

Seattle, Feb. 7th.

To the Political Committee

Dear Comrades:

You have read and distributed my detailed and serious criticism of the policy followed by the SWP-YSA at the Washington Conference, and in the anti-war movement generally - the movement which you consider to be the present central area of party work. This policy, which was oriented around a fight on the organizational level, is in direct contradiction to and in specific violation of your own majority Convention resolutions, and, is specifically opposite to the policy advocated by Comrade Dobbs on his tour, which coincided with the preparations for the Washington Conference, that our tasks in the anti-war movement are exclusively propagandistic.

Furthermore, there is no precedent in the tradition of our party in its mass work for the policy followed at the Washington conference. Nevertheless, you have stated that you will not discuss my criticism at the forthcoming plenum under the formula that it represents "attacks on established party policy," and that you have "more important things to discuss."

Subsequently, you "take note" that my letter was given to non-NC members and you state that this matter is of sufficient importance to place on the agenda of the plenum, whereas the subject matter of the letter is not.

I was unaware that it is a constitutional violation for supporters of a tendency to be informed of the actions of their only representative on the N.C., but however that may be constitutionally, you have chosen to shift the discussion from policy in the anti-war movement to the organizational sphere, by launching an organizational attack against me.

Under these circumstances it would be unprincipled of me to subject the Branch to the severe financial strain of sending me to a Plenum that refuses to discuss our politics and insists instead on organizational harassment of me over a secondary technical rule, which, after 32 years in the party, I am not familiar with, which does not appear in the party constitution, which is certainly not in the Leninist tradition, and which the majority does not practice.

Regretfully,

S/ R. Kirk

FOR NC INFORMATION

To All the Negro Comrades

Dear Comrades:

In accordance with the decision reached at the party convention last September to find a way to bring about a better method of communication, collaboration and mutual exchange between the Negro comrades and to strengthen the party's Negro cadre and increase the party's effectiveness, a Negro Commission has been established. The Commission is composed of National Committee members, Bob Vernon, George Jones and Clifton DeBerry.

The Commission suggests that the Negro comrades send us their suggestions on how best to accomplish this task. We would also like to have your thinking, views and observations on the reaction of Negro militants to the war in Vietnam, the SNCC statement on the war, the Freedom Now Struggle, and the Julian Bond case. If you have not already tried, we suggest that you initiate a probe of some kind in the Negro community. If this is not possible, another suggestion would be to visit Negro subscribers to the Militant in your area. In those branches where the party ran an election campaign recently, it would be a good idea to see and talk with Negroes who expressed an interest in the campaign.

The Negro comrades in New York are in the process of a probe along the lines outlined above. An Afro-American Committee Against the War in Vietnam has been established (at the initiative of our comrades). We will be forwarding you a copy of the committee's first Newsletter soon, along with any other material from New York area that would be of interest and perhaps helpful to you. We would suggest that you send material from your area along the same lines to us here. (The above mentioned committee is still too young for a meaningful appraisal at this time.)

Please forward your ideas and suggestions as soon as possible to the Commission. Send them to Socialist Workers Party, National Office, Attention: C. DeBerry, 873 Broadway, New York, New York 10003.

We want to pass your experiences and thinking on to the other comrades in their branches. As soon as we hear from you and can make a full report based on your reports, we will make a full report and send it to you.

Comradely,  
S/ Clifton DeBerry

February 10, 1966

Seattle:

Dear Comrade Kirk:

Your letter dated Feb. 7, informing us of your decision not to attend the Feb. 11-13 National Committee Plenum, arrived today. In view of your earlier request (Dec. 13 letter) for an early Plenum to discuss what you referred to as a "crisis of policy," your decision not to participate seems inexplicable. We urge you to reconsider.

The reason you give for not attending is without foundation. You write that the PC has "stated that (it) will not discuss" your criticism at the forthcoming Plenum, and that it would be "unprincipled" for you to strain the Seattle Branch finances to attend a Plenum "that refuses to discuss our politics." Neither the PC nor the Secretariat has refused to bring your criticisms of party policy in anti-war work before the Plenum. Quite the contrary.

The anti-war movement is the primary area of party work at present and the most significant fact of political life in the U.S. today. As such it will comprise the major portion of the Political Report. This is the point on the agenda where your criticisms will be raised and discussed.

While planning the Plenum schedule we took into account your extensive criticisms. We fully expected you to request, and we were prepared to recommend, that you be given ample time to present your position to the Plenum. This is in keeping with the long-established procedure in the SWP with which you are thoroughly familiar.

Your decision was made known to us only on the eve of the Plenum. In order that you receive our reply in time to reconsider, we are reading this letter to you by telephone before mailing it. The Political Report is scheduled for 4 P.M. tomorrow, Feb. 11.

Comradely,

S/ Edward Shaw  
For the Secretariat