branch finance committee and one of the forum committee. Another was branch recruitment director at the time.

It seemed evident to the commission that these comrades had a full moral right to vote.

And we could not help but feel that Comrade Garza's conviction that an SWP meeting could be packed in this way was a gauge of her cynicism about the party.

We pursued further her assertions about Comrade Maggi. Assuming, we asked, he had this "obsession" about her, how was he able to get away with all the alleged dirty tricks?

Comrade Garza offered further explanations.

The branch executive committee, she asserted, was "hostile" to her.

Why?

There were on the executive committee, she responded, "two comrades who had been in the Workers League. There was a comrade who had left for a whole number of years during the faction fight and felt quite guilty about having left. And there was another comrade in exactly the same category. So my feeling was I had four people on that exec who were sort of trying to prove they were more loyal than the loyalists and who were very resentful of me and were feeling hostile to me during this entire period and who didn't know me at all. . . . So they brought in a negative recommendation to the branch."

Discussing Comrade Maggi, she displayed the most unrestrained subjectivity.

"I see Michael as being extremely manipulative and disturbed on the question of my membership," she said. "I won't discuss his other psychological problems."

But she went on to volunteer further opinions: "I think he had an obsession on the IT question. And I think—me being who I am and the role I play in the IT, and being aggressive and so forth—here he was, an organizer in New York, and he had no power over an ITer before. And here she is, the bad lady herself. He can decide whether I get back in the party or not."

Her "psychological" estimate of Comrade Maggi included really odious gossip.

She told the commission, "He told comrades he lost a lover because of the IT fight. . . . The guy has a very strong hostile feeling to the ex-IT."

Which comrade told her this?

"More than one. . . . Maybe the one told some others and then a couple of others mentioned it."

What about the local organizer, Comrade Linda Jenness. Was she oblivious to this campaign of persecution against her?

Initially, she said no. "Linda had no way of knowing what he was doing. . . . It was more a hands off policy, that the branches have a right to decide on a provisional member."

But returning to the subject in the second interview, she said, "I think Linda was aware of it. . . . The few times I went to her, she tried to play her neutral thing. . . . I don't think she was neutral. . . . At best, I think she was remiss. . . . And at worst she was glad there was that attitude because she was enjoying what was happening. . . . That was another possibility. I don't know which was true."

What about the National Committee? We asked if she thought it too was willing to stand by and permit the victimization of a former IT comrade.

Her view of the NC was, at best, qualified. Initially she said, "In general, I think they [the former IT comrades] feel they've been treated very well. . . . But there's a special thing around me. That I've become the symbolic bad lady of the IT, so to speak, and that I'm taking the

punishment for everybody else.”

There were, she said, “A few National Committee members who knew there was something ‘rotten in Denmark.’” But for the rest of the NC, “It was almost like a game. Let’s see how much we can wear you down.”

“There was an almost arithmetic relationship,” she added, “between how long somebody had been in the party and how long they hung on trying [to get back in]. I suppose it’s a question of how much investment you had put in. . . . How much crap you were willing to take.”

Former ITers, we asked, were forced “to take crap”?

“Yes. . . I think they had to prove they were superactivists even if they were 46 years old. . . . I think the proof of the pudding is that there are some 20-odd people, I believe, who are back in. And there were originally 130 in the tendency. And 60, some odd, or 70, had reapplied and reapplied seriously.”

Since she believed the NC had not dealt fairly with the former IT comrades, we asked, did she think she could get a fair and objective hearing from the Control Commission?

Here too, she had serious reservations.

To begin with, she challenged the propriety of Virginia Garza, an elected member of the commission, dealing with her case.

Why?

Because, she said, for a number of years Virginia had been her sister-in-law. And, she added, because Virginia is a friend of Michael Maggi’s.

“If this were a bourgeois court,” she said, “if Virginia were on the jury, I would ask her to disqualify herself because I was her sister-in-law. She was very hurt and upset about her brother when the marriage fell through.”

When the Control Commission began its deliberations, the members knew that Virginia Garza had been Comrade Hedda’s sister-in-law. But we proceeded on the assumption that if for any personal reason Comrade Virginia felt she could not function objectively in this particular case, she would have been responsible enough to say so and, so to speak, disqualified herself.

To presume otherwise would have meant not only that Virginia should be questioned, but all the other members of the commission as well, to assure that they might not have some subjective consideration that would interfere with their proper functioning. It would mean, in sum, that a convention could not really elect a Control Commission. With each new case it would have to determine, as with a jury, who would qualify to sit on the case and who should be disqualified.

Nor was Comrade Garza particularly confident about the rest of the commission. She did feel that all were comrades of good repute, but did recall that Comrade Wayne Glover “was very upset during the faction fight.”

But more than this, she said, the commission was simply under too much pressure to be able to render an objective finding in her case.

She said: “I think there’s a danger there would be enormous pressure not to do this [find in her favor] because I’m one person, not particularly important, and because of the problems it would cause. . . . It could cause a big ruckus in the party. . . . I’m sorry, but I’m not going to lie. . . . People are human beings. A Control Commission is made up of comrades who the majority of the people in the party believe are beyond reproach in terms of their ethics, their honesty, and so on. And I believe that’s generally true. . . . But they’re not saints. They’re people.

And they’re under pressure too.”

The cynicism reflected in these remarks—the suggestion that Marxists really have no higher degree of consciousness and capacity for objectivity than others—by itself raises a serious question as to how successfully Comrade Garza could be reintegrated into the party.

But the point goes even deeper.

Consider:

Comrade Garza is convinced she was dropped from membership because the branch organizer had a subjective hostility toward her.

She believes the branch executive committee went along with this because of a variety of “guilt feelings.”

The branch majority was “whipped into an hysteria.”

A meeting was stacked with nationally assigned comrades who marched in to vote as instructed.

The local organizer turned her back on the situation.

The National Committee stayed out of it.

The Control Commission is too subject to pressure to render an objective consideration.

Doesn’t this add up to total contempt—conscious or not—not only for a leadership capable of such offenses but, equally, for a membership that tolerates such a leadership?

This cynical view of the party membership is not unrelated to Comrade Garza’s deepgoing subjectivity.

Recalling something which she said Comrade Maggi had said to her which she found highly objectionable, she said, “Frankly, I considered that a provocation. And I have a very bad temper. I sat opposite him and felt like I wanted to leap and grab his throat. . . . And I contained myself.”

At one point she recalled the branch meeting at which the fight erupted over her assignment. Several people, she said, spoke about her qualifications for the particular assignment she wanted to do. Others, she said, complained that the time of the branch was being wasted.

Weighing the incident in retrospect, she said, “I should have gotten up and I should have said, ‘Forget it, it doesn’t matter. I’ll take whatever he gives me.’ But, you know, you’re sitting there and it makes you feel good that people are upset and that they want you to do this work, and your ego’s in sad shape. . . . So I didn’t get up and say cease and desist.”

Still, the commission had to weigh the possibility that such deeply subjective responses were the product of a conviction—justified or not—that she was in fact the victim of a serious injustice in her effort to win readmission to the party.

The evidence she volunteered strongly suggested otherwise.

To demonstrate this, we think it is worth reviewing some of what Comrade Garza told us about her political evolution. What emerges is a consistent pattern of subordination of political convictions to subjective considerations and organizational grievances.

Comrade Garza joined the party in 1958. An effective speaker and energetic campaigner, she was on several occasions a candidate for office. Prior to joining the party she had political experience in the political milieu of the CP. She is not an inexperienced person.

In the party, during the 1960s, she became increasingly critical of the party leadership, although she indicated no significant political difference. Her principal concern, she told the commission, was with what she saw as the

development of a "Barnes clique" in the leadership.

Others were similarly persuaded and the individuals involved ultimately coalesced into the group, For a Proletarian Orientation Tendency (FAPO).

In 1971, FAPO submitted a political resolution to the party during the preconvention discussion. Comrade Garza told the commission that when she read it she told Bill Massey, one of the FAPO leaders, that she considered it a "piece of workerist shit."

But, she added, some further material was incorporated which improved the document.

And, she explained, Bill Massey called her from the West Coast to urge her to vote for the FAPO documents. She indicated her reservations and, "He said, 'Well, can you vote for *them*?' 'Them' meaning the Barnes clique. And at that point, yes, I was very much caught up in it. And I said, 'Well, I don't know. Maybe I'll have to.' And he was very persuasive and finally in the New York branch I raised my hand for the FAPO thing."

In New York, she said, there was no organized FAPO group. But she had built a group around herself, mainly members of the Long Island YSA, where she lived at the time.

When the Internationalist Tendency, the successor of FAPO, emerged, she joined it. She explained to the commission why and how she did so.

Initially, she said, she did not want to join because she disagreed with the IT's guerrilla warfare line on Latin America. However, she accepted an invitation to go to Canada where, in consultation with leaders of the International Majority Tendency, the IT was formed.

She recalled the situation there: "We had a big fight on whether or not we could have reservations on some of the positions and still be in the tendency. And the decision of the IMT was, no, you couldn't express those reservations. So then you're sort of caught in between. I supported the IT political resolution and I supported the European resolution. But I didn't support the Latin American resolution. So what I should have done, of course, I should have spoken for the political resolution of the IT, and I should have voted for the European document and I should have abstained—I would have abstained on Latin America at that point.

"And I should not have aligned myself with either the LTF or the IMT."

"But," she added, "there was a sort of a question that people, everybody was looking for a side and for a family. . . . It was a mistake. Of course, it was a mistake. But I resisted for a very long time."

Then, she said, a document by Ernest Mandel arrived. She read it, "And it was exactly what I needed to give me the excuse, the possibility of joining the IMT."

Joining the IMT despite her differences with the key plank of its platform, Latin America, she found that having "a side," a "family" was not all that happy a situation.

She was persuaded, she told the commission, that the IT in general and herself in particular, had been "used" and "deceived" by the IMT.

Asked how she felt she had been "used" by the IMT, she offered as a principal example that she had been pressured into giving the report on the IMT Latin America resolution at the December 1973 SWP special convention even though she disagreed with the resolution.

"They wanted me to do the Latin America thing," she said. "And I said, 'This is too much. I don't want to do it. You know I have disagreements with it.' . . . And they pressured me and they pressured me. And I finally gave it and it was terrible."

When the IT split from the party occurred in 1974, Comrade Garza again subordinated a political concern to an organizational one.

When the IT found itself outside the SWP, she explained, it immediately divided into three groups. One, called the IT New Faction, was led by John Barzman. This grouping argued that the SWP remained a Trotskyist party and that the IT members should do whatever was necessary to get back into the party. There was another group, mainly in Los Angeles, led by Milt Zaslow, who had left the party in 1953 and was hostile to Barzman's position.

And a third group was formed, led principally by Comrade Garza and Bill Massey. This group, she said, agreed with Barzman's estimate of the SWP and the importance of being back in.

But, she said, they formed an opposing group for two reasons. One, she said, was that the Barzman position represented an about-face for the faction and time was needed to convince the membership it was correct. Equally important, she stressed, was that she and Massey strongly felt that the IT should not settle for less than "collective reintegration" back into the SWP.

Why was this important enough to form a separate grouping on?

"The comrades were afraid that if we applied separately, some people would not be taken in . . . specifically, me and Massey. . . ."

"So," she continued, "the IT was split, essentially by Barzman. . . . And then we drifted apart."

Barzman and a number of others applied and were readmitted to the SWP. Massey, Garza said, was so convinced that he wouldn't be taken back in that he instead joined the Workers World Party. She maintained her Long Island group and the people around Zaslow formed the RMOC.

Then, she said, Zaslow came to New York for a discussion and won her group away from her. They set up an RMOC chapter which she did not join because she felt it was "nonsense" and that they all belonged back in the SWP even though she had "very strong reservations" about her chances of being readmitted.

Instead, she applied for readmittance to the SWP. But, as mentioned earlier, after a short time she dropped away.

"I could not make it psychologically," she told the commission, "the stone wall I felt I was faced with. Partly my own guilt feelings, partly the response I got . . . I was very demoralized and felt I would never get back in."

She began to collaborate with her former group, now in RMOC.

In April 1976, they asked her to participate in a public press conference which would "defend" the IT from charges of terrorism by a hireling of right-wing Rep. Larry McDonald. The charge of IT "terrorism" had been leveled against the SWP to prove that it was not telling the truth when it asserted that it opposed individual terror.

The issue is a key one in the SWP suit against the government. For another group to unilaterally hold a press conference on a charge directed against the SWP constitutes a grave interference with the right of the party to

determine its own strategy in the case and could prove damaging in court.

But, Comrade Garza said, "Zaslow called me up and convinced me it was correct to do it. That we had to defend ourselves and the International. . . . And the party wasn't going to defend us."

She agreed and called Jack Barnes to invite the SWP to participate in the press conference. Barnes, she said, called back and told her our attorneys advised us not to join in. And, she said, Barnes added, "I strongly advise that you not do it either."

She said John Barzman and Berta Langston both called and urged her not to do it. Someone who she thought was from the United Secretariat of the Fourth International called and, she said, told her, "I just want to know the facts. I'm not going to come to any judgment now."

"An hour or two later, from London," she said, "Tariq Ali calls up. . . . He said, 'OK, good. Have the press conference and I want to give you some advice on it. Tape it . . . so there's no question of what you said. . . .' He gave me all kinds of advice and he said, 'Good luck' and he hung up."

"So far as I was concerned," she added, "I wasn't in the party. I was very bitter against the party because we had been thrown out. I wasn't trying to get back in the party at that point . . . so we went ahead and had the press conference."

(Later, she said, Comrade Ali told her he had not favored holding the press conference but felt she was going to do it anyway and so offered some advice on how to go about it.)

Shortly after the press conference, Comrade Garza said, she joined RMOC.

At the time, she said, she still felt the SWP was a Trotskyist party and that all the former ITers should be back in. And, she emphasized, she was convinced from the outset that RMOC did not share this view, even though it then declined to state its position.

Finally, some six months later, when RMOC finally stated its position openly that the SWP was non-Trotskyist and reformist, she broke with it and persuaded the remaining members of her New York group to do likewise. She and a few others applied for admission to the SWP.

Comrade Garza summed up her political experience since the time she first became critical of the party leadership.

"I really think," she said, "that the differences I held then, legitimately—if I had not believed there was a Barnes clique and if I had not had the organizational differences that I had—could have taken the form of a contribution to the discussion, with certain tactical differences at that point."

"The whole thing got blown up," she added. "By that time the whole factional situation was so heated up. . . . There are a whole lot of psychological factors. . . . The whole Barnes clique business which went on from three, four years before. You're convinced there's this Barnes clique. . . . And then political differences come up and you tend to exaggerate the differences. And then there's an international faction fight and you tend to line up, because it's easier to have a big brother and because everybody else in the goddamn world is lining up. And sometimes I think maybe I wanted to get out of my marriage and there was no way I was going to break up that marriage unless I did

the one unholy thing—something naughty to the party; right?"

Comrades may enquire why we have dwelt so extensively on Comrade Garza's political biography and her views of the past, including the obviously personal thoughts she volunteered.

We believe that consideration of her political evolution helps substantially in clarifying the problem. It's not a matter of "raking up" someone's past political errors, or penalizing them for their past. If the party had such an approach, obvious it would not have accepted back into membership other former IT comrades.

But a person's political evolution can and does shed light on their present. From what she told us, we are persuaded that Comrade Garza's present difficulties with the party stem from the same kind of mistakes she made earlier. Her present conduct is *consistent* with her previous role. It could only muddy, not clarify, the issue to "put aside" the past.

Comrade Garza fully persuaded the commission that politically, she wanted to be back in the party. Yet her own account of her effort to do so shows that at each step of the way, she was unable to subordinate organizational and personal grievances, real or assumed, to that overriding political objective.

And, from her account, this was totally consistent with an entire pattern of political behavior over the years.

Because of organizational concerns (the "Barnes clique") she found herself in FAPO, a group she had significant political disagreements with. Similarly, she joined the IT with which she had even bigger differences. And after the split, she broke with the Barzman group, with whom she says she agreed that the IT had to find its way back to the party.

Then she joined RMOC, which she says she knew was anti-SWP, again subordinating politics to organization.

Her story is almost like a textbook case of the sorry results of this approach to politics.

It would be politically wrong for a branch to ignore such salient political facts.

Similarly, a branch has the right—and responsibility—to weigh an applicant's capacity for the kind of objectivity necessary to function as a member of the party team.

With new, previously apolitical applicants, this often cannot be adequately judged. Provisional membership can help determine this. But even then, it can be inconclusive and the benefit of any reasonable doubt should certainly go to the applicant.

But in the case of former members and people coming to us from other tendencies, the party is in a better position to weigh and judge. For the benefit of the party it should do so. This in no way casts any reflection on people in these categories. It is, simply, a political approach to a supremely political question. That is, who shall be a member of our party.

In the particular case of Comrade Garza, it is not a matter of someone with political differences that would be incompatible with membership. But on the basis of its extensive discussion with her, the Control Commission is persuaded that the Upper West Side branch displayed correct political judgment in deciding that Comrade Garza should not become a member. Membership could only exacerbate the difficulties that became so acute even while she was a provisional member.

A January 3, 1976, plenary meeting of the National Committee adopted the following motion:

"To establish the category of provisional membership. Each new applicant for party membership, upon being approved by a majority vote in the branch to which they are applying (or by the Political Committee in the case of members-at-large) will become a provisional member for a period of three (3) months. Provisional members will have the right to attend branch meetings with voice and to receive internal bulletins. At the end of the three-month period of provisional membership, the branch (or the Political Committee in the case of members-at-large) will decide, according to the provisions in the constitution, on the applicant's membership.

"This decision is to become effective at the time of its publication by the Political Committee in the Party Builder."

In a brief report to the Political Committee January 16, 1976, Comrade Doug Jenness outlined implementation of the motion.

Provisional membership, the report said, was intended to facilitate the opportunities which lay ahead for recruiting workers to the party.

The report noted that such recruitment possibilities are not yet widespread and pointed to one of the reasons for this.

"There's still resistance," the report explained, "because it's a big step to join our organization which is a cadre organization and is different from any other kind of organization that people are familiar with."

"The purpose of provisional membership is to provide a *bridge* to draw people closer who are considering joining, but aren't necessarily willing to make that final commitment. It will help ease people into party membership, to help them overcome their doubts, and give people an opportunity to learn from the inside the full meaning of membership."

Some specifics were dealt with.

The report said: "On implementation we propose that provisional membership shall be universal, i.e., that it apply to *all* applicants for party membership including members of the YSA."

The report stipulated that "the branch will decide by majority vote, in the absence of the applicant, whether or not to accept a person as a provisional member. When the three months are up the branch will vote again, in the absence of the provisional member, as required by the constitution, whether or not to accept that person into membership."

Concerning the rights of provisional members, the report stated:

"Provisional members will be allowed to attend branch meetings with voice and receive bulletins, but will not have the constitutionally defined responsibilities and privileges of members."

It noted that provisional members "can't cast decisive vote in meetings . . . can't run for the executive committee, won't pay initiation fees or dues. . . ."

The concluding point of the report stated:

"A key aspect of the implementation of this program is the education of provisional members. Especially impor-

tant in this regard is for the branch leaderships to organize this education so that the greatest amount of individual attention is paid to provisional members. This may include small classes and/or assigning comrades to work with specific provisional members."

Such an education process is essential if the applicant is to comprehend just what kind of a party we are in the process of building, and why this particular kind of a party is the key to the victory of the coming American revolution.

In 1965 our party convention adopted a major resolution, "The Organizational Character of the Socialist Workers Party." It spells out in a concrete way why a democratically centralized, politically homogeneous party of disciplined, educated and totally committed cadres must be built if we are to win the working class to our revolutionary program and defeat the reactionary forces arrayed against us.

The resolution states:

"Its [the party's] organizational form is intended to serve the central aims set forth in our program of abolishing capitalism and reorganizing America on a socialist basis. Only a combat party of the Leninist type is capable of organizing and leading the working class and its allies to the conquest of power in the main fortress of world imperialism. Confronted as the people are by the most powerful and ruthless ruling class in the world, the party of the American revolution must be conceived and constructed as a cohesive and disciplined combat organization. That is why our party has sought to base itself on the tested and proven Leninist rules of organization, summed up in the concept of democratic centralism."

If we are to build that kind of a combat organization, it means that in considering whether or not to accept an application for membership, we should be weighing the question: Will this be a comrade we can be confident of in a combat situation?

Deciding whether or not to admit applicants into membership in the Socialist Workers Party is one of the most important political decisions branches make. Each time a branch acts on a membership point, it carries the responsibility of upholding and defending the political and organizational concepts of the party. It is not a decision that should be made lightly.

Comrade Jenness's report to the PC motivating the provisional membership category focused on its central point, namely, to facilitate the recruitment of workers to the party.

But having said that the primary function of provisional membership is to help the applicant determine if he or she wishes to become a member of the party does not imply that the party no longer needs to determine if it wants the applicant to become a member.

Nor does it, in some way, imply that our standards, criteria, and norms for membership have been relaxed.

Provisional membership, the report emphasized, gives the prospective member the opportunity to get to know the party better. But it would be quite foolish if the party did not also utilize this period to better determine if it wants the applicant to become a member.

Comrade Jenness made the point that provisional mem-

bership would give workers the opportunity to better decide if they want to become members of "a cadre organization."

That's the essence of the matter and it should not be lost sight of. We are trying to make it easier for workers to join our *cadre* organization. And it's still that—a cadre organization. In a period where there are greater prospects for recruiting workers, we try to utilize maximum flexibility in winning them to our movement, educating and integrating them. We may make a conscious decision that we will take workers, or others sometimes, into the party with a minimum education in our program and we will continue the process of educating and winning them after they are formal members.

But the objective remains the same: To recruit and develop worker Bolsheviks.

We are entirely confident this can be done. We have no paternalistic notions that workers, somehow, are less willing or able to become professional revolutionaries—Trotskyist cadre.

We have not revised our concept of the proletarian combat party and all that membership in it implies. We have simply taken certain tactical steps to facilitate the entry of workers into the party—nothing more and nothing less.

But to have the kind of flexibility of tactical approach to recruitment demands the clearest understanding of what the party is all about and the kind of a party we are determined to build.

When we first began discussing the provisional membership proposal and the turn into industry, a few comrades expressed the view that when we recruit workers, we cannot expect from them the same level of activity and commitment as we now have. *The very opposite is true.* As we develop cadres of worker-Bolsheviks, they will demand greater seriousness, greater professionalism, greater discipline, and greater commitment. If that were not true the very concept of a vanguard proletarian party would be in question. And, for that matter, so would the future of the American revolution. Nothing less than a steeled and tempered party composed in its majority of worker-Bolsheviks will topple U.S. capitalism. (To get an idea what such a party will be like, it's worth looking back to the early Minneapolis branch and its role, not only in the Teamsters, but in the life of the party. The politically hardened, totally committed worker-Bolsheviks of that branch were a mainstay of the party in its fight to establish itself in the face of enormous obstacles.)

The worker-Bolsheviks in the party will insist on a maximum of ideological and political clarity, as well as a maximum of political homogeneity. Among the things needed to move further in that direction is much greater consciousness in dealing with applications for membership.

We think this is true in respect to all aspects of recruitment. That is, applicants with no previous political background, YSAers, former members reapplying, and former members and supporters of other political tendencies.

This means thinking through in a more concrete way the meaning of the threefold constitutional proviso governing who shall be *eligible* for membership. Namely, "Every person who accepts the program of the party and agrees to submit to its discipline and engage actively in its work shall be eligible." (We stress the word "eligible" to point up the fact that meeting these three criteria does not ensure

that an applicant will become a member. It is a criteria to be used by a branch in considering if a person should become a member.)

On what basis does a branch decide if an applicant should be accepted? There is and should be but a single consideration: Will the applicant's membership contribute to the building of the party? No other consideration—including the desires or needs of the individual—can be permitted to substitute for this decisive consideration. Otherwise, criteria for membership becomes subjective and apolitical and the character of the party can only suffer from this.

A subjective approach to an application for membership has occasionally been indicated in branch proposals to the PC recommending approval for readmission of a former comrade. Such letters will sometimes suggest that it would be "bad" for the comrade personally if he or she was not readmitted to the ranks of the party.

Or, that it would be "good" for the comrade to be readmitted.

Certainly, as socialists, we do not have a cold-blooded indifference to such matters. But they cannot be a criterion for deciding on an application for membership. For a movement such as ours, the criteria cannot be whether it is "good" or "bad" for the applicant. Only whether or not admitting an applicant will be a positive step for the party.

While the basis for determining membership must be political, there is, obviously, no fixed measuring stick for determining who "accepts" our program. Program can't be boiled down to a series of planks in a platform. And even if it could, it would still remain to be determined what constitutes "acceptance"—agreement with 51% of the planks? 90% 100%?

Similarly with agreement to accept discipline and be active. Intent is certainly essential. But it's not always sufficient. The branch must weigh whether or not the individual can and will do so to a degree that justifies admission to the party.

In sum, each individual case must be determined in the concrete. In some instances the party will decide that someone with significant political disagreements on particular questions will make a contribution to the movement that outweighs the disagreement. Particularly if there is the prospect that political discussion and debate within the framework of common activity will eliminate the difference.

In other cases, an applicant might be rejected because differing views would prove incompatible with successful integration. Thus, in each case, the basis for judgment is not fixed. But in all cases, it is *political*.

It should be noted here that the criteria for determining who should become a member are more stringent than determining who shall remain one.

To safeguard the democratic rights of the membership, we have developed strong, clear standards regarding what constitutes the basis for ending someone's membership. Here, the weighting is on the side of the individual. Within the framework of loyalty and discipline, the development of the broadest political differences are permitted.

And, despite our view of what membership should mean, people will sometimes remain in the party for an entire period even though their activity and support for the organization has declined to a minimum.

But, pointing to the presence of such individuals within the party cannot be used to justify taking in someone with

similar disagreements or limitations, be they lesser or greater. This applies in terms of an applicant's political views and the extent to which they are in harmony with those of the party, as well as the individual's capacity to integrate into a party branch and become part of the party team.

In the case of someone with particular differences, it also means the capacity to recruit to the party not on the basis of their particular view but strictly on the basis of the party's program.

Additionally, in acting on an application for membership the branches have both the right and the responsibility to consider the stability of the person involved.

There are comrades who hold the view that the party is not composed of doctors and we're not qualified to judge personal stability and, besides, in this society, we're all a bit odd anyway.

The first point is clearly a fact, and the second may well be. But both are beside the point.

Certainly, in approaching this aspect of the question a branch has to strive to exercise a maximum of good judgment and, if you will, common sense. We are not interested in any more than we need to know about an individual in a personal sense. But insofar as it may affect a person's capacity to function in the organization, we have to be concerned and must arrive at a judgment.

And the fact is that regardless of some protestations, we do so all the time, not only with applicants for membership but with members too. In trying to determine the capacity of a comrade to contribute to a leadership team, be it a branch exec or the National Committee, we don't proceed purely on the basis of the most general political criteria. To one degree or another, we take into account self-discipline, ability to work with others, etc.

In attempting to judge applicants in this regard we have to bear in mind that in many cases we don't know the individual well and have to be cautious in arriving at such judgment. Such caution is not simply a matter of fairness to the individual but is obviously beneficial for the organization. But having said all that, a branch can still conclude in one or another specific case that while a particular applicant genuinely accepts the program and is sincerely ready to abide by discipline and work actively, they may not be able to do so. True, this may be hard for the individual, but it is necessary for the good and welfare of the party.

Similarly, in weighing an application, it is entirely legitimate to consider modes of personal conduct and dress.

Here too, no moral judgment is involved. In seeking to build a proletarian party that is prepared to stand up to the pressures of bourgeois society, we have a big job in combating the false ideas and deepgoing prejudices generated by the ruling class. To the extent we can focus on the bigger questions, not the lesser ones, we are more effective.

Far better to be able to persuade a contact about our views on religion, race, the family, women's rights, gay oppression, etc., than to have to deal with a prejudiced reaction to the undue length of someone's beard or totally unconventional garb.

And we must consider if someone's insistence on an "alternate life-style" is not, in actuality, an expression of petty-bourgeois hostility to, and prejudice against, the working class.

Sometimes people who are just beginning to radicalize will be attracted to individual forms of rebellion, including the "countercultural." But it should be different with someone who is informed about the party and its program. In such a case, insistence on unorthodox dress and behavior assumes a political character. Attempting to seek an "alternative life-style" is an expression of middle-class ideology and of prejudice against all of society's seeming "squares"—that is, essentially, the working class.

One question on which we can use more clarity concerns our attitude toward religion and towards members of our party holding religious beliefs.

The basic Marxist view of religion is, of course, well established. As scientific materialists, we stand opposed to all forms of mysticism, including religion.

And while we fully support freedom of religion—the right to believe or not believe as one chooses—we expose and combat the reactionary political and social role of the organized church.

Naturally, we recognize that some new members will come to us without having totally shed off religious belief. And we will not permit that to be an unnecessary barrier to recruitment. But that doesn't mean we don't see such religious beliefs as a problem in making that new recruit into a Marxist. It only means we will carry on the necessary educational process inside the party.

But active commitment to one or another church should definitely be regarded as a barrier to membership. The aims of the church and the party are diametrically opposed and, given the best of intentions, there is no way anyone can reconcile the two.

We think all of these considerations apply even more for former members who want to rejoin.

A number of letters written to the Control Commission have posed the question: What are the rights of a provisional member?

One comrade put it this way: "In a situation where questions are being raised about whether they [provisional members] should be continued or dropped, no 'formal' charges can be brought against them. Therefore, they can't defend themselves in front of the branch. They also do not have the same right of appeal as full members. . . .

"In my opinion, it's not enough to say that when anyone is being considered for membership that person cannot attend the branch meeting and participate in the discussion. Sure, I agree with that, but . . . it's simply too rigid a formula and if allowed to stand as it is would seriously contradict the system of democratic norms we provide our members."

First, in this regard, we should consider Comrade Doug Jenness's report to the PC. The formal approval by that body gives the report, in all aspects, the full force and effect of party policy.

The report establishes, first of all, that a provisional member is *not* a member and does not have any of the constitutional rights of a member. On consideration, it should be apparent that this is as it should and must be. There is no meaningful way that nonmembers can be afforded the same norms as members. In a Leninist party, democracy and centralism are indivisible. Members assume certain obligations and in return, are guaranteed certain rights.

For example, no member can be expelled from the party without formal charges, a trial, and a majority decision by

the appropriate body. And they are guaranteed the right to appeal any trial findings to a higher body, up to and including the national convention.

But there is only one basic decision the party can make about a nonmember. That is, quite simply, whether or not they should become a member. Nothing more or less.

And how can a provisional member be assured the right to be present when their application for membership is being discussed? The constitution specifically bars an applicant for full membership being present when such discussion and vote occurs.

What is involved in this constitutional stipulation—and policy stipulation for provisional members—is not simply to assure an atmosphere where the membership can discuss freely before taking a vote, although that's an important enough reason.

But, additionally, except for at-large members, applications for membership are decided by the branch in which the applicant will be a member. No one else can decide except the branch. No higher body can accept anyone into the party (except in the constitutionally stipulated cases of fusions with another group). A higher body can set aside the decision of a branch if it acted wrongly in ending a person's membership. And higher bodies can have opinions, advice, recommendations, on acceptance or rejection of membership applications.

The only limitation on this basic Leninist right of a branch is the constitutionally stipulated provision that a branch cannot accept a former member back into membership without the approval of the National Committee. But even there, while the National Committee holds what might be called veto power on former members, it cannot reverse the decision of a branch *not* to take such a person into membership.

Does this then mean that provisional members have no rights? No. We are not an irrational sect, and our concern is for winning members, not turning them away. This doesn't guarantee that a given branch will not act unwisely, or even unjustly, in a particular case. Although, frankly, our impression is that the errors tend to lean in the direction of extending the most generous good will to anyone who states that they want to be a member.

Provisional members whose applications are rejected obviously can address themselves to higher bodies of the party. And our politics and norms assure that such communications will not be treated with indifference or hostility. But, of course, the branch decision must have full force and effect.

We might say at this point that we fully agree with the Political Committee decision that there be no exemptions from the category of provisional membership. Such exceptions can only suggest we have different criteria for different categories of applicants. (A new worker applicant must go through a provisional period, but a student member of the YSA need not. A new applicant must meet the proviso, but someone who left the organization need not.)

Further, we believe the provisional membership procedure has particular merit in terms of former members and applicants coming from other political tendencies.

But there may be misunderstanding as to why the PC decided provisional membership should apply to these categories.

Some months ago, one comrade wrote to the national

office, suggesting that we consider not applying the category to former members who left for "personal" rather than political reasons.

The comrade wrote that such applicants already know what the party is and don't need a period to get better acquainted. The requirement of provisional membership for this category, the comrade wrote, "almost looks like a penalty period."

We think this is not fully thought out. To begin with, it would be quite difficult to determine who fits into the quite broad and sometimes elusive category of having left for "personal reasons." Leaving the party is rarely a purely "personal" as opposed to political reason.

Furthermore, it really isn't so that former members already know the party and therefore have no need for provisional membership. Or, at least, it's true only in a general sense.

For example, anyone who dropped out a year or two ago—that is, prior to the turn toward industry—will be coming back to a very different party. We owe them the opportunity to get better acquainted with what the party is doing today and to judge closer up what they think of the party's present political perspective, one they might have missed the entire discussion of.

Similarly with comrades whose "personal" reasons are actually political. A sense of discouragement about the party's prospects. A lack of the political perspective needed to maintain a level of commitment and activity commensurate with membership. Inadequate grounding in our program and theory without which no comrade can sustain activity over a period of time. The pressures of a petty-bourgeois environment, etc.

In such cases, it is added reason for a comrade to have a period of time to determine more adequately if they have resolved the particular problems that led them to leave.

There is another category of reasons for a person leaving the party which is mistakenly described as "personal." This is when someone chooses to resign rather than face charges and possible expulsion for violation of discipline.

For example, if someone is caught stealing money from the party and resigns rather than be expelled, that obviously is not a personal reason and would be carefully weighed in considering a person's application for readmission.

But there is another important nonpersonal "personal" reason which comrades sometimes tend to view with greater tolerance. This relates to someone who resigns rather than be expelled for violation of our drug policy.

Failure to give the most serious consideration to this in weighing an application for readmission can only be interpreted as reflecting a lack of clarity on the political importance of our drug policy and the need for its strictest enforcement.

Our 1977 convention reconsidered and reaffirmed our drug policy, focusing on the impression current then, that the government had eased up on enforcement of marijuana laws and that in a number of states such laws had been made more minimal.

Acting on a Control Commission recommendation, the convention agreed there had been no change in the objective situation that in any way justified a relaxation of our position that use of illegal drugs is incompatible with membership.

In considering any application for membership it must

similar disagreements or limitations, be they lesser or greater. This applies in terms of an applicant's political views and the extent to which they are in harmony with those of the party, as well as the individual's capacity to integrate into a party branch and become part of the party team.

In the case of someone with particular differences, it also means the capacity to recruit to the party not on the basis of their particular view but strictly on the basis of the party's program.

Additionally, in acting on an application for membership the branches have both the right and the responsibility to consider the stability of the person involved.

There are comrades who hold the view that the party is not composed of doctors and we're not qualified to judge personal stability and, besides, in this society, we're all a bit odd anyway.

The first point is clearly a fact, and the second may well be. But both are beside the point.

Certainly, in approaching this aspect of the question a branch has to strive to exercise a maximum of good judgment and, if you will, common sense. We are not interested in any more than we need to know about an individual in a personal sense. But insofar as it may affect a person's capacity to function in the organization, we have to be concerned and must arrive at a judgment.

And the fact is that regardless of some protestations, we do so all the time, not only with applicants for membership but with members too. In trying to determine the capacity of a comrade to contribute to a leadership team, be it a branch exec or the National Committee, we don't proceed purely on the basis of the most general political criteria. To one degree or another, we take into account self-discipline, ability to work with others, etc.

In attempting to judge applicants in this regard we have to bear in mind that in many cases we don't know the individual well and have to be cautious in arriving at such judgment. Such caution is not simply a matter of fairness to the individual but is obviously beneficial for the organization. But having said all that, a branch can still conclude in one or another specific case that while a particular applicant genuinely accepts the program and is sincerely ready to abide by discipline and work actively, they may not be able to do so. True, this may be hard for the individual, but it is necessary for the good and welfare of the party.

Similarly, in weighing an application, it is entirely legitimate to consider modes of personal conduct and dress.

Here too, no moral judgment is involved. In seeking to build a proletarian party that is prepared to stand up to the pressures of bourgeois society, we have a big job in combating the false ideas and deepgoing prejudices generated by the ruling class. To the extent we can focus on the bigger questions, not the lesser ones, we are more effective.

Far better to be able to persuade a contact about our views on religion, race, the family, women's rights, gay oppression, etc., than to have to deal with a prejudiced reaction to the undue length of someone's beard or totally unconventional garb.

And we must consider if someone's insistence on an "alternate life-style" is not, in actuality, an expression of petty-bourgeois hostility to, and prejudice against, the working class.

Sometimes people who are just beginning to radicalize will be attracted to individual forms of rebellion, including the "countercultural." But it should be different with someone who is informed about the party and its program. In such a case, insistence on unorthodox dress and behavior assumes a political character. Attempting to seek an "alternative life-style" is an expression of middle-class ideology and of prejudice against all of society's seeming "squares"—that is, essentially, the working class.

One question on which we can use more clarity concerns our attitude toward religion and towards members of our party holding religious beliefs.

The basic Marxist view of religion is, of course, well established. As scientific materialists, we stand opposed to all forms of mysticism, including religion.

And while we fully support freedom of religion—the right to believe or not believe as one chooses—we expose and combat the reactionary political and social role of the organized church.

Naturally, we recognize that some new members will come to us without having totally shed off religious belief. And we will not permit that to be an unnecessary barrier to recruitment. But that doesn't mean we don't see such religious beliefs as a problem in making that new recruit into a Marxist. It only means we will carry on the necessary educational process inside the party.

But active commitment to one or another church should definitely be regarded as a barrier to membership. The aims of the church and the party are diametrically opposed and, given the best of intentions, there is no way anyone can reconcile the two.

We think all of these considerations apply even more for former members who want to rejoin.

A number of letters written to the Control Commission have posed the question: What are the rights of a provisional member?

One comrade put it this way: "In a situation where questions are being raised about whether they [provisional members] should be continued or dropped, no 'formal' charges can be brought against them. Therefore, they can't defend themselves in front of the branch. They also do not have the same right of appeal as full members. . . .

"In my opinion, it's not enough to say that when anyone is being considered for membership that person cannot attend the branch meeting and participate in the discussion. Sure, I agree with that, but . . . it's simply too rigid a formula and if allowed to stand as it is would seriously contradict the system of democratic norms we provide our members."

First, in this regard, we should consider Comrade Doug Jenness's report to the PC. The formal approval by that body gives the report, in all aspects, the full force and effect of party policy.

The report establishes, first of all, that a provisional member is *not* a member and does not have any of the constitutional rights of a member. On consideration, it should be apparent that this is as it should and must be. There is no meaningful way that nonmembers can be afforded the same norms as members. In a Leninist party, democracy and centralism are indivisible. Members assume certain obligations and in return, are guaranteed certain rights.

For example, no member can be expelled from the party without formal charges, a trial, and a majority decision by

the appropriate body. And they are guaranteed the right to appeal any trial findings to a higher body, up to and including the national convention.

But there is only one basic decision the party can make about a nonmember. That is, quite simply, whether or not they should become a member. Nothing more or less.

And how can a provisional member be assured the right to be present when their application for membership is being discussed? The constitution specifically bars an applicant for full membership being present when such discussion and vote occurs.

What is involved in this constitutional stipulation—and policy stipulation for provisional members—is not simply to assure an atmosphere where the membership can discuss freely before taking a vote, although that's an important enough reason.

But, additionally, except for at-large members, applications for membership are decided by the branch in which the applicant will be a member. No one else can decide except the branch. No higher body can accept anyone into the party (except in the constitutionally stipulated cases of fusions with another group). A higher body can set aside the decision of a branch if it acted wrongly in ending a person's membership. And higher bodies can have opinions, advice, recommendations, on acceptance or rejection of membership applications.

The only limitation on this basic Leninist right of a branch is the constitutionally stipulated provision that a branch cannot accept a former member back into membership without the approval of the National Committee. But even there, while the National Committee holds what might be called veto power on former members, it cannot reverse the decision of a branch *not* to take such a person into membership.

Does this then mean that provisional members have no rights? No. We are not an irrational sect, and our concern is for winning members, not turning them away. This doesn't guarantee that a given branch will not act unwisely, or even unjustly, in a particular case. Although, frankly, our impression is that the errors tend to lean in the direction of extending the most generous good will to anyone who states that they want to be a member.

Provisional members whose applications are rejected obviously can address themselves to higher bodies of the party. And our politics and norms assure that such communications will not be treated with indifference or hostility. But, of course, the branch decision must have full force and effect.

We might say at this point that we fully agree with the Political Committee decision that there be no exemptions from the category of provisional membership. Such exceptions can only suggest we have different criteria for different categories of applicants. (A new worker applicant must go through a provisional period, but a student member of the YSA need not. A new applicant must meet the proviso, but someone who left the organization need not.)

Further, we believe the provisional membership procedure has particular merit in terms of former members and applicants coming from other political tendencies.

But there may be misunderstanding as to why the PC decided provisional membership should apply to these categories.

Some months ago, one comrade wrote to the national

office, suggesting that we consider not applying the category to former members who left for "personal" rather than political reasons.

The comrade wrote that such applicants already know what the party is and don't need a period to get better acquainted. The requirement of provisional membership for this category, the comrade wrote, "almost looks like a penalty period."

We think this is not fully thought out. To begin with, it would be quite difficult to determine who fits into the quite broad and sometimes elusive category of having left for "personal reasons." Leaving the party is rarely a purely "personal" as opposed to political reason.

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be established that the applicant understands and is ready to comply with our no-drugs policy.

In the case of former members, this is doubly true. And in the case of those who left for violating the drug policy, it's at least triply true. In such cases, it is important to determine not only if the applicant is ready to abide by our drug policy. It should also be determined if the applicant agrees politically with the policy.

The reason should be apparent. If someone left because they disloyally violated the policy in the past, thereby endangering the party, and says that they don't agree with the policy but are willing to abide by it, doesn't that raise a serious question about their capacity to do so?

In the case of comrades who left for explicitly political reasons, surely the period of provisional membership is even more beneficial. Have the political disagreements been resolved to the point where they will not be an obstacle to reintegration? Serious political discussion—focusing on the area of disagreement—conducted over a period of time and coupled with the experience offered by provisional membership can go a long way to clarify this.

There is no element of "penalty" involved in this. And certainly it's not a matter of lack of trust. But the party does have the right and, again, the responsibility to consider in a more measured way the application of a former member, particularly one who left for political reasons. Obviously, any attitude of moral "superiority" to someone who dropped out and finds their way back is out of order. But we do take membership in the party seriously. And no matter how necessary it may have been, we cannot and should not take it lightly when someone leaves. Or, by the same token, decides to come back.

And in the case of former members who left for political reasons, as well as people coming from other tendencies, we don't think that it is sufficient to simply accept their statement that they have decided they are in agreement with the party program.

Again, it's not a matter of distrust. It's simply that it takes a serious political discussion to determine this. This is as true for the applicant as it is for the party. Any serious applicant with a political background should welcome the opportunity for such discussion of differences and have no reason to consider it an expression of distrust.

If someone left because of a political disagreement, there is no profit in their rejoining if the reason for their leaving has not been clarified and resolved politically.

Because this is such an important question, the Control Commission recommends a formal procedure for dealing with it more adequately than we have in the past.

When any former member, or someone from another tendency, applies for provisional membership, the branch or its executive committee should designate a committee of reasonably modest size to conduct a political interview and discussion with the applicant. It would essentially be the kind of a discussion that an organizer engages in—or should engage in—with such an applicant. But with several people participating in the discussion, it is more likely to be an adequate one. And this would serve to bring a more rounded report and recommendation to the branch, enhancing its capacity to make an informed decision on the application.

We believe such a procedure would lead to greater consciousness of the need for a more political approach to the question of such applications and would prove benefi-

cial to both the party and the applicant, since such a committee would not have the function of simply directing questions to the applicant but rather of engaging in a discussion, that is, an exchange of views.

In the case of party locals, we think it would be best that the local executive committee rather than the branch assigns the interviewing committee. This has the added advantage that such a committee could also consider and recommend which branch it would be best for the applicant to apply to for provisional membership. In New York, where this is now being done, the initial experience has been positive.

The establishment of such interviewing committees would serve an additional function. It would be able to provide the Political Committee with more adequate information in deciding whether to approve branch recommendations to readmit former members.

The very fact that over the years our constitution has required that former members cannot be readmitted without National Committee approval indicates the importance of the entire question.

Yet, the reality is that such NC approval has become largely a formality. The Political Committee, which is delegated to act in the matter by the National Committee, most often has little concrete information to go by, and until recently, tended to act largely on the basis of the opinion of the branch making the recommendation. Such an approach strips the constitutional proviso of its meaning.

In our opinion, both the branches and the PC have been lax in this matter. The branches have been lax in that they have asked the PC to act without adequate information. And the PC has been lax in doing so.

In order to act on a recommendation in an informed way, the PC has to know first of all, why a person left. Yet invariably, a letter of recommendation from a branch will simply advise that the applicant for readmission left for "personal" reasons, with no indication of what these reasons were.

This should be considered unacceptable. The PC should not act on any application unless it has the information necessary for an informed decision.

The party assuredly has no reason or right to stick its nose into the purely private affairs of its members. But while there can be personal reasons for leaving, there can be no private ones for someone who is seeking readmission. To act in a politically intelligent way, the party must know why someone left and why they want to come back.

The Control Commission recommends an additional procedure relating to comrades seeking readmission in a different city than the one where they left the party. At the time such a comrade is admitted into provisional membership, the branch should notify the Political Committee. The PC, in turn, should obtain from the previous branch the relevant information about the comrade and why he or she left.

This same procedure should be used in a situation where someone is reapplying in the same city, but, because of transfers, none of the leading comrades are familiar with the applicant.

Another area where more consciousness is needed is in relation to people coming to us from opponent political tendencies who occupied leading positions in such tendencies.

Winning such comrades should be seen as a political victory and treated that way.

In such cases, the Political Committee should be informed and, as a general procedure, arrangements made to either have the comrade write an article for the press, or be interviewed, in order to discuss publicly the reasons they left the particular organization they did and what persuaded them to join our party. This can have rich educational value, along with striking a political blow at an opponent.

These are some, but not all, of the questions posed by the experience of the provisional membership category.

In general, how has the procedure worked out? In the main, the consensus in the party seems to be that it has proven a useful measure in helping to achieve the purpose it was established for—to make it easier for workers to join the party.

But there have been problems, and mistakes, in applying this new procedure. The principal mistakes have stemmed from viewing provisional membership as a form of membership.

Failing to distinguish between the two categories, there has been a tendency to assume that the real vote came on the application for provisional membership. If the applicant was reasonably active during the three months, their full membership was assumed to be almost automatic, with the vote virtually a formality. With the assumption of activity as the exclusive criteria, there tended to be an inclination not to deal with the application politically.

Assuming that provisional members really are members has led to other problems. Because of this, they often did not get the political attention they should have. Certainly far less than when they were regarded simply as contacts of the party.

Despite the emphasis on the point in the initial report to the PC, there has not been sufficient serious attention to determining what provisional members are reading and involving them in discussions and classes organized for their benefit.

People who came to us from other tendencies that function on the basis of totally different concepts have

been left on their own and even given extensive responsibilities with no effort to ensure that they got the opportunity to deepen their comprehension of our politics and the very unique way in which we function.

The distinction between provisional members and members was ignored in many instances. Ignoring the constitution, branches have placed provisional members on executive committees, often before they were politically ready to shoulder the responsibility this entailed.

And, acting on the assumption that provisional membership was really the first stage of membership, branches have also ignored the three-month constitutional proviso in electing new members to the executive committee. The three months of provisional membership, some reasoned, constituted the three months required by the constitution before someone can serve on an executive committee.

Such mistakes should help point up that our constitution is not some arbitrary set of rules, but a concretization of our Leninist principles embodying an entire historical body of organizational experience.

A final point: At the last party convention the constitution committee considered whether the provisional membership category should be incorporated into the party constitution.

The constitution committee felt it was not in a position to consider the question adequately and asked the PC that it make a recommendation to the next convention.

The Control Commission would recommend to the PC that the provisional membership category *not* be included in the constitution.

In his report to the PC on implementing the motion to establish the National Committee decision on provisional membership, Comrade Jenness began by stating that the proposition "flows politically from the party's experience and particular situation at this time."

We think the procedure is a good one for this time and situation. In another time and situation there may be a different, better way of facilitating the entry of workers into the party. For that reason it would be better not to make it a permanent procedure by incorporating it into the constitution.

Published in the Party Builder, Volume 10, Number 1, January 1976

**MOTION ADOPTED BY NATIONAL COMMITTEE PLENUM
ON PROVISIONAL MEMBERSHIP**

January 3, 1976

To establish the category of provisional membership. Each new applicant for party membership, upon being approved by a majority vote in the branch to which they are applying (or by the Political Committee in the case of members-at-large), will become a provisional member for a period of three (3) months. Provisional members will have the right to attend branch meetings with voice and to receive internal bulletins. At the end of the three-month period of provisional membership, the branch (or the Political Committee in the case of members-at-large) will decide, according to the provisions in the constitution, on the applicant's membership.

This decision to become effective at the time of its publication by the Political Committee in the Party Builder.

**REPORT TO THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE
ON IMPLEMENTING THE
NATIONAL COMMITTEE DECISION ON
PROVISIONAL MEMBERSHIP**

January 16, 1976

by Doug Jenness

The National Committee's decision to establish the category of provisional membership flows politically from the party's experience and particular situation at this time. This situation is signified by a growing number of contacts and better prospects for recruitment. And an important aspect of this recruitment is the number of recruits who are working people and who haven't been members of the YSA. It is shown also by the expansion of the party into new cities.

However, another part of our situation is that we are not clearly seen as *the* socialists; we don't yet have clear hegemony over our opponents. Masses aren't knocking at our door, nor are we yet signing people up in large numbers at street corners. There's still resistance because it's a big step to join our organization which is a cadre organization and is different from any other kind of organization that people are familiar with. It takes a little time to become familiar with our organizational methods and accept them.

The purpose of provisional membership is to provide a *bridge* to draw people closer who are considering joining, but aren't necessarily willing to make that final commitment. It will help ease people into party membership, to help them overcome their doubts, and give people an opportunity to learn from the inside the full meaning of membership.

Provisional membership in no way implies, and must not be presented in a way to imply, that prospective members must meet a series of tests and jump over a row of hurdles. On the contrary, its purpose is to help break down barriers and resistance to membership. Nor is it some separate, second-class membership, or anything of that sort. It's really part of the procedure for the way a person joins.

Also, it's a different category than new contacts. It's a category of contacts who have reached a certain stage in their thinking in respect to joining the party and are willing to take the step of becoming provisional members, knowing that they are on the road to party membership. And it's different than sympathizers who are willing to help and contribute in different ways to the party, but who have no intention of joining. This is a valuable category which will grow.

Although the main consideration is to help build this bridge for people to join, it will also have a positive effect in making comrades more conscious and comfortable about asking people to join the party. It will help increase confidence about the prospects for party growth, and it will help eliminate hesitations.

(over)

Many branches have already been grappling with ways of establishing a transition for contacts who are considering joining. Some of them are inviting contacts to the business parts of branch meetings and to fraction meetings.

The biggest problem with a pattern of inviting contacts to attend branch business meetings is that it could, if overdone, begin to undermine the norms of party membership, that is, the rights and responsibilities of members, and party democracy. It may not be apparent to many comrades, particularly the branch leadership, that this process is happening, because the comrades who are the most likely to be inhibited from raising questions and disagreements at branch meetings with new contacts present are the least likely to say something about it. In most cases we want to reserve attendance at branch meetings for members and provisional members, who are a category of contacts who have evolved to the stage of taking the final step towards becoming party members.

Inviting militants from the mass movement, i.e., the people our paper is named for, to fraction meetings is very good, and we'll be doing more of it as we get bigger and are more involved in the mass movement. And we will win many of them to our movement. But we must recognize that attending fraction meetings is a relatively one-sided aspect of party experience. It doesn't give militants a rounded experience of what party membership is nor the responsibilities and commitment of membership. It is insufficient as a bridge to party membership.

On implementation we propose that provisional membership be universal, i.e., that it apply to *all* applicants for party membership including members of the YSA. Although the YSA is also an important bridge to party membership in the sense that it helps familiarize people with how the Trotskyist movement functions, there are things other applicants for membership may know better than many YSA members.

And it can also be misread if the party has different provisions for applicants for party membership who are primarily students than it does for workers.

We've decided to make the duration of provisional membership for each applicant three months. If this proves to be too long or too short after we've had some experience we can review it at a plenum.

The procedure for accepting applicants for membership

is that the branch will decide by majority vote, in the absence of the applicant, whether or not to accept a person as a provisional member. When the three months is up the branch will vote again, in the absence of the provisional member, as required by the constitution, whether or not to accept that person into membership.

Provisional members will be allowed to attend branch meetings with voice and receive bulletins, but will not have the constitutionally defined responsibilities and privileges of members. That is, they can't cast decisive vote in meetings, can't be counted for determining the number of delegates for conventions, can't run for the executive committee, won't pay initiation fees or dues, and can't be counted for per capita sustainer to the national office. Of course, provisional members from the beginning will be asked to make a regular financial contribution and to take assignments according to their means and time.

A key aspect of the implementation of this program is the education of provisional members. Especially important in this regard is for the branch leaderships to organize this education so that the greatest amount of individual attention is paid to provisional members. This may include small classes and/or assigning comrades to work with specific provisional members.