14 Charles Lane
New York, N.Y. 10014

December 13, 1973

TO NATIONAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Dear Comrades,

Enclosed for your information is a letter from eleven supporters of the IEC Majority Tendency to the Political Committee and a reply by Frank Boehm, the Oakland-Berkeley branch organizer.

Comradely,

Lew Jones

Lew Jones
SWP National Office

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October 10, 1973

Political Committee
Socialist Workers Party
14 Charles Lane
New York, N.Y. 10014

This letter is to inform the Political Committee, and the United Secretariat, of remarks made to the Berkeley/Oakland branch of the SWP on October 1, 1973, by Branch Organizer, and National Committee Alternate Frank Boehm. Speaking on behalf of what he termed "leading members" of the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction in the branch. Boehm presented a motivation as to why representatives and supporters of the views of the International Majority Tendency (IMT) should be excluded from the Executive Committee of the branch, which was about to be elected.

Among other things, Boehm stated that SWP members who support the IMT's views, had been designated as "disloyal" at the recent SWP convention; therefore, the election of any of them to the branch Executive Committee would necessitate holding special exclusionary meetings or caucus meetings every week, in order to hide information from IMT supporters with which they could not be trusted.

Boehm also charged that in the past, supporters of the IMT's views had never played any significant role in the branch, were inactive, and had only been elected to the Executive Committee by the good graces of the SWP's majority. It is true that since the Fall of 1971 when over 50 supporters of the SWP majority were suddenly transfered into the area, no adherent of a minority point of view has been permitted to play an important role in the branch. Nevertheless, we believe it can be demonstrated that Boehm's statement is exaggerated to the point of being false, and that the responsibility for failure to integrate comrades with opposition viewpoints rests squarely on the policies of Boehm and this artificially implanted leadership -- who now comprise 13 out of the 14 seats on the Executive Committee.

However, what concerns us at present is the charge that all United States supporters of the IMT (no individual names were mentioned) are ipso facto "disloyal" to the extent that they can not be trusted to serve on the Executive Committee. This means that a repudiation of the views of the IMT is a requirement for serving on the Executive Committee. Therefore the Executive Committee is not of the branch but of the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction; and the Organizer (Boehm) of the Executive Committee is in reality the paid fulltime Organizer of the Faction -- just as all the fraction and committee heads, functionaries, and the very headquarters and facilities themselves, are also for that Faction and not our party as a whole.

In no way have supporters of the IMT's views indicated an unwillingness to carry out the decisions of the recent SWP convention. To the contrary, supporters of the IMT participated in the major branch activities that immediately followed it: the moving of the headquarters, the sales campaign, the special internal fund drive for the new branch offices, U.S.L.A. work, Farmworkers Support, Public Forums, branch social and fundraising activities, etc.

In contrast, the branch leadership started off the post-convention period with a trial and expulsion, and a statement (again by Boehm) of the intention to expel IMT supporter Mike T. A Leninist-Trotskyist Faction meeting was held the following week, but in the subsequent month the Organizer has not even bothered to inform IMT supporters when this threatened expulsion is to take place. Furthermore, IMT supporters who have requested transfers to other branches have met with extremely slow responses and even the suggestion that such transfers may be denied.

Clearly the local branch leadership is trying to create an impossible situation here for the supporters of the IMT. We are not now requesting, nor have we ever demanded, the automatic right of representation on local branch Executive Committees. Although we think that such representation is in the best interests of the party and the building of the International, that decision is up to the SWP Majority. However, Boehm's proclamation states that no matter <u>what</u> we do, our alleged "disloyalty" precludes us from becoming a real part of the branch <u>in advance</u>.

Such a position is tantamount to perpetrating a split in our branch along the lines of the International dispute. We believe that this runs counter to the spirit of the recent proposals unanimously passed by the IEC. We doubt that Boehm was unaware of that information because at the same meeting he mentioned having talked to Barry Sheppard of the National Office that very day; and the following evening the IEC decisions were read in the neighboring San Francisco branch.

The charge of "disloyalty" against supporters of the IMT has created a thoroughly divisive atmosphere in our party. It clearly implies that expulsions of the IMT supporters for their views are likely. We believe it is being used to scare SWP and YSA members from giving the IMT's views a fair hearing -- it is employed to line them up in advance on the "organizational" question. Now the use of that charge to exclude us from responsible positions has made the situation intolerable. We urge the Political Committee to consider a repudiation of the point of view that IMT supporters are disloyal and cannot therefore participate as full members of the Socialist Workers Party, including service on the branch Executive Committee.

Signed by supporters of the International Majority Tendency in the Oakland/ Berkeley branch:

Gerard Guibet
Sandy Hall
Tim Kissner
Ralph Levitt
Fran McPoland
Lew Pepper
Beth Semmer
Debbie Shayne
Celia Stodola
Mike Tormey
Alan Wald

cc: United Secretariat
Bill Massey

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Berkeley, Ca.
November 20, 1973

Jack Barnes
New York

Dear Comrades,

This is in response to the October 10 letter addressed to the Political Committee by eleven supporters of the IEC Majority Tendency in the Berkeley-Oakland branch of the SWP. I believe it is important that some of the misrepresentations of fact contained in their letter be corrected, and the record set straight.

The opening charge in the letter itself is false. They state: "Speaking on behalf of what he termed 'leading members' of the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction in the branch, Boehm presented a motivation as to why representatives and supporters of the views of the International Majority Tendency (IMT) should be excluded from the Executive Committee of the branch, which was about to be elected."

It was absolutely clear in the October 1 branch meeting that I spoke neither for the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction nor for any group of "leading members" of the LTF. While I had discussed my thinking with a couple of other comrades in the branch, which I stated when I spoke, I took the floor in the discussion immediately prior to the election of the new executive committee, as comrades oftentimes do, to state some considerations I thought important in the upcoming elections. The amalgam with the LTF is patent fakery.

That same sentence from the October 10 letter also charges that I motivated the exclusion of supporters of the IEC Majority Tendency from the executive committee. This is also false. Here again, the thrust and objective of my remarks were clear. What was motivated was that comrades should not feel that they must automatically, regardless of qualifications and leadership record, place a member of the Internationalist Tendency or the June 10 Tendency on a branch executive committee.

In my remarks I also spoke specifically against the two nominees who are members of the June 10 Tendency, Comrades Celia Stodola and Lew Pepper. Neither has, in my opinion, played a leadership role in the branch. In fact, despite Comrade Stodola's standing as one of the more active members of the June 10 Tendency, neither comrade nominated for the branch executive committee even approaches the average level of activity of the comrades in the branch as a whole. Needless to say, both Comrades Stodola and Pepper have a level of activity far below that of any of the comrades elected to the new executive committee. There is no way either of these two comrades would be elected to the executive committee based on their contributions to the building of the branch, their initiative, or their demonstrated leadership.

A requirement of branch leadership includes not only stating, even if unwillingly, that you will carry out the decisions of SWP conventions -- which in their letter they state they have done -- but taking some kind of lead in implementing those tasks and perspectives.

It is worth reviewing the record of activity of the June 10 Tendency and the Internationalist Tendency members and the two comrades of the June 10 Tendency nominated for the branch executive committee since the party convention. Sustainer pledges and the sale of our press are one of the indices of a comrade's branch leadership performance. This is especially true this fall because of the major campaign the branch undertook to implement the convention decision and to improve its sustainer base and Militant sales.

Members of both the Internationalist Tendency and the June 10 Tendency in the Berkeley-Oakland branch sold an average of approximately 1.5 Militants per member per week in the eight week period following the party convention, while those comrades elected to the new executive committee averaged approximately 9 Militants per member per week sold. Excluding the two older comrades on the executive committee, the average goes up to 10. Comrade Stodola averaged 5 per week, and Comrade Pepper 3.

Even more telling is the difference in sustainer pledges. The average weekly sustainer pledge of members of the June 10 Tendency and Internationalist Tendency equals $2.09, while the average for the comrades elected to the executive committee equals $24.00. Celia Stodola's sustainer pledge is $3.00 per week, as is Comrade Pepper's. The average sustainer pledge in the branch of all comrades -- not just branch leaders -- is now $10.32.

The comrades of the Internationalist Tendency and the June 10 Tendency have often charged that they have been systematically excluded from participating as full members of the branch. But each comrade of these two tendencies, as well as everyone else in the branch, was spoken to in the course of the sustainer raising campaign and encouraged to participate as much as possible. Yet at the end of the campaign the average of the comrades of the June 10 Tendency and Internationalist Tendency combined stood at a low $2.09. In addition, each member of these two tendencies was regularly approached, as was everyone else, to participate as fully as possible in The Militant sales campaign. Yet the average of the supporters of the IEC Majority Tendency after 8 weeks of the campaign stood at a low 1.5 Militants per member per week.

Included in branch responsibility, as well, are attending branch meetings regularly, participating in the building of our public functions and special projects. Furthermore, each comrade is expected to take an assignment on a branch committee or fraction.

But if a comrade does not, for whatever reason, carry out even minimal tasks of membership, it follows that that comrade will most likely not play a "major" role, if any, in the work of a fraction or committee. It is not a question of choosing those who will play "major" roles; any comrade can play a major role in any fraction by setting the pace, or leading the work in any way.

Such is the case with the overall branch leadership record of the local members of the Internationalist Tendency and the June 10 Tendency.

Nevertheless, every one of these comrades without excep-

tion who has been willing to accept an assignment has been given one. Some, such as Comrade Levitt, have refused assignments. Others, such as Comrades Semmers, Tormey, and Pepper, accepted assignments but have not carried them out.

The real record, as everyone in the branch knows, clearly demonstrates that contrary to the claim of exclusion from full branch participation, the Internationalist Tendency and June 10 Tendency members have been spoken to and encouraged to participate, and never denied assignments. The real record, in fact, shows that some of the members of the present day Internationalist Tendency and June 10 Tendency have been on a virtual strike against the party since the 1971 SWP convention, while others have been engaged in a slowdown. This continues to this day.

These comrades further charge that the alleged exclusion of Internationalist Tendency and June 10 Tendency members from full participation in the life of the branch is designed to "scare SWP and YSA members from giving the IMT's views a fair hearing...." This charge also flies in the face of reality. The discussion in the Berkeley-Oakland branch prior to the 1973 SWP convention was the most extensive in the entire party with more than 100 hours spent debating eight various topics. The minority comrades were given equal time to present their positions on all the topics where they requested equal time, except one -- Vietnam -- because they held no agreed on position among themselves. They still don't to my knowledge. But even on Vietnam the comrades of the minority were given extended time of one-half hour to present their criticisms.

The oral discussion period preparatory to the special SWP convention is now open. The Berkeley-Oakland branch will again be engaging in a thorough debate on the disputed points to be voted on at the World Congress. As during our last discussion, the supporters of the IEC Majority Tendency will have the opportunity, alongside the LTF, to present their positions fully and freely.

The most serious charge presented in the October 10 letter to the Political Committee states: "However, what concerns us at present is the charge that all United States supporters of the IMT (no individual names were mentioned) are ipso facto 'disloyal' to the extent that they can not be trusted to serve on the Executive Committee. This means that a repudiation of the views of the IMT is a requirement for serving on the Executive Committee."

It is true that the August 1973 SWP convention unambiguously characterized several of the actions of the leadership of the Internationalist Tendency and the June 10 Tendency as disloyal to the party and to the Fourth International. That judgment was based on the facts contained in the Barzman letter and on the record of members of these tendencies in sabotaging party finances and other party activities prior to the convention. The convention demanded that this method of functioning cease, reaffirmed its 1965 resolution entitled, "The Organizational Character of the Socialist Workers Party," and instructed the branches of the party to proceed in implementing this basic document.

But while adopting this stance, the convention also stated that despite the record of the Internationalist Tendency

and the June 10 Tendency, all comrades were to be judged by their actions in the period following the convention.

The Berkeley-Oakland branch felt it important, in light of the charge in the October 10 letter cited above, that this decision of the convention be reaffirmed in order to remove any possible confusion on this score. Therefore, the branch voted, on October 22, to co-opt Comrade Celia Stodola onto the newly elected executive committee.

I'm very sure the branch will be grateful if her performance, and that of her followers, is better than previously. I, and I'm sure other executive committee members, will do everything possible to maximize the chance of this occurring.

Comradely,

s/Frank Boehm