

SPARTACIST LEAGUE

INTERNAL DISCUSSION BULLETIN

Material on Intermediate Industrial Work:

-Correspondence Exchange:

- a) Circular Letter by Chris Kinder, 14 May 1972
- b) Letter to Kinder by Judd Smith, 23 May 1972
- c) Letter to Smith by Chris Kinder, 10 June 1972
- d) Letter to Kinder by Judd Smith, received 21 June 1972

-Intermediate Industry--Extract of Minutes of Enlarged PB #50,
24-25 June 1972

-On the Skilled Trades Controversy by L. Davidson,
28 October 1972

Material on the Moore-Stuart Opposition:

-Foster-Moore Debate--Minutes of Boston Local Committee,
4 September 1972; with prefaced note by Boston
secretary, 23 October 1972

-Letter to Sam by Kevin F., 23 August 1972; with prefaced
note by the N.O., 27 October 1972

Discussion on the Woman Question:

-Reply to Seymour by L. Davidson, 16 September 1972

-Feminism and Marxism by Joseph Seymour, 16 October 1972
(with appendices from W&R no.1)

-Perspectives Toward a Communist Woman's Movement by Helene
Brosius, 27 October 1972

-The SL and the Woman Question by Liz Gordon, 28 October
1972; with endorsing motion by PB #58, 28-29 October 1972

Press Policy:

-Memorandum on Press Policy, adopted by PB #58, 28-29 October
1972

CORRESPONDENCE ON
INTERMEDIATE INDUSTRIAL WORK

edited material

Chris Kinder
New York

14 May 1972

All Areas

Dear Comrade(s) _____,

With a number of members in several areas in intermediate industry (II), plus the good possibility of a couple more recruits in another area and other reinforcements, our future fraction is our most important political work in the unions at this time. This letter is to report briefly on some of our work so far and begin laying the groundwork for a fraction.

The union presents a tremendous potential for political work. Seething discontent has reached the boilingpoint in many areas, oppositional political formations are growing, and there are even schisms developing in the cliquist and cynical bureaucracy. The workers are generally young, racially mixed and militant, and the industry is central to the U.S. economy, while at the same time being caught in vice-like contradictions of outmoded plant and foreign competition.

The union, although bureaucratic, is sufficiently open to make intervention possible. An opposition booth and some floor time, as well as radical paper sales and distributions inside the lobby--unheard of in more reactionary unions--were allowed at the recent National Convention. Furthermore, the main oppositional grouping nationally, the opportunist Caucus (o.C.) (the only organized left opposition on the convention floor), has been growing and provides an initial opportunity for recruitment to a principled caucus perspective--on the basis of a much-needed split in the o.C. Membership in the o.C. requires no agreement with anything; we could be o.C. "members," intervene in all their meetings, etc., while maintaining our own, independent caucus formation (this is in fact already done by many local caucuses which are vaguely "affiliated" to the o.C.)

Enclosed are copies of the leaflet we produced at the end of the convention and of a letter I recently wrote to Cde. Wes E. on IS trade union work; these two items complete this report. Our members in II, as soon as they become members of the union, should begin writing to the various oppositional groupings, particularly the o.C., another specific caucus, etc. asking for information, subs to caucus papers, etc. They should also, of course, follow the union articles in the ORO press, particularly Workers Power, Bulletin and Challenge. At a later date, letters to individuals may also prove useful in one way or another, such as probing the black caucus which has been providing speakers for Workers League rallies (all black caucuses are reactionary?! ...see Bulletins).

and developing contacts for our caucus.

From the official roll call of locals at the convention, caucus and ORO literature, I have prepared a key list of several score locals which because of size, political activity or close proximity to our branches bear observation and eventual contact by either our fraction or public members through sales, etc. This list is broken down by regions in which we have branches or members, plus a special list for the Mid-West (mainly the center of the industry and some other specific places). I listed virtually every local within a 50-mile radius of one of our branches; others were listed only if size or political activity warranted.

The first purpose of this list will be a mailing of an issue of our paper, which will contain a detailed feature article on the union. Organizers in every area are therefore requested to get the street addresses for these locals and send them to the NO. This can be done with phone books and "directory assistance," which will usually give an address if you ask for the phone number first.

Secondly, locals where we have II members or close contacts are being sent a bundle of the leaflet for trial distributions at the more important plants and/or locals. The third immediate task, of course, will then be to get the issue of the paper to as many II workers as possible. Key locations, both where we have members in and other areas (LA or Atlanta come to mind), should be aggressively and repeatedly pursued for contacts and subs to the paper. Finally, then, our fraction will have a well researched and annotated list of locals and plants for contacting and distributing caucus material.

The Mid-Western area, with our largest concentration of members in II and being closest to the center of the industry and the other Mid-West hot spots, will carry the largest burden in this work. It is up to this fraction particularly to monitor the o.C. and other industrial center-based caucuses and attempt to get to their larger meetings whenever possible (the o.C. has held national caucus meetings both during and in-between union conventions, and also co-sponsored an open conference on racism). Furthermore, the 1973 bargaining union convention will be held in the center of the industry. Between now and then, our public Mid-Western members should make a tour with the particular issue of the paper to the center of the industry and some of the other important areas in the Mid-West, hitting locals and plants. Furthermore, public Mid-Western members should send at least one person to sell, contact and observe at the larger caucus meetings and the union convention. Admission to the conventions requires merely a letter of credential from the managing editor, which will be provided.

Please discuss this letter with all fraction members and send comments and reports on the distributions.

Comradely greetings,

(Chris K.)

enc.

cc: all areas, files

Judson Smith
Midwest
May 23, 1972

Chris Kinder
New York City

Dear Chris,

In response to your letter of May 14, while it was not the letter I had hoped to receive (i.e., one in which the question of security for comrades doing trade union work was discussed in detail), it does provide a starting point for a discussion of that and other important points. At the other ORO educational, my initial position was that the t.u. comrades should not attend because their union was involved and they had not completed their probationary periods on their jobs. Jennings convinced me that was incorrect, that the comrades should attend for the education that they would receive there. I agreed to that, and the Mid-West area comrades decided that every comrade would attend, but only the open members would intervene.

At the educational, it developed that the open members there had insufficient forces to handle the intervention, that through a combination of laughter and ignoring people's hands, the other ORO was going to get through the conference without having to argue politics with the SL. I made a decision to intervene (it was obviously impossible to caucus with the open SL members for security reasons) as a simple t.u. militant and tried to kick a prominent member of theirs in the teeth for scabbing on the NYC teachers' strike.

Following the end of the day's session, the comrades agreed that such an intervention was correct and necessary, and that more of the same would have to happen the next day, at which time the t.u. comrades did everything but announce organizational affiliation. Two comrades spoke from the floor quoting Lenin and Trotsky, defending Lenin's position on self-determination and Trotsky's transitional program respectively, while I attacked the other ORO for having a reformist t.u. program and attacked the featured speaker for having no programmatic basis for his caucus and the o.C. for not passing the demand that the union support no Democratic or Republican candidates. I did not want to go so far beyond the politics of an "honest center person" while still only a probationary employee, but it seemed necessary at the time. Following the intervention, the comrades here (including the rep. from the center) agreed that what we did was correct.

As a result of that intervention, the other ORO and the featured speaker know very well who our people are and are hostile to us. Our attendance at o.C. meetings would be on the basis of being known supporters of the SL and could depend on our making some kind of a political apology and even mere attendance (except as spectators) would place us in an extremely uncomfortable political position, after the points we made about the featured speaker. I hope the remark "we could be o.C. "members"...while maintaining our own independent caucus formation" was merely a description of the

way the o.C. operates and not a suggestion that we enter that wretched, slimy little group. However, your remark that the o. C. "provides an initial opportunity for recruitment to a principled caucus perspective--on the basis of a much needed split" would tend to indicate an entry perspective, as splits are very hard to engineer from the outside.

In general, entry into a group involves a form of political support. Political support requires basic political agreement. We disagree with the o.C. on a break with the capitalist parties (they leave open the question of support to capitalist candidates), we disagree with the way they raise 30 for 40 (when it is not clearly raised in the context of a sliding scale of wages and hours, it can be turned into an economist more jobs/more money demand rather than a demand which places the burden of full employment on the capitalist system), they do not raise nationalization of industry or open the books and we disagree with the organizational structure of the caucus (membership is not based on agreement with a program). There is no basic political agreement between the o.C. and the SL.

Even if entry were politically principled, that orientation would still be incorrect for tactical reasons. The o.C. is an unprincipled bloc between a slimy radical, some bureaucrats in power, some bureaucrats out of power, and some aspiring bureaucrats. As you pointed out in your letter to Wes recently, there was one left oppositionist at the o.C. meeting at the union convention, and this one person was hostile to the SL. In order to justify entry into the o.C. on tactical grounds, you would have to prove the existence of elements recruitable to a principled caucus program.

The SL has a political orientation of work among ORO's because we are in basic agreement on our stated goal, i.e., a socialist society, the disagreements we have are tactical ones of how to reach that goal. On the basis of agreement on our stated goal, we can more or less easily assimilate members of ORO's whom we win over to our program. As for the ostensible oppositional organizations inside the t.u.'s, there is no such basic agreement. The o.C. contains opportunists, reformists, and possibly some naive militants and it does not recruit on the basis of socialist orientation. It stands a lot closer to the union bureaucracy than it does to the rank and file and I would argue that the average shop floor militant is better for our purposes than the average o.C.'er.

One point that needs to be made about the IS and the WL is not just that they maneuver in an unprincipled manner among the union bureaucrats and aspiring bureaucrats, but that such maneuvering, even if done on a principled programmatic basis, is sterile. These people are usually not of the quality of which revolutionaries can be made.

Even if the existence of elements recruitable to a principled program were proven, orientation towards splits in the o.C. would still be wrong. To fan out and do mass distributions at various locals around the Mid-West would give us contacts we do not have the resources to service. To attempt to set up caucus locals around some principled caucus program where there are no SL members would

be to court political disaster. It would mean creating some monster organization which we could not control--especially if we got a few operators from the o.C. We would scarcely even have time to run around capitulating to all the backward elements in the caucus, let alone winning them over to a principled political orientation. We have only a handful of members in II, many of them inexperienced in the party and in t.u. work. If we attempt to build too fast on that small base, we would be placed in the situation of trying to maneuver in an organization we created, because we would not have the political authority based on intense political struggle and political agreement that we would need for leadership.

What we should do for the moment is to try to build support for our caucus program on the shop floors in the factories where we have members. After building a strong base in those places we would be in a position to consider branching out to other factories and locals.

Besides considering your plan to be tactically unwise, I do not think that it can be implemented. You do not seem to realize what our resources are in our Mid-Western area. Loose as I want to play security (I want t.u. members to appear at public radical functions arguing for SL politics on all questions while not speaking as formal SL members), this does not include sale or distribution of SL literature in the Mid-West area and especially not at the union plants. To expect the RCY'ers to do that is utopian. After we managed to industrialize the majority of the RCY members, two comrades are barely keeping up with the campus work with the help of a high school RCY'er on weekends.

Our Mid-Western area Organizing Committee (I would point out that it is an OC instead of a local because it is not yet functioning at the level of a local) is extremely low on forces, especially politically experienced forces. The problem is not confined to this locality, although it is especially acute here. In general, a small organization is incapable of leading a real mass movement because the ties are always too slender. The point was made in the Turner/Ellens faction fight about the lack of collective SL leadership. The point, unfortunately, had considerable validity. In the intervening years, real collective leadership has been developed on a national level, but the next layer of political leadership is exceedingly thin. It is so thin that for regional leadership, which according to Comrade Robertson it takes five years to develop, here the organizer has less than two years in the SL. Due to political and organizational inexperience, we have a hard job here just trying to keep the OC from running off the rails and on top of that, you want us to be the key force in building a mass trade union base. That is absolutely incorrect, we should limit ourselves to exemplary t.u. work until we advance to a level qualitatively beyond our present size.

You want too much too fast and while the perspective I outline of working on the shop floor in the factories where we have comrades, linking these caucuses up nationally, and then branching out to the areas where we do not have members at this time, is the slow way to do it, it is also the only way we can build a solid working class base around the transitional program.

To state the obvious, there are basic differences being raised here. I think these differences should be discussed inside the organization, not just between NYC and here and would therefore urge that this letter be distributed to all centers. Conceivably this discussion could be considered part of the pre-national conference discussion of trade union work. This letter has been discussed with the comrades here and there is general disagreement that entry into the o.C. would be unprincipled and general agreement that the perspective you lay down for here is out of proportion to our size, experience and political priorities.

Comradely,

J. Smith

* * *

Chris Kinder
New York

10 June 1972

Judson Smith
Mid-West

Dear Judd,

The points in your letter of 23 May concerning the pace and course of development of the work of our II fraction were well taken, as were your tactical considerations on entry into the o.C. They were not significantly at variance with my own or other PB members' opinions. I was surprised, however, to find you reading so many errors into my letter of 14 May. Not only do you have me advocating an unprincipled entry into the o.C., but you think I want this in place of the basic SL strategy at this stage of exemplary trade union work based on caucus formations led by our members: "...you want us to be the key force in building a mass trade union base. That is absolutely incorrect, we should limit ourselves to exemplary t.u. work until we advance to a level qualitatively beyond our present size. You want too much too fast and while the perspective I outline of working on the shop floor in the factories where we have comrades...is the slow way to do it, it is also the only way we can build a solid working class base around the transitional program"! No wonder you conclude that "there are basic differences being raised here," with the SL program. My conclusion would have been the same, had I said any of these things!

I intend to clear up these misunderstandings with this letter. I also want to disagree with you, however, on some of your tactical conclusions and with your general criteria for entry work, which I think are erroneous. The latter point, while not immediately pertinent to our work, is very important and gives me a chance to discuss some points concerning Trotskyist work in the unions historically which I've been turning over in my head lately, for the benefit of the pre-conference discussion.

Admittedly, my letter of 14 May, particularly the third para-

graph, lends itself to a certain amount of misinterpretation, specifically over what kind of intervention in the o.C. and when. However, the purposes of the letter were, I think, clear. It was not intended to be a full discussion of our perspectives, but simply a brief report "on some of our work so far" and implementation of some immediate tasks. The latter had to do primarily with preparation for distribution of the issue of Workers Vanguard, for which a long article on II was planned. This required quick action on an initial report, the substance of which was really the letter to Wes, the leaflet, and the selected list of union locals. I intentionally left a full perspectives discussion to the Political Bureau, which had already planned a meeting to discuss the II work. Therefore, I considered a reference to "our own, independent caucus formation," which requires the building process of "working on the shop floor in the factories where we have comrades," sufficient to place my remarks within the generally well documented context of the SL program on trade union work.

Your only references to sales of the particular WV at the II plants, which raises the question of outside support work in general, were to point out that union members couldn't do this because of security, and, "to expect the RCY'ers to do that is utopian." The latter point refers, presumably, to the numerical weakness of the RCY in your area rather than to any principled objection to the RCY doing sales and outside support work for our trade union fractions. The "thin" character of local leadership in general, and the particular numerical weakness of your area are valid observations, but why no assessment of the situation in light of the PB's plan to reinforce your area with at least two more RCYers (in addition to another party comrade), which was one of the topics of discussion during Cde. Jennings' visit? The plans for reinforcement were an immediate reaction here to the successful industrialization of the RCYers in your area; the PB was determined to maintain a viable branch there, including the minimum necessary for public work. Is it still "utopian" to consider plant sales of WV?

Of course there was never any intention in anyone's mind to have union members do paper sales or any other form of work publically identifying them as SL members. The number of people presently in II if in any fraction is a de facto heavy commitment of our forces, however, and our II fraction may go beyond that. It is therefore an important task for the rest of the organization to do outside support work, especially sales of Workers Vanguard at II plants, which should become as regular an event as possible in all areas. This is good and necessary work for increasing the discipline and consciousness of especially the newer RCY'ers. Contacts can and should be called upon for this as well. Even if immediate reinforcement of your area were impossible, I would still say that while it might be difficult, the two or three RCY'ers you have, plus any contacts they can mobilize, should make at least a few sales at one or two of the more important plants in the area with the special issue.

The PB discussion of 20 May on trade union work concentrated heavily on II, but since another discussion is planned for an expanded PB on the weekend of 24-25 June, I will just summarize some of

the main points of the earlier discussion. The discussion centered on plans for the fraction over the next six months to one year, and some possibilities ranging beyond that. The assumption was, of course, that work would begin slowly, after our members were in the union, in building up caucuses locally, then linking them up nationally, and finally coming out with a national caucus paper such as in transport. Within this framework, the expressed desire was for us to surface in this way with our own caucus and paper as soon as possible within a year (which would put it before the next union convention and contract discussion next spring). Your area--beefed up beyond its present size, naturally--was the indicated center of the future national fraction, both because of the size and character of the fraction there, and because of proximity to the Mid-West II centers. Intervention (not formal entry) in the o.C. was seen as one of the tasks of the fraction, for the purpose of splitting or recruiting whatever healthy elements were available as well as combatting ORO's.

None of the above was viewed as in any way contradictory to a number of points made by Cde. Robertson about the work, specifically, that beginning a caucus is not done by leaping in with a leaflet on the first day after one attains membership in the union, but is done as a natural outgrowth of struggle against the bureaucracy in the local through which one first becomes a familiar figure; and that an orientation toward power blocs in groups such as the o.C. was to be avoided as especially dangerous for a new, small caucus. The PB also generally agreed that in order to ensure the production of a stable, functioning caucus during this period--one which is able to function politically despite the extreme rigors and danger of lay-offs in II work--we should continue to run as many comrades as possible through the attempt to get hired in the areas where we already have future fractions. We will thereby maximise our chances that a sufficient number will survive the lay-offs and begin to build up seniority in jobs they can handle. Finally, a speculation was made that perhaps, for the next period of II work (i.e., probably after a year or so of development) we might want to colonize the center of the industry, although there was not unanimity of thinking on this point.

In my letter of 14 May, I had the same timetable of development in mind; perhaps some of the confusion in your mind as to what I was advocating came from too sharp a juxtaposition between the few immediate tasks I was primarily concerned about and a few longer range tactical ideas I wanted to mention. Nevertheless, the period of the next six months to one year is not so far in the future that we should not now consider, for a new fraction that will be doing our most important political work in the unions, many of its specific tasks. I would reiterate, for instance, that a tour by public comrades to the center of the industry and other important mid-west II areas with the special issue of WV (as well as the current issue for that month, of course), sometime between now and the next union convention, is most likely quite possible and should be considered. In addition, it is necessary to begin planning and collecting information now (largely through sales of the paper and other public work) for various tasks of the caucus which will become important later (such as giving it a greater public face within the union by leafleting plants other than those in which we have members).

I continue to maintain that one of the tasks of the caucus which will become important later is some form of intervention with regard to the o.C. Exactly what form this will take tactically is open to question. In any event, it will unquestionably be a subordinate part of our over-all task of building and recruiting to our own, independent caucus, in which we may very well find that, "the average shop floor militant is better for our purposes than the average o.C.er." The fact remains, however, that the relationship of forces is such that the o.C., or some similar left-reformist grouping replacing it, will be an obstacle to our growth for an indefinite period. It will reach many shop floor militants with whom we will have no direct point of contact, as will the ORO's that are currently in or around it. Of course the o.C. is a "slimy little group" and an unprincipled bloc between would-be bureaucrats and would-be radicals, but you are forgetting its central purpose, which is to tie the militants and radicals in the union to the left wing of the bureaucracy and to reformism. It is already succeeding in doing this to some extent, as evidenced by the wide range of degrees of commitment to its full program within it and the large number of ill-defined caucus members and individuals who attended and simply observed its meeting at the last union convention (about 50 total attended this meeting, not counting a large number of outsiders). To ignore groups such as this would be no less an error than to turn work in them into a strategic orientation instead of a tactic, as does the IS.

You say, "The SL has a political orientation of work among ORO's because we are in basic agreement on our stated goal, i.e., a socialist society, the disagreements we have are tactical ones of how to reach that goal...As for the ostensible oppositional organizations inside the t.u.'s, there is no such basic agreement." This is gobbledegook. To say that we have "basic agreement" on stated goals with the ORO's has about as much meaning as to lump Scheidemann, Noske, Luxemburg and Liebknecht together as different varieties of "socialist." As far as recruitment goes, while it is true that we can recruit from the ORO's partly because of their ostensible socialism, it is nevertheless an alternate strategy--the conquering of power by the proletariat--, not tactic, that we offer. The same holds for oppositional caucuses, with whom we have the same "basic agreement, if you want to call it that, of "reforming the unions," to which we offer their militants the alternate strategy of replacing the reformist bureaucracy with revolutionary leadership. Because we can form caucus formations with the better militants on the basis of this strategy and the Transitional Program without necessarily obtaining prior agreement on the full SL program, your schema would seem to make more sense in reverse, in the long run.

The same schematism characterizes your approach to the specific question of o.C. entry and its implications for general criteria. I agree with you that formal entry into the o.C. is undesirable for tactical reasons at this time, although our basis of assessment could change between now and when we are able to implement this position (i.e., after our caucus is established and when the o.C. has national meetings again, which probably won't be much before the next union convention). This is based partly on my observation of their extreme organizational looseness, which would allow us to be members without agreeing to anything, but which would also allow us to intervene

effectively enough as technical "outsiders" in their larger national meetings. However, you assert that entry into the o.C. would be unprincipled because it 1) fails to rule out support for individual Democrats or Republicans, 2) raises "30 for 40" in an insufficient or reformist manner, 3) fails to raise nationalization of industry or "open the books," and 4) has a loose organizational structure.

This approach is formalist and wrong. A grouping within the labor movement is not the same as an organization which crosses class lines, such as NPAC/SMC. In the case of the latter, or of a working-class party in a popular front government, we are against entry on principle because the link with the bourgeoisie dominates and prevents the discussion and thrashing out of program on a class basis, i.e., what course the working class should take in its struggle with the bourgeoisie. Organizations that are clearly within the labor movement can be entered as long as we don't compromise or subordinate our program in the process.

Thus, in the case of the o.C. at the present time, entry would be principled unless it implicated us in any way in 1) use of the bourgeois courts against the unions, support for which is extended by the o.C. to various frustrated bureaucrats, 2) support of one wing of the bureaucracy against another in a general split, towards which the o.C. is clearly headed, or 3) of course, support for any bourgeois candidate in the elections. In other words, entry is not based on complete political agreement, which would be Oehlerism, but on conditions which continue to allow us to struggle freely for our program, unhindered by political compromise.

In 1946, Reuther made a drive for power in the UAW by moving programmatically to the left in a real sense--i.e., actually supporting key slogans in the interests of the workers against the rest of the bureaucracy such as "open the books," "wage raise without price rises" and "negotiations in public"--; but only going just far enough to place himself at the head of the post-war strike wave during the GM strike and from there into the UAW presidency. Basically no different than the other UAW and CIO bureaucrats, he had sold out on the no-strike pledge during the war, and after winning the UAW election he became a typical reformist and a rabid anti-communist. However, during the GM strike, he was clearly leading in some of the political interests of the workers and was the focus of attack of all the other UAW and CIO bureaucrats in their efforts to channel the strike wave in a safe direction. His caucus, with its partial transitional program--in this respect no different from the o.C., which also includes some points and leaves out others--was thus both a real reflection of the interests of the ranks and clearly a vehicle for the personal power of a new reformist bureaucrat. Was the Trotskyist entry in order to reach the many advanced workers in the caucus unprincipled? By your criteria it would have been, since the program was incomplete. Numbers don't change this.

Since the SWP's trade union work during this period was not a perfect model by any means, it is worthwhile to diverge here for a moment and examine what was wrong with their work, in order to both correct errors and avoid over-reaction. There is no lack of indications of serious problems in connection precisely with the various

blocs and caucus-entry tactics undertaken by the SWP in the unions. In the discussions between SWP leaders and Trotsky on trade union work and the elections in 1940 (published as the pamphlet "Stalinism and Trotskyism in the USA" by New Park), he accused the SWP leaders of adapting "to a certain degree" to the trade union bureaucracy by being in such a close bloc with the "progressives" against the Stalinists that they had lost ability to maneuver independently. This led to an abstentionist position in the elections and inability to seize the opportunity presented by the temporary left turn of the CP during the Hitler-Stalin pact. Furthermore, some of the SWP's blocs were more dubious than others, such as their switch from the Reuther caucus to Thomas-Addes, the ousted former leadership, in reaction to Reuther's bloc with right-wing forces and bureaucratism after becoming president. The Thomas-Addes caucus represented the former leadership and in no sense reflected a real thrust of the ranks against the bureaucracy.

Cannon, as well as other SWP leaders, reflected on the implications of some of this practice during the Cochran fight in 1953, when he denounced Cochran's method as one of trade-union "power politics," coming "...from the school of the labor fakers, not from ours." What was the nature of this "school"? "Factional struggles in the trade unions...have been power struggles, struggles for office and place, for the personal aggrandizement of one set of fakers and the denigration and discreditment of the other side." (Cannon, "Some Facts About Party History--and the Reasons for its Falsification," Internal Bulletin, Vol. 15, No. 19, Oct. 1953.) SWP practice over the previous 10-15 years was at least partly responsible for the split under Cochran of trade unionists and others representing 20% of the party. It was not the tactic of occasional blocs, or the specific acts of entry into various left-reformist caucuses that caused the problem, however; it was how the SWP used these tactics and approached trade union work in general.

In the 1940 discussion, Trotsky, though he accused the SWP leaders of "pursuing a trade union policy not a bolshevik policy" nevertheless endorsed the original bloc with the "progressives": "We tried to penetrate the trade unions with their (progressives') help. This was a correct maneuver, I believe." His argument was not against blocs or entries, but that the SWP leadership was allowing what should have been a temporary tactic to turn into a permanent strategy. In fact, he pointed out that were it physically conceivable, entry into the CP at that point would have been desirable.

The lack of an over-all conception of always struggling for power, in whatever arena, and in an exemplary fashion when actual power is unattainable, was, I believe, the real problem with the SWP's trade union work. Though it was not the case in their general political position by any means, in the trade unions the SWP leadership seemed to have a conception of impotence based on size: if it was impossible to go directly to leadership, i.e., hegemony, in the unions, then it was necessary to make a bloc. They tended, I think, to see the bloc not as an occasional tactic in an on-going struggle for power, but as a substitute for it. "In the food unions," said Cannon in the 1940 discussion, "there was an inchoate opposition to the Stalinists. There were office seekers, progressives, former CPers. We have only a few

people. We must link ourselves with one or the other to come forward...Two things can compromise us. One, confusion with the Stalinists. Two, a purist attitude. If we imagine ourselves a power, ignoring the differences between the reactionary wings, we will remain sterile." Trotsky argued for a clear orientation towards being a "third competitor" for power, but Cannon's attitude here remained largely typical of the SWP's trade union work. Only when all blocs were ruled out by gross political betrayal, such as during the war, when all the bureaucratic factions lined up behind the no-strike pledge and the war, did the SWP adopt a course for an independent caucus.

Thus the SWP did make many specific errors which we should criticize, flowing from a doctrinaire approach to program, tactical inflexibility, as well as a tendency to give "critical support" to bureaucrats who were essentially no different than their opponents. Reviewing the history confirms, for instance, our policy of never supporting one wing of the bureaucracy against another, but only supporting those movements which, while they may contain "lesser-evil" bureaucrats, genuinely express the real interests of the rank-and-file and strengthen the struggle against the bureaucracy as a whole. However, entering caucuses that don't have our full program, making occasional blocs and critically supporting genuine "lesser-evils" are not in themselves errors when they are tactically called for in the course of building a revolutionary leadership around a communist cadre in the unions.

As I mentioned earlier, most of the above is not immediately pertinent to our present union work. I should reiterate the point made by Cde. Robertson with which I fully agree: now is no time for "power blocs." Such an attitude now would be the most unserious games playing in place of the serious work of launching our caucus. And again, while entry into the o.C. would not be politically unprincipled in itself, it would be tactically inadvisable at this time not only because a sufficient level of intervention can probably be achieved without it, but also because of the need, especially at the beginning, of sharply counterposing principled, revolutionary-transitional politics as embodied in our independent caucus to the garbled mush represented by the o.C. It is in this sense, not as "criteria" for principled entry, that your points of differences we have with the o.C. program are a perfectly valid tactical consideration: given the relative minuteness of both ourselves and the o.C., the full program assumes the maximum importance. Entry is not a "sell-out" of our program, but at this time we must emphasize our distinctiveness.

I hope, then, that there really are no "basic differences" here. Now is not the time for "power blocs" and now is not the time for basic differences on these questions, either. We must be careful, going into a pre-conference discussion, to guard against the premature outbreak of factionalism based on misunderstandings or less. This can be very dangerous if not checked.

On security, while it sounds as though you may have pushed the limits a bit at the other ORO educational you mention, I don't think there are any major differences, since I, too, want to play

it as close as possible so as to maximize recruitment to the SL. I hope there will be more to say on this at the 24-25 June PB. There were one or two other minor tactical disagreements I had with your letter, which I will also leave to that meeting.

Comradely greetings,

(Chris K.)

cc: SLNO
file

* * *

Smith
Mid-West
[received 21 June 1972]

Chris Kinder
New York City

Dear Chris,

Your letter of June 10 made a bad impression on me. It seemed to be more of an attempt to prove that you are right, always have been right and by implication always will be right, rather than an attempt to clarify and resolve political disputes.

To begin with, on plant sales. The point about "to expect RCY'ers to do that is utopian" does in fact refer to numerical weakness here, as the next sentence of my letter made explicitly clear. Why no assessment of the situation in light of the PB's plan to reinforce our area? People who have been promised to us do not make sales. The particular issue was the immediate question... Obviously, I was not projecting numerical weakness for the local SL until infinity, just for the particular issue of the paper and probably for the summer months here. Another comrade is here now, and he and our high school RCY'er have been doing plant sales in the city by the way. In general, I agree with your evaluation of the need for outside support work and would only add that an SL political presence locally comes before t.u. work here.

As to your perspectives for building a caucus, it was my impression that you wanted to build a real national caucus (25 people, say) out of comrades, whatever could be ripped from o.C. and from whatever contacts we could pick up through WV sales, or leaflet distributions at the union plants. In light of your timetable for development of the caucus, having a national press within a year, it seemed that the above was the only reasonable interpretation of your remarks. If this was a confusion in my mind caused by too sharp a juxtaposition of ideas in your letter, it was shared by the other comrades in the OC here. Perhaps your vague formulations would have been clear to someone who had been in the center to hear the discussion, we are not all so fortunate. In discussing this, I sloppily referred to it as a "mass trade union base," which presented an opportunity for misunderstanding or distortion of my position. 25 people seems like mass work sometimes, it's a lot more than we have

anywhere else in the t.u.'s.

My objection to that tactic was that in such a caucus our comrades would be in a minority in the caucus in a situation where they had not established leadership and authority in day to day work with their fellow caucus members. My view is that in general all union members outside of cities where we have caucus members should be treated as SL contacts, and should not be encouraged to set up local sections of whatever national caucus we eventually form, at least in the beginning stages. If we have a real national caucus closely linked to the SL, we could take in some outsiders, but not before then.

In that context, plant sales in plants where we have people are especially important as a form of outside support, as are plant sales in other plants in the cities where we have people. The center of the industry is far less important, at this time, as are the other large union plants in the midwest you apparently wanted us to cover.

To reply to a couple of your comments that I would like to lump together, "They were not significantly at variance with my own or other PB members' opinions" (emphasis mine), and "None of the above was viewed in any way contradictory to a number of points made by Cde. Robertson..." Of course we value highly the experience of the leading SL comrades, but political questions are not settled by whomever has the backing of the PB or national chairman. Incidentally, your claim to this backing differs from other reports I have received from the center, as does your claim that my letter raised no significant tactical differences regarding our union work. If we agree on fundamentals, however, it does not make any real difference.

On the question of whether entry into the o.C. is a matter of principle or tactics, I wish to withdraw the statement about principle. If I insist this is a matter of principle, then so is the French Turn, entry into the Labor's Non-Partisan League, entry into any labor party formation, etc., and these have not been so characterized by Trotsky and Cannon. I yield on this point to accepted Trotskyist terminology. Principles are formulated to guide us in our work, in my attempt to generalize non-entry into o.C. into a principle, I did drift into formalistic rigidity. Your comments, however, fail to clarify the question of entry.

Entry into some kind of mass upsurge that has not yet codified a program is different from entry into something like o.C. The o.C. is an unfinished political form in the same sense that a still-born baby is an unfinished life-form. Obviously, if it contained masses of workers in political motion in its ranks (as did Reuther's UAW grouping in 1946), the situation would be different. In that case, the masses of workers in motion would be a more important defining characteristic than the formal program. Program, however, does remain a factor. There is a point beyond which we cannot go in our support without drifting into economism. Your formulation "genuinely express the real interests of the rank and file" hardly serves as an effective guide line. The real interests of the rank and file are socialist revolution, logically then, we can only support revolutionary socialist movements. The Workers League argues that reforms are

impossible under capitalism today, and therefore any struggle for reform is automatically revolutionary, which lets them support anything they want. My personal formulation of not the o.C. or anything like the o.C. is too vague to be an operable guide line.

On the question of work among ORO's, the only gobbledegook here is what you have introduced. We do lump ORO's together, not as "socialist," but as "ostensible revolutionary organizations." There is some kind of basic defining characteristic here, if I have not caught it with "basic agreement on our stated goal" then, nevertheless, it still exists. The same characteristic does not exist for oppositional caucuses, most of which do not break with the capitalist system. Our goal is to build communist cadre in the trade unions, in order to make a communist revolution, which is not in basic agreement with what an Art Fox is trying to do now, or what Reuther was trying to do in 1946.

On that last point, let me go on to your comment about premature outbreaks of factionalism based on misunderstandings or less. That seemed comical after your preceding letter. In my letter of May 23, I was faced with the problem of seeing what I viewed as serious mistakes coming from the center. I have no real political authority anywhere outside of this area and do not have the ear of the national leadership. My only recourse was literary, and I made my comments as sharp and hard as possible because I wanted you to back away from what I felt were incorrect positions, positions you now claim you never held. In that context, I deliberately chose to give your unclear comments the worst possible interpretation because I believed that there were basic differences being expressed, and it was the worst possible interpretation of your remarks that concerned me. Never, however, did I use the word "gobbledegook" or refer to confusion in your mind. I would point out that a vicious, sneering writing style can be useful, but should be saved for factional situations. If, however, you wish to conduct our political relationship on that level, I have some nice formulations which I reluctantly edited out of the preceding letter, in the interests of a continuing friendly political relationship.

Comradely greetings,

J. Smith

Extract of POLITICAL BUREAU MINUTES (No.50).....24 June 1972
First Session

Present: PB: Gordon, Kinder, Nelson, Robertson, Samuels (RCY),
Seymour, Treiger
full CC: Brosius, Foster (Boston), Schaefer (RCY)
alt CC: Carter (L.A.), Jennings, Kelley
staff: Cantor, Rogers, Ryan
RCY NB: Cramer, Kamkov
Other: D-1124, Judy K. (Boston), Linda (Midwest), M-1124,
P-1124, R-1124, Smith (Midwest)

Absent: PB: Cunningham (on assignment)
alt CC: Benjamin (on assignment)

Meeting convened 3:00 p.m.

Agenda: 1. Organization of Meeting
2. Leninist Faction
3. Intermediate Industry
4. International

1. Organization of Meeting: This is a very large meeting; all four 1124ers are present, Smith and Linda from Midwest, and 2 members of the youth NB are here. Judy K. attends because she is leaving for Europe shortly. All these comrades should remain for the main political points under discussion; the Leninist faction, Intermediate Industry, and International; the technical points and national conference should be as closed as possible, so that only one 1124er should attend that session. Smith should also remain, as Midwest has no CC members.

Motion: To adopt the outlined procedure on attendance. passed

Motion: On the II point, to have Kinder and Smith give one half hour presentations, Kinder going first as reporter. To hold over the business points on minutes and membership applications to tomorrow's meeting. passed

2. Leninist Faction:...

3. Intermediate Industry:

Presentation by Kinder:

It is becoming clear that our II fraction is our current most important TU fraction and a tremendous opportunity for us. We have major national perspectives in 4 unions, in order to maximize our impact in exemplary TU work. We have colonized a real national network in the II. We're finding that the milieu is relatively fluid, and that the ORO's are interested in this union and in some areas, e.g. Northern California, there is a lot of ORO work to be done. Mid-New England is an exception to that. We have had a good response to WV sales at the plants. The central role of the union in industry and in the American economy is important, and makes it a good union to be in, although the work is physically grueling for the comrades. PB #49 contains a record of previous discussion on this union.

We have a perspective of running a lot more people through the hiring procedure, in order to get a net increase as well as maintain our present strength, as we will have a certain loss due to lay-offs,

attrition, the demanding nature of the work, etc.

On the dispute between myself and Smith; I think if there really was a tendency on my part to make opportunist power blocs, or on Smith's part to avoid all intervention in other caucuses, then we'd have a real dispute, but I don't believe either tendency to be the case.

In my capacity as Trade Union Director, I wrote a circular on our II perspectives, and a section of that is written in a misleading way. The circular was an attempt to do too many things at once, and I put in things which more properly belonged in a perspectives document. I did this because, since we'll be entering pre-conference discussion soon I thought it was appropriate and also I was speculating on how we might have intervened at the recent union convention had we had a functioning caucus. That circular led Smith to believe I had a perspective of an immediate entry into the o.C.; which I did not mean to suggest. When I mentioned the possibility of an entry into the o.C., I didn't mean that we would bury ourselves by a deep entry; but only a shallow one, while maintaining our own independent caucus. I had written "we could be o.C. members"--I now think what would be called for is a strict intervention; in no case did I intend it as an attempt to make power blocs or to cut across our own caucus. I wrote a letter to Wes in the Midwest about TU work, which makes clear I have no illusions about the nature of the o.C.--I criticized it severely, said it was a hodge-podge, and IS goes along uncritically, etc.

Another problem with the circular was that it was unclear whether it was an official TU Commission document or written on my own initiative--although members of the TU Commission who read it didn't have anything to say about it, it was not formally a product of any body. I think in future all circulars out of the N.O. should be official, not individual efforts.

Smith's second letter on the II question had some contradictions. In his first letter he said it was utopian to have the RCYers doing plant sales, yet in the second letter he said they were doing it. On the schedule for the development of the caucus, there's an obvious misreading of what I indicated--Smith assumes we must have at least 25 people before we can have a real national caucus; where did you get that figure from? The transport caucus paper is the paper of a real caucus, and there's less than 25 people there, but it's still a real paper and a real opposition in the union.

Within a year we should begin functioning as a caucus--if Smith objects to that timetable, we should discuss that. His local area is the natural center for the caucus leadership.

On my claiming PB backing for my position; my reaction to your first letter was different from that of the other PB members, but I did see that your letter was a healthy corrective, although I noted a tendency on your part to try to drive a knife in, and an unnecessarily hostile tone.

Presentation by Smith:

I don't think there are any basic disagreements over tactics or principles. The circular was open to different interpretations, and you're probably right that I should have taken a more questioning attitude--but instead I interpreted it as meaning you wanted a loose and broad caucus, not loose in its program, but one without strong links to the SL. I thought you wanted to go into the o.C. and rip off people and develop the caucus in areas where there were no SLers.

The number of 25 people was purely arbitrary--I just chose it. Yes, you can have a press with only a small caucus. But the real question is, do you want to build caucus locals where there aren't any SL members? No; I argue against that, at least not in the early stages of development.

On entry into the o.C.; the principle I tried to formulate was rigid and wrong, and became sectarian. My reaction came right after I had seen another ORO presenting a notorious o.C. spokesman and I didn't want anything at all to do with that guy! That ORO was also trying to blur the lines between us and them. If we did enter the o.C., that ORO would be able to use that to blur the lines between us, even though we'd enter only to criticize and they do it uncritically. Another reason for my hostile reaction in the letter is that I work all week plus Saturday and every other Sunday, and I'm the SL local organizer and I'm worried and thin-skinned.

Problems with our local area: Wes is the no. 2 guy there and his only organizational training comes from my yelling at him--he lacks any experience in an SL center, and there's no collective leadership. There's only me being a kind of tyrant. I'm effective at that but I don't know how good that is and I'm nervous--we need a CC member in our area. I'm also party rep. to the youth--the youth NB ought to keep more of an eye on Wes. And now I'm supposed to be trade union director there too. Steve and Linda's arrival will take the burden off me somewhat, but we still need more experienced cadre. I will still have to go to the study groups, etc. We have potentially very valuable youth, but I don't know enough to train them and the local area is vital to us.

Discussion:

Seymour: What we want in our trade union work is parallel to what we want in other areas of work; that is, to be a clear pole of attraction, with politics which confirm to experience in struggle in that arena--we always want a clear-cut identity. Smith's letter contained the implicit assumption that we are interested in recruiting on a fairly low level. The "average shop-floor militant" is a meaningless phrase. A "militant" pure and simple is the lowest level of political development.

On the o.C.--in general we orient toward national oppositions, as the political consciousness of their membership is on a higher level, and represents a transcending of parochial backwardness. An

investigation of the Black Workers Congress and other black groups in the industry should be a high priority in our II union work. Politically the BWC is probably the main industrial center of black radicalism.

The caucus program is the basis for mass struggle--the people we intend to recruit should be on a higher level of development. Smith is opposed to having caucus members in isolation, but once again that's assuming we're recruiting politically inexperienced people. I don't believe we want to recruit on a lower level in the caucus than in any of our other work. Smith was recruited essentially in isolation. Our work should be directed at the most conscious radical elements, with a long term perspective. There is a left in the labor movement, and what we say and do now may bear fruit not immediately, but in long term impact, on, for example, CPers, black nationalists, etc. in the industry. This union work should be seen as part of our general revolutionary regroupment perspective.

Gordon: I believe it is principled to enter any working class organization, if the intention of the entry is to smash and split the organization. I accepted Smith's contribution as being extremely valuable, with that provision. The SL has always insisted that if we undertake caucus work without a seasoned and hard cadre it can be a serious mistake to try to do a lot of maneuvering. If we do it without adequate political preparation it can blur our own impact and shore up opportunists. Smith was too intemperate, and the heat was unjustified in this particular case, but we jumped on the opportunity to have a good discussion and get him into the center.

I feel there was a real difference on the timetable for developing the caucus. I was glad Smith pointed out that Kinder was too impatient, and I think the rest of us shared that impatience. Feel also Kinder showed a formalism towards the o.C. (as did we). I don't accept the fact that it is the existing vanguard of opposition in the union, don't think it has much of a real membership, but seems to be a series of blocs between local bureaucrats. The question to ask is do local militants look toward it in a favorable manner? Is the o.C. an obstacle between us and them? We must determine exactly how the o.C. is seen inside the union. I have tended to downplay the o.C., and orient instead to strongly developing our own independent presence.

I want to stress the necessity to simultaneously bombard the union with the full SL propaganda from the outside while building our caucus--this will require strong leadership and coordination. I don't want the union work seen purely in terms of the caucus. We do not build caucuses primarily as recruiting devices, but as exemplary work in the class. The SSEU was a failure because we did not manage the simultaneous tasks of being a hard communist opposition as well as doing direct recruitment. We must raise the SL presence from the outside quite strongly--we never thought the caucus alone would do a lot of direct recruitment. That is one reason we can't put more than 1/3 of the org. into union work--in addition to the high priority of party building and developing campus fractions. If

it were true that it was easier to recruit directly from TU caucus work, we wouldn't need such a sharply defined level of personnel commitment.

Nelson: I believe there is a difference of substance. Kinder, in his attempt to consolidate a caucus in this union as quickly as possible, displays a preoccupation with the o.C. that bothers me. He says a formal entry is tactically undesirable at this time, and talks of a "partial transitional program"--that's like being "almost pregnant." There's no such thing! On the level of principle, no it is not a violation to enter a class organization, but I believe Kinder seriously over-estimates the o.C. We can try power blocs at a certain point, but he says it is tactically undesirable now--but given Kinder's own description now, I think it would also be unprincipled, and become essentially a left-center coalition. I think there is an opportunist core to your attitude to o.C.

I consider it axiomatic that, especially in the beginning, we don't have a caucus without a core of party cadre. We must treat the people we sell to from the outside as SL contacts. This union work is new to us--the experience in transport was different. Jennings was in there for seven years, and that caucus paper reflects a certain authority and knowledge. SSEU was an atypical situation, white collar, very open to radicalism--we must be very careful in II, cautious and slow, but not overly so. Even with a younger membership now in that union, it will still take a lot longer to establish credentials. Individual members must establish credentials in each shop, which takes some time. The work will require very tight coordination. Our main task in the next year is to have something in that union. We must build our fraction and then our caucuses, and we've got a long way to go. We've got to be competition for the o.C.

Brosius: It's very clear that the II orientation has meant a big change for the SL locals, and if we're going to accomplish it successfully, we can't take the attitude that it's just one more area of work. The locals must make a conscious attempt to back up comrades working--people burning out quickly can be a tremendous problem, and the local must be sensitive to it, help integrate the work, etc.

What level of cadre should be sent in? We can't pick and choose who is going to get hired; we have to send in a mass of people and get in who we can, so we can't always get experienced cadre in. In Northern California, I thought the best we could get in was middle-level cadre, and what we've tended to get has been RCYers and contacts--2 contacts joined us on the basis of their TU work. The local has had a tug-of-war between the trade union implantation and the RCY. We need to have men in that union, as chauvinism is rampant. We must rip more people out of other areas of work or else it won't go right.

I thought it was wrong to hand out the first leaflet to the union, on their recent convention, with all that emphasis on the WL. Paper sales were good I thought.

24 June 1972

The o.C. doesn't exist in N. California. Most caucuses only activate right before conventions. We must begin to develop a program for the industry, also need to develop the cadre. On the regroupment aspect of it; the exemplary character of our TU work is very important to us, and has already been good for the N. Calif. local.

Is the o.C. like TURF in the Teamsters? We should at least definitely have a literary intervention. If we get a big caucus and they develop fast, maybe then o.C. would be an obstacle.

Schaefer: The TU director should have the authority to send out his own circulars. The problem with that union is developing cadres. We sent a lot of random comrades into Mid-Atlantic states II. This is a bad situation.

We should be very careful in thinking about entry into o.C. How they define themselves, or what a caucus is, also has political implications.

Am glad Seymour pointed out the importance of the Black caucuses. I generally agree with Seymour on II work as an extension of our regroupment perspective, but I don't want too static a conception of what the caucus work will be like. The communication caucus is already looked to for leadership in meetings, even with a weak leadership itself--we may be thrown in situations where we're over our heads anyhow.

Carter: I thought Smith blew the differences out of proportion, and so the reports today were too apologetic in reaction. I think we must send reinforcements to our Midwest center.

On entry, I argued with the British RCL about that. They essentially were functioning as a left cover, and we must consider whether our entry, given our small forces, would have that function. Cries of "principle" often obscure a real question.

In PB#49, I object to the statement that the whole S. Calif. local wanted to send everybody into II--there was only one comrade who wanted to. We need a trade union fraction, and must look carefully at who we're getting into it, its impact on youth work, etc.

We have an ex-PLer contact in S. Calif II. He said that the o.C. always ended up behind the Democratic Party in behind the scenes deals, and the people he talked to there thought it had a bad reputation. The problem with creating caucuses without SL members is that we have no way to check on them or control them. K. got a lot of response to forming a caucus in public employment, and we had to tell him to tell interested people that they should study our program, and we would have to recruit them first on our program.

Robertson: The tone of the initial literary exchange was disturbing; it appeared that two comrades were damaging each other in the course of their work, and that was very bad. Kinder is pushing ahead with his work, and needs authority to do it. But did he get that supplement to WV you sent checked out before mailing?

We need stronger fractions in each plant. S. Calif. is growing and think soon it will have the potential for its own fractions. Meanwhile, if S. Calif. wants to have somebody in II, you can send them up to N. Calif. One cde. here is in a terrible situation with heavy work--either she gets reinforced or we'll have to pull her out. The public employment people want out of it in the long run (say, in a year) and the perspective is to get them into II. Our Midwestern center would be the place to put them, but the center of the industry is the center of the union, and we should think of ways to be able to get people there. We want and need about 5 more comrades into our Midwest center: somebody with more SL experience than Smith, some more youth, and another party couple. Several specific comrades are available for our Midwest center and with TU perspectives of work. Of course, sending in inexperienced comrades with workerist enthusiasm may feed into existing local bias. The area is a higher priority for us than Atlanta. Linda can function there to take the pressure off Smith; she could be either the organizer or party rep. to the youth.

Cannon sketches out the way to start a caucus that seems to be perfectly wrong. In 1940, he said that the way to do it is to find some struggle going on, make a deal with the left wing of it, and ship them about 15 or so youngsters; when small, you've got to make deals. They got their comeuppance in 1953 trying to explain the loss of their auto fraction. Our fractions must be communist, not another self-interested power bloc. We don't run anybody for office if he or she is not known as a red, and we must demonstrate a qualitative difference between groups if we do ever choose sides or bloc for or against a group.

I don't think we should either enter or ignore the o.C. We should be sharply critical of the o.C. where we have the authority to do so. II is intrinsically valuable and we can get in, but we mustn't lose sight of our communication perspective. We've repeatedly tried in the Mid-Atlantic region, and we just can't get in.

We must determine whether comrades' exhaustion from the work will be a strategic or merely tactical problem, and must have a flexible attitude. Our party trade unionists are special, the pride of the party, and have special needs, particularly the newer ones. We must be very aware of this, if we are, we may be able to shift the difficulties from strategic and presently insuperable to merely tactical.

We must function in the labor movement in a parallel, two-fold way. Our party fractions in TU work function in the form of caucuses, raising The Transitional Program. The party must directly approach the plants--e.g. through WV sales and individual contacting--with our full program from the dictatorship of the proletariat on down. To forego the former is sterile propagandism isolated from real workers' struggle; to forego the latter is profound opportunism.

The SL is badly disrupted because of this TU implantation--we have two party organizers working in shops, Kinder is trade union director, and RCY is carrying the main burden of our movement's

public face and doing it poorly because they're inexperienced, and also it's an overload for them.

Jennings: I think Nelson's comments on Kinder were legitimate. The o.C. does not define itself too well--there's nothing on paper of theirs which makes it unprincipled for us to enter. I came out of a democratic caucus in transport--that was the basis for my authority, not just my years in the industry.

Our telling the o.C. we're going to investigate them, may create hostility and a lot of inner tension in their group. If we fight them from the outside, that may harden them up together against us. There was no illusion inside transport that we were working with the democratic caucus; we developed our own authority. There are different ways to approach the o.C. and I don't get a sense of that flexibility.

I like the idea of the center of the industry. It's the center and it's important to be there. We should get in touch with Black caucuses, etc. If K. gets out of public employment, he and Smith could coordinate work between the two areas.

Foster: I don't think we should enter o.C.; a sense of scale is very important. If we entered now, we'd be building for them because we're in places where they don't exist. We need information on specific Black caucuses, on a whole lot of questions. We must be careful with our young RCYers; we can't simply pump them in, but must be very conscientious and develop them. On the industrial center and how soon--seems if it's a long term perspective, all right, otherwise an alternative for soon might be to make a successful implantation in the Mid-Atlantic area, where the YWLL is, and where the center could monitor its development. We must work the security angle very carefully, and develop the dual outside-inside approach. Once we get established, we might experiment with an open SLer if it feels open enough. The WL is making a big outside push, maybe they can sour it for us, even from outside. I suspect they'd try it in the Mid-Atlantic, so we should get strong fractions in this area.

Samuels: It's a question of how legitimate the o.C. is. The center of the industry is where the real opposition is. The ranks are by and large atomized, don't know what's happening from plant to plant; there's not much inter-communication. The o.C. is not the union equivalent of the old SDS. If it's a phony group it'll be a real liability for us to be in it.

On the RCY NB monitoring Wes; well, we're dependent on reports we get from the field--you have to check on people to find out anything, it seems. On the other hand, we can't always wait for a potential problem to diagnose itself.

We mustn't send in people we'll be sorry about later. We must select people to go in; everyone working in a plant must be party material. We must achieve a balance between the youth and trade union work, and can't rip the heart out of the RCY. If our public face is

soured, that will hurt our TU work--people in the plants in the Midwest areas, when they think about the SL, won't be thinking about that guy slaving along beside them on the line, but about the public presence of the SL. Apparently the Labor Committee is orienting to II too.

Martha: I still feel vaguely uncomfortable and have questions--what is a principled entry? I still see shades of differences here. I agreed with Nelson's analysis but am not sure if would be unprincipled at this time. I liked Gordon's formulation.

Summaries to 1st Round Discussion:

Kinder: Entry into a class organization is not in itself unprincipled, but there is a way to do it, and it must be a hard Trotskyist entry. I meant by a "genuine lesser evil" a tendency within the labor movement which in some real way advances the class struggle. What was unprincipled about the SWP entry into the Reuther caucus was that they went in and did not have a split perspective during the presidential campaign when Reuther was selling out.

My timetable for caucus development was the one projected at PB #49. We should try to get a paper like the transport caucus paper within a year. Points were well taken on how to build up authority in the plants.

Smith: Appreciated Nelson's points. I was wrong in my tone, and then tended to retreat rather than fight. Jennings argues for the possibility of entry.

Seymour talks about isolated members--yeah, I was recruited in isolation, but I was brought as soon as possible into a center. You can't just leave people in isolation.

The o.C. has a reformist orientation. Caucuses aren't necessarily CRO type formations. I don't think we generally orient to caucuses in unions--we must evaluate each one carefully. I really don't know what o.C. has. On Jerry's "workerist deviation"--remember that's Wes's characterization, who has an academic deviation.

Second Round Discussion:

Seymour: The Reuther caucus in '43 was a reflection of mass discontent with wage controls in WWII, and had a certain hegemony. It was necessary to enter that caucus. One must look at the social base for it. I also don't believe we should enter the o.C., but that doesn't mean it won't be an obstacle for us. It's known as the left opposition, and we must fight it. It's not true we can ignore and seek to go around it, because for any politically conscious person it's there and is considered. In transport, the democratic caucus didn't have that much of a base.

I'm confused--didn't seem Kinder was talking about trying to split the o.C., but about trying to win over a section--what do you mean? I think Nelson and Smith have a too conservative approach.

Regroupment is relevant to TU work, and counterposes itself to recruiting isolated individuals. It is implicit in the concept of regroupment that we can win over people on a higher level than some of our own members.

Gordon: One must distinguish between the formal program of a group and the impetus behind it. An essentially healthy impetus will develop, so we would try to push for a split. I don't think the o.C. is like that, or that it's paper program is its real program. The test of a real program is whether they are forced to try to mobilize the ranks on it. Part of the problem here is that Kinder does not see the somewhat tentative nature of the PB's timetable. I welcomed Smith's letter because I felt we were incorrect and it was a kind of tentative decision.

On the o.C.; 1. we have a good basis for saying being part of the o.C. would not help us win hard union members. I don't think the o.C. has a membership in that sense. It seems to be blocs of local caucuses only. 2. Also, unless we have well-known representatives and good cadres in we can't orient to power blocs or maneuvers. While the SWP's trade union work wasn't all that bad, they did have the conception that while they were weak they had to make blocs, and that's backward. We can have a united front over a particular issue with our own independent base. A tactical error in this situation could become a betrayal. If we were really weak, we could say we were trying to split the o.C., but we could probably be tolerated within it, and our only effect would be to recruit for o.C., and be a left cover, and that would be the betrayal. But one can't say it's always wrong to make entries, because that's sectarian.

I agree with Nelson, there is no such thing as a "partial" transitional program. Kinder's is a quantitative analysis. When a leadership is forced to sell out its program as a result of pressure from the ranks, that is a situation we could enter, to be the continuators and force the development of the program, in opposition to the leaders who have betrayed.

Nelson: I am conservative on this question. One half of the discussion here has been on whether or not the organization can even afford to develop a strong caucus, so when the o.C. orientation is posed in terms of a possible entry, it seems much too premature. It will take us a long time to develop anything. Our first stage is getting the party fractions and supporting local branches--we can't develop fractions before we have locals capable of supporting them. We need a sense of scale. Seymour--yeah, regroupment is valid in unions too. Regroupment is defined programmatically. A lot of this discussion is premature. I'm worried, because I'm not sure we can even pull it off right now. Comrades should be less impatient, and plan and plot to keep getting people in, and this other stuff should be considered, but for a long term perspective.

Schaefer: There's been grumbling in the NYC RCY that the SL isn't doing enough. The RCY is doing a bad job carrying the public face,

and it's a problem. ORO work is not a routine job to shuffle off onto the youth. Our best RCY'ers aren't good enough as public speakers.

Carter: The S. Calif. public employee comrades want to pick up and develop what contacts they have now, and after that's done, then get out and do TU work, either in Midwest or N. Calif., whatever we want. They are potential TU resources for other areas we may want also.

Robertson: The real side of how getting people into plants is done is that once we get a caucus, you get a friendly committeeman and make some sort of deal and they get in--that's always how it's done. It is very important to get cdes. in. We must be conservative. We are facing a different process in II than in transport, because of the different development of transport--if we'd sent people in there, it wouldn't be the same situation as we have now. We should take up the o.C. question again when we're in a position to act on it. Meanwhile must look for opportunities to attack them. We will know in less than a year whether we need a branch at the center of the industry or not. I have grave doubts about an open SLer in the labor movement. You make yourself a hostage to the future if you do that. We might make a calculated sacrifice though, as a tactic, if it seemed worth it.

Want to introduce the following operational motion. Motion: We do not have a perspective of entry in o.C. or similar formations during the period of implantation in II (i.e. prior to the emergence of a national fraction public face), but we do seek now opportunities to criticize such groupings and differentiate our fraction from them.

Jennings: The reason I emphasized the question of the democratic caucus in transport was because I wanted to emphasize that we must be tactically flexible and aware. Am in favor of the motion. I believe it's correct at this stage to expect that any caucus member we recruit should be in the SL.

Foster: What are the S. Calif. public employee people like--how fruitful is the arena for recruiting? It might be very open, and we might want to continue that work.

Samuels: Of course we will pick up isolated people, but what do we do with them? That's the question. We don't build caucuses outside the fraction and the party fractions must be linked to a local.

Kamkov: I learned the real criteria for entry into a class organization is not so much its formal program, but if it reflects a real left-moving mass movement, and then we'd fight for a program in it.

Summaries:

Smith: I don't have much more to say. Not the industrial center now--we have to shore up our present Midwest center now. We need more political leadership and more people. In our area concretely we are objectively over-emphasizing TU work--we were too successful in

our trade union implantation. We need more open members. Maybe colonize the center of the industry next year.

Kinder: Re Seymour's question--I never projected any intervention into o.C. to make a bloc, thought in terms of a ripoff instead. No intention to build o.C. at all. Jennings sounded like he was arguing for an entry the first round, and now he says he agrees with Robertson!

During the war, in '46, the SWP took the correct attitude when it pointed out that all TU leaders supported the no strike clause.

I think there's a qualitative difference between a fracture within a bureaucracy and a movement of the ranks against the bureaucracy. Remember there's still communication, which is No. 1 priority in the Mid-Atlantic. We're going to be near our upper limit there--I'm not sure how easy it would be to develop a caucus there and then shift it to the center of the industry.

Reads proposed motion on general criteria for the caucus entrism:

Motion: To have a 3 minute time limit on discussion of motions. passed

Disc: Schaefer, Gordon, Jennings, Seymour, Robertson, Foster, Nelson, Samuels, Kinder

Kinder withdrew his proposed motion in the light of criticism as to its vagueness.

Motion: We do not have a perspective of entry in o.C. or similar formations during the period of implantation in II (i.e. prior to the emergence of a national fraction public face), but we do seek now opportunities to criticize such groupings and differentiate our fraction from them. passed

Motion: To adjourn for 1 1/2 hours for a dinner break and to reconvene promptly at 10:30. The last full PB member back has to chair the evening session. passed

4. International:...

Meeting adjourned 11:45 p.m.

ON THE SKILLED TRADES CONTROVERSY

--submitted by L. Davidson

The success of the recent SL industrialization drive has raised a tactical problem to which widely disparate solutions have been produced in the different locals: the problem of whether our comrades should apply for the skilled trades apprenticeship programs. This paper is an attempt to briefly summarize the position reached by the mid-Atlantic II fraction and the reasoning behind it.

Our perspective for work in the industrial unions must extend for a period of years--the proletariat does not readily abandon its existing leadership, and it is only through the development of caucuses and leaders who gain the respect and trust of the rank-and-file by virtue of a long history of consistent and principled revolutionary opposition to the union bureaucracy, that we can expect to successfully implement even our exemplary perspectives for trade union work. Therefore our attitude toward skilled trades vs. assembly lines must reflect a realistic assessment of our ability to survive as an effective tendency in the unions and in the factories. While physical and mental endurance are important factors to consider, the decisive element in this period will be job security--our optimistic plans for the construction of a balanced national fraction rest on rickety foundations: our successes have depended in large part on an artificially induced hiring boom resulting from the temporary advantages to U.S. industry from the newly raised tariff barriers, and will be easily reversed by the layoffs we should anticipate in the future. We will have little seniority to protect us, and our continued existence in the plants may well depend on our ability to become crucial to plant functioning, in such categories as skilled maintenance worker, whose job security generally remains stable through layoffs up to the point of plant closures (automation, which results in layoffs for production workers, can even increase the demand for skilled personnel to service the new machinery).

A major drawback is the extent of required overtime, with six or seven-day weeks and twelve-hour days not uncommon for skilled workers. While this places severe limitations on one's ability to carry on consistent outside political work, it is somewhat compensated for by the vastly reduced strain of physical exhaustion and psychological tedium, and greater opportunities for engaging in other activities (in particular: reading, rest and political discussion) during working hours.

Another criteria to consider is that of intra-plant mobility: although we should avoid those jobs which would restrict our access to the main body of production workers, many skilled and non-assembly unskilled occupations allow for greatly increased physical mobility, which can prove extremely useful for the information-gathering, communication, and contacting essential to caucus-building.

There has existed an historical tension between the skilled and production sections of a union, reflecting on the one hand the narrow craft consciousness of the skilled tradesmen, and on the other the resentment typically felt towards these relatively privileged layers by the assembly workers. Although moving off the line would

inevitably curtail those comrades' ability to become shop stewards for production, lead wildcats, etc., it would not necessarily prevent us from gaining political influence with the production workers: we seek to win support not on the basis of workerist moralism ("see, we will share your oppression to prove our true devotion to the proletariat")--but on the basis of a revolutionary program which unites the skilled and unskilled in common struggle.

The ideal situation would be that of a full range among fraction members: more experienced comrades in the relatively secure skilled layers, and more recently implanted and/or recruited comrades on the lines, giving us the widest possible network for the exposure of our politics. In spite of the most concerted efforts to acquire upgraded skills (as well as the advantage in apprenticeship tests afforded those with intellectual training) we will probably not face the problem of too few left on the assembly lines. If this situation did arise, it could easily be rectified--downward mobility is usually no problem to arrange, and can always be explained by e.g. too much overtime. In general, then, we should encourage comrades to seek upgraded training, entry into apprenticeship programs, or other job categories (e.g. unskilled maintenance) which would facilitate their effective and prolonged participation in communist trade union work, along the guidelines earlier proposed for the RT comrades in Geoff White's "The Tendency and the Party," p. 44, Marxist Bulletin II:

"Our young comrades should be encouraged and be guided toward occupations where they will have the potentiality of participating with and eventually coming into leadership of decisive sections of the proletariat, and away from the Bohemian fringes. Factors to be considered are: economic survival, physical demands, job mobility, and strategic position within the structure of the class. This means special attention to the acquisition of skills which give a degree of job security, job mobility, economic sufficiency, and whose physical demands are not so great as to render after-work political activity impossible. A policy which sends young people into grueling dead end jobs is not only destructive, but also rather than being truly proletarian in fact reflects petty-bourgeois romanticism."

--28 October 1972

Extract of letter of 23 October 1972 to the National Office from Jan Norden, one of the secretaries of the Boston Local Committeé:

Enclosed is a xeroxed copy of the Boston Local SL minutes for a special preconference discussion devoted to the factional situation (minutes of 4 September 1972 meeting). The remarks have been checked and approved by all the comrades, with the exception of comrade Moore. I sent Moore a copy of his remarks (and a xerox copy of the same) requesting him to make changes both on the original and his copy, and then to return the original to me as soon as possible. This was done in a letter of 28 Sept., which was mailed on 30 Sept. I again asked for him to return the corrected remarks urgently in a letter of 10 October. However, to date, I have not received any communication from Moore. Therefore, this set of minutes was typed up with his remarks uncorrected. But nevertheless, I think the minutes as they stand accurately convey Moore's remarks, perhaps with a few fuzzy points.

* * *

BOSTON LOCAL SL MINUTES
SPECIAL PRE-CONFERENCE DISCUSSION
Monday, 4 September 1972

Chair: Steve G.

Meeting called for 1:00 p.m. Begun 1:15 p.m.

Present: Norden, Simons, MacNabb, Susan S., Scott, Barry, Lynn M., Crawford, Morris, Bergman, Foster, Victor, Sharpe, Steve G., Keith A., Moore, Carl L.

Absent: Stuart (unexcused).

RCY: Ken R., Val M., James S., Alice L., Paul C., Sandra O., John, Melinda, Fran F., Mark L., Maryanne D., Richard C.

1. Procedural Motions

- a. Motion to extend voice rights to all RCYers and to have their votes recorded if desired. Passed
- b. Motion to appoint Susan S. and Norden as supplemental secretaries. Passed
- c. Motion to inform Ali S. of factional situation and invite him to attend meetings. Passed

2. Factional Discussion

- a. Procedure: Reporters have 1 hour reporting time each, and 1/2 hour summary time. 10 minute speakers rounds.
- b. Majority Report:

Foster: The minority has not given us much information on their positions yet. We only have the M/S statement submitted to PB #53, the motion on the Moore oral report adopted by PB #53, and the

remarks that Moore blurted out at the last Boston Local Meeting (26 August 1972). There is a need for documents from the minority. Despite the paucity of material, taken in light of the history of Moore-Stuart, in light of the defections, in light of the 1968 faction fight, what we have points to a definite thrust and a motion. (Quotes Dave Cunningham on the democratic centralist nature of the SL and the Pabloist functioning of Moore in Germany. From PB #43 Minutes.)

I want to focus and concentrate on the centrist methodology of the minority, especially in their charge that the leadership is inefficient to the point of liquidationism. The question of organization is a political question. We want a statement on the Cunningham-Treiger-Benjamin defections from Moore-Stuart; still none yet. The cliquist political thrust of the defectors' CC slate would have opened the organization to Pabloist degeneration: there was a systematic conception of the beautiful people vs. the clods. Cunningham was flushed out at the Treiger defection. He was forced into the open when caught lying. This is what revealed "the Cunningham clot." Thrust of Cunningham's position (quotes from Gordon document). Dave Cunningham said the organization's leadership couldn't carry out the transformation of the SL. Moore-Stuart made the same statement, but had said earlier that they wanted to run the Cunningham-Benjamin-Treiger "lash-up," giving it some "politics." Now they come up with the same position as the defectors. This is the core of the minority' position up to now--hardly the basis for a principled faction. Moore-Stuart claim that the majority is using the defections to hide its own failures, its inability to carry the transformation of the SL. Aside from the point that this does not constitute the basis for a faction, this claim has three flaws: it is politically illogical; it contradicts the facts; it is an appeal to an anti-party bloc of disgruntled elements. This characterization of the leadership is precisely the same as Turner's in 1968 and--as with him--led to an anti-party bloc. This characterization is politically illogical: the program is correct but can't be implemented. This is a not so veiled implication of centrism. Centrism will first show up in a perspectives document, but the Minority agrees with our Transformation Memo, a product of the leadership. This is precisely where centrists would be confused. Cunningham et al. withdrew their statement as inadequate.

On international questions: The leadership can't carry out the transformation, Moore-Stuart argue. Moore-Stuart offer themselves as alternative leadership--but what is the record of Moore in Germany? He made a rotten de facto bloc in a selective move to bolster Bolfra in the IKD! This is a blatant example of Pabloist functioning. When a halt was called he went into instant opposition, and then said he wasn't functioning as our rep. Moore has besmirched the SL's reputation in the international Trotskyist movement. The leadership's move to stop Moore was our most important international work. There is a monumental disproportion here: circumventing the PB to support Bolfra was egregious; Moore equates this with failure to get lit orders or put out the IDB!

The charge that the present leadership cannot carry out the transformation is also not true and contradicts the facts. In the last period this leadership has consummated one fusion (with the CWC); it has recruited comrades from the Mass Strike group; recruitment from

the Leninist Faction and the Buffalo Marxist Caucus is imminent. Our press has been regularized--sometimes to 16 pages. It has built a large youth group. And we now have the largest TU fraction in SL history. Our international work has been expanded; we look forward to the establishment of an International Secretariat. Five comrades have just returned from Europe. Plus our New Zealand work. To request immediate political and financial support to Spartacus/BL right after the split is egregious.

On cliques: It is clear a clique existed. It is true, as Moore said, that Lenin made harsh characterizations but at least they were congruent with open political positions. This is not so with Moore, Cunningham, Treiger, etc. If Moore-Stuart have specific charges ("lies, slanders...") then they should bring them to the CC and they will be examined by the Control Commission.

Further on anti-internationalism. Moore misreads the Robertson letter to Moore. Moore's conclusion from this letter is that W&R issues took priority over production of the IDB. But this is wrong. The letter is clear that delay on the IDB was because of putting out the Spartacist issue--which had great importance for our international work. Anyone who can read English can understand that.

On the subject of Cunningham: After Treiger quit, Cunningham wrote a letter to the PB. Cunningham, in March, saw a motion in Moore's work; after Cunningham's letter, Samuels saw an identical motion in Cunningham. There is a parallel motion now in the minority. Cunningham saw himself as a self-appointed Left Wing Guardian of the SL and lay in "watchful waiting" for an opposition to develop. He said Brosius was not a Marxist but more importantly she was not a "hand-raiser" for Robertson, so he was willing to support her for the CC, i.e., willing to bloc with someone he considered a non-Marxist. Cunningham went from a Left-Wing Guardian to an anti-party leadership bloc-ist with anyone. He went through a political degeneration from lying to instant opposition. Now there is a rumor that he's reconciled with Treiger and saying that Turner was done wrong in 1968. Cunningham is now an enemy of the SL. Our internal documents leaked to Turner who has selectively turned them over to the Leninist Faction. One of the recent departees has done this. Moore appears to be in the same motion from his comments at the last meeting about being in contact with Cunningham--we eagerly await more information on this contact. And from his comments about Cunningham, Benjamin, Rogers, et al., not just leaving because of personal weakness, "loss of these comrades is critical to the SL." Perhaps Moore means that these comrades were the physical Trotskyist continuity of the SL? If so their departure implies a substantial change in the character of the SL. The minority has an obligation to clarify these statements.

On the Leninist Faction: Want Moore to elaborate on his charge at the last meeting, that the majority acted in a "bureaucratic and sectarian way" in this matter. Want Moore to make the case that this organization acted toward the LF as Healy did to the RT. What does this mean? How was it an unprincipled split? How did the SL leadership's actions "expose them as attorneys for Barnes"? On the basis of the Spartacist (#21) article this charge is ludicrous. That statement was written so that there was no fingering or viola-

tion of SWP statutes. There is nothing in the article the SWP didn't know already. Besides, the LF was already a public faction. Another burden of clarification for the minority here.

On the organizational question: The minority is clearly un-serious in their fight. They have written off the membership of the SL to some extent: The statement by Stuart to comrades that Moore-Stuart are returning to Europe imminently, only returning for the conference; Stuart's behavior today, missing an important meeting to pick up Franz in NY, show not a trace of communist consciousness. On Franz we still have no word from Sp/BL if he's an official representative. Stuart informed Bergman that she would meet Franz today; Crawford called Stuart telling her it is intolerable for her to miss a meeting held because of the factional situation she started, and told her Franz could be met by NY comrades. Foster informed Stuart that since Franz had no official status with us that her trip to NY would be considered as her going to meet a personal friend. Stuart replied, "That's a fine international perspective." And also (to Crawford) that if the organization could tell Franz to stay with a majorityite, then it was her obligation to inform him of everything going on, i.e., to make the factional situation public. She backed down on this when talking to Foster. She has taken it upon herself to roll out the red carpet, appointed herself secretary of international protocol for the party. Stuart later backed down on the statement that she had a right to inform Franz, however, there may be grounds to believe Moore-Stuart divulged the factional situation to Horst when he visited the U.S., staying with them. Our representatives were questioned by Sp/BL members in Bonn, referring to a letter from Horst. There is a consistent pattern here, consistent with Moore's behaviour in Germany, of an incapacity to comprehend Leninist functioning: Making oral factional statement to the Boston local, and a similar statement to the Chicago local, one and one-half weeks before informing the PB; even then Moore didn't present a factional statement, it had to be dragged out of him; attempting to make an international report to the Boston RCY before giving a report to the PB. (Quotes Cunningham, PB #43 Minutes, on Moore making a serious error on Germany which can't be slipped over so easily.) Moore capitulated to the PB then, returned to Germany, continuing his errors.

c. Minority Report:

Moore: The majority report on Stuart's phone calls was wrong. Stuart said that if Franz was forced to stay with majorityites, he would have a right to an explanation why. Stuart did not act on her own, the minority has its own discipline. We wanted to send someone to meet Franz to double-check on the majority because of past fuck-ups. No one else could recognize him at the airport and Franz' English is not that good. He would have been left high and dry. This is just a question of elementary functioning, comrades. The minority stands on this, we won't respond to provocation. This incident is a typical betrayal of proletarian internationalism. The SL showed a particularist, provincialist attitude toward Horst when he was here. People didn't even talk to him.

I have not seen a majority document. The "Transformation Memo"

is supposed to be rewritten, but where is it? JR says he accepts the "thrust" of Gordon's document. What does this mean? Lenin would never have said this. The majority called the faction fight. After going after Cunningham-Treiger, Robertson came to Boston to start a factional struggle through organizational means. When I got back from Germany I was faced with a factional situation. On Cunningham, he'll have to get his stuff on paper before I'll make a judgement. People have made correct political statements before they degenerate. Paul Levi published his criticisms of the KPD and left the party. But that was not the question for Lenin and Trotsky, rather it was his political criticisms. Dave called me, I didn't call him. If Cunningham is an enemy of the organization, then there will have to be a decision; but I have seen no proof of this.

(Reads from letter to the PB): I am taking up the option given me by the PB to return to Germany for "pressing personal career reasons." There is no possibility of a real struggle for leadership now. I am returning to finish an important Marxist scientific study on German imperialism. Academic career questions do play a role in this. There are financial reasons also, I have many debts which must be repaid if I stay in the U.S. I would have to get a high-paying job, and would have little time for literary production. Or else declare personal bankruptcy.

Comrades, this fight is simply a pro-forma defense of the SL program. There is no struggle for power. Anyone who doesn't see that is blind. (Reads from "Cliques, Blocs and the Regime") The fundamental premise here is the petty-bourgeois cliques versus the healthy slobs. Well, if the regime is so healthy why didn't they force Treiger to bring his complaints into the open? Why weren't Treiger-Cunningham exposed by Crawford or Brosius. The majority can't explain why their criticisms found such wide acceptance. Four full CC members are gone now. Why do leaders have to be crushed? In the "Cliques, etc." article, the majority doesn't even define cliquism. (Besides, Robertson, in particular, doesn't believe the theories put forward by Gordon, on the petty-bourgeois literati, etc.) Cannon called Abern a cliquist because of the latter's unprincipled combinationism. He blocked with the left (Oehlerites), then turned around and blocked with the right. But Abern came out with signed documents in open fights. Here there are only two real proofs: Treiger accused of making a rotten bloc with women's liberation activists to get Seymour in the youth; and Cunningham's original statement.

Cliquists have no other program but cliquism. But the organizational question is a political question. Robertson says opposition to the slate is political. But how much more true this is of the question of the ability of the leadership to carry out the line. This is the syllogism of the majority: Once a person becomes hostile, then he blocs with other hostiles. Therefore any critic of the regime becomes part of a rotten bloc. The regime is the program: lay off or be crushed. Criticism of the regime was the beginning of the present factional struggle. The inability to carry out the program is the fundamental characteristic of Robertson's sectarianism. This has revealed itself in several key areas: The failure to con-

struct a collective leadership, a centrist accomodation to women's liberation, anti-internationalism. The arguments in "Cliques, etc." inexorably lead to a workerist, semi-syndicalist deviation. The Robertson-Gordon attack on the leading Marxist intellectuals in the SL, calling them "beautiful people" means breaking with Marxist scientific analysis. It was Cunningham, Benjamin, Moore who made an extension of Marxism on the Ireland question. Robertson's steam-roller tactics didn't give the SL a position on Ireland. Robertson wants this type of discussion, but then crushes the comrades who lead this discussion. The chief virtue of Robertson is an ability to recognize and fight revisionism. But the "cliquists" in this case have not abandoned Marxism, rejected the SL program. Moore's document on the SPD was accepted by the PB. Robertson-Gordon have no political basis to declare a faction fight. Robertson has beheaded the organization in order to maintain his own position in it. He doesn't even have Wohlforth's fig leaf of internationalism to cover his tracks. If Robertson is wrong he will have engineering one of the most unprincipled splits in the history of American Trotskyism. In attacking the most talented intellectuals in the party, Robertson is breaking with Leninism. He makes a workerist deviation from Marxism because he terms Moore, et al., petty bourgeois but does not show their deviations.

On the supposed organizational inability of the cliquists: If Cunningham failed, Gordon is a miserable failure. Nelson failed miserably, among other things bungling the floor leadership at the 1970 SDS convention. The reward for exercising criticisms is defamation and organizational steamrolling. Robertson condemns "cliquists" and then approves their documents. Robertson lacks many of the qualifications of a revolutionary leader. In choosing Seymour and Samuels to speak his line, he indicates his inability to make the transformation from a propaganda group to the nucleus of the revolutionary party. Robertson's flaws are elevated to principles, and the professional dilettantism of Robertson-Gordon become limitations of the party. To attack Marxist intellectuals without cause is a denial of the scientific basis of Trotskyism. The majority admits that the SWP degenerated after its loss of intellectuals in the 1939-40 split. The SL will now go the same road as the SWP, only faster. This whole analysis can be documented in the majority's own documents. In "Cliques" the majority makes the anti-Leninist syndicalist suggestion of putting the "cliquists" into the factories. In fact, the "cliquists" are the ones who functioned the best, recruiting in Boston, Cunningham in winning the Washington comrades of the Leninist Faction, in the CWC, Moore in Germany; not just literary work. Workers Vanguard was produced by Benjamin, Rogers. No comparison with the SWP in 1939-40, with the clear social division in the NY local. If there is any comparison then it is with the Communist League of America.

Now the regime attacks private correspondence, without which pre-tendency discussion is impossible. The charge of cliquism was raised to cover up the real clique of Robertson-Gordon-Nelson. There never has been a real collective leadership in the SL. Benjamin told Robertson his criticisms all the time, yet he is called a "cliquist." This is the last faction fight in the SL, comrades. All the people who could oppose the leadership have either been driven

out of the organization or relegated to the status of political pariahs, like myself. If you don't believe this, just stick around. On other questions: My letter to Cantor was to a C Cer. There is a fundamental dishonesty of Robertson and the regime he runs, such as the Stalinist technique of editing minutes. For the meeting on the "Boston Secretariat" there were three sets of minutes. Then JR claims they kept it inside the CC, but even the minutes say there were innumerable RCYers wandering in and out of that meeting. This is supposed to be democratic centralist functioning! If you want an example of what's happening, look at the careers of Zinoviev and Radek. On the Leninist Faction: The leadership behaved with sectarian hysteria, fingering the remaining LF members to the SWP. WV said the LF had knowledge of the Washington comrades fusion perspective with the SL since 15 May 1972. This opens up the LF to charges of disloyalty. It was a typical Healyite smash and grab operation.

On international questions: The reason I formed a bloc in Germany was not centrist methodology. I received two sets of instructions, from the PB and from Robertson. Robertson shouldn't have given instructions, but he did. There are two different things, recruiting and fraternal relations. If recruiting is the focus, fraternal relations go into the background. Robertson gave me instructions to recruit an authentic Spartacist tendency, but later he shoves these instructions under the rug. The IDB is the question of getting organized international discussion going and this they will never do. By now we should have had four or five IDB's.

d. First Round Discussion:

MacNabb: I don't know where to begin. Moore, your charges are ludicrous and unfounded. They raise questions as to your mental stability. You make all sorts of statements that Robertson forced an ersatz faction fight, in order to purge leading comrades. But Cunningham, Benjamin, Rogers, Moore had a gripe group for years. Cunningham, Treiger and Benjamin brought the fight to the party; Robertson didn't want it. They behaved in an unprincipled, anti-Leninist manner. You never raised to the leadership charges that Robertson-Nelson-Foster-Kinder are a gang of cronies, but complained to your tight clique. Your positions reveal ambiguity of your loyalty to the SL. By your analysis a split by you would be principled. Your cliquist activities here are obvious to all your old comrades in Boston. You show a fundamentally skewed perspective on our international work. For instance, you misread the letter by Robertson to say women's liberation document was more important than the IDB. But the letter says clearly that putting out this issue of Spartacist was more important than the IDB. In general, the center of the world Trotskyist movement is in France, not in Germany. You conceive of international work as being wherever Moore is at the moment, as if Bill Moore is going to reconstruct the Fourth International. A colossal arrogance warps your conception of international work. On the LF, the article in Spartacist was scrupulously written to protect those still in the SWP.

Carl L.: Generally, the minority presentation says more by what it doesn't say than by what it does. It doesn't answer Foster's question or even document charges raised earlier by the minority. Moore capi-

tulated last spring, and now is returning to old positions he had previously rejected. A large part of what Moore states today is an apology for those who have already quit. What is your position on Turner, then? The minority really should give us a statement on Turner. There is a real question of the seriousness of the minority. What is a faction if not a body to fight for leadership. But you don't fight. Do you intend to remain?

Norden: Moore complains that the majority doesn't attack the political positions of the minority, simply charging "cliquism." But that's all we've had until now. Cunningham didn't claim political differences, and Moore so far says he stands on the SL program. But what you've said today constitutes a real deviation from Leninism. By declaring that declassed Marxist intellectuals are the only ones qualified for leadership, that attacks on intellectuals behead the organization, that the defection of Cunningham-Treiger et al. is critical to the SL, Moore essentially denies that the party is the vanguard of the class. He places it outside the class. On the charge of cliquism, Moore now claims he had private instructions to recruit in Germany. But he only brings this out now, not last March. This is cliquism. Your charges that this is the last faction fight, that you are now a political pariah raise the question, are you going to stay around to see? In general, Moore charges the leadership is too inept to carry out the transformation of the SL. Yet this comes at a time when the SL has more than doubled in size in a year; we have a regular monthly press for the first time; we have the largest trade union concentration in the organization's history; and we are doing more international work than ever before. So there is a question of the sincerity of these criticisms. Moore's method is to pick up any criticism he can think of, throwing it all into a hodge podge: incapable leadership. What you've done today is defend the defectors. These people were not excluded, they defected. Finally, your charge that their loss is "critical" implies a qualitative change in the SL--perhaps the organization is now centrist, and a split consequently principled?

James S.: The Moore-Stuart statement is a textbook of cliquist errors. Criticisms are not just personal, but vital for the work of the organization. But you don't take the facts into account. Crashing out the IDB was prevented by the attempt to recruit the Johnson group of Blacks. But you don't mention this. Your covering for Cunningham et al. is amazingly similar to Turner in 1968. He said the SL had no right to expel them, and then proceeded to leave the organization.

Scott: It is unbelievable that you and Stuart are going to make all these accusations and then run off to Europe, and to have the gall to expect the organization to give you tasks to do there. You talked to Cunningham but didn't report it to the leadership; yet this information is vital to the organization. It is fantastic to think you are going to be allowed to do this. We have to stop our own transformation at this time to deal with this creation, and then you run off to Europe. Where is the factual basis for your Bonapartist analogy? A Bonapartist leadership implies an organization racked by internal conflict where the balance of forces allows the leadership to rise above the struggle and exert their authority. But where is

this struggle in the SL? One person against the rest of the organization? As an alternative leadership, you fail miserably. You have Moore's past ignoring of democratic centralism in the German question, and Judy's action in missing the meeting today. You have internal contradictions: Forming a faction you declare an alternative leadership, then flee to Europe. Last summer Judy admitted she wasn't a leader. And to raise these criticisms now is cliquist behavior with no other purpose than to wreck the SL.

Mark L.: You charge the leadership with inability to carry out the transformation. But it is being carried out. The Intermediate Industrial intervention, for example, in many areas and with leading comrades. The SL is now known and hated, and this shows a qualitative change. The charge that there is no collective leadership is false. People are urged to take leadership roles. The example of the Mass Strike shows the SL is careful to avoid workerist or syndicalist deviations. If the leadership had a workerist deviation they would have taken us all in as we were then. Yes, cliquism was condemned and that was necessary. But if it had been Healy you would simply have been smashed, instead of having democratic discussion and then simply a resolution. I need more clarification from the majority on the situation with the LF people in the SWP. It's my impression that the people mentioned in Spartacist were already known to the SWP and we didn't finger anyone. The losses of Treiger et al. are too bad, but taken in the perspective of the transformation, more friction will probably lead to more struggles.

Susan S.: I'm annoyed we have no document from you to read. In your original statement there is no political criticism, and you have given us none today. In none of your statements have you criticized Treiger's defection. If they were so competent, why did they fail to fight at the crucial moment. On the question of collective leadership, Treiger refused the post of national organizational secretary. If Cunningham had all these criticisms why didn't he raise them earlier? And where has your fight been all these years? Only since you were cornered have your positions come out. In Germany you acted as an individual, so who's interested in collective leadership? You show numerous errors in understanding democratic centralism. It was an error that people walked in and out of the meeting on the Boston Secretariat, but look at your own behavior in Germany, and here. For instance, trying to give an international report to the Boston RCY meeting before reporting to the PB. You make no comment on our big changes and growth in the last year. You show a lack of seriousness. Your reasons for going to Germany are more important than staying here and fighting for leadership. On your loyalty to the SL, I think you're leaving the door open. I believe that in your mind, with the positions you've given today, you have already broken with the SL, as a "bureaucratic swamp." Your arguments are the same as Cunningham. On our anti-internationalism, look at our New Zealand work, the visits to Europe. And we don't just jump into a bloc without a principled basis.

Ker. R.: You start a civil war in the organization and then run off to Germany. You start a faction, and then claim there is no struggle for power. Yes organizational questions are political questions. You poisoned the atmosphere in Europe by bureaucratic organizational

functioning. You claimed the leadership knew of the clique. The opposite is true, they were stunned. You claim the cliquists were the best recruiters. But the SL has been built by a collective group. For instance, with the CWC Foster went out to the Coast. I don't see how it is possible to interpret the LF situation as Moore does. There was a turn to VNL. The subsequent focus on VNL in WV shows the leadership is sensitive to it. The transformation is being carried out. We have a 16 pp. WV on a regular basis, and a real youth organization; there is an enormous amount of international work. The main theme is you have had a light attitude toward organizational questions, which means a light attitude toward the party.

Sandra O.: As Crawford said in the study group, when a revolutionary organization takes tactical turns there are usually groups that fight that change. The Ellens group attacked the leadership and used many of the same arguments. I wish you would substantiate your charge of centrist accomodation to the women's liberation movement.

Lynn M.: It is contemptuous that until today your documents have been very vague, and now you drop this bundle of slanders and distortions in a draft document which is not even yet submitted to the PB. Your criticisms of SL work in the international arean are technical rather than political. The Boston Secretariat was allowed to function until we found out it was being used for political means. You show a very personalistic viewpoint: wherever Moore is we should reinforce him. You say we are anti-internationalist while you're in Germany, Sharpe in Paris, and work in New Zealand. In Germany you admittedly circumvented the leadership, setting yourself up as an equal to the PB. You have made flagrant violations of democratic centralism here, and in the Chicago local, since you've been back. In none of your documents do you explicitly term yourselves a faction. What is the role of the cliquists in building the collective leadership? You are planning to go to Germany for personal, career reasons. Why haven't you consulted with the national leadership to figure out what was best for you to do now. You say that Spartacus/BL is being won over. But what is it being won over to, a bureaucratic swamp?

Barry: After your contributions last Sunday on the Deitch defense, I had hopes for much more from you, Bill. But now I'm concerned because you just came in with a whole new pack of unsubstantiated charges. You read from p. 11 of "Cliques, Blocs and the Regime," but you didn't read the next paragraph, which says how we have been growing. I fail to see how you can substantiate the charge of syndicalism when the leadership calls for "only 1/3 of the organization in TU work." You say we have fingered the LF people, but their statement was read publicly in the SWP, and the leaders' names were available in documents that were being sold openly. On collective leadership: a comrade here today is going to NY to become integrated into the collective leadership. And Robertson wouldn't have agreed to Treiger touring the country if he had had questions. The leadership is trying to build collective leadership. To say that "the 'cliquists' functioned as the best recruiters" is a cliquist formulation in the first place. The SL recruited the CWC, Mass Strike, and Spartacus/BL if that happens. On protecting people: a very unusual procedure of a secret PB meeting was taken in order to protect

Treiger's authority in the organization. This is far from steam-rolling. These charges raise questions about your party loyalty, as does the phone call with Cunningham. Why do you want to work for an organization that has seen its last faction fight? Your attitude to Treiger and Cunningham should be hate, because of organizational reasons and because they got out and left you here alone. If this is a bureaucratic regime, why are they planning to devote a day of the RCY educational next month for pre-conference discussion? This certainly isn't necessary in order to maintain a democratic front. It's done because the leadership sees factional discussion as educational.

Sharpe: Bill's arguments amount to circular reasoning, to prove that only "kept" intellectuals are left in the organization, like me I presume. The reasoning is: the good guys were driven out, therefore only bad guys remain. It's a self-justifying argument. Moore counterposes formalistic objections to political correctness. But there is a pattern behind the formal questions, they are not just isolated incidents. Bill states that this is only a pro-forma faction, there is no real struggle for power. Formally it is true that right now you have x against two. But the only way to have political struggle is to stay in the U.S. and work, not going to Germany. On meeting Franz: he speaks English well, and Judy doesn't speak German so the whole argument doesn't stand up. Messages can be transmitted. On cliquism, Cannon defines it as including among others, constant gossiping about the regime, and the subordination of principled questions to organizational and personal questions. And this does fit Moore. In Germany, for instance, the leadership of the Sp/BL did not know we were going first to Bonn, and we didn't know the Bonn people were in a minority in the organization. Their leadership reacted with surprise to our suggestion of conducting discussions from PB to PB, as if no one, i.e., Moore, ever suggested it to them before. On the IDB, Bill claims the leadership either doesn't want or is incapable of producing the IDB. Moore is right that there should have been four or five IDB's by now. But the point is these criticisms are technical, not political. I could make much sharper criticisms. But we are having international discussion; we are forming an international secretariat; we are now putting out a second French edition of Spartacist, enabling us for the first time to penetrate the OCI cadre; we have had discussions with the OCI leadership. There are many possibilities and we have every intention to follow them up. The material on the IKD/Bolfra split is translated, but the introduction by Bill was unclear, so I had to rewrite it. It will be out imminently.

Alice L.: Permeated throughout your documents is the notion that political positions are the line and intellectuals capable of Marxist analysis are the leadership. You ignore the context in which they function, i.e., the party. You say that Cunningham has to get his stuff on paper before you can make judgement. Why, you can just look at what he's done alone and make a judgement. The way someone functions in the organization is also a subject of Marxist analysis, and given your actions here I'm not surprised you took a centrist line with Sp/BL in Germany. I don't understand the political basis of your accusation of workerism. It seems to me this is a reaction to being called petty-bourgeois.

Bergman: Moore, Treiger and Cunningham can be brilliant Marxists at times, but they have also shown an undialectical method at times. Moore reacted in an idealist, ultimativistic manner at a crucial time. For example, he says the IDB will never come out, and this proves the regime is anti-internationalist. It's possible it won't get out, but that doesn't prove anti-internationalism. Or claiming that because people didn't wine and dine Horst, the SL leadership is anti-internationalist. And the argument that Judy has to meet Franz: a member of the CC of the Sp/BL should be able to get around. Moore acts as if it is an all-or-nothing situation but doesn't show a trend. Bill is sometimes brilliant, but sometimes he is very wrong, too. You will have to prove Cunningham and Treiger were run out of the organization; they defected. A secret PB meeting was called to protect Treiger, not to drive him out. The same with Cunningham: he lied to the party, and withheld criticisms for years. I want Bill to stay in, but I think he is wrong.

Morris: Bergman hit on something important. The majority of the trouble flows from your inability to see yourself as part of a collective leadership. Even in the Boston local you viewed yourself as isolated when no one else saw you as isolated. You see the leadership as only two or three people when a much larger collective leadership is in operation. You don't have a real idea of what a collective leadership is. People feel there is a collective leadership because they have had their ideas considered, they feel part of it. You have thrown away all the respect people had for you by saying you are going to Germany now for personal reasons and not staying to fight for the vanguard party. You claim there is no fight for power, but want Robertson-Gordon replaced, but with no slate to replace them, except perhaps the people who have already left. This is liquidationism. Cunningham is not in the organization now, but why can't you form a judgement? Christ, they've done enough already. It seems weird: you defend the defectors, but claim they are fighting for our program. But if that's so, they are unprincipled swine for leaving. If you claim you are fighting for our program you must condemn them for breaking with the party which embodies the program. You blame the leadership for stifling discussion, but they stopped the discussion by quitting. On international work, it is being done and will continue. The SL has been doing lots of international work and you just toss it aside. I agree with Norden that you have a deviation on the organizational question, and are deviating by calling for a leadership only of declassed Marxist intellectuals.

Keith A.: I have nothing clear to say, the absurdities in your letter, Moore, have already been covered. Your perspectives are going down hill. You make all these charges, and now are liquidating your struggle. It makes it all a charade, and amounts to looking for a way out of the SL. Your position on Levi is the same: You imply the Communist International should not have thrown him out. Well they did because he broke discipline to express correct criticisms. This seems to be a plan to use the same avenue. I don't believe you have a perspective of staying in the SL.

Crawford: The comments this afternoon have been good, sharp and germane. To say there is no collective leadership is an insult to other people in the organization. It is very important to understand

that we are very thin on cadre. In Chicago our organizer is working on a job six days a week. In Berkeley we have historically had a problem of leadership. Now in many areas the youth is having to carry the public face of the party. The transformation is very complex and is straining the organization. All are overworked and some have been worn thin. We were vulnerable, and Marvin picked up on the weak spots. But he didn't get very far, because people were not intimidated, they did not hate the national office. On Cunningham and Treiger: Cunningham was never undercut, he had great authority in the SL; there was never a campaign to destroy him. On Marvin, I knew he had problems before the Plenum last year, and I spoke to the leadership then. Incidentally, he is not a theoretician, but a propagandist. Moore originally agreed that Treiger was "light-minded" for rejecting the position of national organizational secretary when it was offered to him. Now Moore is blocking with Treiger, Cunningham, Rogers, Benjamin, but blocking only in their rottenness. They are different politically, David to the left and Marvin to the right within the SL. Treiger now claims that the Trotskyist movement has been bankrupt since Trotsky's death in 1940. On Levi: Trotsky said he was right on some of his criticisms, but wrong because he broke with the party. Where do you stand on the right of the organization to defend itself? Do you support the PB resolution expelling Cunningham? There is a question of how they leave, i.e., it wasn't a slow phase-out like G. White. You don't comment on Turner in 1968 either. Why do people quit? Apparently because they felt there were no gains to be made in the organization. Political struggle is a painful experience, but it is the only way to achieve clarity. It is difficult to be a political leader in NY, there is a frenzied atmosphere. And Cunningham, Treiger, Rogers, Benjamin couldn't take it. Only Janet was efficient among the bunch of them, and her tasks had been unfulfilled apparently for the last month she was in. The point is you are upholding these people, grouping them together. You have a social democratic line on the organizational question, but you don't have the courage to admit it. At times you are quite a good academic Marxist intellectual, but now you have the problem of defending the indefensible. The same thing that happened to Cunningham is happening to you. You're looking for a provocation, an atrocity story. You want to be expelled so you won't have to resign; but so far you haven't been expelled, even though we could have expelled you two months ago. You are different than Cunningham and we thought you might stick it out, but your motion now is to find a reason to resign. You never talk about defense of the SL from these creeps, or mention the fact that Harry Turner has our internal documents.

Simons: Moore said today, as a basis for accusing the SL leadership of bureaucratic, sectarian actions toward the LF people still in the SWP, that the Spartacist article stated the pro-SL minority in the LF was on a fusion course with us since 15 May. But this is totally wrong; the article never dates the fusion course. You make no rebuttal to Foster on this point, but use the argument to base your charges against the regime. I am also disappointed in Bill's statements today. If the defectors had been principled, they would have made a formal fight in the pre-conference discussion and then in the course of the class struggle the bureaucratic leadership would naturally make major blunders. When this became clear to the rank

and file they could then drive out the rotten leadership. Moore is changing his line today, claiming the SL has been finished off. At what point did it become impossible to have any more factions in the SL? The thrust of Moore's arguments is incomprehensible and without foundation. He has no event of consequence, no Germany in 1933 to base himself on, only a few technical arguments. His position is that the best leaders of the organization are already out, their loss was decisive (i.e., there will be no more faction fights). Those left are capitulators like Radek and Zinoviev. Moore is a fool or a huckster, but he could still play a role if he stays. But he isn't. What is this flight to Germany--exile? Why come back for the conference, it is just a waste of breath by his analysis. His arguments now amount to a form of blackmail. If we don't accept his position of the intellectuals, then they will get us from the outside unless we get rid of the Robertson regime.

Melinda: You say the question of Cunningham is not whether he broke democratic centralism, but whether his criticisms were correct. This is wrong. On Franz, even aside from the question of Judy's language capabilities, she was still wrong to go. You charge that this is "the last opposition in the SL"--is that a threat or a promise? We have had factional struggle before.

Fran F.: It is pretty clear that Stuart-Moore have a split perspective. And if so, what are you going to recruit Franz to? It seems that Moore-Stuart will try to harm the SL, but they can't harm it.

Steve G.: Marv Treiger was a good public spokesman, but he is a political coward and a political bastard who tried to rip the guts out of the SL. I don't like your lumping him with Cunningham. It is not true that the regime drove anyone out of the organization. They picked up and left, Marvin after doing everything he could to wreck the organization, David after he was caught lying to the organization. On the slate proposal: G. Repchinski was more harm than good, a dead weight. Benjamin wouldn't fight for his position. On the evil bureaucratic machine: Why don't you call the regime out and out Stalinist, since that's what you mean. You have no conception of collective leadership. Cunningham-Moore-Benjamin were all part of this bureaucratic machine. All had an opportunity to be in the leadership, and you too, but it wasn't taken. Moore offered to go to NY, but still has a "star" attitude, i.e., I did this and I did that. I take exception to some of the charges going around. On the SPD paper by Moore, how does this show intellectuals are being driven out? It's not such a great piece, simply the development of basic SL positions. Seymour's article on the Black Panthers is just as good. Cunningham did do a good job on Ireland, but if it had laid on his desk any longer, Ireland might have floated out to sea and sunk. You say you're still a member of the organization? Well, don't play with us. We won't take stuff like Cunningham called you and not vice versa. We don't accept you're saying you don't know whether or not Cunningham et al. are opponents. Let us in on that Cunningham-Moore telephone conversation. Start acting like a member.

End of the first round at 5:30 p.m. Break until 7:30 p.m.

SECOND SESSION BEGAN 7:40 P.M.

e. Motions Introduced:

Foster: Two motions: (A) The Boston local sharply condemns the minority for having comrade Stuart, one of two minority comrades, willfully miss the Sept. 4, 1972 special pre-conference discussion meeting on the factional situation in the SL, and instead go to New York City to pick up a personal friend at the airport since it evidences an unserious and un-Leninist attitude on the part of the minority comrades. (B) The Boston local condemns comrade Moore for withholding information from the PB on his communication with ex-comrade Cunningham after the latter's resignation from the SL and instead only partially divulging this information some time later at the Boston local meeting of 26 Aug. 1972.

f. Procedure: That there be an additional 20 minutes added to majority and minority reporters' time for interim summaries between the two rounds, and that there be a five-minute time limit in the second round. Passed

g. Minority Interim Summary:

Moore: The "Cliques" document is workerist and syndicalist because it suggests sending the "cliquists" to the factories. The SL has a formally correct position on syndicalism, but that doesn't stop the leadership from appealing to it cynically in order to purge people. I didn't link Cunningham and Treiger, the majority did that. On Cunningham: this is the key to why this struggle was aborted. Cunningham kept his mouth shut too long. My attitude toward them is hard political criticism. Already in the Moore-Stuart document we characterized Cunningham's behavior as cowardly. What their political differences are I don't know, but I can't judge them until they come up with some. Cunningham's role was as a left guardian of the SL, but he failed to fight. He should have seen his role in 1969 on the military question. Robertson formed a bureaucratic amalgam of Cunningham and Seymour. Robertson told Cunningham that if he raised the military question he would be crushed, told him to shut up or get out. "The steps would be as formal as a minuet," but he would be smashed. This seems to be the beginning of Cunningham's degeneration, he drew back then, so now he has no basis for fighting. Robertson said that against Moore he was willing to form a dead-end faction. That means split, comrades. Those people should have fought down Robertson. If you have political differences you don't fight organizationally. The whole thing seemed to be over two people on the CC, so Robertson fought against them, but they couldn't fight back. On this question of protecting people: Robertson protects people in order to protect himself. I raised criticisms all the time about the Boston leadership but nothing was ever done. Then Kinder, Foster made a workerist error, but they were protected. I don't know about Treiger, but at this point doubt the majority's characterization of him. Cunningham and Treiger couldn't handle a dead-end faction. I criticize them for not facing down Robertson. On the question of party loyalty: the question of a split is always a possibility in a faction fight. There is either a split or a fusion at a higher level.

I am staying to fight for the program, but I think the fight was over in July. Face it: there is no real struggle for leadership, it is ridiculous to tour the country. On Turner, I think I still have the orthodox line on him in the 1968 fight; I gave a class on it two weeks ago. When did Robertson begin to degenerate? I think it was in 1969 when he threatened comrades in a cop-like manner over the military question. On who gave the documents to Harry Turner, I really don't know. There is a consistent sectarian tone in the majority documents: "We are the vanguard party." Well, we aren't. We are the nucleus, but I don't believe that any more. There is an inability to implement the transformation document, a persistent routinism. Comrades are systematically protected from the impact of real struggle. Robertson continually violates democratic centralism. It took a secret PB to get Robertson to give up the keys to the files. The charges of secret Moore-Benjamin correspondence are absolute bullshit. I have known Benjamin since 1963, but no political collaboration. The key element in my argument is these "petty-bourgeois" types have been key in fusions, recruiting, not that they are "stars." Cunningham contacted the LF and we have gotten to a certain point with them. Nelson contacted the CT and we lost them. On women's liberation: where is the majority document? All the women's liberation documents are written in the NO, not by comrades involved in the intervention. On W&R, political struggle on this has been put off for months. W&R contradicts the line of the first four congresses of the Communist International. Transitional organizations should be under the leadership of the party and this question is now totally unclear. On the IDB, it was not counterposed to recruiting California blacks, it was supposed to be crashed out before Robertson went to the coast. At this point the question of my affiliation is not raised, although it may be later. But there is no opponent organization I agree with.

g. Majority Interim Summary:

Foster: Cunningham played a key role in the Ireland question on the complicated question of self-determination in Ireland. But the article was the outcome of collective discussion in which Robertson played a key role in integrating the formulation. The original Cunningham leaflet was rejected as ultimatic, putting the last slogan first. You can't lump Cunningham and Treiger. Cunningham was a serious loss for the SL but Treiger wasn't. Treiger made some fuzzy formulations in his talk on Bangladesh, suggesting a policy of defeatism in a war between the USSR and China, which the CT picked up on. Benjamin was weak personally. And posing their loss as beheading the SL is certainly inaccurate. To say that this was the "last faction fight in the SL" is an un-Marxist statement. Even reformist organizations have factions and splits, reflecting class pressures. Moore has a monoemphasis on literary Marxism. His analysis of the degeneration of the SWP relied solely on the loss of its intellectuals. Moore sees organizational measures to crush opposition to the slate. What precisely were they? There were none. We bent over backwards to have a fight. We wanted to find out what their positions were because there was a certain thrust to the slate proposals. Cunningham defended Rep for CC, while slurring over Rep's bad positions. His switch on Brosius is an example of anti-regime combinationism. We wanted a faction fight, we wanted to get statements, but we didn't get a document. We stated that Cunningham's

road to regeneration was to come out and struggle forthrightly for his views on the regime. The organization wanted to save Benjamin-Rogers-Cunningham. What was the parallel to Levi? Where were the expulsions? You are setting up straw men. We want political discussion on these issues. We could have suspended you at the last meeting when you told of your phone conversation with Cunningham, but we didn't. The situation in the Boston local was not as you said. The dispute was over the policy in UAG, and recruitment of UAG contacts. We can discuss this some time in detail if you want. In any case, both Kinder and I took a rap for it, but we both bounced back. In fact, in this case Robertson supported Moore-Stuart, not his "cronies." There was no heavy hand of the regime there. On various other charges: There were many others in on the CT discussion besides Nelson; e.g., Treiger. On women's liberation, it was Robertson who intervened to prevent a rotten bloc of comrades against Seymour. Documents have been written by people outside the NO and more will be. On slate questions: The criteria for CC membership is programmatic stability. There were legitimate questions about Moore's functioning in Germany and on the organizational question. In general, the minority is now in a series of contradictory positions, and trying to construct a syndicalist deviation where none exists. There is no evidence for this charge. You state that there have been years of routinism, organizational heavy-handedness, anti-intellectualism, but you make no case for it. I also want you to go into Cunningham's behavior in 1969 more.

h. Second Round Discussion:

Maryanne D.: On Treiger and the others, Moore says he can't make a characterization of them on available information. But this is what leadership must do. Moore is exchanging Marxism-Leninism for agnosticism. The minority must prove itself, not the majority. What are you putting your political life on the line for? Where are your loyalties? I don't think you're waging a very convincing struggle.

Paul C.: You say Cunningham's degeneration began when he didn't respond to Robertson's organizational methods on the military question. But now you only make a "pro-forma" faction fight. Does this mean you are going to be a passive observer on your own degeneration? Or are there other reasons for this?

Val M.: I'm not that familiar with the factional situation since I just read the documents last night.

MacNabb: The Gordon document isn't syndicalist at all. It said there was a self-conscious group of intellectuals separating themselves from the rest of the SL. The thing on industrialization in the document said that participation in the trade union movement can help integrate intellectuals into the party. Robertson could have destroyed Cunningham a long time ago if he had wanted to, over the Wohlforth document. You don't grasp the fundamental conception of democratic centralism. I challenge you to show how Robertson is undercutting the transformation document. The SL program recruited Boston comrades to the RMC and from the LF, not any particular individual. You don't understand the role of program.

Carl L.: The fact that all the minority is not here is an example of not understanding the democratic centralism question. You are apparently backing off from a split course. But what are the Sp/BLers being won over to? What is your position on Treiger's wrecking course? There is no basis for agnosticism on Treiger. The secret PB meeting was not primarily about the keys to the file. It was not an attempt to drive Treiger out of the organization, but the opposite. Moore should speak to the motions on the floor.

Norden: Moore doesn't understand the organizational question on a number of issues. For example, he raises the question of the file keys to a major issue but thinks the slate (i.e., the question of national leadership) is not a political question. Also Stuart's absence today and Moore's behavior in Germany. There is a real question of your membership, if all your characterizations of the leadership are correct. You have already written off the membership, not just the leadership, or else you would stay and fight. Levi was correctly expelled for breaking discipline and defecting. On your explanation of the SWP's degeneration: It is not a question of a few errors, but of the whole program of the SWP. To say that the loss of intellectuals caused the degeneration of the SWP is idealist, similar to Healy's explanation of Pabloism as originating in wrong method. It also implies there was no hope for the organization after 1940.

James S.: I am disturbed by Moore's repeated refusal to condemn the renegade comrades. He seems to be leaving a road open to the defectors, to VNL or even IS. Why are you leaving a road open to groups developing in such a rotten direction?

Scott: You talked to Cunningham since his resignation, so you could have gotten his political positions. What was the content of that call? What did you talk about--the weather? Anyway, his actions are available. You say you are vying for the leadership in the SL and yet by your words and actions you are burning all your bridges to the rank and file members of this organization. Stuart has only excuses, not reasons, for her absence here today.

Mark L.: I'm glad to hear you're staying in the organization, but that means putting off your trips. You say you don't have enough information to characterize Cunningham et al. What are you going to do when we are about to seize power and the bourgeoisie comes up with new revelations on the reds? What are you going to do then--say "Wait, I didn't know that"?

Susan S.: All your arguments are one-sided. The more positions you take, the more the one-sidedness comes out. On protecting people, you're no one to talk of under-handedness. Kinder and Foster made mistakes, but Moore made gross mistakes in Germany. But you were also protected, you weren't expelled or even demoted. A youth comrade who lied to the NC twice was not even demoted. Treiger was protected from the Plenum on; Cunningham was also protected. Your own actions were underhanded in the George mess. Rather than political struggle being suppressed, there have been arguments on women's liberation against the Seymour thesis from the beginning. You accuse Robertson of violating democratic centralism, but how

many times have you broken democratic centralism? It's not that the SL is unable to make the transformation. It is the only organization that has remained consistently on the left. And those who've left represent those unable to stick it out. Again and again there is no disagreement with program to begin with, but they claim they are forced to leave on the basis of rotten leadership, and are then led to a different political line. We didn't fail, but Cunningham, Benjamin failed to make the transition from a propaganda group to the nucleus of the vanguard party.

Ken R.: I'm real surprised how soft you are on Cunningham, Treiger and the others. It's clear that many were protected.

BREAK FROM 8:50 P.M. TO 9:05 P.M.

Sandra O.: You criticized the leadership for the priority given to a women's liberation document. But given the amorphousness of W & R, it is even more important to produce a program. Women on the West Coast initiated the intervention in women's liberation and have been writing documents.

Barry: The crisis of leadership is key, but Moore goes to Germany! Is the SL more bureaucratic than the SWP was in 1962? Yet these "hard communists" couldn't even fight. We want to see programmatic differences to fight. If we were so workerist, why would we give a damn for women's liberation. You accuse the regime of steamrolling Cunningham, but you don't take into account that the revolution makes tremendous demands on people; it devours some.

Sharpe: I am astounded at how weak your criticisms are. You start with personal criticisms and fetishize them to justify your positions. I could make the criticism from the failure of the IDB to appear that there has been no Marxist analysis on international questions. There are lots of inadequacies in the organization: Robertson can't write more than 10 lines, and I wouldn't trust Crawford to mail a letter or return a notebook. But your political conclusions don't follow from this. You reduce everything to formal logic, or become agnostic where it is important to be firm.

Bergman: If you are not allowed to go back to Germany will you stay in the organization and sacrifice your academic career?

Morris: I'm tired of giving you facts because I don't think you give a fat damn. I think you're hell-bent on some subjective revenge that I don't understand. The point is you didn't raise criticisms at the time you had them or to the right people. You claim to have gone to Robertson with criticisms of us, and he did nothing. What did you want him to do--destroy us? He didn't, and that indicates he's not the cliquist you see him to be. Your cliquism is still there, for example the question of Franz today. You say you agree with the SL program, but at the same time you want to destroy the embodiment of that program.

Keith A.: If you're serious about this organization you will disband your faction and stay in the U.S. through the pre-conference discussion.

Crawford: The facts are evident. I want to talk about the party: Gordon and Robertson are being slandered in this meeting. I talked to Janet at the break in the PB meeting and she said: "I believe in Turner's devil-theory of Robertson." She saw Robertson as the personification of the anti-Christ, the Pope, the devil and Stalin all rolled into one. It was rampant paranoia, seeing Robertson as the dominant figure in every nook and cranny in New York. But she said she couldn't prove it. Our discipline is strict, but fair. We are not a debating society, and debates are not polite affairs; it is to hammer out a line, and can be quite tense. These people couldn't take it and have been brewing over it, Cunningham since 1969. Benjamin told everyone he was a psychological basket case. Cunningham was afraid to bring his criticisms to the highest body he was part of. The point on intellectuals is infuriating: No one in the organization has the breadth of knowledge of Robertson. Seymour is one of the best economists in the world today, one of the few who can polemicize with Mandel and win. Moore sat through the PB meeting when Cunningham was there. Where was the heavy hand there? He was encouraged to take positions and wouldn't. It was pathetic, he wouldn't take a position. You can protect and support comrades, but you can't protect them against themselves, and at that point they must be fought. Helene got pretty rough treatment but she wasn't destroyed. And I repeat, there has been no one expelled, there are no atrocity stories.

Simons: Trotsky supported the expulsion of Levi. (Reads Trotsky, First Five Years of the Communist International, pp. 85-6, 90-1.): "...the decision concerning Levi adopted by the Congress at Moscow is perfectly clear and requires no commentaries. By the decision of the Congress, Levi was placed outside the Communist International. This decision was not at all adopted against the wishes of the Russian delegation, but on the contrary with its rather conspicuous participation, inasmuch as it was none other than the Russian delegation that drafted the resolution on tactics....as member of the Central Committee and member of the Russian delegation, I voted for the resolution confirming Levi's expulsion from the International.... Levi opposed himself not only to the March mistakes but also to the German Party and the workers who had committed these mistakes....The organization created by Levi is bound, in the very nature of things, to attract all those who accidentally fell into the ranks of the Communist Party and who require, especially after the March upheaval, the first convenient pretext for betaking themselves to the hills. It would be far too awkward for them to return straightway to the Independents. For these tired pilgrims Levi has arranged something in the nature of a sanatorium or rest home for critics. Its name is the KAG. The German working class has no earthly use for this institution. The German working class already possesses its own revolutionary party. The latter has still far from overcome all its growing pains. In store for it still lie heavy trials and tribulations, both external and internal. But it is the genuine party of the German working class. It will grow and develop. It will conquer."

Steve G.: Reality has its place in Marxist analysis. The position closest to Moore's on the woman question was Seymour, a "key element of the regime." When he was attacked by every kind of combination, Robertson protected him. We had a six hour discussion on W & R in

this local. And at the Plenum the one who asked for contributions on W & R was Robertson. I criticized Gordon's "Cliques" article in July, but overall it has a correct evaluation of the defectors. On building the organization, just look at the new RCYers here (who you didn't recruit) asking you for programmatic differences and speaking well. The leadership is building a vanguard. The nucleus will exist with or without you. Cunningham, Treiger could have been part of the collective leadership. It was up to them, and you still have the opportunity if you want it.

1. Minority Summary:

Moore: On Levi, Lenin attempted to bring him back into the KPD at the Third Congress of the Communist International. On Cunningham, Treiger et al., I won't condemn them for political differences I don't know they have. I have already criticized them for leaving. As far as my party loyalty is concerned, I have raised criticisms when I had them. I didn't know of the W & R problem until I returned. It is wrong to say that Cunningham, Treiger, Benjamin and Rogers weren't reacting to something. Many of them played a key role in getting the SL to where it is today. The pressure was really on Robertson, Gordon and Nelson and that's why they wanted to fight. Treiger and Cunningham didn't know how to fight them. They were outmaneuvered and outgunned. On international work: It's not just the IDB, but a whole perspective of struggle on the international level. The leadership shows a linear attitude, a passive, hands-off attitude on international questions. This is sectarian. I signed the letter on Bolfra-IKD as part of the collective leadership, even though it was not my line on it. I was for establishing ties immediately with Spartacus/BL. The Fourth International was founded by four groups that had far greater differences than the SL and Sp/BL. The majority draft document still doesn't choose between the IKD and Bolfra. If there isn't a minority position worth fighting for, what's that? A real breakthrough in Germany was missed because of the sectarianism and laziness of the leadership. The majority still makes the SPD question the main criteria!

On W & R why is there no PB document for the majority on it yet? There has been nothing on this in the past year. Robertson stopped any political struggle on it. The question of my returning to Europe will be settled in the PB. I have a hard position on it, though. I used the analogy of the SLL from '51 to '63, when it first intervened internationally, by sucking up to the SWP, to describe the present SL leadership. Sectarianism leads to degeneration, and that's the way I see things going. I'm not going to abandon the organization. If the differences become too great, I will resign, giving a political resignation. Is the SL the nucleus of the vanguard party or not? I believe I have evidence for not. I don't think the work habits of the leadership are those of professional revolutionaries. What we need is a Sverdlov or Cannon, a fusion of declassed intellectuals with the advanced workers. The Bolshevik leadership was Lenin and Trotsky, balanced by Sverdlov. The regime launched this fight because it saw an issue on the slate. I feel Benjamin had excellent political judgement, he got the paper out. He should be on the CC and Moore also. Examples of slander: Three times it has been predicted that I would split. This is slander. Talk about organizational

pressure? I have been through the wringer three times in eight months in order to keep me from being here, to make me split. Well, it won't work. I'll write the document they wanted to prevent me from writing.

j. Majority Summary:

Foster: You always shoot from the hip. It took one letter from Stuart for you to go into opposition, without even asking for clarification. You claim you had contradictory instructions, and draw a dichotomy between recruiting and fraternal relations. But you didn't realize that and ask for a clarification? In fact, you were told to apply general political pressure. But you made decisions yourself, and got the Boston Secretariat to carry them out, without notifying the PB. Why was the secretariat dissolved in December when it was okay in November? Because in November the PB didn't know what you were doing with it in Germany. Yes, some predicted you would split in December; a variety of bets were made on what you would do. But the outcome at the PB in March was the desired one. You give a disengenuous reply on the question of the cliques: "What Cliques?" There was a link-up here, a touching of hands of the cliques, and you had correspondence with the others. The George case is another example of shooting from the hip to protect a clique member. It turned out that the leadership protected him from some elements of the youth. The devil himself (Robertson) was opposed to the if-then motion that was voted. And you didn't write to the PB but to people you felt close to. On the supposed Robertson-Gordon-Nelson "clique", you were elated when they supported you against Foster, Kinder. On suppressing criticisms: both Moore and Stuart did this. You went behind the backs of national and local leadership. In one case you complained bitterly to Cantor, she called Robertson on the Coast telling him all hell was breaking loose in Boston, Robertson called Foster asking what was happening.

On women's liberation, we have had historic weaknesses on the West Coast. But where were your documents in this period. There have been excellent Marxist articles in the last several issues of W&R and one in the recent WV on women's liberation. The core of our document on women's liberation for the SDS convention was written by Morris, with contributions from you and me and papers by Carter, Kamkov and Day, and put together by Gordon. The women's document was supposed to be written by me, but I did not have the time to write it because of my job. Nelson also raised criticisms of the W & R work. On the cliquists doing all the work while the old farts just piss in the well: We all worked on winning over the LF and the CWC. On the Washington LF people, the final work was done by Robertson and Cunningham; Robertson was key to winning over the CWC. You still haven't answered the political illogic of claiming a correct program but incapable leadership. This should come out in perspectives documents, but you accept the SL Transformation Memo.

On the charge of workerism--I don't see the evidence. We were afraid of a growing together of self-conscious petty-bourgeois intellectuals against the apparatchnik clods. Maybe you should be on the CC, but we couldn't have any struggle about it because the cliquists gave up the fight and quit. On the charges of Bonapartism:

Who is Robertson bouncing between? This requires documentation. You have made some interesting allusions surrounding the Levi case, namely that discipline in pre-party formation in the U.S. might not be the same as in the large KPD that Levi belonged to. On Germany, Moore was protected, not put through the wringer; the affair was restricted to the CC. Helene was protected, Cunningham and Treiger as well; Chris and myself have been protected at times. But I don't see a careful selection of who was protected in order to protect the regime. Moore simply misreads the article on the LF. We tried to have formal contacts but were frozen out. The whole PB did assiduous work on it. We attempted to show the need for them to study the SWP history. But they had a conference and hardened up on some peculiar positions: anti-democratic centralism (freedom of criticism), a quirky Fifth International position. They showed some sympathy both to the SL and VNL (instead of political struggle, they tried to conciliate both). But the leadership had a commitment to going independent. Yes, it was a maneuver, designed to put political pressure on the LF, and make some principled points to the LF leadership. And it has been reasonably successful.

On Germany: this is the first time you've admitted you felt the SPD question was not crucial in deciding who to support. We are not agnostic on international questions, but we were agnostic on the split because we didn't have the documents and your report was poor. The SL showed eagerness toward the Sp/BL conference, sending three comrades and literature. We went to Britain and talked with the RCL. We criticized their military work, which is essentially soldier trade unionism which doesn't deal with the Irish question. But we also found out Moore went there on his own before, but only after the fact, in a letter from Stuart. You attribute to us the position of the OCI, but in our meetings we criticized their anti-Pabloist family of Trotskyism perspective strongly. On international discussion we should have a thorough discussion on Germany. We may have difference of more than just shadings with the Sp/BL. We have more hope for them than the IKD, but they can't handle the SPD question for the same reason they can't handle the DKP. Also their attitude to the organizational question. They are a developing organization, but they will develop in struggle, and there will have to be much struggle before it becomes a Leninist organization.

On the regime question, your arguments reflect menshevism. Sure, the regime walked all over your back with golf shoes, but they didn't destroy you. All that came out of that was a resolution against the Boston clique. If you want some after the fact advice, what you should have done is declared a tendency with a long-range goal of forming a faction. You should reconsider your positions pointing to a split perspective, but you shouldn't pull back, we should have a hard fight. So there we have it: The comrades have covered it all at length. Your many assertions tonight must be proven. The transformation is proceeding well, thank you. It's never been better. It was bad in 1969 when we were down to 40 people. If you examine your arguments you'll see they don't hold water. In general you don't understand the party question, and can't see the forest for the trees. I speak in favor of the motions. It is false that Stuart went to NYC to check up on the majority. She said she didn't want the majority there. On Cunningham, you have

been remiss in your duty to the PB. There are plenty of facts to condemn Cunningham, Treiger et al., but you don't do it. Who knows, Cunningham may come up with some formally correct criticisms, but obvious organizational prophylaxis would require you to inform the leadership of any contact. A final point: there was no move to remove Moore from the leadership even after his horrid conduct. The minority is oblivious to elementary organizational things. You will have to do better.

3. Voting on Motions

- a. The Boston local sharply condemns the minority for having comrade Stuart, one of two minority comrades, willfully miss the Sept. 4, 1972 special pre-conference discussion meeting on the factional situation in the SL, and instead go to New York City to pick up a personal friend at the airport since it evidences an unserious and un-Leninist attitude on the part of the minority comrades.

For: SL: Susan S., Morris, Bergman, Foster, Simons, Sharpe,
Lynn M., Barry J., Crawford, MacNabb, Keith A.,
Carl L., Steve G., Scott, Norden.

RCY: Alice L., Melinda L., Fran F., Sandra O., Val M.,
Paul C., Maryanne D., Mark L., John S., Ken R.,
Richard C., James S.

Against: SL: Moore

RCY: None

Abstain: None

Not Voting: None

Passed

- b. The Boston local condemns comrade Moore for withholding information from the PB on his communication with ex-comrade Cunningham after the latter's resignation from the SL and instead only partially divulging this information some time later at the Boston local meeting of 26 Aug. 1972.

For: SL: Susan S., Morris, Bergman, Foster, Simons, Sharpe,
Lynn M., Barry J., Crawford, MacNabb, Keith A.,
Carl L., Steve G., Scott, Norden.

RCY: Alice L., Melinda L., Fran F., Sandra O., Val M.,
Paul C., Maryanne D., Mark L., John S., Ken R.,
Richard C., James S.

Against: SL: Moore

RCY: None

Abstain: None

Not Voting: None

Passed

4. Future Agenda

Foster: We need to have long international reports, so we should have a full discussion on this since it bears on the factional situation. Should have report from Sharpe, supplementary remarks from Foster, and perhaps a counterposed report from Moore.

Moore: Counterposed reports may not be useful, but we should have a lengthy discussion.

Crawford: Since Moore's views seem to be in flux we may not need majority and minority reports. I project a series of meetings on the woman question, trade union issues and possibly others.

Motion to adjourn: Passed

Meeting adjourned at 10:52 p.m.

NOTE ON THE LETTER OF KEVIN F.

The following letter throws some light on the late Communist Tendency in relation to ourselves, an issue raised by comrade Moore in his Boston debate with comrade Foster on 4 September 1972. Additionally of interest, some of the current uses to which Cunningham is being put are presented.

Parenthetically, the letter's author avoids entirely the subject of our major private confrontation with the CT--Proletarian Military Policy. After several hours of debate we finally extracted from them the admission that PMP meant to them workers' control of the bourgeois state apparatus, i.e. a kind of extra-parliamentary popular front. Only after we hit them repeatedly with what Lenin had to say to Kautsky on the nature of the state did they back away from that logical culmination of their (and Fender-Turner's) position.

Finally with regard to the postscript of this letter, on the face of it in view of the letter's own tone and content, one can hardly imagine what level of anti-Marxism and subjectivity would have to be reached in order for us to make in that author's eyes a "malicious" accusation against the CT. But in reality brother Kevin is merely expressing, in the characteristic puerile and thin-skinned CT fashion, a classic centrist softness to the right (enthusing over IS) and harshness to the left.

--the N.O., 27 October 1972

* * *

LETTER OF KEVIN F.

August 23, 1972
Waltham, Mass.

[Milwaukee]

Dear Comrade Sam:

We recently heard of your interest in the IS, as well as of your general agreement with our, the CWG-CT, perspectives in the SWP. Under these circumstances we thought it might be advisable to write to you explaining why we joined the IS and not any other organization.

When we "left" the SWP we were faced with what Cannon said the art of politics consists of--the question of what to do next. Not really being sectarians, despite what had been dinned into our ears in the SWP, we decided to investigate all the "Trotskyist" groups without bias. Vanguard Newsletter was the first group we approached, because we had read and liked it inside the party. This proved to be an outfit which had no real purpose other than to spread the thought of Harry Turner, a thought which even then was growing extremely purist. About the same time we even had a meeting with a representative of the Workers League. As you can imagine, this didn't come to much. Roughly in the same period we were approached by the Spartacist League. An interesting sidelight on this is that they

had told us, before the pre-convention discussion period opened, that we should quit the SWP and join them--and even get a seat on the NC, etc. Naturally, we had rejected the advice of these sterling political experts and had stayed in to fight. Despite this, and despite the generally bad impression the SL had made on all of us in the past years, we decided to keep the avenues open. However, the more we saw the less we liked. It was just then that the CWC was joining and that they were beginning a monthly paper. Despite these good signs, the Sparts continued as before, finding all kinds of reasons for not having a proletarian orientation and generally orienting towards the most backward and anti-worker students. The RCY itself was one of the major reasons for our growing hostility. This is probably the most self-satisfied bunch of self-proclaimed little Marx's, Trotskys, etc., that has ever existed. Their behavior on a public floor shows the decided influence of Robertson's infatuation with PL ("Trotskyism with a pre-frontal lobotomy"). They scream and yell, accuse the holders of the meeting of being the enemies of the workers (them?) and generally act like real little Stalinists, except that their favorite epithet is "Stalinist," not "Trotskyite." Appropriately enough, their leader is Joe Seymour. If it were possible to find a more likely candidate for dilettante of all time, it would have to be Oscar Wilde. Seymour is a great political thinker. He, in opposition to the old Spart thesis that there was never going to be an economic crisis, has discovered that there never was a boom. In addition, he has discovered that black workers are not super-exploited, probably because they don't produce very much anyway!

All these things, plus a lot of research into the background of that tendency, convinced us that they were, as a group, a totally worthless bunch. For instance, you have a tendency which after seven years existence finally gets around to publishing a monthly paper. The only good thing about the paper is that it can't mislead the workers, since no worker would read that tripe twice. Their trade-union program is a direct reflection of their non-interventionist attitude towards the workers. Like so much sectarian rubbish it reflects passivity. The PL thing, the black question, the economic question all separated us. Their origins, which they have managed to mask in a cloud of obscurantism, is really revealed fairly well in Wohlforth's "What Is Spartacist?" and in Harry Turner's series "Trotskyism Today," if you take them with a grain of salt. Finally, it is noteworthy that Marvin Treiger and Dave Cunningham, from what we hear, have both quit the Sparts, and on generally the same grounds: that the SL is a "Byzantine cellar," that it is a cult around Robertson, and that their proletarian orientation is a farce. There is nothing new about these charges. What is significant is that this time the top leadership of the SL says it. Cunningham, in particular, was a long-time Robertsonite and the only reason that Spartacist ever got out at all; no thanks to his fearless leader, who is right up there with Marcy and Marcus in the loose-screw department. "Where there's smoke, there's fire," appears to be a truthful axiom about these charges against SL.

But enough about that. Our statement, in Workers' Power #60, is of course rather limited. Nevertheless, it states the bare facts. When it was first suggested that we might contact the IS, our reactor

was, "not the Shachtmanites?!?". However, after visiting New York and being visited by some of the NY IS comrades, we decided that the IS was the place for us. Not because it is perfect. It's not, and nobody denies this in the IS. Not because we have changed our minds on the nature of the Soviet state. We made sure that that was clearly stated in the paper. Our reason for joining is that the IS is the only organization which is going in our direction--to the left, to the workers. I think they feel the same way. We don't have to pretend that we agree on everything. That's part of the democracy which we find so welcome in the IS. That we can together seek to find the answers to our common problems through common work. That is the basis for a real regroupment, and not a series of interminable polemics having no basis in the developments of the class struggle, a la SL.

We, of course, are curious about you also. Are you now in the SWP/YSA, or were you? How did you hear about us and when? We assume that you have the CT documents, but you may not have a copy of the single issue of Red Flag, our magazine which we published as the CWG. You can get one from the IS National Office, or we will send you one, whichever is easiest. What is your general attitude to the IS? What is the political situation in Milwaukee? As I recall, the YSA/SWP was never able to build a real branch there. Can this situation be changed? We hope to hear from you soon on all these points and on others raised in the letter.

Fraternally,

Kevin F.

P.S. We keep hearing from various sources all kinds of accusations that the Sparts keep circulating about us. Most of it is the kind of petty-bourgeois sour grapes that we would expect, but some of it is more malicious. It would be helpful if you could inform us of what you know in this regard.

Kevin

REPLY TO SEYMOUR

--submitted by L. Davidson

Seymour's Theses on the Women's Liberation Movement can only be welcomed as a provocative contribution to the necessary process of struggle and clarification of the SL perspectives on the woman question. They reveal, however, a certain lack of understanding of the nature of women's oppression and the struggle against it, and cannot be allowed to stand unanswered. While the conclusion consistent with Seymour's premises would appear to be abstention from the struggle against feminist, reformist, and Stalinist ideology in the women's liberation movement and the liquidation of our women's work, he does not propose this, maintaining instead a formally correct, if unspecified, general thrust on our future tasks.

His opening statement: "Because the oppression of women is deeply rooted in all class cultures and rests upon an institution--the family--central to social and economic life, women have not regarded themselves as an oppressed social group whose condition could be changed," is incorrect in a number of ways, reflecting an impressionistic and unmaterialist approach to the woman question. To begin with, the reasoning of this sentence, if applied to the proletariat as a whole, would lead to our abandoning the struggle for socialist revolution altogether. Certainly the oppression and exploitation of the worker is deeply rooted in the institution of wage-slavery, "central to social and economic life," but we do not draw from this the conclusion, based on an empirical and ahistorical estimation of the present backward consciousness of the mass of workers, that the working class has not regarded itself as an "oppressed social group whose condition could be changed."

It is precisely because the oppression of women is so deeply rooted in the capitalist social and economic structure that it requires a socialist revolution to eliminate--this is the basis for the Bolshevik conception of special work among women: that the female proletariat and sub-proletarian strata can be brought to communist consciousness through an understanding of their special oppression, its material basis, and the role of a unified working class in overcoming it through the overthrow of capitalism and the construction of a classless society. This awareness does not, and never will exist spontaneously in the masses of women--it must be brought to them from without by conscious revolutionists.

There do exist, however, rudimentary impulses against women's special oppression, which have been reflected both within the class, in reformist struggles, and in movements based in other classes, inevitably distorted by the outlook of these bourgeois and petty-bourgeois strata. In both cases this awareness is bound within the framework of bourgeois ideology and leadership, and will continue to be until broken from it through the intervention of communists armed with the transitional program.

Seymour apparently shares with the feminists and the German idealists their view of the family as an eternal relation, unchanging through "all class cultures" and historical periods, and

hence unconnected to the present tasks of revolutionists. This assertion was adequately answered by Marx and Engels in The German Ideology, when they argued, "The family, which to begin with is the only social relationship, becomes later, when increased needs create new social relations and the increased population new needs, a subordinate one. . . , and must then be treated and analysed according to the existing empirical data, not according to 'concept of the family,' as is the custom in Germany."

In fact, the struggle for revolutionary consciousness within the women's movement is possible and necessary because an objective basis for this consciousness already exists: in the area of women's oppression, as in many others, capitalism creates the seeds of its own destruction. Through a reciprocal process of drawing women into the wage-labor force and industrializing household production, as part of the general historical tendency to reduce all social relations into the sphere of commodity exchange, capitalism itself has created the material basis for the economic independence and social equality of women.

But while the capitalist organization of production has rendered the family obsolete, it is structurally incapable of replacing it with a higher form of social organization. Instead, its reliance on the atomizing and conservatising effects of the isolated family unit lead to an attempt to bolster it in its present mutilated form against the forces acting to dissolve it. An important reflection of this is the development of the welfare system, where the state fulfills the function traditionally assigned to the husband, in order to artificially maintain an inefficient and individuated system of production (or reproduction) of the labor force. The task of communists is to recognize the obsolescence of the family and to seek to channel the discontent engendered by its disintegration in a revolutionary direction.

Seymour characterizes as "fleeting" the bourgeois women's movements, such as the suffrage movement, which carried on sustained political activity for a mere 70 years; he altogether ignores the reformist-led working women's movement aimed at minimal trade union rights and organization, child labor laws, etc.; he dismisses as "exceptional" the socialist women's sections established by the Social Democracy and the Comintern. Having thus conclusively demonstrated the absence of any tradition of mass struggle against women's oppression, the obvious conclusion is that this is not a viable issue around which to mobilize the masses of women in struggle. . .

What he fails to recognize, however, is that political movements, capable of mobilizing the masses against any form of oppression, have generally been characterized by periods of mass upsurge alternating with long periods of isolation and "insignificance." By Seymour's criteria, one should dismiss the petty-bourgeois student movements as "fleeting," the struggle for Negro rights as "exceptional,"--even the trade unions in this country engage their members in direct economic struggles only sporadically and political battles rarely. One distinguishing characteristic of a Marxist is the historical overview which allows one to anticipate and prepare for those infrequent moments of mass upheaval in which the

working class overcomes its ordinary passivity and quiescence and becomes capable of conscious, decisive, political action.

Similarly, as long as the special oppression of women exists, and alongside it the material possibility of its elimination, there will continue to be manifested opposition to this oppression, which we will seek to intersect and influence with our analysis and program.

The basic error Seymour makes in his description of the women's liberation movement is in viewing it as a static, monolithic entity with a unified political line. In fact, it was a heterogeneous and contradictory phenomenon, characterized from the beginning by internal struggle between opposing political currents. The '60's protest movements in general were marked by a combination of genuinely egalitarian and internationalist impulses with a variety of utopian, populist, and anarchist organizational and strategic conceptions, finally brought under the ideological sway of Pabloist and Stalinist revisionism. Similarly, the women's liberation movement, which was distinguished primarily by the essentially correct realization, that women were in fact oppressed and had to organize to fight that oppression, developed through organizational forms and theoretical assumptions reflecting, often in reverse, its New Left origins. (This is counterposed to Seymour's assertion that the central premise of the movement was "the unique capacity of an independent women's movement to overcome women's oppression.")

Arguments for organizational separatism stressed the need for women to struggle against their own special oppression, representing a break with the traditional Stalinist/trade-unionist practice of mobilizing women only in support of their husbands' strikes. Following the example of the black movement, for which separatism and nationalism appeared as the illusory alternative to the bankruptcy of the reformist liberalism of the civil rights movement, the need for a revolutionary struggle against the special oppression of women was translated into the poly-vanguardist framework of separatism and exclusionism. The rejection of the Stalinist view of the family as "fighting unit for socialism," the rebellion against the elitist and bureaucratic practices and pervasive male-chauvinist attitudes, were key formative factors in the emergence of the women's liberation movement from the New Left, and its subsequent development of anti-theoretical, anti-leadership, and anti-communist tendencies.

The growth of the movement produced more than this, however--it also provided the impetus for the reconstruction of the authentic Marxist position on the family and the need for special work among women, and an arena for the development of a "correct Marxist program for the woman question," thus overcoming the previous historical hiatus during which the Trotskyist movement seemed to lose contact with the Bolshevik tradition on this question. The development under the leadership of the SL of a pole of communist opposition within the women's movement is ignored in Seymour's discussion, thereby discounting the role of conscious intervention by the vanguard, which though hampered by inexperience, unclarity, and

an insufficiently aggressive stance, nonetheless made it possible to attract and recruit to the SL a number of the most politically advanced elements. One can only conjecture about the political impact we might have had were we able to intervene initially with the cadre and program we have since developed.

The development of the women's movement was marked by a continual process of political conflict and polarization, with divisions (often overlapping) along the following lines: between personal and political solutions; between reformism and revolution; between feminism and Marxism; among ostensibly Marxist organizations (e.g. Maoism vs. Trotskyism.) The disintegration of the movement has meant the splitting of these component parts in several directions: the personalists retreating into their personal lifestyle "solutions," the reformists plunging headlong into the Democratic Party, the "socialists" joining the various ORO's.

Seymour cites the secondary nature of direct agitation against the state and other bourgeois institutions over abortion reform, equal pay, etc., as evidence for the political irrelevance of the women's liberation movement. In fact most agitation against the state for abortion reform through WONAAC, equal pay through NOW, child care through CP fronts--any agitation against the state in isolation from a revolutionary program would be inevitably reformist; similarly, in the absence of a clear strategy of working-class mobilization, one is left with the bourgeois courts and capitalist parties to implement these demands. That many women's liberationists were repelled by the deadend of liberal reformism is understandable--that they did not more clearly perceive as an alternative the struggle for proletarian power to transform the material roots of women's oppression, is testimony to the strength of bourgeois ideology and the present weakness of the vanguard.

One of Seymour's least convincing arguments, borrowed for the occasion from the Workers League, is the attempt to discredit the women's movement by pointing to its thoroughly petty-bourgeois class character. We do not normally base our decision whether to intervene in a movement primarily on its class composition, but on our ability to capitalize on pretensions to Marxism and subjectively revolutionary impulses, in order to split off a section winnable to the Trotskyist program. Nor is the transitory nature of a petty-bourgeois protest movement a convincing argument against involvement--it speaks instead for the necessity of timely concentrated intervention at key points. The analogy with SDS is useful here: a greater appreciation of the importance of timing in our intersection of the mass leftward motion on the campuses could have resulted in a qualitatively different balance of forces among the ORO's.

The present disintegration of the women's liberation movement, corresponding to the demise of the New Left, while it removes this as an available ongoing arena, nonetheless provides us with the opportunity and obligation to continue to present ourselves as a clear communist alternative to the bourgeois feminists, ex-Trotskyist liberals, and other rotten elements, using our uniquely correct position to attract whatever fragments remain with a subjectively proletarian, revolutionary orientation.

Exclusionism is not for us a principled obstacle to involvement--we adapt to it tactically in order to defeat it politically. If we had had black cadre, we certainly would have fought for hegemony of the exclusionist black movement (or parts of it)--on the basis of a program of unified proletarian revolution and a strategy for black transitional organization--seeking to break a section away from separatist, exclusionist, polyvanguardist organizational conceptions on the basis of more advanced political consciousness (this policy is clearest in our attitude toward exclusionist black or women's caucuses within the unions). Fighting for hegemony does not necessarily mean that we expect to win it in the immediate period--nor do we fight for leadership, as do the opportunist ORO's, on the basis of the movement as it is and with the most backward politics--we use the struggle for hegemony as a vehicle to express our politics, polemicize against opposing tendencies, and split away a section of the most advanced and receptive elements.

Another minor error is the contention that we should orient only toward individual recruitment, which runs counter to our general perspectives for regroupment: while we certainly expect to recruit individual activists in the course of our work, we recognize that the most serious will have established and maintained groups to implement their perspectives, and that we can anticipate success in drawing to us other groupings similar to the Oakland and New Orleans women.

What is most impressive about Seymour's Theses is not, however, what he gets wrong--it is rather what he leaves out altogether. There is nothing by way of useful analysis of the position of women in the family or the workforce, of the various political trends in the women's movement; of our own past work in this arena and its relation to our other tasks, no practical suggestions for the future, except for the helpful admonishment, that our work must be "propagandistic, of a high theoretical level," with which few will disagree. By disregarding the material basis for the struggle for women's emancipation, the contradictory currents within the petty-bourgeois women's movement, and the role of the conscious vanguard, Seymour substitutes the standpoint of metaphysics and impressionism for that of Marxism.

--16 September 1972

FEMINISM AND MARXISM

--submitted by Joseph Seymour

The Purpose of the "Theses"

The basic theme of comrade Davidson's document is that the "Theses" is an argument for abstaining both from the current "women's liberation movement" and the struggle against the oppression of women in general. This is not true. The aim of the "Theses" was to change the character, not the existence, of our intervention in the "women's liberation movement." The "Theses" was difficult to write because our women's fraction had not produced a perspectives document on their work. It was therefore necessary to project the W & R leadership's guiding political conceptions.

The main operational point of the "Theses" was the need to concentrate more on attacking feminism as an ideology. I believe the W & R leadership displayed a tendency toward the same deviation that characterized the Turner-Ellens leadership of MLCRC as regards black nationalism. W & R deliberately avoided sharp polemical attacks on feminism, substituting the presentation of a positive program against the oppression of women as if this was enough to win "women's liberation" activists over to communism. The work tended too much in the direction of exemplary mass work, and not enough as opponent work directed particularly at the ostensibly revolutionary feminists.

Behind this difference over what W & R should be and do, was a different analysis of the "women's liberation" movement. I believe the current "women's liberation movement" is an expression of petty-bourgeois radicalism arising out of the same social-political milieu and sharing similar ideological conceptions as Third World-anarcho-Maoism, youth vanguardism, life-style radicalism and black nationalism. I believe the W & R leadership regarded the "women's liberation movement" as an embryonic mass movement created by politically backward women who were spontaneously reacting to their oppression as women. They tended to see feminism not as a conscious counter-ideology to Marxism, but as a kind of women's liberation equivalent of trade union militancy. They tended to treat "women's liberation" activists pedagogically as political innocents, not as political opponents. The developments of this past year have confirmed the position of the "Theses" that the current "women's liberation movement" was a transitory petty-bourgeois radical current and not the beginnings of a mass women's movement in which we would be working for years and years. There is a general consensus in the SL that the "women's liberation movement" is dead, leading to the quite unexpected proposal to liquidate W & R.

What Is Feminism?

To rebut comrade Davidson's document point by point would be lengthy and diffuse. I will therefore concentrate on what I believe to be our major political differences and which are most likely to be important in future SL work in this area. These are the nature of feminism and the relation between the communist vanguard and non-party women's organizations.

I believe comrade Davidson does not recognize the class character of feminism. I believe she sees feminism as an essentially harmless misconception, which exists at all only because the communist movement does not effectively combat the oppression of women. Feminism has a material base in this class society. It reflects the social reality of bourgeois and upper petty-bourgeois women, for whom their oppression as women is the primary form of social oppression they suffer. Feminism is a class ideology reflecting false consciousness at two levels. Since for bourgeois and upper petty-bourgeois women, their oppression as women is primary, they believe all women are primarily oppressed as women and that the fundamental division of oppression in society is that of men against women. Feminists also have class consciousness. Thus, feminist anti-communism is not simply a reaction to the real or alleged failure of the communist movement to oppose the oppression of women. It also reflects the defense of class privilege against the threat of proletarian dictatorship.

Comrade Davidson appears to believe that if we can convince most "women's liberation" activists of the "correct Marxist program for the women question," they would automatically come over to communism. However, their unwillingness to be won to the correct Marxist program is a reflection of false (class) consciousness. Feminism is the political movement of an alien class. As a rule, women who come to communism from feminism must become class traitors. Comrade Davidson doesn't fully realize this or its importance in our work.

Feminism has its own social base. The failure of ostensible socialists to oppose the oppression of women may strengthen feminism, it does not create it. The effectiveness of socialists in fighting the oppression of women may weaken feminism, it does not automatically eliminate it. In comrade Davidson's analysis of the current "women's liberation" movement, feminism is treated entirely as a reaction to the failure of the traditional left to fight the oppression of women. By clear implication, if significant socialist forces fought the oppression of women, feminism wouldn't exist. This idea is historically proven false. Powerful revolutionary socialist movements have faced serious opposition from organized feminism. Would comrade Davidson care to defend the proposition that the Victoria Woodhull wing of the American section of the First International was a reaction to the male chauvinism of Sorge and Marx or their refusal to fight the oppression of women? Does comrade Davidson believe that the opposition of organized feminism to the Comintern women's organizations were because the latter were defective in opposing the oppression of women? Comrade Davidson states that the SL has recruited from the current "women's liberation" movement. However, in an earlier period, ex-members and sympathizers drifted away from the SL toward the "women's liberation" movement. The direction of recruitment between the communist vanguard and organized feminism is not necessarily one directional. The SL's correct position on the oppression of women no more prevents us from losing members to feminism than our correct position on the oppression of blacks prevented us from losing Stoute and other black members to nationalism. Organized feminism can be a conscious and serious opponent of the communist movement. It is not a passive pool for recruitment. And it is not a harmless reaction to the failures of the communist movement in dealing with

the oppression of women.

The Nature and History of the
Current Women's Liberation Movement

The following is comrade Davidson's analysis of the origins of the current "women's liberation" movement.

"Similarly, the women's liberation movement, which was distinguished primarily by the essentially correct realization, that women were in fact oppressed and had to organize to fight that oppression, developed through organizational forms and theoretical assumptions reflecting, often in reverse, its New Left origins....Arguments for organizational separatism stressed the need for women to struggle against their own special oppression, representing a break with the traditional Stalinist/trade unionist practice of mobilizing women only in support of their husbands' strikes. Following the example of the black movement, for which separatism and nationalism appeared as the illusory alternative to the bankruptcy of the reformist liberalism of the civil rights movement, the need for a revolutionary struggle against the special oppression of women was translated into the poly-vanguardist framework of separatism and exclusionism. The rejection of the Stalinist view of the family as "fighting unit for socialism," the rebellion against the elitist and bureaucratic practices and pervasive male-chauvinist attitudes, were key formative factors in the emergence of the women's liberation movement from the New Left, and its subsequent development of anti-theoretical, anti-leadership and anti-communist tendencies."

Taken as a whole, this is an objectivist defense of the "women's liberation movement." The argument amounts to this. Given the state of the existing left (its male chauvinism, indifference to the oppression of women, etc.), organizations against the oppression of women had to take a separatist form with a justifying ideology. Since any movement directed against the oppression of women is better than none at all, the "women's liberation movement" was essentially progressive as against the New and Old Left. The emergence of a separatist women's movement is treated simply as passive reaction to the failures of the existing left. Its leadership and cadre are absolved from responsibility for their politics (they didn't know any better). In sharp contrast to the historical tolerance with which comrade Davidson treats the women's liberation movement" (one could not really expect better given the circumstances), she harshly condemns the New Left and Stalinists, who are held responsible for their own bad politics and those of the "women's liberation movement" as well! It doesn't occur to comrade Davidson that just as one can explain away the anti-communism and personalism of the "women's liberation movement" by the objective circumstance which gave birth to it, so one can explain away the economist-philistinism of the Stalinists and the elitism and male chauvinism of the New Left by the objective conditions which shaped those movements. Gus Hall and Mark Rudd are no less products of their political environment than Anne Koedt and Roxanne Dunbar and our fundamental attitude toward them as opponents

is not different. There is no basis for patronizing the "women's liberation movement" as the innocent victim of the New Left and Stalinists.

The key sentence in comrade Davidson's analysis is "the women's liberation movement, which was distinguished primarily by the essentially correct realization, that women were in fact oppressed and had to organize to fight that oppression..." Does comrade Davidson mean that the "women's liberation movement" was unique in holding that position, that the rest of the left did not and could not realize the oppression of women and the need to fight it? If this is, in fact, true, separate organizations were clearly justified on tactical grounds. The "male dominated left" refused to fight against the oppression of women. There was no choice but organizational separatism.

This thesis is historically false. If the emergence of separatist women's organizations was essentially a result of the refusal of the existing left to fight against the oppression of women, then these organizations should have come about as a result of faction fights in the existing left organizations leading to splits and expulsions. This did not happen. Most of the women who abandoned the existing left organizations to organize a separatist women's movement already were committed to exclusionism as an ideological principle, not as a tactical expediency. And was the traditional left incapable of opposing the oppression of women in any way? Very shortly after the women question became prominent in the radical milieu, almost all the traditional left organizations added women's liberation demands to their propaganda and agitation and many set up special women's organizations. Comrade Davidson refutes her own analysis by noting that much of the agitation against the institutional oppression of women (e.g. day care, abortion reform, equal pay) was carried on by the CP and SWP, naturally in a reformist way. That organizations against the oppression of women took a separatist and exclusionist character was not inevitable. Clearly the active and conscious role of the feminists was important.

Comrade Davidson's analysis of the "women's liberation movement" leaves out the decisive importance of feminist ideology, particularly the relationship between poly-vanguardism and life-style radicalism. In fact, the term "feminism" is not mentioned in the passage cited. Organizational separatism was seen as an ideological principle, not a tactical expediency--an end in itself. Women's liberation was defined to mean a change in attitudes between women and men. Organizational separatism was required to provide an independent power base for women and to prevent men from politically influencing women. The basic argument for exclusionism was not that men were unwilling to oppose the institutional oppression of women. It was that the presence of men would retard the subjective development of women which was regarded as the essential component of women's liberation.

Having placed the blame for feminist separatism exclusively on the New and Old Left, comrade Davidson goes on to place the blame for feminist personalism entirely on the SWP, CP and liberals.

"...most agitation against the state--for abortion reform through WONAAC, equal pay through NOW, child care through CP fronts--any agitation against the state in isolation from a revolutionary program would inevitably be reformist...That many women's liberationists were repelled by the dead-end of liberal reformism is understandable..."

Again feminism is seen simply as a passive reaction to reformism. The life-style feminists were well-meaning people turned on to false paths by the perniciousness of the CP and SWP. This amounts to denying the very existence of petty-bourgeois radicalism. Life-style radicalism and utopian idealism are not unique to the current "women's liberation movement." They have always characterized petty-bourgeois radicalism. The communist movement must always combat these currents and attitudes.

As a historical statement, the above passage is grossly false. Consciousness raising groups and feminist propaganda circles were flourishing well before WONAAC and the CP's women's fronts were created. The SWP and CP's reformist women's activities were a response to the emergence of an independent "women's liberation movement," not vice versa. The analysis is so faulty that comrade Davidson contradicts herself. First we are told that the separatist women's movement was a reaction to the indifference of the traditional left to the oppression of women. Then we are told that the "women's liberation movement" tended toward personalist politics because the SWP and CP had a monopoly on struggles against the institutional oppression of women, which they conducted in a reformist way.

Comrade Davidson states that given the reformist nature of the struggles against the material oppression of women, it was "understandable" that many women's liberationists turned toward personalist politics. If by "understandable," comrade Davidson merely means comprehensible, the statement is a truism. But I believe comrade Davidson means something else by "understandable." Comrade Davidson means healthy, progressive, based on a revolutionary impulse, a movement to the left. If this is what she implies, it is dangerous nonsense. A student activist who drops out into the drug scene because he is repelled by the SWP's endless anti-war demonstrations is not moving left, is not reacting in a healthy way. There are thousands of thoroughly bourgeoisified ex-radicals who can justify their existence by pointing to the opportunism and bureaucratism of the CP and SWP. In general, someone who leaves a reformist or a centrist left organization for personalist politics is moving away from, not toward, the communist movement.

Petty-bourgeois radicalism always justifies itself by criticizing the opportunism and backwardness of the proletarian left. Often it is necessary to defend Stalinist, revisionist and reformist workers organizations from petty-bourgeois radicals motivated by subjectively justifiable impulses. The atrocities of Stalin turned thousands of CPers into anti-communist liberals against whom we defended the CP. Virtually the entire American left supported breaking the 1968 NYC teachers' strike because they believed they were defending the interests of blacks against the racism of Shanker and the labor bureaucracy

in general. That petty-bourgeois radicalism feeds on the opportunism and bureaucratism of working-class organizations makes it more, not less, dangerous.

Comrade Davidson's treatment of the feminists is simply undialectical. Radical feminism is always seen as a reaction to outside forces, as effect, never cause. In fact, the radical feminists, revisionist socialists and bourgeois liberals continually reacted on one another. If the dead-end of reformism drove women's liberationists toward personalism, so the dead-end of personalism drove many women toward reformist activism. Probably the rapid collapse of the "women's liberation movement" this year is partly due to the McGovern campaign. No doubt, thousands of women who passed through the small group, consciousness raising phenomena saw in the McGovern movement a way to really change society in the direction of women's liberation.

The Communist Vanguard and the "Women's Movement"

The Comintern document on work among women reprinted in W & R has the following passage:

"The Third Congress of the Comintern confirms the basic precept of revolutionary Marxism, i.e. that there is no "specific women's question" and no "specific women's movement" and, that every sort of alliance with bourgeois feminism, as well as any support by the women workers of the treacherous tactics of the social-compromisers and opportunists leads to the undermining of the forces of the proletariat."

That the Comintern thought it necessary to make this seemingly terminological point indicates that something important is at stake in this terminology. The term "movement" is a treacherous term easily sliding into class-collaboration. It is for that reason one of the favorite terms of the SWP.

Comrade Davidson's document is replete with references to an all embracing "women's movement" of which the SL is seen as the revolutionary wing. Thus:

"The development under the leadership of the SL of a pole of communist opposition within the women's movement....the struggle for revolutionary consciousness within the women's movement is possible and necessary....The development of the women's movement was marked by a continual process of political conflict and polarization, with divisions (often overlapping) along the following lines: between personal and political solutions; between reformism and revolution; between feminism and Marxism..."

Comrade Davidson is incorrect when she writes of the women's movement as heterogenous. The divisions she speaks of were not contained within the women's movement. The "women's movement" is a dangerous political fiction, similar to the "Arab revolution" or the "black community." What is conventionally called the women's move-

ment is the expression of the oppression of women by different political currents associated with different social classes. Gloria Steinem and NOW are expressions of bourgeois liberalism. Ti-Grace Atkinson and the Radical Feminists are the expression of petty-bourgeois radicalism. WONAAC is the expression of revisionist socialism. W & R is the expression of communism. These individuals and organizations are not part of some trans-class women's movement which embraces them all. W & R is not the communist pole in a women's movement in which NOW is the bourgeois pole.

Accepting the Comintern's contention that there is no trans-class "women's movement," the SL cannot fight for the hegemony over the conventionally defined women's liberation movement. The exclusionist women's liberation movement was essentially feminist, a form of petty-bourgeois radicalism, the movement of an alien class. What is in dispute is not that we should seek to recruit from the "women's liberation movement." What is in dispute is not organizational entry tactics. What is in dispute is the conception that the SL is the organic left-wing of some trans-class women's movement. We are not part of the "women's liberation movement." And our recruits from that arena cease to be part of the "women's liberation movement."

The Tasks of the Communist Women's Organization

Comrade Davidson states her conception of communist women's organizations as follows, "that the female proletariat and sub-proletarian strata can be brought to communist consciousness through an understanding of their special oppression, its material basis, and the role of a unified working class in overcoming it through the overthrow of capitalism and the construction of a classless society." Does comrade Davidson mean that all proletariat and sub-proletariat women are brought into the communist movement only by understanding their oppression as women and only through special women's organizations? This is not the Bolshevik conception. The communist women's organizations were directed at more backward women who could not be drawn into the class struggle and the central organization of the class directly, typically working-class housewives and poor petty-bourgeois women.

Comrade Davidson's statement that the purpose of a communist women's organization is to educate women around their special oppression is one-sided and, therefore, false. A major task of communist women's organizations is to mobilize women to struggle for the over-all program of the party. In his famous conversation with Zetkin, Lenin is insistent on this. After castigating the KPD women's organization for organizing prostitutes and classes on the anthropology of marriage, Lenin states, "Just now we must really give priority to problems other than the forms of marriage prevalent among Australia's aborigines or marriages between brother and sister. For the German proletariat the problems of the Soviets, of the Versailles Treaty and its impact on the lives of women, the problem of unemployment, of falling wages, of taxes and many other things are on the order of the day." A communist women's organization has a dual purpose. It both struggles against the special oppression of women (including its educational aspect) and mobilizes women around the overall program of the party.

Comrade Davidson states that women can be brought to communist consciousness by understanding the communist solution to their special oppression. This is false. A woman who supports the communist movement because it offers the solution to the special oppression of women is no more a communist than a peasant who supports the communist movement because it offers him land. For such a woman to become a communist she must transcend a particular, subjective concern for the oppression of women and identify with the goals of communism as a whole--with all the oppressed and the future of humanity. Comrade Davidson puts forth a subjective concept of communist consciousness. People become communists because communism offers a solution to their own oppression. In large part communist consciousness is achieved and maintained by struggling against strong subjective impulses to identify with particular social groups (particularly oppressed groups), thereby subordinating the historic goals of communism to personal group loyalty.

Note: In concluding comrade Davidson condemns the one page "Theses," primarily concerned with W & R perspectives, for incompleteness-- "There is nothing by way of useful analysis of the position of women in the family or the work force...." In three years and to this day, the leadership of our women's fraction, notably comrade Brosius, has not written a perspectives document for the work (not a paragraph). This is gross political irresponsibility. If comrade Davidson is seriously interested in our developing a comprehensive position on the woman question, she would do better to direct her attacks on the leadership of our women's fraction for the "incompleteness" (!) of their writings on the women question.

Note 2: To document the first section of this document, appended are those sections of W & R #1 dealing with the nature and perspectives of W & R; "Who We Are" and "Organize Nationwide."

--16 October 1972

Attachment, Feminism and MarxismWHO WE ARE

[reprinted from Women & Revolution #1]

The Furies

Revolutionary Women came together nearly two years ago as a small rap group in the San Francisco Women's Liberation movement and we called ourselves--half whimsically, half seriously--The Furies. We met once a week to talk about our oppression, share our feelings, and provide a measure of mutual support. Our new-found sisterhood was exciting--even exhilarating--to us.

After several months of such discussion, however, we began to feel a little stifled, so we initiated a study program, worked on the abortion issue and protested against job discrimination. Now we felt we were doing something--putting our ideas into practice--yet we couldn't help noticing that our efforts were sporadic and disjointed. We realized that what we lacked was the organization and clear analysis that could give our action direction and power, so we began putting our energy into developing principles and a program. We were no longer a small rap group, but an action group with a basic political program for struggle. Our politics were enunciated in our first publication--"Women's Liberation--Revolution--The Class Struggle." We changed our name and became The Socialist Workshop.

The Socialist Workshop

We remained active in San Francisco Women's Liberation. We attended intergroup council meetings, mass conferences and workshops and we participated in struggles around women's rights. We wanted to see San Francisco Women's Liberation transform itself from a loose conglomeration of small groups into a strong militant organization. Together with a few other groups, we called for a political conference of all individuals and groups in the area who wanted to discuss what our principles and program should be. Many women responded to this call and attended the two-day conference, but some of them came to argue against having any political program at all. We had come prepared to discuss our ideas on principles, program, tactics, and structure, but found ourselves bogged down in endless and hopeless discussions with feminists whose thinking could not go beyond a mindless affirmation of solidarity with all women and a rejection of politics as some sort of masculine perversion which could only divide us from our sisters. Needless to say, little came out of the conference. We voted to meet again, but political discussion at later meetings was also effectively blocked and eventually the meetings became so meaningless that even the anti-political factions stopped attending. One or two attempts have been made since that time to have political meetings, but these, too, have rapidly degenerated and dissolved.

In the face of this failure of San Francisco Women's Liberation to organize itself, the Workshop turned much of its energy toward a

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class series--"Women's Liberation and Revolution"--which we are currently offering through the Free University of Berkeley. Our aim is to further our own education and to discuss with all interested people the revolutionary struggles of women in the past and the roles that we can play in the struggles to come.

Revolutionary Women of the Bay Area

Realizing that we were no longer merely a workshop, we changed our name again recently to Revolutionary Women of the Bay Area. Our emphasis at this time is on the construction of a strong, nationwide, revolutionary organization to fight the oppression of women with a socialist program. There are groups in Austin, New York City and Boston who are in general agreement with our principles and program and it is with the hope of uniting with more such groups and individuals across the country that we have begun to publish Women and Revolution.

We invite you to exchange information with us, debate with us, criticize us, and join with us in building the kind of revolutionary women's liberation organization we all need.

* * * * *

ORGANIZE NATIONWIDE

[reprinted from Women & Revolution #1]

The women's movement in the United States has suffered both from a lack of clearly defined politics and from a lack of effective political organization. Attempts to surmount these obstacles have often become bogged down in discussions of whether politics and organization are even necessary to the women's movement. We maintain that they are critical for our development as a real revolutionary force! Today's women's movement needs a national (and eventually an international) organization in which revolutionary women can work together to fight capitalism.

It is time to transcend the usual "small group" formations. Small groups may open our eyes and even help us become better revolutionaries but they will not make the revolution and they often foster the illusion that our oppression stems from personal problems which can be worked out. We know better. We know that many causes of our neuroses and inadequacies are built into the capitalist system and help it function. With this realization comes the recognition that liberation can come only with the overthrow of capitalism, and for this we need a solid organization geared for struggle, not merely a scattering of small groups. Local actions are not enough! We must begin to organize on regional and national levels!

Revolutionaries cannot rely on groups like NOW, which support this system and merely want to reform it. We cannot rely on sporadic

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gatherings of radical women. We must have an organization of our own which has socialist politics and which recognizes the working class as the motive force in the revolution.

Given the enormity of our objective and the power of the enemy (which controls the economy, the media, the police and the military), we must begin to gather our forces and delineate our aims, our strategy and our tactics. We need to share our experiences and develop our political program through discussion and debate.

Through our political agitation, we will point out revolutionary paths when events begin to force people to move against the system. If we hide our politics until "people are ready for it," they may never get ready and we will have been fatally remiss in our obligation as revolutionists.

If you feel as we do and if you think you can generally accept our program, or if you want more information, let us hear from you now! Together we can begin to build an effective organization of revolutionary women and men to struggle effectively for women's liberation.

PERSPECTIVES TOWARD A COMMUNIST WOMAN'S MOVEMENT

by Helene Brosius

This paper is offered as a tasks and perspectives document for Spartacist League work around the woman's program. A great deal more could be written, for instance about the recent upsurge of "Women's liberation." Hopefully, with the establishment of a Woman Commission, it will be. I have tried to focus on those aspects which I think are in question in the party and those which lay the foundation for the operational conclusions.

Our position on the woman question, which I call "unique" and "superior" in this paper, is really so only relative to other positions, especially the other ostensibly Marxist groups. Those renegades, who might be expected to have adopted what is simply the orthodox Marxist analysis of the question, in fact evidence the intervention of alien class forces into the workers movement, no less than the "radical" feminists.

It is the sad fact that our position is unique on the left. Thus this paper is merely a reaffirmation of orthodoxy in line with the positions, notably, of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky and the organizations they led, including the operational extensions developed by the Comintern.

"...Our national sections still lack the proper understanding of this question. They adopt a passive, wait-and-see attitude when it comes to creating a mass movement of working women under communist leadership. They do not realise that developing and leading such a mass movement is an important part of all Party activity, as much as half of all the Party work. Their occasional recognition of the need and value of a purposeful, strong and numerous communist women's movement is but platonic lip-service rather than a steady concern and task of the Party.

"They regard agitation and propaganda among women and the task of rousing and revolutionising them as of secondary importance, as the job of just the women Communists. None but the latter are rebuked because the matter does not move ahead more quickly and strongly. This is wrong, fundamentally wrong! It is outright separatism. It is equality of women a rebours, as the French say, i.e., equality reversed." (Lenin, quoted by Clara Zetkin, in My Recollections of Lenin)

The woman question has been part of the Marxist program since the Communist Manifesto was written. The Revolutionary Social Democrats, especially the Marxists in the SPD and the Bolsheviks, saw that the work demanded a special division of labor within the party and the development of the Marxist program to encompass the special oppression of women. To favor liquidation of our work on this question is clearly un-Marxist. Most comrades would be quick to insist that they mean we should continue to deal with the question in our propaganda (e.g. mention should be made of it in Trade Union programs) but "since the (petty-bourgeois) movement is dead, what is there to do anyway?" As will be shown, this line of argument misses the main thrust of communist work among women and would lead to the

liquidation of our work. The "liquidationist" position carries with it a tailist opportunism of the sort that Trotsky fought against in his insistence that the work of the revolutionary party must flow from the objective needs of the class and not their present level of consciousness. We do not reserve our woman program for those periods when false consciousness has hegemony over a petty-bourgeois movement. Sex divisions are a pervasive roadblock to proletarian militancy. The American working class, deeply divided along race and sex lines, will surely be incapable of securing victory unless these divisions are transcended by a revolutionary proletariat united behind the vanguard. We must discover how to achieve this unity.

History of Communist Work Among Women

In order to gain a correct strategic understanding of the aims of this aspect of our present work, it is essential to investigate the historic experience of the communist movement. For a systematic examination of the development of communist practice, I refer comrades to the article "Towards a Communist Women's Movement" in WV #11. For the purpose of the present paper, I will concentrate on three key aspects of communist work: (1) the need for special communist work among women and around the woman's program to the whole class, (2) the purpose of the special work, (3) the need to integrate the work into the activity of the whole party. We must understand the nature and purpose of the work both prior to the revolution and after the assumption of power, during the dictatorship of the proletariat. Little material on these questions has been published in English. Research is badly needed to discover more material in English and translate literature from other languages.

As early as 1896, debate raged in the SPD over the issue of the need for special work among women. Zetkin's position in favor of special work was adopted by the party. Recognizing that it was impossible to carry out special work without a suitable division of labor in the party, the debate resulted in the establishment of a woman's section of the party. Seen as part of the common proletarian revolutionary movement, a section was organizationally independent from and politically subordinate to the party. This relationship, including an exchange of representatives on leading party bodies, was later codified in the Comintern documents. There was a similar debate within the RSDLP from 1906 in which Kollantai was one of the main spokesmen for the position favoring special work on the German model. Various means of carrying out special work were attempted by the Bolsheviks up to the seizure of power. Before 1910, some form of division of labor within the party was adopted by the Social Democratic parties in Austria, England, United States, Scandinavia, Belgium, Holland, Switzerland, Finland and France. It is interesting to note that the relationship between special sectors of the proletariat and the party was debated in 1903 around the issue of the Bund.

"'Autonomy' under the Rules adopted in 1898 provides the Jewish working-class movement with all it needs: propaganda and agitation in Yiddish, its own literature and congresses, the right to advance separate demands to supplement a single general So-

cial-Democratic programme and to satisfy local needs and requirements arising out of the special features of Jewish life. In everything else there must be complete fusion with the Russian proletariat, in the interests of the struggle waged by the entire proletariat of Russia. As for the fear of being "steam-rollered" in the event of such fusion, the very nature of the case makes it groundless, since it is autonomy that is a guarantee against all "steamrolling" in matters pertaining specifically to the Jewish movement, while in matters pertaining to the struggle against the autocracy, the struggle against the bourgeoisie of Russia as a whole, we must act as a single and centralised militant organization, have behind us the whole of the proletariat, without distinction of language or nationality, a proletariat whose unity is cemented by the continual joint solution of problems of theory and practice, of tactics and organisation...." (Lenin, Collected Works, vol. 6 p. 334-5)

Despite clarification on the questions of special methods and organizations for work among women, the question continued to be debated in the communist movement up to and including the Comintern period. Zetkin spoke of it in My Recollections of Lenin, conversations with Lenin from 1920.

"[Lenin] 'We derive our organisational ideas from our ideological conceptions. We want no separate organisations of communist women! She who is a Communist belongs as a member of the Party, just as he who is a Communist. They have the same rights and duties. There can be no difference of opinion on that score. However, we must not shut our eyes to the facts. The Party must have organs--working groups, commissions, committees, sections or whatever else they may be called--with the specific purpose of rousing the broad masses of women, bringing them into contact with the Party and keeping them under its influence. This naturally requires that we carry on systematic work among the women. We must teach the awakened women, win them over for the proletarian class struggle under the leadership of the Communist Party, and equip them for it. When I say this I have in mind not only proletarian women, whether they work in mills or cook the family meal. I also have in mind the peasant women and the women of the various sections of the lower middle class. They, too, are victims of capitalism, and more than ever since the war. The lack of interest in politics and the otherwise anti-social and backward psychology of these masses of women, the narrow scope of their activities and the whole pattern of their lives, are undeniable facts. It would be silly to ignore them, absolutely silly. We must have our own groups to work among them, special methods of agitation and special forms of organisation. This is not bourgeois 'feminism'; it is a practical revolutionary expediency.'

"[Zetkin] I told Lenin that his arguments were a valuable encouragement for me. Many comrades, very good ones, too, vehemently opposed the Party's setting up special groups for planned work among women. They denounced it as a return to the notorious 'emancipation of women' movement, to Social Democra-

tic traditions. They claimed that since the Communist Parties gave equality to women they should, consequently, carry on work without differentiating among all the working people in general. The approach to men and to women should be the same. Any attempt to consider the circumstances which Lenin had noted concerning agitation and organisation would be branded by the exponents of this view as opportunism, as renunciation and betrayal of fundamental principles.

"This is not new and not conclusive,' Lenin said. 'Do not let it mislead you. Why are there nowhere as many women in the Party as men, not even in Soviet Russia? Why is the number of women in the trade unions so small? These facts give one food for thought. Denial of the indispensable special groups for work among the masses of women is part of the very principled, very radical attitude of our dear friends of the Communist Workers' Party. They are of the opinion that only one form of organization should exist--a workers' union. I know about it. Principles are invoked by many revolutionary-minded but confused people whenever there is a lack of understanding, i.e. whenever the mind refuses to grasp the obvious facts that ought to be heeded. How do such guardians of the 'purity of principles' cope with the historical necessities of our revolutionary policy? All their talk collapses in face of the inexorable necessities. We cannot exercise the dictatorship of the proletariat without having millions of women on our side. Nor can we engage in communist construction without them. We must find a way to reach them. We must study and search in order to find this way.'"

The Communist Approach

The tasks of the woman section was outlined by Zetkin in her speech to the Fourth Congress of the Comintern.

"It [the woman section] exists for systematic Communist propaganda among the women. This has a double purpose. First to incorporate within the national sections of the Comintern those women who are already filled with the Communist idea, making them conscious co-workers in the activity of those sections; second to win over to the Communist ideals the indifferent women and draw them into the struggles of the proletariat."

Seeing its work as most importantly the task of recruiting women to communism and assisting them to become full party members, the guidelines sought to draw the delicate balance between the need for special work among women and the integration of this work into the work of the whole party. While special methods for the work were seen as necessary, this was never meant as a perpetuation of the divisions in the class but rather as a vehicle for ending them--that is--not out of resignation to the status quo, but to change it. Women in the Comintern demonstrated that:

"It is evident then that the more intensive the work [among women] of the Communist Party the more firm and definite the stand

of the Party or of any particular branch, the stronger is the influence of the Party on the women, and consequently the larger the number of women in the Party organizations." (Hertha-Sturm (Germany) report to the 4th Congress, 27 Nov. 1922)

Even during the Comintern period, the woman commissions and secretariats had to continually stress the importance of work and the woman program becoming part of the work of the whole party.

"The third task [of women's committees], however, is the most important. The women's committee must see to it that agitation among the large masses of the women proletariat be included in the general work of the Party; that it does not remain a special task of a small handful of communist women. They must make all efforts that the agitation among the women becomes a branch of the whole movement, that it be carried on by all organisational and political means at the disposal of the Party, and be supported by the full authority of the Party and its various organs." (Hertha-Sturm (Germany) report to the 4th Congress, 27 Nov. 1922)

The Comintern material provides a clear guide for the purpose of special work among women. For communists, this work has as its primary goal the drawing of women into the communist party as developed, rounded communists. In one aspect, then, the work involves the struggle for women to get into the labor force, partly over the issues of the material possibility for this (child care and employment opportunity). It is also necessary to draw women into other organizations of the class, not only for the positive gains in class cohesiveness but also importantly to overcome class divisiveness stemming from the pervasive traditional family-bound and religious circumscription of working-class women. Thus is posed the need to incorporate a large proportion of working-class women and women workers in such bodies as a Labor Party, Trade Unions and Trade Union caucuses, factory committees and so on. And above all the recruitment of women to the party, provisions for their development and full integration into all levels and arenas of party work must be accomplished.

A second function of such work is to direct propaganda on the woman question itself to the class as part of the struggle toward political hegemony over the working class united for proletarian revolutionary activity and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

During the period prior to the revolution, propaganda on the family and the oppression of women, directed toward the whole class, will be a necessary part of the transcendence of bourgeois ideology and development of revolutionary consciousness.

The Woman Question and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat

It is important to understand that special attention to work around the woman program was seen as critically important after the seizure of power in Russia, under the dictatorship of the proletar-

iat. In the Soviet Union during the early years, political education among women and men to combat that section of bourgeois ideology which reinforced male chauvinism was directed by the Woman Section. Most importantly, however, the material basis for woman's emancipation, i.e. the socialization of family responsibilities and the inclusion of women fully into the work force, was consciously and systematically carried out.

"The methods of the working women's sections consist in directing the activity of the working women in the accomplishment of the practical tasks embodying the aspirations and demands of the working class. This method of attracting the working women in practical activity has greatly contributed towards increasing the influence of the Communist Party among the masses of the working and peasant women." (Smidovitch (Russia) report to the 4th Congress, 27 Nov. 1922)

Particular emphasis was laid on transforming the nuclear family. Much propaganda on the question was written by leading party members such as Lenin, Trotsky and Kollantai. While much of this may seem obscure and removed from our present tasks, we must acquire historical understanding in order to maintain perspective and ensure that our present practice is in line with our strategic goals.

The Hiatus in Communist Woman's Work

Prior to the Stalinist degeneration, mass proletarian women's organizations existed under the leadership of the Comintern. Even as late as 1929 and for ten years thereafter, the CPUSA published a monthly magazine, The Working Woman, probably named after the Bolshevik paper Rabotnitsa. Doubtless, its line followed the CP's through its twists and turns during this period.

But after the renunciation of the correct Marxist position on women and the family as part of the Stalinist degeneration, the work of the Comintern among women was practically forgotten and became inaccessible to large sectors of the working class still under the leadership of the Stalinists. For thirty years, there was a virtual hiatus in struggles of women in advanced countries around their own oppression and, within the ostensibly revolutionary movement, of work around the emancipation of women or directed principally at recruitment of women. A good deal of research is needed on this period, particularly about the upsurges which did occur in so-called "backward" countries (Japan, 1946) and also the role of women in revolutionary activity of the thirties.

Unfortunately, with the founding of the Fourth International, communist methods of work among women were not rediscovered. In the Transitional Program, only the barest mention is made of the special oppression of women. No analysis of the role of the family, super-exploitation of women, exclusion of women from the work force, or male chauvinism are provided. The question is not raised in other sections of the program which have particular applicability to the question such as the discussion of backward countries, Fascism, Stalinism, inflation and consumer prices, sliding scale of wages and hours, unemployment and the Trade Unions. The program, written

under the pressures of Fascism and the coming World War, needed to focus on the main class issues. But material on the woman question would clearly have strengthened the attack, for instance, against Fascism, which had as a characteristic vicious expressions of male supremacy and the most brutal oppression of women.

Although Trotsky never saw the Transitional Program as being a complete program and even, himself, made extensions on some issues related particularly to the woman question, such as universal military training, this initial incompleteness certainly did much to maintain ignorance on the woman question within the Trotskyist movement.

The Fourth International and member parties such as the SWP did not even begin to carry forward the work of the Comintern on the woman question. In the SWP a rationale for, or even awareness of, their departure was never expressed. Until the recent upsurge in the petty-bourgeois woman movement, the question was virtually ignored except for the most mundane, ritualistic assertions or discussion tangential to the main work of the party such as the "cosmetics controversy." Turning inside out, the SWP's recent, purely tailist, polyvanguardist approach, which has become more blatant over time, is a mockery of Marxism.

Significant gains in the position of women were made during the twenties and thirties. The second World War, as is well known, brought with it the fullest integration of women into industry ever experienced in the U.S., along with the child care centers to make it possible. One hears of no indigenous social movement in opposition to the ripping out of hundreds of thousands of women from their industrial employment and the disestablishment of the child care centers after the War. No working-class tendency took up this struggle.

The fifties represented a profound social counter-revolution during which many of the gains achieved in the twenties and thirties, including those benefitting women in particular, were reversed. Friedan's The Feminine Mystique discusses this phenomenon, especially the changes in bourgeois propaganda as the needs of the bourgeoisie changed from before World War II (years of the "new woman," aggressively pursuing "a career") to the post-war period of the "happy housewife" completely engrossed in "home and family." At least partially, the rise in the woman's movement of the sixties can be seen as a reaction to these reversals.

The Nature of the Petty-Bourgeois Woman Movement

The argument that it is incorrect to speak of a woman movement is simply a semantic game. Obviously, tendencies, which have their main purpose to struggle against the oppression of women, all represent aspects of bourgeois ideology. However, there is a reason why these tendencies took on the mantle of "women's liberation." They were incorrect responses to the fact of female oppression, responses generated by alien class appetites. Clearly, over a period of years, there has existed an arena of "women's liberation" where numerous

tendencies intersected and counterposed their varying programs and strategies for the liberation of women. There were, and are, feminist and poly-vanguardist organizations formed for the purpose of fighting against the oppression of women which themselves contained numerous counterposed tendencies. A characteristic of all of these organizations and tendencies (putting aside those unashamedly bourgeois organizations) was that they saw more commonality among themselves than between any of them and the socialist left. The thrust of these tendencies was feminist or poly-vanguardist, either of which ended up at the same place--the need for women to devote themselves only to work around their own liberation. They saw themselves as either one sector of the revolutionary struggle (other sections being the "third world" struggles etc.) as in the case of the poly-vanguardists, or as the main focus of the revolutionary struggle, as in the case of the "radical" feminists. This was the basis upon which they occasionally attempted exclusion of the (female) representatives of OROs while allowing the inclusion of any and all tendencies which recognized the pre-eminence of this commonality. It was this, and not simple male exclusion which characterized what we have called the petty-bourgeois woman movement, and this which justifies the use of the term.

Naturally, for communists there is no woman movement as such, that is--politically autonomous from the communist movement. But other tendencies do not recognize this and do project a movement on the basis of their essentially feminist or poly-vanguardist conception. Zetkin explains this in her speech to the 4th Congress.

"What we usually designate as the Communist women's movement is not an independent women's movement and has nothing to do with any feminist tendencies."

Thus, throughout the Comintern documents, the distinction is drawn between the communist woman movement, which is part of the world communist movement, and the separate feminist woman movement, founded on fundamentally false, anti-Marxist precepts.

Petty-Bourgeois Woman Movement--Dead or Alive?

The petty-bourgeois women's movement is not dead either in the U.S. or internationally. In the United States it has been waning lately and we stand to gain more recruitment from it at this stage than we did in the period of its upsurge, as we have had increasing gains from Maoist groups during this period of their disorientation and disintegration. We should welcome its decline and disintegration as an opportunity for us to intervene with our correct program during a period in which competing, false tendencies, which have had a death grip on sections of the radical movement, have evidenced their bankruptcy and their previous adherents are more willing to examine our propaganda. Thus our task is to aggressively continue to propagandize our unique (though thoroughly orthodox) position on the woman question and seek to reach women's liberation activists on our full program.

In other countries, notably England and Italy, the woman movement is far from dead. While in the U.S., we managed to derive a

clear conception of our work rather late in the movement's upsurge, a situation which greatly lessened the impact we might have had on the movement, we are in an excellent position to influence at least those Trotskyist groups internationally with whom we are having discussions, by virtue of our present well developed and clear position.

Now that the fact of the oppression of women has become accepted by the left and even the bourgeoisie gives lip service to the existence of certain aspects of female oppression, struggle toward woman's emancipation will undoubtedly be a concomitant part of revolutionary upsurge. The presence of the Spartacist League is essential for the establishment of a communist pole and to vie for leadership against assorted feminist, reformist and poly-vanguardist tendencies as well as male chauvinist organizations seeking to direct the working class. The question is how to pose our program most effectively and what we should present as a model in counterposition to the left's capitulation to petty-bourgeois tendencies, abstentionism, reformism, or tailism on the woman question.

S.L. Work in Women's Liberation

It has been left to the SL to rediscover the correct Marxist Leninist approach to the question and apply it to our work. Over the period of the last four years many errors were made; there was much confusion, misunderstanding and disorientation but we have gropingly come closer and closer to a strategical understanding of our work theoretically, programmatically and organizationally. Our first leaps in understanding took place in the development of a program which gave us, at last, an invaluable tool for intervening in the arena and helped guide our work. It took several years for the program to become, through a process of revision, clarification and correction, a full Transitional Program as applied to the Women's liberation struggle. We have developed a proletarian revolutionary program which is presently unique for carrying on the tradition of the communist women's movement. In the recent period it has been aimed especially at intervention in the waning contemporary women's movement and at the ostensibly revolutionary left.

The organizational genesis of our work was the participation of several comrades in the Bay Area "small groups." The Socialist Workshop was formed in order to intervene in a more directly political way in the larger, heterogeneous women's organizations with a class analysis. The weaknesses found in the work of the Socialist Workshop--these were programmatic flaws, general political softness and arenaism--were also characteristic of the work in other arenas at the time as in Maritime and Workers Action/Committee for a Labor Party. All suffered from a lack of strong, centralized political guidance from the party. At this time the Workshop upheld the principle of non-exclusion while adhering to a tactical decision for the temporary exclusion of men. The purpose was to ensure that the main issue, our class struggle perspective, could be explained and fought out first. It was felt that an understanding of the principle of non-exclusion would be more easily reached after an understanding of a revolutionary proletarian orientation was attained.

At the time of the formation of Revolutionary Women in the Bay

Area we had decided to publish our paper Women and Revolution (W&R) under the direction of the party and to admit men to the organization. Groups have existed in New York, Austin and Boston and have had mixed success. We have had significant recruitment, especially recruitment, especially in the Bay Area but also in New Orleans, New York, Buffalo and Boston, from work which originally centered around our woman program or in which discussion and work around the program played a significant part in the process of recruitment to Trotskyism. Some research has been done in the history of the communist women's movement, particularly as we began to consider the conception of a woman section. In keeping with our understanding of our organization as a propaganda group, like the SL as a whole, we have put out one pamphlet, numerous leaflets and position papers, held many educational classes, forums and interventions around the country, and published three issues of W&R.

It was found to be urgent that we clarify the organizational relationship between the W&R groups and the SL. Previously these groups had been linked only through our comrades, acting as a disciplined fraction within them (or, in the case of the New York group, abandoning discipline with the consent of the party in order to freely discuss the issues with non-party sympathizers of SL). This format was found to be unworkable both from the party side, where distrust of the work existed, and within the groups, where non-party women were uncomfortable about their relationship to SL and party women found it difficult to function with real political clarity, as the New York experience showed. W&R seemed to verge on a front group although the unusual characteristic of front groups--secrecy of party leadership--was not practiced. At the 1971 plenum it was resolved to have a perspective of establishing the same type of relationship as we applied to our youth group according to the formula developed by the first four congresses of the CI. This has been carried out by some of the W&R groups, notably in Boston. Our difficulties have not stemmed from lack of activity in the arena. Rather, tensions have been created by the disparity between the great amount of time and energy devoted to the work and the lack of centralized direction in line with a clear perspective. This tension has been apparent both among those actually involved in the work and also has caused suspicion of the work on the part of other party members. We hope to achieve this strategic clarity at the coming National Conference.

S.L. Work--Integration into the Party

Although an extensive critical history of SL work in this arena is needed, I will focus here on those errors which inhibited the thorough incorporation of the work into the work of the whole party. Lack of such integration has been detrimental to all areas of work. It has expressed itself in several ways. In our early work there was virtually no connection between women's liberation activity and the Party. The main reason for this was the lack of an SL program or strategy for the work. As the program developed more national homogenization of the work was achieved by using it as a tool to intervene in the movement. We had something unique to offer as a concrete bridge to revolutionary consciousness. As the Comintern material was studied and particularly after the 1971 plenum

the mechanism for integration became clearer. But the work still tended to be pigeonholed into the work of the women's group rather than seen as an integral part of all areas of party work. This becomes obvious by an examination of our Trade Union work through the propaganda put out by supporter groups.

Trade union work of SL supporters, while usually formally mentioning the oppression and super-exploitation of women, rarely incorporates this issue as an integral part of its activity. The propaganda of the maritime caucus is particularly lacking in this regard. It must be stressed that, even when the issue should not be a central focus of the work, as when women are virtually excluded from the union, to ignore it completely verges on opportunism and creates barriers to unity of the class.

In addition to many other political flaws, no mention at all is made of the special oppression of women in the first two issues of its paper. The third issue has excellent proposals regarding pension, maternity and welfare benefits, geared toward women as spouses. No mention of sex discrimination is made in sections dealing with working conditions or job availability. In general, throughout the demands and propaganda, the assumption is that all seamen are, in fact, men. While most are men, the caucus should not be satisfied with the situation and should see fighting the oppression of women and bringing them into the work force as part of the caucus work. In paper number 5 the demand "... (3) Make more jobs: six hour day by adding an extra watch (four watch system) and more men in Stewards Department" is a good example of the assumption of an all male work force--even in the department which has the largest proportion of women. Although "sister" is occasionally added after "brother," the fight for integrating women into the work force is not made concrete through explanations of the demands which would benefit women but not at the expense of other workers, i.e. those demands against unemployment such as "no homesteading" or "End Runaway Shipping." In union work, abstract demands like "End Discrimination" are good but not nearly as effective as demands raised which explicitly offer solutions.

On the question of runaway ships, which affected the women in the union particularly, no link whatsoever is made. Where the passenger ship question is specifically discussed, not even the merest mention of the fact that this virtually eliminated women from the union is made nor is this linked with the rest of the program such as "end job discrimination."

The work of the maritime group is discussed here only to demonstrate the lack of integration into a key area of party work. This is in no way meant to disparage the whole of the excellent work these "brothers" are doing.

In the communications industry, work of our supporters has been some of the best in pointing out the oppression of women and including it as an integral part of their activity. Even here, though, demands which particularly speak to the oppression of women are often not explained in that context, thus lessening their effectiveness. As an example, examine the bureaucratic attack on the MAC described

in WV #13 (CWA Paper Launches Smear Campaign Against Caucus.) In the article, the vicious male chauvinism of the "Dear Mummy" letter is clearly and sharply exposed. This is in contrast to the caucus response which did not even mention it although the use of woman baiting as a slander technique was blatant, offensive and intentionally divisive. In the article, an effective point could have been made on the issue of sex divisions within the class which in the phone company is one of the most effective mechanisms for maintaining the impotence of the unions. The operators' strike in New York is one example of this. The defection of the Western Electric workers (predominantly male and with a history of militancy) from California local 9415, thus abandoning 9415 (predominantly female and much less militant) to their backwardness, is exemplary of the pernicious use of sex divisions within the industry.

The WV #13 article, and the caucus propoganda about the "Dear Mummy" letter could have used this issue to demonstrate how the caucus program, cited at length in the article, clearly aims to unite the class while struggling over issues particularly of benefit to women. In contrast, the company, exemplified by the "Dear Mummy" letter, continuously attempts to divide the class, and weaken its combative power by fostering false consciousness to divert the struggle.

Our work in II can provide an unusually rich opportunity to exemplify our perspectives on the woman question. The union has a long history of support for a wide range of reformist demands (equal pay for equal work, end to sex discrimination, opening skilled trades to women, extension of protective legislation to men, maternity benefits, child care centers etc.) enabling us to use these issues as an integral part of exposing the bureaucracy and building a revolutionary oppositional leadership which will actually initiate struggles on these and other issues against the companies. For example, most male workers would enthusiastically welcome the integration of women into the centers of production--albeit for reasons not altogether reflecting a high political consciousness. Such a campaign led by an oppositional caucus, based on the transitional program, could accomplish a great deal in making concrete our program, demonstrating in an exemplary way our strategy for the liberation of women through militant class struggle.

The formal concession to the token hiring of women by the industry may be expanded into a systematic attempt to introduce large numbers of women as a conservatising force, attempting to play on their traditional docility. We could play a crucial role in intersecting this, and help to make the entrance of women into the plants instead a wedge for heightened political consciousness. The union, which has an established organizational policy calling for women's committees in all locals, educational programs for workers' wives, regional women's conferences and a national women's department, thus provides us with a ready-made arena for this work.

As will be discussed in a later part of the paper, Trade Union work is not just one, but one of the crucial areas, in which we will concretely wage a struggle around our woman's program.

Exclusion of Men

A contributory factor in the alienation of women's liberation work from party work was the initial exclusion of men from the Socialist Workshop and later Revolutionary Women or W&R. Our intransigent opposition to the exclusion of men from any bodies within the party was never questioned, thus men were incorporated as members of party fractions. However, the tension between this and their exclusion from direct contact with the work of the fraction within the arena led to a certain formalistic quality in their work. In agreement with the position long held by Dale R., I believe that the practice of male exclusion in public work was unnecessary and detrimental to our work and in addition it reinforced the tendency to separate the woman question from our work as a whole, relegating it, willy nilly, to "women's work." The primary "advantage" of the exclusion of the majority of vocal, leading (male) comrades from RW was that it forced the development of numerous female comrades, who were left with most of the responsibility for running an organization, making tactical decisions and carrying forward our political line. However, how much more political development there would have been with proper leadership! Certainly many opportunities were lost because of our inadequacy. While I do not believe male exclusionism should have been initially seen as a split issue with women's organizations, nor that we should have, tried to force the inclusion of our male comrades into exclusionist meetings, I do feel that we should have included them in our own meetings and should have vigorously fought for the principle of non-exclusion, tying it in with the rest of our politics, from the beginning. In an exemplary way this would have had a positive impact on the better elements in the movement.

Another expression of the alienation of the work from that of the party was that WL work was not seen as an important part of our opponents work. Our program can be counterposed to that of all the left tendencies and most groups have been encountered at one time or another within the arena. Those who are not members of OROs are unorganized New Lefters, Maoists, anarchists or feminists and our polemics against them should be seen as part of our priority orientation toward subjectively revolutionary elements. The more serious women's liberation activists if they remained political became or will become members of an ostensible revolutionary organization when the futility of their single issueism becomes apparent to them. For instance, the YSA has recruited out of the movement, albeit at an appallingly low and psuedo-feminist level. Our clearly superior position and strategy has had the effect, as in the case of the "East Oakland Women," of helping to win militants away from consideration of other organizations. Our position can also have an effect within OROs and should continue to be used in our polemics against them. Here one can make the distinction between women drawn toward our work initially because of their felt oppression and those attracted to our superior position on the question.

Why Special Work Among Women

Implicit in the attitude of many who feel that special work among women is now unnecessary is the conception that our woman work

was carried out simply to intervene in and recruit from the petty-bourgeois woman movement. This is counterposed to the Communist conception which is that demands aimed at the emancipation of women are an important part of our program which must be vigorously fought for, not just automatically parroted, and that in order to properly fight for them, educate the class around them and win working women to the communist party, special attention must be given to the work through a division of labor within the party. It must be shown that to look toward the abandonment of a special party apparatus to direct work among women and around the woman question to the class, will severely hamper our work in this area, reducing our woman program to the merest assertion of orthodoxy.

While we will continue to direct much of our attention toward implantation in the Trade Unions, women remain, by and large, outside of the organized work force. Working-class consciousness remain low among female workers because of their family responsibilities, their precarious position as marginal members of the work force and socially imposed roles and norms of behavior. Additionally, many women of the working class are not part of the work force itself when for long periods of their lives, their primary task is child rearing. These women are particularly subject to counter-revolutionary attitudes because of their isolation, lack of exposure to even basic working-class or trade union consciousness and dependent financial condition. At the same time, forced financial dependency ties their fate to the flux of economic conditions which affect the working class as a whole--inflation, unemployment, war etc.

Certain sections of the female population, such as black women, who would certainly be expected, if they are mobilized, to play an outstanding role in the revolutionary movement, will be especially difficult to reach through TU work. Excepting the communications industry, and this will become more apparent as we broaden the scope of our industrial implantation, women will not be heavily involved in those industrial areas of our highest concentration.

Perspective of a Woman Section

During a period of agitational work, the party will recruit masses of workers by demonstrating that it has the programmatic answers to the problems of peoples' lives, and the organizational capability to carry out its program. The question of what organizational forms will be used in order to present our program is a tactical question. While it appears that in our present period, a separate women's organization is neither feasible nor necessary, it seems likely that when we are a mass party the recruitment and development of layers of working-class females will necessitate such an organization.

Some of the arguments for the establishment of a youth group also apply to the establishment of a Transitional Woman's Organization (TWO). First is the argument for the need of a separate organizational structure where women can develop politically and prepare for party membership. Women, because of their socialization toward motherhood have traditionally been less involved in politics than men and when involved have normally played organizational or

secretarial roles. We have seen this phenomenon even in the SL where, because of a higher level of consciousness and the urgent necessity to use all of our small forces to their utmost, women play a much more vocal role than in the other OROs. A TWO would provide a training ground, much as SW and RW have already assisted in the development of numerous women comrades. This function will become more important when we are recruiting numbers of working-class women who have not been trained or socialized to be actively creative, verbal intellectuals and who may benefit more from participation in a special organization.

While a woman section is similar in its relationship with the party to the youth group (i.e. political subordination and organizational independence) the difference between the youth and the woman section is programmatic emphasis. The RCY is based on the SL program as a whole with special development and emphasis on those aspects which particularly speak to the special needs of youth. Rather than a special section of the SL program, the woman program is also the full party program with particular emphasis and expansion of those sections which speak to the special oppression of women and which relate specially to our strategical orientation to this section of the class, such as the urgent necessity of integrating women into the organized labor force. Just as the trade union programs, in line with necessary security modifications, are full transitional programs which are tailored to a particular union situation by demands which relate to needs of a particular industry, the woman program in no way truncates, dilutes or minimizes aspects of the full party program. There is one party program, not party programs of sectors; partial struggles by sections of the mass center around specific felt aspects. Versions of the party program, modified for different areas of work, are thus not counterposed but aspects of the same program.

While opposing in principle the establishment of a woman's organization politically autonomous from the party, we should have a perspective of instituting a special apparatus (division of labor) with which the party may do systematic communist work among women, bringing our woman program to the masses of female workers, recruiting to, and developing women in, the communist movement, and directing propaganda and agitation around our programmatic demands for women's liberation toward the whole class. This apparatus should first be a woman commission of the SL and later a woman section.

This conception is counterposed to both the IS "women's caucus" and the autonomous women's movement. Both of these imply the institutionalization of narrow parochialism which militates against transcendence of false divisions within the class through communist consciousness.

A Commission vs. a TWO

We must be careful to distinguish between the two methods of organization discussed in this paper, the Woman Commission and the Woman Section. Both of these are Leninist forms of organization for the purpose of carrying out special work among women, work which is necessary due to the special conditions of women in capitalist

society. The Commission is a party body formed to function as part of the division of labor for the purpose of directing party work aimed specifically at women or centered around issues key to our communist woman program. A primary function of the commission at this time would be to ensure that work on this question is integrated into SL work in all areas. It would also do such work as was deemed necessary to bring women comrades and sympathizers more fully into party work. Finally it would be responsible for overseeing the production of a propaganda organ as a continuation of W&R, the regular inclusion of articles in WV, pamphlets and national leaflets. A part of this work is the direction of research and theoretical clarification that has been necessary for some time on the woman question.

The transitional organization, or section, described above, would have a different relationship to the party. A woman section is an arm of the party in the mass movement. As part of its duties would be the recruitment of women to the party it would necessarily deal with our politics in a broader way.

Link S.L. T.U. and Work Among Women

The work of our woman commission or section should not be seen as separate from our Trade Union work any more than it is from the party. These two areas of work, while having separate organizational structures, are overlapping parts of the common movement. As disciplined members, women in the section will be called on for Trade Union work in an auxiliary capacity and the organization will be called on to participate in cooperative activities with Trade Union fractions or caucuses. Naturally--women actually engaged in trade union work will be under the direction of the party, as are RCY members. One of the primary methods of waging an attack on the family, and mobilizing women for political struggle, is attempting to achieve the fullest possible integration of women into the organized labor force. As members of the labor force women are able to be financially independent, are organizable into trade unions and can wield workers power. All of these factors will open the door to their politicization and enhance their contribution to the revolutionary movement. This is why Lenin, in opposition to the liberal moralizers, saw the initial drawing of women into the work force as essentially progressive. The TU movement will be the major arena of struggle for those aspects of our program speak to the material conditions for the inclusion of women into the work force, such as an end to discrimination, 30 for 40, union control of hiring and upgrading.

Work in the TU movement can assist in two of the programmatic tasks of our woman's work: One, discussed above, of bringing women into the work force and, two, that of combatting male chauvinism toward unity of the class. As an example, in the Trade Unions, our work should be directed at unions both inclusive and exclusive of women. In those exclusive, we will struggle toward the goal of creating conditions necessary to draw women into the work force. In those inclusive, we will propagandize toward unity of the class, struggling for demands which benefit women and are in the interests of the whole class. Both of these tasks create conditions essential to proletarian revolution. While the primary purpose of the work within the Trade Unions is not winning organizational control of the union

apparatuses themselves, but gaining political hegemony of the communist party over the whole class, the vehicle for this is mainly work within existing organizations of the class. Therefore the struggle for revolutionary leadership in the unions necessarily goes beyond "pure trade union" issues and must include such questions as the woman question, the Vietnam war, culminating in a Workers Government. Committed struggles around the woman question can provide a vehicle for demonstrating to the masses of working-class women the effective implantation of our program. While the woman section and the TU movement, under revolutionary leadership, struggle for many of the same programmatic demands, it is the organized working class which actually has the power to fight for the program. Further, the party seeks to win masses from the lower strata, the unorganized workers, to communism. This work will be carried out by sections of the organized working class under revolutionary leadership and is tied closely to our work among women.

"Opportunist organizations by their very nature concentrate their chief attention on the top layers of the working class and therefore ignore both the youth and the woman worker. The decay of capitalism, however, deals its heaviest blows to the woman as a wage earner and as a housewife. The sections of the Fourth International should seek bases of support among the most exploited layers of the working class, consequently among the women workers. Here they will find inexhaustible stores of devotion, selflessness and readiness to sacrifice."
(Transitional Program, p. 45)

For these reasons, the necessity for close collaboration between the Woman Section or Woman Commission and trade union caucuses is proper and inevitable.

International

It could be argued that in the U.S., improvements in the condition of women have made the institution of a special organization with which to reach women, or the need for special party apparatus to reach women, unnecessary. While I believe this argument is incorrect for all the reasons presented in this paper, it is blatantly inapplicable internationally. Recognizing the extreme oppression of women worldwide, especially in colonial countries, the Comintern aimed at building an International Woman's Section. Although available evidence shows that, due to the Thermidor, this organization was never fully realized, the political groundwork for it was laid, an International Secretariat established and several International conferences were held, usually in conjunction with conferences of the CI. In fact, international communist woman's organizations played a role in the formative struggles and polarization which preceded the establishment of the Third International. The Comintern work, which has been abandoned by all ostensibly Trotskyist groupings in the U.S., with the exception of ourselves, was also abandoned internationally.

The International Spartacist tendency can and must be the initiator for the continuation of the work of the Comintern. We have been the only group with the theoretical continuity which enables us

to play the pivotal role in the international struggle towards the rebirth of the Fourth International. Particularly because of our position as the strongest representative of our tendency we must take on this responsibility.

At the present time much of our work in this area would be simply the propagation of our position to other international tendencies. We must seek to discover the positions of the groupings with which we are in contact, pose our position and draw them into discussion. The woman question, which is universal in its general character, is also a key barometer for the position of an ostensibly communist group on the broader issue of the Communist perspective on oppressed minorities, doubly oppressed sections of the working class etc.

At present this work will consist largely of correspondence with women's liberation groups and other Trotskyist organizations internationally. The article in Spartacist #17-18 should be translated and put into French Spartacist. In New Zealand, where the woman's movement is still very much alive, we can carry forward our work in collaboration with our comrades in the New Zealand Spartacist League.

Any work directed at Stalinist countries must take into account the Stalinist betrayal of women as part of the degeneration of the worker's state. This was seen by Trotsky as one of the most important indices of the extent of the process of degeneration. Throughout The Revolution Betrayed Trotsky dwells at length on the abandonment of the goal of the emancipation of women in the Soviet Union under the pressures of "generalized want" and Stalinist degeneration.

"The October revolution honestly fulfilled its obligations in relation to woman. The young government not only gave her all political and legal rights in equality with man, but, what is more important, did all that it could, and in any case incomparably more than any other government ever did, actually to secure her access to all forms of economic and cultural work...[but] up to now this problem of problems has not been solved. The forty million Soviet families remain in their overwhelming majority nests of medievalism, female slavery and hysteria, daily humiliation of children, feminine and childish superstition. We must permit ourselves no illusions on this account. For that very reason, the consecutive changes in the approach to the problem of the family in the Soviet Union best of all characterize the actual nature of Soviet society and the evolution of its ruling stratum. (The Revolution Betrayed, p. 144-145)

Just as in the U.S., our position on the woman question can have impact internationally on Maoist and other Stalinist groupings. Because of the gross betrayals carried out in this realm, the question can be one of the more effective in winning over militants within the Stalinist countries toward the building of a Trotskyist

opposition toward political revolution.

Perspective for Work in the Coming Period

We must draw on the model of the first four congresses while at the same time recognizing that our work is now at a different level due to our small size and lack of deep roots in the working class. In particular, we must note that where many sections of the Comintern were engaged in mass agitation, winning women to common work with them on the basis of their ability to lead struggles under their own banner around agitational demands, ours is predominantly propagandistic. Precisely because of this (we have nothing to offer but our program) militants who are won to our woman program are usually winnable to Trotskyism as a whole in the short term. We have found in our trade union work as well that caucus members usually become party members quite soon or else drop away from the work. The woman section is intended largely to win the masses of backward workers, layers whom, in this period, we do not have a perspective of recruiting. Therefore a woman section is not in keeping with our present priorities.

For a Woman Commission

A key task currently facing the SL, and a task we must continue to carry out beyond the present period, is the thorough integration of the woman's work into the party. The infusion of our work toward the emancipation of women into every aspect of party activity, combined with a recognition of the special methods necessary to win over masses of women in the future (a section) will do a tremendous amount toward polarizing feminist groupings and other OROs. As has been mentioned before, our position on the woman question, which includes the notion of a section, is particularly effective in fighting and recruiting militants from other organizations, in the U.S. and internationally. In order to ensure that connections in our work are made at all levels, and to carry forward the work, including research and the publication of a journal, a woman commission must be formed immediately. A Commission will face the task of centralization of our work. It will be the operative mechanism for the integration of this work throughout the activities of the party and particularly into trade union work. An exchange of representatives between the Woman Commission and the Trade Union Commission would be appropriate.

The Commission will carry forward research in the areas of history, the international woman movement and, very importantly, political economy. At this time a critical task will be the publication of a Tasks and Perspectives document and of our journal. Finally, a woman commission will help lay the groundwork for our future woman section and make concrete our determination to build this section.

The Commission will have the job of discovering and corresponding with other communist woman groups internationally with the perspective of building an International Woman section linked to the Fourth International.

In the immediate period we must assiduously approach, with the

intention of intervening in, the remaining sections of the woman movement where it appears fruitful. A great deal of work can be done systematically contacting individuals and groups on our subscription list. We have continually received inquiries from interested people which have been answered only haphazardly. We must take all steps possible to capitalize now on the fragmentation of the woman movement.

The Press

The press, particularly the first year of Workers Vanguard, has been a notable exception to the lack of integration into party work. But even here, considering the amount of party energy devoted to this work, relatively little space has been devoted to the question, most of the articles dealing with the wretched WONAAC. Our priority press responsibility at this point is the establishment of a bi-weekly WV. We must have frequent, extensive articles on the woman question in our main organ.

We are still far from the goal of a biweekly, due mainly to the lack of competent editors and writers. It is therefore unrealistic to project the publication of a regular and frequent organ as a continuation of W&R. However, it appears feasible to project the publication of a journal on a regular, if infrequent basis (say-- every 6 months). I would propose the perspective of the publication of: "Women and Revolution published by the Woman Commission of the SL under the direction of the SL Central Committee." The press should continue the development of W&R through its first three issues having a highly polemical, propagandistic approach. It must include as well articles of a more theoretical nature and on subjects other than those directly connected to women, which might be of interest to our audience. This journal should be treated as a supplement to WV, perhaps having one issue come out in August when there is no WV. Some articles which may be written include polemics against the IS and Stalinist positions, the LC and CP approach toward welfare rights, Healyite/WL position and analysis. Other interesting articles would include history of Oakland group, women in the deformed worker's states, analysis of the communist approach toward the woman movement historically, working class and permanent revolution, international woman movement, history of communist work among women in America, women and the political economy under capitalism.

As an empirical observation, it should be noted that the W&R paid subscription list as of this date numbers over 700. (There are about 450 RY subs and 1000 to WV.) Even if many of these are simply curiosity seekers, responding to the Women's Liberation fad, this still is a relatively good readership. It is well known that W&R has always been the easiest of our publications to sell. Despite the fact that locals are no longer selling W&R subs because of its uncertain future, the subs keep coming in at a rate of several a week.

The continuation of a separate press serves several important functions. In the absence of an organization at this time, the continuation is part of the perspective of the eventual formation of a woman section. Our paper is already known around the left both in this country and abroad, and demonstrates our seriousness about the

work and our unique perspective of the necessity for special work among women as a continuation of the Comintern decisions. Suspending publication would necessitate its reestablishment at some future time, work that it has taken us several years to accomplish. W&R can continue to be an important vehicle for reaching members of the present women's movement and of OROs with our full program. It will be exemplary of the communist recognition of the need for special work among women. In conjunction with the Commission the organ can be the format whereby we continue to publish the results of our research on the question, polemicize against other organizations nationally and internationally and gain theoretical clarity.

Implied in the notion that special work is needed in order to reach the masses of women, is the idea that special propaganda is also needed. This will undoubtedly be true when we are in the process of setting up a section. Now, in preparation for this work, we must take the first steps concretely toward this goal.

--27 October 1972

THE SL AND THE WOMAN QUESTION

by Liz Gordon

I. Introduction

To some extent the shadings within the Spartacist League on the woman question may reflect a healthy tension within Bolshevism--that the revolutionary vanguard is on the one hand, and first of all, the organized expression of the historic interests of the working class, and is on the other hand what Lenin termed "a tribune of the people." That is, the revolutionary party must be sensitive to the real needs of all the oppressed while never blunting the principled cutting edge of its uncompromising proletarian class line.

As an aspect of oppression under capitalism, women's oppression is a real although subordinate aspect of the class struggle against capitalism. Like for example oppressed racial or national groups, women are a specially oppressed stratum which cuts across class lines; a movement against the oppression of women not defined along class lines inherently encompasses counterposed class forces. The aim of the revolutionary Marxists therefore must be to politically polarize such movements along fundamental class lines to win sections of the oppressed to making common cause with the revolutionary proletariat and its party.

As Marxists, we understand that the fact of oppression must generate elemental resentment and sporadic outbursts of resistance. In the absence of a strong proletarian pole and a principled revolutionary leadership, however, this partial consciousness cannot generate in the mass a revolutionary program for women's emancipation, but is limited and distorted by bourgeois ideology into utopian and reformist dead-ends, and made prey to isolation and demoralization. As revolutionists, we recognize this resentment against oppression as a reservoir of potential militancy imposing upon us a strategic responsibility to struggle to deepen and systematize this resistance, to break it from the distortions of bourgeois ideology, and to seek to develop the program and forms of organization enabling the oppressed to make common cause with the revolutionary proletariat in the struggle to overturn capitalist social relations and open the road to communism, the classless society.

In rejecting a position of abstentionism in principle, however, we are by no means committed to undertaking any significant commitment to carrying out work in this field at present. Still less are we committed to any particular organizational mechanisms. It must be kept firmly in mind that any struggle undertaken by the SL at its present size and development must, as in any other field, be considered from the vantage point of how best to maximize our opportunities through the careful selection of arenas in which we can pursue exemplary mass work and direct recruitment of cadres to the SL.

In my opinion, the SL is at present not in a position to undertake to devote a significant commitment of its resources to work on the woman question, in the absence of pre-existing mass organizations of struggle around this issue. Unlike Comrade Seymour, however, who

appears to think that movements against the oppression of women are necessarily ephemeral or artificial, I believe that work by communists against the oppression of women--both their oppression as workers and their special sexual oppression--is important strategically, both in order to develop revolutionary class consciousness among the mass of oppressed women and in order to raise the general level of consciousness in the class itself over the issue. The demonstrated ability of conservative, obscurantist and outright reactionary forces, such as the Church, to mobilize women as a brake on the general class consciousness--for example in Spain in 1934--contrasts with the demonstrated ability of the mass European socialist parties to organize oppressed women as an ally of the revolutionary proletariat. I believe that the SL should seek opportunities to carry out propagandist and exemplary work around the issue of women's oppression. Exemplary work in this field would have a dual character, not only highlighting our analysis and program for women's emancipation, but also demonstrating in embryo the Leninist concept of transitional organizations.

Since the mobilization of women against their oppression, in conjunction with the working class as a whole, has a strategic importance, we need to develop a clear conception of the approach which the vanguard should pursue, in order to consider if and how the SL as the vanguard nucleus can develop and demonstrate this conception in an exemplary manner.

II. Why a special women's organization?

The need for organizations of women in struggle separate from (but not counterposed to) the other institutions of the working class is an application of the Leninist position in favor of transitional organizations of oppressed strata. The existence of pervasive male supremecist ideology among sections of the class necessitates special organizations to defend specially oppressed groups against backwardness among other sections of the oppressed, as well as to utilize the uneven development of consciousness among the mass so that no section of the oppressed is held back from struggle.

The need for separate organization within the revolutionary movement flows not from any need to "protect" women from the party, as IS and other feminist conciliators would have it; a "revolutionary" party which is consciously and pervasively male chauvinist is not a revolutionary party. Systematic political departures on the woman question, as on any other issue, require factional struggle by party members--factions are the only appropriate form of "separate" political organization within the vanguard. But oppressed women are a stratum of the mass which is not simply contiguous with the class, but includes non-proletarian elements, most importantly peasant women and women partially or completely lumpenized by exclusion from the productive process. The party seeks the closest ties with all sections of the oppressed, in order to establish its leadership on the basis of its program, but does not simply amalgamate the proletarian party with such strata, which suffer characteristic deformations of consciousness and parochialism. The proletarian

party seeks to take power and rule its class dictatorship with the support of all the strata oppressed by capitalism, but it is not a multi-class party. Female members of the party--like petty-bourgeois derived communists, black communists, etc.--join the party on the basis of abandoning any allegiance other than the historic tasks of the proletariat, which in its own class interest must fight for all the oppressed. Those militants who accept the hegemony of the working class and its vanguard but are not communists first and foremost must be organized as part of the revolutionary movement, but the party must not dissolve into them.

It must be understood that the organization of women against their oppression presents special problems in addition to those of parochialism and general class backwardness. Male supremecist ideology, and especially the atomization of women in individual families, has historically rendered women significantly less militant than male workers in most situations. This contrasts with the situation of doubly oppressed black workers, who are in general more militant than the class as a whole, although blacks too can be mobilized (in the absence of a strong revolutionary class leadership) against the class and its institutions, as for example when blacks have been mobilized against the union movement because of resentment against the more privileged position of unionized white workers and the conservatism of the union bureaucracy.

As we stated in "Black and Red":

"The necessity for mass organizations of strata of working people with special needs and problems was recognized by the Leninist Comintern, which worked out the tactics of the relationship of such transitional organizations to the revolutionary party and to the class struggle as a whole. These organizations are a part of the revolutionary movement, and their struggles advance the overall class struggle. They are neither substitutes for nor opponents of the vanguard party of the entire class, but are linked to the vanguard party through their most conscious cadres. Examples of transitional organizations are militant women's organizations, revolutionary youth leagues, and radical trade-union caucuses. Such a transitional organization is necessary for Negro workers at a time when large sections of the working class are saturated with race hatred.

"With its program of transitional struggle around the felt needs of a section of the class, the organization mobilizes serious struggle by the largest possible number. Such an organization, while not itself 'socialist,' leads those participating in its struggles to the realization that a fundamental overturn of the existing society is necessary."

A transitional organization is defined by its program--the full program of the party applicable to the struggle of a particular oppressed group. As such, transitional organizations do not arise spontaneously in the mass, although individuals and particular groupings may as the result of their own experiences come independently to see the need for such a program. Therefore, while mass

reformist movements may arise more or less spontaneously as the limited reflection of objective oppression, conscious intervention by the vanguard elements will be required in the development of mass transitional organizations.

III. Program

The program of the transitional women's organization is the applicable sections of the transitional program of the vanguard party. But the party program is not divisible! To bowdlerize the party's program by separating out some of its elements is necessarily an adaptation to partial and particular interests within the class as a whole. This is true because there is no demand which is inherently or automatically transitional.

There is a pervasive tendency in the Trotskyist movement to define as a transitional demand anything which can be viewed as a bridge between something and something else (as 11¢ an hour raise can be placed on a continuum between 10¢ an hour and the proletarian revolution). A more schematic interpretation is that bourgeois-democratic demands are "reforms," calls for the revolution are "ultimate" and those demands which do not explicitly call for socialism but cannot be realized under capitalism are "transitional." In fact, the nature of particular demands can only be determined with reference to the particular concrete situation and in conjunction with the totality of the program. Thus for example, the demand for free and independent trade unions if raised in Nazi Germany would not be a "reform" demand. Economic demands which would not possibly be granted by the wage-freeze U.S. bourgeoisie in 1972 or by the ruling class in a Latin American country were in fact granted by the French bourgeoisie when faced with the 1968 general strike. Thus it is only in their context and their totality that transitional demands are revolutionary.

Therefore the program of the transitional women's organization must embody the pressing needs of the proletarian movement as a whole. A failure to recognize this would leave us prey to opportunism; thus, propaganda directed at women militants would necessarily include opposition to the Vietnam war, the wage freeze, racial oppression, etc.

The construction of an effective and principled program for a transitional women's organization requires going beyond those aspects of the Marxist program which self-evidently relate to women--marriage, child care, equal pay, etc. Just as "Open Admissions" is a general class demand which has particular relevance to the needs and concerns of blacks (and in fact arose as an outgrowth of the black movement), so the consideration of the woman question in the light of the full transitional program provides the basis for developing a program for a women's organization through demonstrating the relationship between the militant women's struggle and the proletarian struggle rather than by fragmenting the party's program. For example, the demand for the unionization of the unorganized is particularly pressing for women workers.

The fact that much of our women's program--particularly that dealing with the oppression of women in the family and in society at large (the educational system, prevailing male chauvinist morality, divorce and abortion legislations, etc.) rather than at the work-place--implies a fight within an explicitly political formation rather than an industrial fight means that the labor party demand assumes particular importance as posing an organizational mechanism for the struggle to realize these demands.

IV. Immediate SL perspectives

The SL's work in the women's liberation arena has suffered, more than perhaps any other aspect of our work, from a lack of systematic guidance and direction by the leadership--perhaps inevitably, as a third-level priority of a vastly overextended organization with a thin leading cadre. Left to the individual initiative of particular interested comrades, the tone of the work has varied sharply in the different localities--witness for example the change in the character of the newspaper when it was shifted from the Bay Area to Boston. The propaganda and interventions carried out by our comrades have been generally good but many comrades not involved in the work have approached it with a pervasively suspicious attitude because it did not carry the authority of many of the leading comrades as well as because of particular inadequacies and errors. The SL's perspectives and priorities with regard to this work have been unclear from the beginning and, in the absence of continuous involvement by the leadership, the comrades have been unable to reorient in the light of the drying up of the petty-bourgeois radical women's movement. A comprehensive perspectives document, which again is the responsibility of the leadership, has never been produced.

Despite its deficiencies, our involvement in the women's arena has recruited a considerable number of comrades, including through the polarization of small feminist-Maoist circles, who joined the SL on the basis of a full rejection of feminism in favor of communism.

The organizational experience of the SL in this work has tended strongly toward the conclusion that the women's circles must be brought under the discipline of the party so that the non-SL comrades involved can participate fully in the debates and decisions of the movement and be represented on its leading bodies. In our experience in the women's arena we were forced pragmatically to rediscover the position of the Communist International, which strongly opposed the initiation of women's organizations not organizationally linked to the proletarian vanguard, not only when the revolutionary organization is a mass party--in which case "independence" would in fact constitute counterposition to the revolutionary party--but also when the vanguard is weak and struggling to increase its contact with and influence among the masses. Our strategic perspective should be the development of a women's section of the SL.

In my opinion, the disintegration of the organized women's liberation movement makes the continuation of local women's groups affiliated to the SL undesirable in terms of our extremely limited re-

sources. In the interests of organizational cohesiveness and a unitary set of national priorities, I believe we should strongly discourage local areas from the initiation or continuation of separate local women's groups. However, the women's liberation issue continues to be of interest within the radical movement, and a diffuse consciousness of the existence of reformist-democratic women's demands has become generalized through the mass media. The SL must continue to intersect this field of interest through its propaganda.

The question most immediately and urgently posed is whether to continue the publication of an (infrequent) women's newspaper. The intersection of the heavy demands facing the SL with our meager resources peaks most sharply over the question of our press in general, with the imminent attempt to transform WV into a bi-weekly. At the same time, however, the SL has invested a modest political capital in the creation of a women's newspaper and the development of a readership, and we must be conservative about dissipating this asset.

I feel very strongly that if we are to continue the paper, at any frequency and in any format, it must be produced in the center and under the direction of a division of labor among qualified comrades heavily organizationally committed to this work, and with adequate supervision and assistance from the leadership. We cannot expect to produce competent propaganda, and motivate the comrades in the field to participate in its production and circulation, with only the odds and ends of comrades' attention in the center. The proposal for a women's commission of the SL Central Committee, resident in the national center, seems to embody both the necessary preconditions for undertaking to continue the women's press and the obvious need, demonstrated in the past only in the breach, to integrate work around the woman question into the priorities of the SL as a whole.

It should be noted on the one hand that neither the SWP (which has viewed the women's liberation movement as its potential substitute for the anti-war movement in the event of "peace" in Vietnam) nor the IS (which considered the woman question so important as to pose a possible separation of the organization into two IS organizations on the basis of sex) has attempted to produce a women's publication. On the other hand, we have the amazing fact that paid subscriptions to the women's newspaper exceed those to the RCY paper although no concerted national effort has ever been made to sell subscriptions to the former.

I favor the constitution of a women's commission after the National Conference and the continued attempt to produce 2-3 issues a year of the women's press as a holding operation designed to permit further investigation of the possible tactical opportunities around the woman question without irretrievably suspending the publication. The women's commission will have as its responsibilities the preparation of a comprehensive perspectives document summarizing the SL's experience in the arena and projecting a course ahead, the production of a few issues of Women and Revolution, the securing of additional articles on the question for WV and the supervision of whatever episodic interventions are possible into the remnants of the petty-bourgeois women's movement. If the commission proves basic-

PRESS MEMORANDUM

As has been noted, the transformation perspective was initially conceived and developed beginning in January 1971 in several months of intensive Political Bureau discussions which culminated in the "Memorandum to the CC on the Transformation of the SL" as the basis for the September 1971 CC Plenum. The document codified the PB's collective determination that the intersection of a period of renewed international working-class upsurge and the development and growth of the SL made possible a qualitative leap forward for our organization. The PB discussions recognized that a key element in the transformation, which at the same time would be itself a precondition for achieving the transformation perspective in every arena of our work, was a regular and frequent public press. As the memorandum stated, "Now that the SL also finds imposed upon us the tasks of, and key elements in the capacity to be, the nucleus of the vanguard party, the inability to resolve our press question would reduce us to a mockery."

Recognizing that the record of the SL in producing its main public organ had been the SL's most outstanding and characteristic weakness, our determination to move immediately to a regular monthly Workers Action/Workers Vanguard before significant improvement in our press capability had been demonstrated was an ambitious undertaking, fraught with the obvious dangers of precipitous loss of confidence in the organization by its cadres should we fail to meet our goal and the almost inevitable reflex of serious factional outbreaks in that event.

Despite particular weaknesses in WV as it has evolved over the past year, it cannot be denied that the SL has succeeded in achieving a regular monthly paper of consistently high political and technical quality. Perhaps the best testament to our essential success has been, paradoxically, the departure of the "silent opposition" in its successive waves--Treiger and Rogers, then Cunningham and Benjamin. Cunningham, although he sometimes produced excellent articles and leaflets, was an unreliable writer and his position as Editor of Spartacist was mainly nominal. Benjamin, however, was a reasonably effective Managing Editor of WV, while Treiger was a member of the WV Editorial Board as well as a regular contributor of topical material. Rogers was in charge of general circulation of our press as well as reprinting Marxist Bulletins and work sessions. Yet the precipitous departure of these defectors did not prevent the production of a readable and politically valuable 16-page September WV on time. While WV production is still far from automatic (each issue continues to be something of a crisis-ridden venture for the editorial and especially the technical staff), we have shown that the SL has achieved and will continue to maintain a regular monthly press despite the departure of several talented and/or hard-working individuals previously heavily involved in this work. Thus the capacity to produce WV and the credit for the past year's production belongs to the organization as a whole as much as to the particular individuals involved in its production.

But while our press capability has certainly not been destroyed by the departure of the defectors, it has been damaged. Aside from

other skills, our departed cliquists between them represented a considerable pool of writing ability; considering the generally extremely high level of political capacity on the part of the cadres of our organization, we have surprisingly few good and disciplined writers. It is most fortunate that the cliquist outbreak left our technical press staff entirely unscathed, as these skilled and dedicated comrades would have been far harder to replace. Benjamin's replacement as Managing Editor by Comrade Chris Kinder is if anything a strengthening of our press, but the organization must assume a heavy financial burden since Comrade Kinder is absolutely unable to undertake even part-time gainful employment if he is to continue his vital work as Trade Union Director.

The success of our main press goal, the apparent stabilization of a monthly WV, makes possible a re-evaluation of the severe and chronic press problem which beset us over the past years. Since before the Founding Conference in 1966, periodic "oppositions" have flared up episodically over so-called press policy. Characteristically, criticism of the SL's apparent inability to produce the regular press we so badly needed was combined with challenges to our conception of a high-level press, with impatient critics unable or unwilling to distinguish between condemning an abysmal press frequency and an impulse to become more "popular" by downplaying polemical struggle against other tendencies. This confusion resulted at least in part from an inability to understand the source of our press weaknesses, so that comrades tended to locate the difficulty in a "perfectionist" attitude.

Certainly there is a relationship between the kind of paper we strive for and the ease of producing it. More time, care and money must be expended on a paper which is not a "garbage organ" rewriting the New York Times, making egregious blunders, contradicting itself from one issue to the next, technically unsaleable and unreadable. The knowledge that our organization has high standards for its press may tend to intimidate inexperienced potential writers. Certainly the extremely high level of involvement in other activities by SL comrades (in contrast for example to the Workers League, which for years has made a principle of its press as a substitute for even any intention to implant cadres in the union movement) has meant that a single-minded, exclusive concentration on the press has been impossible for the organization as a whole.

That "perfectionist" attitudes were not the source of the SL's press problem is demonstrated by the fact that WV taken as a whole does not qualitatively depart from the high standards manifested in Spartacist. Nor have we abandoned our basic definition of our readership to embrace a conception of the so-called "average worker" who is presumably uninterested in polemical struggle. Our first, best and most concise conception of the intended readership of our press is found in Spartacist No. 1, "In Lieu of a General Policy Statement"

"We intend our periodical to be a propagandist publication directed toward the same two aims which we have hitherto pursued exclusively within the confines of SWP membership. We want to influence such radical and leftward moving groups or sections as aspire to Marxist clarity and direction. We frankly state in

advance that the purpose of our action is to further a revolutionary regroupment of forces within this country such that a Leninist vanguard party of the working class will emerge. Secondly, we want to win individual supporters for our viewpoint from among radical youth, militants in the civil rights struggles, and seek to create modest nuclei within key sections of the working class. Critical to our success will be the ability of our comrades to both be involved as revolutionists in the social struggles of our times and to undertake effective inquiry into the pressing theoretical and political issues posed for Marxists today."

WV is still written for what might be called the "advanced worker" very broadly defined; this includes for example members of the Ligue Communiste, radical campus activists, union militants, Black Panther sympathizers--a perfectly good example is a young worker met in the Chicago maritime hall who was reading The Revolution Betrayed. We continue to insist that the comrades we will influence and recruit in this period are not basically different from those we have recruited in the past; if our own comrades do not find WV stimulating and instructive, then there is either something wrong with WV or something wrong with our members.

WV differs from the earlier Spartacist in that much more is possible with a monthly paper. Virtually every article in Spartacist had to be definitive, able to stand by itself as our statement on the issue or arena in question. A monthly paper has the possibility of being a tool of intervention with a regular readership, whose articles can be shorter and more topical and can be read in the context of earlier material. Similarly, every issue of Spartacist aimed at being balanced, with at least one article of interest to each of the elements comprising our intended readership. Balance is still a primary goal of WV but not an overriding one. WV is also able to cover more kinds of material: more topical subjects which would have come up between issues of Spartacist, more material which would previously have been edged out by lack of space, fuller explanation of basic concepts or terms.

While WV has been in general a high-quality paper conforming to our general standards, particular criticisms can certainly be made. The past issues of WV should be taken, not as the perfect embodiment of our intentions, but as a reasonable reflection of our aims. There are several areas where the editorial staff feels improvement is necessary and realizable: overly long articles, which can be broken up into several shorter ones (or when absolutely necessary serialized) to maximize layout attractiveness and readability; treatment of particular situations (e.g. a particular strike or conference) in the context of broader political points and comparisons, rather than a recitation of particular atrocities followed by a list of almost universal program demands; polemics consciously written with the intent of being instructive to people who may never have heard of the group in question (e.g. "Police Militancy vs. Labor," a crushing polemic against the Workers League which also is a full and clear presentation of the Leninist theory of the state); more coverage of international affairs; the development of a larger pool of writers to

take advantage of particular comrades' areas of experience and interest and to avoid sameness in tone; a larger pool of responsible editorial staff to keep simple mistakes to a minimum.

However it is important to be realistic. Our press is only as good as the organization which produces it. Articles covering subjects where the SL has little direct experience will tend to be sketchy or flawed (New York City telephone, Black Workers Congress). We must be very careful with subjects beyond the realm of our competence (literary criticism, science) or knowledge; the Workers League with its coverage of popular music, the Feltrinelli affair or the Fischer-Spassky chess match is a relevant horrible example. Uninspired coverage of strikes or conferences is generally better than no coverage at all. Every ORO polemic cannot be written to interest every particular union militant any more than every long-shore article can be fascinating to a French high school student who doesn't know what containerization means. What the comrades do have a right to expect, and must demand, is a generally interesting paper in which every article should be at least competent and politically correct.

The key to the achievement of a regular monthly WV has not been, then, a change in basic conceptions or a qualitative sacrifice of quality. It has been, most simply, the establishment of a separate press apparatus ruthlessly isolated from our other urgent demands. As the transformation document noted, "the step of producing and effectively distributing an 8-page monthly has and will require a drastic reorganization of the center and the SL as a whole." In order to ensure total responsiveness to the needs of the press and its particular schedule, the key WV technical and editorial personnel have been consciously insulated from other continuing responsibilities through the establishment of a National Office fraction within the New York local. These comrades are available for particular assignments between issues of WV, but in the main have not been involved in work whose own urgent priorities can compete with WV during the period of paper production. Other leading SL comrades have often been required to suspend other work to function as writers or political consultants. The overriding priority assigned to WV has in a sense deformed the organization and is to some extent responsible for particular failures or slackness in other areas of work (e.g. PB minutes, past functioning of the New York local).

Our projected press expansion goal for WV is to go over as soon as possible to a regular 8-page bi-weekly. The number of 12-page issues which we have found ourselves able to produce over the past year, despite our expectation of 8-page issues, indicates that we have reason to be optimistic about our ability to generate copy. If even the current size and involvement of SL becomes consolidated, we will be in a position to produce and distribute a bi-weekly within a year or two, although it must be kept in mind that the acquisition of trained writers and staff will tend to lag severely behind our numerical size. The circulation of WV will also have to be significantly expanded in order to justify a bi-weekly press, which will require not only energetic sales work but a continuing commitment by comrades in all areas to selling subscriptions.

Press expansion to a bi-weekly must be contingent upon the other pressing needs of the organization, as the press competes for leading personnel with the stabilization of strong SL and RCY branches and the establishment of systematic international work, for example. Undertaking WV expansion should also be partially contingent upon achieving our other public press goals: the development and stabilization of the RCY Newsletter as a regular 4-page monthly; getting all existing and projected Marxist Bulletins in print; the production of a far greater number of pamphlets, both collections of related articles from the press (e.g. longshore, SSEU, Healy-Wohlforth) and new material; the stabilization of an infrequent (perhaps quarterly) Spartacist emphasizing international and theoretical material; the use of the Marxist Studies format for valuable educational material. (L.G., 5 September 1972)

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The following is a projection of what currently appear to be the major obstacles to the achievement of a regular 8-page bi-weekly WV--together with indicated means to overcome these difficulties, which are broken down into four areas requiring increased capacity or performance:

1. Circulation base:

Approximately 5,000 copies of each issue of WV are now circulated to subscribers and through sales in the interval until the next issue comes out. Roughly double that circulation is indicated--i.e. 5,000 every two weeks. The integration of new members and new work habits in present local committees and our extension into several other areas should give us this capacity. The rest is a matter of hard work.

In addition to the obvious reasons for substantial circulation is the consideration that to produce and circulate the paper is very hard work for all the comrades involved. If it were also unrewarding work--that is, too few readers and too little impact on social struggle--then one way or another we doom our press, through erosive effects upon those committed to the long hours and desperate intensity of work required in all phases of the paper's production.

2. Copy:

We are closest to bi-weekly capacity in our ability to produce acceptable copy, but upon a very slender base of very few regular contributors. While, in the main, experience indicates that writers for the Marxist press are born, not made, they must also be discovered. There is no reason not to believe that with proper encouragement and direction, perhaps every fifth member could become a fully adequate writer for one or another kind of article. In addition, in order to achieve, issue by issue, assurance of proper copy, we will need to develop and/or transfer into the center several dependable staff writers.

3. Technical Production:

If we are not to send our composition crew to an early political grave, we will need a staff and facilities capable of working one week on, one week off. Today the production of the monthly spreads over approximately a two-week interval, and without significant voluntary delay in that period. The composition crew pool now numbers 3-4, plus the Managing Editor, plus the assistance of another member of the Editorial Board. We will need to introduce into this work and train 1-2 more comrades, reorganize the technique of production and possibly acquire additional equipment.

It must also be appreciated that composition work is skilled, grinding and not necessarily rewarding per se. We must make provision for the steady circulation of individual comrades into and out of the composition crew every year or two.

4. Editorial:

The barrier between us and the bi-weekly that presently appears most qualitative in character lies in the size and capacity of the editorial staff. We must have an editorial staff which can rapidly and ably edit and rewrite raw copy and themselves write high-grade copy to fill gaps and cover last-minute developments. The editorial staff requires a high degree of division of labor within itself and the developed capacity to make the projected copy reflect the intersection of political developments with the work of the organization and to work with present and putative writers, at one end, and to understand and smoothly mesh its work with the technical process of production, at the other.

Presently Comrade Kinder is the Managing Editor, to the fundamental slighting of his job as SL Trade Union Director. Were there now another comrade to take over the Managing Editor's job, Kinder should be cut back on the press to the role of Labor Editor. Comrade Gordon, the National Secretary and director of all publications, now spends perhaps half her time working alongside Kinder on WV, to the detriment of national functions and other publications. Even Comrade Robertson is unduly involved in WV. A new Managing Editor and at least one other capable comrade primarily devoted to WV editorial work appear to be required for the bi-weekly in addition to the continuation of indicated work by Kinder and Gordon.

The Editorial Board and National Office are continually canvassing the organization for possible staff writers and editors (at present four comrades are being encouraged to move to the center with this consideration as at least an aspect of the reason for the move).

This projection must be taken in the context of the totality of the situation of the SL. Thus the continued rapid growth at the base of the SL in the last few months has led to a shift in other national requirements. It no longer suffices for us to project a simple arithmetic extension of the national structure--e.g. the creation of a separate international department which has already been recognized as urgent and which appears shortly to be realized.