

14 Charles Lane
New York, N.Y. 10014

May 10, 1973

SAN FRANCISCO - Gebert

LOS ANGELES - Sudie Trippet

Dear Comrades Gebert and Trippet,

This letter is in response to your request, contained in your letter of April 7, 1973, addressed to the Administrative Committee, that certain documents be printed in the Internal Information Bulletin as part of the pre-convention discussion. These documents include: "Appeal to the National Leadership of the SWP Concerning Internal Democracy"; "Additional Comments Relating to the 'Appeal to the National Leadership of the SWP Concerning Internal Democracy'"; "Postscript"; and an exchange of letters concerning the circumstances of the publication of an article in the SWP Discussion Bulletin during the 1971 pre-convention discussion.

The content of these documents covers two areas. One concerns editing by the national office of articles submitted to the SWP Discussion Bulletin, which I will discuss below. The other is your complaint that Comrade Matilde Zimmermann was shown a copy of discussion articles by yourselves before they were printed in the 1971 pre-convention SWP Discussion Bulletin. That this happened is evident from the fact that Comrade Zimmermann replied to your articles in an article printed in the same issue of the SWP Discussion Bulletin; it is also confirmed in the exchange of letters between Comrade Gebert and Comrades Camejo and Zimmermann.

It is not the norm for articles submitted to the SWP Discussion Bulletin to be shown to comrades for the purposes of answering them before their publication in the Discussion Bulletin, either by the national office or individuals. However, this has been done in the past a few times, when special circumstances indicated that this would facilitate the discussion, and with agreement from all parties concerned. One of the circumstances surrounding this instance was that you had repeatedly complained that the national leadership had not answered your arguments. You did this through repeated telephone calls to the national office, and in your articles in the SWP Discussion Bulletin itself. (See "The Generation Gap -- Which Side Are You On?" by Sudie and Geb, Vol. 29, No. 22.) There you state: "Articles published after ours, have already seen replies in print. One article printed after ours, saw not only a reply, but even a reply to the reply. A phone call to the NO on July 15 revealed that as of that date no reply had yet been submitted, though one or more replies were to be expected, someday."

You had repeatedly raised the same point in the Boston branch. Comrade Camejo, who at that time was a member of the Boston branch, came to New York temporarily to help the national office with the convention preparations. He asked a leader of the Boston branch, Comrade Zimmermann, who had verbally debated the questions you raised in the branch, to submit in written form her answer to some of your arguments. To facilitate this, given the approaching deadline for contributions to the discussion, he showed proofs of three of your latest articles to her, under the impression that you had agreed to

this procedure, and her article was printed in the same bulletin as yours. However, given the fact that there apparently was some confusion on this score, it was an error of judgment on the part of the national office to use this procedure.

Your articles were not held up in publication at all by this procedure. There was some short delay because the necessary security editing of your articles took more time than usual, but this proceeded independently of Comrade Zimmermann's writing of her reply.

With the exception of the materials concerning the circumstances of the publication of Comrade Zimmermann's article in the 1971 pre-convention discussion, the other materials you have submitted for publication in the SWP Discussion Bulletin represent an attempt to insert in the SWP Discussion Bulletin material previously rejected for publication during the 1971 pre-convention discussion or during the party literary discussion on the gay liberation movement. This material was deleted or changed for reasons of security, or because it went beyond the bounds of a discussion of the gay liberation movement during the literary discussion on that question, or because it went beyond the bounds of a discussion to set the political line of the party. These articles are rejected for inclusion in the SWP Discussion Bulletin, with the exception of materials relating to Comrade Zimmermann's article.

Editing by the national office of contributions to the SWP Discussion Bulletin is minimal. Such editing falls into two categories. The first is routine security editing. The national office has the responsibility to security edit every contribution to the SWP Discussion Bulletin.

The second area of responsibility of the national office relates to the nature of a written discussion in the Socialist Workers Party. The purpose of the pre-convention discussion is to discuss the political issues before the party. The national office has the responsibility to reject material submitted to the SWP Discussion Bulletin that falls outside this purpose.

Comradely,

Barry Sheppard
for the Political
Committee

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4609 1/4 Marmion Way
Los Angeles, Ca. 90065
April 7, 1973

Admin. Cmte., SWP

Dear Comrades--

In connection with the "Appeal to the National Leadership of the SWP Concerning Internal Democracy" which we sent you in early February of this year, there have been developments which are very relevant. Comrade Barry Sheppard, during his national organizational tour, spoke with each of us in person in order to respond to that appeal. As a result of that discussion, there has been an exchange of letters among involved comrades.

In addition to feeling that the National Committee should be fully aware of our appeal itself, we also think the NC should have an idea of the response to it, the relevant letters, and also of what we feel about the response we received. So we would like to repeat our request that the appeal be reproduced and mailed to the full NC before the plenum at the end of April; and we would like to ask that the following materials be done the same with:

- (a) our understanding of Barry's answer to our appeal (enclosed)
- (b) the relevant letters (enclosed)
- (c) our post-script on the subject (enclosed).

Also, regardless of how the plenum responds to our appeal, we feel that it would be good for the education of the comrades as a whole, if all these documents were printed in the pre-convention internal discussion bulletin; we are submitting these documents with this letter, in form for printing in the DB as soon as the literary discussion opens.

If we don't hear otherwise from you, we will assume that this procedure will be followed. Thank you.

Comradely,

s/ Sudie (LA branch)
& Geb (SF branch)

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4609 1/4 Marmon Way
Los Angeles Calif 90065
February 4, 1973

Administrative Cmte, SWP

Dear Comrades--

Enclosed with this letter is an "Appeal to the National Leadership of the SWP Concerning Internal Democracy," which is self-explanatory. Since it involves what we see as serious violations of party democracy, this appeal should receive a serious response.

We would like to see the problems involved, solved before the beginning of the upcoming preconvention discussion, since preconvention discussion procedures are in question. And so it seems to us that the coming NC plenum is the place for the appeal to be dealt with.

We think this appeal should be reproduced and distributed to the entire national committee by mail before the plenum, so the entire national leadership can be fully informed about the matter; we make this as a request. Will this request be granted? What are the relevant procedures? Will we be notified of an official response to this appeal?

We hope that the problems we have had can be resolved with a minimum of time and bother.

There are three questions in this letter. When you answer them, we would appreciate it if you would send one copy to Sudie at the above address and another copy to Geb c/o the San Francisco SWP branch. Thanx.

Comradely,

s/ Sudie, LA branch
& Geb, SF branch

APPEAL TO THE NATIONAL LEADERSHIP OF THE SWP:
CONCERNING INTERNAL DEMOCRACY

Dear Comrades--

We make this appeal to you in hopes of ensuring that future SWP internal discussions will be carried out in the best possible way.

We are very concerned with this, because of several of our experiences in the past two years, involving what we felt were significant and unjustified violations of internal democratic rights. We want to report what we know of these incidents, and to explain why we feel they need to be appealed. We hope to be able to get agreement on the political principles involved so that we won't have to fear repetitions.

The four main incidents:

- (1) censorship by the national office of the discussion of the SWP's membership policy of marijuana, in the article we wrote on the youth radicalization, in the 1971 pre-convention discussion.
- (2) censoring of the last paragraph of our article about gay liberation in the same discussion.
- (3) Four cases of censorship of what we wrote during the special 1972 discussion of the gay liberation movement.
- (4) a very unusual privilege that seems to have been given to a comrade who wrote a reply to something we wrote in the 1971 discussion.

In the second case we were given an explanation we feel was not satisfactory; in the other three cases we've never received any sort of explanation. We need to take the cases one by one.

ONE: CENSORSHIP OF THE MEMBERSHIP POLICY DISCUSSION

During the 1971 party pre-convention discussion, we submitted an article titled "The Generation Gap: Which Side Are You On?" One aspect of the "generation gap" we dealt with was the massive use of marijuana among young people today, a fact which has become politically important especially because of the reactionary laws against this. Our first concern was to encourage the party to more actively take a public stand in favor of the right to use marijuana.

But a second concern we had, was to suggest and argue for a change in our membership policy concerning marijuana. We feel this policy is too formal in approach, so inflexible as to be harmful to the party under present conditions, by causing distrust and misunderstanding, and by making recruitment more difficult especially among those we need most to reach; that the motivations for the policy, while sensible in the abstract, were not completely valid at the present time (and also partially wrong even in theory, in the form it is sometimes presented); and that as a result it is in the interests of the party to have a more flexible approach. So we argued for a change in this policy.

Of course, such a discussion--concerning a security policy--could present a security problem under certain conditions. But we found that we were able to write our views on this in such a way as not to compromise party security in the slightest; this was quite

easy to do. We took great pains to make sure that there was not so much as a comma in our article which could endanger the party. We still stand on this: there is not one comma in what we wrote that in any way or in any degree compromises party security.

We were honestly startled when we read the printed version of our article in the Internal Bulletin: the entire discussion of the membership policy, every bit of it, was gone.

It was not a case of rewriting or removal of certain passages which the national office saw as a security problem; all of it was gone. The following is the discussion which was cut out:

"Our tendency to sympathize with the PL position that pot is petty bourgeois, has also caused us to establish unusual internal regulations on the matter.

"It is absolutely necessary for the party and the YSA to take whatever measures are necessary for the security of the movement. In general we have the position that the entire lives of members, including their personal lives, must be conducted in such a way as not to jeopardize the security of the movement.

"But this doesn't cause us to feel the need to ensure that no comrade ever breaks any law. It's quite possible that there have been cases of women comrades obtaining illegal abortions at one time or another. It's also possible that some gay comrades have taken part in gay sex acts even in those states where this remains illegal. Illegal extra-marital sex may also sometimes occur.

"We don't know whether such things might occasionally happen among comrades, because we don't even try to find out, and if we did try to find out we'd never be able to, anyway. We don't feel the need to prevent every such incident, because our concern is not to have a movement which never has a member who ever breaks any law. Our concern is to have a movement which never places itself in unnecessary significant legal danger, and we don't feel that that results even if some incidents along the above lines do sometimes occur.

"But in relation to marijuana, we forget that our concern is never to place ourselves in unnecessary significant legal danger. Instead we imagine that our concern is never, ever to break a law. Our comrades break far fewer laws than the average American, but it is always possible that some comrade sometimes breaks some law.

"Regarding the marijuana laws, it's not only possible but inevitable. Remember that being in the presence of marijuana is just as illegal as smoking it. Every time we go to a major anti-war demonstration, we may find ourselves in the presence of some marijuana. Every time a comrade goes to a rock or soul concert, we face a great danger of finding ourselves seated next to a kid who passes us a lit joint; at many such concerts, joints are passed up and down the rows to such an extent that everyone or virtually everyone there, participates.

"At such a concert, passing the joint on without smoking it

is not enough to make us legal. Even refusing to touch the damned thing won't make us legal, since it's illegal to even be in the presence of the stuff.

"Some comrades might feel that we just shouldn't go to concerts anymore. But surely all comrades will agree that we must continue to attend antiwar demonstrations even if it means being illegally in the presence of grass. Again, our concern is only to protect the organization, and the organization is not generally endangered by our attending either antiwar demos or concerts.

We ought to consciously agree that our internal regulation on grass is not that all comrades must refrain from ever, ever breaking any facet of the anti-grass laws. Our internal policy on grass, like anything else, is that no comrade may do anything which unnecessarily places the movement in significant legal danger.

"That is the only valid concern we can have regarding possible violations of the anti-grass laws by comrades. We cannot restrict use of grass among comrades, on grounds that grass is petty bourgeois, until someone comes up with some scientific evidence for that analysis (and the testimony of Progressive Labor doesn't count!).

"One passage in the Political Committee memorandum on gay membership, suggests that an additional reason for prohibiting use of grass by comrades, is "the hatred of many of the oppressed of this country for the narcotics trade." To answer this:

1 - Marijuana is of course not a narcotic.

2 - Insofar as any such hatred for the narcotics trade has any defensibility, it is a hatred for the underground capitalists who profiteer off the trade. Any comrade who profiteered off the narcotics trade, would obviously be placing the movement in such extreme legal danger that no additional reason is needed for prohibiting that practice.

3 - Underground capitalists who profiteer off the trade of things other than narcotics -- such as counterfeit money, illegal abortions, or for that matter, marijuana -- also would place the movement in such serious legal danger that we need no further reason for prohibiting such practice among comrades.

"The fabled 'hatred of many of the oppressed of this country for the narcotics trade' will not disappear the day marijuana is legalized. But the necessity for any restriction at all on the right of comrades to use grass, will disappear the day that marijuana is legalized.

"In the meantime, our internal policy regarding the marijuana laws should be just like our policy regarding any other laws. No comrades can be allowed to place the party or the YSA in unnecessary, significant legal danger. If comrades want to take part in illegal sex acts (such as gay sex or extra-marital sex), or if comrades want to attend concerts where there will find themselves illegally in the presence of marijuana, etc., the security of the movement required only that they not place the movement in unnecessary, significant legal danger.

"The hatred of many of the oppressed of this country' for gays and grass-smokers, is the creation of the bourgeois media, and we have no interest in compromising with such backward notions when we don't have to."

The same thing was done with the summary which we titled "Miscellaneous Resolutions"; this was a numbered list of our main points, which was printed later in the same bulletin number. The summary we wrote for the section on our membership policy, was cut out completely; here is the original:

"It is of paramount importance to ensure the legal security of the party. So we have the general policy of prohibiting any actions, in comrades' personal lives or otherwise, which present unnecessary, significant legal danger to the movement. Beyond this, no special internal policy is required regarding the marijuana laws."

In both cases the passages were cut out without any note being placed into the printed version to indicate that a passage had been deleted. We were never notified of the action, let alone given an explanation. Luckily, we had felt the need to check the printed version against our xerox of the original, sentence by sentence; otherwise we might just not have noticed. The fact that we might well not have noticed is yet another reason why we really should have been notified at least.

Since we were in a nearby branch and since there was some time left in the discussion period, the national office could have contacted us to try to work out whatever changes were felt to be necessary, so that at least in some form we could have presented our views on the membership policy; if anything had to be censored, this seems the way it should have been done.

But we feel there was absolutely nothing that needed, or even came close to needing, to be censored--for security or any other reasons. Just a few months later the YSA printed some articles calling for a more flexible marijuana policy, in its pre-convention discussion; those articles seem to be of the same general type as ours was, yet the YSA didn't feel the need to censor them--even though the YSA's discussion bulletins were being sold publicly.

Actually, we are only speculating that the grounds for the censoring was security (what else could it be?); we haven't received any notice of the action, let alone the reasons for it. Shouldn't internal censorship be taken more seriously than this?

TWO: CENSORSHIP IN THE 1971 GAY LIBERATION ARTICLE

During the same pre-convention literary discussion we also submitted an article titled "What's So Good About Gay?" One of the main ideas in that article was that human beings are biologically gay -- "the human animal is gay" -- and that the Protestant ethic of capitalism requires for people's gayness to be suppressed into unconsciousness. We discussed how this suppression is done: "Straight society needs to keep the majority of people from even trying gay sex as an experiment, for the obvious reason that such experimentation would lead to people realizing that they are gay." We presented a political defense of

what some comrades had called the "gay will to convert," which we felt was best symbolized in the spontaneous slogan heard at Gay Pride Week demonstrations: "Hey, hey -- Waddya say? -- Tri it once! -- You might be gay!"

Since we attached so much political importance to the attitude of experimentation and self-discovery in this article, we decided to end it like so:

"To end on a personal note, let us say to all our beautiful comrades, that if you haven't tried it, you really don't know what you're missing. Why not take an evening, the next time you're in some state where it's legal, and give it a swing? You'll be glad you did."

When we sent in this article to be printed in the Internal Bulletin, we again had no idea that there would be any trouble in getting it printed. We were just astonished when it was returned to us with a cover letter which is quite brief, brief enough to reproduce here:

July 19, 1971

Dear Comrades Sudie and Geb,

Your document "What's So Good About Gay? (or Homosexuals Are Really Revolting!)" is unacceptable for printing in the Internal Discussion Bulletin.

The bulletin cannot be used for suggestions or advocacy on strictly personal matters of comrades. If you wish, you may edit your contribution accordingly and resubmit it for the Discussion Bulletin.

Comradely,
Joel Britton
National Office

We immediately phoned the NO and asked for further explanation. The small amount of information in the above letter was repeated to us. The NO explained that it could not tell us in any further detail how we had gone wrong -- and what we had to do to the article to make it acceptable -- because they had returned the article to us and didn't remember (no, they had not made a xerox of it). Was there anything other than that final paragraph which was unprintable? Again, they couldn't recall, but they seemed to remember that it was more than just the last paragraph, a lot more. We gave up on this approach.

Even though we thought we had a right to have the article printed as is, the way we wanted it, still we sat down to figure out how to change it to make it acceptable by these standards which we had never been taught about in classes on the theory of democratic centralism. The only significant change we could come up with was to cut that last paragraph -- where the word "personal" had appeared.

We resubmitted the article, with a cover letter. We explained why we wanted that paragraph in: "the fact that we wanted to include it, should be seen as an indication that we

felt a political purpose in writing it. We think there is a real political gain to be made in encouraging repressed-gay comrades to experiment out of scientific curiosity."

We stated that, while we wanted the paragraph in, still we would rather that the rest of the article get printed, rather than nothing at all, so we agreed to cutting the last paragraph if they would not print it. The article was then printed, without the offending paragraph.

In that letter to the NO, we asked: "given that it was such a brief paragraph and could presumably not have caused significant real harm if printed, was it really necessary to refuse to print it?"

We added that an article written by some other comrades had included a great deal of personal character attacks, which are clearly out of order in a political discussion. The NO printed that other document anyway; we asked, "couldn't you have done the same thing with ours?"

We pointed out that if the article had been printed when it was first received, it would have reached the branches in time to be discussed there, and possibly for someone to write a response. In fact, if there even had been an attempt to reach us by phone (Boston's not very far from NY), we might have reached an agreement without what turned out to be a nine-day delay in the mails. Our letter asked why the national office did not seem concerned that our ideas see print as soon as possible (the printed version finally came out after the discussion deadline).

We specifically stated that we felt these three questions "deserve answers from the Administrative Committee."

But we never got any answer at all.

We still don't understand this. If there is a paragraph in an article that we write for an internal discussion, which we include for what we consider to be political reasons, and which we consider to be a political statement, does the national office have the right to call it "strictly personal," and refuse to print it?

Such a right could easily be misused. It was in this case. Shouldn't internal censorship be taken more seriously than this?

THREE" CENSORSHIP IN THE 1972 GAY LIBERATION DISCUSSION

By the time of the special internal literary discussion on gay liberation last year, we had learned to expect the unexpected with regard to censorship of our articles. So we were not quite so surprised when it happened again. There was censorship in each of our three main articles. First: Our criticism of comrade Barry Sheppard's article was titled "Concerning an Inadequate Compromise." One section of it, called "The Double Standard for Gays," was designed to show that Barry's arguments against intervening in the gay movement at this time, were inconsistent with what Barry would say about most other movements.

Barry said "There is no national action coalition around specific issues of gay oppression which we could support and help build." This was our response:

"But we were intervening, for example, in the women's liberation movement for a year or two before there existed a national action coalition in that movement, either, and further, WONAAC would probably not exist today if it were not for the work we have done to help build it."

The national office cut out the word "WONAAC" and put in the word "that" instead. Since we haven't heard a word of notice or explanation, we can only guess why. Was it a tightly-kept secret that "WONAAC" was the name of the national action coalition which we were playing a vital role in?

If the national office disagreed with what we said about WONAAC, one of the comrades could simply have written a denial. But to cut out the word makes it harder for comrades reading our article, to understand what we are talking about. How would Barry feel if we had the power to take out a specific word in his article and replace it with a vague "that"?

Shouldn't internal censorship be taken more seriously than this?

Second: In responding to the article by comrade Nat Weinstein, one of our main purposes was to show that his abstentionist attitude toward the gay liberation movement was what comrades call "workerism"; we titled our response to Nat, "Gay Liberation vs. 'Workerism.'"

Now Nat and the other abstentionist comrades generally do not take workerism to the extreme of, say, the Workers League; the difference in degree is so great that it's fairly hard to see any close resemblance. But there were some workerist positions put forward at the 1971 SWP convention, mostly by the Proletarian Orientation Tendency. We felt that we could be much more understandable if we showed parallels between Nat's views and those of the "FAPO" group, as it was often called. The main paragraph in which we tried to show the FAPOism of Nat's views, went like so:

"Nat's position represents a synthesis of the positions on gay liberation taken a year ago [during the 1971 SWP convention] by Hedda Garza and the FAPO group. Comrade Hedda was also concerned about not 'erecting barriers.' The FAPO group advocated 'support' from the sidelines (although they said this was just because we don't have enough cadres; they never said that 'gay liberation has notrevolutionary role to play,' as Nat does). More importantly, the whole FAPO approach to politics can be seen in Nat's approach to gay liberation -- a mixture of economism, empiricism, and rigid traditionalism."

A couple of pages of our article was then devoted to a detailed argument designed to show the similarity between Nat's methodology, and the methodology of the FAPOs. But the reader of our article would have a hard time figuring that out, because the national office changed this introductory paragraph, to this:

"Nat's position represents a synthesis of the positions on gay liberation taken a year ago by some comrades during the pre-convention discussion. Some were also concerned about not 'erecting barriers.' Others advocated 'support' from the sidelines (although they said this

was just because we don't have enough cadres; they never said that 'gay liberation has no revolutionary role to play,' as Nat does). Nat's approach to gay liberation is a mixture of economism, empiricism, and rigid traditionalism."

We don't mind so much that comrade Hedda's name was cut out. But our basic analysis of Nat's position becomes only half-understandable when all reference to the FAPO group is censored out.

One reason why we really can't imagine why this incident of censorship occurred, is that our remarks here were just a condensation of what we had said about FAPOs and the others, in our previous article, "Concerning an Inadequate Compromise." In that previous article, there were several similar references by name to the FAPO group, which were not censored.

Our article would have been much more understandable, and much more reflective of our views, if it had not been censored in this way. We don't know why this paragraph was chopped up; again, we never received any notice or explanation about it. Shouldn't internal censorship be taken more seriously than this?

Third: Much the same as the second. In the same article analysing Nat's views, way at the end, in summarizing our two pages of analysis of what we called economism, empiricism, and rigid traditionalism in Nat's article, we drew this conclusion:

"Nat's methodology, and his conclusions, bear a striking resemblance to those of the various 'workerist' trends in the radical movement, from our own FAPOs to the Workers League, Spartacists, Labor Committee, etc."

In the printed version, everything after "radical movement" was cut out; not only was the reference to the FAPOs cut out, but also the references to the Workers League, Spartacists, and Labor Committee were also cut out. As a result, in the entire article as printed, there were no specific references by name to any of the tendencies we were comparing Nat with. This of course made the whole article much less understandable.

Again, we don't know why. Never any sort of notice or explanation, no consultation, nothing. Is there a pattern emerging? Shouldn't internal censorship be taken more seriously than this?

Fourth: Our third main article during the 1972 gay liberation internal discussion was "Women and Gay Liberation." This article was concerned with showing the links between anti-female sexism and anti-gay sexism, and the links between the struggle for sexual freedom of women, and of gays. Nat had argued that "sexual freedom" was relevant to gays but not to the women's liberation movement; his purpose being to show that there isn't a link between these two movements. Nat argued that working class women don't have time nor energy to worry about sexual freedom. We replied:

"This is exactly, down to the very last detail, the same reasoning that we see among most of our opponents, and that we saw from the FAPO group last summer. Only they draw a more logical conclusion. They oppose the movement for legalized abortions

which the party favors; instead, they prefer movements for free abortion on demand, equal pay for equal work, etc."

When this paragraph was printed in the internal bulletin, the phrase "from the FAPO group last summer" had been changed to "among critics of the party position at the last convention," and they were not all alike, and they did not all have positions resembling comrade Weinstein's. This change in our text not only made our comment more vague, it even made it less accurate.

We again don't know why this chop was made (though we suspect it may have been for the same reason as the previous two chops, whatever that reason may be). Again, the effect was to make our article somewhat less understandable. Again, no notice, consultation, or explanation; the pattern continues. Shouldn't internal censorship be taken more seriously than this?

Wouldn't any comrade have to object to someone snipping and chopping away at their articles, preventing them from presenting political arguments which they consider important?

FOUR: MATILDE ZIMMERMANN'S APPARENT SPECIAL PRIVILEGE

If comrades check their files of the 1971 preconvention discussion, they will see that our article on the "generation gap" was immediately followed, on the very next page of the same issue of the internal bulletin, by a rebuttal by comrade Matilde Zimmermann, titled "In Defense of the Revolutionary Party Against Sudie and Geb."

This is of course unusual. Usually there is a wait of weeks or more, between an article appearing in an internal bulletin, and any response to it appearing in the bulletin.

We are happy to see comrades discussing our ideas. If we had had any idea that Matilde would be interested in writing a response to our article, we would have been happy to give her an advance copy of it; this would have been easy to do, since we were all in Boston at the time. But in fact we had no idea that Matilde would want to write a reply, and so we didn't give her an advance copy.

What must have happened is that, after the national office received our article, an advance copy coming from the national office must have made its way to Matilde; the national office meanwhile delayed publication of our article while Matilde rushed together her reply and got it to New York, where it was then printed on the very next page of the same issue of the internal bulletin, as our article was.

We don't understand why Matilde got a special advance copy, or why the printing of our article was held up until her reply was received.

If comrades will look on the very next page after Matilde's article, they won't find our answer to it. In fact, they won't find our answer to it in any 1971 bulletin. We had no knowledge of Matilde's article until we saw it in print in the discussion

bulletin, a couple days after the discussion period had ended, so we couldn't respond to it in 1971 (let alone in the same issue of the discussion bulletin).

Matilde of course had plenty reason to think we might be interested in responding to her article, but she did not choose to give us an advance copy of it. The national office did not provide us with an advance copy of it, either. In short, we had no special privilege comparable to the special privilege Matilde had.

How is Matilde's special advantage over us to be explained, in terms of Trotskyist organizational principles? Will something similar happen again?

* * *

Our motive in making this appeal is to try to see to it that such infringements of internal party democracy, won't be repeated. If only one of the four (actually seven) incidents we mentioned, had happened, it would have been much easier to be much less concerned. But with so many similar incidents involving us since 1971 (and what has happened to others, that we don't know about?) we have to conclude that there is a real political weakness in the party center, on the question of democracy of internal discussions.

We don't feel that we have to talk in great detail about what this can lead to; we all can remember very well the role that undemocratic internal procedures have played in a whole list of disasters of the socialist movement.

Little bits of abandoning of internal democracy may only lead to little bits of disasters. But little bits of abandoning of internal democracy can also lead to bigger bits. Isn't internal democracy to be taken seriously?

It's hard to admit a mistake. But revolutionaries have to do lots of difficult things. If the national office would admit that it was in general mistaken in the above incidents, we would be able to be much more confident that this sort of thing won't happen again.

Comradely,

s/ Sudie & Geb

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS RELATING TO THE "APPEAL TO THE NATIONAL LEADERSHIP OF THE SWP CONCERNING INTERNAL DEMOCRACY"

(note: the first document is the Appeal itself, which you received from us probably around Feb 6 '73 -- S&G)

II -- Comrade Sheppard's response

Shortly after we sent the above appeal to NY, comrade Barry happened to be on the West Coast during a national organizational tour, and while in our respective cities he had a discussion with each of us, to answer the questions we raised. In reproducing his remarks here, of course there are some dangers: we might easily misunderstand or distort what he said, or perhaps Barry might have used a choice of words at some point, which doesn't exactly reflect what he meant or would choose as a formal response. We are being careful to try to be fair to him and his views, and we do think we are reproducing them adequately, but of course comrade Barry may wish to clarify whatever might still need clarification.

(1) Marijuana policy censorship: Our proposal for a change in this policy, was censored for reasons of legal security, as we had suspected.

Barry said that

the following policies had been decided upon by the PC, as security rules for the literary discussion in '71: first, there could be "no discussion of hard drugs" -- specifically, there could be nothing that would suggest that "any comrade even wanted to change... our policy on heroin or other such drugs"; second, there could be no suggestion that there are positive benefits in marijuana use, and nothing that "could be interpreted to mean that actually people in the party are using marijuana secretly"; third, there could be no suggestion that comrades sometimes break other laws (there may also have been other similar policies, too).

The third reason was relevant to our case; we had suggested the possibility that sometimes some comrades may break some laws. We stated in the censored section, that "It's quite possible that there have been cases of women comrades obtaining illegal abortions at one time or another. It's also possible that some gay comrades may have taken part in gay sex acts even in those states where this remains illegal. Illegal extra-marital sex may also sometimes occur."

We also stated that it was "inevitable" that some comrades would violate laws about being in the presence of marijuana, just as a ~~result~~ result of attending and antiwar demonstration or rock concert where others were using grass.

apparently

The decision to censor [^]wasn't made out of a feeling necessarily that we were in danger of being victimized for illegal abortions etc., but rather from the view that any sort of suggestion that comrades might break laws, no matter how trivial, produces an atmosphere where it might be easier to victimize us on whatever might come up. Comrades may be openly gay, for instance, but we must not call attention to the fact that we are thus ~~breaking~~ violating the anti-gay laws.

Of course, only some parts of our discussion of the membership policy were unprintable. But [^]so much would have had to be chopped out *according to Barry,* of this discussion, that it would have made our arguments very

incomplete, and so — in fairness to us — the whole section was cut, *of course, it was the national office that defined "fairness".*

Thus, the YSA later in '71, and again in '72, printed pre-convention contributions which seemed pretty similar to what the SWP censored.

But that was the YSA's decision; maybe conditions ~~WERE~~ were somewhat different, or the articles were somewhat different, or maybe the YSA also shouldn't have printed the stuff. Just because the YSA printed what it printed, without all the YSAers ending up in jail, that in no way means the SWP was being too paranoid, *says Barry,*

There was no discussion of why we weren't consulted about the change in hopes of working out a wording acceptable to all. No

discussion of why we weren't even notified or sent an explanation.

And no discussion of why there wasn't any notice in the printed

article to show that a section had been removed.

(2) Censorship in the '71 gay liberation article: this is the

paragraph that went out for being "suggestions or advocacy on

strictly personal matters". True, ^{Barry admits,} it was just a short little paragraph,

but you have to draw the line somewhere. True, we obviously felt it

to be a political statement relevant to the discussion, but the

national office felt it was not a ~~political statement~~ politically relevant,

and on the basis of that decision of theirs, they cut it out.

There was no explanation offered for why our protest letter sent to the national office at the time, was never answered.

(3) Mentioning "WONAAC" by name: Here Barry told us that "political

security" was involved; ^{the N.O.} we didn't want to give any ammunition for

red-baiting. Opponents in the feminist movement had publicly read

quotes, out of context, from ^{SWP} our internal bulletins in the past. ~~It~~

What we had said about WONAAC was fair enough, but ~~it~~ quoted out of

context ~~it~~ it could be used against ^{the SWP} us in this way. The words "WONAAC"

and "NPAC" had also been cut from some other comrades' articles, for

similar reasons. The dangerous statement in what we wrote, was:

"WONAAC would probably not exist today if it were not for the work we have done to help build it". By simply cutting out the name itself and substituting a vague ~~xxxx~~ reference, our political security was thus more secure, *says Barry.*

(4) Mentioning "FAPO" by name: On this, Barry told us that bringing up the "FAPO" grouping ~~xxxxxx~~ of the '71 convention, during the '72 gay liberation discussion, would be reopening a broader discussion. When we discussed the FAPO position on gay liberation, and compared comrade Nat Weinstein's position to it, it's only reasonable that some comrades might want to respond with a defense of the FAPO position on gay liberation. They might then claim that other questions were directly involved, and thus try to reopen discussion of other questions. It was this broadening of the gay liberation discussion into other issues, which was being nipped in the bud, so to speak.

Barry admits,
True, ⁱⁿ a previous article we had been allowed to mention FAPO by name, and in fact at greater length and detail. *Barry says* ~~that~~ that was a mistake; we should never have been allowed to say anything more specific than "some comrades" or etc.

In the case of ~~XX~~ "FAPO" and also "WONAAC", there again was no explanation offered, as to why we were never consulted, sent an explanation, or even notified of the censorship.

1.0
(5) Mentioning "Workers League, Spartacist, Labor ~~XXX~~ Committee":

in one place where we compared Nat's view of gay liberation to that of the FAPO and the above opponent groups, it was all cut out. This was just a mistake: only "FAPO" should have been cut out, and "Workers League, Spartacist, Labor Committee, etc." should have been printed, according to Barry.

(6) Matilde's & apparent special privilege: Barry stated that no-one

in the party gets advance copies of internal documents before the regular printing; he had no idea how Matilde had gotten her advance copy of our article, so he asked around, and discovered that comrade Peter Camejo said he had seen our article when it came into the national office, and with our permission had given Matilde the copy. Following this, ~~ix~~ are copies of the exchange of letters among the comrades involved.

We hope we have been complete and fair in reproducing Barry's comments from our notes; we trust Barry will add or clarify if necessary.

Signed,

Sudie & Geb

III - LETTERS ON MATILDE'S "SPECIAL PRIVILEGE"

San Francisco

Feb 12 '73

Peter Camejo

Dear Pete --

I had a long talk with Barry Sheppard here today, about an appeal Sudie & I sent to the N.O., concerning, among other things, the apparent special privilege Comrade Matilde got in the form of an advance copy of what we wrote in the '71 SWP pre-convention discussion.

He says that you told him you had phoned us & gotten permission to give her an advance copy. Obviously we hadn't recalled this, or we wouldn't have sent in this appeal. He also says your diary confirms this. Could you let us know in as much detail as you can, how you & your diary recall the whole series of events?

I'm sure you can appreciate how concerned we feel about this. We are also in just a bit of a hurry to get whatever clarification we can. Barry will be in L.A. & will talk to Sudie there, near the end of this month as I understand. It would be very helpful if she could have your letter by then. Can you send a copy to ~~ME~~ ^{each} both of us? Thank a lot --

Signed, Geb

[These, et uncopy, are copies we typed from the original or carbon, in form for the DB-SEG]

①

②
14 Charles Lane, NY

February 19, 1973

Dear Gebert and Sudie,

You have asked how it was possible that in the preconvention discussion leading to the party convention of 1971 a contribution by you was answered in the same bulletin. This would indicate that Matilde Zimmerman, who answered your contribution, had access to your article prior to its publication. This you refer to as a "special privilege" which Matilde got.

What occurred regarding this matter was the following: The national office was, as usual, overextended in its work and with the preparations for the party convention asked me to leave Boston for a short period and help out in organizing the technical side of getting the discussion bulletins out.

Upon arriving in New York I discovered that no one had answered your earlier contribution and that to my knowledge no one was planning to. You had on various occasions complained about this at our branch meetings in Boston. On Saturday, July 17, you submitted three more documents. About that time you called the national office to make sure your documents had arrived and that they would be printed in time since we were getting near the end of the discussion period. Your call was passed to me since I was handling the documents. You asked me if anyone had submitted a reply to your

contributions and I said no but that I would try and see if someone would.

That weekend, July 17 and 18, was the first WONAAC conference.

Matilde Zimmerman, a leader of the Boston branch, was attending it. I called her and asked her if she would consider taking up your points and answering them as a leader of the Boston branch.

I xeroxed copies of all your documents and rushed them to Matilde so that her answer could be finished in time to get it into a bulletin. As it turned out she worked very fast, I believe she took off the next two days after the WONAAC conference to work on it while still in New York.

On Tuesday, July 20, I finished up preparing most of the documents which we had on hand and returned to Boston for an Executive Committee and EKH branch meeting. Both of you were present at the Executive Committee meeting since you gave a report there. It was at that meeting that I recall informing you that I had asked Matilde to work on a reply to your article and had advanced her a copy. You were quite pleased to hear that Matilde would be answering your article. At the time the bulletin appeared you did not protest the printing of Matilde's answer along with three of your contributions (Vol. 29, No. 22).

After our phone conversation of July 17 I felt it was in keeping with your own request to have taken the steps I did to facilitate an answer which you yourselves requested.

(4)
You state in your letter that you are in a hurry to get this

information -- two years after the fact. So I am rushing this off so you

will have it as rapidly as possible.

Comradely,

Peter Camejo

San Francisco

Feb 21 '73

Peter Cameje

Dear Pete --

I want to express my appreciation for your promptness in answering my recent letter. You didn't seem to understand why there was so much hurry after all this time; I even though I noticed a bit of sarcasm in your reference to this.

As you know, the ~~rush~~^{rush} was so Sudie could see your response before seeing Barry when he's in L.A. later in February; we didn't have much advance knowledge either of Barry's tour, or of your involvement in the whole question.

In July of 1971, before we had any knowledge of Matilde's article, we had run into censorship of our article on gay liberation. We had written the N.O. a letter of protest which specifically requested answers to several specific questions. We were waiting for an answer to that letter when the other matter arose-- in fact, we're still waiting for an answer to that letter.

Since our first letter of protest was simply ignored, we had to conclude that letters of protest to the N.O. were not the most effective tactics in the world.

We felt that the problems we ran into would only be taken seriously

(6)
by a subsequent convention, or — we hope — maybe a plenum. We were, and still are, more concerned with the censoring of articles. We wrote the N.O. about this as well as the other, some 6 months before the next convention, and nearly 3 months before the plenum.

I'm afraid there's going to be more to be said on Matilde's "special privilege", among other things, and I'm also afraid that it may be hard for all of us to maintain a pleasant tone while it goes on. In line with this, I recall that when we were all in Boston, that you were quite understanding about my preference for being called "Geb". So ~~XXX~~ I was surprised when your letter referred to me as "Dear Gebert". Is this a result of your moving to NY? (It seems that comrades in the national office have not been able to cope with the fact that I should be called simply "Geb" — and not "Gebert" or "Robert Gebert" or "Bob Gebert" or "Bob Geb" or "Bob".)

I do recall phoning the N.O. on different occasions; I believe I also recall the Boston exec meeting you mention. But neither Sudie nor I recall in any way giving you authorization to give Matilde an advance copy of our articles, either before or after you did it. In fact, until we saw her response in print, we had had no knowledge that she even might be replying to us.

It seems we remember differently. Unfortunately it isn't a simple matter of memories conflicting after the passage of time. Offhand I can think of three arguments which back up my memory and Sudie's:

ONE: Studie and I were shocked when we saw Matilde's article, right next to ours. The only explanation we could imagine, was that it was considered acceptable for the national office to send advance copies of discussion articles to selected comrades, such as Matilde. We continued to assume that this was the explanation until Feb 12 '73 when Barry told me otherwise. If you had in any way told us to expect the article, we wouldn't have been so surprised to see it, would we? If we had okayed her getting an advance copy, we wouldn't have concluded that giving out advance copies was an official privilege of the national office, would we?

TWO: If you had told us that you "had asked Matilde to work on a reply to ~~the~~ our article and had advanced her a copy", we would have explained to you that we weren't primarily interested in Matilde's response. We had been asking for a response which in some ~~real~~ real way could be taken as expressing the view of the national leadership of the party -- someone in the national office, maybe, or maybe a member of the national committee. We would have welcomed Matilde's effort, but it wouldn't in any way have been satisfactory. We would have explained this to you, and suggested that you find another comrade if possible -- even yourself, perhaps. If you had spoken with us, we would have given you such a response. We didn't give you such a response, because you didn't give us any occasion to.

THREE: If you had informed us of your action or asked us for ^{our} authorization, we certainly would have approved — gladly. For the same reason, we gave

John McCann of the FAPO group advance copies of everything we wrote. Also,

in the 1971 YSA convention discussion, I wrote two articles responding to the

~~article~~ ^{article} by the "Minority Tendency", and gave them advance copies. Giving advance copies of discussion articles, to those most likely to write responses, is obviously helpful to the discussion — it makes it possible to have much quicker replies. So we would gladly have okayed giving Matilde the advance copy.

But — there is a catch. We would — naturally — have asked Matilde to return the courtesy. Isn't that reasonable?

I don't understand why Matilde didn't simply return the courtesy, on her own initiative. I also don't understand: why didn't you make it a point to ask her to ~~EEEE~~ return the courtesy?

At any rate, we would have asked for it, in pretty emphatic terms, ^{said} if you had/so much as a word to us to inform us of what you had done or wanted to do. If Matilde had given us an advance copy of her article, we could have responded to it in some form, long before the deadline. Then it would have been fair, right?

It is also as a comradely courtesy, that I'm writing you this letter. I'm hoping it will help clarify the situation for you. I feel I

(9) 12,
could benefit from some clarification, myself.

Can you understand our position in this matter? Can you understand how certain we ^{feel} ~~feel~~ that we never in any way ~~XXX~~ consciously authorized what you did, and that you never notified us or asked for our authorization? Can you understand how unpleasant it is, to be put into the position we're now in, of not knowing what conclusions to draw?

Can you understand how -- even accepting what you say happened -- Matilde still ended up with a "special privilege" that Sadie and Geb were denied?

I do hope you'll interpret this letter in the comradely way I mean it.

-- Geb

10
San Diego

26 Feb '73

Dear Sudie,

I received your letter today about the preconvention discussion articles two years ago. I did get copies of Gebert's and Peter's letters on the subject, and my recollection of the sequence of events is the same as Peter's.

Comradely,

Matilde Zimmerman

~~SECRET~~ IV - POSTSCRIPT

After the discussion with comrade Sheppard described above, and the exchange of letters printed above, there still remain a number of questions in our mind which we feel need answers. Some of them are questions which have been answered, ~~many~~ but we aren't satisfied with the answers so far; others haven't been answered at all. It is important for us to all have a proper and full understanding of internal procedure, and so we wish to stress the questions that still need answers.

pace ~~→~~
ONE: Most comrades do not know how much internal censorship we have, or all the reasons for it. We think that most comrades have a vague idea that there is a possibility of security censorship in theory, but that in such legality as we have in the US today it wouldn't have much real effect. We also think most comrades have not had any idea that internal documents are also censored for being "suggestions or advocacy on strictly personal" questions even when the authors have fairly reasonable grounds for feeling that what they are saying is politically relevant. We think most comrades would not have expected "WONAAC" or "FAPO" to have been censored in these examples.

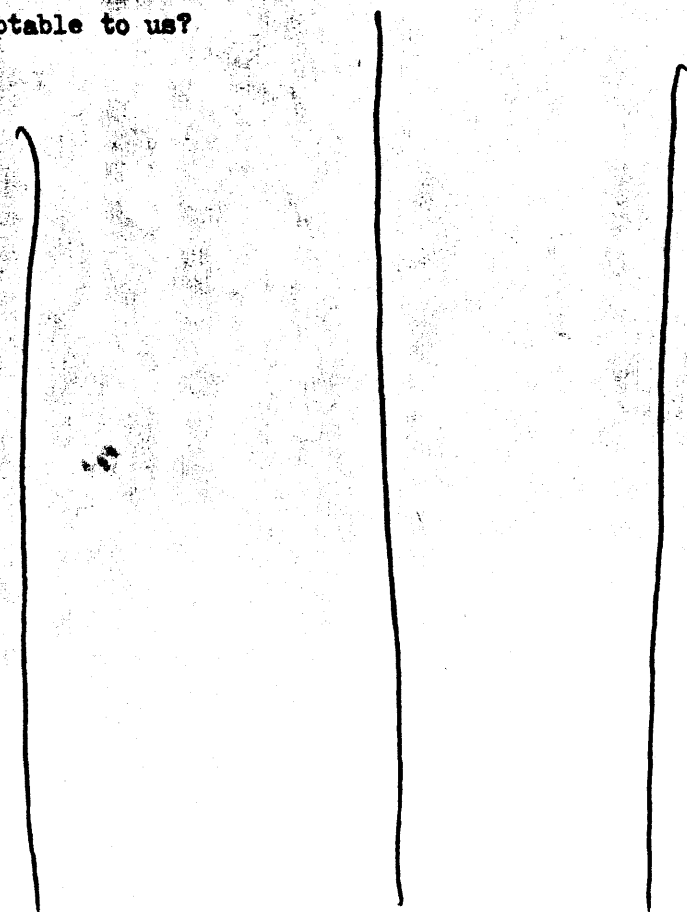
There may even be many other reasons why articles are commonly censored; we only know from the ones that happened to us. Are there any other grounds why internal documents would be likely to be censored by the national office?

TWO: We have internal education about the theory of democratic centralism, which generally gives comrades the impression that anything any comrade wants printed, gets printed, limited ^{usually} ~~only possibly~~ by time and possibly space. Why don't our internal classes teach us about all the other possible exceptions to the rule?

THREE: If internal bulletins are regularly censored, with no sort of notice to the reader that some section has been ~~XXXX~~ cut out or ~~XXXXXX~~ reworded, then how are we supposed to have any idea of how much is being censored? Maybe it happens a lot to Studie and Geb but hardly ever to anyone else. Maybe it happens a lot to everyone but the censors themselves. Why isn't the reader of our internal bulletins informed, maybe by a symbol like [...] ?

FOUR: In every case of censoring of our articles, it would have been reasonably easy for the national office to contact us and try to work out some sort of wording acceptable to both sides. Wouldn't it be

FOUR: In every case of censoring of our articles, it would have been reasonably easy for the national office to contact us and try to work out some sort of wording acceptable to both sides; in each case this wasn't done. In fact, the national office went so far as to decide in the case of our discussion of the marijuana membership policy, that they had to cut out so much that it was ⁽⁽only fair⁾⁾ to us to cut out the whole thing; so in effect, they allowed no discussion of the membership policy at all. Shouldn't we have been allowed to decide whether we wanted the printable parts printed? Shouldn't there have been an effort to work out a compromise which would be at least ~~partly~~ partly acceptable to us?



~~more fair to at least make an effort to do this?~~

FIVE: The only censorship we were notified of, was in the case where our entire article on gay liberation in '71 was rejected for being too "personal"; if we didn't carefully check the printed version of everything we wrote against the originals, how would we even have known that censorship had occurred? Shouldn't we have been sent some notice of what was done — and, for that matter, an explanation of why it was done?

SIX: It happens that one of the several motives in our minds, for arguing that the SWP should support the marijuana legalization movement, was that legalization would lead to use by larger numbers of people, and use of higher quality grass and hashish (i.e., fewer bad side-effects); we feel that this would have a positive cultural impact with eventual political benefit. As it happened, we didn't choose to put forward ^{part of our} this line of reasoning in the '71 discussion. Barry now tells us that, if we had made any such claims about benefits of marijuana, such a discussion would have been censored out. We do not at all understand how such an internal discussion article would significantly endanger the party; isn't the danger much greater, to our internal health

and internal democracy, when such a viewpoint ^{can't} couldn't even be put forward to the party by a comrade?

SEVEN: Barry also told us that the decision was made not to allow any suggestion that "anyone even wanted to change...our policy on heroin ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ or other such drugs". But isn't this a serious violation of the internal democratic norms, and rights of any comrade with such a view — or, potentially, any other minority view the political committee decides to ban? Wouldn't the danger to our internal health be much greater than the danger from the law in such a case?

EIGHT: In the general legality we live in, we really haven't got a heck of a lot to hide from anyone, which is a good thing, since we couldn't hide a heck of a lot if we ~~HE~~ wanted to. By banning any suggestion that comrades ever break any laws (even getting illegal abortions, having gay love, or extra-marital love, or being unintentionally in the presence of grass by going to an antiwar demonstration), doesn't that suggest that we do have something to hide? Wouldn't openness ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ and plain talk make more people realize that we don't have things to hide?

NINE: The November '70 Political Committee memorandum which decided to allow gays to be members of the SWP, also discussed our membership policy banning use of marijuana, which wasn't changed. One passage says "When we know of, have evidence of, or even hear rumors of the use of marijuana in the organization, we look into it. If it's true we tell the comrades they have to knock it off, we explain why and say they must comply with this rule or leave the organization". This memorandum ^{was also} ~~has been printed up~~ ^{as a 1971 internal bulletin.}

Maybe the political committee shouldn't have said "when", but rather "if". As it was printed, the passage certainly could be interpreted to mean that some times our policy has been violated by comrades. This goes much further than what we wrote.

It's true that nothing bad happened to ^{the SWP} ~~us~~ as a result of the political committee memorandum being uncensored; we haven't had any Minneapolis Trials or anything. But how come it's okay for the political committee to accidentally imply that some comrades may have smoked dope, yet we can't even suggest that some comrades may be actively gay in states where that's illegal?

Is it just that the censors mainly censor everyone else but don't bother themselves practicing what they preach?

TEN: In the case of the "strictly personal" last paragraph, our original article was simply returned to us as rejected for containing such suggestions or advocacy. We were told we could rewrite it and re-submit it, but we were given no suggestions as to how. When we phoned about the matter we even were given the general impression that there was a lot more than ~~THE~~ just the last paragraph, that would have to go. Wouldn't it have been better to tell us right from the start, that all we had to do was chop off the last paragraph?

ELEVEN: We felt that that last paragraph was politically relevant; the national office felt it wasn't. In cases where it's debatable whether something is politically relevant or not, wouldn't it be better to have a policy of reasonable flexibility?

TWELVE: When the censorship of this paragraph occurred in '71, we wrote a letter to the Administrative Committee which is described in detail in our Appeal above. This ~~IX~~ letter asked a few specific questions about the action the AC was taking, and we asked for a written explanation. That was fairly close to two years ago -- why didn't we ever get an answer?

THIRTEEN: Would it really be all that bad if some opponent stood up at the next women's liberation movement conference and read from an SWP internal bulletin, a sentence like: "WONAAC would probably not exist today if it were not for the work we have done ^{help to} to/build it" ?

Wasn't it basically true? Isn't it more dangerous to have the attitude that we have to hide ~~the attitude~~ ^{really} what we think about WONAAC ? Why act as if we have something to hide, when we really don't?

FOURTEEN: Concerning the mention of the "FAPO" grouping -- what difference does it make whether we referred to them by some specific name such as "FAPO" or by some vague reference like "some comrades" -- when many comrades could still figure out who we meant?

FIFTEEN: The national office agreed that our references to the FAPO position on gay liberation, were relevant to the gay liberation discussion; after all, it was printed, and just the ^{word "FAPO" was} ~~specifics~~ were chopped out. ~~REDACTED~~ Reasonably enough, some comrade or comrades might want to answer anything we said about the FAPO position on gay liberation. Maybe, as Barry suggested, these comrades would want to reply with a discussion much broader than gay liberation, which would have been out of place in the special '72 literary discussion on just the gay liberation movement.

We think defenders of the FAPO position on gay liberation should be treated like anyone else. Whatever limits were on discussion by comrades in general, should simply have applied also to them.

Where is the sense in ~~not~~ preventing Sudie and Geb from naming FAPO by name, just because some FAPO-supporter might -- might! -- ~~respond~~ respond by trying to re-open discussion of questions outside of gay liberation? Isn't that punishing us for something that someone else might do, and then again they might not?

SIXTEEN: In our previous article in the '72 gay liberation discussion, we discussed the FAPO position at length, and by name. Barry tells us this was a mistake; the national office should have chopped it out there, too. Maybe yes, maybe no, but the article already had been printed, for better or worse, with FAPO mentioned repeatedly and discussed at greater length. It was too late to undo what had been done. Even if there was reason to cut out the ^{disputed} ~~bad~~ word in the first place, ~~wasn't~~ wasn't it too late to make a difference?

SEVENTEEN: Barry tells us that it was a mistake for the national office to have chopped out the "Workers League, Spartacists, Labor Committee, etc."; only the reference to the FAPOs should have been chopped, and the rest

13 - 15

was completely ~~like~~ accidental. Doesn't that suggest that maybe the censors have been a little trigger-happy? We think any censorship of internal ~~like~~ discussion should be done only in the most extreme situations, that it should only be done as a serious decision of more than one comrade, and not wherever ~~anywhere~~ someone thinks maybe there might be some sort of grounds for censoring. If internal censorship was being treated as very serious business, then "accidental" censorship just wouldn't happen.

Does the national office think twice before censoring, or isn't the matter taken quite so seriously?

EIGHTEEN: Comrade Peter Camejo has taken responsibility for giving comrade Matilde Zimmerman the advance copy of our generation-gap article in '71; he claims he did this with our spoken approval, as a result of our complaint that the national office wasn't responding to our article on the ~~feminist~~ women's party.

While we had expressed a complaint about the silence of the national leadership on the feminist party concept, we definitely recall never having been asked by anyone whether Matilde might have an advance copy of something we wrote on a different subject. Peter's evidence beyond his memory and Matilde's, is his daily diary.

Peter surely has enough political savvy to realize that, on an important question like this one, someday he might need some more convincing proof than a little memory and his personal diary; why didn't he put something in writing to us stating what he did and why? Why didn't Matilde's article mention the advance copy (maybe even thanking us for the courtesy)?

NINETEEN: Supposing we had agreed to Matilde getting an advance copy (which we would have agreed to if we had been asked) -- why wasn't the courtesy returned to us, by us getting an advance copy of Matilde's article?

~~XXXXXXXX~~

may be

SUMMARY: There ~~xxxx/xxxx~~ times when our movement overestimates the problem of security in a particular situation. For instance, for a decade ending about two years ago, the party had a semi-formal policy banning gays from the party, on security grounds; this policy has since then been seen as a mistake, an exaggeration of what security required from us. ^{And likewise, we} think we have built up a fairly substantial amount of evidence, just from our own personal experience, to show ~~that~~ that the national office has been censoring too many internal bulletins on security grounds.

In addition to the pattern of an ~~XXX~~ exaggerated stress on security, there is another parallel pattern which can be seen in what we've discussed; the pattern of the national office ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ being too fast to decide that someone else should make some particular sacrifice. We'll give three separate examples.

The first example is the question of internal censorship itself. The national office has been too quick to chop ~~xxxx~~ chunks out of internal bulletins written by others, while not being equally strict on themselves (see especially what was printed in the Nov. '70 PC memorandum to all members, compared to what was chopped out of our own article), and certainly not giving others a fair chance to be consulted on a new wording when some wording must be ~~xxxx~~ changed.

The second example is the policy banning gay members, which was even formalized ~~xxx~~ by the YSA and made public in the Organiser. The party leadership which decided that gays had to give up the right to be comrades and that comrades had to give up the right to be gay — was not composed of gay people. It was straight people volunteering that gay people should make a sacrifice, a sacrifice they were not about to make themselves (the laws against extra-marital sex that some straight comrades violate, were naturally "unenforcable", but the laws against gay love were considered a security problem!). ~~against gay love was a threat to our security!~~

We feel that the present membership policy on marijuana is another example; we ~~XXX~~ won't present our full thoughts on this subject here, but we will say this: if it were ^{another drug} ~~similar~~ that was illegal, there are some leading comrades who ^{might} ~~would~~ be more concerned with winning legality, and who ^{might} ~~would~~ be able to better understand the concept of a balanced approach to ~~the marijuana situation~~

our own membership policy. There are comrades who think that any serious revolutionary can give up marijuana, yet they themselves would have a bit of a problem giving up ^{tobacco or} drinking if the ^{situation was} ~~turned around~~ turned around. ^P The PC's only written explanation to the membership as to why we have a special policy on comrades smoking grass, puts equal stress on the laws against it, and "the hatred of many of the oppressed of this country for the narcotics trade".

We don't know whether there are more oppressed people in the US who hate ^{tobacco or} marijuana, or who hate ^{tobacco or} alcohol; but it is clear that the ones who hate ^{tobacco or} alcohol would have better scientific evidence to back them up. Why aren't comrades asked to give up ^{tobacco or} alcohol, because of the hatred of many of the oppressed, for ^{those drugs?} ~~that drug~~ Isn't this another case of some comrades volunteering that others should make a sacrifice which they themselves would not be quite so eager to make if things were reversed?

NO
ENT →

NO
ENT →

Any national leadership must be made up of human beings recruited from capitalist society; as a result, any national leadership is going to give themselves the benefit of the doubt, more consistently than they do for others. This is why we have a constitution, and this is why we have clear norms for everyone to follow.

But it seems as if the norms of internal censorship need to be made more specific and clear, and firm.

We need to have the norm that internal censorship is a totally exceptional thing, done as a last resort only in exceptional situations. We also need a clear norm that, when censorship occurs, the comrades affected must be notified in writing of what has been done, and the reason why. Further, whenever practical, an attempt must be made to work out with the comrades involved, a wording which is satisfactory to both sides. Generally speaking, there should be some sort of indication to the reader that something has been cut out or changed, so the reader is at least somewhat informed. And our internal education should explain whatever censorship policies are decided, so comrades aren't taken by surprise when it happens.

The situation at present leaves us with very little way of predicting how much of this present appeal and post-script will ever

~~see~~ see print in the Discussion Bulletin. We have assembled our Appeal

itself, our paraphrase of Barry's informal response, copies of ~~3~~ *four*

letters concerning Matilde's special privilege, and this post-script.

Most of our readers will read these words, in the pages of the '73 internal SWP

pre-convention Discussion Bulletin. We feel the need to close by asking

the national office: HAVE ANY OF THESE MATERIALS THAT THE READER IS

.NOW READING, BEEN CENSORED?

Signed,

Sadie (LA branch)

Geb (SF branch)