14 Charles Lane
New York, N.Y. 10014

October 22, 1973

TO NATIONAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Dear Comrades,

Enclosed for your information is a copy of a letter from Tim Wohlforth of the Workers League to Jack Barnes and a copy of Comrade Barnes' answer.

Comradely,

Lew Jones

Lew Jones
SWP National Office

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Workers League
135 West 14th Street
New York, N.Y. 10011

October 5, 1973

Jack Barnes
National Secretary
Socialist Workers Party
14 Charles Lane
New York, New York

Dear Comrade Barnes,

As you know, I have been seeking to meet with a representative of the Socialist Workers Party. I have made several phone calls to this effect making it clear that I was taking this initiative on behalf of the International Committee, with which the Workers League is in political solidarity, as well as on behalf of the Workers League.

The purpose of this initiative is to seek the support of the Socialist Workers Party in urging upon the United Secretariat, with which it is in political solidarity, a discussion as outlined in the International Committee statement "For A Discussion on The Problems of the Fourth International." This statement appeared in the Wednesday, August 29 issue of the Workers Press and the September 24 issue of the Bulletin.

We continue to be interested in holding a discussion with you or any other representative of the Socialist Workers Party to see if a way can be found to bring about such a genuine discussion as outlined in the above mentioned statement.

We are hoping to hear from you in the near future.

Yours fraternally,

s/Tim Wohlforth
National Secretary
Workers League

cc: G. Healy

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14 Charles Lane
New York, N.Y. 10014

October 20, 1973

Dear Comrade Wohlforth,

I have attached the September 19, 1970, United Secretariat statement on the "unity" discussions then being sought by Gerry Healy in behalf of the "International Committee." It closed as follows:

> "To summarize: The International Committee has characterized the United Secretariat of the Fourth International and the Socialist Workers party as 'servants of the class enemy,' who 'decided to sell out to the Stalinist bureaucracy and the imperialists,' whose actions have placed them 'outside the camp of Trotskyism and of the working class,' and who must be dealt with as 'political scabs of the worst sort.'
>
> "No other conclusion is possible: Either (1) in making advances towards us, the leaders of the International Committee have decided to sell out to the Stalinist bureaucracy and the imperialists, and are following a course that will place them outside the camp of Trotskyism and of the working class; or, (2) the leaders of the International Committee have begun to recognize how wrong they have been in their characterization of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International and its cothinkers in other countries but do not want to acknowledge their grievous errors, still less engage in public self-criticism.
>
> "If the leaders of the International Committee have changed their opinion, then it is their duty to make public their political reasons for changing. On what specific political issues have they altered their views? We await their explanations with interest.
>
> "Of course another possibility exists -- that Comrade Healy's 'approach' to the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, and along with it Comrade Wohlforth's 'approach' to the Socialist Workers party, are only part of a 'unity' maneuver in the 'war' being conducted by the leaders of the Socialist Labour League against the Fourth International and the organizations sympathetic to its views.
>
> "This would seem to be the most likely possibility were it not for the fact that Comrade Healy has expressly issued a public assurance that he has 'no intention' of engaging in 'factional manoeuvring' over unity 'as such.'
>
> "Comrade Healy's public avowal that no unity maneuver is involved makes it all the more imperative that the International Committee publicly clarify its stand on the alternatives indicated above."

Since that time neither in their actions nor their press have the Socialist Labour League or the Workers League indicated any reconsideration of their characterizations of the United Secretariat and the Socialist Workers Party. In fact, the very public statement by the "International Committee," which you now

advance as a basis for "discussion," characterizes the United Secretariat and the Socialist Workers Party as "revisionists" totally unable "to return to the basic principles of Trotskyism." The Socialist Workers Party is slandered as having "opportunistically degenerated even further in the last ten years"; that is, further than being "servants of the class enemy," deciding "t sell out to the Stalinist bureaucracy and the imperialists," and engaging in actions placing the party "outside the camp of Trotskyism and of the working class."

In view of your failure to respond to the United Secretariat statement of September 19, 1970, your failure to indicate by any other means that you have modified your views of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International and the Socialist Workers Party, and your persistence in continuing up to this moment to publicly misrepresent and lie about our political positions, we see no reason for altering our previous refusal to engage in private parleys with representatives of the "International Committee."

Fraternally,

s/Jack Barnes
National Secretary
Socialist Workers Party

cc: United Secretariat
Gerry Healy

SEPTEMBER 19, 1970, STATEMENT OF UNITED SECRETARIAT

In a statement issued July 5, 1970, we reported that Gerry Healy, the national secretary of the Socialist Labour League, speaking on behalf of the International Committee, had asked to meed with Pierre Frank, a member of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International. In two conversations that were held, Comrade Healy "raised the question of organizing a mutual discussion that might open the way to the Socialist Labour League and its French sister organization, the Organisation Trotskyste, unifying with the Fourth International."

In its statement, the United Secretariat did not reject in principle the possibility of a unification some time in the future. But we noted the following items:

1. That "this move by Comrade Healy stands in strong contrast with the slanderous attacks that have constantly appeared in the press of the SLL and the OT against outstanding figures of the Fourth International, with the systematic refusal to engage in common actions in Britain and France, even in defending victims of repression by imperialism or Stalinism, and with the claim to be 'reorganizing' the Fourth International."

2. That "on a whole series of political issues the SLL and OT have not modified the very sharp differences they have expressed for years in opposition to the Fourth International."

"Under these circumstances," we concluded, "unification is not a realistic perspective."

Since then, two new developments have been called to our attention.

In the United States, the Workers League, a group sympathetic to the views of the International Committee, addressed a letter signed by Tim Wohlforth and dated August 18, 1970, to our cothinkers of the Socialist Workers party proposing a "joint meeting" in commemoration of the death of Leon Trotsky.

In England, the Workers Press of September 8 published a statement signed by Gerry Healy. In this statement, Comrade Healy specified that in his two meetings with Pierre Frank, which included other members of the United Secretariat and the International Committee, "At no time did I or anyone else from the International Committee make proposals as such for unity to the United Secretariat."

What he did do was to make an "approach." This, he pointed out, was clarified in the July 7 Workers Press as follows: "As part of this preparation the Committee requested G. Healy, the national secretary of the Socialist Labour League, to contact representatives of the Unified [United] Secretariat for informal talks around the possibility of joint discussion centered on outstanding political differences and directed towards the holding of a joint international conference."

Comrade Healy made two other significant points:

1. "Factional manoeuvring over 'unity' as such would convince no one, and we have no intention of engaging in this."

2. To facilitate "a comradely approach" to the discussion desired by the International Committee, "we are prepared to enter into mutual agreement that this be no longer conducted in our public press, but internally within our respective organizations."

Both the initiative taken by the Workers League toward the SWP and Comrade Healy's latest proposals to the United Secretariat appear to us to disregard the key question; that is, the depth of the political and theoretical differences separating us and whether these have been lessening or growing greater.

The differences involve two interrelated areas: (1) Characterization of the two sides from a class standpoint; (2) specific political and theoretical issues. In our opinion the differences in both areas have been growing greater since 1963 when the SLL and the OT held them to be so deep as to preclude participating in the Reunification Congress of the Fourth International.

We will defer consideration of the political and theoretical differences for another time and confine ourselves here to some items of public record that will serve to illustrate how the Socialist Labour League and its cothinkers have characterized the United Secretariat of the Fourth International and its cothinkers of the Socialist Workers party of the United States.

In the August 20, 1966, Newsletter (now the Workers Press), the Political Committee of the SLL charged the SWP with having "capitulated to imperialism" and with having "sold out the anti-war movement." The pamphlet published by us, Healy "Reconstructs" the Fourth International, which contained documentary evidence, including letters by Healy, showing the sectarian and anti-democratic character of the Socialist Labour League, was called a "provocation" that "constitutes a complete and irreversible departure even from revisionism...."

The SLL Political Committee stated further: "We shall not hesitate to deal appropriately with the handful of United Secretariat agents who hawk it around the cynical fake-left in England."

In an article published in the September 3, 1966, issue of The Newsletter, Gerry Healy made the following allegations concerning James P. Cannon, one of the founders of the world Trotskyist movement: "He [Cannon] had decided to sell out to the Stalinist bureaucracy and the imperialists."

In the same article, Healy made his attitude unmistakably clear: "The Socialist Labour League is out to destroy Pabloism and its SWP accomplices. There can be [sic] and, we repeat, there never will be a compromise on these questions -- the fight will go on until we destroy the Pabloites and the revisionist SWP."

A declaration passed by a special conference of the SLL and published in the December 3, 1966, issue of The Newsletter stated: "No longer a proletarian tendency, they [the SWP] are the left wing of the radical middle class."

In the same vein, the declaration continued: "It is this to which the SWP is really orientated: the firmer tying of the US working class to the two-party system and the capitalist establishment, despite the propaganda protestations to the contrary."

The SLL declaration made the following assertion concerning the SWP: "Your political actions have placed you outside the camp of Trotskyism and of the working class."

In line with this slander, the authors of the declaration

concluded by saying: "Henceforth we have no relations with the SWP: it is a fight between the working class and the servants of the class enemy."

This pronouncement was echoed by Tim Wohlforth, who is regarded by the International Committee as its leading cothinker and exponent of its views in the United States. In the February 13, 1967, issue of the Bulletin, in an attack on James Robertson, the national chairman of the Spartacist League, Wohlforth ended by saying:

"We warn Spartacist: There is presently a war going on between revolutionary Trotskyists represented by the International Committee and revisionist agents of capital represented by the SWP-Germain-Frank-Pabloite formation. You are on the other side in this war. Henceforth we will have no relations with you."

In our opinion, such assertions are not mere epithets. They express considered conclusions which Comrade Healy and his cothinkers have drawn as to the class nature of our political views, our political course, and the social composition of our organizations and sympathizing groups. This is the basic explanation for actions directed against us that otherwise remain inexplicable if not irrational. It is sufficient to cite two cases to illustrate the point.

The first is the assault on Ernest Tate on November 17, 1966, committed by six stewards of the SLL in the presence of Gerry Healy. Comrade Tate, a militant of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, was attacked while selling the pamphlet Healy "Reconstructs" the Fourth International in front of Caxton Hall in London where a public meeting of the SLL was being held.

The second case is the slandering of Hugo González M., a leader of the Bolivian section of the Fourth International. During a savage witch-hunt in which many members of the Bolivian section were arrested and tortured and the entire police network was searching for Comrade González, the November 19-26, 1969, issue of Informations Ouvrières, the Paris publication of the French cothinkers of the Socialist Labour League, asserted: "Serious suspicions exist today that Mr. Gonzáles [sic] Moscoso in person is working in the pay of the Bolivian government."

In following such practices, the International Committee is acting in accordance with its theory concerning the alleged "degeneration" of the Fourth International and the Socialist Workers party. As Wohlforth expressed it in defending Gerry Healy in the Tate case: "Ernest Tate and his political allies represent political scabs of the worst sort." In accordance with the "class" position he was taking, Wohlforth stated that the relationship between the SWP and its cothinkers on the one hand and the SLL and its cothinkers on the other "is symbolized by this confrontation with Tate."

To summarize: The International Committee has characterized the United Secretariat of the Fourth International and the Socialist Workers party as "servants of the class enemy," who "decided to sell out to the Stalinist bureaucracy and the imperialists," whose actions have placed them "outside the camp of Trotskyism and of the working class," and who must be dealt with as "political scabs of the worst sort."

No other conclusion is possible: Either (1) in making advances towards us, the leaders of the International Committee have decided to sell out to the Stalinist bureaucracy and the imperialists, and are following a course that will place them outside the camp of Trotskyism and of the working class; or, (2) the leaders of the International Committee have begun to recognize how wrong they have been in their characterization of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International and its co-thinkers in other countries but do not want to acknowledge their grievous errors, still less engage in public self-criticism.

If the leaders of the International Committee have changed their opinion, then it is their duty to make public their political reasons for changing. On what specific political issues have they altered their views? We await their explanations with interest.

Of course another possibility exists -- that Comrade Healy's "approach" to the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, and along with it Comrade Wohlforth's "approach" to the Socialist Workers party, are only part of a "unity" maneuver in the "war" being conducted by the leaders of the Socialist Labour League against the Fourth International and the organizations sympathetic to its views.

This would seem to be the most likely possibility were it not for the fact that Comrade Healy has expressly issued a public assurance that he has "no intention" of engaging in "factional manoeuvring" over unity "as such."

Comrade Healy's public avowal that no unity maneuver is involved makes it all the more imperative that the International Committee publicly clarify its stand on the alternatives indicated above.