

LEFT WING BULLETIN

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LEFT-WINGERS FORM NATIONAL CAUCUS

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Young Socialist League

PORTRAIT OF THE CENTRIST AS A YOUNG SHACHTMANITE

BY Dave Carleton

The present situation in the YSL, as every child knows, is a case bare-cheeked, bare-faced, hand-polished, chrome plated sellout and capitulation to the social democracy. But what interests us at the reaction of the centrists. They spend their time "explaining" that the decisions of the Martinite leadership (in which they were not consulted, and with which they do not really agree politically) --that these decisions and documents do not mean what they say in plain English. The centrists "explain" that each new overture to the social democrats is filled with the most revolutionary content, if only properly "understood". And the leadership, for its part, is not unmindful of the psychological yearnings of the centrists on whom it leans, so that words like "revolutionary" are to be found carefully sprinkled through the most odious and outrageous reformist proposals of the Martinite leadership. These words appear for the benefit of those who wish to continue kidding themselves about the direction of the leadership. Such is the fate of those who have failed to grasp the inner essence of the higher reformism in America.

Another symptom of centrism, that unfortunate clinico-political constellation, is the continuing appraisal of the most characteristic and minutely-planned acts of the Martinite leadership as "errors" or, as we might say, TISE (tragic mistakes of the Shachtman era). The tendency of these centrists is clear: they are performing their time-honored, traditional function of providing left camouflage for reformism.

Occasionally, however, it will be observed by the clinician that the centrist is engaged in another, dialectically-opposite maneuver, known in the literature as "foot-dragging". This is a kind of faint obstructionism, characterized by passive, covert, and sullen opposition, which never quite manages to come to a fundamental break with the rightest direction of the leadership. And yet, when boat-time comes, these very same resisters will be seen crowding up the gangplank, ready to sail arm-in-arm with Shachtman into the sunset, as the social democrats sing their colorful songs (music by Norman Thomas, lyrics by Dulles).

One recent example of the centrist cutiosa provided amusement enough to delight even the most jaded connoisseur of political apologetics and blindness. Upon receipt of a NY letter urging extreme caution in regard to organizational involvement with Stalinoids in forums (Norman Thomas might be upset??), our local centrists, up to their arms in Stalinoids were somewhat taken aback. But not for long. They decided after three hours of critical exegesis and explication de texte, and armed with jesuitical casuistry, the New Criticism, Kabbalistic numerology, and ten years of "explaining" Shachtmanism, decided that the meaning was plain: the leadership was not anti-Stalinoid, it was "neutral".

Historical comparisons are much in vogue at the moment. When Tim Wohlforth sounded the alarm at the creeping reformists within the gates the Martinites did not shrink from comparing this with Zinovievs public betrayal of the date of the October rising. Capitulation to

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Publication of this bulletin officially launches the formation of the Left Wing Caucus of the YSL. This caucus is composed of all those in the YSL who oppose the proposed unity with the SP-SDF and who believe that this proposal "calls into question the continued existence of the YSL as an independent organization of revolutionary socialist youth."

We urge every single member of the YSL to read over the material contained in this issue as well as the material emanating from the recent plenum. We sincerely hope that after careful consideration of the real political issues involved you will join with us in the struggle to preserve the YSL as a revolutionary youth organization.

We invite everyone to join with us in this struggle even though they may have differences on many other important questions. If you agree with us on the basic question of unity then we can discuss the other questions on a common basis - that of revolutionary socialism.

Even though we do not consider these other vital questions - the Russian question, the colonial revolution, etc. - the basis for building a left wing in the YSL, we do consider them to be of the utmost importance. We dedicate ourselves to the most thorough discussion of all these questions within the ranks of the YSL. This discussion we shall carry on both in our own bulletin and in the YSR.

The publication of this bulletin shall not be construed in any way as the scuttling on our part of the YSR. We shall individually and collectively write for the YSR also. We feel, however, that this bulletin will greatly facilitate the speed and thoroughness of the discussion.

We intend to discuss not only the basic political questions facing our movement but also the concrete implementation of our politics - that is the questions revolving around the practical work and organization of our movement. As Marxists we recognize no wall between theory and practice. We see the two united in constant interaction and dedicate ourselves to do our duty as loyal YSLers to carry out the political controversy and to contribute our share to building the movement.

This bulletin is published under the following section of the constitution:

Article seven, section four:

"Minority tendencies or caucuses may publish their own material for internal and external distribution, but they must make clear that these publications do not represent the views of the organization as a whole. All national and local mimeograph and mailing facilities shall be open to such tendencies or caucuses for use at cost."

The material in this issue and in all subsequent issues represents the views of the left wing caucus of the YSL if it is marked as an editorial statement. Otherwise it represents the views of the author. In any event it does not necessarily represent the view of the organization as a whole. The editors would appreciate hearing from all members in the YSL regardless of their views at the moment. Address all communications to: Wohlforth, 305 E. 21 St., NYC 10.

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.

13 COMRADES JOIN TO INITIATE LEFT WING CAUCUS

Tim Wohlforth, New York, NAC, NEC

Shane Mage, Dayton Area, NEC

Frank McGowan, Minority Representative on New York Exec.
Columbia Fraction

Danny Freeman, Columbia Fraction

Sherry Goldman, New York

Martha Wohlforth, New York

Scott Arden, NEC Alternate, Chicago

John Worth, Chicago

Jim Robertson, Former NEC Member, Berkeley

Roger Plumb, Berkeley

Dave Carleton, Berkeley

Stan Larssen, Berkeley

Judy Mage, Dayton Area

JOIN WITH US --- SAVE THE YSL!!!

RESOLUTION: ON THE AMERICAN SOCIALIST PARTY

Shane Mage

The Socialist Party has merged with the Social-Democratic Federation at a convention held January 19-20. The political character of the new organization is indicated by Thomas' statement that no political differences exist between the unifying groups.

The SDA has virtually since its inception been a loyal supporter of U.S. imperialism and the Democratic Party. That Thomas is right and that the merged organization will clearly have the politics of the SDF, is shown by the joint SP-SDF "Memorandum of Understanding" which praised the Marshall Plan and endorsed its members supporting Democratic (and Republican!) Party candidates. The politics of this organization can be defined as "State-Department Socialism" and "Democratic Party Socialism."

The political role of the merged SP-SDF is that of socialist cover for U.S. imperialism and "liberal" big business. The YSL has nothing in common with the "Socialism" of the State Dept. and the Democratic Party.

We consider the influence of the SP-SDF within the labor movement to be reactionary and seek to combat it politically.

We call on all left-wingers in the SP who refuse to go along with State Dept. Socialism to leave the SDF-SP and join a genuine socialist organization, the YSL.

RESOLUTION: ON THE UNITY QUESTION

Shane Mage

For the first time in decades the regroupment and unification of the dispersed groups of the American left has become the subject of serious discussion among socialists. This corresponds to a pressing need of the American socialist movement and to a radical change in the objective situation confronting socialists on a world scale.

The need for regroupment of the American left has been evident for a long time. True, until economic and social changes sufficient to bring about the general radicalization of the American working class have occurred, no organizational move can lead to establishment of a mass party of socialism in the U.S., nor will American socialists be able to break out of their present isolated propaganda-group existence.

Nevertheless, within the limits of the present social and economic conditions of the U.S., the perennial disunity and fragmentation of the Left exerts a very harmful influence. This disunity seriously hampers socialist propaganda and virtually precludes any serious socialist agitation. It also is an obstacle to a future breakthrough of American socialism from its present isolation.

Unfortunate as the consequences of socialist disunity have been, the fragmentation of the past period has been absolutely necessary. At the time of the first imperialist war the world working-class movement was torn asunder by the split between reformism, opportunism, centrism, social-patriotism and all varieties of class collaborationism, on the one hand, and revolutionary Marxism on the other. Since that time this split has only deepened, despite (or rather, because of) the epochal defeats suffered by the international working class, and therefore by revolutionary socialism. The YSL continues to believe that only the political victory of revolutionary socialism over social democracy can establish the necessary precondition for successful proletarian revolution.

Superimposed upon this fundamental division has been the influence of Stalinism, the counter-revolutionary product of the degeneration of the Russian revolution. The influence of Stalinism and of Stalinist ideology has crippled and paralyzed the best, most revolutionary sections of the working class, and has contributed in no small measure to the preservation of capitalism and social-democracy.

The great, fundamental change in the objective conditions of today is the disintegration of Stalinism. The international working class is now well advanced toward throwing off the Stalinist incubus; through the overthrow of the Stalinist bureaucracy in Eastern Europe and the collapse of its political instruments, the CPs of the Western world. Stalinist ideology has, in the course of the last year, been reduced to a shambles and is rapidly losing its grip over elements, both intellectual and proletarian, hitherto held firmly in line. In America it is the crisis of Stalinism; the disorientation of the

"Stalinoid" groups (Sweezyites, "Progressives," Cochranites) and the emergence of CP elements moving in the direction of authentic revolutionary-democratic socialism, that provides the context for socialist regroupment.

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In proposing socialist regroupment we are not proposing that other groups accept our entire program as the basis for unity. We do not propose a magic formula which will enable American socialism to break out of its isolation nor do we promise fantastic gains for a united left-socialist movement. Still less do we propose a vague, all-inclusive group which would give social-democratic agents of the U.S. State Department or apologists for the Kremlin equal status with genuine socialists. What we propose is a form of regroupment which would unite American left-socialists, whatever their differences on many theoretical and political issues, around the basic principles of revolutionary socialism class struggle, democracy, internationalism.

Spelled out concretely, we propose regroupment of American socialists in a new united organization on the following political basis:

1. Clear and unequivocal defense of the democratic liberties of all, and a no less unequivocally democratic conception of socialism.
 2. A clear break with the Stalinist bureaucracy, calling for the replacement of its rule by democratic socialism and siding with the Polish and Hungarian workers in their freedom struggles.
 3. A resolute policy of independent working class political action in the U.S., calling for formation of a Labor Party and opposing the capitalist parties on a principled class basis.
 4. Opposition to the foreign policy of U.S. imperialism and support to all colonial revolutionary movements (without prejudging the question, which can be decided by majority vote of the new movement, of whether Stalinist-led movements should be considered part of the colonial revolution.)
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In its internal life a united American left-socialist movement would seek to encourage the fullest and freest discussion of all practical and theoretical problems of the international workers movement -- but it would not be afraid to take its own position on these problems. It would not make a fetish of "discipline," and it would be helped in this by the healthy revulsion of its ex-Stalinist militants against the Stalinist perversion of "democratic-centralism" -- but it would recognize that its activities in mass organizations need to develop in a disciplined fashion, not only because united action is the only way to implement an agreed policy effectively, but, equally important, because only if leaders are subject

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The great, fundamental change in the objective conditions of today is the disintegration of Stalinism. The international working class is now well advanced toward throwing off the Stalinist incubus; through the overthrow of the Stalinist bureaucracy in Eastern Europe and the collapse of its political instruments, the CPs of the Western world. Stalinist ideology has, in the course of the last year, been reduced to a shambles and is rapidly losing its grip over elements, both intellectual and proletarian, hitherto held firmly in line. In America it is the crisis of Stalinism; the disorientation of the

THE UNITY QUESTION: AN ANALYSIS

By Frank McGowan

Those who favor unity with the SP-SDF base their position on an inaccurate and misleading analysis of the future perspective of American politics. The SP as the traditional party of American socialist protest has a supposedly great potential for becoming the center around which a loose "Debsian type" regroupment of all sorts of diverse groups who choose to call themselves "socialists" can and will take place. The growing contradictions of American society and in particular the antagonistic structure of the Democratic Party may in the near future lead to the formation of a labor party. A "new" SP would be able to hasten the development of such a labor party. Once the labor party was established this initial conglomeration of "socialists" would function together to get the labor party to adopt a "socialist program." The difference between reformist and revolutionary socialists would only reveal itself when the seizure of power and establishment of socialism by this "socialist" labor party became the order of the day.

This analysis is full of contradictions. It involves in the first place a gross overestimate of the potential ideological power of the SP name and tradition, a tradition largely discredited in the eyes of most workers and intellectuals who have had any contact with radical politics (and this is precisely the group which will have to be appealed to first). Those who favor unity admit that the mythical drawing power of the SP tradition does not in the least help the present SP-SDF. But they maintain that a tremendous potential exists and that only the aid of a few active YSL-ISL members is necessary to make it a reality. This is certainly a highly un-Marxist approach. One would expect them to demand at least a few concrete manifestations of this great historical force before they made it their political strategy.

But even if the SP tradition were as attractive as it is made out to be, it still would not follow that the SP could become the basis for a broad "Debsian" type regroupment including both social democrats and revolutionary socialists. The SP has the superficial appearance of a potentially broad organization because it has from time to time developed an abortive left wing. But the basic organizational structure of the SP has for the past 40 years been based on the right wing; on trade union bureaucrats, municipal government machines, and petty-bourgeois intellectuals connected with publicity and financial resources. This right wing has always controlled the SP and has always been more willing to dispense with a hundered peripheral left-wingers than with one pillar of the basic right-wing

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NOTE: The "Resolution on the Crisis in the Stalinist Movement" by Shane will appear in the next issue of the Left-Wing Bulletin together with his analysis of the plenum discussion on that subject.

Motion on the Recent Political Course of the Y.S.L.

The NEC takes note of the following political acts undertaken by leading bodies and organs of our movement and of the fraternally related ISL.

1. We note the support offered the SP by both the YSL and ISL in the last election as against all other socialist candidates. We note that this support was offered with no criticism of the SP's political line during the election. Labor Action in its electoral statement and Max Shachtman in his Liberation article mentioned the existence of "differences" between the two tendencies -- but he did not mention the nature of these differences. No criticism was offered of the support given to American Imperialism by Hoopes and Friedman during the election. We consider this to be in violation of the position adopted by the last meeting of the NEC, which, while supporting the SP, attempted to exclude support of the SP's politics.
2. We further note that ever since the de facto adoption of a policy in favor of unity with the SP, no criticism has been made either in Labor Action or the Young Socialist Challenge of the pro-imperialist policies of the American representative of the social democracy, the SP-SDF. The SP's action in support of "internationalization" of the Suez Canal -- i.e., turning it over to American capitalism -- plus statements in the December Call in support of UN intervention into Hungary -- i.e., turning the Hungarian workers over to American capitalism -- offered ample opportunity for such criticism. In addition the recent merger of the SP with the SDF on a program of State Department socialism also demanded a principled, critical attack from revolutionary Marxists.
3. Max Shachtman -- head of the fraternally related ISL -- appeared before the radical public in NYC at the recent forum on regroupment and refused to mention a single criticism of the pro-imperialist policies of the SP-SDF. This act was defended by the majority of the YSL N.C.
4. The New York YSL Executive committee recently passed a motion to begin sales of the Call on a regular basis on the literature table of the YSL during all our functions. We note that the policies of the Call are contrary to those of the YSL and are precisely the politics which we find it necessary to break many of our contacts away from.
5. The New York YSL executive committee and Labor Action are supporting the meeting sponsored by the SP-SDF and LID at which Anna Kethly spoke. We further note that according to the December Call Miss Kethly, upon being recognized by the UN as a delegate from Hungary, will "call for a United Nations Emergency Force to be dispatched to Hungary." We consider such a force to be the arm of American imperialism and dedicate

ourselves to protect the Hungarian revolution from both Stalinist counter-revolution and American imperialism,

6. We observe that because of the general orientation towards unity with the SP on the basis of the SP right wing's politics and because of the lack of any effort by the leadership, our membership is not being educated about the nature of Social Democracy. This lack of revolutionary Marxist education is so deplorably evident that a member of the NAC who supports unity recently remarked that an invasion from the right could sweep away many of our members and that some members are proposing entrance into the SP now as individuals.

Taking into account the above trend which when looked at in its entirety spells out support for the defenders of American imperialism within the socialist movement, we wish to make known our basic disagreement with the approach of these bodies and organs of our movement. We call for a reversal of this right wing opportunist course. This entire course is in violation of the fundamental principles upon which our movement was created -- revolutionary socialist opposition to capitalism and Stalinism.

We of the NEC remind the comrades that opposition to capitalism and its agents is no whit less important than opposition to Stalinism and its agents. We call for a return to this basic conception. We call for a struggle to maintain the YSL as a revolutionary Marxist youth organization.

-- Submitted by: Shane Mage and Tim Wohlforth

Let's Win Over the SP Left Wing!

The foundation of the YSL -- just a few short years ago -- marked an important event, the winning over of a section of the SP, the YPSL, to the revolutionary struggle. These fine YPSL comrades came to the conclusion through their own struggle for revolutionary socialism within the SP that they could no longer remain within the bounds of the SP; that they must unite with the youth of the ISL in order to build a viable revolutionary youth movement in this country.

Since this time -- considering the tremendous pressures of the times -- we have together progressed fairly well. We have prevented the further decline of the revolutionary youth forces and have been able to recruit a number of youth to our banner. We can face the future with reasonable assurance that with correct policies and with an aggressive leadership we can make a real impression among the American youth. Thus this unity which brought out of the SP almost all of the youth was a progressive step.

Today we are faced with a somewhat different situation. Again the left wing of the SP is restless. The unity with the SDF -- even though the leadership in the ISL and YSL could find nothing in it to criticize and have refrained from doing so -- evoked the serious resistance among the better elements in the SP. With McReynolds as their chief spokesman they characterized this unity for what it was -- a move to the right -- a unity on the basis of State Department policies which they as socialists rejected. Talk of splitting became so common that McReynolds in his letter to the members in January had to devote considerable space to talking the left wing into accepting the unity. Some individuals -- despite the counsel of the ISL and YSL -- have already left.

Faced with this very hopeful situation -- hopeful, that is, to revolutionists -- the ISL and YSL leadership has reversed our past stand, a stand which led to the development of the very youth movement we all belong to. They refused to call upon the left wing to leave the SP and come and join with us in building an organization based on opposition to both Stalinism and capitalism.

The stand of the ISL is clearly seen in the section of McReynolds' letter recently made public. It did its best to prevent such a split. Shachtman in his letter in response to Myra Weiss made it clear that he stands by his position in opposition to winning over the left wingers to our banner. This by far is the most significant fact in the whole exchange of letters.

Whether it was primarily because of Shachtman's urgings or whether -- which is just as probable -- McReynolds used Shachtman as a cover for a retreat he had already planned is unimportant. The fact remains that McReynolds entered the unity convention with the knowledge that the left wing could prevent unity with the SDF if it put up a fight at the convention, and refused to put up any fight at all. This position Shachtman condones. I characterize Shachtman's position as support of capitulation of the left wing at the unity convention. I challenge Shachtman to call me a liar -- barefaced or otherwise.

As far as the YSL is concerned it must be stated that the NEC, with full knowledge of what Shachtman has done, not only refused to condemn him but followed in his footsteps. The following section of Comrade Shane's document was voted on separately on the NEC: "We call on all left-wingers in the SP who refuse to go along with State Dept. Socialism to leave the SDF-SP and join a genuine socialist organization, the YSL." A vote for this section means a continuation of our traditional line of winning over the left wing of the SP to our politics. A vote against represents a break with this tradition and in my opinion another example of capitulation to the social democracy. Shane and I were the only NEC members to vote for the section.

What, comrades, could be a clearer case of capitulation to another tendency than refusal to recruit its members? The comrades of the "majority" (in view of the recent referendum the quotation marks are definitely in order) deny the accusation of capitulation to the social democracy. By this one example -- and there are many more -- we prove our accusation to the hilt.

In this respect it is interesting to note that the unity orientation was first introduced as a tactic to win over this very left wing. Now we see it is being used to do precisely the opposite --- to excuse a tactic of keeping them in the SP. The only members of the NEC who now stand for winning over the left wing of the SP are Comrade Shane and myself. Let's get that clear here and now. If anyone wishes to correct this statement let them go ahead. Nothing could make me happier than to learn that other NEC comrades share our determination to continue building our movement.

-- Tim Wohlforth.

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PORTRAIT OF THE CENTRIST
(Continued from page 1)

Norman Thomas is compared to proletarian revolution! Such is the revealingly abysmal political level of the graduates of Shachtman University. A more apt parallel to the present situation is found in the drift of the Russian party after the death of Lenin. There, too, the centrists went along unthinkingly, eyes fixed on the organization, and not on the complete reversal of political direction of the organization. Today, Shachtman and the Martin clique know quite well where they are going. Do the centrists? Despite the reformists' familiar talk of a "different" period today, what is really striking is the starkly classical nature of the current political patterns, especially in regard to reformism and centrism. Five years from now, some of our centrist elements, safe in the arms of the SP-SDF, will wake up and say, "were we once revolutionaries? Who will tell them?"

Editorial: The Meaning of the Electoral Referendum

After a full and lengthy discussion among our ranks, the electoral referendum was finally concluded and the results announced -- two and one half months after the election. By a vote of 44 to 34 (This includes seven votes which came in after the deadline and were, therefore, not counted in the official tally, which was 37 to 34.) the membership overturned the position adopted by the NEC in September and implemented by the organization in the meantime.

This decision of the membership is of great importance no matter how much the present leadership of the YSL may wish to ignore it. This vote represents the feelings of the membership on a matter important enough to produce two fat issues of the YSR. On this one issue at least the feelings of the membership ran in a contrary direction to those of the leadership. This vote represents a vote of no confidence in the present leadership of the YSL on an important political question. This is a fact which the leadership is at present doing its best to hide.

Exactly what is the political significance of this vote? We do not claim that it means that the majority of the YSL membership stands with us on the unity question. We recognize that a significant number of those who voted with us on the electoral question did so on the basis of Comrade Fleischman's or Arlon's position.

However, this does not mean that the vote was insignificant. Those who voted with us on this voted against any specific endorsement of the S.P.! They wished in no way to appear before the public as spokesmen for the SP alone in the election. This reticence of the membership to endorse in any way the politics of the SP must be considered in light of the nature of the current moves toward unity with the SP. The NAC can no longer take a public position in support of the SP and the SP's politics and feel that the membership stands behind them.

Secondly those who voted with us on the electoral question specifically voted for the inclusion of the SWP and SLP in an electoral endorsement. This means that no matter how they may characterize the SWP they do not feel that such a characterization puts the SWP beyond the pale of a general endorsement. Thus they reject the extreme Stalinophobia of the leadership towards the SWP.

Thirdly, by voting with us on the electoral question, the majority of the membership endorsed the notion of support to all socialist candidates who run against the capitalist candidates. This general principle is now the policy of the YSL. It must be carried out by the leadership in the coming elections and until such time as the membership at a convention reverses this decision.

Those members of the YSL who voted with us on the electoral question still have differences with us on the unity question. We ask you to begin to think through the logic of the position you are in.

By voting with us you expressed your true socialist feelings and revulsion at the idea of appearing before the radical public as the spokesman for the SP and its pro-imperialist politics. We suggest that this humiliation will be but a trifle compared to what is in store for you once you join the SP-SDF. You will find yourselves selling Calls, sponsoring Friedman at meetings, and in all probability participating in campaigns -- not for SP candidates, bad as that may be, but for capitalist candidates since part of the recent SP-SDF Memorandum which is now the basis of the organization you wish to join is devoted to paving the way for just such a development.

It is time for you to join with us in opposition to this perfidious unity and devote your energies to building the revolutionary movement and in working for a real sound unity -- a unity towards the left!

ATTENTION SONNY:

ON YOUR "LEFTWARD MOVING" NEW LEADER

The overall impression conveyed by the book is that of an organization dedicated to doing its difficult jobs as well, and as fairly as possible. Often in the past it has needed to deal with the urgent matters without the benefit of previous experience as a guide and, under such circumstances, some fluffs were unavoidable. The remarkable thing is how few of them there have been. Mr. Whitehead cites chapter and verse to show that the FBI, on a daily basis, is as interested in clearing innocent people as in convicting the guilty. It has placed emphasis on considerations of civil liberties and rights, and all agents are taught that good intent does not absolve any law enforcement officer from harm wrongfully done. In short, the glib charge of "Gertopo" which has been flung at the FBI from time to time finds no support in this book, which the reviewer accepts as a responsible rendition of the actual record.

--A review of "The FBI Story" by Julien Steinberg in the Jaanuary 21, 1957 issue.

~~This~~ If the New Leader is moving to the left then it hasn't got as far as Eisenhower not to mention the Reporter or New Republic.

UNITE FOR UNITY

"Unity is a magnificent thing but
not on a rotted foundation."

- Leon Trotsky

Introduction.

On Linking the Boots of the Social Democracy.

The question of unity cannot be raised in the abstract for of course everyone is in favor of unity as a "principle". What we must discuss is the political content of any proposed ~~unity~~ unity. The political content of the proposed unity between the ~~YSL~~ ISL, YSL and SP has now become obvious.

The title for this section was suggested to me by the remarks of one of our working class comrades in the Newark ISL who used a similar, but more frank expression to describe the ISL's activity. As a description of the recent activity of the YSL it is also not far from the mark.

By a number of concrete steps the YSL leadership has illustrated graphically the political nature of the decision of the September Plenum to work toward unity with the SP. The unrepresentativeness of the plenum, with no West Coast representation, plus the lack of any understanding or discussion of the question in the movement, has not prevented the right wing from carrying out a number of concrete political acts, all of which are of the same character - that of putting the YSL forward to the political public as a spokesman for the social democracy. The following are a few examples ~~of~~ to illustrate this.

1. I wish ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ all the comrades would study Hal Draper's "kid glove" treatment of Dave McReynolds' absolutely fantastic remarks in a letter to LA about his "comrades" of the French SP who are slaughtering the Algerian people. When this was brought up by Shane and myself in the course of the polemic on the electoral question not one spokesman for the "majority" said a word against this treatment. In fact in private conversations they made clear their approval of this approach. By the way I hear from some YSL eyewitnesses to the SP convention, including ones friendly to the SP, that Draper's report of the convention amounted to a veritable whitewash.

2. The electoral campaign itself was the most important step of this nature. It must be completely understood that the real motivation on the part of the NAC majority for supporting the SP was solely the unity question. Virtually every comrade of the majority on the committee was toying with the idea of Abstention in the election until they learned of the unity perspective.

Throughout the country and especially in New York we appeared before the radical public as the chief spokesman for Hoopes and Friedman. We distributed literature supporting them on the leading campuses and were in effect ersatz social democrats in the elections. The New York Executive Committee even volunteered to distribute SP literature with the address of the SP on it to further woo our "comrades of the State Department." This was a tremendous step in the direction of becoming not only the "tail of the Second International" as Shane has previously charged, but becoming the chief spokesman of this traitorous political formation (a "left" spokesman to be sure).

In this respect it is interesting to note the ~~the~~ refusal of the ISL to offer even critical support of the SP. For real critical support includes criticism of the SP's politics in ones statements. As Comrade Arlon so correctly points out in the latest YSR, this was not forthcoming and even the SP leftwingers were disappointed by the ISL's stand. For it is clear that the ISL is oriented not toward wooing the SP's left wing but rather its right wing. I refer interested comrades to the last two YSR's for a thorough discussion of the electoral issue.

3. The New York Exec - again in the vanguard of the retreat - has decided to start selling bundles of the Socialist Call, that great "American" magazine which printed the resolution of the SFIO (French SP) on Algeria without comment and which at present is supporting American imperialism in Egypt under the guise - especially designed for social democrats - of internationalization of the Suez Canal. This "socialist" magazine will be sold at all YSL meetings on an equal basis with Labor Action. Thus the YSL puts on an equal footing the ideas which it supposedly fights against with all its might with the ideas it claims to support - also, I assume with all its might. Comrades of the NEC, I beg that at least you censure the N.Y. Unit for this one act. That is the least that a self-respecting socialist can do.

4. The most recent gesture of solidarity with the traitors of socialism is undoubtedly the most horrendous. Again our right-wing stronghold, the N.Y. Exec, takes the lead. This instance involves the meeting being sponsored by the SP, SDF and LID at which Anna Kethly will speak. The N.Y. Exec has decided to give its full support

to this meeting and begin a campaign on campus with its own leaflets to bring people down to the meeting. Furthermore, it has decided not to distribute LA's as this might be interpreted as a hostile act by our "Friends".

Here we are supporting a meeting whose political content we all should know well. Any in doubt of this should read the New Leader's special supplement on labor in the Soviet Union and those nasty Bolsheviks. The main effect of this meeting is obviously to use the Hungarian revolution to bolster Washington's foreign policy. The attempt of the State Department to utilize the Hungarian revolution must be resisted by all genuine socialists. Our support of this meeting is a tremendous blow to just such an important political task. Not only are we supporting the social democratic attempt to utilize the Hungarian revolution for the purposes of American imperialism, but we are not even given the fundamental rights of any member of a "united front" - the right to have our own speaker at the meeting. Furthermore, we refuse to express our views in the form of an LA distribution. Support the Hungarian workers, yes, but not with the weapons of American imperialism!

5. Every effort is being made in New York, Chicago, and elsewhere to present SP speakers at our forums, our camps and so forth. All such presentations are arranged purposely to exclude any real political debate between the two tendencies. They are intended to impress upon our petty bourgeois friends that we too are "respectable." Thus we see that the present move toward unity is not based on the desire for a genuine discussion of differences with the aim of arriving at some sound political agreement. No debates are planned - only "friendly" boot-licking sessions to again use the expression of our Newark comrade.

The discussion on the NAC involving the question of whether to print a statement in Challenge supporting the SP was decided in the negative in order to prevent any real discussion of the SP in our press. Martin went so far as to propose that if the minority was allowed to send letters to Challenge that these letters ~~xxx~~ must be censored by this very same NAC - to make certain they did not offend the SP. And these comrades speak of nothing but "democracy". Sometimes I think that Trotsky's famous phrase about how when anyone speaks of morality he reaches for his wallet, could be changed to fit those who speak of nothing but democracy!

Thus, comrades, we see concretely the political consequences of this orientation. And all this has happened in just a few months. In a few months we have retreated so far from our revolutionary principles, all for the love of a --- corpse. Those comrades who favor unity but who wish to remain revolutionaries: the least you must do is openly

attack Comrades Martin and Harrington for the methods they are ~~xx~~ using to implement unity. At least censure the N.Y. Exec for selling Calls and supporting the Kethly rally.

If our talented comrades in the leadership have been able to accomplish so much in such a short time God knows what our movement will look like in a year or two. As for gratitude, the SP has refused to thank the ISL and YSL for their support of the Socialist candidates. Oh well, comrades, you certainly have tried, but you are a long way from the marriage ceremony, not to mention the nuptial bed.

Corpse Joins Hands with Corpse

As it becomes more and more difficult to justify the present unity move to the YSL membership which still has genuine revolutionary aspirations the supporters of unity have been spreading the most fantastic illusions about the SP. In the forefront of this effort is of course Comrade Harrington who as far as I know hardly even pretends to be a revolutionary socialist. That this particular comrade, who among other things is a pacifist, believes in God and holds a menshevik position on the Russian revolution - things which make Burnham at the time of the split a veritable Lenin by comparison - should be writing most of the "majority" documents is of course not surprising, viewing the nature of the "majority's" politics.

This comrade has had enough gall to publicly characterize the SP as a "centrist organization". A centrist organization is one which uses revolutionary terminology as a cover for reformist politics. Now admittedly the SP needs a cover, but this is one they will never voluntarily adopt!

I will characterize the SP as the agent (in the political sense of course) of the State Department within the socialist movement. This is no idle charge and I can prove it to the hilt,

However, the following will have to suffice. I will not delve into the SP's rather disreputable past. I will rely solely on its current merger with the SDF, approved by its membership by an overwhelming 2 to 1 majority, according to Labor Action

As to the political nature of this merger, I will rely solely upon the statements of the SP's own left wingers. McReynolds and friends, while far from revolutionaries, deserve commendation for at least remaining socialists, for this is what was at stake in the merger.

As we understand from the last convention, the present SP-SDF unity is based on what will probably go down in history as the world's worst political document, "SP-SDF Memorandum of Understanding." One SP left-winger stated that she could not see how anyone could go along with this memorandum, not even the Democrats. It includes, we understand, a burning indictment of Stalinist imperialism but excludes a single mention, even, of American imperialism. As a left wing SP leader put it, you can look for one real criticism of capitalism and you will not find it.

What is the SDF after? This same leader states that the SDF wants the SP to stop running candidates so they can support Stevenson. They want according to this comrade, the SP to support the arms race and keep

quiet about the danger to civil liberties. He feels categorically that this is not a socialist unity. Another comrade of the left wing commented that one point in the document makes it the privilege of party members that one point in the document makes it the privilege of party members to support the two capitalist parties. In this respect it is interesting to note that Comrade Zeidler supported three Democrats in Wisconsin including the gubernatorial candidate and we have heard of no move in the SP to censure him. Thomas, of course, voted for Stevenson.

This document, we learn from the convention, considers the Marshall Plan to be an example of the American Spirit at its best. These, comrades, are the words of State Department socialists and this memorandum is now the basis of the SP's politics. A leader of the SP left wing characterizes the SP-SDF unity as full support of the worst, most shameful policies of the State Department and John Foster Dulles.

That the SDF is a corpse no one will deny. At present their chief problem seems to be to dig up 50 members to fill the allotted number of delegates' positions at the unity convention. The SP - as is witnessed by its inability, with all its so-called "tradition" which so impresses our right wing, to get even 2,000 votes in the last election - is fast dying. The SDF is dead and the SP is dying; let us leave it that way!

However, the SDF as sort of a last gasp is joining with the SP to insure the SP's immediate departure from political life. The SP has gratuitously given this corpse one-half the delegates at the merged convention as well as one half of the new NEC. This makes the specific weight of the SDF in the leadership far out of proportion to their numerical strength.

Furthermore, according to SP left-wingers, this merger rules the ISL-YSL but in the eyes of the left wingers even the Dund because the SDF would not stand for it.

In any event I feel I have made my point, as well as I could make it under the circumstances. The SP has moved to the right (many of us doubted that it could still go further but we stand corrected). It is indisputably the agent of the American State Department and, Comrades, we are contaminating ourselves in the eyes of every decent Socialist - including, I feel, many still in the SP, by our capitulatory attitude toward this putrid corpse.

Shachtman's Nondescript Brew

The present move of the ISL and YSL towards unity with the SP has, as far as I can discover, no precedent in the last 50 years of socialist history. I have searched diligently with the hope of discovering such ~~history~~ a precedent. I thought that at least the most opportunist of opportunist, the most unprincipled party of them all - the Stalinists, in their popular front period, would have called for unity without mentioning the political basis for unity. But no. Even they never stopped to this, as they called for unity on the basis of the program of the Third International - a discredited program but at least a program.

It is probably a sign of the backwardness of this country and its
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influence on radical politics that one has to go back to the days of Marx and Engels for examples of such opportunism.

The comrades of the "majority" state in the document on the electoral question: "We recognize that between the ISL, the SP and the YSL there exists enough in common to warrant and urge such unification." I have repeatedly asked these comrades just what is this that we have in common with these disreputable state department socialists? Comrades, I beg of you to have enough decency to answer me on this. To refuse to answer this question is absolute proof of the opportunistic nature of the right wing's politics. It is putting the tactic before the political principle. To answer in the positive is in my opinion proof of the social democratic nature of our current politics. I for one see no political basis for unity, and frankly view this unity move as capitulation to the social democracy. I ask every single comrade to think about this for a moment for it is the essence of the matter. As Trotsky put it: "What decides the issue is not unity in itself but its actual political content." In insisting that program is basic and programmatic agreement is necessary for any sound unity I venture to say I have on my side every one of the great Marxists, for this principle is fundamental to Marxism. The comrades of the "majority" have chosen an opportunist road, not a Marxist road. I want it to be understood that I do not insist on complete programmatic purity, for I agree with the comrades of the "majority" that one must be willing at times to compromise one's complete program in order to move a leftward moving tendency further to the left. But I insist that we must at least discuss the program. An excellent example of the correct approach to unity is the unity which formed the YSL - a unity based on principled programmatic agreement - the antithesis of the right wing's present move.

The unity was markedly progressive and announced the definite breaking away from the social democracy of a section of the SP. It now seems that the majority is attempting to undo what has been accomplished by taking these very same people back where they came from not to mention the rest of the movement.

The comrades of the YSL have stated quite categorically that they are in favor of complete capitulation to the present leadership of the SP (which now includes the SDF) and are for unity on the basis of the politics of the State Department. (As could be expected Martin has followed along and the ISL's position is included in toto in the "Majority" document on unity.) The ISL says "Our attitude in favor of unity is not conditioned on any change in the program or leadership of the SP...we are for uniting ~~the YSL~~ with the SP as a whole as it is now...We are for...a lasting and stable coexistence of merged forces."

Comrades, are you willing to accept as the basis for unity the infamous SP*SDF Memorandum? This is now the politics of the SP.

I have searched comrade Martin's document for any mention of even differences between the YSL and the SP. In all fairness I must admit I found one such reference. In paragraph 20 we are told "There are a series of 'historical' issues which divide the traditions of the SP, YSL and the ISL." Comrades, is this what divides the YSL majority from the SP - solely historical issues, such as differences of

opinion on the Russian Revolution? Are the comrades of the YSL "majority" then in favor of full support to the American State Department for this is the SP's current politics! If this is the case there is no doubt but that these comrades belong in the SP and that they call themselves revolutionists due to some misunderstanding which I will be glad to clear up for them. But those of us who are in 100% opposition to the State Department and its defenders; who are for the active struggle against our own ruling class will not follow you and can only say - good riddance. Martin goes on to say "what is crucial is that the organization be in agreement on the political questions behind the historical fact, that we stand for civil liberties for all, for an extension and deepening of democracy." this is all very fine and quite moving to be sure - but what comrades is Martin talking about? For if Martin is really serious about what he is talking about he is for the exclusion of the SP and the SDF from his great "Debsian" movement. Is the SP's support of American imperialism a question of "Extension and deepening of democracy?" Or comrades do you agree with me that it is quite the opposite? Comrades on what concrete political question - whether it hides behind historical fact or not - are we in agreement with the SP or for that matter the SDF? On Korea? On the American State Department? On NATO? On Guatamala? How about imperialism in the Middle East? The SDF by the way is an enemy of civil liberties and let us not kid ourselves on that score. So comrades if we are totake Martin seriously - instead of uncritically being impressed by his liberalistic jargon - we are put in the impossible position of excluding the SP and SDF from the party we want to form with them. Let's stop kidding ourselves. Martin is not for building a party dedicated to the "extension and deepening of democracy" - he is of building a party for the "extension and deepening of American Imperialism" for this is the only kind of party he can build with the state department socialists - and I for one want no part of it.

Martin a little furthur along in this amazing document suggests that nothing separates us from the SP than did the YPSL's from the SYL. This is a slander against Harrington, Denitch et al and an attempt to distort the truth to make it palatable to the comrades. Quite frankly comrade Martin - let's stop pulling the wool over the eyes of the membership. Tell the truth about the real nature of the proposed unity and if you won't at least let me speak to them frankly.

Comrades I have documented to the best of my ability the nature of the SP and of its work with the SDF

But does Martin even mention this document? You will not find one word on this and for this reason alone his document must be rejected. The majority is not being honest; they are refusing to discuss the nature of the SP and are attempting to limit my ability to do so.

Many of the right wing comrades have spoken of the necessity to unite with these people in order to prepare for our future functioning with them in a labor party. Martin's document speaks of "a broad, inclusive socialist tendency which will aim at winning the labor party to socialism in a broad general sense." Now, comrades, when has the issue ever been to win anybody or any movement to socialism in the "broad, general sense." Is not the real meaning of

socialism spelled out in the particular political struggle? Remember who was in the Right wing of SDA-SLID, the social democrats. And I venture to say that is where they will be in the labor party. We will find far more support for a labor party left wing from liberal workers than from "socialists" of their ilk. They are our enemies at present and they they will remain our enemies inside a labore party. Let us get that straight once and for all.

Comrades, just what is our right wing after? It is obvious from both their remarks and their actions that they are opposed even to discussing the tremendous differences that separate revolutionaries from the SP until after the marriage, so to speak - or perhaps not even then. Obviously this particualr approach to marriage has much to do with the present high divorce rate in this country and the effect will undoubtedly be the same in the political field.

Engels in a letter to Bebel describes exactly what the right wing is up to. "These unity fanatics are either the people of limited intelligence who want to stir everything up together into one non-descript brew, which, the moment it is left to settle, throws up the differences again in much more acute opposition because they are now all in one pot - or else they are people who consciously or or unconsciously want to adulterate our movement." I venture to say that the supporters of unity include both types in their ranks. As Engels points out, the opportunistic unity which Shachtman and the YSL right wing favor will lead inevitably to a furthur rash of splits which instead of furthuring genuine unity in the radical movement will actually set us back maybe for a considerable period of time. Unity is a tremendously serious business and genuine unity based on programmatic agreement takes a long time to forge. To attempt to take shortcuts and follow an opportunistic line can do tremendous harm to the radical movement.

We understand that the ISL wants to add a little spice to the brew in the form of stalinoids who may still hold Russia to be a social-ist~~st~~ state. Needless to say this is one point they will have trouble convincing their social democratic friends of, for the SP refuses to stand on the same platform with such people even to debate them.

But more important, the best of the stalinists have spent too many years struggling against the State Department and witch hunt to wish now to become part of this ugly brew. It is unfortunate that we should be asking them to give up the one decent political attribute they have.

I do not wish by all this to impugn in any way the honesty of the comrades of the ISL and YSL who hold this mostaken opportunistic line. This of course makes the policy no less mistaken, Engels' comments in the following excerpt from a letter to Kautsky should cause some of the comrades to think:

"This forgetfulness of the main standpoints in the momentary interests of the day, this struggling and striving for the success of the moment without consideration for the later consequences, this ~~xx~~ sacrifice of the future of the movement for the present may be 'honestly' meant, but it is and remains opportunism, and 'honest' opportunism is perhaps the most dangerous of all,"

Oehlerism and I

Some of the comrades of the right wing in search of some historical analogy to justify their position on unity have called ~~me~~ Comrade Shane and myself "Oehlerites". It is interesting to note ~~that~~ that probably the only comrades in the movement who historically condemn the "French Turn" of entrance into the SP in the Thirties are precisely some of these very same right wing comrades.

I for one defend the famous French Turn and consider Oehler's position to have been sectarian. I further feel that a close study of this historical analogy will prove something quite different than Harrington and Martin wish. The Trotskyist movement adopted a position of entrance into the SP on the basis of the following facts: In the first place there occurred in the Thirties a significant influx of revolutionary workers and students into the left wing of the SP. This left group had no conscious Marxist leadership and was under great pressure from the CP to join it. Furthermore the pressure from the left grew so intense in the SP that the right wing split off, forming the infamous SDF. At this time the Trotskyists negotiated for entrance into the SP in order to bring about a regroupment of revolutionary forces and prevent the CP from taking over this left wing.

The situation in the present period ~~is~~ is precisely the ~~opposite~~ opposite. The ~~the~~ SP, far from moving to the left, has actually taken a tremendous step to the right and has joined hands with this very same SDF. History repeats itself but this time in reverse. There has been no such influx of revolutionary workers and students into the SP which is today little else but a corpse. Under such a ~~set~~ set of circumstances the present move toward unity with the SP cannot be explained away as a stage of revolutionary ~~group~~ regroupment, in the struggle to build a revolutionary movement. Interestingly enough the ISL makes no attempt to justify its move in these terms. It states quite categorically that it is for a lasting coexistence of the merged forces, while Trotskyists have always held that there cannot be any lasting coexistence of supporters of American imperialism and supporters of world revolution. Further evidence of the gulf between the present actions of the ISL and YSL and the ~~the~~ action of the Trotskyists in the Thirties is illustrated by the fact that Shachtman regrets that he even left the SP!

Comrades, it is worth thinking over the terms of the ISL statement. The references to lasting and stable coexistence are extremely interesting. I assure you the only way in which we could stay for any length of time in the SP would be by complete capitulation to the leadership, just as the only way Shachtman could have remained in the SP in the Thirties would have been by a similar capitulation.

If anyone is in doubt on this score let him mull over our actions in the SDA. Here we did everything possible to prevent the inevitable split. We refused to prepare the left wingers for the coming split and we did our best to talk them into submitting to the ADA and this did much to cut off their own political development. There is no doubt that we would act in the same way in the SP. No matter how obnoxious was the leadership, no matter what atrocities it committed, no matter what limitations it placed upon

our democratic rights, we would capitulate. The net effect would be to strengthen the social democracy and prevent the breaking of any section of radicals from it. Such a policy is the diametrical opposite of the revolutionary policy of the Trotskyists in the thirties.

Thus you see that entrance into another party is not a matter to be taken lightly. One cannot take the attitude, "Well, let's try it and if it doesn't work what have we lost?" In the first place such an entrance into the SP would mean a curtailment of our ability to express our views to the outside world. Under certain circumstances it might be worth it to accept such a curtailment in order to gain access to the membership. But this is certainly not the case now.

For all who doubt this fact let them ponder over the self-imposed curtailment the YSL has already undergone because of its unity orientation. We are already speaking as if we were part of the SP.

In the second place entrance into the SP should not be taken lightly, for a unity which has no sound political basis will be soon torn asunder, engendering extreme bitter feelings and setting back the whole development of the radical movement many years.

Now as I have previously pointed out the most likely outcome is that the YSL and ISL once in the SP will capitulate. But if they do succeed in getting others into foolhardy venture or in building a somewhat bigger movement it will inevitably be torn asunder by internal dissension. The days of the broad "Debsian" movement are past. The Russian revolution plus the ~~xxx~~ traitorous actions of the social democracy have marked the close of that particular period and some of our comrades are not living in this century with their talk of reviving this particular type of movement. But in reality it is of little concern and is but a cover for their own ~~xxxx~~ ~~xx~~ desires of "respectability." To me, if one is a revolutionist one does not expect "appreciation" from the ruling class and their petty bourgeois allies in the labor movement and elsewhere, but not so with Martin and Harrington, it seems.

Unity Towards the Left

To raise the question of Unity in this period is quite correct. It is the way in which it has been raised that is mistaken. We are now entering into a period of turmoil in the radical movement. This has been largely brought on by the 20th Party Congress and the recent Eastern European events. Of course there are general broad tendencies to the left in this country, with the militant action of the Negro people and the growth of militancy in the working class. But so far these factors are merely protents of the future, as no fresh body of workers has entered the radical movement.

Quite the contrary is actually going on. A number of concrete ~~ca~~ cases illustrate that we are still in a period of deadening prosperity and the atmosphere of the witch hunt is still with us. As I have already observed the SP has moved to the right by its merger with the SDF. Secondly it is obvious from my remarks that I feel the ISL and YSL are also moving to the right - a movement which I feel ~~the ISL and YSL are~~ can be arrested and reversed if the comrades will seriously think through the questions that have been raised in the movement.

Thirdly, a section of the CP under the leadership of Gates - while taking a Titoist line on the question of the Hungarian revolution - seems to be moving in a social democratic direction.

However there still remain tremendous opportunities in the present situation for building a revolutionary movement. We must constantly keep in mind that our task is to build such a revolutionary movement and that we must build it today so that when we enter a labor party, which I do not feel is too far off, the revolutionary wing will be as strong as possible vis a vis the reformist wing. It is not our task to build the reformist wing in the coming labor party, as this will remain our major competitor for the allegiance of the working class. This is fundamental and I have a feeling that at least some of the comrades of the right wing are interested in building the reformist wing. If this is so - and only such a perspective is consistent with the present politics of the right wing - they should say so in plain English, for on this a tremendous gulf separates revolutionaries from reformists.

At the present time I do not feel that there will be any major regroupment, but many individuals and even small groups of individuals can be won over to revolutionary socialism. This is particularly true when we look at the youth field. We even stand a good chance to win over many of the left wingers in the SP to whom we hope the merger with the SDF is final proof of the impossibility of working inside the SP. Our present tactics can only serve to keep them in the SP and postpone, perhaps indefinitely, their break with the social democracy.

In this context I again refer the comrades to the remarks of Comrade Arlon. The ISL and YSL are now carrying out a program in opposition to the breaking away from the social democracy of the left wing of the SP. They are doing everything in their power to prevent such an occurrence and by so doing they are doing their best to prevent any leftward regroupment in this country. These comrades are in fact the enemies of any revolutionary realignment. They are interested only in capitulation to the social democracy!

The YSL as the only socialist youth movement has an excellent opportunity to win over hundreds of youth who have formerly looked to the CP. But in order to do so we must repudiate our present capitulatory line toward the SP. These youth have not struggled against American imperialism and capitalism for so long to simply give this all up and join with the supporters of the witchhunt and American imperialism. These youth must be approached from the left and not from the right.

Comrades, we should declare openly that we are willing to join in united front actions on specific issues with everybody including the SP, the SWP, and the CP. Where we can get agreement with only one or two groups we should go ahead. Where we can come to agreement with others we should also operate. The united front slogan must be pushed to its utmost. It is through joint work that we can reach and convince other radical youth.

This is something concrete that we must begin right away. I assure you it is far more fruitful than unity with a corpse.

Furthermore we must carry on extensive discussions with stalinist youth; SP youth and the youth of the SWP. We must struggle for programmatic clarity and search for a political basis for unity.

Thirdly we must announce to the radical world that we are for unity - for unity towards the left - and that we wish to discuss with all the basis for such a unity. We on our part feel such a unity must be based on 100% support of the Hungarian and Polish revolutions and opposition to the Stalinist bureaucracy; 100% support of the colonial revolution; and 100% opposition to our own capitalist class and its political representatives the Democrats and the Republicans.

We do not demand complete agreement and we exclude nobody, including the CP, the SP, and the SWP from the discussions. But we feel that without sound agreement on the above basic positions no healthy movement can be built.

Such a program can have a tremendous effect on moving individuals and groups to the left. We will stand before the radical public as serious principled socialists who are willing to discuss and work with anybody but who refuse to bow to the momentous pressures of our times which are pushing so many to the right.

Comrades, at such a time as this, when the future of the revolutionary socialism in the U.S. and the world looks so bright, when the effort of every individual is important, let us follow a revolutionary path. We know the reformist one to be a blind alley.

UNITY YES! -- BUT UNITY TOWARDS THE LEFT!

Lessons of the Recent NEC Meeting

By Shane Mage

Two central political questions were discussed at the NEC meeting last January 26 and 27 -- 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.

1. The Question of Socialist Unity

The proposal that the YSL unite with the then Socialist Party was first raised at the NEC 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 NEC 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 NAC 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 quite turn out to be the case -- the membership, by referendum vote, endorsed the policy we had advocated, and rejected that of the NAC majority.

To understand the full import of the discussion of unity with the SP-SDF 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 SDF.

We of the minority knew, both from our general evaluation of the political position and evolution of the YSL 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 raiding 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 Friedman (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 YSL. 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 practise 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 NAC 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 Stalinists while 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 unfolded 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 practise, the YSL 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 NEC 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 YSL majority now is 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 YSL! 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...

significant, and of no importance at all in their orientation toward the SP-SDF. What has happened? When the merger of the SP and 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 ~~XXX~~ SP-SDF, but ought to belong to a real socialist organization, the YSL. One would expect the leadership ~~XX~~ of the YSL 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 in the SP-SDF! No wonder the majority expressed no interest no interest in winning over the SP "Left"-- it has been too successful in convincing 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 YSL 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 YSL 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 ~~xxx~~ including the ISL in 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 NEC 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 fore-runners 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-YSL leadership to enter the SP-SDF on the basis of the right wing's program?), and that the State-Dept. "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 NEC majority position in favor of unity with the SP-SDF 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 NAC 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 NEC majority means "Right-wing social-democratic, since it uses that term to describe the present pro-capitalist, pro-imperialist program of the SP-SDF). 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-SDF 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 Reuther 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 stage 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 charac-

ter 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 NAJ, 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 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 and George. 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 principled 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 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.

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Part II of this report on the NEC plenum of Jan. 26-27, dealing with the discussion of our attitude toward the Stalinist movement in America, will appear in the next issue of this bulletin.

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