

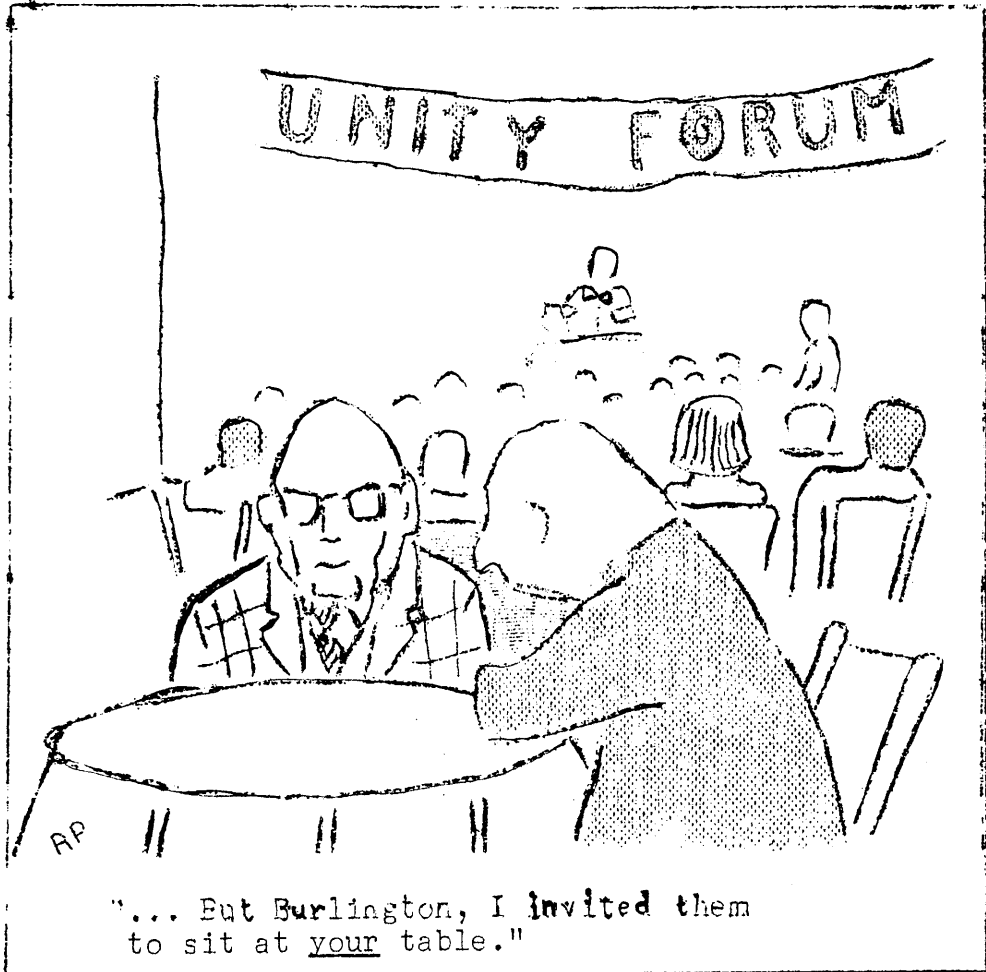
# LEFT WING BULLETIN

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EDITORIALS

I. AN APPEAL FOR UNITY IN OUR RANKS

The last issue of the Young Socialist Review (Vol. 4, No. 1) contained, as could be expected, a number of attacks on the left wing of the YSL. What was frightening about the issue was not that the left wing was being attacked but the way in which it was being attacked and the attitude towards the left wing expressed implicitly or explicitly in most of the articles.

Most of the articles were designed to prove that the Left-Wing Caucus was disloyal, not a part of the "legitimate" stream of the YSL, a "cannonite caucus", etc. More important than the fact that these charges happen to be false and are slanderous is the motivation behind them. This motivation was expressed by Bogdan Denitch who explicitly asks us to leave the YSL because he is "for people joining whatever organization they are closest to" (YSR, Vol. 4, No. 1, page 57) and we, according to Denitch, are closest to the SWP.

There are other ominous signs of a certain mood -- if not a conscious tactic -- that is developing in the ranks of the right wing. On the NAC Comrade Harrington spoke of the necessity of really "enforcing the constitution" following the convention. Exactly what he means by this is unclear. But if his past actions are anything to judge by, he may be intending to straitjacket the left wing with a "super-leninist" approach to the question of internal democracy in the YSL.

We of the Left Wing all sincerely hope that these above signs do not mean that the right wing is preparing to split the organization. We stand unalterably

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The LEFT-WING BULLETIN is published under the following section of the YSL 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."

All signed material in this and all subsequent issues of the LEFT-WING BULLETIN represents the views of the individual author or authors and not necessarily the views of the Left-Wing Caucus as a whole. Statements or resolutions that "officially" represent the views of the Caucus will be clearly labelled as such. Unsigned material and Editorial Statements represent the views of the Editorial Board. In any event it should be clearly understood that nothing published in the BULLETIN necessarily represents the official viewpoint of the Young Socialist League.

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opposed to any split in our ranks. We have been and remain dedicated to building the YSL even with its present leadership and politics as long as a YSL remains to build.

This is because our conception of socialist youth unity includes the right wing. We wish to have a broad independent YSL including in its membership along with others those who may wish to join the SP-SDF or work toward eventual affiliation of the YSL to the SP-SDF. While we of course will politically oppose such a tendency in our ranks we certainly will defend its right to exist. We will abide by the decisions of this tendency when it is in the majority as long as we have the right to carry on the struggle for our program and as long as the YSL is open to those who disagree with the right wing.

This means concretely that even if the YSL should choose to affiliate with the SP-SDF we would go along with this move as long as we could continue loyally to fight against it and to work for disaffiliation of the two bodies. Of course we would also insist that the YSL admit into membership those who also may wish to see an independent YSL at some future date.

To ask any more of us would be in effect to demand that we give up the struggle for our political program, which is opposition to unity with the SP-SDF.

The question that comes to our minds on reading over the YSR is: Does the right wing's conception of unity include the left wing? Concretely, will the right wing pledge itself to fight, wherever it goes, for the inclusion of the left wing and oppose any attempts to expell it? Will the right wing state that it will affiliate the YSL with the SP-SDF only if the SP-SDF accepts the left wing also as a loyal section of the YSL which wishes to disaffiliate the YSL from the SP-SDF? If not, then it becomes clear that the right wing has chosen to sacrifice its own comrades in the left wing of the YSL as the price of admission into the SP-SDF.

If this be so, we call on the right wing to frankly admit it instead of working behind the scenes for our expulsion.

Furthermore we appeal to every member of the YSL to do all in their power to prevent a split in our ranks. The YSL must remain united. We must not allow the right wing in its mad rush for "unity" with the SP-SDF to split its own ranks and to expell in one way or another a section of its own comrades which happens to be larger than the entire YPSL. Is this any way to approach "unity"? To split one's own movement?

We on our part will do our utmost to prevent a split in our ranks. We have faith in our ideas. We know that -- unless we are expelled -- we will win the majority of the members of the YSL to the concept of the viability of a militant independent youth movement.

## II. WHO IS FOR UNITY?

Due to the particular way in which the unity or regroupment question has been posed in the YSL, many probably think that the differences in the movement are between the right wing who are "for unity" and the left wing who are "anti-unity". While this happens to be correct as far as the question of "unity" with the SP-SDF is concerned, it is far from the truth if we take a broader look at

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the regroupment question.

Three recent actions on the part of the YSL right wing help to clarify this question. At a recent New York membership meeting the right-wing majority in the unit voted to designate the American Youth for Socialism, the SWP-oriented youth group in New York, as "hostile." (See article on page 10).

Secondly, the NAC clarified its position on the Muste Forum setup. Following the lead of the ISL, the right wing has decided that the YSL shall not participate in the forum. This forum, which simply organizes the discussion that has been going on nationally, is condemned by the right wing as having a "stalinoid coloration" and therefore the YSL must not contaminate itself by participating in it.

As everybody knows the Muste forum setup has no position on anything and is simply a means of regularizing the regroupment discussion. Its "coloration" is that of the radical movement in general which it represents. It includes every radical group except for the right wing of the SP and the YSL-ISL.

Following up this line in a third area, the YSL NAC voted against participating in a joint May Day celebration in New York that would also include all radical tendencies. The YSL would have been given time to speak and it could have said anything it wished. However its "purity" came first and it refused to participate jointly with the rest of the radical movement.

These three actions all have similar characteristics: a retreat from the entire regroupment discussion; a fear of "contamination" by working together with the rest of the radical world; and a hysterical condemning of anything outside the right wing of the YSL, the ISL, and the SP-SDF as "hostile" or "stalinoid" and the like.

Thus we are beginning to see the real meaning of the right-wing "unity" proposal. It is based on a sectarian retreat from the entire arena where regroupment is essential -- those in and around the Communist Party. The present tactics of the right wing are aimed at isolating the YSL from the only fruitful regroupment arena. Thus while the rest of the radical movement meets and discusses, the YSL places itself off to the side with only the right wing of the SP-SDF for company.

Even in this narrow area the right wing is not really for any form of real "unity". This Comrade Draper points out in his recent article in Forum (reprinted on page 27). He states: "The discussion in the League will not even start getting anywhere until it is realized that Shachtman's proposition is for a very distinctive and particular form of 'socialist unity' -- namely, it orients toward dissolution-and-entry into the SP." This, Comrade Draper points out, has no similarity to any previous "entry" move in the history of the revolutionary movement. He states that Shachtman is not proposing "that revolutionists join the party (SP-SDF) in order to 'revolutionize' it or change its political character. That is excluded today, under these circumstances. It is excluded for Shachtman. It is not his perspective and not his proposal." (Emphasis in orig.) This is because "from the point of view which Shachtman holds, it would be a great error to change the rightwing politics of the SP." Shachtman wants a movement "that appeals to the right," Draper says. This is the reason why "the ISLers must guard against changing the right-wing political character of the

SP" according to Shachtman's approach. Comrade Haskell put it more frankly at an ISL meeting: the ISL would act as the "policemen of the left wing." Shachtman has never denied this allegation, to our knowledge. He cannot do so for the simple reason that this is the logical conclusion of the political move he is advocating. For if the ISL were to enter the SP-SDF and really push their politics and let the other left-wingers push theirs, this would lead almost immediately to a split which would be disastrous for all parties. Thus the only solution for Shachtman is to subordinate the ISL's politics to the right-wing pro-imperialist politics of the SP-SDF for a period of time.

Shachtman bases this move on the following proposition, according to Comrade Draper: "That a Third-Camp Marxist propoganda group is not viable today any longer as an independent organization." This explains the fever of Shachtman on the entry move. Everything is subordinated to entry into the SP-SDF. The ISL and YSL must retreat from the real regroupment discussion; must refuse to discuss a political basis for unity; and must resort to the cheapest kind of stalinophobia to win the graces of the SP-SDF leadership. They find themselves even today -- before the entry -- in the camp of the SP-SDF right wing with the left wing of the SP-SDF participating in the Muste forum.

Thus we see that the right wing, instead of proposing a real "unity" and participating with the rest of the radical world in serious discussion, is attempting to unceremoniously dump the whole movement into the nearest ash can, which happens to be the SP-SDF. There may be some people in the YSL who say that the above description is correct for the ISL but it does not hold for the YSL. We urge these comrades to beware. The warning of Comrade Draper to his fellow ISLers might well be heeded by YSLers: "What I would like to see even less, however, is a process whereby the League members back themselves into a position that turns out to mean dissolution-and-entry, without a majority having ever envisaged it." (Emphasis in orig.)

The present NAC draft resolution on "Perspectives for American Socialism" is specifically designed to achieve the above end. It states that the YSL "is ready to unite with the Socialist Party (SP-SDF) as it stands today." It asks for no changes in its program and leadership. Further, when discussing the role of the YSL it states: "By calling upon the merger of the YSL, ISL and SP-SDF, the YSL states that it favors unity between the ISL and the SP-SDF, and that it desires to constitute or participate in constituting the youth affiliate of the united socialist organization." It goes on to state that it does not "know exactly how this will come about." This leaves the door wide open to a simple dissolution-and-entry move. It in no way insists that a negotiated affiliation that would preserve the political independence of the YSL be the only acceptable one.

The Denitch-Harris-Meier motion of implementation (YSR, Vol. 3, No. 4, page 10) also allows for a simple dissolution move, for while it states what the YSL shall "seek" agreement on a number of vital points, it does not set up the minimum the YSL would accept.

At present, we repeat, the YSL right wing is involved not in a move that will unify the radical youth movement but rather in an attempt to dump our organization into the SP-SDF.

We of the left wing, however, stand for a program of real unity of all

America's radical youth on the basis of a militant socialist program. We propose that, because of its broad nature, the YSL be the center of such a regroupment. Instead of calling the AYS a "hostile" organization, we publicly invite them and all other radical youth to join the YSL. Instead of attempting to dissolve the YSL we wish to build and expand it.

Instead of attempting to precipitate a split in the ranks of the YSL we urge the right wing to remain in the YSL; we include them in our concept of unity.

We wish to put no straitjackets on the YSL that will in fact impede the possibility of real socialist youth unity. We therefore oppose entry into or affiliation with the SP-SDF which would put the YSL, regardless of the form in which the "unity" took place, under the direct control of the SP-SDF NAC and would therefore exclude a large section of the radical youth in this country who do not wish to be under the domination of the pro-imperialist SP-SDF.

We urge that the YSL participate fully in the regroupment process and join and support the Muste forum. We urge it to participate in all joint meetings of the entire radical public as well as to participate in united action with all radicals including the CP, SWP and SP-SDF as a first step in the general regroupment process.

We urge all YSL members to consider carefully the choice before you: Do you wish to be roped into a dissolution of our movement under the guise of a "unity" proposal, or do you wish to really build the YSL and join with other radical youths to build a sound, revitalized youth movement on the basis of militant socialist politics -- on the basis of opposition to both capitalism and stalinism?

STATEMENT CONCERNING OUR PERSPECTIVES WITH REGARD  
TO REMAINING IN THE YSL AND LOYALTY THERETO

Because of the repeated accusations of the right-wing leadership of the YSL and some of its more hysterical sympathizers, we of the Left-Wing Caucus feel it unfortunately to be necessary to publicly clarify again our position on our continued functioning in the YSL. We wish to state once and, we hope, for all that we are loyal and will remain loyal to the YSL as an independent organization for young socialists.

The Left-Wing Caucus rejects out of hand as based on nothing other than hysteria the accusations of "Cannonite agent" that have been hurled at the caucus in general and some of its individual members in particular. The caucus deeply regrets that the right wing has undertaken this type of tactic to cloud and submerge the political issues involved in this dispute, and that they have reduced the discussion to the level of the question of our loyalty. Furthermore we strenuously object to the right wing's equating loyalty to their policies with loyalty to the YSL, and to their manifest desire to have us leave (viz. Comrades Bogdan's and Shachtman's remarks on various occasions).

The Left-Wing Caucus pledges itself not only to remain in the YSL regardless of the outcome of the coming convention, but also to continue to remain in the League in the event of a genuine and democratically agreed upon affiliation with the SP-SDF, providing (a) that the YSL preserves its independence of policy, and policy-making authority, particularly with regard to its third camp position, and (b) that it retains the right to disaffiliate and that it will regard as loyal any member or faction which advocates such disaffiliation, and (c) that it continues its tradition of allowing into its ranks members of the various adult political organizations. The caucus considers the question of loyalty to the YSL in the event of dissolution of the League by the right-wing leadership for the sake of entry into the SP-SDF and its youth affiliate, the YPSL, as fraudulent and meaningless. Neither we, nor anyone else, can guarantee continued loyalty to a non-existent organization.

We of the Left-Wing Caucus, in the light of our position that the present YSL forms the natural and only possible center for youth regroupment at this time, reaffirm our intention of continuing to build the YSL and feel that we have demonstrated our ability to do so.

-- The Steering Committee of the  
Left-Wing Caucus



REPORT ON THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE  
OF THE LEFT WING CAUCUS

On March 23 and 24 thirteen members of the Left-Wing Caucus, from the Berkeley, Chicago, Dayton Area, and New York Units, gathered in Ohio to discuss the situation in the YSL in the context of the perspectives for socialist regroupment.

Margaret O. chaired the meeting and Judy M. took the minutes. First on the agenda was unit and national reports. These gave the caucus members a picture of how the YSL functions nationally, and of the role of the left wing in each area.

The second and third items on the agenda, "On Building the YSL" and "The Struggle in the YSL", were the major topics for discussion. The comrades discussed in detail the various ways in which the YSL could be expanded, and formulated their policies for socialist regroupment in the youth field. They then discussed the struggle in the YSL, evaluating the struggle as it had developed and relating it to the general regroupment situation.

On the basis of this discussion, the participating caucus members unanimously adopted two resolutions, one on regroupment and one on the unity of the YSL. The resolution on regroupment is an endorsement of the Simms-Thorn-Rubin resolution. (The Simms-Thorn-Rubin resolution, together with the Left Wing Caucus resolution are reprinted in full in the current YSR.) The resolution states that the Left-Wing Caucus wishes to "facilitate the general regroupment of socialist forces in the youth field on a militant class-struggle basis." It endorses the general line of the Simms-Thorn-Rubin resolution, which urges that the YSL offer itself as a center for regroupment of socialist youth and urges all socialist youth, whether affiliated with any socialist organization or not, to join its ranks.

The Left-Wing resolution further states, in part: "We counterpose this approach — based as it is on the continuation of the struggle against both capitalism and stalinism — to the proposal of the NAC majority to liquidate our movement under the guise of 'merging' with the YPSL and becoming the youth affiliate of the SP-SDF.

"We believe that the only kind of movement that can be attractive to the radical youth of America is a regrouped socialist youth movement based solidly on the principles upon which our organization was built."

The resolution on the unity of the YSL was also carried unanimously. It stated:

"The Left-Wing Caucus of the YSL stands opposed to any move to split the YSL.

"We dedicate ourselves to building the YSL as it was formed — as a democratic, independent, socialist youth organization.

"We request that the Right Wing join with us in a joint declaration stating

that all elements of the YSL stand dedicated to the continuation of the YSL and opposed to any split in our ranks."

Following the adoption of these motions the caucus members proceeded to discuss the organization of the caucus. A Steering Committee of five, representing each area, was elected, consisting of Tim, Shane, Scott, John W., and Jim R. It was decided that Steering Committee members would be responsible for organizing caucus activities in their units and for coordinating the Left Wing nationally. Sherry was chosen as treasurer of the caucus and Martha as editor of the Bulletin.

Assignments for the writing of convention documents were made, and finances were discussed, as well as other organizational details.

Finally there was a discussion on the Gates-Foster struggle in the CP. Originally the comrades had planned to discuss also the labor probe, the Gaza question, and Eastern Europe. However, since they decided that the caucus should not take positions on these questions, and since the passage of time had made it necessary for several comrades to depart shortly, it was decided that the struggle in the CP should be the only topic for discussion, since it was integrally related to the regroupment question.

A year ago, or even a few months ago, a national meeting of an organized left wing in the YSL could not have been conceived of. The fact that this meeting took place is a sign, not only of the strength of the left wing, but also of the rapid pace at which the right wing of the YSL has moved to the right.

The serious, calm, and cooperative manner in which the comrades approached the discussion was heartening to all. The meeting had two important results: a solid basis of agreement among the caucus members present on the vital problems confronting it; and a heightening of the confidence, optimism and morale of the caucus.

--- submitted by mw

#### CORRECTION OF THE EDITORIAL ON THE CHALLENGE MATTER

"I wish first to apologize for the statement published in the LWB (April) which is in fact an exaggeration and factually incorrect. The NAC did not receive any protests from units when it acted. I based my statement on three facts. In the first place I received from Gerry McDermott a letter stating that the Pitt. comrades supported me on the Challenge issue and were so writing the NAC. Secondly a letter read to the NO from Charles reaffirming his support of opening the Challenge to the minority and stating that in his opinion Jim B. and Arlon agreed on this. Thirdly, Bogdan stated that he was also now supporting the minority on this.

"Thus I noticed that the NAC had received these protests (which were not from units) and changed its position since the Tues. NAC and Friday N.Y. Unit membership meeting. Therefore I assumed that these protests had something to do with the change of line.

"I however repeat my retraction of the statement that units had protested as of that date and will publish a retraction in the next LWB and apologize for any misconceptions this may have engendered." --- Statement of TW in NAC minutes of March 19.

ON HOSTILITY AND UNITY--A LOOK AT THE AYS AND YSL

By Tim Wohlforth

The New York YSL membership meeting on April 12 declared the American Youth For Socialism (AYS), the SWP oriented youth group in New York, to be hostile". After questioning from the floor Comrade Denitch, who introduced the motion for the executive committee, explained that this did not mean that YSLers could not attend AYS functions. However, all "political" relations with the AYS were to be handled through the New York YSL Executive Committee. Furthermore Yslers were not to take their friends or friends of the YSL to meetings or parties of the AYS and when attending meetings YSLers were to raise "hostile" questions which would point up the differences between the two groups.

As far as I know this is the first time in the history of the YSL that any section of the YSL has passed a motion labeling another political group as "hostile." The timing of this pontifical declaration is most interesting. For the first time in quite a few years it is possible for different radical groups to discuss with each other in a friendly manner and lay the basis for united activity and possibly unity. Virtually every radical group has decided to let recede into the background much of the sectarian wrangling of the past and to discuss in an intelligent fashion the differences that separate us as well as the many things we hold in common.

At such a time, for the New York Unit of the YSL to come out and declare another socialist group to be "hostile" is pure sectarianism. It does not even follow a thorough discussion of the differences between the two groups, for the first debate between the AYS and YSL is being held a week after this declaration. It certainly does not further the fraternal and friendly relations all sensible socialists are trying to establish among themselves today.

Another significant aspect of this move is the singling out of the AYS. There are other youth groups around. There is SLID which attempted to sabotage a meeting of the Debs Club at Columbia because it charged that the YSL was controlling the club and as everybody knows the YSL is "totalitarian, Trotskyite Communists." This does not seem to me to be a particularly "fraternal" act on the part of SLID. Why not designate them as "hostile" while we are at it? What about SDA, which recently expelled all SDAers who were also members of the YSL? Why not designate SDA as hostile? And then there is the YPSL. Certainly if one is going to label groups "hostile" on the basis of programmatic differences the YPSL should qualify. I refer interested parties to the YPSL recruiting pamphlet which quotes at length from the SP-SDF unity statement.

But instead of singling out any of these the motion mentions only the AYS. Is there a political basis for this choice? Does the AYS have politics that are in greater divergence from the YSL politics than the SLID, SDA, YPSL, etc? The fundamental basis of all YSL politics has always been militant opposition to both capitalism and stalinism. We in the YSL have formulated this in the form of the slogan "Against Both War Camps ... For a Third Camp." The AYS is not a third camp group and to the extent that its sympathies and politics lie with the SWP, to that extent it holds a defensist position on the Soviet Union.

However on all concrete issues facing us today the AYS is in solid agreement with us. It unqualifiedly supports the Hungarian revolution and calls for its extension throughout the Soviet orbit. It stands unqualifiedly for the revolutionary overthrow of the bureaucracy and the destruction of every last vestige of its power. Of course there can be no doubt where it stands on the question of American imperialism. In the struggle against our own ruling class, our immediate enemy, we find ourselves in solid agreement with the AYS.

Therefore while important disagreements exist between the AYS and the YSL on such questions as the defense of the Soviet Union, there does not seem to be a basis for singling out the AYS for special labeling as "hostile."

The real motivation of the motion flows in my opinion not from the concrete differences between the two groups on the Russian question but rather from the direction in which the right wing in the YSL is going. The YSL right wing is looking in only one direction -- to the right, and is interested in only one thing -- entrance into the SP-SDF. This means it cuts itself off from the rest of the radical public, from the whole regroupment process (see editorial on page 3 ), and develops a hostile attitude towards those closest to it on the left.

These are all characteristic of a basically rightward move in the real politics of the YSL. This we of the left pointed out during the discussion of the electoral question when the right wing forced the YSL to endorse the SP uncritically and refused to consider any sort of endorsement of the SWP. Thus we have the basic ingredients of a real rightward move -- extreme hostility towards those on your left even though the political differences between you and them are not very great and extreme "accommodation" to those far to your right whom you now make apologies for.

The real meaning of the Executive Committee motion was an attempt to scare the membership of the YSL away from "fraternizing" with members of the AYS. While the motion does not go so far as to prevent such "fraternizing" it is obviously meant to create an atmosphere where attendance at AYS functions by anyone except those specifically chosen to go down and give them hell is considered a "traitorous" act. This fear of "fraternization" and using organizational measures to attempt to "solve" a political problem is strikingly similar to the actions of the SWP during the Goldman unity move. Here a section of the SWP wished to bring about unity with the Workers Party and the SWP tried to treat this political question in part by putting a "ban" on fraternization between members of the two parties.

This is exactly what the right wing is attempting to do today and it remains just as ineffectual, mistaken, and bureaucratic as when the SWP did it in 1946. Let us hope that the membership of the YSL in New York and elsewhere will not let themselves be whipped into a sectarian hysterical approach towards the AYS. I hope they will attend AYS functions and talk over the many differences between the YSL and the AYS on a friendly basis. To be afraid to do so means, as it meant with the SWP in 1946, that one does not think one's politics are strong enough to stand up under the impact of serious discussion. I for one do not wish to see the YSL make such an admission.

Furthermore I feel an exploration of the differences between the AYS and YSL will show -- except to the sectarian -- that there is not enough separating us to prevent the effective co-existence of the different tendencies within the same youth group. The best way to solve the problem of the AYS as a competing youth group is to ask them to join the YSL. I hope members of both groups will consider this very carefully.

STATEMENT OF RESIGNATION FROM THE INDEPENDENT  
SOCIALIST LEAGUE

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

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

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

THEORETICAL RETREAT

War and Stalinism

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

In 1951 Shachtman wrote:

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

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

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

"Faced by the coming war crisis, the socialist movement will more urgently than ever call upon the working-class movement to

to take command of the nation and, should it prove necessary as a result of the reactionary and imperialist drive of Stalinism, to take command also of the defence of the nation. Even if, at the outset, a labor government which takes over the nation and defends the interest of the working people on the basis of a genuinely democratic course in foreign and domestic policy which is not in fact subordinated to the interests of capitalism and imperialism should not yet be a socialist labor government, the socialist movement stands pledged to support and defend it in word and in deed in any war in which it is threatened by a reactionary enemy, Stalinist Russia included." (emphasis added)

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

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

#### Reform or Revolution

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

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

Moreover to the question: "Do you use the word 'revolution'"

to indicate the means whereby this change will be brought about?"

Shachtman answered: "No. That is not involved in the term 'revolution' as we employ it."

Further on a contrasting was made with the meaning of reformism as follows:

Q uestion to Shachtman: "When you use the term reformist you mean a socialist organization which intends to achieve its ends by reformist methods. Can you be more explicit?"

Reply: "Reformists seek to make capitalism work in a way in which we think only socialism can work---they want to reform it here and there...we are for a more radical change of the basis of society."

Thus by an attempt at terminological confusion the ISL would have it both ways: accommodate itself to the enormous pressures and hostilities which are operative against revolutionary socialists, yet be "revolutionary" to silence left-wing critics and keep supporters with uneasy memories in line.

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

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

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

- from "The Meaning of Democratic Socialism" by Pierre Bonnel, published by the Young People's Socialist League, 1956.

In passing, it should be noted that the "democratic" "Socialist" author is a member of the French Socialist Party,

currently leading the French government in conducting the bloody colonial war in Algeria.

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

#### The Nature of the State

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

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

#### ORGANIZATIONAL DISINTEGRATION

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

#### Some Symptoms

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

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

(3) The national committee of the ISL has been a paper committee for years. There are no plenary meetings apart from convention times; it does not even receive minutes of the deliberations of its sub-body, the Political Committee. Thus the



leadership of the organization has rested exclusively in the hands of a largely uncontrolled little group of half dozen leaders in one locale.

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

#### The Crisis in Leadership

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

#### POLITICS AND LEAGUE LIFE

The decline of the ISL has proceeded by interaction and mutual exacerbation at both levels -- the changing role conceives for itself as a socialist movement and its ability to build and hold a devoted cadre. For what real point is there to self-sacrifice by the membership, if the results of such work are increasingly seen as essentially irrelevant to social progress, which is supposedly to come without a necessary participation and eventual leadership of a revolutionary vanguard in the working class. Thus the demoralizing tendencies mutually reinforcing and accelerating, have resulted in Shachtman's current proposition to liquidate what is left of the ISL and enter the Socialist Party-Social Democratic Federation, itself the recent product of a similar surrender on the part of the Socialist Party.

#### DISSOLUTION INTO THE SP-SDF

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

(1) It is no unity proposal as hitherto known by that name. There is no political basis projected for unity, merely that the SP-SDF will accept the ex-ISL people into their ranks.

(2) It involves a political capitulation to the pro-capitalist and imperialist policies of the SP-SDF as Shachtman makes clear by the insistence that the ex-ISL members in the

SP-SDF will keep their particular ideas in their pockets for a long time and not oppose the leadership of Norman Thomas & Co.

(3) It is a liquidationist proposal which virtually guarantees the disappearance of the Shachtman tendency in short order. If entrance into the SP-SDF is obtained, the bulk of the ISL members will have found simply a rest home; those who may have gone along with the illusions that their leadership was executing some kind of "Leninist" tactic will drop out or go over consciously to reformism. Should entry not be made in a fairly near future, the situation will be even more disastrous. Already the ISL membership is living with "bags packed". The entry idea has unleashed all the centrifugal forces in the ISL and at a point when the League is on the border line of collapse anyhow.

(4) It is a move essentially independent of the regroupment taking place among the former supporters and members of the shattered Communist Party. This is shown by the testimony of PC member Hal Draper that the entry question was first raised in the Political Committee over a year ago, before the Krushchev revelations; and it was made public before the Eastern European revolutions wreaked their toll on the American CP.

(5) It is being argued in terms and leads to activity by the ISL which does real disservice generally to the cause of a militant class-struggle socialist reunification. The SP-SDF is a bitterly sectarian grouping which conceives of its "democratic" socialism as violently hostile to all varieties of Leninism, its heirs and assigns, all variants and deviations from same, real and alleged. But the preponderance of radicals in America come under one or the other of the SP-SDF's proscribed listings. Few will follow the lead of the ISL in forsaking the advocacy of their beliefs in order to coexist in a little sect under the leadership of social-democrats crusted with age.

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

#### IMMEDIATE REASON FOR LEAVING THE ISL

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

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

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

James Robertson

San Francisco Bay Area Branch, ISL  
April 12, 1957

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

Received From Berkeley on April 17  
1957

### THREE PROPOSED DRAFT RESOLUTIONS

(Editorial Note: At the national meeting of the Left-Wing Caucus the following documents were assigned to be written and then submitted to the caucus for possible amendment or endorsement. We print these below unamended in their entirety except for Comrade Shane's document. Due to the length of the document and the fact that Shane suggests that the Caucus officially endorse only part III of it, the first two parts have been submitted to YSR for publication.

The Left-Wing Caucus has as yet taken no position on any of the following documents. It intends to discuss and amend these documents openly along with the rest of the YSL membership. Publication in the LWB does not in any way signify endorsement of the documents by the Caucus.)

### TASKS AND PERSPECTIVES FOR THE YSL

1. The Young Socialist League was formed three years ago in February, 1954, by the merger of the Young People's Socialist League, the Socialist Party youth group, and the Socialist Youth League, the youth affiliate of the Independent Socialist League. It has based itself since its foundation on a program of militant opposition to capitalism and stalinism. However, as the only nationwide socialist youth organization, the YSL has always conceived of itself as a broad organization permitting the coexistence of different tendencies and traditions within the general framework of the struggle against capitalism and stalinism.

2. Over the past three years the YSL has been able to accomplish within the context of a reactionary and unfavorable climate a considerable amount of which it can be proud. Through the merging of the forces of the YPSL and SYL it has been able to build a viable national youth organization which showed its vitality by its ability to attract many new elements. Thus in a period when the general radical movement was in a state of decline the YSL has actually been able to expand, modestly but significantly.

3. Today the YSL stands before the radical youth as the only national radical youth organization. The LYL has dissolved; the YPSL exists in only two localities; and the SWP youth have no national organization. Thus the YSL is in a relatively strong position as compared with other sections of the radical youth. It now confronts a situation with a number of highly significant opportunities for it. For the first time since its foundation the possibility of a real, significant expansion -- not of twos or threes, but of whole new units and tens of new members to the existing units -- lies before it if it can itself rise to the occasion.

4. The stalinist movement is in a state of crisis. This has caused the Labor Youth League to dissolve and has left stranded literally hundreds of former members and sympathizers of the stalinist youth. These youth are in a state of shock produced by the Khrushchev revelations and heightened by the Hungarian events. It is the duty of the YSL to offer to those who still wish to struggle for socialism an organizational and political road out: to offer to them an organization dedicated to the struggle against both capitalism and stalinism.

5. While the crisis in the stalinist youth movement is the most important opportunity opening up to the YSL, there are others also. Flowing from the upheavals in the stalinist movement there has been a general shakeup of the entire radical movement producing the current rash of regroupment discussions. The climate has been created in which a real and meaningful exchange of ideas among all radicals is possible. The YSL can play an important role in this broader development.

6. There is also a noticeably better atmosphere on the campus. Students are becoming more receptive to radical ideas and the hysteria of the witchhunt is somewhat lessened. The current struggle among the Negroes for freedom in the South has stirred a broad section of American youth, both white and Negro. A more militant defence of civil liberties and academic freedom can also be observed on campus.

7. The task confronting the YSL is two-fold: (1) it must conduct a concerted drive to bring about a regroupment of radical youth forces on a sound political basis and (2) it must participate at every stage in the struggle of the American youth for civil rights, for civil liberties, against the threat of war, and for freedom and democracy everywhere. These two tasks are intertwined, for in order to facilitate the regroupment of radical youth it is necessary to struggle jointly with other youth on a whole series of important immediate objectives; also in order to struggle effectively for such demands, a regrouped and revitalized radical youth movement is necessary.

8. The YSL, as the only national radical youth organization, offers itself as a possible center for regroupment of radical youth forces. It is uniquely qualified to do so, being itself the result of a modest regroupment. Its character as a broad organization, which contains within it diverse elements and which openly invites members of the various adult radical tendencies to join it, should facilitate such a regroupment. Also, the YSL's politics of opposition to capitalism and stalinism provide a basis of united, militant and cohesive activity by the organization. This is because it bases itself on a fundamentally socialist approach to politics and on a working-class foundation. The YSL also dedicates itself to participating in whatever way it can in every struggle of the American youth for a better life for all.

9. As the first step toward a regroupment of radical youth the YSL urges the launching of serious and comradely discussions of all important political questions among all sections of radical youth including the social-democratic youth centering around the YPSL and SLID, the youth of the SWP, former members and supporters of the LYL some of whom are now organized in Marxist discussion groups, the youth of the Libertarian League, as well as individuals or groups of youth around the magazines Dissent, American Socialist, and Monthly Review. We urge immediate and close cooperation among all these youth in order to begin organizing the discussion.

10. At the same time as the discussion is being carried on, we urge the most extended united front activity among all radical youth (including all those mentioned in paragraph 9) around such issues as civil rights, civil liberties, and other current campus and youth questions. Such united front activity will serve to strengthen youth forces around these issues and thus help to advance them. It will also provide a basis whereby each section of the radical

youth can test the other in action and thus provide a sound basis for a fruitful and comradely discussion of the many issues that still divide us.

11. As pursuant to the constitution of the YSL and based on the traditions of our organization as a broad organization of American socialist youth we urge all radical youth to join with us in building the YSL on the basis of militant class-struggle politics, that is, on the basis of opposition to capitalism and stalinism. We urge all radical youth to do this regardless of their present affiliation to radical adult groups or parties and regardless of the many theoretical and historical issues which may divide us. We feel as long as there is agreement on the conception of a militant youth movement the many other questions can best be settled within the YSL and while jointly building the YSL.

12. We specifically invite the members of the Young People's Socialist League who can no longer stomach the anti-socialist policies of the SP-SDF as embodied in the recent "Memorandum of Understanding" to join with us. We also ask the younger members and sympathizers of the Socialist Workers' Party, the Libertarian League, the members and sympathizers of the former LYL, the sympathizers of the magazines American Socialist, Monthly Review, and Dissent, and all young socialists who are organized into independent discussion clubs or are unorganized, to join with us in building a broad, militant youth movement dedicated to the struggle against capitalism and stalinism.

13. Such a program as outlined in this document can, we feel, do much to reinvigorate the radical youth movement, as well as strengthen and advance the progressive forces among the American youth. We feel we can contribute to the rebuilding of a radical youth movement in this country as well as contribute in the struggle for civil rights, civil liberties, and freedom and democracy for all. Such a struggle can help to advance the general struggle for socialism in this country and throughout the world. We urge all other radical youth to join with us to carry out this task.

-- submitted by Tim Wohlforth

### PERSPECTIVES FOR AMERICAN SOCIALISM

#### Part III. The Socialist Movement in the U.S.

1. 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.

2. The American socialist movement today is composed of small propaganda groups, isolated from the main stream of the labor movement. This propaganda group existence, this isolation, flow from the general objective conditions of American society in the present period. 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.

3. A significant revival of the socialist movement in America can come

about only as a result of a fundamental change in this objective situation. 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 the 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.

4. 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 agitation. It restricts to a minimum the possibilities for growth open to American socialism at the present time. It is also an obstacle to a future break-through of American socialism from its present isolation.

5. 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 world 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 political victory of revolutionary socialism over social-democracy remains today the necessary precondition for successful proletarian revolution.

6. 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 Stalinist ideology has crippled and paralyzed the best, most revolutionary sections of the working class in every country, and has contributed in no small measure to the success of social-democracy in its role as the chief prop of the decaying capitalist order.

7. The great, fundamental change in the world 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".

8. 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 socialist groups formerly sympathetic to the Stalinist bureaucracy and the emergence within the Communist Party itself of tendencies in the direction of authentic socialism; that provides the context for socialist regroupment at the present time.

9. The principal task of a regrouped socialist movement in the present period would be to carry on socialist propaganda and agitation inside the working class and among other potentially radical groups of the population. Another necessary function of a united American socialist movement would be to facilitate a free, open, and democratic discussion of all the issues before the American and international socialist movement, in which all the different tendencies within the socialist movement would participate.

10. The necessary precondition for the creation of such a movement is the agreement of all the socialist tendencies that would compose it on the basic political program of the movement. This is especially obligatory in view of the fact that the American socialist movement cannot be expected to be anything other than a propaganda group in the immediate future. Any movement in these conditions will be defined politically by the type of propaganda it carries on, by its political program. Regroupment cannot result in a durable unity of socialist groups unless it is based on a common and agreed on set of political principles.

11. American socialists can reach this sort of principled agreement only through a process of free discussion, of open confrontation of views. For this reason the YSL seeks to engage in discussions with all socialist tendencies on all the political issues of our times. We encourage the holding of as many forum-type discussions as possible, including as many divergent views as possible. Specifically, we welcome the formation of the American Socialist Forum, inspired by A. J. Muste. We feel that the ASF can help to provide a setup through which all the important discussion now being conducted within the radical movement can continue and be furthered.

12. We believe that the political program of a united socialist movement should make a basic and incisive criticism of the most important aspects of the present social order in America. It should offer an attractive socialist alternative to American capitalism as well as to Russian Stalinism. The type of political program we advocate for a united socialist movement is illustrated by the following points:

- a.) A united socialist movement must defend the civil liberties of all victims of the witch-hunt, and it should emphasize the democratic nature of the socialism it advocates.
- b.) This movement should be for a Labor Party as the necessary next step for the American labor movement, and it should oppose the two capitalist parties.
- c.) It should oppose the foreign policy of U.S. imperialism, and support the national liberation movements in colonial countries.
- d.) It should oppose the Stalinist bureaucracy in the name of socialism, and should support the Hungarian and Polish revolutions.
- e.) It should, of course, be the firmest ally of the Negro people in their struggle for full equality.

13. A program of this sort is a necessity. These are the most important political questions in the world. The basic purpose of socialist organization is to advocate socialist politics, and it is impossible to do this without taking a socialist political position on the decisive questions of current politics. At the same time, this socialist political position should be spelled out in terms general enough to allow tendencies with important disagreements on other issues to unite behind it.

14. As a socialist youth organization, the YSL is primarily concerned with the regroupment of socialist youth. We believe that the regroupment of socialist youth must follow the same general political and organizational lines as the general socialist regroupment in the "adult" field envisaged above.



However, we recognize that the tempo of youth regroupment need not be the same as regroupment of the existing "adult" socialist organizations. A more or less prolonged period of discussion may well be required before the existing socialist organizations are able to unite. In the socialist youth field, on the other hand, there exists a unique factor which makes it possible to initiate, if not consummate, the process of regroupment before the "adult" organizations are able to unite. This unique factor is the existence of the YSL itself as the only nationwide socialist youth organization in existence in America today.

15. In addition to its status as the only nationwide socialist youth organization the YSL has certain unique advantages which give it a chance to play a leading role in uniting American radical youth. It is an independent youth group, unaffiliated to any "adult" socialist organizations. It conceives of itself as a "broad" group, and can include as members socialists holding many and varied views and can also include members of different "adult" socialist groups. Its program is quite consistent with the suggested five point program state above.

16. These characteristics; broadness, independence, socialist politics; are those that a united socialist youth organization should have. We do not consider independence from any organization ties to an "adult" organization to be a desirable characteristic for a socialist youth organization under all circumstances, and we believe that a united socialist youth organization should be affiliated to a similarly united "adult" group, under conditions of the widest autonomy. However under current conditions, when unification of socialist youth is possible before a similar process can take place in the "adult" field, the independence of a united youth movement is a necessary precondition for including within it members of different socialist tendencies.

17. The YSL possesses the necessary characteristics to serve as a center for the unification of radical youth in the U.S. The YSL therefore rejects all suggestions that it dissolve itself and that its members join some other organization which does not have these characteristics.

18. Instead, the YSL offers itself as a center for socialist youth regroupment. We desire to unite with all existing radical youth groups who would be willing to discuss unity on the basis of the program stated above. The YSL also invites young members and sympathizers of all "adult" socialist groups to join it. This invitation specifically includes, but is not limited to, the SP-SDF, SWP, Libertarian League, members and sympathizers of the former LYL, and sympathizers of the magazines American Socialist, Monthly Review, and Dissent.

19. In all cases where regroupment is not immediately possible, the YSL nevertheless attempts to carry on the widest possible program of discussions and united actions with radical youth of all tendencies. Even if our differences with some group are too great to permit immediate unity, we still seek out all opportunities for common action on those issues which unite us with other radical youth: defense of civil liberties, support to the struggle of the Negro people, etc. Open political discussion and joint activity can lay a sound basis for a future unity.

20. In summary: the unification of American socialists into a single political organization would mark an enormous advance for the socialist movement

if this unification can be carried out on a socialist political basis. We have suggested the main points of a political program which is broad enough to unite differing socialist tendencies, and at the same time implies a militant socialist position on the main issues of American and world politics. We call on all socialist groups to discuss the political basis of regroupment as widely as possible, and hope to see a united, broad, democratic, militant socialist organization emerge from this process of discussion.

21. As our immediate perspective as a youth organization we hope to unite with all socialist youth on a basis of socialist politics, and guaranteeing members of all "adult" groups full equality and full freedom of internal and external political expression. We hope to make the unification of all socialist youth our contribution to the process of unification of all American socialists.

-- submitted by Shane Mage

### THE CRISIS IN THE AMERICAN COMMUNIST PARTY

1. The 20th Party Congress, the Khrushchey revelations, the added revelations about anti-Semitism within Russia, and the events in Poland and Hungary have had a profound effect on the American Communist Party. Members have been leaving the party in droves. It finds itself unable to recruit new forces and incapable of playing any real role in any of the current struggles in this country. Those members who have stayed are thoroughly bewildered and disoriented. Their wide periphery is also in a state of shock and confusion.

2. This situation of ferment in its ranks has also had an effect on the leadership of the CP. Among the top layers of the party bureaucracy a split has occurred between John Gates and his followers and William Z. Foster and his supporters. A third group, centering around Eugene Dennis, plays a moderating and vacillating role between the two major factions. It is essential that revolutionary socialists understand the nature of this factional struggle and define their attitude toward it as well as toward the entire crisis in the CP.

3. First we must understand exactly the nature of the differences between Gates and Foster. In order to do this we must know what is not at issue between these two tendencies of the bureaucracy. Both Foster and Gates are united in their general support to the line of the Kremlin. Both hold Russia to be a socialist and progressive society and both orient in one fashion or another to the bureaucracies of Russia and the satellites. This means that both support the "peaceful co-existence" line of the Soviet Union with its general antipathy to the revolutionary activity of the international working class. Both also support a class-collaborationist line in America together with a general reformist outlook on the American scene. This is summed up in their united support to the "peoples' anti-monopoly coalition" slogan under which the CP has been supporting the Democratic Party. Both represent the interests of the CP bureaucracy with its general aloofness toward rank and file members and working class elements in the party.

4. However, important differences do exist which must be recognized. Fundamentally Foster represents the interests of the Russian bureaucracy without

question and thus has been supported by the Soviet Union in the recent struggle. Gates, however, has moved somewhat away from the direct control of the Russian bureaucracy and took for a while a position more closely aligned with the native bureaucracies of Hungary and Poland. However following the recent visit of Chou En-lai to Poland and elsewhere he has been going along with the new Kremlin line and refused in fact to fight for his position on Hungary at the recent CP convention. Furthermore he has been moving even further into the morass of reformism by accentuating these aspects of the stalinist program. Foster, on the other hand, has been demagogically putting on a "left stance" even though he remains in fundamental agreement with Gates on reformism.

5. Thus neither section of the party bureaucracy has been able to break in any significant way from stalinism and provide a vehicle for moving the party or a section of it toward class struggle politics in this country and in Eastern Europe. It is important that we understand this and not let wishful thinking triumph over political reality.

6. It is the task of revolutionary socialists to do their utmost to further the development of a rank and file caucus within the CP dedicated to class struggle politics. Such a caucus must be independent of either faction in the leadership and critical of both. It will in all probability find itself in a struggle against the "peoples' anti-monopoly coalition" slogan and all that it entails in this country. It will also find itself struggling for a clear-cut position in defense of the Hungarian workers in their struggle against the oppressive stalinist bureaucracy. We urge all present members of the CP, instead of flying from politics, or supporting the dead end offered by Foster's stalinism or Gates' reformism, to continue membership in the CP and struggle within it for a militant class struggle program for this country and for the rest of the world, including the so-called "socialist" countries. This is no easy road, but it is the only road out of the twin evils of reformism and stalinism that confront the CP today.

7. Such a rank and file caucus should consider as one of its primary tasks the continuation of the discussion within the CP. In order to facilitate this it would of course wield its influence so that neither of the contending factions in the leadership got a real majority. It would realize, however, that the greatest danger to the continuation of the discussion and to any possible progressive development within the CP lies in the Foster tendency which represents the Russian stalinist bureaucracy and the old-line unthinking repression by the leadership. It must at all costs therefore work to prevent Foster from gaining unbridled power in the party. Gates remains more firmly committed than Foster to a continuation of the discussion and it is therefore permissible to block with Gates over Foster for the preservation of internal democracy.

8. It must be made clear at all times that such tactical moves do not constitute political support for the Gates section of the CP bureaucracy. However it is impermissible to block with Foster who represents orthodox stalinism. We recognize that some misguided elements in the party have supported Foster feeling that he was to the "left" of Gates. We appeal to them as well as those who support Gates because of his better position on Hungary to join with the bulk of the party members who are not aligned with either faction to join together in the struggle for a militant CP with a class struggle program.

--- submitted by Tim Wohlforth

THE MEANING OF SHACHTMAN'S "SOCIALIST UNITY"

By Hal Draper

(Editorial Note: The following article is reprinted from the March, 1957 issue of Forum, the discussion bulletin of the Independent Socialist League. It is being published here in keeping with our general policy of printing articles and documents pertinent to the unity discussion which have not received broad enough circulation. We have received a number of inquiries about this article and have been unable to obtain additional copies of the Forum. This article is not reprinted with the prior consent of Hal Draper and it in no way indicates any support by Comrade Draper of the Left-Wing Caucus. The Left-Wing Caucus does not necessarily endorse the views of Comrade Draper as expressed in this article.)

First of all, we should get clear what is in dispute and what isn't. The PC has published three resolutions, or statements of policy, around the question of unity and regroupment. The first two were adopted unanimously. The third and latest concretized the dispute which was latent behind the other two.

These differences of opinion in the PC were discussed in the committee from the very beginning--- namely, early a year ago. There were obviously two ( at least two) different conceptions of what it meant to favor unity with the SP, or what unity. For months it was hoped--- or at any rate, to speak for myself, I hoped-- that the difference could be legitimately resolved in the committee without breaking out into a racking dispute in the League over the fate of the organization. I expected, and expect, no good from such a dispute.

Thus, when it turned out that the first resolution on Unity with the SP ( published in LA Nov. 5) was voted unanimously, it was communicated to the League with the note that there were differences of opinion on related matters that would come up later.

Resolution #2 (Proposed Statement of Policy on Socialist Regroupment ) dealt with an entirely different side of the general question, namely, with the question of an all-in Socialist regroupment which specifically concerned itself with the problem of how to bring together both "pro- Soviet" Stalinoids and democratic socialists. This statement was not only adopted unanimously by the PC but was, if I am not mistaken, unanimously greeted with enthusiasm by the membership everywhere or virtually everywhere. It is this line not the line on entry into the SP, which has also aroused deserved interest outside the ISL.

In the adoption of this statement, too, the differences showed them selves. The point involved was the relationship between Resolution # 1 and Resolution # 2.

Shachtman proposed the formulation that unity with the SP be regarded as the " main orientation". I opposed this. Shachtman then proposed the wording which appears in the Statement about not doing anything that "would impede" the unity envisaged in

Resolution # 1. I accepted this pointing out that it doesn't settle any questions that would naturally arise as to what does and what doesn't impede the kind of unity envisaged in Resolution # 1. But at any rate, this made it possible to get the Statement out to the League, after too long delay.

Another passage in this statement did not come up for questioning at the time of adoption. This was the paragraph which actually did establish the relationship between the SP side of the regroupment and the "all-in" side. It was formulated in terms of urging the "inclusion" of the SP in a Socialist regroupment. Urging its "participation". The idea was very clear that we thought that the S P should be one among the socialist tendencies regrouped in the manner proposed.

In his Jan. 18 speech at the public symposium "Can the Left Unite?" at the Great Northern Hotel in New York City, Shachtman first launched the line that the "all-in" socialist regroupment should take place within the framework of the SP; that is, the organizational road to this regroupment was presented as joining the SP.

Taken up ex post facto by the PC, this was embodied (somewhat fuzzed up) in the Resolution #3 of the PC majority, along with some other articulations of some of Shachtman's conception of unity. Then the present Minority Resolution was written too.

Thus the differences proved irrepressible, and the dispute emerged from the PC. The differences, however, are not simply on this or that phrase or formulation but on the whole conception of what "unity with the SP" means and on the viability of the ISL. This has been perfectly clear in the PC for months. The League members cannot adequately decide on the question till they understand it just as clearly.

#### TO CALL A SPADE

The present dispute is tagged "socialist unity". It started out on that subject. However, the discussion in the League will not even start getting anywhere until it is realized that Shachtman's proposition is for a very distinctive and particular form of "socialist unity"-- namely, it orients toward dissolution-and-entry into the SP.

I have no objection to calling by the name of "socialist unity" a program which emans dissolution-and-entry. Nor am I concerned, in this connection with whether or not it is possible to convince the SP leadership to be so broadminded as to let ISLers join, after dissolution, if only through the backdoor; that is Schachtman's central concern right now; he may be successful. We have a different concept of socialist unity, that is of the socialist unity which we favor.

A program aiming at dissolution-and-entry, like Shachtman's may be considered good or bad--a masterstroke of strategy, or the manifestations of a pitiful collapse--or what-have-you; but at any rate comrades ought to look open-eyed at the

different course proposed, and understand what is at stake.

If a majority of the League, on reflection, wants to set a course toward dissolving the ISL into the SP, then so be it. What I would like to see evenless, however, is process whereby the League members back themselves into a position that turns out to mean dissolution-and-entry, without a majority having ever really envisaged it. This is not a good way of adopting a position, in spite of its extensive history. Unfortunately, it is also an easy thing to let happen .

#### FOR A HEALTHY UNITY

There is nothing wrong in itself with any proposal to dissolve the ISL, for some other form of organization. But certainly it not one to be entertained or entered so lightly. Those comrades to whom this is addressed will not need any tub-thumping claims about the role which the ISL plays, modest though it be: namely as an ideological center of the Third Camp politics and Marxist socialism, with its special appeal to those who do not wish to support either capitalism or Stalinism. All we need say right here is that this role is still needed. Before we are moved to abandon it, we need to have very firmly in mind---- for what.

One can move to abandon any independent organization, or this organization, or any other form of organization--- that is not the central issue as long as the essential political role of the Third Camp socialist cadres can be maintained ( or naturally , extended) wherever they may be.

The Minority Resolution proposed a unity with the SP which preserves that role. It spells out this proposal. It says that a healthy unity can be achieved only if there is prior agreement, openly arrived at, on an overall party platform so general that it can be loyally supported by, on the one hand, Third Camp revolutionary socialists and, on the other hand (say) right wing social-democrats who are pro- American. Under such conditions, in such a party, the former could play their distinctive political role not only loyally but in such a way as to build the united movement.

If such a unity cannot be achieved, it will be because the SP turns it down; and that would be a pity. If such a unity can be achieved, then a real step of progress for the socialist movement will have been realized.

So we are for a unity with the SP which permits that political role, wherever we are; or at any rate if it is proposed that it be abandoned, we want to know: for what.

#### THIS IS NOT 1937

Can a program of dissolution-and-entry fulfill that political role or anything adequately like it ?

On this, one thing has to be firmly understood by everybody: Shachtman's perspective is not for an entry like that of the Trotskyites in 1936.

The Trotskyist entry in 1936 was made with a divided soul on the part of the then-Trotskyist leadership; but I emphasize that Shachtman's present perspective is different from either division of that soul. To be specific:

(1) One strain of thinking in the then-Trotskyist group, at any rate never clearly rejected in advance, was the perspective that the entry would only serve to clean out all good left-wing elements in the SP, amalgamate them with the Trotskyist cadres and thus eventually permit the re-formation of an enlarged Trotskyist party. If this strain was at first submerged after the entry, it was virulently re-activated by Trotsky in 1937, and in fact set the pattern which was actually followed in the exit from the SP, with the help of the right wing SPers who were anxious to expel them anyway.

In effect this was the perspective of a "commando raid", though it does not seem to have been clearly formulated in advance by the Trotskyist leadership or all of them.

It goes without saying that a repetition of this disastrous course would be an unmitigated crime. Since this would be the strong opinion, I am sure, of every ISL member without exception. (as distinct from the SWP), I mention this only to eliminate it from the picture.

(2) But leaving aside the "commando raid" strain in the Trotskyist entry, the "good" current in the Trotskyist perspective was that which envisioned them as a loyal left wing seeking to transform the SP by a normal, majority vote into a revolutionary party. This was, of course, the open and avowed aim of the Trotskyist-led faction, the Appeal Group, accepted by all sides as legitimate, as indeed it was. Indeed, the then-leadership of the SP around the "Militants" had itself been just recently a left wing faction which had wrested the program and leadership of the party away from the "Old Guard". Open political debate in the party, open controversy, comradely conflict to see who could get a majority, may the best side win and take control of the National Committee or write the program of the party -- all this was accepted as normal, legitimate and responsive behavior for all concerned. And under the circumstances it was, or would have been. For the SP was alive, growing stirring, a healthy political organism, a real arena in which this sort of political struggle had a meaning. That was the '30s.

Anyone who thinks that this is or can be the perspective of Shachtman's dissolution-and-entry line today simply does not understand what is going on. Two moments thought, well applied, ought to show that such a perspective is out of the question for anybody. And in fact, Shachtman does not hold it.

## THE NATURE OF THE PROBLEM

It is precisely SP people who have expressed the fear that this is what an ISL entry today would mean. For as Norman Thomas quite frankly and vigorously explained at the SP convention last July, given what the SP is now adays the ISLers would be able to take over the party without any trouble, and rightaway or just about. Other SPers at that time explained to me why they believed it: their reasons had to do with an estimation of the ISL's forces and quality that was flattering, at least in comparison with thier estimation of the SP's. At the same convention, too, when the SP left-wing's motion for a unity conference was defeated, A.J. Muste was likewise quoted as taking a dubious view of SP-ISL unity on this ground.

Whatever one may want to say about objections to Socialist unity on such grounds, this much is clear: that if an entry were made on this basis, it would and could only lead to a split or the equivalent of a split. And any "unity" which leads to such an outcome would be a catastrophe -- not just for the SP but for ourselves. It is bad enough that the Trotskyist movement has one such on its conscience.

But this is exactly the poser for anyone in the League who thinks that Shachtman's "unity" can be or should be made with the normal perspective that was in order in the '30's: namely, that revolutionists join the party in order to "revolutionize" it or change its political character. That is excluded today, under these circumstances. It is excluded for Shachtman. It is not his perspective and not his proposal.

For it might be only too easy for an influx of ISLers to "take over" the SP-- if not organizationally, then politically-- that is, at any rate change its political character in the direction of the ISL's. That's not because of our great strength but because of the SP's extreme weakness, and because of certain well-known inadequacies of the SP's general membership and functioning. And that goes even though by "takeover" here, we mean take over entirely democratically and fairly both in letter and spirit.

## THE DANGER OF SUCCESS

The problem is not merely that of eschewing the disastrous split perspective ( or whatever it was) of 1937; that's no problem for anybody in the ISL. The problem isn't that of 1937 in any respect. For the "danger" is that no matter how we might "take over" the SP, such "success" would be meaningless at best, but in fact worse than meaningless. We would "take over" only ourselves and bring about only a new division. This would be senseless.

But more than that: from the point of view which shachtman holds, it would be a great error to change the right wing politics of the SP.



For Shachtman thinks of his "unity" perspective as setting up a movement, or a simulacrum of a movement, which appeals to the right. Part of the value of the SP, for Shachtman, is precisely its right wing appeal. Insofar as the SP becomes ISL-ish, it loses part of the very reason why Shachtman is so enthusiastic about dissolving into it now. This is another and even more basic reason why (per Shachtman) the ISLers must guard against changing the right-wing political character of the SP.

It is consistent with this that Shachtman fervently stresses that as far as he is concerned, the SP-SDF Terms of Unity, the political basis there laid down, are entirely acceptable to him also as the platform for a united SP.

So this present proposal of Shachtman's for dissolution-and-entry is like no other entry proposal you have heard of before: nor like any other "unity" proposal you are likely to think of under that label. This isn't to condemn it for that reason. It is to emphasize that you have to understand what it is that is being put before the League.

#### THE MINORITY RESOLUTION'S SOLUTION

This same problem is, of course, also the reason for the form which the Minority Resolution takes: that is, the Minority Resolution proposes a different solution of the same problem.

If unity is to be possible, it says--and that is by no means sure--it can be a healthy organizational merger, one that can endure, only on the basis of a definite prior agreement.

In essence, the nature of the agreement suggested in the Minority Resolution is the acceptance by the united organization of something like the broad character that we have sketched out for an all-in socialist regroupment (in the PC Statement on Policy or Resolution #2). In that conception, different socialist tendencies could co-exist in the same broad loose movement only on the basis of a very broad and general platform on certain crucial divisive issues: a platform general enough to avoid a clash between incompatible programmatic conceptions: a platform general enough to be a "neutral" umbrella over points of view equally legitimate in the united organization.

Of course, in that Statement of Policy, the problem that was met was that of the spread between the "Stalinoid" tendencies and the democratic socialist, particularly on the question of Russia.

In the case of unity (or entry) of the ISL and SP, the spread is that between Third Camp revolutionary socialism on the one hand, and pro-American camp social-democracy on the other. How shall these two tendencies be able to coexist in the same party -- not as warring Kilkenny cats, but in healthy and durable cooperation?

The Minority Resolution proposes the same type of solution. That is the meaning of the agreement which it proposes. If unity is possible, it is possible only in this basis. And on such a basis, unity would be a healthy and progressive step forward for the socialist movement.

What this means is that we propose to come to an agreement with the SP people not on common program (that is hardly possible) but on the type of organization in which we can live together. We do not propose to convince the SPers of our Third Camp politics: we do not propose that we concede to theirs. We propose that unity establish a kind of socialist organization in which these two politically disparate tendencies can coexist durably.

This in essence is precisely the proposal we make for "all-in" socialist regroupment. The Minority applies it also to the problem of the SP-ISL unity. This is the approach to be borne in mind in reading the Minority approach as it is detailed and elaborated in the resolution and in Comrade Haskeal's article in this bulletin.

#### AN IMPORTANT CONFESSION

But, argues Shachtman, very vehemently as if making a decisive point, it is ridiculous to think that the SP will even be willing to talk about such an agreement for unity; he scouts the very idea as absurd; the SP won't listen..... Therefore, continues Shachtman, you of the Minority are "really against unity..."

What is important here is what Shachtman is confessing by making this argument, which is a very prominent part of his case.

He is saying, in next to so many words, that if you are "really" for unity, you must be for some proposal that the SP is willing to accept now or soon.

But Why?

Shachtman's argument makes sense only for one who is convinced that "unity" must be consummated at any cost. And this does make sense in terms of Shachtman's perspective. But what if the only "unity" that the SP is willing to give ear to, especially to eloquent pleaders like Comrade Shachtman, is the kind of "unity" which is to be consummated by the ISL dissolving and applying for membership in the SP -- that is, not by any organizational merger such as the original PC resolution spoke of, but dissolution-and-entry, with the political prospect described?

So when Shachtman denounced the Minority Resolution because (as he claims) the SP wouldn't deign even to discuss its proposal for unity, he is telling us a great deal about his views.

Is he indeed for dissolution at any cost? Well, no,

naturally; we can all be sure that he would draw the line at a couple of things -- like the "anti-Leninist loyalty oath" which some SP humorists have talked about, or any requirement that he repudiate his political views. These scruples of Shachtman are a great comfort, but in mentioning them by way of example, we also illustrate the scope of his dissolution-and-entry proposal.

#### THE BURY-THE-ISL

This heart of the question was posed very well by a comrade at the New York discussion meeting of Feb. 20 who rose to support Shachtman's views. He gave a thoughtful and sober contribution to the discussion that notably helped it. "The position of Comrade Haskell /who had reported for the minority/ is really against unity," he argued, echoing Shachtman here, for the question is /he went on to say/ "Do you want unity enough to take it on Max's terms?"

This was, and is, a faithful reflection of the thinking embodied in Shachtman's proposal. This same comrade went on to make other remarks, in the same spirit of thinking-aloud, which likewise cast light on the issues. "The question," he argued, "isn't propagating the Third Camp point of view, but how to get a movement that can propagate the Third Camp point of view..." And he ended with a bon mot from Dr. Johnson: "Marriage has a great many problems but celibacy has no pleasures." In fact, his contribution was not only wittier than Comrade Shachtman's report, but also a good deal more enlightening in essential respects.

What this points one's attention to is an issue on the fate of the ISL which lies just beneath the surface of the formal counterposition of resolution. This is an opinion which deserves serious confrontation, no matter how deplorable we think it is. The opinion is: that a Third Camp Marxist propaganda group is not viable today any longer as an independent organization. "An end has to be put to our sectarian existence" (meaning our existence as an independent group), say voices. "The day of sects is over," they say, "we ought to make clear that we're just looking for someplace to dissolve into," it goes.

We need not pause over the meaning of this as it might apply to entry into the mass social-democracies in other countries, for this is not involved here; our views on that point, unanimous or near-unanimous, have been established for years. These increasing murmurs are referring to the need of giving up the ISL as outlived in this country now; of dissolving not into a mass social-democratic movement of labor, but into a right-wing social-democratic sect which, it is claimed, is not "a sect like us" because it has, or can have, an attractive appeal to the right, thus allowing "an opening to the right," etc.

Now anyone who has come or will come to the conclusion in his own mind that the ISL must go, will hardly care to worry about the kind of conception that is embodied in the Minority Resolution; now would I expect him to introduce a resolution stating "Resolved,

that we should look for someplace to dissolve the ISL into," especially if he thinks that the SP is as good a receptacle as any and doesn't have to be looked for; and so this discussion may take place on more than one level of argumentation. All the more reason for bringing out this issue into the open, so that the comrades can look at it. Every comrade will have to decide it in his own mind.

#### THE ISL'S ROLE

Now the ISL form of organization -- that is, to put it briefly, a Third Camp Marxist group as an independent group today -- is no sacred principled deduction from the precepts of Marxism. As Marx wrote: "If sects exist with a measure of historical justification for their existence, it but indicates that the working class has not yet ripened for an independent historic movement. But when the working class reaches maturity, all sects become a reactionary phenomenon". That is a basic thought for socialists. If the ISL exists with a "measure of historical justification", it is precisely because the American working class has not yet produced its independent political movement, because it is still a distance from this maturity.

By the same token, as long as this unfortunate situation is true, Marxists can not jump over their own heads. By the same token, the ISL has its "historical justification" -- namely, in the political role which it plays, as mentioned above.

It would be very easy, alas, to poke fun at this political role, for are we not tiny and uninfluential? Yes, we have often "admitted" that. But there is no proposal for us which, by some brilliant road hitherto unthought of, will make us big and influential. There is only a proposal before us to dissolve into another tiny and uninfluential sect; sweetened with the argument that this other sect, because it is right-wing, has prospects denied to us.

For myself, I will only remark on this that it is just as dubious as would be the proposition that the ISL had prospects of growing from a sect into a mass party on its present basis. Neither the ISL nor the SP nor a combination of the two has any prospect under today's circumstances of making the qualitative leap from sect to socialist movement; that will become possible only when the American labor movement takes the field as an independent political force; and the prospect may well be that only in the womb of a labor party movement will a substantial socialist regroupment take place that can wed together disparate and antagonistic tendencies. (The proposal in the Minority Resolution could do it, I believe, but whether it will is quite another matter.) For it is the mass labor movement that, then, will act as the cement to hold together ideologically disparate currents and, indeed, subordinate ideological differences to the general class struggle. That, after all, is the "secret" of the heterogeneity of the British Labour Party as an "all-in" socialist regroupment."

As we decided to view ourselves in 1949 when we abandoned the "party" designation and recognized ourselves as a propaganda group, it is in anticipation of this "regroupment" that we wish to play a political role now. We look forward to being a Third Camp Marxist tendency within a broad labor party; in this sense, truly we look forward eagerly to giving up our independent status, if (or in so far as) that will further the political role which is distinctively ours.

But this line of thought, well established among us, obviously cannot be carried over to a proposal to dissolve-and-enter into . . . the SP.

It is precisely the fact that we look forward to being a Third Camp Marxist tendency in a class-wide political movement, which we would seek to push to the left in an open, democratic struggle of opinion, that confers that "historical justification" on our political role today as an independent center of the cadres of this Third Camp tendency of tomorrow.

#### WHAT YOU GET FOR WHAT YOU GIVE

When therefore it is proposed that this independent Third Camp center be abandoned as untenable, and dissolved into the SP, what is decisive is a simple and old question; what you get for what you give . . . politically.

As for any comrade who thinks that a Third Camp Marxist center is not viable anymore as an independent group anyway, why, obviously then he won't feel that he's giving up much in getting behind Shachtman's idea of dissolve-and-enter. He will be understandably impatient with anything that stands in the way of early realization of the dissolution; for obviously an organization cannot long stand thus poised. He will ask, like the comrade at the New York meeting: "Do you want unity enough to take it on Max's terms?" But this question, by its own momentum, leads to another: "Do you want unity enough to take it on..... whose terms?"

I am ready any day in the week to give up the independence of the ISL, but only for something that will better permit us to play our political role as a Third Camp Marxist tendency on the American political scene, however modestly, and wherever we may be. Shachtman's aim to dissolve-and-enter the SP will do the reverse.

Indeed, it is already showing that it will do the reverse. True, Comrade Shachtman becomes understandably vehement in arguing that his proposal does not mean "capitulation" to social-democracy. He becomes highly scientific and precise in his definition of "capitulation", laying it down that it means only repudiation of one's views, which of course is out of the question. Well, one could get up a short but amusing dossier on how Shachtman has used that hapless term "capitulation" in the course of his differences with opponents inside the socialist

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movement; but what would that prove? Certainly nothing to Comrade Shachtman. So we must not and will not say that his proposal entails "capitulation" of any kind whatsoever.

Let us instead use a very precise term. What the consequences of the Shachtman line entail is a systematic political adaptation to social-democracy.

This is what is foreshadowed by the Majority's reluctance, or refusal, to include any criticism of the SP-SDF terms of unity in the report which was written for Labor Action (Jan. 28). This is what is foreshadowed when Shachtman actually praises the SP-SDF terms of unity as a platform basis for his "unity". This is what is foreshadowed when Majority supporters are stirred to ask what's wrong with putting our ideas "on the shelf" for a while.

No, Shachtman has not the slightest intention of repudiating his views. But who will be so "sectarian" as to object if they are bent, fitted, filed, rubbed down, carved, trimmed or cold-stored so as to ingratiate us as good-dogs with the SP right wing?

The Majority thinks of this perspective as a means of "lying low" until the hoped for radicalization or politicalization of the mass labor movement -- that is, lying on the shelf, or in semi-hibernation -- after which (they maintain) the SP will blossom and flower since it has that indispensable right-wing appeal . . . This is what accounts, let us say in passing, for the peculiar combination in their argumentation of seemingly very optimistic predictions about coming radicalization and their immediate goal of dissolving the ISL, which would be an otherwise incomprehensible conclusion from expectations of an upturn.

This is the heart of the issue about the fate of the ISL which is presented to the League under the label of "socialist unity."

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