

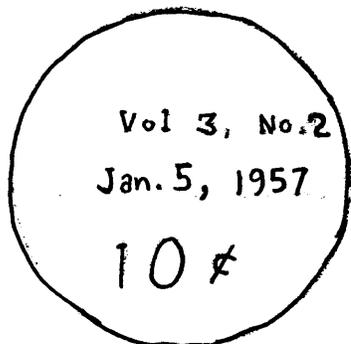
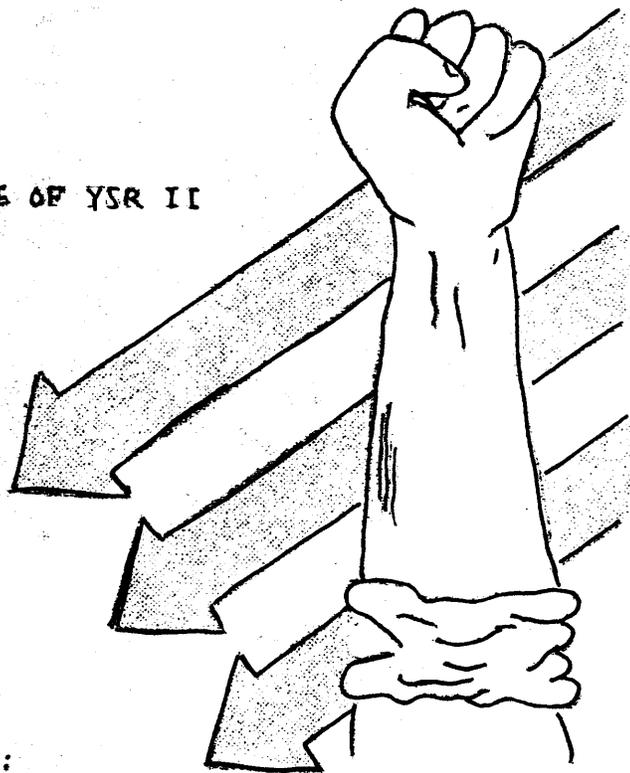
# YOUNG SOCIALIST

# REVIEW

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INFORMATION AND  
DISCUSSION BULLETIN  
OF

THE YOUNG SOCIALIST LEAGUE

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OFFICIAL BALLOT  
NATIONAL MEMBERSHIP REFERENDUM  
on 1956 ELECTIONS

1. The YSL position should have been: vote for the  
Socialist Party candidates.

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

2. The YSL position should have been: vote for any  
of the three socialist candidates.

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

(Date) \_\_\_\_\_ (Name) \_\_\_\_\_

(REMARKS)

On the Electoral Action Referendum II

by Mike Harrington

(1) We are all agreed that the YSL can only endorse a protest vote, i.e. that our endorsement of a Party or Parties does not constitute political support to their program, but only means that we urge those who wish to protest against the fakery of the major parties to cast a vote in such and such a way. From the Majority's point of view, a vote for the SWP is impermissible; a vote for the SLP is irrelevant; a vote for the SP is indicated.

The SWP

(2) Our objection to a vote for the SWP, either as a single endorsement or as part of a "Vote Socialist" endorsement, is not primarily based on our political criticisms of the SWP program. It is rather a function of the actual, practical consequences which SWP politics had in the SWP campaign, the fact that the campaign was an ersatz-Stalinist campaign. In this article, I am going to concentrate to a considerable extent on the documentation of this fact, but there must, of necessity, be a political interpretation to go with it.

(3) First, the context. The SWP was running its campaign during a period in which the CP was severely demoralized, politically disoriented, torn, for the first time in years, by bitter, open factional struggles. It was a period in which CPers themselves were raising fundamental political questions such as whether Russia was socialist (see, for instance, the article of "ES" in Number 6 of Party Voice, Discussion Organ of the NY State CP). Furthermore, it was the period of the Polish and Hungarian events.

(4) At such a time, the SWP attack-appeal toward the CP was based on....the conception that Stalinism represents a pro-capitalist force. Time and time again the SWP marked this as the crucial difference between itself and the CP: a case of revolutionary socialism versus reformism. Occasionally, there were references to the basic questions which the CPers themselves were raising, but only occasionally. The SWP was characterized so consistently in the terms of socialist opposition to reformism and opportunism that two SWP theoreticians (Stein and Ring) explained that the CP course in the last decade was not left-sectarian, but opportunist, i.e. that "it continued to pressure U.S. imperialism to re-establish the broken alliance" (Militant, September 17, p 2). And this, as we shall see, has interesting consequences in terms of the current internal fight in the CP.

(5) Here are some examples of the SWP campaign orientation: "Using the Communist Parties to disarm the masses politically in the struggle against capitalism..." (Militant, August 27, Platform); editorial attacking Morris of the Daily Worker as "100% in favor of Reuther's principle of class collaboration in politics" (Militant, September 3); lumps SP and CP together because "they stand for policies contrary to the interests of the working class" (in

(Cowley's letter, also September 3); in letter to CP National Committee, pitches the attack primarily against "class collaboration" (Militant, September 24); without specifying the period, characterizes the CP as "driven to help preserve the status quo throughout the world" (Weiss letter, October 1, p 2); and so on and so on. Thus it is that the Militant editorial which Comrade Wohlforth singles out for praise is primarily directed to this one point, to the question of class collaboration and the CP.

(6) Taken in the abstract, one might say, well, just another case of programmatic inadequacy, but nothing basic about the nature of the campaign. Then remember: first, in this particular period, with the CP in its specific situation, this is an incredible point to pick, one which feeds illusions. The occasional attempt to give some kind of explanation to the factors behind the CP line is swallowed up in the whole fog of analogizing the CP to Reuther and the SP, of implying that it is simply a radical party gone wrong, opportunist, etc. But, secondly, it led to a grave agitational distortion in the campaign, of which the following, the use to which Dobbs put one of the best pieces of TV time which he received, is a classic example. It is pondly related in the October 29th Militant, the transcript of Dobbs on "Reporter's Round-Up":

"Lucas. Mr. Dobbs what is the relationship between the socialist Workers Party and the Communist Party in the United States?

"Dobbs. The Socialist Workers Party and the Communist Party have an altogether different approach to the question of political action by the working people of the United States. We advocate the formation of a labor party. The Communist Party advocates that the working people support the Democratic Party."

That, comrades, is the difference between the Stalinist Party and America's "resolutely" anti-Stalinist Party, i.e. the same as the difference between the SWP and the AFI-CIO.

(7) Now this approach had important consequences in the campaign. It was not simply a matter of televising illusions about Stalinism. It was more than that. One of the chief aspects of the SWP campaign was its endorsement by McAvoy and Hallinan. This was trumpeted by the SWP, it was characterized by Comrade Wohlforth as an event of a "strikingly progressive nature." Let us look at Hallinan in his "principled" endorsement (the Militant's phrase) of the SWP. In his initial statement, he proclaims that he is for left unity, i.e. unity on a Stalinoid basis. And the various Parties? "Their mutual recriminations, based principally upon names and slogans which have lost their meaning, should be relegated to the Museum of Political Factionalism" (my emphasis, Militant, Sept 17, p 1). Later, Halinan, now firmly in the SWP camp, tells what he thinks of the CP: "Does not that party advocate socialism? Is it not opposed to war, racial discrimination, the exploitation of man by man - for friendly relations with China, the Soviet Union

and the other nations of the earth?" (Militant, October 22, p 2). When the SWP did answer this, or rather a "leading comrade" answered it, the reaction was that of a slap on the wrist, so much so that that it contained the following kind of statement: that the CP's politics were "anti-socialist" "in 1956"!

(8) In all of this, let me emphasize, the SWP did not become Stalinist. It ran a campaign which had the effect of allowing Stalinoids and Stalinists to retain the maximum number of illusions about Russia and the CP, while breaking on the one question of class collaboration in 1956. Again, one must underscore the context. The Stalinist world is in a state of turmoil, it is practically upside down, and at this juncture the SWP runs this type of a campaign. Such a campaign can be rightfully characterized as an "ersatz" Stalinist campaign.

(9) But more. Shortly after the election, when summing up its ideas to the CP (and giving them in a fuller presentation than at any time during the campaign), we find the following in a letter to the CPers (Militant, November 12): "Our criteria is the interests of the world socialist revolution which coincides fully with the interests of the defense of the Soviet Union." How does this compare with the following? "We must not lose sight for a single moment of the fact that the question of overthrowing the Soviet bureaucracy is for us subordinate to the question of preserving state property in the means of production in the USSR; and that the question of preserving state property in the means of production in the USSR is subordinate for us to the question of the world proletarian revolution." (my emphasis; Trotsky; In Defense of Marxism, p 21) Compare "...is subordinate" and "co-incides fully": a revision of some significance, though only two words long. The point may appear petty, but it isn't: for this is a theoretical revision of an important position of Trotsky's by...the "orthodox" Trotskyists. It is a part in a larger process of capitulationist actions and formulations.

(10) All of this is, of course, intimately tied up with the current crisis of Stalinism. And, in this regard, it is well to remark another dimension of the same factors which expressed themselves in the SWP campaign. The SWP is clearly leaning heavily on Trotsky's famous analysis of the Stalinists as a "center" tendency, caught between right and left, but driven eventually toward capitalist restoration. Thus it is that for them Nagy in Hungary is an "opportunist" who rallies "pro-capitalist" elements, that is his crime. Thus it is that the same issue of the Militant refers to "right-wing CP" forces in Hungary, i.e. the grouping which broke with the Warsaw pact and called for UN aid. Thus it is that SWPers in New York, when speaking up at Stalinist meeting, give the appearance of siding with the Fosterites against the Gates tendency. The SWP campaign was of a piece with this theoretical approach. While the best, the most important, elements in the Stalinist movement were being torn by basic questions about the nature of the Party, of Russia, etc., the SWP is offering...its theory of Stalinist reformism, its recipe for retaining illusions while showing independence. We cannot endorse, in any way, such a campaign.

(11) (As this was being written, yet another example of the direction of the SWP line confirms our general analysis. At a CP discussion meeting in New York, John Gates came out against Russian intervention in Hungary, both when Geroe called in the troops and when they were used to crush the Nagy government. By doing so, he explicitly placed himself in opposition to the CP statement on the question. This was greeted by an SWP speaker at the meeting with an attack on...Gate's reformism, his belief in a peaceful, parliamentary transition to socialism, etc. There are many, many things in Gates' position which no socialist could agree with (his continued defense of Russia as "socialist"; aspects of his point of view on how to build an "anti-monopoly coalition", etc.), but the fact remains that he represents the best tendency in the CP, i.e. the only one really moving in the direction of socialist politics. To ignore this basic fact and to concentrate on non-essentials (non-essentials to this movement) is an incredible act. It is one more case in point of how the SWP program leads to practical acts of capitulation such as their campaign.)

#### The SP and the SLP

(12) The irrelevance of the SLP and the relevance of the SP are best taken together. The conception with which we began must be repeated at this point: there is no question here of determining whether the SP's political program can be endorsed (we could not do that), but rather of whether this is the indicated way to campaign for a protest vote. In the case of the SP we can make the endorsement. And in our particular situation, and given the kind of campaign which we called for (to be treated later), the question of the SLP becomes irrelevant.

(13) To begin with: for a variety of historical factors, a vote for the SP is the "normal" mode of American protest. The SP is not identified with the politics of Darlington Hoopes and Samuel H. Friedman. It is thought of: (a) as the "historic" American Party of Socialism, the Party of Debs; (b) as the party of Norman Thomas, in the sense that it is for civil liberties, for production for use, the labor movement, against big business rule, against tweedle-dum and tweedle-dee, etc. Not that this conception is not ours; but it is, as Comrade Shane would say, a fact. For the various people with whom we are in contact, our pushing a vote for the SWP or SLP would be perplexing; they would almost immediately ask us to tell why we were not for the SP, and they would expect a programmatic answer.

(14) Here is a crucial difference between the SP and SWP-SLP. Since the SP is the "normal" mode of protest, no particular programmatic argument for the SP is necessary when one endorses it as we have done. And since a vote for the SWP/SLP is "abnormal", people would almost always demand programmatic reasons. Dialectically, concretely, historically, an SP capitulation to American imperialism is not, as for as a protest cam-

paigh goes, symmetrical to the SWP capitulations to Stalinism. That is, they have a different political meaning.

(15) All of this holds true for both groups to whom we appeal in the campaign (and, as will be pointed out, our conception of the campaign was particular and specific; our slogan was raised in a certain way). For the Lib-Lab, the remarks about the SP are obviously true - a jillion of them have already voted for Thomas on the grounds described above. For the Stalinist-Stalinoid, two factors are important: (a) even they tend to consider the SP in the "historic" sense (see Steve Nelson's article in the current "Political Affairs"); (b) in particular, in this campaign, we want to keep them as far away from the illusion-engendering campaign of the SWP as possible. Mallixnan, cited by Comrade Wohlforth to prove his point is, I submit, a confirmation of the exact opposite, of my point.

(16) To sum up the above: The SP is generally understood as the party of protest vote, as a party one votes for without necessarily agreeing with its politics; the SWP/SLP are not.

(17) Moreover, a legitimate aspect of this campaign is how it affects us internally. And, in this regard, the way in which the majority endorsed the slogan, Vote for H&F, becomes important. Here are the two relevant sections of the Majority resolution:

"(11) We must view this question in terms of the kind of a campaign the SP proposes. It will not be on the ballot in most states, and support of the SP ticket means calling for a write-in vote. The SP itself voted for a campaign primarily in an effort to get radio and television time. There is no indication that there will even be a campaign organization, rallies, etc. In other words, the SP itself does not view its campaign as agitational.

"(12) Given this situation, we endorse the campaign of the SP, but in a certain way. The slogan, Vote for Hoopes, should not play the major point in our agitational work. Our support means that we call upon members of the League and its sympathizers, as well as radical workers, Negroes and liberals - those who are thinking in terms of a protest vote - to cast that vote for Hoopes and Friedman."

(emphasis added)

Now this is a very definite conception of a type of endorsement. It means: (a) that our agitational slogan during the campaign was to be that of the Labor Party (and our major article, reprinted as a pamphlet, was accordingly oriented in that direction and did not mention H&F; (b) that our educational work, i.e. arguments addressed to those near us, those with whom we talked politics in a meaningful sense, was to include the recommendation for a vote for H&F. It also meant that in various localities, our units and clubs would invite SP speakers where that was on the agenda, work with local SP's where possible, etc.

(18) Now some of the comrades, and I am thinking of Comrade

Owen and those who agree with him in New York, agree politically with the Majority, but argue against our conclusions on "practical" grounds. Their point of view, I feel, is based on a mis-understanding of the kind of SP endorsement projected by the Majority. In an agitational campaign, the argument for simply shouting, "Vote Socialist" from a sound-truck would have considerable weight. For there, one would not have the opportunity to go into all the details, to speak of the way in which a write-in is cast, etc. But we did not endorse an agitational campaign for the slogan, Vote for H&F; our agitational work, as pointed out before, centers around the Labor Party slogan. Our H&F slogan is addressed to a situation where we are talking with a conscious student, Negro, radical worker, where we are doing a job of political education. Under such circumstances, it is important (a) to reject an SWP vote, i.e. to explain our attitude on the SWP; (b) to place our line in the context of the American "protest vote" tradition, i.e. in terms of the SP.

(19) Similarly for the "mechanical" argument. If our voting slogan were agitational, then the question of whether a party was on the ballot or not would become of considerable importance. But as an educational slogan, we must consider primarily, not its physical availability, but its political function. In the limited sense of our endorsement, the mechanical argument doesn't hold.

(20) The same factors play a part in the stress given to the probing of unity, to the theme of socialist regroupment, in the Majority stand. We are in contact with the SP: in Chicago and LA, a continuing and somewhat friendly contact; in New York, a more hostile situation, but one which is undergoing change. We did manage to do valuable political work through our H&F endorsement. Thus, in terms of the kind of campaign projected, the unity consideration is a relevant one. Could we have had similar relations with the SWP/SLP?

(21) To sum up this section: the generally understood meaning of an SP vote hasx, in Lib-Lab and even Stalinist circles, long been that of the protest vote. Not so with the SWP/SLP. In this context, we have a powerful argument for the slogan, Vote for H&F. Secondly, the Majority projected this slogan in an educational, not an agitational, sense. Therefore, the various "practical" objections, based as they are on an implicit conception of an agitational campaign, are not controlling. And finally, the fact of our concrete political relationship with various SP sections is not unimportant. From these considerations, and from the analysis of the SWP campaign which we have already made, the Majority's position is placed in perspective: a vote for the SWP is impermissible; a vote for the SLP is irrelevant; a vote for the SP is indicated.

#### Blocs: Principled and Unprincipled

(22) At the very outset, let me return to a crucial point, one which Comrade Wohlforth chooses to evade: that it is clear that among the comrades calling for a referendum, there is a range of political opinion which embraces qualitatively different attitudes; that this should be made clear by these comrades themselves



so that we can have a clear notion of the internal political situation in the YSL, so that an unprincipled bloc is avoided. There is nothing wrong with people with different political points of view agreeing on some immediate point and working together. But when this common action results in an obscuring, a distortion, of the political differences, then one is on the high road to an unprincipled bloc.

(23) Comrade Wohlforth describes his grouping (in which he includes both Comrade Shane and the LA comrades): "...that we have political differences among ourselves is known to everybody; but the common political basis of our position has been stated and it is based on independent socialist politics, not on Cannonism." (my emphasis) Now let us see where this "common political Basis" is stated, and how the political differences work in this particular bloc.

(24) At the Plenum, which Comrade Wohlforth attended, Comrade Shane made it very clear that the basis of his position was sympathy for the SWP. In his first document, he had characterized the SWP as being "as resolutely anti-Stalinist" as any other socialist tendency. On the basis of Shane's defense of the SWP at the Plenum, I attacked his written statement, using almost the same arguments which he had rejected at the Plenum. As a principled proponent of his position, Comrade Shane replied with a document that is clearly and unequivocally Cannonite.

(25) Now, Comrade Wohlforth in his document, "Diverse Comments": "Comrade Shane in his latest document has made passing references to a new position adopted by him on Korea and Formosa. I for one do not intend to answer Shane on this matter until he presents these ideas in some substantive form and not just in a casual reference. They are not pertinent to the present discussion, except that Harrington's reaction to them is an illustration of the extent of his Stalinophobia. To him, Cannonism becomes 'ersatz-pro-Stalinism', Shane's state capitalism becomes 'Cannonism,' and the left wing's argumentation - which clearly states its differences with the SWP - becomes 'based on Cannonite politics.' Such a tendency to smear political opponents and to refuse to differentiate between basically different political points of view has no place in a socialist movement and simply is an example of the extent of Comrade Harrington's capitulation to the atmosphere of the times."

(26) This passage is classic as an illustration of the dangers inherent in an unprincipled bloc. Let me take individual aspects of the paragraph to demonstrate this.

(27) For Comrade Wohlforth, Comrade Shane has made "passing references," "a casual reference", which do not require repudiation by one who is in a bloc with him. This is his characterization of several, single-spaced pages of revision of basic independent socialist positions, including a repudiation of the Third Camp line on Korea. Turn this around to get its full flavor. Just suppose that a member of the Majority wrote several pages in which

he proclaimed: that he solidarized himself with the SP position on the Korean War, with its initial line on Guatemala, and with its initial attitude on Guy Mollet. Comrade Wohlforth, who can find a "disastorous tendency" in one answer to a letter by Comrade Draper, would, I am sure, fill the air with charges against the majority - and they would be a little stronger than Kautskyism. Point: in an unprincipled bloc, there is the danger of the double standard, one for your political differences with those in the bloc, another for those outside of it; there is an almost inevitable tendency to gloss over crucial political differences.

(b) For Comrade Wohlforth, Comrade Shane's position on Korea and Formosa is a "new position" stated in a casual "reference" On Korea, yes. On Formosa, it is a restatement of a line which Comrade Shane has argued for in Labor Action - and, in my document, I called attention to that argumentation. Once again, the danger of the unprincipled bloc, the inevitable glossing over.

(c) To skip a little. To me, Comrade Wohlforth tells us, "the left wing's argumentation - which clearly states its differences with the SWP - becomes 'based on Cannonite politics.'" Two distortions. First: what is the "left wing"? Does it include Comrade Shane? Does Comrade Shane clearly state his differences with the SWP? Has Comrade Tim, or any other member of what he calls the "left wing" differentiated himself from Comrade Shane on various questions (such as the SWP) while basing their common point of view on independent socialist politics? Second: in my Reply to Comrade Shane, I differentiated ad nauseam between Shane and others who now share his conclusions but not his politics (cf, for example, paragraphs 1 and 21 of my document). For Comrade Wohlforth this becomes... "a tendency to smear political oponents." In other words, I did not say what Comrade Wohlforth implies I said. But why these contortions on his part? Because he is in an unprincipled bloc and doesn't think that this fact is "pertinent." Therefore, he has to mis-state my point of view, and to invent a "left-wing" which clearly does not include Comrade Shane (since it states its differences with the SWP, and Shane doesn't), but which isn't without him at the same time. A further step in the progress of the politics of Comrade Wohlforth's unprincipled bloc.

(d) Tone. This has nothing to do with the politics of an unprincipled bloc, with its glossings, but rather with Comrade Wohlforth's unfortunate style. "To him (Harrington), Cannonism becomes 'ersatz pro-Stalinism', (wrong: I solidarized myself with the ISL characterization that the Cannonite are running an ersatz pro-Stalinist campaign) Shane's state capitalism becomes 'Cannonism' (wrong: I didn't mention a word about Shane's state capitalism; I documented his pro-SWP politics), and the left wing's argumentation... becomes 'based on Cannonite politics' (wrong: as noted above, the confusion is not mine, but Comrade Wohlforth's). The conclusion of this argument: that this is "simply an example of the extent of Comrade Harrington's capitulation to the atmosphere of the times." Judge for yourself.

(e) My original point remains. Comrade Wohlforth has given us a fine demonstration of the twistings and turnings which develop out of the politics of an unprincipled bloc. Once again: imagine that a Majorityite had a pro-SP position symmetrical to those of Comrade Shane on the SWP. Would Comrade Wohlforth find this

"not pertinent", a "casual reference", etc.?

Summary

- (28) Let me recapitulate some of the basic issues and ideas involved in the Referendum.
- (29) The SWP. The SWP is a Party based on a crucial programmatic contradiction: its socialist struggle against the Stalinist bureaucracy; its anti-socialist defense of "nationalized" property in Russia. The Pabloites based themselves on one out of the two points and became anti-socialist. In resisting them, the Cannonites were taking a socialist stand, but this did not wipe out the anti-socialist element in their basic program. That element has been present in a whole series of cases, e.g. attitude toward the Korean War, toward China, etc. It was present in the 1956 campaign. In the campaign, the SWP adopted various positions which were capitulationist. In particular, it ran a campaign which differentiated the SWP from the CP primarily on the basis of one question, that of attitude toward the Democratic Party. As a result, it was able to attract various Stalinoid-Stalinist types, but at the price of not shaking them up too much, at the cost of providing a new basis for all but one of their illusions. Such a campaign is not a "protest" campaign; it is an ersatz Stalinist campaign. For this reason, we cannot endorse it in any way.
- (30) However, it would be wrong to go from this characterization of the SWP campaign to a characterization of the SWP as such. The Party remains a socialist party with a profound anti-socialist element in its program. In this particular period, one in which the socialist movement is developing a new type of relation with the Stalinist movement, that contradiction will be sharpened, it will have (and has had, as with the Gates faction) bad consequences. Still, the SWP has yet to resolve its contradiction, even though a specific act of its, like the '56 campaign, may be based more on the anti-socialist parts of its program.
- (31) As a matter of general characterization, the SP remains a "centrist" tendency (and not, as Comrade Shane would have it, a party of "deep-dyed reformism"). It is centrist, but with various differentiating characteristics. It is, for example, a highly bureaucratized centrist party, and this must be taken into account when dealing with it, though it is not particularly relevant to the question of electoral endorsement. It is a centrist party which is the focus of the American protest-vote tradition. This is a differentiation which becomes extremely significant when the question of endorsement is raised.
- (23) By calling for a vote for H&F, we do not make a programmatic endorsement of the SP. What we say is this: that in this given situation, the best way to carry on an educational campaign for a protest vote within the context of an agitational campaign for a labor party is to call for a vote for H&F. This follows, not so much from general considerations about centrist parties, but from

all kinds of concrete, specific and historical political considerations.

(33) And finally, the Majority called for a certain kind of endorsement. This must be underscored, the educational nature of the campaign which we proposed be understood, the fact that our agitational slogan was that of the Labor Party must be remembered. In this context, with a vote for the SWP excluded, a vote for the SLP becomes irrelevant; a vote for the SP is indicated.

#### Politics of the YSL

(34) In conclusion, every comrade will vote on the question as he must. There are many motivations on both sides of the question. However, the Referendum has, I believe, made one thing clear: that, for the overwhelming majority of us, our discussion and disagreement takes place within a basic commitment to the independent socialist position. The discussion which was initiated on the issue of electoral action must now be broadened, in preparation for the next Plenum and Convention, and for our day to day work. This is clearly a period of change, of re-orientation to a new situation. In the coming months, we will have to range over a whole series of crucial, important questions - work with the Stalinists, attitude toward socialist re-groupment, etc. In this context, we cannot over-estimate the importance of this Referendum, whose meaning is more symptomatic than conclusive.

(35) Still, the Majority stand should be affirmed. There was no "appealing" choice for us in the election, none at all. But given the situation as I have described it, given the kind of a campaign projected by the Majority, the slogan, Vote for H&F, was the right one to put forward.

VOTE FOR THE MAJORITY POSITION!

by Shane Mage

Comrade Harrington's essay " On the Electoral Action Referendum " seems to be of such a nature as to confuse as much as possible the political issues involved in this question. In reply, I seek only to pose those political issues as clearly as possible. I will avoid following up Mike's digressions, unless the polemical form of this discussion makes it unavoidable, and I promise never to refer to Mike as a " Shactmanite ".

Mike and I may disagree on what socialist policy should have been or should be toward the 1947 UAW fight, the Korean war, the Chinese revolution, the Formosa situation. For purposes of the discussion on Electoral Action, however, the question of which of us is right on what issues is perfectly and completely irrelevant.

The only significance of these issues is this: Mike brought them up as proof of the SWP's " capitulation to Stalinism ". As he stated his point, " In the four cases in point enumerated above, the truth about the SWP is plain enough: that it has been capitulationist with regard to Stalinism."

It is necessary for Mike to prove this - necessary but insufficient. It is necessary for him to show that the SWP is " capitulationist with regard to Stalinism " before even thinking of support to the SP, which is capitulationist ( to put it mildly ) with regard to U.S. imperialism. But even if he does prove this, he still is required to show sufficient political reason to single out the SP for support. He fails even to come close to doing either.

Let us now look at each of Mike's " cases in point ".

First, the UAW fight. Originally, Mike charged that the SWP were " leading elements in the Stalinist caucus " (ital. mine, s.m. ), obviously implying a generally pro-Stalinist role in the union movement. Now, he admits that his charge was unfounded; the " Thomas-Addees " caucus was not a Stalinist caucus, and the SWP line in the UAW was not the expression of a pro-Stalinist trend, " as was made clear by their blocing with anti-Stalinist forces in other unions."

Having had to admit this, Mike then tries to show that, though his original statement was false, the consequences he drew from it were completely valid.

And how does he do this? By asserting that the SWP's characterization of Reuther was based on a pro-Stalinist theory. What pro-Stalinist theory? That Stalinist parties are analogous to social-democratic parties.

Mike has here mangled and distorted the SWP's views on this theoretical point. But even if his version of the SWP theory was true, what right does Mike have to call it pro-Stalinist, even potentially? The SWP is entirely against the Social-Democrats - it considers them treacherous, counter-revolutionary, etc. If it equates the Stalinists to

them, isn't it rather an anti-Stalinist theory than a pro-Stalinist one ?

Mike, assuming that this supposed SWP theory is pro-Stalinist, then goes on to assert that the SWP's anti-Reuther line was based on it. But he doesn't show the connection between the two. And in fact, if we look at the actual basis of the SWP's policy, we see that this "theory" had nothing to do with it. ( I quote from Cannon's speech on " Some Facts About Party History " )

" The question of the Stalinists -- who were backing the Thomas-Addes group -- was only one factor in the discussion at the 1947 Plenum, and not the main one. The main question at issue was the factual question as to which way the main mass of the non-Stalinist militants were lining up in the UAW pre-convention fight. "

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"The adopted resolution listed four reasons for the orientation toward the Thomas-Addes bloc. The first reason was Reuther's combination with the reactionary Catholic outfit, the ACTU, and ' their increasing hostility towards us, as well as all radicals in the union." The second reason was the danger of the Reuther-Catholic bloc getting a monopoly in the leadership and stifling democracy in the union -- a very important point, and for me the decisive one. The third reason, I quote: ' The overall more progressive character and militant composition of the Thomas-Addes group and their demonstrated desire to cooperate and work with us.'....The fourth, and final, reason the PC resolution gave for supporting the Thomas-Addes bloc...was' The decline of Stalinist strength and influence; and their virtual absence from the top councils of the Thomas-Addes group. " ( All italics in orig. )

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In passing, let us note that Mike did not deny my point that the SWP's analysis of Reuther had been proven correct - he merely asserted that it was based on a false theory. But what is theory without the test of practise? And if the analysis flowing from a theory is confirmed, what then follows about that theory ?

The burden of the above has been to disprove Mike's charge of the SWP's "capitulation to Stalinism" in the labor movement. I have not even attempted to deal with the class nature of the CP's, and that question is entirely irrelevant to the present discussion. My point of view on this subject is on record ( in my " Draft International Resolution " of last year ), and I am more than willing to discuss this at any time that someone is willing to present a criticism of my position.

Secondly, on Korea. Mike says, correctly, " But this is not the place to argue the question of Korea ", after he has spent two paragraphs arguing " the question of Korea ". I will not answer him on it, solely because I wish to restrict myself to the question at issue - the SWP's

alleged " capitulation to Stalinism ". Mike has in no way answered me on the two intertwined aspects of the war which motivated the SWP's position on it, and differentiate the SWP's stand from any variety of pro-Stalinism ; The war was, in part, a national struggle of the Korean people against U.S. imperialism and a revolutionary struggle of the South Korean peasantry for the land. These are facts which even Labor Action recognized ( under the form of " Stalinist political warfare "). Whether or not these aspects of the North Korean struggle justify supporting it, the fact remains that the SWP differentiated them from the Stalinist leadership which it continued to oppose. And that is not " capitulation to Stalinism ", unless proven to be no more than a systematized rationalization.

A word on " Stalinist imperialism ", Mike complains that I ignored his disavowal of his " previous ideas on Stalinism and Imperialism ", expressed in passing in his article on State Capitalism.

In the article in question, I very carefully stated Mike's view as that " Stalinism as a social system cannot be called imperialist ". What did he say on this point in his article on " State-Capitalism "? Nothing at all ! At no point did he repudiate his belief that there are no inherently imperialist drives within a " bureaucratic - collectivist " system - rather, he considered " Stalinist Imperialism " as the function of an isolated national state under imperialist competition. Therefore he has a right to talk about the possibility of Russian, or Polish, or even Albanian imperialism, but he has no right to talk of Stalinist imperialism.

His new approach is compatible with state-capitalism, but not with bureaucratic-collectivism, because its basic approach is to abstract from all social differences between the contending world powers - and this can be a theoretically permissible methodology only on the assumption that these social systems have a fundamentally identical nature ( And very often it isn't permissible even then ! )

On China, Mike merely repeats that he considers Chinese Stalinism to be " bureaucratic-collectivism ", " the new enemy of socialism ", a " set back for an indefinite period/to the workingclass, democracy, and socialism." But he doesn't even answer me as to the existence of the Chinese revolution, ie., the mass action of hundreds of millions of human beings as the motor force of China's social transformation. However, this is the decisive question.

If there was no such revolution, then both the SWP and myself are guilty of " glorifying " Chinese Stalinism in capitulatory fashion. But, on the other hand, if this revolution actually took place my criticism of Harrington's views must be admitted to be valid: that he counterposes " to the actual historical tasks and accomplishments of the colonial revolution his theory of the ' bureaucratic - collectivist future ' ".





he said on page 8, and was once more lumping the SWP with the Stalinoids: " All kinds of Stalinoids, Cochranites, Canonites (sic.), etc., ... support the Poznan workers. "

Can it be that this sort of " forgetting " is not exactly accidental ? Perhaps, though he would probably refuse to admit it even under oriental tortures, Mike unconsciously is perfectly well aware that the SWP's position on the Eastern European revolution places it in a different class camp from every variety of pro-Stalinist.

This must be the central point in evaluating the SWP. It is a question of - which side of the barricades is it on ? This is not a matter of formal logic, it is one of political logic. In the workers revolution against Stalinism the SWP lined up with the workers peasants and students of Poland and Hungary, and against all the varieties of Stalinists, including the " Titoist " Stalinists like Gomulka and Nagy. Alongside this monumental fact, what place has talk about the SWP's " capitulation to Stalinism " ?

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Mike starts his discussion of the American SP with a statement of my general attitude toward entry into Social-Democratic parties which, it so happens, is entirely false: " Comrade Shane disagrees with our basic position, that the independent socialists should now constitute themselves, in general,...in the left wing of the...mass workingclass parties of social democracy. "

In point of fact, I agree with this position. In my " Comments on the Martin and Harrington resolutions on the International Question " (YSR, Dec. 9, 1955, p.6) I quoted Martin's statement of this theory thus : " In general... all revolutionary socialists should enter the European Social-Democratic and Labor parties in which the workers are to be found ", and then commented that " this position is quite correct where the SP's do in fact contain the bulk of the working class ". The only exceptions I named were France, Italy, and Spain. If the present possibility of socialist unity in Italy is consummated, I will of course be for entering a united socialist party - but all events of the past year have made it even less intelligent for socialists to enter or stay in the party of Guy Mollet.

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In discussing the American SP, Mike finds it necessary to dispute my statement about " the consistency of the SP's deep-dyed reformism " - and the arguments which are the best he can find to do this with are instructive indeed. Since 1954 ( But the leadership, and therefore the political line, of 1954 is still solidly entrenched, isn't it? ) a left wing has developed in the SP. " The fact that a Third Camp resolution almost carried the 1956 SP convention is certainly a refutation of 'deep-dyed' reformism ".

Now I don't claim to know what was in that famous " Third Camp resolution ", because since the SP not a word of it has been reprinted in either LA or the YSR, although, presumably,

here was and is an obvious opportunity for the pro-SP group to offer some sort of substantiation for its case.

But why should anyone think that a resolution is revolutionary, or even anti-reformist, because it uses the phrase "Third Camp" ? I would, in fact, be very much surprised if this resolution contained even the slightest deviation from reformism, since the political character of this "left" wing is perfectly clear. Isn't it for unity with the SDF ? Didn't McReynolds seek to defend the SP right wing's refusal to condemn Mollet ? Haven't our Los Angeles comrades, who know these "left-wingers" intimately, stated that on the question of Stalinism the SWP has a better position than they do ?

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Finally, let us come directly to the question of electoral policy. Those who favor supporting the SP have in one breath told us they are in no way opportunistic, and in the next told us that the relative merits of the SP and SWP programs were irrelevant. Draper even accused S.R. and Tim of "opportunism" for raising the question of political comparison.

This approach has at least the virtue of brazenness, but it is no less self-contradictory for being expressed so self-confidently. No amount of verbiage can get over the fact that to support electorally one party as against another means to support its program as against the program of the other party. Not to accept it lock stock and barrel, of course, but in general to prefer it to all competing programs.

Mike rejects Tim's contention ( shared by the San Francisco and Los Angeles comrades ) that the SWP " Has a far better position on Stalinist imperialism than the SP has on American imperialism ". He replies, " Where the 'better' comes from I don't know." But he really ought to know, on the basis of his own point of view. The SWP is for revolutionary overthrow of the Stalinist bureaucracy: the SP is for reforming capitalism. The SWP consistently supports the national struggles of peoples oppressed by Russian imperialism, as in E. Germany, Poland, and Hungary: When has the SP stated that it is on the side of Algeria, British Guiana, Guatemala, Kenya, Malaya, Egypt, against their imperialist oppressors ? The only "justification" for Mike's plea of "inconsistency" is that the SP has sometimes supported Western imperialism, sometimes been "neutral" between imperialism and its victim, sometimes been completely silent. But support an oppressed nation in war ? Its refusal is firm and consistent.

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I believe that I have shown, in my previous article and in this, that the politics of the SWP are clearly superior to those of the SP even by "Third Camp" criteria. How is it, then, that we are not discussing whether or not to single out the SWP for support, but whether or not to support the SP alone ?

The answer is to be found in the political nature of the pro-SP tendency. Though these comrades continue to use " Third Camp " phraseology, their actual politics in this instance are not based on " Third Camp " criteria but on their desire to liquidate the YSL ( and ISL ) into the SP.

Over a year ago, I characterized this tendency as taking " the position of a loyal left tail to the Second International " The evolution of the official YSL leadership since then has confirmed this.

Mike neither accepted nor rejected my political characterization of the NEC majority position: " If the YSL appeals for votes for the SP ticket alone, it will be giving political support to a supporter of The State Dept. It will appear before American youth as a critical supporter, at second remove, of U.S. imperialism. "

Unquestionably Mike does not want to admit that this is the political meaning of his position - but politics has its own logic. The YSL leadership is moving ever more rapidly toward capitulation to the Social-Democratic agents of U.S. imperialism. Electoral support to the SP is a giant step in that direction. This movement would be definitively and completely consummated by organic unity with the SP.

Those in the YSL who seek to remain revolutionary socialists, who reject this pro-SP orientation even though they disagree with my basic criticisms of " bureaucratic-collectivism " and accept the majority version of the " Third Camp " will certainly vote against the line of support to the SP; but their vote alone is not enough. They also have an obligation to discover the relationship between the basic political line of the NEC majority and its current politics. I believe that I showed that relationship in my articles of a year ago. That discussion was never closed; it is now more open than ever.

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by A. Tussing

27 October, 1956  
Los Angeles, Calif.

### THE YSL AND THE 1956 ELECTION CAMPAIGN

Two months have passed since the Plenum of the Young Socialist League's National Executive Committee. Neither the YSL's nor the Independent Socialist League's national office has initiated a serious discussion on the question of unification of the ISL, YSL and the Socialist Party. We in Los Angeles have had discussions about this issue, however, in both organizations, and as a result some of us might not have formulated our statement on the election as we did in the discussion article of September 18.

If that article seemed to be sectarian in tone and hostile to the Socialist Party (as some SP members who saw it interpreted it), it was because we wanted to show our dissatisfaction with the National Action Committee's decision, and the manner in which the Committee made it, sharply enough to gain some attention. But, change the style and the vocabulary as you wish, assume everybody favors Socialist unification, and the body of our position stands. We still do not see sufficient agreement on the "unity" question based on a discussion in the organization, to justify its inclusion in an election resolution.

#### WHY ENDORSE A CANDIDATE?

Less than one week after this is written, the 1956 elections will be history. One month later the Young Socialist League will complete its discussion of whom to support in the elections! Such a situation is conceivable only because of the weakness of the Socialist movement in our country. If our failure to have a public position is neither ludicrous nor disastrous, it is because our recommendations can change few votes.

We may not influence the outcome of the election, but we should be no less scrupulous in our political reasoning because the stands we take today do influence the development of our movement. This fact appears to be foremost in the minds of the YSL National Action Committee and the ISL Political Committee. Despite comrade Draper's denial in the Oct. 29 Labor Action, unity with the Socialist Party is the first motivation given in all three statements of the ISL-YSL position on the elections (The YSL NAC resolution, the lead article "Vote Socialist in '56!" in the Oct. 8 Labor Action, and especially in comrade Shachtman's piece in the October Liberation.)

Although we now favor unity with the Socialist Party, we need not support its candidates. The ISL and YSL statements on the election imply a necessary connection between the two questions:

"In particular," reads Labor Action (Oct. 8, p. 4), "in view of the proposal that has been raised in the Socialist Party for socialist unity, including unity with the ISL, we wish to encourage this sentiment . . ."

"We favor unity between the Socialist Party and the Independent

Socialist League since we look forward to the reassemblment of all democratic socialists in one organization. We recognize that between the ISL, the SP and the YSL there exists enough in common to warrant and urge such unity. Given these views, we therefore urge a vote for the Socialist Party candidates . . ." (from the NAC draft resolution, sec. 10; emphasis mine)

The Social Democratic Federation does not make this mistake; it is well on the road to actual unification with the Socialist Party, but this fact does not force it to endorse Hoopes!

We should not make our position on the election depend on the hope of organizational gain for ourselves. Whatever our position is, it should be capable of convincing liberals and workers who don't give a damn for the socialist movement, and "socialists" who don't care what happened to the ISL or YSL.

When the Los Angeles YSL first considered the "electoral question", the issues seemed simple. We rejected the Republican and Democratic candidates for the same reasons Labor Action and Challenge have detailed week by week. We rejected the suggestion of a boycott for obvious reasons. The remaining question was how we could use our tiny influence most effectively for a socialist protest vote, that is, one which would clearly show our dissatisfaction with the choice offered between Stevenson and Eisenhower without deluding anyone that we thought Communism was an effective or acceptable substitute for Republican or Democratic reaction.

Ostensibly Labor Action also puts this standard first, when it selects "the Socialist Party for this electoral recommendation . . . because we believe that a vote for the Socialist Party will be most easily and widely interpreted as a socialist protest vote in its general sense . . ." This statement is correct in some places, but meaningless in more, but if it were true without qualification, then we should endorse the Socialist Party in preference to other socialist groups, provided its program were not completely unacceptable.

Hal Draper's denial in his answer to S.R. and Tim Wohlforth, that our endorsement of the Socialist Party alone is linked to programmatic considerations is contradicted by Labor Action's own statement rejecting the Socialist Workers Party . . . because of its program. Obviously, to meet the standard we related above, and which Labor Action purports to share, both program and practical considerations concern us. We have to examine the various parties regarding their politics and their strength, public reputation, etc.

#### THE THREE PARTIES COMPARED

Three socialist parties had Presidential candidates, but none of them clearly deserved our support either on the basis of its program, or because of its "hegemony" over the Socialist movement. The Socialist Labor Party is unmistakably opposed to both capitalism and Communism, and exposes all "lesser evil" myths. It is on

the ballot in twelve States and is running a vigorous campaign; the SLP got as many votes in 1952 as the two other parties combined.

But the SLP and its candidates slam the door on every proposal which could possibly help American Labor free itself from its fruitless alliance in the Democratic party. The SLP attacks the unions as such, and denounces their involvement in politics. It opposes all reforms which would improve the lives of American workers, strengthen freedom, or retard H-Bomb warfare.

Since Labor, Negroes, and liberals can shake off the Democratic incubus only by more political action, and by working more intensely for democratic reforms, the Socialist Labor Party is a damn poor alternative to capitalist politics.

The Socialist Workers Party was also running candidates. The SWP doesn't compromise in its characterization of capitalism or the politics of capitalism. And we can agree with most of its program for the United States. The SWP says that labor must form its own party before it can begin to solve its political problems. Its candidates are on the ballot in ten States.

But the Socialist Workers Party defends Russia. Its election propaganda talks only of two "camps" in the world, the "imperialists" and the "anti-capitalist" struggle, which includes Russia, China, and the Communist Parties. The SWP deliberately plays down its anti-Stalinist position to pick up support from Communists and fellow travelers. The Militant often gives its readers the impression that the worst thing wrong with Russia's Stalinist bosses is their eagerness to compromise with capitalism.

And the SWP is waging this campaign, not in the English language, which predominates among American workers, but in a frightfully intransigent Marxistic jargon which only a lifelong sectarian can understand. (Beside it even Labor Action, or one of our own documents, reads like basic English!)

The Socialist Party campaign is harder to describe in black and white. The SP is not hostile to the labor movement, nor does it defend Russia. In past years, the Socialist Party campaign has been the socialist campaign. But in 1956, the SP is not really running candidates. It is on the ballot in four unimportant States, and has deliberately made no effort to get on the ballot in those States where it has some strength. The Party's decision not to exert itself to get on the ballot was probably correct, in view of its weakness, but it definitely has some bearing on the SP's effectiveness in being "most easily and widely interpreted as a socialist protest vote . . ." Its locals, even the strongest, are making only the most feeble and perfunctory effort to get out the vote. The Socialist Party Campaign is not a serious public effort, and it would be peculiar if we should take it more seriously than its own members do.

Of course the Socialist Party is the only one of the socialist sects with whom it would be fruitful for our units to cooperate in the campaign. But endorsement of the SP nationally and in our press was another question. The Socialist Party has nothing to say about the most important political problems for Labor and liberals in the United States. Its "platform" has nothing to say about the Negroes in the South or about their battles for equality, except a pious "endorsement" of the Supreme Court decision on school segregation. A typical radio speech by comrade Hoopes was devoted to an attack on the principle of a two party system!

The international policy of the SP is worse than nothing. If it is not strictly correct to call it "chauvinist", it is surely something less than internationalist. The SP endorsed the imperialist "police action" in Korea, but support's Egypt's right to nationalize the Suez Canal in a Call article no internationalist could be ashamed of. (but what will be its attitude if a U.N. "police force" should take over England's colonial role?) It criticizes "comrade" Mollet's war in Algeria and in the same breath commends the political policies he proposes to bolster his military policy.

The political amorphousness of the SP, and the fact that it is not rigidly organized around devotion to a single set of theories or principles, may put the Socialist Party in the best position to unify the American socialist movement, but they do not necessarily make it everywhere the only or best expression of a socialist protest vote.

When we have looked at both the politics and the actual campaigns of all three socialist parties, it should be obvious that all of them share what is most important for us: REJECTION OF CAPITALIST POLITICS. It should be apparent that none of them is clearly "most" satisfactory. The most satisfactory position for us is a "socialist protest vote", meaning, "if there is a Socialist candidate of any party on the ballot in your State, vote for him; if there is none, write in one of the three."

If Labor Action and Challenge advocated a socialist vote without preferring one party above the others, we would not take responsibility for the faults of any of them. Our support would be only for that which they advocate in common: REJECTION OF CAPITALIST POLITICS!

Such a position in no way presumes "equidistance", that is that we consider the politics of the SLP, SWP, and SP equally bad, or even that we regard support of American imperialism "the same as" support of Russian imperialism (or worse than, or better than . . .) Just as we were promised by the majority that our specific criticisms of the Socialist Party would be made loud and clear (as they never were in any of our statements on the election), so could we indicate precisely why we don't give support to any one of the parties alone.

With this kind of statement, we could cooperate with the Socialist Party in California, Illinois, and Pennsylvania (for instance), where the SP might cooperate with us, without asking our friends to abstain (by a write-in vote which will probably not be counted) where another party is on the ballot. Where all three parties are "write-ins" the votes of the party which has best made its candidates known are most likely to be counted. We can't see how an uncounted vote for Hoopes and Friedman, traditions of the SP notwithstanding, is more "easily and widely interpreted as a socialist protest vote . . ." than a counted vote for Dobbs and Weiss.

(In California, where the SLP has a candidate for U.S. Senator, our endorsement of this candidate is prohibited by the present ISL-YSL position.)

### THE COMMUNIST PARTY CRISIS AND THE SWP

A final advantage of the policy of not endorsing the campaign of any one party is that we could urge those Communists and pro-Communists we know, who oppose the CP's popular front position, to vote for the SWP. Although the political and practical issues we discussed above should be grounds enough for deciding our policy in the election, ~~the~~ the position of the NAC majority rests on a rejection of this tactic toward the Communists. We do not believe that our election position stands or falls with a certain tactic directed at the CP, but the NAC's attitude reflects an unnecessary inflexibility in our politics and our propaganda.

It is of a piece with the article written by comrade Lowe for the last NEC Program, "Work in the Stalinist Arena."

"It is of great importance to stress here that we must not take the stance toward the Stalinist movement of "left-critics"

"Public debates or forums on questions such as 'the American Road to Socialism,' etc., should generally be avoided because it gives (sic) to the Stalinists that cloak of legitimacy which they are so desperately seeking for today."

Our approach declares that there is only one political subject which we have any business discussing with Communists, the "Russian Question." While we have no reason to conceal our position on Russia (as the SWP appears to do at times), we have other principled differences with the Communists. We know that the CP's relation to the Democratic Party is closely related to the needs of Russia's foreign policy. But the Communist or Stalinist we hope to influence doesn't know it, and you can't prove it to him until he has changed his mind on other questions.

The Communist Party is disintegrating, but we will not recruit many people who quit the CP (or LYL, etc.), mainly because the ISL and YSL aren't the mass organizations the CP was or pretended to be. But we can influence a few of them and recruit one or two if we don't confirm the slanders about us: that we are interested only in attacking Russia (or Yugoslavia, or China, etc.) and the



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Communists, and that we offer nothing constructive for the United States. (Consider how many times anti-Communist liberals charge us with this fault, too!)

Regardless of its faults, the SWP and its campaign still fulfill our minimum standards for the description socialist. The SWP campaigns against capitalism and the capitalist parties. It is certainly organizationally independent of the Communists.

The CP naturally fulfills neither of these requirements. And it is just the American CP's past and present subservience to Moscow, and the relation to the Democratic party, which is a result of the CP's dependence, which are destroying the Communist Party and driving rank and file Communists (communists and Stalinists alike, if the distinction is clear) out of it.

The Socialist Workers Party addresses its appeals to these people, in and out of the CP, "American Labor (not "the Soviet Union") must break with the Democratic party and form its own party! You agree? . . . Good, so follow us and not the CP!" "Stalinism has been brutal, counter-revolutionary, anti-democratic, etc. and Stalinism still exists and must be eliminated," says the SWP, "You don't want to apologize for the bureaucracy any more, but you don't want to join American imperialism in its war against the Soviet Union? . . . Good, then support us and not the CP!"

This line of argument, elaborated and detailed, is the SWP's aggressively pro-Stalinist campaign. It is intended to weaken the CP, and that has been its result. The ~~Levoys~~ and Hallinans testify to its effectiveness.

The same comrades who have lectured so well to the "left" in the YSL . . . about why a political program must answer the needs of people who aren't ready to adopt a full socialist program . . . deny us in principle any kind of bridge to the Stalinoid contact. We ask of him complete capitulation on the Russian question before the ISL and YSL have anything to say to him. So we refuse to debate the "American question" with the LYL! And we address open letters to "the Stalinist Youth of the LYL!"

The SWP, in its own fashion (which we couldn't imitate if we wanted to), is attempting to build a bridge to the CP membership. It won't recruit large numbers of Communists for the same reasons we can't, and because the SWP requires of political people far more difficult concessions than we do, e.g., agreement on the importance of Leon Trotsky, on the role of the party, on "dialectics", etc. But there should be no reason why a vote for the SWP couldn't be part of our bridge to the Communists.

#### CRITICAL SUPPORT OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY

As we wrote earlier, our attitude toward uniting with the Socialist Party shouldn't determine our political positions. And our policy on the election shouldn't depend on either the

desirability or the likelihood of unity. But there is no need for us to treat all the parties alike, nor to use the same tone in criticizing them. They are different, and some of the sects have almost no value and no future whatever (consider the SLP, or the Johnsonites, for instance). What disturbs some of us, however, is the complete absence of criticism of the Socialist Party in our election statements.

Declaring that differences exist is not criticism! An example of the type of evasion which makes us appear politically responsible for Hoopes' idiocies is Max Shachtman's statement in Liberation: "It is hardly necessary to dwell here upon my disagreements with many of their views. They exist, they are known, they are serious, and they will, I trust, continue to be discussed with freedom, fairness and objectivity." Etc.

It is not necessary, or even desirable, for us to specify, as some comrades of the "left" suggest, that Hoopes is a reformist and that we are "Marxists" or "revolutionists". We do not even need to call Hoopes & Co. supporters of American imperialism. But to spend two thirds of the article in Labor Action ~~there~~ calls for a socialist vote developing a program for American labor, and then to dismiss the fact that the candidate we support, ~~does not~~ <sup>does not</sup> share our analysis with "The Socialist Party maintains/on a number of vital issues of the day . . . which are in our opinion incorrect policies . . .", is unnecessarily accomodating.

Comrade Shachtman's article in Liberation would give the reader who didn't know what actually happened at the Socialist Party convention the impression that the SP adopted a position "in favor of a policy under which the Socialist Party should initiate the ~~reunification~~ reunification of the American Socialist movement on a sound, democratic basis, a unification which, as was proposed at the Chicago nominating convention of the Socialist Party, would include the present Independent Socialist League." No one would possibly imagine that the proposal was decisively defeated at the SP convention, or that the convention endorsed unification with ~~some~~ of these whom Shachtman called "those turncoats from socialism who renounced ~~the~~ cause to preach the dissolution of the socialist movement and turned up as apologists for a Democratic Party . . ." etc.

It was a left SP comrade who called our attention to the fact that there is nothing in ~~our~~ election statements which ~~does~~ not give aid equally to the right and to the left within the SP. The same comrade suggested that our evasion of the differences between ourselves and the SP majority could be interpreted by the right wing as a maneuver on our part (like the SWP's accomodation to the CP), "distorting" the SP position for the sake of unity. If the comrades don't think the SPers have reason to be apprehensive about uniting with "Trotskyites", they should review Cannon's "History of American Trotskyism." If we can't quote Cannon's conclusions about the effect of the Trotskyists' period in the Socialist Party, we should be aware that every rabidly anti-ISL SPer can!

## FOR A CONTINUATION OF THE REVOLUTIONARY COURSE

H. Oppenheimer

H. Radetsky

Philadelphia, Pa.

### 1. THE ISSUE

The recent referendum issue of YSR has profoundly disturbed us, since we see in all the documents a lack of understanding of, and a departure from, the Third Camp position. Therefore, much as we deplore the necessity of this kind of internal discussion, we feel it necessary to state our position, and to declare ourselves (who would have thought it necessary!) for the Third Camp.

Electoral policy is not the issue at stake; if it were we would be content to state our position as "Vote Socialist", and let it go at that. The issue, made explicit in the NAC Draft Resolution, and by Comrade Harrington, is unification with the SP, that is, with the social-democracy. The Draft Resolution, par. 10, states: "We urge such a unification (between ISL, YSL, SP)... Given these views we therefore recommend a vote for the Socialist Party candidates." Let us not hide behind the mask of electoral policy, then; the question at issue is unification.

### 2. AIMS AND PROGRAM OF REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALISM

It is deplorable to have once again to state what should be fundamental to all our thinking: socialists are aiming at democratic ownership and control of the means of production and distribution by the workers that operate them; revolutionary socialists believe that this is achieved by the revolutionary workers taking power in society, by ballots if possible (i.e. given the right of complete political expression), by violence if necessary (where such right of political expression does not exist). We would remind our comrades that this is our objective, and that all tactics are to be measured as to whether or not they help to attain it. This is the basis upon which our activity must rest.

The question before us, then, is whether unification with the SP, the vehicle of social-democracy, will lead to this goal, and still further, whether unification with social-democracy in any form (including a prospective Labor Party) will serve this goal.

### 3. THE SP AND THE SOCIAL-DEMOCRACY

Comrade Harrington tells us that the SP is the "...traditional American vehicle for a protest vote" (par. 34), and again "...the SP remains the traditional vehicle for a protest vote in America today." (Par. 45)

First of all, this is nonsense, as even Comrade Harrington should know; except for '48, the SP has lost votes in every election since 1936, while the SLP has gained in every one. In the mayoralty election in New York in 1949 the SLP outpolled the SP by 2½ times.

But even if it were ~~xxxx~~ true that the SP is the "traditional vehicle for a protest vote" or that in time of crisis workers will turn to the SP for leadership (isn't that a silly notion!), that is still no reason to go into the SP and continue the delusions of social-democracy. Is it necessary to remind our comrades that the social-democrats have always, everywhere, betrayed the workers in time of crisis?

But, we are told, the SP represents a continuum of politics; there are good socialists in the SP. Fine--our function is not to delude them as to the nature of the SP. If they are socialists, they will, like so many hundreds of others, leave the SP. If not, they, like the SP, will leave the mainstream of American left politics.

This is not to say, of course, that we cannot ally ourselves with social-democrats (or with bolsheviks) on specific issues, as long as we do so as an organization with an open, well-defined, socialist program, accepted as such by the other groups, or as individuals openly accepted as socialists, and not masquerading as liberals. We work for such alliances, remembering all the time that their purpose is not to bring in socialism, but one, to achieve the specific goals aimed at, and two, by so doing to advance the consciousness of our allies and those with whom such an alliance comes into contact.

"Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims," Marx said, and De Leon points out that "Borers from within get bored out." Either a socialist remains a socialist openly and honestly, and is expelled from non-socialist organizations when he becomes dangerous to the bureaucracy, or to avoid the latter course he covers up his socialism, stops talking, compromises, supports the bureaucrats...all for socialism in the long run, of course... and gradually assumes the face of the enemy.

But, we will be told, the Labor Party will be much worse than the SP. Are we therefore going to oppose working with it? And our answer is--the SP is bad, and we will have none of it; and the Labor Party will be worse, and considering what provocations we will have to endure,

what opportunistic masquerades we will have to fake, what betrayals we will have to excuse in the name of the Labor Party, we will have none of that either, except as an organized group of revolutionary socialists, open and honest, with our own publications, our own point of view, our own program; in opposition to the Labor bureaucracy, not supporting it. If we cannot be accepted as such in a Labor Party, better to remain outside.

The above is in reference to a live Labor Party. Yet ISL would explore unity with the corpse of the SP "without laying down any conditions in advance," and we have heard it said that better papers than LA have been given up, and can be given up again. This fantastic urge towards unity under any conditions is precisely the hallmark of social-democratic betrayals. We have called for an SP vote, LA has called for a Liberal Party vote; when shall we call for a vote for the Democratic Party? After all, that's where labor is. This, indeed, is a well-travelled road for many ex-socialists.

For a revolutionary program, the only purpose in entering the social-democracy is to prepare for its eventual split during a revolutionary period. This cannot be done with the moribund SP, nor with the Liberal Party, nor with the ADA. It can be done under certain limited conditions in a Labor Party, and it may well be that to maintain and advance socialist consciousness, we will be outside the Labor Party when the revolutionary period is ushered in, as were the Soviet Bolsheviks and the German Spartacists. Better socialists outside than opportunistic, deluded betrayers, inside.

#### 4. THE NAC DRAFT RESOLUTION

We are happy that the NAC realizes that socialists cannot vote for Republicans and Democrats. But our "conception of a real alternative to the two major parties" (par.5) is socialism, not the Labor Party. It has already been too long that we have not talked about socialism as the alternative to capitalism; the Labor Party fetish has too long been a substitute for socialist thought in the YSL.

We declare ourselves for a third course in the socialist movement. We declare ourselves against social-democracy on one hand, and bolshevism on the other. And we call FOR THE CONTINUATION OF THE REVOLUTIONARY COURSE.

ANSWER TO THE ELECTORAL MUDDLE: A GENERAL SOCIALIST PROTEST VOTE  
FLOWING FROM THE POLITICS OF THE YSL, NOT FROM THE PRO-SWP POLITICS  
OF SHANE.

By Comrade Owen Fleischman

## I. INTRODUCTION

Since September, the YSL has been engaged in a discussion which ostensibly would determine our stand on the now past elections. Actually the discussion --at least as carried out by the NAC, NEC Plenum and Referendum, the NY unit, as well as 43 pages of the current YSR on the membership referendum--has been on a completely different and much more important subject. This subject includes our attitudes toward the SWP and what has been labelled the question of "SP Unity." Both are really only aspects of the much deeper question of the new perspectives which have opened up for a socialist movement in America this last year.

The way in which the majority presented the "electoral policy" discussion made it impossible to discuss that question from the proper viewpoint of a tactical line addressed to the general electorate--more specifically for us the liberal and Negro audience. Instead, they discuss the politics of the SWP and base themselves on a question the national organization has not discussed -- SP Unity.

Both of these points are of a sectarian nature--of undisputed importance when we discuss politics with socialists and people who are about to become socialists, such as disgusted ex-liberals and dissident stalinists who have broken over the question of democracy--but with no relevance when we address ourselves to workers, Negroes and student who still have liberal politics. And here I include the stalinoid liberals. Our campaign was addressed to the latter, or should have been. When speaking to the former, we present our entire politics and in particular attack the programs of all three socialist parties. That is, these programmatic and organizational points are vital within the narrow confines of the radical movement, but our protest line is not directed there. In fact, to make such points the basis of our line is to make our stand more than a protest one and removes it from the context of bourgeois elections of 1956.

While everyone knew that the September Plenum had to take a stand on the elections, the last minute inclusion of the Unity point came as a surprise, particularly to those not on the NAC. It was put there in response to the stand the ISL had taken in answer to the question addressed it by the SP left wing, who had proposed unity at the last SP convention some months before, and therefore had a schematic organizational flavor.

During the months preceding the plenum, as usual our overworked NEC found no time to get out a draft electoral resolution; and Comrade Shane had written two documents on the question. I have not seen the document he wrote in January since it got lost in the National Office before it could be published. We in NY have not seen the letters referred to in the discussion, other than the statement of the Chicago Unit and that of some L. comrades. We must emphatically solidarize ourselves with all complaints about the manner in which the discussion was held.

We in NY have a special complaint which some other comrades join with me in making. In particular, comrade Joan helped formulate this section of the article and endorses the stand. Because of the muddled nature of the discussion and the way in which both the majority and minority have inextricably mixed together basic politics and the tactical question of electoral policy, those who disagreed with the majority on the latter but even more violently with the minority on the former, were put in an intolerable position. The majority called on you to line up and vote for Socialism against Stalinoid illusions, and the minority reporters put forward not merely their electoral stand, but their whole politics, including an incorrect characterization of the SWP and SP. Comrades: Do not allow yourselves to be stampeded into voting against a position you hold because you think it will be interpreted as endorsement of Shane's politics! We feel, however, because of the way in which the discussion has been conducted we must include some short statement in our ballots to distinguish our reasons from those given by Shane and from those of Wohlforth. Hence, we call for the referendum vote noted in the title to this article: "A GENERAL SOCIALIST PROTEST VOTE FLOWING FROM THE POLITICS OF THE YSL, NOT FROM THE PRO-SWP POLITICS OF SHANE." We also call upon the National Office to count not only the two choices they give us, but also record and report out such a third choice. If they refuse, I ask comrades to write it in.

## II. ELECTORAL POLICY

Our reasons, as distinguished from those of the minority are the following:

Our electoral stand should be based upon the best tactic for getting across our opposition to the Democrats and Republicans, with particular emphasis upon Stevenson's betrayal of the Negro people. As an alternative, it is a protest vote we call for, not a vote for socialism. It is not even a vote for a labor party; it is a vote against reaction in the form of two dledun-tweedledee alternatives. We socialists say if you want to protest against them, we have an alternative; we are running a campaign and you can vote our ticket. We add, you can expect nothing but reaction from capitalist parties; the only way to progress is a break with capitalist politics, to form a Labor Party. Our message: You have been betrayed. The way out is a labor party. Sotto voce - Vote Socialist protest.

Both majority and minority agree that this is the nature of our campaign. But the majority puts forward other considerations that have nothing to do with our being best able to reach the Negroes and dissident liberals we want to reach with our message. They make two points and conclude that such a vote means a vote for the SP. "We cannot recommend a vote for the candidates of the S/P in view of that party's continued capitulation to Stalinism." It goes on to the attempt of the SWP to make itself the vehicle for a stalinoid protest vote this year. Then a positive point; our favorable attitude toward unity of the ISL and SP, and the organizational realignment of all democratic socialists. I should add a third point that is not mentioned in the majority resolution, but is the center of the ISL's election statement. In view of the tradition attached to the SP as the party of Debs, it has over the years been and continues to be the vehicle for a socialist vote in America.

Now this point of the ISL is of a different nature from the other two. They claim it as their central one precisely because they want it to appear that programmatic and organizational considerations are not their basis for an SP vote. They give the term "socialist protest" a special meaning since they address the call not just to liberals (whom we ask to vote socialist as a protest even though they are not socialists), but also to our friends who are not SP'ers to vote for them even though they disagree with the SP's program. Now we do have things to say to other socialists during this campaign, but it seems to me that our appeal for their votes is the most minor aspect of them. However, the explicit rejection of the SWP is done on the basis of their program. Since we don't say that our rejection of the SP's program is enough to exclude voting SP, we are in effect saying, "The SWP is beyond the pale, just as capitalist parties are." I, therefore, claim that the ISL is dishonest when it make this non-programmatic point central. While the SWP is beyond the pale in many other senses, in the context of this election, they are socialist enough not to be excluded from the "protest vote" category. Attitudes toward stalinism is not an issue for liberals in this election campaign, though it may be for socialists.

I will admit that the SP does have the tradition referred to. It undoubtedly could have been important in this election if the SP conducted as serious a campaign as the other two sects. But when Norman Thomas doesn't even campaign for them; when they make almost no attempt to get on the ballot, etc., any impartial analyst must come to the conclusion that even though that tradition exists, it played almost no role in this campaign. In those areas where the socialist parties ran no campaign there is a point, but in most large industrial cities, the fact that the SWP and SLP were serious about their campaigns and the SP not, was far more important than any tradition. The bulk of the people one argued with in the campaign did not know of the existence of more than one socialist party--much less the differences that separated them. I am not talking of those rare individuals who have memories and liberal politics at the same time. Those who once hated Truman's guts and loved Eisenhower remember no tradition that tells them if they want to protest by voting socialist, they must naturally pick the part of Gene Debs and Norman Thomas.



I wonder how many have had experiences similar to mine in election discussions? In a group in the college lounge one remark was "Socialists? I heard them on the radio last night -- some guy named "Haas." I replied that you only hear us at election time because then FCC regulations force free radio time. How would it have sounded if I had had to discuss the sectarian character of the SLP, and that the SP represented the general non-sectarian Socialist Protest Vote in America which I and everyone who was against sectarianism had to prefer. And especially in those areas where the SLP or SLP was on the ballot, but not the SP.

The second point, that of unity, deserves much more attention. I will take it up in detail in a later section in which I discuss the more general fact that a perspective exists in America today, because of the developments of the last year, for a Democratic Socialist movement. Here I will only take up the bearing of this on our electoral stand. It has next to none. Our stand is not addressed to socialists since socialists are doing more than protesting. They are supporting the particular current they feel closest to. We are adopting a line for a public campaign, and the criteria for it do not include even partial political support of the programs or the organizations. That's what we mean by the term protest. And even less can we make narrow organizational considerations such as our getting into contact with SP'ers and legitimatizing ourselves in their eyes, unless this serves to make our general electoral line more forceful. Comrade Shane's use of the term "opportunism" is perfectly correct here, thought not in the more general sense of capitulating to Social Democracy politically. I say that instead of strengthening our protest line, the call for a specific SP vote weakens it.

Now given the fact that a real perspective exists today for an American socialist movement (which I try to show in a later section) the use of the term "we socialists" is a particularly apt one in reply to the question of the socialist splinter parties. The attitude of, "There is no socialist movement in America today--just educational groups--and if you want to cast a socialist protest vote it doesn't greatly matter which one you vote for. It's what you're voting against that counts." This is precisely what the general liberal public should hear from us. Those who ask us programmatic questions about the campaign are either dishonest or not liberals.

To dispute this, the majority would have to demonstrate that the crisis in the CP affected Stevenson's chances appreciably, i.e. that attitude towards stalinism played a role in the politics of the outside world vis a vis the election. Now our attitude towards the SWP really is relevant when we talk of our perspectives as socialists in the next period, and I will take up the point. But the real facts of this campaign show that the stalinoid liberals that the SWP was appealing to were looking for a vehicle (given the abandonment of the Progressive Party and ALP by the CP) for a protest vote, i.e. a vote completely along the lines we call for--against "progressives" burying themselves in the Democratic Party, and for a labor party. As an answer to the first point (and we agree with this characterization of the SWP), we say it is not relevant to a protest,, i.e. "negative vote.

Putting aside the question of elections, what is that really defines our attitude toward the SWP? To answer this question, we have to first say that it flows from our attitude toward Stalinism, or since that term has acquired a special meaning since the 20th party congress, we should say toward Bureaucratic Collectivism. If you will, use "State Capitalism" as Tony Cliff and Shane do, to mean a fundamentally new type of class society, with the bureaucrats the ruling class through nationalized property and monopoly of state powers, that has a qualitatively new structure, texture and dynamic from anything the old capitalism had. But by it mean that this new form is a contender with socialism for the inheritance of the old capitalist world. The fundamental struggle of this period is between three classes aspiring to or holding power today: the bourgeoisie, the bureaucratic class and the working class. Because of the confusion that the fetish of nationalized property has sown among those who desire the classless society, socialism, all sorts of fine people with excellent instincts find themselves in the wrong camp; the camp that equates nationalized property with progress, workers' power and with socialism. Above all, this camp identifies industrialization in relatively backward areas with progress. Even though it hate the bureaucracy, accepting the fetish of nationalized property puts the SWP on the side of the bureaucracy in the struggle for world power. Because of this fetish, implicit in their position on Hungary was the idea that were the charge of the stalinists about capitalist restoration in Hungary true (they say it is not) they would support the Russian army there.

But some comrades say they are revolutionary socialists. They are really for working class power everytime the chips are down. But we insist that they no longer know what working class power means, and how key is the need for democracy. In this period to call the triumph of any anti-working class force progressive, or give its industrial accomplishments that name is to betray socialism.

What this boils down to is the question of the road to power for the working class. To us, this leadstrough the bourgeoisified ideological currents of liberalism and Social Democracy. The major lesson to be learned from the degeneration of the Russian Revolution is the one the ISL has done to make clear: The working class needs democracy as it needs food and air: Without it it cannot have even a breath of power; with it no other class can rule in the final analysis. The struggle for democracy is the struggle for socialism and the struggle for socialism is the fight for democracy.

Now Shane, who does not have the fetish of nationalized property does not consider the bureaucracy a historic contender for power with the working class. It is a bastard form that has no inner strength and no future; that can only exist in the period of the death agony of capitalism and cannot survive that period. It is only because of this view that he can talk of the "colonial revolution" that is Stalinism's triumph in the same terms that socialists did two generations ago, merely because they perform the same formal acts that were given the same bourgeoisie revolution at that time. After the stalinists, Us!

But regardless of where one can trace a theoretical error back to, the real question is "Which side are you on?" Both Shane and the SWP are on the wrong side. They are from the viewpoint of the needs of the workingclass part of the forces of the Stalinist class enemy. The fundamental role of the SWP is to strengthen the hand of the new butchers of the workingclass even though this is the last thing in the world they want to do. Such are sometimes the consequences of mistaken politics.

It is a tragic joke of history that some of the most heroic and principled fighters of the working class by the dynamic of their politics stand with its butchers blocking the path to power; while some of the worst careerists and opportunists, those who had the trade unions and the Social Democracy, merely by performing those tasks necessary to the preservation of their jobs, perform the progressive function of building the working class strength that is the basis of its struggle for power.

Now the "unity" question does have some bearing on the electoral campaign, but this is in terms of how we implement our line, not how we arrive at it. Organizational cooperation with the SLP is not possible and even if it were would be worthless. The kind of campaign the SWP has presented in its press and from its platforms legitimizes the CP as a workingclass party that is for socialism; playing up the reformism angle and playing down the fight for democracy. The center we want to create will have to have for its absolutely minimal program the struggle for democracy everywhere, a point that the SWP doesn't consider that important. Though such a center may be full of stalinoids, such a central theme (which is at the heart of the CP crisis) has the dynamic of forcing a break with their illusions. But what the SWP wants to say to them has to do primarily with reformism. I will go into the reality of the perspective and the organizational problems of such a regroupment in order to show that there is an immediacy today underlining the fact that cooperation with the SWP and personally associating our people in the eyes of socialists and dissident stalinists with their campaign would be disastrous politically, i.e. Shane's role at Antioch where the SWP spoke three times during the campaign.

One of our political tasks during the elections was to point up to these people (who are not the political public our protest line is addressed to) the capitulatory nature of the SWP campaign; to use the opportunity to put forward our politics. When it comes to our new organizational perspective in America, the disintegration of the CP plays a most important role. These are the people for whom a center must be created today. The SWP is so sectarian and dead that it is reluctant to recruit these people who are attracted to it above all the other socialist sects because of its tradition. It is said that when Draden applied for membership he was put off for a number of months, until such a new center is created; the bulk of such people will drop out of politics completely. Not only do we want to effect these people directly ourselves, but we want to use the pressure of their existence

upon the leadership of the SP. It is the external reality that makes the unity of the ISL and SP a burning necessity, and it is this reality that will force some growth of the SP despite its leadership; a vitality will be forcibly injected into its moribund veins. We want to use the reality of the new perspective to continually keep them under pressure to do something. And it is this that makes the unity perspective an organizationally real question, if not this minute, then in an hour.

We are not the only ones talking about a Unity and a Regroupment. The Cochranites, Sweezyites, Cannonites and even part of the CP also want a "new socialist movement" in America. What they mean by this is a Stalinoid party quite independent in that the CP would not dominate it. Its politics would be one that hailed the "triumph of socialism" as a world system," or its equivalent in other words. They have as their fundamental task repairing the damage that the CP has done to the ideology that considers bureaucratic collectivism progressive.

The center we want to create would have many of the same people, but its fundamental task would be to draw the line between those who consider the struggle for democracy central and those who don't; between those who think Stalinism can be democratized from the top and those who call for mass struggles against the bureaucracy. Now the SWP has the correct point of view on this question, but they want to slur it and underplay it, toadying up to all the stalinoid illusions as well as possessing many of them itself. It does not want to draw this line; rather draw it between the reformists and the revolutionists. Some in this new movement would not even have as clear a point of view on stalinism as the SWP has, but they would accept the task of clarifying their politics, with democracy the central theme of the new credo.

This does not mean that we are uninterested in the talk about an anti-CP stalinoid center or in the meaning for people with stalinist politics voting for a "Trotskyist" party; insofar as it accelerates the disintegration of the CP we can hail it as a progressive step. But we want to create a center that will make such a half-way house politically untenable.

Organizational cooperation with the SWP and SLP are thus excluded. But this is not true for the SP, even though we cannot be very eager to give them a platform given their identification with "America the leader of the Free World". The SP's tradition, and its long term monopoly on the term "Democratic Socialism" (which we have in reality taken over to such an extent that we are the voice of Democratic Socialism in America today), make it the natural focus of the new movement if only it had some life. We want our people to be associated with it because today its tradition is more important than its line, its past the key to the future if only the barriers blocking the keyhole were removed. Thus everything we did in the campaign in the way of cooperating with them was quite proper; it had nothing to do with stalinophobia or political capitulation to the Social Democracy. But it could and was done without a stand of public support of their candidates against the other parties in CHALLENGE. This would have

been true even if the ISL had not taken the stand it did, which in the absence of one by us, implied that we agreed with them.

Our activity on campus during the elections should have been along the following lines: Since we do not agree with the politics of any of the candidates or parties, we should have been more interested in getting our speakers to give talks on campus, than in providing a platform for the socialist candidates or their spokesmen. Where it was possible to get broader audiences for a candidate than for ourselves, we would tend to prefer an SPer (tho it doesn't matter too much and we wouldn't press the point) since their deviation from our politics is in the direction of concessions to the liberals and we could appear as left critics making the usual points we always make to liberals. The SLP and SWP would bring up points that we disagree with that wouldn't have any relevance to liberals, and that we would prefer not see raised in public campaign speeches of "we socialists". Because of our attitude towards the SWP, they would be last on our list. In the inevitable debates we would prefer one socialist, a Democrat and a Republican; or better yet a militant Negro from NAACP confronting the latter two. The one thing we didn't want was a debate between three socialists.

Our local groups could decide which of the three to ask people to vote for in their state - not on any political basis, but upon whether they were on the ballot - underlining the fact that if we ourselves were going to vote SP (as I did) we didn't feel that all socialists had to. If only one is on the ballot, we should call for a vote for that particular party.

### III THE DISCUSSION SO FAR

One cannot blame the minority too much for bringing in the irrelevant political questions in this discussion, since it was the majority that raised them as a basis for our electoral position. Comrade Shane's August article has a remark against the unity which he had just heard mentioned for the first time in a letter from Comrade Martin. He then asks:

"Why is a vote for the SP permissible and one for the SWP impermissible? Evidently those who think so must base themselves on one of two viewpoints: either they feel more sympathy towards a Party they think to be favorable to American Imperialism than toward one they believe favorable to Russian Imperialism -- and thus show themselves, in a real sense, as critical supporters of the Western Camp; or else they believe that the SWP's politics are far more pro-Stalinist than the SP's are pro-capitalist."

Referring to Poznan as the crucial test, Shane concludes, "the actual politics of the SWP must be considered anti-Stalinist, though hampered by a false theory." While this charge is "Stalinophobic nonsense", the SP on the other hand has failed in the opposite number of this crucial test; Butcher Mollet and Algeria.

So we see that Shane answers the irrelevant points raised by the majority on their own terms. His other reasons for a general protest vote - the nature of the YSL as a broad socialist youth organization demands it and that our political line puts us no closer to the SP than to the

the SWP - are also sectarian and irrelevant to a protest campaign. And Comrade Wohlforth echoes them; for while he disagrees with Shane on the nature of the Stalinist revolution in the colonial world, he also condemns the singing out of the SWP for non-support (as the majority really has done) as stalinophobic. He agrees with Shane's characterization of the SWP which because of its attitude towards Poznan "has a far better position on stalinist imperialism than the SP has on American imperialism".

Now I with Harrington believe that Shane's political viewpoint still commands next to no support in the YSL; at least nobody agrees with him in New York. I also believe there are few who would as Comrade Tim has done, accept his characterization of the SWP and SP, as well as vote for the SWP. In New York, there is only one other such comrade. I will give my characterization of the SP in which I ~~do~~ disagree with Comrade Harrington in my discussion of the unity perspective.

The plenum discussion made unity and questions related to it the basis of the dispute (convincing Comrade Harris and myself to vote with the ~~no~~ majority, even though he personally voted for the SLP and I changed my mind later). When Comrade Shane and Wohlforth then proposed an NEC referendum (and hinted at a membership referendum) because of the geographic unrepresentativeness of the Plenum, I was against it. I remain so for the usual reasons that a written discussion at long distance is even more undemocratic than an unrepresentative Plenum. This is much more true when it comes to a membership referendum which our constitution makes possible only in the event that an emergency convention was first considered. And this tenth rate dispute is not of that order of magnitude. Unity would be, but they called for the referendum on elections instead on the basis that a reversal of the Plenum decision could come in time for a CHALLENGE editorial before Election Day. This, and particularly the call for a membership referendum in October after the first had failed, is what I would call "sectarian madness", a term which Comrade Wohlforth uses to denounce the majority stand running away with himself in a burst of youthful emotional radicalism.

(Ed. note. It is important to note here that a separate position on the ballot, which would have separated my point of view from that of Shane's, was denied us and, properly so, on the basis that the referendum had already been called with the two specific majority and minority positions. The nature of the referendum cannot allow a new position to be proposed after the discussion has commenced.)

At the plenum I asked these comrades not to make the organization occupy itself in the next period with this relatively minor question, but to instead initiate a full blown discussion of the unity question for the next Plenum to decide, and ultimately our convention next year. Everyone agreed that this should be done, and on this basis comrade Bill From Chicago (who I think has what is now my position on the elections voted against the idea of an NEC referendum.

But any member of the NEC can call such, and so Shane and Tim did. The out of town units, legitimately disgusted with the type of discussion in the referendum statements et al, then made the mistake of calling for this membership referendum. And so we find ourselves in the ridiculous position of taking a belated stand on the now past elections.

(In the NEC referendum I voted for the General Protest Vote, appending a statement, ((which comrade Martin forgot to print)), that I did so not on the basis of comrade Shane or Wohlforth's politics and reasoning, but on that of the majority political positions in the YSL as determined by our last convention.)

If anything is to be salvaged from this faux pas, we must immediately begin the discussion of unity. Then many of the points raised in the discussion between Shane and Harrington can be disentangled from the electoral question, and we can have a sensible discussion and make a political decision of real importance to our movement.

#### IV UNITY AND OUR NEW PERSPECTIVES

The question of ISL-SP Unity is much more deep going than the schematic organizational form would indicate. Comrade Shachtman spoke at the YSL Summer Camp (which while a big success did not have a national attendance) on perspectives in America, and most of my thoughts on the subject are extensions of the ideas he mentioned then. The further deepening of the crisis in the CP since then has given the question an immediacy it did not seem to have at that time.

There are three things of fundamental importance that have happened in the past year. The revolutionary impact on American politics of the new level of struggle by Negro people is known to all. It has put the Labor Movement and its liberal allies on the spot -- but this time a Labor Movement that is so powerful politically that it could not fight for its program at the Democratic Convention without splitting that Party wide open. We knew at that time what was noted during the elections; that in most industrial cities it was the labor machine that conducted the campaign. The labor movement has gone about as far into the Democratic Party as is possible; it is so big and powerful that the rest of the Party in the North has become in fact if not in appearance a thin shell about the forces of labor. And this would become apparent to all if they did fight for their program. This in comrade Schachtman's opinion meant that the Labor Party was but a moment off -- an inevitable event in this period.

The third change is of course the permanent crisis and disintegration of the CP under the blows of the 20th Party Congress, the Polish workers, and especially of the heroic Hungarian Revolution crushed in blood by its Russian Dutchers. This last event augers the end of the Russian Empire, showing that in the period when old empires are falling apart new ones cannot be built. But above all it demonstrates in living events that the working class is a powerful giant, capable not only of tearing apart the fabric of Stalinist Totalitarianism through leading the struggle for National Independence and democracy, which in fact can only mean working class power, but most important that this giant has broken an historical quiescence of twenty years.

The most important consequence of these events for us is that there is now a perspective for a Socialist Movement in America. In the years since the thirties, what was once a movement has shrunk to a handful of organized in sects, with a perspective of holding on to keep socialist ideas alive for some future development. This movement in my opinion can have only the politics of Democratic Socialism.

I have already gone into one aspect of this, that of the dissident Stalinists. I will now take up the other side of the potential; the democratic socialists.

The organizational material for such a movement is very meagre today. There exists no attracting center with a capable cadre. The YSL and ISL can grow, but only to become larger sects if no new center is created. And this is because our ideas are far to the left of any Movement that could be organized in America today because of the backwardness of the American working class. A Labor Party would of course provide such a center in its left wing, which in my opinion would tend to have democratic socialist politics. But the perspective for a Democratic Socialist Movement exists now: We can begin the task of creating it today, and it can play a vital role in the formation of the Labor Party. By a movement I mean thousands or tens of thousands, not hundreds of thousands or millions. It could certainly play some social role, however, as against the isolated sectarian existence all of us have become so accustomed to.

It is in this context that all the discussion of SP unity and the politics of the SWP takes on real meaning for us, but without having first agreed on this context the discussion takes on a rather disembodied air and becomes rather unimportant.

I have stated a number of times that this will be a Democratic Socialist Movement. There are two reasons for this terminology. The first is that the term was adopted by the "Militants" under Norman Thomas who took over the SP in the thirties to distinguish themselves from the Social Democratic Federation, and the ex-socialists of earlier days who were mobilizing to give the workers' votes to Roosevelt. Today it distinguishes, because of this tradition, between those who insist on a break from capitalist politics and the "Social -Democrats" of the LID, SDF, and peculiarly enough the leadership of the SP, who have a politics that leads to dissolution of the party. Over the years it has been from this latter element in the SP that its leadership has been drawn. They are its most political and trained people, and they have streamed away from it into bourgeois politics around the labor movement, some by way of first spending some years in the leadership. Norman Thomas and Robin Myers are of them. Those you no longer see are leading people in the ADA (if with a special labor orientation), and its like in the Labor Movement or working for the State Department, etc.

The present membership of the SP are democratic socialists in this sense, both right wingers and left wingers, "state department" socialists and third camp socialists, political primitives and political fundamentalists alike. Harrington, however is completely incorrect when he states that the politics of the SP have been inconsistent; willy nilly pro- and anti- American Imperialism. It may be true that many of its members are confused, and that even some "left wing" resolutions may get passed at conventions. But the Party speaks out with one voice to the outside world, and that voice is that of an advisor to the State Department. And the majority of the Party accept this point of view - if in a passive way. No left winger ever gets into the real leadership of the party.



Sure, on the local level you get some left wing locals -- for years it was true that the only left wingers who could say the words - Socialist Party - with enthusiasm came from California. But they are not the SP just as the Labor Movement is not the Democratic Party even though they have the Detroit "Branch".

For dissident CP'ers this term also assumes a special significance. Their crisis can be summed up in one word, "democracy". I have spoken earlier in connection with these people the role that the traditional importance of the SP in America plays. It is this invaluable asset that the dissolutionists leading the SP criminally let go to waste. They want none of these people. It is our task to expose them as the people who want to bury the SP, who see no special role for socialists to play in these crucial years, who will try to resist the pressure that all democratic socialists must bring to bear on them as the events unfold. It will be the pressure of these events and the changing tempo of American political life that will force the unity with the ISL upon them if anything does. And by this I don't mean that the SP will become left wing.

Much of the talk about unity has been unreal because it has been presented in schematic and utopian form. The resolution we voted for at the Plenum merely said that we thought unity would be a good thing. And so it would be. I am convinced that its first major effect would be to bring to life the dead ISL'ers by bringing the new perspective home to them, providing us with the cadre the new movement needs. But everyone asked, "Is this just a pose or are you serious?" The answer they gave: "Certainly we are serious; we really think it would be a good thing and such a unity would not be a raid or anything like it. We would want to build the SP."

But this isn't an answer to what was asked. People want to know how much of a chance there is; and the answer given has been that different people have different estimates, but let us take the position that we are for it and begin to explore the possibilities. I have given my first thoughts on the dynamic involved, and hope that other comrades will take this up in further discussion.

Another thing might be said about prospects. There has been a real change in our relationship to the SP in the last five years. Only those who have experienced the emotional charge attached to "Bolshevism" in the SP themselves can appreciate how much of a change this has been. But a few short years ago it was unthinkable that anyone could raise the question of cooperation with the ISL or SYL, much less of unity, without the axe coming down at once amid cries of "Kronstadt" and "Totalitarian" from foaming mouths. Today a third of the Party actually raise the question of unity at a convention and elicit a mild and unemotional response (with of course the same political content and rejection -- but it doesn't mean the same thing.) The things that have changed are the loss of the SP's vitality politically and especially organizationally to such an extent that we play more of a public role than they did. Given our own ideological development over the years, our emphasis upon democracy and orientation toward the world social democracy, we have in effect become the real bearer of the mantle of Democratic Socialism. Thomas' defense of us in Washington reflected that (as well as credit upon him). They can never speak of us in the tone they once did.



The tradition of the SP only has a potential, not a current meaning- and it will take a great deal of hard work with a new attitude to make that potential the new reality. That tradition we insist meant very little during this election campaign, and in any honest assessment of the socialist protest vote for liberals, the SP vote was only a part.

This is our stand. To the members of the Socialist Party, we should have said during the campaign, "As far as the general public is concerned, a vote for any of the three parties is a socialist protest vote, and it makes no sense to differentiate between you and the other sects. In particular where they are in the ballot and you are not. We must call for a vote for them. To socialist we say support the SP campaign in every way you can to strengthen this sect because of its potential. But though we help you in this way, we cannot ourselves in the absence of a serious campaign on your part and the sectarian attitude you have toward the crisis in the CP, and the new possibilities for a socialist regroupment and a new "Debsian Party" with many new currents in it act today as if you were the party of American socialism.

We must drive this fact home to everyone in that party. We must tell it to every dissident ex- CPer they turn down. It must become part and parcel of our current political line. In terms of this line, we will be able to prevent the disappearance of some of these people from the political scene, recruiting some and making friends of others. As it will change our outlook on the next period, so it can flavor that of the entire socialist current in America and give an ideological base for the prospective movement. Above all, it will show us to be in the vanguard of the American Socialist movement.

December 1, 1956

## SOCIALIST POLITICS AND THE SWP: REPLY TO HARRINGTON

John Worth

### I. Introduction

The charge of 'pro-stalinism', which is supposed to be basis for our rejection "out of hand" of a protest vote for the SWP candidates carries with it, I think, a strong odor of irrationality. No doubt there are significant differences, strong differences, in outlook, theoretical approach, and party organization between ourselves and the SWP. The SWP retains a strong, militant organization, tightly disciplined, dogmatic, monolithic in its conviction of historic necessity. The ISL and YSL are more 'intellectual', inclined to doubt, flexible in theory, but these virtues, unfortunately, have not been combined with a stable, vigorous revolutionary organization.

The 'capitulation' of the SWP rests, so far as I can make out, not on any deterioration in the quality of the SWP's opposition to stalinism, but in our interpretation of its refusal, after 18 years, to alter its programmatic 'defense of the USSR', or its social analysis of the bureaucracy which has developed atop the nationalized property forms. For this reason it had been previously maintained that the theory of the degenerated worker's state could lead to certain 'pro-stalinist' conclusions. I think that this opinion is erroneous--however, the significance of the ISL-YSL attitude lies in its consistent attempt to demonstrate that one or another of the positions adopted by the SWP is the aforementioned 'working out'; that the SWP has adopted pro-stalinist conclusions.

In my opinion the charge cannot be lightly made. The charge of 'capitulation to stalinism' against a revolutionary socialist organization requires, at the least, long and careful documentation. Since the SWP vehemently denies--ridicules!--the ISL attack, it must be assumed that the objective character of the position is what is actually in doubt. Unless we can demonstrate that the SWP has willfully adopted a position favoring the extension of stalinism as a system, even on the basis of its present analysis, the discussion should be carried on in the most serious, comradely manner. If our intention is to build a revolutionary proletarian party in the United States, and the clear commitment of the SWP is to do so, as a first step in the dispute we must demonstrate, in practice, that we are serious, revolutionary socialists. Secondly, we can attempt, while carrying on a discussion among socialists, to stick resolutely to facts, scientific analysis--drawing our conclusions firmly from clearly stated premises. But the attack on the SWP, particularly that of Harrington, has been impressionistic, dogmatic, with an adamant bias against any sympathetic interpretation--and on very many points a sympathetic interpretation is obligatory.

As an organization the SWP has many defects. It is suspicious, dogmatic, vituperative in debate, impossibly rigid except in traditional arenas. The SWP, since the death of Trotsky, has not advanced one inch in the marxist interpretation of economic, social, and revolutionary events. Its capacity for assimilating the experience of the present

generation is open to serious doubt. It has not demonstrated, in theory or practice the viability of the monolithic party in meeting the challenge of the American revolutionary movement. But it has emerged, at the lowest point of American socialist organization, with the strongest organization, most resolute approach to political action, of any party on the left. This is no trifle. At the least it imposes the obligation of seriousness in our debate.

## II. Harrington's "Statement FOR the NAC and Plenum Majority Position"

In order to reject 'out of hand' a vote for the S.P. Harrington cites four major points which, he believes, demonstrate the pro-stalinist orientation of the S.P. He does not attempt to document, or define them, in the general context of S.P. activity, but merely, so to speak, 'stands on them'. These are:

- (a) The S.P. role in the UAW as leading elements in the Stalinist caucus and against the Reuther caucus...
- (b) The S.P. support of Stalinist imperialism in the Korean war.
- (c) The S.P.'s continued glorification of the Chinese R"revolution" as just about the most glorious event in socialist history since 1917.
- (d) The S.P.'s opposition to a socialist slogan of self-determination for Formosa, its willingness to sell out the Formosans to Mao.

The "crucial difference on the question of Stalinism," Harrington continues, "is not whether one characterizes the revolution one hopes for in Russia as 'political' or 'social', but above all how one reacts to Stalinist politics, i.e. to Stalinist imperialism, to Stalinist organizations, particularly those outside of Russia. In the four cases in point enumerated above the truth about the S.P. is plain enough: that it has been capitulationist with regard to Stalinism."

Thus Harrington on the S.P. No facts, definitions, method, nor analysis. Just standing room. 'Capitulation' means surrender. An 'ersatz Stalinist' campaign is a campaign which upholds stalinism in its own default. Perhaps Harrington thinks he is just enunciating commonly held truths. In this case there would be hardly any ground for discussion. But, at the risk of tedium, let us look once again at the 'cases in point'.

### 1. The S.P. role in the UAW

The S.P., in this example, is supposed to support a stalinist caucus against Reuther. Was the Thomas-Maddes caucus, as Harrington maintained, a full-blown "stalinist caucus", or simply a caucus in which stalinists participated. Unfortunately Harrington does not bother to defend his characterization against Shane's challenge, but goes on to an 'analysis' of the S.P.'s antagonism to Reuther which, we must believe in the 'analytic' article, was based, not on an 'evaluation' of union militants, as Shane and the S.P. think, but on its 'well-known analogy' between Stalinism and Social Democracy. (Of course, that is not the analogy as is apparent from Harrington's quotation itself). In this analogy the Stalinist leaders and Social Democratic leaders are equated as traitors to the working class movements which they lead. It is, of course, somewhat hard to see why the S.P., on this ground should prefer a "stalinist" caucus, but let it go and suppose that the failure of the S.P. to block against stalinists, whatever the situation, is the error, and is based on a mis understanding of the 'class nature' of the two movements; failure to realize the 'tremendous viability' of stalinism in the modern world. Is this evidence of 'pro-stalinism'?

Only if the SWP, engaged (as Harrington thinks) in opportunistic manipulations between two treacherous leaderships, believes that a stalinist leadership is preferable to the traditional labor bureaucracy; and this follows only if the SWP generally supports stalinists vs labor bureaucrats or social democrats. But Harrington admits that the SWP "at that time" did not seek to support Stalinists "everywhere" as was made clear by their blocking with anti-Stalinist forces in other unions." This is apparently a loose reference to the bitter, protracted struggle in which the SWP, in alliance with Joe Curran broke the long stalinist domination of the National Maritime Union in New York. As an "internally consistent" "worked out" program for stalinist domination of the American labor movement this is a pretty sorry effort. But perhaps I have missed the force of the phrase "at the same time"—in which case Harrington must mean that the "self-consistent" program did not have the aim which Harrington wishes to guarantee it, but was a program with a different aim, or one worked out program evolving to another. But as far as the argument is intelligible Harrington is proving a pro-stalinist orientation then and there, in which case the generalization fails on the contrary instance of NMU; or, if to outline an 'evolution' was his intention, we should have been shown an original position, the course of the evolution, and the end product. Or must we rely upon 'prior documentation' for our authority? In this case a bibliography is more helpful than the undocumented assertions.

## 2. SWP 'support' of Stalinist imperialism in the Korean War

The major premise of the SWP position on Korea was opposition to American imperialist intervention against the people of Korea. Does Harrington have no position on intervention? Absolutely indifferent? The SP, of course, favored it, because ~~at~~ the leadership of the SP, in alliance with the American bourgeoisie, wishes to stamp out evils like stalinism. Opposition to imperialist intervention, however, is a position of fairly long standing in the revolutionary socialist movement. Opposition to imperialist war has two aspects: (1) defense of ourselves against self-murder in the interests of capital; (2) defense of the smaller nation against ~~frax~~ destruction of homes, industries, farms, population, etc. If the situation is complicated by wilful intervention by another imperialist power it hardly alters our task. Regardless of the character of the imperialist war we attack it at the root—by assaulting the stronghold of monopoly capital. The sole basis for any assault on imperialism—American, British, or Russian, is through our attack on the capitalist system—here! The rest is blowing at the wind. Harrington understands neither the meaning of defense, nor its method. The sole method of the revolutionary socialist movement is international class struggle. Proletarian organization is means, tool, and end. The absolute prerequisite of our attack on the stalinist bureaucracy anywhere is the victory of proletarian forces here. In this the SWP maintains a revolutionary socialist position. But the SP has openly capitulated.

## 3. The SWP's 'glorification' of the Chinese Revolution

Harrington has many views on the subject. Was the Chinese revolution a massive uprising of hundreds of millions of millerially oppressed peasants—or the victory of a few thousand stalinists? In his analysis of the colonial revolution Harrington visualizes a bureaucracy carried to power "on the backs" of the peasantry. Defending his electoral position he stands on the YSL formulation: "While the victory of Stalinism in China

struck a blow at capitalist imperialism from which it will never recover, it, at the same time, raised the new enemy of socialism to power and set back for an indefinite period the workingclass, democracy and socialism." (From their former eminence under Chiang, the warlords, and imperialists, one supposes.) Precisely who took arms, insisted on destroying the landlords, pushed the stalinists--remarkably reluctant "aspirants to class power"--into revolutionary leadership, rolled Chiangs armies into the sea? Harrington, apparently, has no idea. One moment the few thousands of stalinist "agents"--the next a mass revolutionary wave that tore up the roots of old China. The only possible resolution of this impossible position is the formulation in which the whole peasantry (unwittingly, of course--peasants are stupid) acted as themselves "agents of the bureaucratic collectivist class" in Russia, or agents of the agents in the struggle to suppress--themselves!

But the stalinists rose to the leadership of the revolutionary movement because they offered a revolutionary program of peasant aims, and led the peasants, in the day to day struggle, into opposition, conflict, and overthrow of feudalism and the imperialist armies. Having achieved power the bureaucracy, because their own aims conflicted with the revolution, began to suppress the revolutionary aspirations of the peasantry. This means that the stalinists, erstwhile revolutionary leaders--in the time honored tradition--launched an immediate counter-revolution--i.e. went into opposition to the peasantry. Does the massive revolutionary consciousness, generated by the tremendous movement against the past, dissolve at the whim of the stalinist overlords, transform the peasantry into arch-reactionary supporters of the exploiters of their class? Marxists have repeatedly insisted that a revolutionary peasantry, in isolation, cannot maintain the conscious revolutionary purpose to hold their power. The longer the period of isolation, the greater the disillusion of the masses, the greater their retreat into torpor. Does Harrington have nothing to propose to break this isolation except renewed imperialist assault on China? Successful intervention will entail annihilation, root and body, of the revolutionary organization of the Chinese peasantry; mass reprisals against all revolutionary leaders, the return of warlords, headsmen, compradors, feudalism. The renewed rape of China by the imperialists. Are revolutionary socialists absolutely indifferent to the process? Harrington is--because he hasn't the vaguest idea that defense of the Chinese revolution now is the only bond within which we can forge the future alliance of the world proletariat, and the tremendous Chinese peasantry. And we defend the Chinese revolution by creating the proletarian power which alone can come to its aid.

To accept Harrington's method and conclusions entails, therefore, complete rejection of the revolutionary socialist position. However deployed it is the absolute end of revolutionary politics.

#### 4. The S&P's opposition to the "socialist" slogan of self-determination for Formosa

On this point Harrington prefers Lenin to Shane. On few others. The fact remains, nonetheless, that national self-determination is not a socialist slogan. In the same sense, the transitional program, about which the struggle of revolutionary socialists is currently based, is not a socialist program. Hence, the S&P cannot be said to oppose a socialist slogan in the sense that Harrington seems to mean it. Apparently the

intention is to define the SWP as "anti-socialist" because it "opposes the slogan. The crudity of the approach is self-evident.

Socialists, however, do not present their socialist program on a take-it-or-leave-it basis, but actively intervene in mass struggles for democracy, better living conditions, trade unions, at all times and places because the transitional demands are the focal points for the development of a revolutionary opposition to capitalism. "Thirty for forty" is not a socialist slogan—has no meaning as such—but it is a revolutionary slogan because it crystallizes proletarian forces about a specific objective. Because of our analysis of capitalism as a dynamic, integrated, social organism, we reject the ultimate validity of the slogans. We are not reformists. We do not conceive successive reforms achieved by mass action about these slogans as socialist measures. The last step of our program leads—not to socialism—but to revolutionary action against the bases of bourgeois society. The transitional program, transitional slogans, evolve revolutionary consciousness—not a socialist society. This is the principle point of difference between the revolutionary socialist movement and social democracy, because social democrats defend bourgeois democracy as the actual vehicle of socialist development. The program is, therefore, not an end, a principle, but a bridge to action; to the dictatorship of the proletariat which will have a ~~xxx~~ socialist program.

Whether we use one or another transitional, or bourgeois-democratic slogan is not, therefore, a principled question. We do not agitate for a "graduated income tax" although this was a valuable point of previous agitation. We struggle for the extension, not the creation, of mass industrial unions. Each previous victory about a transitional demand raised the revolutionary capacity, the class consciousness of the proletariat to new levels.

The question of the slogan of self-determination for Formosa may or may not, therefore, have a revolutionary content. I do not wish to discuss the utility of various possible slogans, since the question has not been raised in that form. It should be clear that Harrington has neither presented an analysis of the question, understood the validity of any slogan for Formosa, nor substantiated his case against the SWP on this score.

### III. The "facts" on Poznan

The original position of the SWP is defense of the interests of the workers against every exploiter. It certainly is true that the SWP's position on Poznan is "to its credit." But we hardly missed the force of the phrase. Harrington is incapable of even gathering data on the SWP's position, the meaning of the demand for a political revolution against stalinism.

If one began ones inquiry into the SWP on the basis of the articles on Poznan one would, indeed, be obliged to the conclusion that The Militant's vigorous, intelligent exposure of the stalinist bureaucracy, in and around Poznan—including the final fraudulent conviction of insurrectionists—was completely to its credit. But, Harrington "points out", stalinists and stalinoids called for justice. As far as that goes Vishinsky called for 'justice' against the 'mad-dog-fascist-Trotskyites'—and he insisted on his stalinism. Let us agree, nonetheless, that the SWP's unequivocal defense of



the Poznan workers is to its credit. Of course, a single instance does not establish any organization's credentials as anything. The principle feature of Harrington's attitude on this point is his incapacity for further research. Evidently, to be contradicted in practice, harried from pillar to post by reality, so to speak, makes unbiased research difficult. But persistent myopia concerning political positions is not a ~~theoretical~~ virtue in theoreticians. As a comradely gesture we urge Harrington to read another article in The Militant sometime. But let us, for the moment, summarize a few trifling—~~if~~ unpleasant—facts.

- (a) The Fourth International in 1938 stated that "the chief political task in the USSR still remains the overthrow of (the) Thermidorian bureaucracy"—a position which the SWP has altered by extending it to China, Vietminh, and Eastern Europe only.
- (b) The SWP unequivocally supports the revolutionary struggle of the Hungarian workers against all stalinist factions, including the 'liberal' Imre Nagy.
- (c) The SWP has completely supported the Polish workers, and postulates the next success of the Polish revolution as the total overthrow of the stalinist bureaucracy.
- (d) The SWP supports the revolutionary Chinese and Vietminh peasantry against the stalinist dictators, while defending them against imperialist intervention; i.e., calls for the revolutionary overthrow of the bureaucracy on the basis of an alliance of world proletariat and the peasantry.
- (e) The SWP has resolutely opposed all sectors of the comintern and its successors. It has carried on resolute struggles, in conjunction with other national sections, against the treacherous stalinist leadership of national mass working class parties.
- (f) The SWP has consistently exposed the pseudo-liberalism of the post-Stalin bureaucratic regime. It has denied any liberalization, or any alteration in its reactionary content.
- (g) the SWP's orientation to the CP in the United States, which is gripped in the general crisis of world stalinism, has been consistent exposure of the reactionary role of CP leaders as agents of the Kremlin, betrayers of the American negroes and working class, and appealed to the membership to repudiate this leadership on the basis of a genuine revolutionary program.

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS

The revolutionary socialist position of the SWP can be immediately verified by the articles printed in The Militant which clarify, surely and distinctly, the meaning of the demand for overthrow of the bureaucratic stalinist regime in its entirety; entire repudiation of the stalinist rulers; and the character of the revolutionary developments which it expects.

The SWP's position on the creation of an independent, revolutionary proletarian party, which is the over-riding strategic consideration of all SWP policy is absolutely correct, and the sole possible criticism of the SWP on this score must be directed to its capacity to assume the role of vanguard.

The character of the orientation to the disintegrating CP, with an

attempt to retrieve the serious revolutionary elements still within the CP is perfectly correct<sup>1</sup>, and in any case the type of objections which we could launch are not questions of principle, but of tactic.

A vote for the SWP cannot, in any sense, be ruled out on the basis of the impressionistic, undocumented ~~articles~~ accusations made by Martin, Harrington, et. al. in their attempt at political analysis. Further, support of the SWP in further election campaigns, as well as an attempt to merge our forces on concrete issues, since no difference in principle separates our two organizations, is completely in order.

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NOTE ON THE SWP "LETTER TO CP NATIONAL CONFERENCE"

Harrington's report on this letter, which must be considered an important element in his case, is completely erroneous. The appeal is clearly made to the membership; the 'plenipotentiaries' are urged to endorse the Dobbs-Weiss campaign on the basis of the principles which, says the letter, "are the principles the CP membership subscribes to and have been working tirelessly to realize. By backing our candidates you would express their socialist convictions. Now, the congenial follow-up, in which the "Cannon-Foster Alliance" is cemented:

"Although you", the letter continues, "have never stated it forthright", the policy that you advocate is renunciation of "the struggle for socialism"; "crossing class lines"; "betrayal of the interests of the working class"; a "Cruel Blow at Negroes"; reinforcement of the "political domination of the capitalist over the working class" through "your class-collaborationist policy"; "a betrayal of the socialist aspirations of numerous radical workers, including CP members, and of the interests of the American working class as a whole"; forestalling the "need of the Soviet working class which is seeking to end the hated bureaucratic dictatorship in the Soviet Union"; betrayal of the colonial revolution because "what the colonial peoples need to guarantee victory over American imperialism--the stronghold of monopoly capitalism in the world--is the emergence of the American working class as an independent political force. They need the American working class challenge to Big Business rule at home."

Harrington, of course, has a "political" alternative. What?

"I," says Harrington, "am for urging the CP rank and filers to raise demands that will put them in conflict with Stalinism and with the CP bureaucracy."

Congratulations on distinguishing this fine point of "tactical orientation."