

**Which Road
For
Socialist Youth?
REFORMISM
OR
REVOLUTIONARY
SOCIALISM?**

a collection of the
writings of the
left wing of the
young socialist league



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YOUNG SOCIALIST Educational Bulletin 2:

WHICH ROAD FOR SOCIALIST YOUTH -- Reformism or Revolutionary Socialism?

Writings of the Left Wing of the Young Socialist League

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INTRODUCTION

In the present period one can notice certain signs of renewed interest in socialist ideas among the young people of this country. Socialist clubs are springing up on college campuses; socialist youth organizations in the country's major cities are beginning to grow modestly; even teenagers are showing interest in socialist thought and politics.

This is creating an environment favorable for the rebuilding of a socialist youth movement in the United States. In order to build such a movement, however, we need more than the will for it, more than the hands to run mimeo machines and to pass out leaflets at campuses and factory gates. All the good will in the world, all the hard work, will not alone produce a viable socialist youth movement.

We need something more -- a genuine socialist program upon which to base a movement. If there is one lesson to be learned from the 100-year history of the international socialist movement it is this: the desire for a socialist future is not enough on which to build a movement. We must have a program capable of building a movement that can bring about socialism. All the polemics and resolutions, splits and unities, "isms" and "ites" are but reflections of the process of developing such a program.

Socialist youth in the United States do not have to start from scratch in developing a genuine socialist program. Not only do they have the rich tradition of the Marxist movement and its experiences over the last hundred years in almost every country of the world; they also have the recent work done by socialist youth of their own country in trying to develop a socialist program which is suited to our own times.

It is no mere accident that the deepest thinking on a program for socialist youth occurred during a factional struggle within a small socialist organization known as the Young Socialist League. Marxism is not something that can be studied and developed in an ivory tower. It is developed in organizations formed by Marxists to realize their thoughts in action -- even if the action can be no more than passing out a leaflet containing those thoughts.

In late 1956 and early 1957 the Young Socialist League stood as the only nationwide body of young socialists separate from the Communist Party youth. This was the period of the Khrushchev revelations, the Polish and Hungarian revolutions. The entire left in this country was in flux. The task before the YSL was to regroup the socialist youth who were seeking a way out of the ideological crises brought on by the developments in the Soviet orbit into an organization with enough strength to make an impact on the broader strata of American youth.

Faced with this opportunity there developed within the YSL two fundamentally conflicting approaches. The right wing, which controlled the organization and had the backing of the fraternally related Independent Socialist League of Max Shachtman, oriented not towards the opening regroupment opportunities but rather to the almost defunct Socialist Party. It sought unit, with the SP affiliate, the Young Peoples' Socialist League, on the basis of the pro-State Department politics of that organization. In reality it was seeking respect-

ability rather than the building of a genuine socialist movement.

The left wing called for the regroupment of all socialist youth into an independent youth movement with a genuine socialist program of opposition to the American State Department and Western imperialism and solidarity with the workers of the Soviet lands in their struggles for workers' democracy. (Left-Wing Caucus Declaration, page 1).

In the course of this political struggle, which ended in the forcing out of the YSL of the left wing, a whole host of important questions were discussed which are still of current interest. These include:

The American Labor Movement: John Worth, in his article "Labor Democracy and the Reuther machine," discusses the attitude of the ISL towards the "liberal" section of the trade union bureaucracy. Martha Wohlforth's "Labor Action and the Racket Probe" deals with the reaction of the Shachtman group to the government's crackdown on labor racketeering. The McClellan Committee, just starting operations when this article was written, still exists and the attitude of socialists towards it is still of considerable importance.

The Witchhunt: A little-studied phenomenon is the effect of the witchhunt in this country on the radical movement. Tim Wohlforth's "The Strange Case of the American Forum" gives the history of the formation of the American Forum for Socialist Education, the subsequent witchhunting attack upon it, and the reactions this precipitated on the left. It is Wohlforth's thesis that the witchhunt, acting as a catalyst on radical politics, gives us an insight into the differences between reformism and revolutionary socialism in our own day.

Socialist Unity and the Building of a Labor Party: Shane Mage in "Lessons of the Recent NAC Meeting" deals not simply with the question of unity that faced the YSL. He goes deeper into an analysis of the right wing's "Theory of Stages" with which they saw a gradual development of the labor movement, first to labor party consciousness, then to reformist socialist consciousness, and then finally, possibly, to revolutionary consciousness. He counterposes to this the Marxian concept of uneven development in history. The ideas sketched out in this article are very stimulating and deserve further investigation.

The War Question: Jim Robertson's "Resignation from the ISL" not only gives us a good look into the real nature of that organization, but in the process deals with the important theoretical question of the attitude of socialists toward war.

The United Front: A good deal of confusion in the radical movement has centered around the united front tactic. One of the most effective weapons of socialists against capitalism when used properly, it is also one of the most effective ways of inculcating opportunism within the working-class movement when used incorrectly. Tim Wohlforth's "What is a United Front?" is an attempt to get at the real nature of the united front tactic.

The Electoral Question: Needless to say, the struggle within the YSL would not have been complete if it had not at least touched on the electoral question. Currently the formation of an Independent-Socialist Party in New York State has caused a full-scale discussion within all sections of the radical movement on this question. Shane Mage in "The Politics of Unity" points out how the real drift of Shachtman's politics to the right was most clearly shown in his retreat on this question.

A collection of the writings of the Left Wing of the YSL would not be complete without some humor and satire. "The Shaman and the Swamp" is, in my opinion, one of the finest pieces of political satire written for a long time. The cartoons included in this collection speak for themselves.

Out of all these articles emerges the outlines of a revolutionary socialist program. Some of the articles may lack polish. The reader may not understand some of the initials used, or know of some of the people referred to. But one cannot fail to get an insight from these articles into the nature of the division in socialist youth ranks between the revolutionary socialists gathered around the YOUNG SOCIALIST, which contains the former YSL left wing, and the social-democratic youth in the YPSL, which now contains the former YSL right wing. Every young socialist owes it to himself to explore the nature of the political differences between these two formations before making up his mind to join either one. It is to help in this process that we are republishing this selection of writings from the left wing of the Young Socialist League.

The material included in this collection appears in its original form, just as it was published during the actual struggle in the YSL. Therefore initials of organizations, titles of publications, names of persons involved that were common knowledge to YSL members at the time but are not necessarily common knowledge to present readers are used throughout.

In order to aid the reader some of the more obscure names and initials are listed in the Glossary for identification.

YSL LEFT-WING DECLARATION

The National Executive Committee has adopted a resolution calling for unity with the Socialist Party-Social Democratic Federation. This action calls into question the continued existence of the YSL as an independent organization of revolutionary socialist youth.

The NEC resolution states that it is for unity on the basis of the present political program of the SP-SDF. This program is reactionary and anti-socialist. In world politics the SP-SDF supports U.S. imperialism and its basic policies. In American politics the SP-SDF supports the labor bureaucracy and its alliance with the Democratic Party.

Genuine democratic socialism has nothing in common with these policies. On the contrary, the socialist movement can be built only by political struggle against the class-collaborationist and pro-imperialist politics of the social democracy.

If the YSL unites with the SP-SDF it will be abandoning this struggle -- as is already shown by the refusal of the YSL national leadership to criticize the SP-SDF in public, and by the refusal of this national leadership to attempt to recruit members from the SP-SDF into our organization.

We are members of the YSL because we want to assist in the formation of a revolutionary democratic socialist youth movement in the U.S. We are not sectarians. We are willing to unite with all socialist-minded youth on the basis of the minimum program of genuine socialism: independent political action of the working class and the oppressed peoples here and everywhere throughout the world, against both Stalinist and capitalist oppressors.

We consider that the basic question posed by the proposal for unity with the SP-SDF is: either to build the YSL on a socialist political basis or to liquidate the YSL in its present form on the basis of the anti-socialist politics of the SP-SDF.

We believe that this is a question of such vital importance that it is our duty to form a caucus in order to present our views to the members of the League and to save the socialist youth movement from the political disaster of the YSL liquidating itself into the SP-SDF.

We call on all members of the YSL who remain committed to building a real socialist youth movement here, in America, and now, in 1957, to join with us in this undertaking.

LESSONS OF THE RECENT MEC MEETING (Part 1)

by Shane Mage

Two central political questions were discussed at the MEC meeting last January 26 and 27 [1957] -- Socialist regroupment and the current crisis in the Stalinist movement. Both discussions, each in its own fashion, demonstrated the rightward development of the majority of the national leadership of the YSL and clearly counterposed the political issues dividing the tendencies within the YSL.

The Question of Socialist Unity

The proposal that the YSL unite with the then Socialist Party was first raised at the MEC meeting last September. Although this proposal marked a complete change in the attitude of the YSL toward the SP, which had been one of extreme hostility since the very inception of the YSL, it was introduced in the most light-minded fashion possible. The very fact that such a proposal would be made was concealed from the MEC members until the last moment prior to the Plenum, and even then they learned about it only by a passing reference, which already took this 180 degree turn for granted, in the MEC majority resolution endorsing the SP in the election. The evident conception of the majority, in this respect, was that it had such complete control of the organization, and such complete political confidence from the membership, that any proposal it chose to introduce would be automatically adopted with only the most formal sort of discussion. This was also its attitude on the issue of supporting the SP in the presidential election, despite the fact that seven months before I had submitted a resolution calling for a "General Socialist Protest Vote." In a letter to the Los Angeles unit Comrade Harrington wrote: "We did not anticipate that these issues would become controversial... we knew that Shane had his position and that Tim concurred. But we had no reason to anticipate dissatisfaction throughout the organization..." Of course, as the comrades know, this did not turn out to be the case -- the membership, by referendum vote, endorsed the policy we had advocated, and rejected that of the MEC majority.

To understand the full import of the discussion of unity with the SP-SWP at the recent Plenum, we must start with an examination of the motivations presented by the majority for their proposal of unity with the SP last September. At that time this proposal was presented as essentially a tactical one, based on the supposed strength of the SP left wing at the SP convention and on the disintegration of the SP right wing. The majority advocated it on the grounds that if the ISL and YSL united with the SP they would take it over almost immediately from the existing SP leadership which they regarded as muddleheads and incompetents, while if the SP refused unity, the ISL-YSL proposal would serve as an excellent maneuver to win over the SP "Left" which had proposed that the SP include the ISL in its merger with the SWP.

We of the minority knew, both from our general evaluation of the political position and evolution of the ISL right wing and from the concrete fact that the majority's unity line was intimately connected with their position of political support to the SP in the election campaign, that this was no mere incorrect tactic, but a basic political line of capitulation to social democracy presented in the form of a raising maneuver. Nevertheless, we answered the majority's arguments on their own tactical ground, as well as on the principled political

issues. We pointed out that unity with the SP would never be allowed by the SP leadership unless they felt completely sure that they would be able to control the united organization, and that they would lay down conditions which serve to perpetuate their own control. We pointed out that the SP was about to unite with the SDF, which would not merely move it even further to the right, but would provide a really solid organizational base for the right wing SP leadership

The majority comrades replied that unity between the SDF and SP was impossible, and that whatever conditions were laid down by the SP leadership the ISL-YSL would still be able to take the organization over because they would supply all the activists. We said that any attempt to take over the SP would merely result in a new split with very bad political results. The answer was that "Political primitives and political fundamentalists" like Briceman (one of the worst right-wingers in the SP, incidentally) would stick with the SP under all conditions, so that the loss of Thomas and a few others would be unimportant and more than compensated by the influx of "hundreds" of unaffiliated radicals who would, according to the majority, join the SP merely because it had united with the ISL. Finally, we maintained that the way to win over worthwhile individuals in the SP "Left" was not to adopt a policy which could only support their illusions as to the possibility of socialists functioning in the SP, but to express, in a friendly but clear manner, the basic reasons why genuine socialists do not belong in the social-imperialist swamp of the SP but in a revolutionary socialist organization like the ISL. The reply to this was that the way to win over someone is not to talk about differences, but to emphasize what is common between you.

(The opportunistic nature of this approach, especially as defined in practice by the right wing, consists in the fact that differences are completely ignored and only the common points mentioned. Especially when the existing differences are fundamental and basic, as is true of the differences between revolutionary socialism and social democracy of any variety, this is not only dishonest but results in a political whitewash of the social-democratic tendency. But again, this is not, for the right wing, a merely tactical mistake, for the tactical explanation is not really believed in but put forward merely to cover up the essential political content. Thus, speaking for the "AC majority, Comrade Harrington in the election discussion offered as proof of the SWP's "capitulation to Stalinism" the fact that "To be sure, it [the SWP] states its opposition to the Stalinist regime, but it also emphasizes what it has in common with the Stalinist-Stalinoids." If we took the right-wing's argumentation seriously, we would have to state that they are advancing a very peculiar sort of political double standard -- it is capitulation for the SWP to emphasize what it has in common with stalinism when making basic and revolutionary political criticisms of Stalinist politics and the Stalinist regime; while for the ISL-YSL to propose unity with the SP-SDF while refusing to criticize in public any aspect of the SP-SDF's pro-capitalist, pro-imperialist politics is a legitimate and necessary political tactic! We can agree with Mike that the term "capitulationist" is applicable to one of these two approaches.)

The speed with which the right wing unlearned the political meaning of its orientation toward the SP after the Labor Day Plenum is indicated by two facts. First, the political line of supporting the SP in the election was presented by the right wing as excluding support to the SP itself. Harrington, in arguing for his position, emphasized that he favored endorsing "Not, note this, the SP; the SP campaign." In practice, the ISL did not merely endorse the SP campaign,

which would have been bad enough, but presented itself as the political agent of the SP by, in New York, distributing SP leaflets containing SP interest blanks, and by failing to modify its support by any criticism of the SP or its campaign.

Second, the Plenum decided that a full discussion on the unity question, including presentation of both points of view in Challenge, was to be held before the next W.C. meeting. As everyone knows, nothing of the sort was done -- the majority didn't send out its draft resolution on this question until two weeks before the Plenum and in other ways prevented any discussion of their SP-SDF unity perspective from taking place. If this central issue is discussed before the convention, as it must and shall be, it will be solely because of the efforts of the left wing. At the last Plenum, the leading majority comrades showed great reluctance even to give the unity question a pre-eminent position on the draft agenda of the next convention, and recognized the necessity of this only because of the pressure of the left wing, not because of its intrinsic merits or importance to the life of the organization.

The Shift in the Right Wing's Motivation

With this as background, we can now proceed to a consideration of the discussions at the recent Plenum. The most striking feature of the discussion was the transformation in the motivation of the proposed unity with the SP-SDF. In fact, the only member of the majority who had a word to say on this point was Comrade Taylor who stated that "we could take over the SP in three days" but if we did, "it would be a horrendous mistake." Examine for a moment what this change of perspective means: the ISL majority is now willing to leave leadership of the SP in the hands of a political tendency which is hostile to the most basic political positions supposedly defended by the YSL, and is not even willing to try to win the majority of the SP-SDF to the general viewpoint of the ISL! If this is not a formula of capitulation to the social-democratic leadership, what is it?

A similar change marked the attitude of the majority to the SP "Left." Last September, they tried to magnify the strength and influence of the "Left wing" in the SP in order to make their pro-SP position more plausible. Now, the SP-SDF "Left" is presented as quite insignificant, and of no importance at all in their orientation toward the SP-SDF. What has happened? When the merger of the SP and the SDF was announced the SP "left wingers" reacted in a decent fashion -- they denounced the merger as what it was, an act of complete political capitulation to U.S. imperialism, a unity whose political basis had nothing in common with socialism. At this point, one would have expected a national leadership genuinely interested in building the YSL and in winning the SP "left" over to a revolutionary socialist position to repeat to these comrades what we have been telling them continually throughout our three years of existence -- that they do not belong in the SP, still less the SP-SDF, but ought to belong to a real socialist organization, the YSL. One would expect the leadership of the ISL to point out to the SP "left-wingers" that the pro-capitalist, pro-imperialist character of the SP-SDF merger completely confirms all our previous criticisms of their policy of remaining in the SP, and that if they want to continue to work for socialism they can no longer avoid joining the YSL. But the national leadership of the ISL and YSL did no such thing -- not only did it not encourage the SP "left" in its fight against the merger with the SDF, it actually advised them to give up their opposition to merger and remain in the SP-SDF! No wonder the majority expressed no interest in winning over the SP "Left" -- it has been too successful in con-

vincing them to retreat from the genuinely socialist positions they had begun to take!

Who is Sectarian?

Despite the accusations of "sectarianism" against us, we of the YSL left wing still desire, unlike the majority, to unite with radical youth from the SP-SDF on the basis of what we have in common, even in spite of very important political differences. We therefore introduced a specific motion calling on left-wing youth in the SP-SDF to leave that organization, which they themselves declared had nothing in common with socialism, and to join the YSL. The vote on this motion was indicative of just who in the ISL is interested in building the organization by winning over to it the SP "left wing." The vote: Tim and Shane for, all the rest against.

But if the majority is uninterested in the SP-SDF "Left," they are very definitely interested in the SP-SDF right wing! After all, these are the people who have absolute control of the SP-SDF organization, the group that will decide (unless the YSL membership has something to say about it) whether or not the YSL right wing will be able to liquidate the ISL into the SP-SDF. What, after all, does it matter if their politics are pro-capitalist and pro-imperialist? And so, when last September the important argument for unity was the success of the SP left in getting some votes for including the ISL in the unity, today the majority comrades proudly claim that more and more SP-SDF right-wing leaders are willing to accept the ISL and YSL as loyal members of their organization. And in return for this favor, the right-wing leaders of our organization are not exactly averse to applying a little whitewash to the SP-SDF right-wingers. Thus Comrade Taylor was able to inform the "MC" that the "SP" (NO member of the right wing was bold enough to use the SP-SDF's real name) is actually moving to the left. He explained this discovery by the following curious logic, starting from the crisis of Stalinism: "The Socialist Party supports American imperialism out of fear of Stalinism, not out of pro-capitalism. With the crisis of Stalinism the SP is starting to break with American imperialism." The syllogism is so neat that one almost hates to point out that social democracy in general, including the American forerunners of the present SP-SDF (Debs, if you remember, called himself a bolshevik), has been pro-capitalist and pro-imperialist since 1914, long before even Stalin had heard of Stalinism!

Of course, there was some empirical confirmation offered for this startling announcement -- that the SP-SDF right wing is increasingly friendly toward the ISL (as why shouldn't it be, given the eagerness of the ISL-ISL leadership to enter the SP-SDF on the basis of the right wing's program), and that the State-Department "socialists" who publish the New Leader have been suggesting to U.S. imperialism that maybe it could gain a political advantage over the Russians by offering to withdraw its troops from Europe. Of course Comrade Taylor neglected to mention the actual political movement shown by the formation of the SP-SDF. The joint SP-SDF "Memorandum of Understanding" hailed the Marshall Plan as an "expression of the American spirit at its best" and stated that its foreign policy "must not be based on the illusion that peace can be achieved by appeasement of the Communist imperialism that threatens the world's peace and freedom ... We realize that until universal, enforceable disarmament can be achieved, the free world and its democratically established military agencies must be constantly on guard against the military drive of the Communist dictators." If this

isn't a movement to the right, the SP must have started much further right than even I suspected last August!

The "New Line"

The "EC" majority position in favor of unity with the SP-SDA is thus not at all motivated by tactical considerations of any sort, least of all the perspective of raiding the SP which these comrades had used to cover up their position only a few months ago. The SP entry perspective has been presented as part of a fundamental new strategic line on the development of socialism in the U.S. This line was spelled out in the "EC" majority resolution and in Comrade Martin's report to the plenum, in roughly these terms:

It is possible at the present time for the American socialist movement to break out of its isolation from the working class through the expedient of regrouping itself in the form of a "broad" socialist party. The leadership of this party must be social-democratic, because the social democrats are furthest to the right, therefore closest to the present politics of the labor movement. In no sense is this party to have a "left wing" program, since advocacy of socialist politics will merely isolate it from the labor movement. Instead, it will be for "socialism in a general sense" on the basis of a "broad socialist program" (it should be noted that by the term "broad" the "EC" majority means "Right-wing social-democratic," since it uses that term to describe the present pro-capitalist, pro-imperialist program of the SP-SDA.) This party will have the task of forming the nucleus of the "left wing" of a future Labor Party -- this "left wing" to be based entirely on the advocacy of "socialism," again "in a general sense."

Comrade Martin presented this perspective as a theory of three stages:

- (1). The socialist movement will revive itself around the SP-SDA nucleus.
- (2). A non-socialist labor party will be formed. The main axis of division within this labor party will be between socialists "in a general sense" and non-socialists.
- (3). The Labor Party will adopt a socialist program.

Of the many criticisms that can be made of this mechanical and unrealistic orientation, perhaps the most important is that it is totally divorced from any evaluation of the objective situation in which socialist regroupment is to take place. Max bases himself on the proposition that "It is possible to revive the socialist movement in the U.S. today." But the socialist movement has not been withering this past decade because of its own mistakes, but because the working-class passivity produced by the permanent war economy combined with the boom phase of the normal prosperity-depression cycle has dried up the natural arena for socialist political activity. A meaningful revival of the socialist movement in America can therefore come about only as a result of a fundamental change in this objective situation, and therefore the majority position can only be predicated on the expectation of such a change. But the conclusion that the majority draws when it speaks of an "Opening to the right," when it wants to adopt a social-democratic program in order to be close to the workers at their present stage of consciousness, is in complete contradiction to the expectation of a change which will violently alter that stage of consciousness! The contradiction can be avoided only on the basis of a perspective of a gradual and slow development, without violent breaks in the economy, and therefore in the working-class consciousness. But this is not, to say the least, our prognosis

for America's fantastically unstable capitalism! It is, on the other hand, the basic perspective of Heuther and the labor bureaucracy, the authentic American social democrats.

The Abandoning of Marxist Methodology

The "Theory of Stages" advanced by Comrade Martin is also very revealing of the right wing's views on the future of American socialism. First of all, we should be well aware of the complete abandonment of Marxist methodology inherent in Martin's formulation of his position. According to dialectical materialism, social change does not take place through a peaceful, gradual evolution from stage to stage; qualitative transformations occur at crisis points, in the form of a rapid and violent change marked above all by discontinuity of form, by "leaping over" historical stages in accordance with the law of combined and uneven development which compels social classes to solve their historical problems by use of the most advanced methods available, and which absolutely precludes repetition of methods used under different conditions in a preceding historical period. The "classical" example of this process is of course the Russian revolution, which saw the Russian workers go directly from the "stage" of feudalism to the "stage" of proletarian dictatorship without stopping at the state of bourgeois parliamentary democracy, as the Menshevik exponents of the "Theory of Stages" insisted they would have to.

Comrade Martin's prognosis for the development of American socialism is thus non-Marxist in method. As a result, it completely ignores the violent and radical changes inherent in the very hugeness of American capitalism. The American labor movement is as sluggish as it is big and strong, because it is under the complete control of a privileged bureaucracy profoundly attached to the existing social order. To set this tremendous mass in motion, to produce such a revolutionary act as the break of the labor movement from capitalist politics, requires the action of economic and social pressures of tremendous force. Yet Martin expresses assurance that when the workers finally move, they will move slowly, a step at a time!

Even within the context of Martin's presentation, one stage is missing -- the creation of a revolutionary socialist party, capable of leading the workers to the establishment of their own rule. Is this because Max no longer believes such a party is absolutely necessary to achieve socialism, because he puts the creation of a revolutionary party off into such a vague and distant future that he considers it irrelevant at the present time, or because he thinks discussion of it would disturb his new social-democratic friends? When I raised this point during the plenum discussion, Max didn't consider it worth a reply.

The majority resolution on socialist regroupment also is marked by abandonment of socialist political methodology when it states that the YSL wants to create a left wing in a future labor party which "will aim at winning the labor party to socialism in a broad, general sense." Socialist politics, as opposed to sectarian politics, does not seek to establish socialism by winning people to a set of abstract ideas, whether specific or general; on the contrary, it seeks at every stage to concretize its ultimate program in such a way as to effectively promote and stimulate the class struggle of the workers. The political program of revolutionary socialism exists basically as a Marxist worldview, but in the actual arena of class struggle it, like the program of any other tendency, manifests itself as a series of stands on concrete issues. The left

wing of a labor party, whether that party called itself socialist or not, could never be based on "socialism in a general sense" any more than it could be based on, say, "Atheism in a general sense."

Precisely because irreconcilable political conflicts on the most important issues of our time exist among those who call themselves "socialists," any genuinely "broad" socialist party would break wide open the moment it had to answer a real political question, such as, say, the attitude to take toward a rank and file opposition movement in a union headed by a social-democratic bureaucrat who happens to sit on its executive committee. The "permanent and fruitful co-existence of the merged forces" envisaged in the majority resolution is thus conceivable, given the political character of the SP-SDF leadership, only on one of two conditions: either the new party refuses to take a position on any significant political issue, and thereby reduces itself to the status of a sect as isolated from American political life as the SLP, or else one of the tendencies agrees to accept the position of the other on all points. And as we have seen, the right wing of the YSL has already declared its willingness to concede permanent control of the organization to the SP-SDF right wing. On such a basis "permanent coexistence" might indeed be possible!

We of the minority have a different view of the objective circumstances which make regroupment of the American socialist movement an important possibility at the present time. We believe that the mortal crisis of Stalinism makes possible now the creation of a new and broader party on a decent socialist basis, a party which would be able to intervene in the real political struggles which will mark the coming radicalization of the American working class. The majority, on the other hand, denies the primary role of the Stalinist crisis in the circumstances making possible socialist regroupment. They are compelled to do this, because their orientation is not toward those who, up to now, have been in the ideological grip of Stalinism, but toward the social democrats.

Thus, Comrade Taylor, trying to answer the question posed by us, "What has changed to make unification with the SP-SDF so desirable at the present time, when we have always opposed it, and violently?" stated that "the discussion of socialist regroupment does not stem from the Stalinist crisis." He listed four conditions which now combine to make this regroupment necessary. First is "The isolation of the existing sects." But this is not exactly new -- the sects have been isolated for the last decade, and more. Second is the "CP crisis," whose central character Comrade Taylor is trying to deny. Third is the "easing of the war danger," marked no doubt by such manifestations of the "Spirit of Geneva" as the Suez crisis, the big increase in the U.S. military budget for 1957, the Eisenhower Doctrine, and the current carefully staged Spy Scare. Fourth and last was the already discussed assertion that the SP-SDF is "starting to break with American imperialism."

Two Amendments

After the "Draft Resolution on Socialist Realignment and Socialist Unity" had been approved by the WAC, with only Comrade Tim in opposition, some right-wing comrades reread it and made an alarming discovery -- it included no statement of differences with the SP-SDF, except on "questions of fact" (not even of theory!) concerning various "'historical' issues." The majority comrades were concerned by this fact, some because they thought it left them vulnerable to the criticisms of the left wing, others because they genuinely

wanted to see a statement of their own basic and fundamental differences with the SP-SDF included in the resolution. For the first group, Martin and Taylor introduced an amendment stating that the YSL differed with the SP-SDF on a number of issues (without, however, specifically characterizing the SP-SDF position on any of these issues as pro-capitalist or pro-imperialist), and promising that the ex-YSL-ISL would seek to influence the SP-SDF on specific issues as they came up (a valueless promise, if they are sincere about not wanting to take over the merged organization. As Comrade Shachtman has often told us, any tendency that is serious about its ideas will not allow responsibility for implementing them to remain in the hands of people hostile to those ideas!) If this belated addition to its original position is supposed to disarm our charge that the right wing is "capitulating to social democracy" I think we can reply, paraphrasing Comrade Harrington on the SWP, that this amendment represents the bare minimum separating capitulation to social democracy from social democracy itself!

Some of the right-wingers on the NEC, while supporting Martin down the line politically, were very unhappy about this amendment. For instance Comrade Owen said that "Martin and Taylor have put forward an amendment they really do not agree with but which they support in order to slur over the differences." And Comrade Art added: "Max and Sonny [Max Martin and Sam Taylor] have a sort of unbelievable point of view ... the document only bears out the slanders of Tim and Shane." But Art and Owen -- isn't your own failure to come up with anything better than Max's position proof that our charges against the right-wing position are not "slanders," but true?

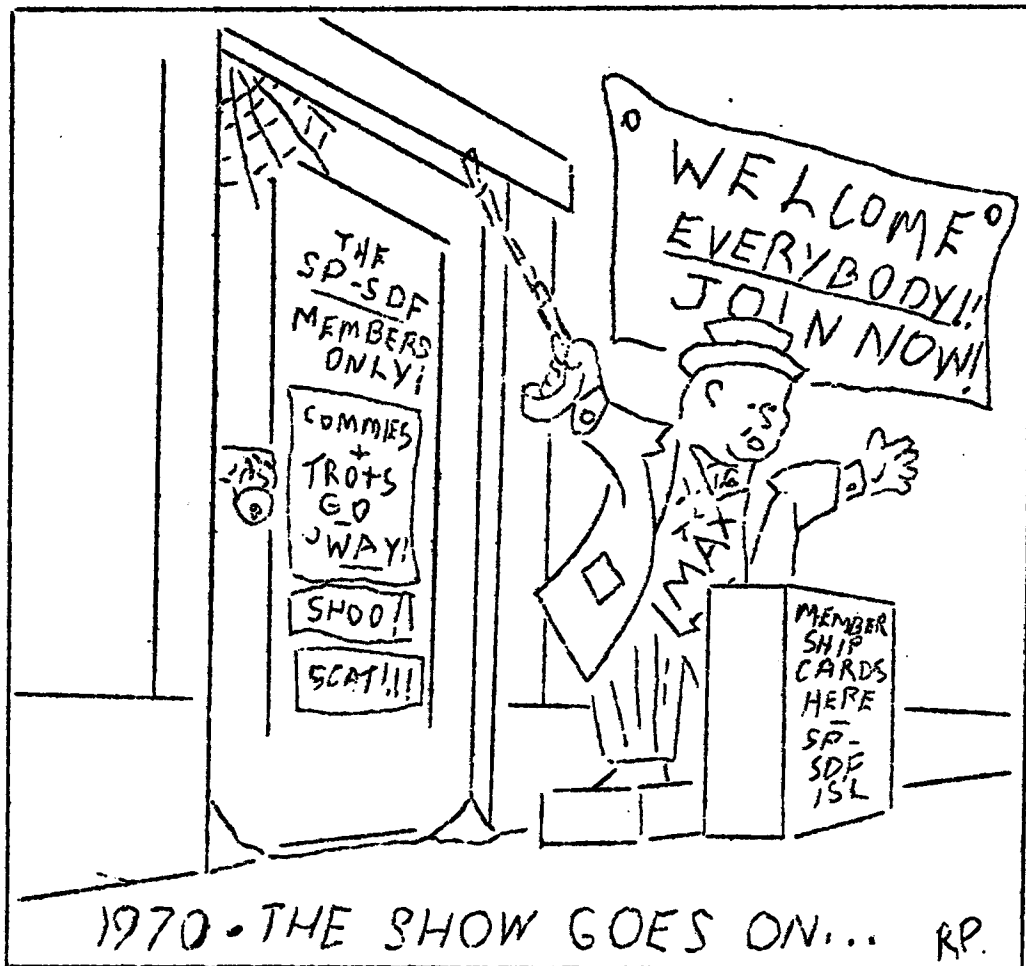
An amendment of a somewhat different nature was introduced by Bogdan [Denitch] and George [Rawlings]. They stated that the basic difference between themselves and the social democrats was one of class nature -- they regard the U.S. state as an enemy, the political agency of the capitalist class, while the social democrats regard the state as above classes, representing all the people, themselves included.

This amendment had its faults, both of omission and of phrasing; but it did at least offer a basic political analysis of the American social democracy, and it was true as far as it went. Unfortunately, Bogdan and George refused to establish any principled difference between themselves and the rest of the right wing. George stated that the sole difference he had with Max and Sonny was that they had "a different perspective as to the imminence of unity." Bogdan and George themselves are for unity, and indicate that if it was imminent they would accept Martin's position. As a matter of fact, they do not believe that unity is imminent for a year or a year and-a half, and in the meantime they consider the majority line extremely dangerous. Bogdan charged that "we cannot defend it with SP left-wingers, we cannot stand by it with right-wingers, it makes us a bunch of damn liars." They are also afraid the Martin position disarms the right wing against the SWP, the YSL left wing, and, extremely indicative, the SP. Bogdan was extremely disturbed by the reaction of some members to the unity line. He reported that in N.Y. many right-wingers were very impatient to get into the SP-SDF, and actually talked in terms of joining it as individuals. He described the effects he feared from the majority line thus: "Suppose we tell our members that we can get into that swamp and that we can function in that swamp -- won't they join the SP as individuals?"

But if Bogdan and George were unable to draw the conclusion that principle

differences exist between them and the right wing, the leading members of the right wing seemed to recognize it, and responded by an attempt to defend the SP-SDF. Mike [Harrington] called the bogdan-George amendment "Vulgar Marxism and schematicism at its worst ... these things are not true, are a lot of nonsense." And Sonny, maintaining his role as the most outspoken apologist for the SP-SDF, accused Bogdan of "slandering the SP."

In the end, the George-Bogdan amendment got only three votes (George, Tim and myself. Bogdan had no vote.) The right wing opposed it solidly, thus making even plainer than ever one of the decisive facts of their political orientation — their absolute refusal to draw a fundamental line of demarcation between themselves and the SP-SDF right wing.



THE SHAMAN AND THE SWAMP

by S. Aesop

Once upon a daydream, not too long ago, in a mighty nation, not too far away, there lived two groups of people, very far apart.

One was called the Redmen, no one quite knew why; the others were called the Others, because they were. The Redmen were very very few but there were lots and lots of Others. This was not always the case, it was said, and the tribal tablets told of a time when lots (but never lots and lots) of Others were Redmen. This was long ago.

The Redmen were a quarrelsome lot, few as they were, and did not live together. They lived in separate tribes, each being the True Redmen tribe, and when Redmen from two tribes met they sometimes argued most noisily. They only agreed, all of them, that one day the Great Power would fix it so everyone would be a Redman. And they, or most of them, tried to help the Great Power, from time to time, but never did too well.

Nevertheless, in between quarreling, and changing tribes, the Redmen thought hard about the Great Power and performed many rituals and made strong incantations to bring its day closer. Each tribe had its own ritual and sometimes several -- for though the tribes were small there were many views and oftimes a tribe would be divided into clans each with its own ritual.

Now one day it came about that all the Redmen began to quarrel about a new idea. This idea was that all Redmen should join together and make one bigger small tribe instead of several smaller small tribes.

It would seem that this idea came to them because the biggest tribe of Redmen -- which was not really a Redman tribe but only just said it was -- because this biggest tribe's Mighty Medicine Man had died and the new Shaman could no longer hide the badness of his ritual. It was a very very bad ritual indeed and real Redmen began to leave this tribe.

Now it happened that each of the little tribes (except for one that lived on a high plateau, and another that lived in a swamp) wanted these Redmen to come live with them, or best yet, as was stated, for all Redmen to get together and form one bigger small tribe.

One of these little tribes was very excited. Its strongest clan was run by a sort of Redman who was called Mighty Shaman. He was headman because he had made his own ritual, could make awesome incantations, and mainly because out of the many tribes he had been in he had made this one.

Mighty Shaman's tribe was small and old but it lived right next to a younger and stronger tribe. This younger tribe bowed down to mighty Shaman and used his ritual and made his nephew, Little Shaman, headman because Little Shaman knew the ritual real well and could make almost as much noise as Mighty Shaman.

The Redmen in Little Shaman's tribe were even more excited about tribal unity and talked about it all the time.

But Mighty Shaman had a strange idea all his own. In his wanderings he had once lived with the tribe in the swamp and he always regretted leaving. He had heard that another tribe (of very pale Redmen to be sure) was coming back to live in the swamp and make it even better for swamp dwellers.

Now it should not be thought that the swamp was not a nice safe place for a Redman to live. It was. In the swamp a Redman could ooze down into the warm mire up to his neck and almost no one would know he was a Redman if he did not tell them.

Besides, in the swamp a Redman was safe from the Others. The Others (or some of them) were sometimes very mean to the Redmen and would not let them hunt or fish in certain places and even worse. But not in the swamp. In the swamp the Others did not do bad things to Redmen and if the swamp tribe behaved well (which they were very good at doing) and kissed the feet of the Others and took parts of the Religion of the Others into the tribal ritual (which they did) why then they were allowed to hunt and fish all over.

Well, Mighty Shaman decided he was lonesome for the swamp and called together his Pow-wow Council. Some of the witch-doctors on the Pow-wow Council thought the slime was too deep in the swamp but they were hooted down by the elders who kept thinking of how warm and safe and comfortable it would be.

So it happened that Mighty Shaman called in Little Shaman and told him to prepare the younger tribe to march into the swamp. Little Shaman went back to his tribe and incanted long and loud. The other leaders of his clan finally gave in because he allowed them to think that the real reason for going into the swamp was to pump out all of the mud and build a fine strong tribe which would gain many Others.

Some of Little Shaman's tribal brothers rebelled, however, and formed a new clan. They pointed into the swamp at the unhappy younger swamp dwellers, and also they said that they did not want to give up their ritual for that of the swamp. They called for a new bigger tribe of all Redmen, including the unhappy swamp dwellers, on firm dry land and with a good ritual.

Mighty Shaman and Little Shaman and their lesser headmen became very unhappy because of this. They sent out the story that the new young clan was not loyal to the ritual and was made up of scouts and spies from an enemy tribe.

This was a big un-truth but it scared many of the undecided members of Little Shaman's tribe and some of them stopped thinking rebellious thoughts and came again to sit placidly at the feet of Mighty Shaman.

They noticed, however, that Mighty Shaman's feet gave off a strange odor and were covered with clay and slime, due to his explorations in the swamp. Many of them just could not stand the odor and they went to the new clan and made it strong. Finally, the Shamanites could not stand dry land any longer and they gathered up their followers and, after begging the permission of the muddiest swamp dwellers, they snuck into the swamp to live.

They found it so pleasant that most of them slipped all the way down in the muck and buried themselves so deeply that after a very short while no one, Redman or Other, ever heard from them again.

STATEMENT OF RESIGNATION FROM THE
INDEPENDENT SOCIALIST LEAGUE

by James Robertson
San Francisco Bay Area Branch, ISL, April 12, 1957

To break finally and irrevocably with an organization which has been one's principal concern for eight years is a serious matter. This is not, however, a resignation from the political group joined, for today the ISL is merely a woefully disintegrated remnant of the Party in which membership was originally taken.

The vicious circle of political retreat, organizational decay, and personal demoralization which has trapped the Shachtman group for some years has had remarkable consequences. At one time the Workers Party was an avowed and vigorous revolutionary Marxist body, which sought to give meaning and direction to its work from the standpoint of the revolutionary doctrine associated with the names Lenin and Trotsky. The past half dozen years, particularly, have witnessed a persistent, though gradual, wavering, and beclouded transition to the aims of reformist socialism.

THEORETICAL RETREAT

War and Stalinism

This transition has taken place under the influence of a desperate Stalinophobic reaction to the expansion of Russian power at the end of the Second World War into East and Central Europe and to the establishment of bureaucratic collectivist regimes in Asia, through Stalinist domination of anti-colonial movements. The revisionism in the ISL, therefore, first showed itself with complete clarity in taking a position toward the threatened Third World War.

In 1951 Shachtman wrote:

"Without hesitation or ambiguity, we can say that the only greater disaster that humanity could suffer than the war itself, which would be disaster enough if it broke out, would be the victory of Stalinism as the outcome of the war." (Emphasis added.)

With this perspective, the ISL was forced to seek a basis for its anti-war policy in the forces existing within the framework of capitalist imperialism. Twist and turn as it would, it was, if tenuously, tied within that framework.

The first anti-war recipe elaborated that same year (1951) with this one-sided perspective reads as adopted by the ISL Convention:

"Faced by the coming war crisis, the socialist movement will more urgently than ever call upon the working-class movement to take command of the nation and, should it prove necessary as a result of the reactionary and imperialist drive of Stalinism, to take command also of the defence of the nation. Even if, at the outset, a labor government which takes over the nation and defends the interest of the working people on the basis of a genuinely democratic course in foreign and domestic policy which is not in fact subordinated to the

interests of capitalism and imperialism should not yet be a socialist labor government, the socialist movement stands pledged to support and defend it in word and in deed in any war in which it is threatened by a reactionary enemy, Stalinist Russia included." (emphasis added.)

This labor government is a strange animal indeed! Never before seen in life (or in Marxist theory). It is either a lie or a delusion of its authors. To a Leninist, for a working class to smash capitalist imperialism and take command of the nation in war or peace necessarily requires the socialist revolution, i.e., the establishment of proletarian state power as the outcome of a process of struggle culminating in the victory of a socialist working class with a revolutionary party at its head. "But," might have replied the authors of this anti-capitalist, perhaps not yet socialist government, "the need to replace capitalism is urgent, and where is a socialist-minded working class, not to mention a revolutionary party?" To which one must reply: in America some way off, no doubt; but, this unfortunate fact does not deny the necessity for these prerequisites, merely their immediacy. For Marxists to engage in such day dreams instead of working for the real possibility of emancipation is in effect to deter the avowed goal.

In more recent years the conclusion of the Korean war, the limited relaxation generally in the cold war, and above all the more clearly seen horror associated with nuclear warfare, have forced into the background the Shachtmanite toying with "a democratic war against Stalinism." In the meantime, the "lessons" derived from the new line have sunk deeply into the minds and conduct of the bulk of the ISL, members and leaders, and corrupted their revolutionary consciousness.

Reform or Revolution

But is not the ISL a revolutionary organization? It certainly asserts that it is. What, however, is meant by the declaration? Max Shachtman stated it exactly last summer in a government hearing on the listing as "subversive" of the ISL, formerly the Workers Party, and the former youth section, the Socialist Youth League.

To the question: "When the organizations (ISL, WP, SYL) use the word 'revolution' what do they mean by that?" Shachtman replied: "The reorganization of society on fundamentally different economic foundations ..."

Moreover to the question: "Do you use the word 'revolution' to indicate the means whereby this change will be brought about?" Shachtman answered: "No. That is not involved in the term 'revolution' as we employ it."

Further on a contrasting was made with the meaning of reformism as follows: Question to Shachtman: "When you use the term reformist you mean a socialist organization which intends to achieve its ends by reformist methods. Can you be more explicit?" Reply: "Reformists seek to make capitalism work in a way in which we think only socialism can work --- they want to reform it here and there ... we are for a more radical change of the basis of society."

Thus by an attempt at terminological confusion the ISL would have it both

ways: accommodate itself to the enormous pressures and hostilities which are operative against revolutionary socialists, yet be "revolutionary" to silence left-wing critics and keep supporters with uneasy memories in line.

Consider, however, the more honest answer which an avowed reformist socialist gives to the same question.

He asks: "Is democratic Socialism revolutionary?" And goes on: "If to be a revolutionary merely means to be opposed to the present unjust conditions and to strive for a society in which the existing evils are removed and the basic human needs satisfied, who would not be a revolutionary? But it is obviously not enough to reject the present bourgeois order and advocate the classless society to deserve the title of a revolutionary. One must also want 'the revolution,' which includes wanting the techniques necessary to carry through a revolution and the consequences which flow from that. If we mean by revolution such an historically conditioned sequence of concrete actions, can democratic socialism support it?"

To which the author answers himself: "Socialism is not and cannot be revolutionary in the Marxist, which is the precise historical sense of the term." And: "To accept this conclusion implies by no means the endorsement of a shallow reformism. Democratic Socialism does not aim at reforming bourgeois society, thereby risking to consolidate it; it aims at changing it from within." — from "The Meaning of Democratic Socialism" by Pierre Bonnel, published by the Young People's Socialist League, 1956.

In passing, it should be noted that the "democratic" "Socialist" author is a member of the French Socialist Party, currently leading the French government in conducting the bloody colonial war in Algeria.

What all this means is that the ISL has conducted a verbal sleight of hand so that reformist socialists are to be seen as revolutionary socialists and reformers are taken to be reformist socialists (though the confusion between the latter two is partly inherent since, despite different professed aims, the means proposed are similar or overlapping; thus some liberals want a labor party; and some reformist socialists want to work for a "class-less" Democratic Party.)

The Nature of the State

Theoretically central to the above discussions of war position and terminological designation is the question of the class character of any given state. If the class character of a state apparatus is not irremedial then perhaps the state can be won (electorally) for the workers and by a non-revolutionary, perhaps not yet socialist, labor party. If on the contrary and in accord with Leninist thought, a state has an inherent, i.e. built-in, class commitment, then to effect fundamental change, recourse must be had to the creation of another and different kind of state by the revolutionary people.

On this question wherever it has arisen as in analyzing the post-war British Labour Government, the ISL has for some years practiced a special kind of "avoidism" taking refuge, when pushed, in discussions revolving around "governments" and quantitative estimations of how good they are.

ORGANIZATIONAL DISINTEGRATION

Today and for some years past the Independent Socialist League has been a hollow shell, in distinction to an earlier period in which the vigorous internal life, the activity and sacrifice of the members, were such that any movement could be proud of them.

Some Symptoms

(1) The ISL has a discussion bulletin. The last issue to come out before the present crisis was in 1954 — over two years ago. Before that there had been only a couple of bulletins a year for four years. In the last months while the fate and future of the ISL have been in the balance, one slim bulletin has appeared. Some years back the membership participated in the life of the party to such an extent that one or more thick bulletins a month came out.

(2) The past couple of conventions, constitutionally to be held every two years, have been held perhaps three years apart and in a perfunctory manner by any previous standards.

(3) The national committee of the ISL has been a paper committee for years. There are no plenary meetings apart from convention times; it does not even receive minutes of the deliberations of its sub-body, the Political Committee. Thus the leadership of the organization has rested exclusively in the hands of a largely uncontrolled little group of half dozen leaders in one locale.

These and similar considerations clearly reveal that the organization lacks internal life, possesses a most apathetic membership and is characterized by an absence of democracy. Not that it is bureaucratic; there is simply an internal vacuum — nothing.

The Crisis in Leadership

While successive sets of national leaders inherited from pre-war days have defected or decamped, their replacements coming up from the ranks of the League have been meager indeed. Two whole political generations are simply not willing to assume the responsibilities and sacrifices of party work. Those who in the war years came to political maturity and then considered themselves professional revolutionists, are today mainly dispirited: family men first, socialists second. Those recruited into the youth leagues off the campus in the post-war period are, to the extent that they are still around, busy furthering themselves in their academic and professional careers and part-timing their socialism. Hence the apparatus and national office of the League are being strangled for lack of personnel and have little hope for the future.

POLITICS AND LEAGUE LIFE

The decline of the ISL has proceeded by interaction and mutual exacerbation at both levels — the changing role it conceives for itself as a socialist movement and its ability to build and hold a devoted cadre. For what real point is there to self-sacrifice by the membership, if the results of such work are increasingly seen as essentially irrelevant to social progress, which is supposedly to come without a necessary participation and eventual leadership of a revolutionary vanguard in the working class. Thus the demoralizing tendencies mutually

reinforcing and accelerating, have resulted in Shachtman's current proposition to liquidate what is left of the ISL and enter the Socialist Party-Social Democratic Federation, itself the recent product of a similar surrender on the part of the Socialist Party.

DISSOLUTION INTO THE SP-SDF

With the foregoing remarks on the ISL in mind not too much need be said about the Shachtman "unity" proposal. The following should be noted:

- (1) It is no unity proposal as hitherto known by that name. There is no political basis for unity, merely that the SP-SDF will accept the ex-ISL people into their ranks.
- (2) It involves a political capitulation to the pro-capitalist and imperialist policies of the SP-SDF as Shachtman makes clear by the insistence that the ex-ISL members in the SP-SDF will keep their particular ideas in their pockets for a long time and not oppose the leadership of Worman Thomas & Co.
- (3) It is a liquidationist proposal which virtually guarantees the disappearance of the Shachtman tendency in short order. If entrance into the SP-SDF is obtained, the bulk of the ISL members will have found simply a rest home; those who may have gone along with the illusions that their leadership was executing some kind of "Leninist" tactic will drop out or go over consciously to reformism. Should entry not be made in the fairly near future, the situation will be even more disastrous. Already the ISL membership is living with "bags packed." The entry idea has unleashed all the centrifugal forces in the ISL and at a point when the League is on the border line of collapse anyhow.
- (4) It is a move essentially independent of the regroupment taking place among the former supporters and members of the shattered Communist Party. This is shown by the testimony of PC member Hal Draper that the entry question was first raised in the Political Committee over a year ago, before the Khrushchev revelations; and it was made public before the Eastern European revolutions wreaked their toll on the American CP.
- (5) It is being argued in terms and leads to activity by the ISL which does real disservice generally to the cause of a militant class-struggle socialist reunification. The SP-SDF is a bitterly sectarian grouping which conceives of its "democratic" socialism as violently hostile to all varieties of Leninism, its heirs and assigns, all variants and deviations from same, real and alleged. But the preponderance of radicals in America come under one or the other of the SP-SDF's proscribed listings. Few will follow the lead of the ISL in forsaking the advocacy of their beliefs in order to coexist in a little sect under the leadership of social democrats crusted with age.

Moreover the ISL must exhibit a fundamental hostility to every regroupment enterprise and proposal not seemingly leading to membership in the Socialist Party-Social Democratic Federation.

IMMEDIATE REASON FOR LEAVING THE ISL

The precipitating reason for this resignation is that the ISL is proposing not only to liquidate itself, but to destroy as well the more viable, militant

Young Socialist League.

The ISL exerts a great influence in the YSL. To counteract this demoralizing control it is necessary to attack the ISL. This, however, is incompatible with continued membership. These obligations have led to a muting of criticism of the ISL. To continue this situation would be an abdication of responsibility in the Young Socialist League.

Some of the ISL's supporters recently leveled an untruthful and personal attack in the pages of the Young Socialist Review against the present writer so as to discredit his views and the achievements of the present Bay Area Young Socialist Clubs, YSL, with which he is associated. In order to make a satisfactory reply it was impossible not to take up the question of the role and character of the ISL. Such action necessarily brings to an end the writer's membership in the Independent Socialist League.

James Robertson
San Francisco Bay Area Branch, ISL
April 12, 1957

Stanley Larssen and David Carleton, being in substantial agreement with the above statement, also tender their resignations from the ISL at this time.

Received from Berkeley on April 17, 1957

LABOR ACTION AND THE RACKET PROBE

by Martha Wohlforth

The current Senate investigation of labor racketeering is daily unearthing lurid details about the connection of certain corrupt union officials with the underworld, vice, government, and business. This committee, the Senate Select Committee on Labor and Management Practices, will keep these unsavory details in the headlines, day after day, for months and even years. The effect of such an atmosphere of hysteria on public opinion provides an unequalled opportunity for an attack on the entire labor movement and for an intensive drive to put through anti-labor legislation at every level of government. A "right-to-work" bill has recently passed the state legislature in Indiana, a major industrial state with 600,000 union members. A similar bill failed by only two votes in the Idaho Senate. In Delaware, leaders of both parties are making a strong effort to push a "right-to-work" bill. The NAM has released a new batch of anti-labor propaganda. Labor leaders have virtually given up all hope of repealing the anti-labor legislation in the eighteen states where it now exists. They frankly state that the "Congressional climate is not conducive to any move for federal action to shut the door to state rule over union security." (N.Y. Times, March 4, 1957.)

In the midst of such an attack on the union movement, when the very right to strike and organize are seriously threatened, it is the clear duty of every militant socialist to come to the defense of labor: to point out to the well-meaning but misguided liberal public the dangers inherent in the situation: to destroy the illusion that the bourgeois government, the enemy of labor, can solve the workers' problems for them.

Labor Action has failed pitifully in this important task. Several articles by Ben Hall and Jack Wilson have put forth an attitude of virtually uncritical support to the labor bureaucracy (albeit the "progressive" section of that bureaucracy) and its policy of cooperating with government investigations of unions and denying to union officers the right to hold office if they invoke the Fifth Amendment. Several union papers, among them Hotel and Ford Facts -- which fortunately, in this case, have a far larger circulation among workers than does Labor Action -- have taken a far more correct and more militant stand on the question than has Labor Action.

The official union policy, recently adopted by the AFL-CIO Executive Council, is that union officials have a responsibility to cooperate with governmental investigations of labor organizations and that those who invoke the Fifth Amendment have "no right to hold office." In addition, the Reuther leadership of the UAW stated that it actually "welcomed" the government investigation.

The most basic flaw in Labor Action's approach is this: at the outset it should have stated the obvious, namely that the problem of racketeering can never be solved under capitalism. The most important fact that the present investigation is clarifying is that labor racketeering could not exist without the active participation of a section of the ruling class. Illegal activities among the corrupt elements in the unions are inextricably linked with business, big and small, and with city, state, and even federal government. The Senate committee may be able to get a Hoffa or a Dio (though even that is not too likely) but the big, well-known and highly respectable men who are undoubtedly behind the Hoffas and the Dios -- those the Committee would not want to get even if it were able. Jur-

thermore the personal motivations of the racketeers, consciously expressed by many of them in the hearings on welfare funds last year, reflect the pressures of this profit-oriented society: "The guys on the other side of the bargaining table have Cadillacs and diamond rings," they say, "why not us too?"

Secondly, Labor Action has failed to adequately point up the dangers of entrusting to the enemies of labor a task that should be done by labor itself. Ben Hall admits (LA March 11) that "some commentators maintain that the unions should have voiced a strong unanimous protest against any government investigation." But the unions could not do this, claims Hall, because they failed to clean their own house soon enough and now would be accused of "covering up" for the corrupt elements. It is indeed unfortunate that this government investigation had to occur, according to Hall. But it was made necessary; it is the "evil consequence" of labor's having permitted rackets to flourish for so long. And since it is necessary, claims Hall, there are certain advantages to labor: it will create a climate in which Carey, Reuther, etc., the "progressive" labor bureaucrats, can speak out openly against Hoffa and Beck, and it will speed up their own drive against the racketeers; and the \$350,000 appropriated to the committee, more than labor could ever afford, will enable many facts to be uncovered which the unions can use. So it is not such a bad thing, after all, even though of course it is doing tremendous damage to the prestige of the labor movement.

Of course we socialists cannot excuse the casual and permissive attitude toward corruption which has existed for so long in the labor unions. This, however, is no reason why we have now to jump on the bandwagon, give up all faith in the ability of the labor movement to do its own job. It is not possible under capitalism to eliminate all corruption in the unions; but very significant progress can be made, and the very process of the struggle will sharpen the consciousness of the workers.

On this issue many elements in the unions are far more outspoken than Labor Action. In the Feb. 2 issue of Hot Facts, organ of Local 600, the UAW's largest local, Carl Stellato came out with an attack on the Senate Committee and on the AFL-CIO Council's support of it. He pointed out that labor is quite capable of cleaning its own house, and that the job should not be entrusted to the very people who are the most powerful and outspoken enemies of labor. Had Labor Action reported Stellato's attack, it would undoubtedly have been quick to point out that Stellato is the most outspoken opponent of Reuther in the UAW, and was seizing this opportunity to make a demagogic attack on Reuther, whom Labor Action has consistently supported through the years. Demagogic or not, Stellato's remarks are perfectly correct, and doubtless reflect much dissatisfaction and pressure from the ranks.

Hotel, organ of the New York Hotel Trades Council, AFL-CIO, has devoted considerable space in its Feb. 25 and March 4 issues to an attack on the official AFL-CIO policy. According to Jay Rubin, Council President, even some of those who voted for the AFL-CIO policy have expressed misgivings about the ultimate consequences. He stated that "it is their feeling that the door has been opened to intervention in union affairs by people who have no interest in labor except to undermine and destroy it. Those taking this view ask whether Congressional committees are really concerned with eliminating racketeers or whether they are seizing upon wrong-doing by a few individuals as a means of launching an attack on the labor movement. ... Among those taking this position are some who are mos.

concerned with cleaning corrupt elements out of the labor movement. But they are frankly doubtful that the job will or can be done by Congressional or other governmental committees and urge that the task is one for labor itself ... because 'what affects any part of the labor movement affects all,' the International also must speak out against labor's enemies and their efforts to use the sins of a few to smear and destroy the many. The open-shop elements such as the National Association of Manufacturers ... are eager to see labor investigated not because they are concerned with the elimination of racketeering, but because they want to discredit union organization ... cleaning out the few corrupt elements 'is the job of labor alone.'" Rubin also emphasized that the only way the job could be done was to see that control of the unions "is in the hands of the members."

We see, then, that several progressive labor leaders are far more aware of who their enemies are than Labor Action's writers are. This important question is scarcely mentioned in Labor Action. The reactionary composition of the committee is well known to socialists, but at least they should be reminded of it, which Labor Action does not do. McCarthy, Mundt, and McClellan are notorious. Of McClellan the N.Y. Times says, "He fits without apology among the Southern conservatives." The only so-called "friends of labor" on the Committee are McNamara and Kennedy. The pervading tone of both Hall's and Wilson's articles is one of pessimism and lack of faith in the working class to solve its own problems independently of the bourgeois government.

The "Principle" of the Fifth Amendment

A third weakness, and a very serious one, in Labor Action's treatment is its discussion of the Fifth Amendment. Hall seems overwhelmed by the vague promises in the moral codes of the AFL-CIO Council to uphold the "principle" of the Fifth Amendment. The code states: "We recognize that any person is entitled, in the interests of his individual conscience, to the protection afforded by the Fifth Amendment and reaffirm our conviction that this historical right must not be abridged." It goes on to say, however, that if a union officer invokes the Amendment "for his personal protection and to avoid scrutiny by proper legislative committees, law enforcement agencies or other public bodies into corruption on his part, he has no right to continue to hold office in his union." This is clearly an invasion on the constitutional provision that an individual does not have to testify against himself, no matter what the reason. If exceptions are made in the case of racketeering, who knows where the line will be drawn next? To prove a person guilty of any crime requires (or should require) evidence other than the accused person's own testimony. It is the elementary duty of a socialist to defend the civil liberties of any person, no matter how despicable his personal actions or his political views may be.

Hall gives four rationalizations for the Council's position: 1) It defends the "principle" of the Fifth Amendment. As stated above, defense of a "principle" means nothing unless one is willing to defend it in all its aspects. 2) It does not direct its fire at Communists. "By omission it makes a distinction between racketeers and Communists." Wouldn't you agree, Ben, that it might have made slightly better distinction than that? 3) The statement is "carefully worded so that it does not apply ... to any and every use of the Fifth Amendment at Senate hearings." So the Fifth Amendment can be used on some occasions. If there are any occasions where it cannot be used, it might as well not exist. 4) "The Council does not suggest that such witnesses be

penalized by the government for refusing to answer questions," merely that they are not entitled to hold office in a union. The only trouble with this code, Hall goes on to say, is that enforcement of it is left up to each International union, and in many cases they won't bother to enforce it!

Hotel is again, on this point, more aware of reality than is Labor Action. Hotel states: "Some in labor also have expressed concern at what they regard as a surrender of basic constitutional rights. They argue that the Fifth Amendment must be defended in principle and that no right can be given up without imperiling all, including ultimately the right to strike and even to organize." (Emphasis added.)

Labor Action Out of Touch With Labor

Labor Action has its ears so finely tuned to the labor bureaucracy that it fails to hear the grumbings of discontent in the ranks. The statements of Rubin and Stellato provide ample evidence that the policies of the AFL-CIO Council are not being swallowed without protest. But no word of these or similar protests has found its way into the pages of Labor Action. Who should Ben Hall choose to mention as his sole reference to the existence of opposition in the unions to the policy of the Council? No other than Dave Beck! Beck stated that he opposed the policy of the Council regarding the Fifth Amendment and that he would protect the right of Teamster officials to invoke the Amendment. The fact that the Teamsters Union is one of the most corrupt and undemocratic unions in existence does not mitigate in any way the correctness of Beck's stand. It is significant, I think, that Hall did not, while justly attacking Beck for his crimes against the working class, defend the use of the Fifth Amendment in all cases.

The primary purpose of the Labor Action articles appears to be the description of the various corrupt practices of some union officials. This we can read in gory detail in any daily paper. But a socialist analysis of the real causes of corruption in the labor movement, the role of the labor bureaucracy and the government and their relation to the class nature of our society does not seem to be forthcoming.

This type of reaction is but the latest example of the orientation of the ISL (and the YSL's right wing) to the labor bureaucracy. It seems that in every case where the working class ought to do something, these people find some reason why someone else ought to do it for the workers -- either the trade union bureaucracy, the liberal movement, the social democracy, or the bourgeois government itself.

This orientation is an integral part of the overwhelming drive toward respectability which impels the ISL to regard entry into the SP-SDF as the only solution to its problems. There are many militant comrades in both the ISL and the YSL who consider that the most urgent task for revolutionary socialists is work in the union movement. These comrades must be made to realize that this work will be greatly hindered, if not made actually impossible, unless this bureaucratic outlook is reversed.



THE STRANGE CASE OF THE AMERICAN FORUM

by Tim Wohlforth

Prologue

The modest attempt by A.J. Muste to establish a forum to further the regroupment discussion has led to the most fantastic chronology of events. All the forces latent in the regroupment situation have been brought out into the open by the catalytic action of the ever-present witchhunt.

As A. J. Muste and his Forum symbolizes in concrete terms the entire regroupment discussion, both in the eyes of the radical public and in the eyes of the bourgeoisie, a close examination of the "case history" of the Forum can yield a wealth of information about the contending forces on the left and the fundamental question of unity itself.

What is the American Forum?

Way back in March,* after playing a leading role in the regroupment discussions for a couple of months previously, A. J. Muste organized a meeting of representatives of all the tendencies on the left to organize some sort of permanent Forum for the purpose of furthering the regroupment discussion. It was his desire to see the present regroupment discussion flourish. He hoped to do this by setting up a permanent forum which would foster the spreading of the discussions horizontally into areas where it has yet to occur and to put forward the basic principle of the all-inclusiveness of the discussion. It was not Muste's idea to foster any type of united action among the tendencies as he did not feel there was a political basis for such action today. He certainly had no intentions of establishing the Forum on any political basis whatsoever.

Norman Thomas, who had previously been interested in the project, withdrew his support after consultation with the SP-SDF and in that way indicated that the SP-SDF would not participate officially in the Forum. Following suit, Max Shachtman, who was listed on the call for the conference, wrote a letter to Muste on March 19 asking his name to be removed.

Prior to the conference a special meeting was held in order to urge the ISL to change its mind on the question of support to the Forum. This attempt was unsuccessful, but the ISL did send a representative to the conference in order to argue for its position. The ISL held that the Forum must come out for democracy everywhere before it could be considered respectable "in the eyes of the working class." Also present at the conference were representatives of a number of other tendencies including the left wing of the SP-SDF (which was represented by Dave McReynolds). The CP was there despite the objections of the Foster faction and was represented by one of the leading Gatesites, Albert Blumberg.

The only one who supported the ISL's line on the "democracy" question was McReynolds who went along with the Forum anyway. The feeling of the others was that this was not a political organization but rather "a broad loose place where everyone can get together for discussion purposes." It would be ridiculous, they argued, for such a forum to take a position on a basic political question

* March, 1957 - Ed.

when it was the purpose of the Forum to discuss just such questions on an all-inclusive basis. The ISL on the other hand felt that without such a position the Forum would have "a Stalinoid complexion." The ISL did not attempt to explain how it could participate in the Independent Socialist Forum in San Francisco and still refuse to participate in the Muste Forum. The ISF, like the Muste Forum, naturally has a "Stalinoid complexion" since it merely reflects the present composition of the radical movement as a whole. It is as much of an "organization" as the Muste Forum, having a chairman, an executive committee, etc.

The real reason for this contradiction is the significance of the Muste Forum itself. What the Forum did was to concretize and symbolize on a national scale the entire regroupment discussion in such a way as would (and certainly later did) put the spotlight on the whole process. Furthermore it did so on the basis of one fundamental position: the all-inclusiveness of the discussion. It seems clear that both the SP-SDF right wing and the ISL were attempting to find a formula for the exclusion of the CP from the discussion to start with. One cannot be sure in this case whether the ISL simply thinks along the same lines as the SP-SDF right wing, expressing the same infallible instinct as to what is or isn't "kosher" with the powers that be, or whether the ISL was reacting to the SP-SDF leadership in such a way as to appear respectable to it. Whatever the "inner motives" of Shachtman, the net effect was the same.

Thus at the very beginning of the Muste affair a polarization had set in -- a polarization and political alignment which is of extreme significance. It symbolizes a correlation of forces which has played an important role in the past two months and which we will be seeing a good deal of in the months to come. On the one side stands the entire radical public -- the CP, SWP, Cochranites, Pacifists, Left Wing SP-SDF, etc., and on the other side stands the "respectable force" -- the SP-SDF with its own unsolicited worshipper, the ISL.

In a communication on April 5 to the YSL on the ISL's position on the Forum I stated: "This report is of special significance to the YSL as it reflects a new line adopted by the ISL on the whole regroupment perspective. There is no doubt that the effect of this line will be felt in the YSL ...". Needless to say, shortly after this the NAC adopted the ISL's position in toto without changing so much as a comma. I was the only NAC member to vote against this line and to support the Muste Forum. So far the only other individual in the YSL who is not in the Left Wing to come out in favor of participation in the Forum is Bob Bone. The others by their own silence must be classified as supporters of the Stalinophobic position on the Forum of the Social Democracy.

And so the matter stood until May 13.

Enter the Witchhunt

On May 13 the New York Times reported the formation of the American Forum -- for Socialist Education. The announcement was followed by a series of events which momentarily blew up the entire regroupment discussion and tore the last shreds of decent socialist covering from the naked body of the Social Democracy. On May 14, the SP-SDF, according to the New York Post, characterized the Forum as a "cover for totalitarianism" and in this way put in a somewhat cruder form the line of the ISL and YSL right wing toward the American Forum. It also was announced that a Sleeping Car Porter's official resigned from the

National Committee of the Forum after, it is understood, pressure from very high up in the trade union bureaucracy was exerted upon him.

On May 15 the Times condescended to discuss the matter in an editorial. Since the Times hardly ever bothers to discuss the left on its precious editorial page, this gesture emphasized the importance of the American Forum in the eyes of the bourgeoisie. In this way it focused the attention of the entire bourgeoisie and its witchhunting representatives upon this new "threat" from the left. Using language much more sedate than the ISL, not to mention the SP-SDF, it stated: "We note that this new organization provides a formal means of cooperation, even if only for purposes of discussion, of prominent Communists and non-Communists who do have claims to stand in the main traditions of genuinely American radicalism." It was touching indeed to note the Times' concern for the fruitful and progressive outcome of the discussion among radicals, as well as its interest in preserving "genuinely American radicalism."

At about the same time the not-so-subtle and sedate representative of the capitalist class, the New York Daily News, stated in an editorial entitled "Look into this Mob": "We suggest that the Senate Internal Security Committee look into this mob without delay; also that the Attorney General make inquiries as to whether he oughtn't to add it swiftly to his list of subversive organizations."

Immediately following this the Senate Internal Security sub-Committee under acting-chairman Senator Butler subpoenaed four members of the American Forum national-committee and Senator Eastland wrote a letter to A. J. Muste requesting information, a letter which Muste answered with a flat statement of non-cooperation. -- Butler, according to the Chicago Tribune, also asked for the Attorney General to inquire into the possible listing of the Forum. The Tribune states: "If a Justice Department inquiry establishes that the new organization is a camouflaged adjunct of the Communist Party, Butler said, it should be added to the list of subversive organizations in the United States as a warning to supporters unaware of its hidden control."

Thus we see that the bourgeoisie has put the full weight of the witchhunt upon this small committee in an attempt to smash the regroupment discussion. Those who doubt that the entire regroupment discussion is at issue and not simply the American Forum had better think twice, as right now other "committees" are beginning to bear down on the regroupment discussion in other quarters. For instance I learned in Berkeley that George Hitchcock, chairman of the Independent Socialist Forum, has been subpoenaed to appear before one of these committees.

It seems that the Attorney General has taken the advice of his senatorial friends, for the June 13 N.Y. Times reports that the Justice Dept. "is very much interested in the possible Communist control" of the American Forum -- for Socialist Education. It goes on to report that the matter has been referred to the Justice Dept.'s Internal Security Division. We can all heave a sigh of relief for our security is now in safe hands!

The Finger Men for the FBI

Now let us see what the reaction to this witchhunting attack upon the American Forum has been among the various forces on the left. To begin with on May 15 Herman Singer, National Secretary of the SP-SDF, wrote a letter to the Times in answer to its editorial of the same date. In this letter Singer complains that the Forum, by using the name "socialist," has violated his copyright. For obviously it can not be a socialist Forum since it isn't affiliated with the Second International. He goes on to say: "The American Forum includes members of the Communist Party and representatives of two Trotskyite organizations. As such, the American Forum misuses the name Socialist." You see, even Trotskyists are not "socialists" in the eyes of the State Department "socialists."*

On May 16 the National Action Committee of the SP-SDF met on the question in an atmosphere of hysteria with Singer "calling for our expulsion," according to Dave McKeynolds. At this meeting a motion was passed recommending to the NEC that it declare membership in the Forum to be incompatible with membership in the SP-SDF because of the inclusion on the national committee of the Forum of a representative of the Communist Party and the Socialist Workers Party. Another motion was passed requesting all SP-SDF members listed on the national committee to withdraw in 10 days. Finally a motion was passed endorsing the press release and letter to the Times issued by Herman Singer.

Thus the SP-SDF officially responds to the witchhunt by extending it to its own ranks and adding its own pressure to that of the witchhunters in an attempt to smash the Forum. In that way it clearly showed its character as a capitulator to the witchhunt and its inability to really struggle against the witchhunt.

This ought to cause those who are in such a fever to enter the SP-SDF to stop and reflect before they leap. Here we see clearly the political nature

* This theme is amplified in an editorial in the June issue of the Socialist Call. The editorial in reality attacks the Times from the right. It seems that the Times devoted too much space to the formation of the Forum, thus making it more difficult for the SP-SDF to wreck it. The Call states: "It is possible that the Forum would have made a modest entrance, been duly flushed out by the Socialist Call, appropriately branded as a fraud for its use of the name socialism and then have disappeared." The Times is then attacked for giving "the impression that, despite the presence of Communist Party members and Trotskyites, the American Forum was a legitimate medium for discussion of socialism." The Call editorial goes on to point out that the whole thing is a result of the recent CP line of infiltration, a line which, among others, those dirty "Trotskyites" now follow. We are informed that "with the Kruschew (sic) revelations the barrier between Communists and Trotskyites has evaporated." This in spite of the fact that as recently as the first AF-SE rally, June 12, Blumberg made a special point of mentioning that the differences that separate the CP and SWP are of the "gravest character" and Farrell Dobbs likewise spelled out the most important differences. But to the demented mind of the SP-SDF they are all the same thing. It should be noted that while all the SP-SDF declarations to the capitalist press constituted nothing but a red-baiting attack on the Forum, their protest against Eastland's witchhunt attack on the free speech rights of the AF-SE was confined to a small squib in their house organ, the Socialist Call.

of the SP-SDF as a State Department socialist group utterly incapable of resisting our ruling class on any important matter. When the chips are down it lines up inevitably with the bourgeoisie against the interests of the working class.

We learn something also about the organizational nature of the SP-SDF. The SP-SDF, far from being a broad all-inclusive organization, will not permit its members the right to join as individuals the American Forum. In fact whenever the left wing in a crucial issue publicly declares a position which differs from the SP-SDF and therefore from the State Department, expulsion is in the air. Let all those who wish to enter the SP-SDF ponder over whether they intend to keep their mouths shut in public and if not, whether they are willing to risk expulsion, if it comes to that, in order to defend socialist principles.

The New Leader, which is the most well-known, though "unofficial," spokesman for the Social Democracy in this country, printed an article by Diana Trilling in its May 27 issue which expresses the views of this branch of the Social Democracy on the Forum. After her usual attack on the liberals for being too hard on McCarthy because of their guilt complex for not realizing the dangers of the "Communist Menace" soon enough, she had the following to say about the regroupment discussion:

"The appeal for discussion of their 'problems' is the best possible appeal which Communists can make to non-Communist leftists. Nothing is more attractive to the leftist intellect than the illusion (my emphasis, TW) that there is a rift within the Communist Party of which he can now take a reasonable advantage. If the shift in the Soviet line had not actually precipitated defections from the ranks, such defections might very well have been invented for the high dividends they pay in non-Communist sympathy and accessibility -- and, in fact, there are those of us who are crude enough to doubt whether there have in truth been as many alienations as are now advertised. It is just possible, of course, that some of these withdrawals were conveniently arranged, or even pre-arranged before Khrushchev's speech, in order to distribute Communist agents in places where they would otherwise not be welcomed and ensnare a new generation of fellow-travelers."

There we have it -- the whole thing is simply a Communist plot. So works the demented police-state mind of the right wing Social Democrats through their organ, which Sam Taylor of the YSL NAC remarked so recently was "moving to the left." God save us from those who call themselves socialists. I prefer a liberal any day to "socialists" of the New Leader's ilk! (Murray Kempton, New York Post columnist, had this to say about the Forum: "I wrestled, I might say, a long time within myself before I decided not to apply for membership in Muste's committee. It wasn't the two communists that threw me; it was those ex-fellow travelers. I have known quite a number of Communists I liked, but fellow travelers depress me. They're so self-righteous.")

The other forces on the left rallied to the defense of the American Forum. The SWP, which has been attacked in some quarters for not really being interested in regroupment, defended the Forum wholeheartedly in action and on the front pages of the Militant. Zaslow and McAvoy, both of whom were subpoenaed by the Senate Committee, resisted this witchhunting pressure, showing the dedication of the Committee for Socialist Unity both to its self-proclaimed goal of socialist unity and to the defense of free speech against the witchhunting

attacks of the Eastlands. Dave Dellinger, representing the anarcho-pacifists, defended the Forum in the current issue of Liberation, pointing to the number of pacifists and other anti-Stalinists on the national committee. He defended the fundamental principle of free discussion among all radicals.

David McReynolds and the Fine Art of Capitulationism

What was the reaction within the SP-SDF to this ultimatum of the MAC to resign from the AF-SE national committee within 10 days? In the first place, the star performer, Dave McReynolds, acted out his by now well-known routine. As far back as 1954, when the merger of the YPSL and SYL came up, he found himself in the position of turning his back on those he felt closest to politically by refusing to join in the formation of the YSL. He would stick to the SP come hell or high water, and eventually his program would win out in the ranks, was his approach. In this way he weakened the development of the united third camp youth movement in this country.

More recently he conducted a principled fight against the merger with the SDF. He stated that this merger was based on the "worst, most shameful policies of the State Department and John Foster Dulles" and that it was not a socialist unity at all. However, after talking with Shachtman he capitulated, called the unity actually progressive and attempted to rally the left wing to support the unity. In doing so he promised to fight for one thing at least at the convention: the name Socialist Party must remain. But once you start on the road to capitulation there is no turning back: he gave in on that also. As a reward for his "noble" capitulation, in which he so unselfishly put the politics of the State Department before his own, he was kicked off the MAC. This is the way the SP-SDF pays for capitulation to it -- Shachtman take note!

The current capitulation is even more sickening. After talking to Harrington, I understand, he resigned from the American Forum he had helped to set up with his friend and co-thinker A. J. Muste. Turning his back on the Forum, he urged the rest of the left-wingers in a letter to do likewise.

He wrote: "To say that I personally have been sick at heart this past week is to put the matter mildly indeed. The Part. acted without giving us a hearing, in hysteria, and in a totally undemocratic way. Herman Singer's telegram to the N. Y. Times on the A.F. was a classic job of playing fingerman for the Justice Dept. and the F.B.I." He goes on to note that "Bayard Rustin, one of the Vice Chairmen, has made it clear that he will have to withdraw or else give up all his work on the Southern Negro Question -- as a result he is withdrawing." Another SP member is resigning because it may endanger his position as business agent of a small union, he also remarks. And thus he points out how his own leadership, whom he describes in the letter as "the two-bit second rate party hacks running the N.O.," is part and parcel of this whole witchhunting affair; and how the bureaucrats running the Negro organizations and trade unions have simultaneously exerted their pressure upon their members on the committee. How does McReynolds himself react to this pressure? "However after very careful thought and conferences all this week I find myself in the inglorious position of sounding the retreat once again." And so goes David McReynolds, sounding one inglorious retreat after another as he slowly marches backwards through history.

This is a classic case of capitulation and its end result is predictable--

political suicide. Just as in 1928 when Zinoviev and friends capitulated to Stalin on the basis that they would save up their forces for a future struggle at a time of their own choosing, so McReynolds promises to fight, not now, but later. Just as Zinoviev was forced into one capitulation after another until he was politically bankrupt with no following whatsoever, so McReynolds has begun on this course with two major capitulations in the last few months which have seriously weakened his authority within the Party left wing, not to mention the radical public as a whole. Just as Zinoviev's capitulation ended in his extinction at the time of the Moscow trial, so McReynolds' capitulation will end, not, we hope, in his physical extinction, but certainly in his political extinction.

This classic course deserves careful study in the YSL, for it is the projected course of Shachtman in the SP-SDF and for Draper in relation to Shachtman, and even for all those who we are told "disagree" with Martin but who bloc with him against the left wing.

How did the rest of the SP-SDF left wing react? Considering the immensity of the pressure brought to bear against them, one is forced to conclude that these individuals, regardless of one's political differences with them, stand as giants compared to Singer, McReynolds, or even Shachtman. They stood up in their own party against this witchhunting attack and withstood the pressure of public opinion in general. They deserve (and have yet to receive) the official support of the YSL. McReynolds resigned as did two others. However Charbneau, Braden, Sibley, and Thygeson (national secretary of the YPSL) stuck to their guns and Stryker joined the Forum's national committee in protest.* Thus there remain today, despite the threats of the SP-SDF WAC and despite the support to these threats by the SP-SDF WAC recently, six SP-SDF members on the National Committee of the AF-SE.

Enter Shachtman

At this point in the drama it might be well to return to one of the minor characters involved in whom we have a special interest -- to Shachtman. When we last left him he had written a letter to Muste announcing that he declined to support his venture. This letter, which was reprinted in part in the May 27 Labor Action in the context of another letter to the AF-SE National Committee, places Shachtman in the position of being truly a Cassandra.

He seems to have foreseen the avalanche of the witchhunt that would hit the American Forum for he states: "If they cannot agree on such an elementary notion (defense of democracy everywhere) -- if they equivocate or evade it altogether -- the new organization will lay itself open from the start to charges and suspicions from which I fear nobody -- not you or I or others -- could convincingly defend it. It would start under a cloud that I would not want over my head." Shachtman -- luckily for him -- has not had to stand under this "cloud" during the last few heated weeks. And so life is a little easier for him and unity with the SP-SDF a little closer.

I do not wish to class Shachtman's attitude on the same level as that of

* It has just come to my attention that Tad Tekla of the SP-SDF in Cleveland has applied for membership on the AF-SE national committee.

the SP-SDF, nor certainly on the same level with Eastland. There are important differences as well as similarities. In the first place the SP-SDF itself did not go as far as Eastland and call for putting the group on the Attorney General's list. It even uttered a feeble protest against the abridgement of free speech involved in Eastland's campaign. Shachtman, however, sincerely wants to defend the Forum. He states: "I have nothing but contempt for the intentions behind the advice which the reactionary press offers to socialists, and in particular I regard the clamor for governmental and police intervention and persecution with loathing."

Shachtman is not completely clean in this matter, I am sorry to say, for good intentions are not enough -- they are important, but not enough. Shachtman's defense of the American Forum is limited by two factors: his agreement with the estimation of the SP-SDF, the New York Times and others, that the Forum serves as a cover for the CP; and his entry move into the SP-SDF.

On the first point, Shachtman just happens to agree with the Times and others, that cooperation of all radical tendencies in order to discuss is not permissible, at least not in this form. He agrees with the SP-SDF that the Forum is a cover for "totalitarianism," though he would use somewhat different phraseology. Thus in this respect he has given in to the witchhunt. He fears he would lose his purity in the eyes of the SP-SDF if he had to bear the burden for the "cloud" (or "Stalinoid complexion" as it is sometimes called) over the American Forum. He claims of course that this is because he wants to remain "respectable" in the minds of the workers, but it seems evident from his actions that he is simply bowing to the prejudices fostered by the witchhunt atmosphere.

In fact one might say that it is thinking along these lines that is in reality the real appeal of the SP-SDF entry line within the ranks of the ISL and the YSL right wing. In this context it is interesting to note the remarks of the YSL spokesman in Cleveland who said the SP-SDF "is clean and has a good reputation and has never been in trouble with the government." Such thinking is the antithesis of a militant socialist struggle against the witchhunt.

Another example of this type of thinking is found in Shachtman's May 27 letter to the AF-SE, printed in Labor Action. He states that this Forum "places an unwarranted burden upon those who have acquired serious and responsible positions in the broad labor, Negro and other movements. The isolation of such individuals can only further the isolation of socialists from these broad movements, and certainly will not alleviate it." Thus, instead of defending the right of Rustin and the various labor officials to function in the Forum even though he himself does not wish to do so, Shachtman seems to be blaming the Forum for enlisting their support in the first place. Instead of attacking the bureaucracies of the trade union and Negro movements for capitulating to the witchhunting pressures and clamping down on the democratic rights of their members, he attacks the Forum for "embarrassing" them. Such a twisted and distorted approach (especially since it was published after the opening of the witchhunt attack, whose scope Shachtman was intimately aware of) amounts purely and simply to a capitulation to the witchhunt. Part and parcel of this approach is the attempt of Bogdan Denitch, while on tour for the YSL, to use the resignation of Rustin not as a sign of the witchhunting attack on the Forum, but to prove that "responsible" Negroes agree with his analysis of the Muste Forum. If Denitch claims that individuals who are forced into submission by the pressure of the witchhunt agree with him, then I am forced to admit that I have

been too lenient in describing his position. For in this case Denitch's position would be simply opposition to the Forum in order to save one's skin from the witchhunting onslaught. Along these lines Charlie Walker, the only YSL MEC member on the West Coast, stated that if the Muste Forum had come out for "democratic socialism" it wouldn't have had all this trouble with the government. Enough said about this sickening aspect of the business.

Another factor which limits Shachtman's ability to play a progressive role in the defense of the American Forum is his unity move with the SP-SDF. As noted above, one of the most important aspects of the entire struggle against the witchhunt was the heroic resistance of the SP-SDF left wingers to the joint attack perpetrated by the combined forces of the witchhunters and the SP-SDF right wing. It is clear that anyone really interested in the defense of the AF-SE would come to the defense of these fine comrades. A civil libertarian would understand that what was at stake was not one's attitude towards the Forum, but the defense of the right of the SP-SDFers who favor the Forum to continue as members of its national committee. This would accomplish both the militant defense of the Forum and also the protection of democratic rights within the SP-SDF.

Shachtman, however, instead of defending these comrades or even keeping silent while the right wing moved against them, actually attacks Muste for inviting them in the first place. (See his May 27 letter in LA.) Here again appears that distorted approach of Shachtman: The witchhunt is not to blame; the SP-SDF leadership is not to blame; only Muste is to blame for the whole thing. Such an approach is but another example of capitulation to the witchhunt. Also it is further confirmation of the characterization of Shachtman as the future "policeman of the left wing" once in the SP-SDF.

It can be assumed that Harrington in his conversations with McReynolds played a similar role and urged, not that McReynolds put up a fight for his right to stay on the Committee, but that he capitulate and talk the entire left wing into capitulating.

The YSL Gets Into the Act

During the course of my tour I became incensed at the attack being leveled at the American Forum and concluded that it was my socialist duty to rally to its support. I wrote a letter to A. J. Muste offering my support and announcing my willingness to join the National Committee of the Forum. I did so making it clear that I would function as an individual and would not represent the YSL as a whole. Thus I would be in a position similar to that of the Left Wingers in the SP-SDF. I realized at the time that there were certain dangers involved and that the YSL right wing might take action against me. However, I knew that I had solid foundations for such a move in the basic principles of the YSL as a broad organization and that as long as I acted as an individual and did not present myself as representing the YSL, then I was acting perfectly within the bounds of discipline of the YSL. Furthermore I felt I could not stand aside when the fine comrades of the SP-SDF left wing were taking a similar risk for the sake of basic socialist principle.

In reaction to this step the YSL right wing with unprecedented speed moved against me with threats of expulsion. The only reason they did not expel me on the spot was the nearness of the Convention which they felt would be a

better time to expel me. Such an action by the right wing is in keeping with their solidarity with the SP-SDF right wing and their fever to split their organization if necessary in order to get into the SP-SDF. Just how the right wing expects to explain its actions against its left wing for supporting the Muste Forum to the left wingers in the SP-SDF is difficult for me to see. It will be still harder for it to explain this to the radical public, 90 per cent of whom are represented on the American Forum National Committee.

I for one do not intend to give in on this matter. I feel it is my right as a YSL member to participate on the American Forum National Committee, and the right wing is making a travesty of our traditions of broadness in its hurry to expel the left. The YSL has a tradition of permitting its members to hold dual membership in rival and hostile political organizations. The AF-SE certainly in no way rivals the YSL and has yet to be declared "hostile" by the right wing. In fact the statement to A. J. Muste refusing to support the Forum was written in a very cordial manner. Muste himself has always been regarded favorably by the YSL. There is a tradition of friendship and political collaboration between Muste and the YSL symbolized by the fact that A. J. Muste spoke at the founding convention of the YSL. So certainly there is no ground for preventing me from holding membership in an organization which is neither rival nor hostile and which has no politics.

I urge every member of the YSL to rally to the support of the American Forum and to reject the attempt of the right wing to expel the left wing. To refuse to do so would be a tremendous blow to the YSL. It would mean the expulsion of a quarter of the membership of the organization, and furthermore would cause the complete discrediting of the YSL in the eyes of the radical public. It would further isolate the YSL from all but the SP-SDF right wing. Such a policy would lead, not to a progressive regroupment of radical youth forces, but rather to the building of an isolated social-democratic sect.

Exit Shachtman

There are a number of people in the YSL who explain away their flight from revolutionary politics by stating that the fundamental difference between reformism, centrism and revolutionary socialism will become important only in a revolutionary period. However the classic roles of these tendencies have been acted out today in relation to the American Forum.

One can spend years debating the unity question, pointing out the social-democratic formulations of the right wing, speculating on the possibilities of building a "broad Debsian party," and it will all be for nought if the discussion does not uncover the basic tendencies in action and reaction when they come in contact with the ruling class and its interests. The one progressive function of the intrusion of the witchhunt into the regroupment discussion is that it lays bare the real nature of the contending forces and the inability of each to struggle against the ruling class.

Let us first take a look at the self-appointed personification of social democracy, the SP-SDF. Having accommodated itself to the ruling class over a long period of time, it tends to view politics in much the same way as that class, and thus is able to react to the impending pressure and furor of the ruling class before that pressure is released. Thus at the very beginning of the discussion on the formation of the Forum it bowed out unceremoniously. Once it

heard the master's voice through the editorial pages of the N. Y. Times it reacted in minutes with a telegraphed letter to provide ammunition to the witchhunting attack on the Forum. The following day it gathered together its national committee and with vengeance extended the witchhunt into the ranks of its own party.

We see today in this one minor incident that the Social Democracy plays the same perfidious role as lackey to the ruling class as it does in a period of revolution when it openly supports counter-revolution. The only difference is in the degree of importance of what is at stake.

Now let us look briefly at a more complicated phenomenon -- the role of the centrists in reaction to the witchhunting attack on the Forum. Here we find a greater concern with fighting the witchhunt. The centrist wishes both to fight the witchhunt in an intransigent manner and at the same time adapt himself to the pressures of the petty bourgeois circles he functions in.

The ISL's role in the event is the best example of centrism today. It starts out, as does the SP-SDF, with a certain accommodation to the ideology of the ruling class. This takes the form of the desire for respectability. It claims to want to remain palatable in the eyes of the working class. But in reality it is bowing to the bourgeois influences and ideology which inevitably dominate the working class in a reactionary period. Instead of fighting this alien influence within the ranks of the working class, it hopes in some way to accommodate itself to it. It hopes to appeal to the right; it wants "an opening to the right," as Shachtman has put it. Instead of meeting bourgeois politics and ideology head on, however, it hopes somehow to sidetrack this confrontation and to move the liberals leftward step by step. The net effect is that, instead of budging the liberals, the centrist himself moves to the right step by step.

The ISL expresses this general tendency to straddle two camps -- to keep a foot on each side of the class line -- in a most conscious way in its "unity" proposal. It concretizes its general search for respectability in the circles in which it functions with the proposal of entry into the SP-SDF: It attempts to get into the SP-SDF by its politics "bent, fitted, filed, rubbed, carved, trimmed or cold-stored so as to ingratiate us as good dogs with the SP right wing," according to Hal Draper.

Thus when it comes to the question of the direct pressure of the ruling class bearing down on the regroupment discussion, Shachtman and the ISL find themselves already in a certain amount of agreement with this ruling class. They have already adapted to the point where they cringe with fear at being involved in the Forum and thus being tainted. In whose eyes are they really afraid of being tainted, I ask?

On top of this the ISL finds itself in a position where it either excuses or actually encourages capitulation to the witchhunt. How else can one explain its attitude towards the left wingers in the SP-SDF who fought against the witchhunt attack emanating directly from Eastland and indirectly through Singer? How else explain its blaming haste for involving Negro leaders and trade unionists, instead of venting its wrath on the bureaucracies of these movements who willingly sacrifice these leaders at the beck and call of the witchhunters?

Thus the ISL, by its conscious adaptation to the Social Democracy and through this means to the ruling class itself, is unable to play a principled and militant role. Despite its intentions it is unable to fight the witchhunt in a principled manner. The political bankruptcy of the unity move is thus expressed even before the unity is consummated. Where will it end? There can be only one answer to that question: it will end in the political suicide and eradication from the scene of an entire tendency -- of Shachtmanism.

LABOR DEMOCRACY AND THE REUTHER MACHINE

by John Worth

The amazing stand of Labor Action on the labor rackets probe is unquestionably the strongest evidence of the role which the ISL is prepared to play in the American labor movement. In political terms, the ISL's capitulation* before Reuther's drive to eliminate the last vestiges of opposition to a bureaucracy -- the section in which his role has been constantly greater and grander -- is much more significant than the "tactic" of the all-inclusive party.

The plea for "democracy" -- not class democracy, but democracy in the abstract; the noun "democracy"; the "democratic state of affairs" -- sums up Labor Action's response to the most serious challenge posed the American labor movement since the inception of the witchhunt. Not only does Labor Action refuse to condemn the Senate Committee's intervention in clear, unequivocal terms; it has tacitly accepted its role in "cleaning out" the union racketeers. Finally: it has not printed a single word in opposition to the bitter blow against the Fifth Amendment, launched by the AFL-CIO executive committee, which now wishes to replace the courts as interpreter of the American Constitution though it has attacked Beck for shielding himself with its use.

The contribution -- sole and ultimate -- of Labor Action to an understanding of the struggle (aside from the insipid plea for a "truly democratic set of rules" -- rules! mind you) has been to gently chide the "bureaucratic attitude" which fears the rank-and-file above all else.

The tone is not incidental. The ISL's role in the labor movement for more than a decade has been set by its participation in the Reuther caucus, from the first stages of Reuther's march to Presidency of the CIO, through the present, in which the enormous power of that office, under Reuther's inspired dictamen, moves the combined forces of the AFL-CIO. Reuther's words, not Meany's, attract the major headlines. Reuther, not Meany, is the big voice of American labor. The recent attempt to build Meany as something besides the bureaucrat that he is -- probably entailing a considerable expenditure on his part -- cannot succeed, short of a miracle, in destroying the pre-eminence of Walter Reuther in the AFL-CIO.

This man, from the standpoint of labor's needs and perspectives, is the most dangerous man in the American labor movement. The hold which Reuther exercises on his own cadres, stemming from a genuinely militant role in the 1930's, and protected by a "militant" vocabulary today, can prove disastrous, because Reuther, great man of labor, is engaged in the total domestication of the American labor movement -- its reduction before monopoly capital. His real power today rests there -- not on the militant strategy of the 30's. As Sid Lens put it in a recent article: "If he (Reuther) had remained a radical as he was 20 years ago, it is doubtful that he would have risen as high as he is ..." "Doubtful" is the cautious phraseology that Lens employs for the Harvard Business Review. There is no "doubt" involved.

* "Capitulation" is used advisedly. The rationale employed -- to put the rank-and-file in motion -- is worthless. To attack Reuther in the labor movement is to lose one's "respectability" -- in the eyes of Reuther.

It is Walter Reuther, and the "progressive" coterie which surrounds him, which has moved most effectively to eliminate democracy in the UAW, frustrated its most militant traditions, sabotaged the promising trend to a labor party -- and worked tirelessly to subordinate labor to American capital. No other interpretation of Reuther's role is possible. The kid glove treatment handed Reuther's drive to power by Labor Action, therefore, is particularly indefensible.

Reuther and the Labor Racket Probe

On January 29 Senator Joseph McCarthy introduced a Senate resolution authorizing a "select committee" to investigate labor racketeering. Immediately prior to the introduction of the resolution, first the UAW International Executive Board, then the AFL-CIO Executive Council petitioned Congress to authorize "an appropriate congressional committee to conduct an investigation ... and expose ... corruption in labor, in industry." (The Militant, Feb. 4, 1956)

On January 28, one day before McCarthy introduced the resolution into the Senate, the AFL-CIO Executive Council, by a 38 to one vote (Beck's), assuming the prerogatives of constitutional adjudicators, decreed that invocation of the Fifth Amendment by any member of the organization would constitute grounds for dismissal. That the Council "meant" this to apply only to racket investigations is irrelevant. The attempt to limit the use of the Fifth Amendment, i.e., to establish the priority of the AFL-CIO exec over the constitutional right to avoid self-incrimination, cannot be considered anything but a blow against civil liberties in the labor movement.

Thus, the "progressive" sector of the labor bureaucracy, at the instigation of the "liberal" Walter Reuther, simply invited the American bourgeoisie to break the integrity of the labor movement, at the same time that it launched an attack on the Fifth Amendment in the manner which is frequently contemplated, but rarely carried out, in the bourgeois courts.

Although an attempt to invoke the power of the rank and file of the Teamsters is the natural method of democratic struggle, as Gordon Haskell points out: "Much as the union leadership would like to have the movement rid of Communist or racketeer control, they are very reluctant to encourage rank and file movements of revolt against established leaderships for any purpose. This kind of thing sets precedents ... rather than encourage all-out membership struggles ... they seek to set up another 'official leadership' to fight the old ones." Unfortunately, Haskell, in his mild "agitation," does not bother to develop the implications of his own remark, insofar as they point up the fact that Reuther and the "progressive" forces of the AFL-CIO have absolutely no interest in eliminating "racketeers" and "communists" except to guarantee the monolithic character of their own domination.

To assert that a "progressive" struggle is taking place in the effort to oust Beck, to discover principally opportunities for "a struggle for democracy," to refrain from a militant exposure of the danger inherent in this bourgeois-"labor" coalition -- is to display an impossible obtusity.

A few cracks in the bureaucratic apparatus may permit, temporarily, a break in favor of the rank and file -- as may any jurisdictional dispute bet-

ween labor dictators. The elimination of Beck, in this particular instance, simply sets the stage for the final consolidation of the bureaucracy; provides a barrier between the ranks and their "leadership" which will, short of mass movement to the left, be well-nigh insurmountable. The kind of a struggle that is being waged against Beck, under these circumstances, is least of all "progressive." It contains the elements of a dictatorship more severe in its consequences than anything that Beck imagined.

Reuther vs. Stellato: Democracy in Local 600

Reuther's current affection for "democratic" process isn't without precedent. His methods in rooting out Stalinist -- and anti-Stalinist -- militants in the period of his rise to power are well known.

The last center of opposition, Ford Local 600, felt the full weight of his "tactics" in early 1952. Stellato himself had been a Reuther follower and, according to the report of Walter Jason (a not unbiased reporter) in Labor Action, Feb. 11, 1952, had carried on his own "coarse, stupid, and bureaucratic anti-Communist campaign," prior to flying into the arms of the defeated Stalinists, and assuming the mantle of champion of the opposition.

Whether Stellato was exactly "driven into the arms of the Stalinists" is an interesting question. It is stated in somewhat overpositive terms, unfortunately; to sustain a close examination of the facts. If, as Reuther asserted in late 1951, Ford Local 600 under Stellato was Stalinist-dominated, Reuther was remarkably reluctant to prove the point before the special trial board demanded by the UAW Constitution.

More adequate as an explanation of Reuther's hostility is the following remark by Jason (LA, Feb. 11, '52): "The Stellato coalition protests against trends in the UAW toward bureaucratism, and in many instances they are correct. The leanings in the UAW away from its traditional rank and file democracy are disturbing and dangerous, but so far they still remain only trends."

The "trends" came down with a bang a month later, however. Immediately following the witchhunt visit of the House Un-American Activities Committee, under Rep. Potter, which arrived with the announced intention of hatching Local 600, (proving nothing, incidentally) the Reuther-dominated International Executive Board of the UAW ordered 600 to "show cause why an administrator should not be appointed to take charge of the local union." (The Militant, March 17).

Four days later, Walter Jason, reporting to Labor Action, wrote:

"DETROIT, March 16--After a one-day hearing, at which the Reuther leadership acted as prosecutor, judge and jury, the international executive board placed a six-man administration over Ford Local 600, in spite of vigorous protests of the duly elected officials of that local union, the largest in the world. ...

"The main charge against the four top officers of Ford Local 600-- Carl Stellato, president; Pat Rice, vice president; Bill Hood, recording secretary; and Bill Grant, financial secretary -- was that they were derelict in their duty because a small clique of the Communist Party was the real leadership of the local union."

These were essentially the charges which Reuther refused to press before a trial board three months earlier. They are the same charges that the House Committee under Potter failed to establish. (Reutherite international representative Elesio Romano had testified only that "The communists and their supporters were in full control of the Ford local's weekly newspaper, Ford Facts." (The Militant, Mar. 11, '52.)

Having to defeat the Local 600 leadership in open, democratic election Reuther, therefore, utilized the witchhunt hysteria which attended the UnAmerican Activities Committee visit to Detroit in order to attack an opposition caucus in the UAW.

The cynical, absolutely spurious use of the "Communist control" issue is demonstrated by Brother Reuther himself. Despite his "exposure" of the Stellato regime, the new election required by the UAW Constitution to take place within 60 days, was set off to September by Reuther -- because the Reutherites couldn't put a slate into the field against Stellato with any hope of success.

The Administrative Board removed (not suspended!) six Local 600 officers "without even charging Communist affiliation." (Militant, Apr. 27.)

Most damning of all is the "explanation" which Reuther presented to the Reutherite caucus. If Walter Jason's account is inclusive the "Communist" issue was buried beneath an entirely different set of accusations which, with Jason's comments, deserve reproduction here:

"Reuther charges that the criticisms in Ford Facts are not anti-Reuther but anti-union. That is why it was necessary to shut it up.

"He used two major illustrations to try to prove his point. After the last UAW convention, Ford Facts had a sensational full-page story headlined 'Betrayal.' This article blasted the role of Reuther. It criticized the salary increases to top officers and to international union representatives.

"This article, according to Reuther, was used by other unions to defeat the UAW-CIO in elections. Therefore, the Stellato regime is guilty of anti-union activities.

"Another article that burned Reuther up was the recent criticism of the UAW unemployment conference in Washington. Reuther's program of fighting for more steel and copper was denounced as a 'bosses' boy' program. The article ridiculed claims that the conference accomplished anything. It accused Reuther of hand-picking the delegates to that conference.

"Of course, readers of Ford Facts know the extremes which criticism of Reuther reach at times in that paper. Does a paper have the right to be wrong? Does a local union officialdom have the right to criticize the policies of the top officers of the union, even if that criticism may be picked up by someone else? Reuther's answer is 'No!

"The basic trouble with Reuther's rule is that in practice it signifies that NO criticism will be tolerated, for ANY criticism may be picked up by other unions, like CP-controlled unions, and quoted against Reuther and the UAW.

"Let us take the current issue at Ford Local 600. Suppose a local union votes that the placing of an administrator over Local

600 was bureaucratic; this action is noted in the next issue of the local union paper; then a CP-controlled union quotes the local union paper as calling Reuther 'bureaucratic.' Under the present rule the local union leadership is subjected to the same charge of anti-unionism as Reuther levels against Ford Local 600 officials." (Labor Action, March 31, 1952.)

The crudity of this particularly "coarse, stupid, and bureaucratic anti-Communist campaign" undoubtedly strengthened Stellato's position immensely. Opposition to Reuther was sufficiently strong in 600 to force withdrawal of Reutherite candidates for the top posts. Fifteen of 19 units elected anti-Reuther candidates; several Reutherite incumbents were defeated, and 80 per cent of the 184 General Council seats went to anti-Reuther forces.

Nonetheless, within the month the same "progressive" Mr. Reuther sparked a step by the UAW administration to "take steps at the forthcoming March convention to bar members of the Communist Party from holding membership in the UAW." That the position did not carry is not to Reuther's credit.

Thus we have an example of Reutherite democracy in action. That Reuther failed in his attack on Local 600 is not an indication of Reuther's generosity. It is an indication of the depth of the democratic tradition in the UAW. But the depth of a tradition should not obscure the heavy inroads that Reuther has made, and is making. The fact of the matter is clear. A genuine struggle for rank and file control will clash with Walter Reuther. He is no friend of labor democracy.

Class Conflict and the "Progressive" Bureaucracy

The dictatorial character of Beck's union is open and indisputable. Traditions of democracy have been smashed: every element of opposition is crude and relentless. To oppose Beck and the quasi-gangster leadership of the Teamsters is a matter of guts -- not slick political analysis. There is not, and never has been, any question of the attitude of socialists toward bureaucrats of Beck's caliber. Every conceivable opening in the struggle to overthrow the Teamster dictatorship should be used -- except a coalition with those forces which intend to destroy, not the Becks, but the unions.

In the context of the struggle which is taking place today Reuther's role is infinitely more dangerous than that of the Becks. The fate of organized labor is at stake. Reuther's progress to power within the labor bureaucracy has been steady and virtually irrevocable. He is dangerous because he understands the power of the movement which he dominates. Every action is calculated -- to prohibit open, independent class action -- the battle against the political and economic subordination of a whole class.

Reuther understands the need, if the bureaucracy is to sustain itself between capital and labor, of militant words, and aggressive "campaigns." But even the enormous barrage of publicity which surrounds Reuther's contract negotiations -- massive affairs -- cannot obscure the fact that Reuther fails, in every contract, every issue, to solve even the immediate problems of his own auto workers.

The famous GAW [Guaranteed Annual Wage] is a dead issue, solving nothing.

The resentment which exploded in dozens of wild-cat strikes immediately after Reuther's most recent 'victory' -- the Three Year Contract in 1955 -- has not been exhausted. Opposition to Reuther is centered in the UAW itself. Jack Wilson's "Chrysler Story Infuriates Rank and File of UAW" (Labor Action, March 18, 1957) emphasizes that the reaction to Chrysler Vice-President Misch's boast that record earnings were due to "new efficiency in operations, the elimination of 22,000 jobs, and new work standards" (time-study! automation! speed-up!) whether or not, as Misch says, "The leadership of the UAW had been informed of our plans with a full background of what was at stake." (I am noting the point that the UAW workers charged the bureaucracy with betrayal. The most that Wilson himself has to say, after noting the shaky vote of confidence accorded Reuther by the higher echelons, is that "Interestingly enough, neither the company nor the UAW has denied the facts in the Crellin story.")

The most casual review of Labor Action's coverage over a period, not of months, but of years (!) shows that it is, not a critic, but an apologist for Reuther. For Labor Action, Reuther is progressive. The word needs no qualifying quotes. But Reuther wishes to be, and is, a dictator, limited only by the forces which can be brought to bear against him within the union. It is impossible to utilize a Reuther, engaged in the destruction of militant, democratic traditions, to introduce democracy into Beck's union. Nothing is further, as Haskell apologetically notes, from the minds of the omnipotent "leadership" of labor.

The role which can, and must, be played by socialists is far from the foot-dragging "commentary" with which Labor Action accompanies Reuther's more intolerable assaults on democracy. We cannot isolate, within a reactionary bureaucracy, more or less -- "relatively progressive" tendencies. The coalition of the labor leaders and the bourgeois witchhunters (for the labor probe is obviously an extension of the earlier witchhunt -- the containment of labor, not the "Communists") is the natural opponent of socialists in and out of the labor movement.

The first thing that has to be learned -- or relearned -- is that labor unions are instruments of struggle against the bourgeoisie. There are no rules in that struggle, except those which are imposed by the black-jack and billie. The class independence of the unions must be the key point in our analysis and activity.

I repeat, the key element in determining the role which the ISL plays today can be discerned by examination of its attitude toward the Labor Rackets Probe. The affinity for Social Democracy -- simply follows!

WHAT IS A UNITED FRONT?

by Tim Wohlforth

The present "Draft Resolution on Youth and the Campus and YSL Perspectives" adopted by the NAC contains within it a whole series of misconceptions about the real meaning of a united front -- misconceptions which have been held for some time now in our movement.

I will attempt first to describe what a "united front" has traditionally meant to revolutionary socialists since the days of Lenin and then to deal specifically with some of the formulations in this resolution as well as in the similar resolution adopted at the last convention.

The Leninist Conception of a United Front

Trotsky describes the position on the united front drafted by himself and adopted by the Comintern in its early days as follows: "The Communist Party proves to the masses and their organizations its readiness in action to wage battle in common with them, for aims, no matter how modest, so long as they lie on the road of the historical development of the proletariat; the Communist Party in this struggle takes into account the actual conditions of the class at each given moment; it turns not to the masses only, but also to those organizations whose leadership is recognized by the masses; it confronts the reformist organizations before the eyes of the masses with the real problems of the class struggle. The policy of the united front hastens the revolutionary development of the class by revealing in the open that the common struggle is undetermined not by the disruptive acts of the Communist Party but by the conscious sabotage of the leaders of the social democracy." (What Next, pp. 72 f.)

The above quotation contains all of the fundamental elements of a united front policy adopted by a revolutionary organization. While drafted in order to deal with the reformists it is just as applicable today to both the reformists and Stalinists and was in fact pushed during a later period by Trotsky as a tactic towards the Stalinists on many occasions.

Thus the united front is a temporary working agreement between organization with contrary politics but who have a basis for united action on some current progressive demand of the working class. It is not in any sense "political collaboration" and is not based on political agreement, but rather is a method of acting jointly where such agreement in fundamental politics does not exist. As Trotsky put it, "Agreement on fighting actions may be made with the devil, with his grandmother and even with Moske and Grzesinski." (The Only Road, p. 58.)

Also, united fronts are not based on any opinion as to the "sincerity" or "legitimacy" of the parties involved. In fact revolutionists go into united front actions with reformists with the assumption beforehand that the reformists will if possible sabotage the venture. For instance the Bolsheviks blocked in a united front with Kerensky against Kornilov even though they knew beforehand that Kerensky was working closely with Kornilov and carrying out his policies.

United fronts do not mean -- and are incorrect and should be opposed if they do mean -- any sort of conciliationism with the party one is uniting in action

with. As Trotsky put it in The Strategy of the World Revolution: "The most important, best established and most unalterable rule of every maneuver says: One's own party organization should never be diluted, united or combined with another, no matter how 'friendly' the latter may be today. Such a step should never be undertaken which leads, directly or indirectly, openly or maskedly, to the subordination of the party to other parties or to organizations or other classes and therewith limits the freedom of one's own agitation, or a step through which one is made responsible, even if only in part, for the political line of other parties. You shall not mix up the banners, not to speak of kneeling before another banner."

Lastly, united fronts are based on the working class as it is presently organized and must be conducted through the leadership of working-class organizations as presently constituted and with their existing leadership. The famous "United Front from below" is in effect not a united front but rather a call to all workers to join and fight under one's own banner.

The purpose of every united front action is twofold. First it is a means whereby the whole working class can be united in action for its own advancement at a time when it is divided politically. In a certain sense even the trade unions are "the rudimentary form of the united front in the economic struggle" (What Next, p. 91) and the soviets or workers councils as exemplified in Hungary are the highest form of the united front.

The second purpose of a united front is to expose the leadership of the organization or organizations one is uniting in action with. It shows concretely to the members of the other organization that in common action it is not we who mislead and disrupt the working class but their own leaders. Thus a united front campaign is a method of reaching and winning over the members of the organizations one blocs with. Those who have faith in their politics should have no fear about uniting in common action -- "with the devil," if need be.

Thus while a united front is also negotiated (in the open) with the leadership of an opponent organization, it is in reality aimed at the membership-- aimed at uniting in action the members of the various organizations and at winning them over to revolutionary leadership.

It is for the above reason that in concrete cases it is always the revolutionary, disciplined group which knows what it wants, that always takes the initiative in a united front maneuver, and which always gains from it. This is why revolutionaries usually have to force reformist and Stalinist organizations into united actions by pressure from their own ranks.

The 1955 Tasks and Orientation Resolution

I doubt if any movement has ever passed a more confused, incredible and politically harmful position on the united front than that passed by the YSL at the last convention. This has caused the right wing itself to change its line on united fronts under the pressure of events. However, it is worthwhile to take a look at the following paragraph (14) of the resolution which explains why the YSL favors united fronts with liberals and opposes them with Stalinists:

"While liberals are the defenders of the imperialist policies of one side

in the cold war, and the Stalinists of the other, it does not follow that we adopt the same attitude toward both. The liberals when they enter into a particular action to protest the firing of a teacher, join an anti-ROTC campaign or oppose the sending of U.S. troops to Indo-China do not demonstrate the same meaning and consequences as when the Stalinists propose the same thing. The liberal is opposing a particular action of the cold war policies at home or abroad from what is objectively a democratic position, and not from the point of view of defending or justifying a totalitarian force. It is a step toward our point of view or it is a step we can support because if carried to its logical conclusion it would lead closer to our position -- for civil liberties and a democratic foreign policy. Not so with the Stalinists. The objective meaning and consequence of their actions leads to or is part of their support of the Stalinist camp."

Thus the YSL places itself in concrete reality closer to the defenders of American imperialism than to the defenders of Russian imperialism. We see even at this date the seeds of movement towards the social democracy and away from a revolutionary third camp position.

But aside from this fact, the above quote (which remains the attitude of the right wing) removes from the discussion one element sometimes brought in by the right wing: the class nature of the American CP. There is no doubt about the class nature of liberalism. It is frankly capitalist and in the capitalist camp. Yet we are for united fronts with liberals. Thus whether or not the CP is a working class party is irrelevant to the present discussion of a united front tactic towards them.

However the above quote has two main faults: (1) It is not what it says about the Stalinists that is wrong but what it says about the liberals; and (2) In any case, what it says is irrelevant to the question of a united front tactic.

It is absolutely correct to state that Stalinism as a movement acts as the agent of the Stalinist bureaucracy and is not sincerely dedicated to the struggles it engages in. The March on Washington movement during World War II, for example, proves that the Stalinists will sabotage the struggle of the Negro people if it suits the needs of Kremlin foreign policy. Its perfidious role in the trade unions during the war also proves this.

The paragraph contends, however, that the liberals' support of American imperialism has no deleterious effects on them -- that everything they struggle for they struggle for sincerely and will not sabotage. They have an "objectively democratic position" whatever in the name of Marx that creature is. This is as absolutely incorrect as the former statement is correct. For instance, the liberals as an organized movement in World War II clasped hands with the Stalinists and played the same reactionary role by their unconditional support of Roosevelt. After the war the liberals instituted the witch hunt and defended it under Truman; they supported the Korean war, etc. In other words their support of American imperialism led directly to their sabotaging the class struggle in this country in world War II and the struggle for civil liberties following the war.

The conclusion of this is not that we should not have united fronts with either group but rather that we should have united fronts with both of them,

realizing all the time that either one of them may very easily sabotage the whole affair.

The reason why we wish to have united fronts with supporters of both American and Stalinist imperialism is that on concrete issues such as civil liberties and civil rights there is a basis for joint action of the entire "radical" youth and because it offers us a chance to expose the leadership of both the Stalinists and liberals in action and thus win over a section of their membership by showing that only revolutionary socialists can struggle consistently for these demands.

The YSL's Present Draft Perspectives Resolution

The present draft resolution of the right wing on tasks and perspectives contains within it the line on united fronts adopted at the last plenum. This confused section, which in no way attempts to grope with the mistaken position of the YSL in the past or shows one inkling of an understanding of what precisely a united front is, has only one sentence which contains political meaning: "... all units, fractions and members at large must discuss with the N.O. all questions of their activity in respect to Stalinist youth organizations." This means concretely that the YSL has no policy and has decided in lieu of a policy to let the NAC decide in each case. The rest of the section is a hodgepodge of irrelevant and ridiculous matters such as whether or not we call the Stalinist youth "comrades"; how our attitude should be dependent on the particular tendency the group is part of inside the CP; how "we should try to raise the political criteria of opposition to totalitarianism and dictatorship everywhere" (this is a suggestion that we "unite" with the Stalinists on only those questions which disunite us -- in other words we oppose the united front); and it contains the following gem: "At the same time we do not have a policy of excluding Stalinist organizations from United Front activities nor are we in favor of including these groups under all circumstances" (i.e. we do not have a policy.)

The utter inability of the right wing even to understand what a united front means is shown in the section of the resolution dealing with the AYS. It states: "While we are not against participating with the AYS in joint activity, it should only be on the basis of firm political agreement. In no case should our third camp politics be subordinated to vague and misleading Cannonite formulations."

An insight into the mentality of the right wing can be gained by comparing this section with the section on SDAs: "We should attempt to cooperate with liberal students wherever possible and to draw them into joint activities on many political issues -- civil liberties, civil rights, etc." No statement here that "our third camp politics should not be subordinated to vague and misleading liberalistic pro-imperialistic formulations." (By the way, while the resolution takes an extremely "hostile" attitude towards the AYS it calls for remaining "on friendly terms with" SLID.) This dual standard of softness towards the liberals and extreme hardness toward the Stalinists, and even worse, toward fellow revolutionary socialists like the AYS, pervades everything the right wing writes or says. This tells us more about the direction of the development of the right wing than a million theoretical formulations.

However this statement shows no understanding of the united front. In the

first place, in all united fronts with anybody one keeps one's organizational independence and politics. One unites not on what we disagree about (third camp politics) but on what we are in agreement on: civil liberties, civil rights, the Hungarian revolution, and the like. Thus we keep our politics crystal clear and assume no responsibility for the politics of the other participants in the united front actions, but at the same time we do not ask that our specific politics be the basis upon which the united front is formed. To hold this view is not only to be sectarian but in reality to be opposed to the united front.

I repeat: The united front is a method of joint action of those who disagree on fundamental questions and has nothing to do with political collaboration or organic unity of one sort or another.

The Right Wing's Real Position on the United Front

In reality the right wing is opposed to a united front with the Stalinists and uninterested in a united front with fellow revolutionary socialists. As I pointed out in a previous article (LWB Vol. 1 No. 2) the New York YSL, which is under the domination of the right wing, opposed a united front on the Algerian question. They specifically wished to exclude the CP from such a venture. Their reasoning was that the CP was in reality the enemy of the Algerian workers and had acted as such in the past.

This is absolutely true, and this is exactly why we propose a united front to them now when they state (demagogically to be sure) that they defend the Algerian people.

Here we have a classic example of the best type of united front. We take the CP at face value and demand that they join with us in a protest on Algeria in defense of the Trotskyists and others who are today being jailed by Mollet. If the CP accepts it is put into conflict with its tacit support of Mollet, and if it turns it down we have discredited it in the eyes of its own members and have raised ourselves in their estimation.

However the right wing turned down this golden opportunity to test the Stalinists (and also to test, by the way, the social-democratic friends of the right wing) and in fact has done NOTHING of any nature on the Algerian question despite profuse assurances to the contrary.

Another example of the right wing's attitude is their reaction to my proposal that we go into a joint May Day celebration with the Stalinists and others that would protest various things which we were in agreement on. We would have been given complete freedom of speech and could have addressed an audience of over 1,000. In turning down this excellent opportunity to speak to Stalinists and participate in a united front of all radicals on May Day the right wing got very indignant about standing on the same platform with the Stalinist butchers on May Day. (This did not prevent them from singing the International with the social democrats, also known for their butchery of revolutionaries.) No doubt given certain circumstances the Stalinists would shoot us again, but as Trotsky remarked in 1940 to a similar point: "Yes, I know they sometimes shoot us." (This was shortly after the May 24, 1940 machine gun attack on him.) He said, "Do you think Lewis or Green wouldn't shoot at you? It is only a difference of circumstances." (Socialist Appeal,

October 19, 1940). As Trotsky has said on a number of occasions, to treat the question on this level is "to put it on the plane of spurious sentimentality." (The Only Road, p. 59.)

Trotsky went on to say: "We can't let antipathies or our moral feelings sway us. Even the assailants on Trotsky's house had great courage. I think we can hope to win these workers who began as a crystallization of October. We see them negatively: how to break through this obstacle. We must set the base against the top. The Moscow gang we consider to be gangsters, but the rank and file don't feel themselves to be gangsters, but revolutionaries. They have been terribly poisoned. If we show we understand, that we have a common language, we can turn them against their leaders." (Stenographic draft of the June, 1940 discussions with Trotsky on the Stalinists.)

The Task Before Us

The task we in the YSL have to face is similar to the one outlined in 1940 by Trotsky. We must reach the membership of the Stalinists -- "to set the base against the top." There is only one way to do this, and that is the aggressive use of the united front technique. Such a technique not only will help advance the immediate tasks of the working class, but will lead to the destruction of the Stalinist movement and the winning over of a significant section of it to revolutionary socialism.

To stand aside from this task as the right wing does in order to remain "pure" in the eyes of the bourgeoisie and its representatives in the socialist movement, is to step aside from the struggle in a sectarian fashion. Such a move is in my opinion just as disastrous within the framework of the small radical movement today and the tasks of revolutionaries within it as the CP's ultra-leftist line was within the context of the epochal tasks of the German working class in 1933.

THE POLITICS OF "UNITY"

by Shane Mage

Under this title, I meant to present a final summation of the political nature of the YSL Right Wing's proposal to liquidate the YSL and enter the SP-SDF "as it stands today." However, in view of the ISL draft resolution on socialist electoral action which I have just seen, this is scarcely necessary.

In fact, even before this latest manifestation of the political degeneration of the "Independent Socialist Tendency," further argument on the political nature of their "unity" proposal would constitute belaboring the obvious. We have already, at great length, established the capitulatory nature of their orientation to the SP-SDF. More significant, the leading theoretician and writer for the "Independent Socialist Tendency" itself has fully confirmed our political evaluation. More than three months ago, Comrade Hal Draper gave a scientifically precise definition of the Right Wing's politics: "systematic political adaptation to social democracy." By all rules of rational debate, this definition must be admitted by all to be valid. Since Draper's article appeared, not a single word has been written by anyone, in either the YSL or ISL, to dispute the accuracy of his definition. More -- except for mutterings about Draper having opposed the "Labor Party" slogan in 1938, the Right Wingers are struck dumb when it comes to answering Draper even orally! As an example of this, at the recent debate in N.Y.C. between Shachtman and Murry Weiss, the SWP spokesman quoted at great length from Draper's indictment of Shachtman's policy. Not only was Shachtman unable to present any answer to this, he wasn't even able to toss it off with a witty comment -- he was forced to ignore it altogether!

Our differences with Comrade Draper are, of course, substantial and well known. But the Right Wingers cannot hope to escape from his analysis by pointing to those differences. In fact, it is precisely because Draper disagrees with us on basic political questions that the charge of "systematic political adaptation to social democracy" has such crushing weight.

In the context of the "systematic political adaptation to social democracy" of the ISL-YSL Right Wing, the ISL draft resolution on electoral action fits in as the latest and most extreme swing toward social-democratic politics. The ISL resolution states, in essence, that socialists should, as a matter of principle, not run candidates against labor-backed capitalist politicians, and that socialists should not urge workers to vote against these capitalist politicians. Thus the ISL lines up with the extreme right wing of the SP-SDF and against the SP left wing (just as it did, incidentally, on the issue of the Muste forum). The meaning of the ISL position is "neutrality" in favor of the Democrats (the ISL opposes any socialist campaign, it opposes the non-labor-backed Republican candidates, it carefully does not oppose the labor-backed Democrat.) This is a position identical to that of the CP which very carefully neither supported nor opposed Stevenson formally in the last election, but was openly opposed to Eisenhower. It is now fairly evident why the ISL and the YSL Right Wing had no criticisms of the CP's policy on American politics (see H. W. Benson, The Communist Party at the Crossroads, New International Publishing Co., January, 1957) -- they were preparing to accept the essentials of that policy! The ISL's position is but a short step away from the position of Norman Thomas and the SP-SDF Right Wing -- open support to the Democratic Party

candidates, and that step can be easily taken. If the ISL recognizes no socialist principle compelling it to oppose capitalist candidates it can find no principled reason preventing it from supporting such candidates.

For our part, a principled class opposition to the capitalist political machines is an inseparable part of the class struggle. There is no more fundamental principle of Marxism. The difference between class-collaboration and class struggle, above all in politics, is the difference between social democracy and all shades of authentic socialism. The ISL resolution would place it firmly on the social-democratic side of that line. That is the political nature of the proposal to liquidate the YSL -- it can no longer be hidden by demagogy about an "all-inclusive party" with "10,000 to 50,000 members." The choice between the Right and Left wings is simply this: for or against "systematic political adaptation to social democracy"!

GLOSSARY

- AYS -- American Youth for Socialism, the New York City youth group of the Socialist Workers Party at the time. It was dissolved in the fall of 1957 and its members, together with the left wing of the YSL and a number of independents, participated in the launching of the Young Socialist Alliance, the New York supporter club of the YOUNG SOCIALIST.
- Challenge -- The official organ of the YSL which appeared as a page in Labor Action.
- Cochranites -- A group which split from the Socialist Workers Party in 1953 and has published the American Socialist ever since.
- CP -- Communist Party.
- Denitch, Bogdan -- A leader of the Young People's Socialist League when it broke with the Socialist Party and merged with the Socialist Youth League in 1954 to form the YSL. He was a "left" supporter of the right wing.
- Draper, Hal -- Editor of Labor Action and one of the founding members of the Workers Party. He was a left critic of Shachtman during this period though he finally went along with the entry into the SP-SDF.
- Harrington, Mike -- He, like Denitch, was in YPSL before it merged with the YSL. He was National Chairman of the YSL and the leading spokesman for the right wing.
- ISL -- Independent Socialist League. This is the name taken by the Shachtman group since 1949. Previously it was known as the Workers Party which had its origins in a split from the SWP in 1940. The ISL, which was fraternally related to the YSL, finally dissolved into the SP-SDF in the fall of 1958.
- Labor Action -- Official organ of the ISL.
- LWB -- Left-Wing Bulletin, the discussion bulletin published by the left wing of the YSL.
- LWC -- Left-Wing Caucus, the official name of the left wing of the YSL.
- McReynolds, David -- One of the leaders of the left wing of the SP-SDF.
- Martin, Max -- National Secretary of the YSL who was known as the unofficial spokesman for Shachtman within the YSL and therefore a leader of the right wing.
- Militant -- The paper which represents the views of the Socialist Workers Party.
- NAC -- National Action Committee, the leading body of the YSL resident in New York. It was a subcommittee of the IEC.
- NEC -- National Executive Committee. This was the highest body in the YSL between conventions. It met occasionally in plenary session.

Oehlerite -- The Oehlerite grouping broke with the Trotskyist movement in the 1930's because of opposition to the entry of the Trotskyists into the Socialist Party. It soon became an isolated ultra-leftist sect that finally disappeared.

PC -- Political Committee. This was the body in the ISL comparable to the NAC in the YSL.

Rawlings, George -- A member of the NAC of the YSL who on some questions agreed with Denitch.

SDA -- Students for Democratic Action, the youth affiliate of the liberal Americans for Democratic Action.

Shachtman, Max -- One of the founders of the American Trotskyist movement, he broke with Trotsky over the Russian question in 1940. He then founded the Workers Party.

SLID -- Student League for Industrial Democracy. This is a largely defunct youth affiliate of the extreme right wing social-democratic League for Industrial Democracy (LID).

SLP -- Socialist Labor Party. This group has a reputation as a sectarian organization because of its refusal to espouse any "reforms" or to support the labor movement.

Socialist Call -- Official organ of the SP-SDF.

Socialist Youth League (SYL) -- The youth group of the Workers Party and the ISL until its merger with the YPSL to form the YSL.

SP-SDF -- Socialist Party-Social Democratic Federation. This is the American section of the Second International, right wing international socialist movement.

SWP -- Socialist Workers Party. The American Trotskyist organization.

Taylor, Sam -- A member of the NAC of the YSL and a leader of the right wing.

Weiss, Murry -- A leading member of the SWP.