

J. FOSTER

# **SPARTACIST LEAGUE**

**INTERNAL DISCUSSION BULLETIN**

***Comradely Greetings to the Delegates  
of the Third National Conference  
of the SL/US***

***(and to comrades Bill, Adaire, Joel and Gene who are away)***

SPARTACIST  
Box 1377, G.P.O.  
New York, N.Y. 10001

November 1972  
whole no. 20  
\$1.50

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CONFERENCE GREETINGS FROM SL/AUSTRALIA-NEW ZEALAND

New Zealand Spartacist League  
Wellington,  
New Zealand

15 November 1972

To: The Spartacist League of the U.S.

Comrades:

The Australian and New Zealand Spartacist League sends fraternal greetings to the R.C.Y. Conference and the Third National Conference of the Spartacist League of the United States.

In this period of continuing capitalist disintegration, we, as socialists, are intensely aware of the need for a revolutionary International. The betrayal and decay of past Internationals, together with the pseudo-revolutionary posturings of various Pabloists and centrists has retarded the rebuilding of the Fourth International and the construction of genuine, mass, Trotskyist parties essential for the proletariat's winning of power. Today, the primary responsibility for this task rests with the Spartacist tendency internationally, as the historic continuators and revolutionary embodiment of the traditions laid down by Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky.

The Spartacist League, having built on solidly Marxist foundations, is now in the process of accomplishing the task set for itself at the 1971 Plenum; the transformation into a stable propaganda group. Through this, Spartacist has gained some of the needed, national authority to lend weight to its internationalist perspective. Further, the establishment of your international bureau is another example of the determination to transcend national isolation.

The growth of the Spartacist League of the U.S. has made us keenly aware of the urgency and responsibility involved in creating an Australasian section of co-thinkers. Your example and assistance have helped pave the way, but our road ahead is no easy one. Political isolation, a backward and atomized proletariat, a small and largely untested cadre and an historically undeveloped left are but some of the problems we face.

Our response to your Conferences, therefore, is of a dual character; regret that we too cannot participate, and, congratulations on your achievement in laying the basis for assuming the even more challenging tasks ahead; the building of the revolutionary Party of the U.S., and the struggle for the rebirth of the Fourth International.

FOR THE REBIRTH OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL!

--The Australian and New Zealand  
Spartacist League

COMMENTS ON THE LABOR PARTY FORMULATION

--by Art Carr (Bay Area)

1. "Dump the Bureaucrats! Build a Labor Party Based on the Trade Unions!" is the title of an article in a caucus newsletter in which we have some influence. This formulation, which represents a break from the traditional slogan of "an independent labor party based on the trade unions," was put forth and met with general agreement at the labor day west coast pre-conference.

2. The traditional formulation has the two-fold advantage of providing a class vehicle for the transitional program and drawing a clear class line thus exposing the bureaucracy's inability to make a real break with the bourgeoisie. "Dump the Bureaucrats!", however, sets a precondition on the labor party struggle, i.e. first the ranks must throw out their leaders. This negates the crucial exposure effect of the demand for class independence and lets the bureaucracy off the hook. It also leads to two erroneous conceptions of the labor party: the labor party is a "rank and file" formation; or, the labor party has to be under our leadership. The first conception is semi-syndicalist and the second is a sectarian pretense with a united front from below quality. Although our caucus work is exemplary in nature, we attempt to use our program to polarize the union and place our caucuses in power. The political defeat of the bureaucracy, the exposure of its inability to even defend past gains is essential. But "Dump the Bureaucrats!" blunts the edge of the labor party demand as a weapon against the bureaucracy.

3. The same article from the caucus newsletter says that "... the only time the bureaucracy will support or form a labor party would be to head off insurgent political action based on a working class program." But the bureaucracy is not "counterrevolutionary through and through" but is capable of undergoing deep fissures which produce a partial, empirical break from the bourgeoisie. The contradictory social position of the bureaucracy lies in its intermediate position between the objective interests of the proletariat and the continual offensive of the capitalists; it is capable of breaking in a deformed fashion from the bourgeoisie in order to maintain its social base--the trade unions. The one-sided analysis of the bureaucracy of the newsletter can leave the class politically disarmed in the event of a partial break by a section of the bureaucracy from the capitalist parties.

4. Phase I initiated a qualitative offensive by the US capitalists domestically as well as internationally--union contracts were temporarily abrogated and the initial tough talk of the bureaucracy was shown to be only talk. The sharply defined role of the government in this offensive, the series of defeats of isolated strikes, and the humiliating prostration of the bureaucracy sets the stage for a real political break from the bourgeoisie. The defeat of the economic, isolated strikes graphically makes urgent the necessity for a generalized political struggle of the class. But the "crisis of leadership" is acute; revolutionary influence in the class is weak while the bureaucracy maintains a stranglehold. Our task is to construct exemplary caucuses which can begin to polarize a few local unions

and show the way out of this impasse. At this point, within the key tactic of building caucuses around our program we should begin to emphasize the demands for a labor party and "30 for 40". Given the relationship of forces, the "Dump the Bureaucrats" formulation effectively means an abstention from the labor party fight as a weapon to defeat the bureaucracy.

5. The conference should reaffirm the traditional formulation of the labor party demand. The clearest formula is contained in the March (and others) 1972 Workers Vanguard--"Break from the Capitalist Parties--Build a Workers' Party Based on the Trade Unions; Toward a Workers' Government!" This not only demands a break from the bourgeoisie but also implies a party built around our program, a program which can put the class in power.

--5 November 1972

\* \* \*

BASL  
7 Nov. 1972

Comrades,

This is summary position of views I delivered in pre-conference discussion here. Unfortunately, the majority position of the "Dump the bureaucrats" formulation had full support in the local discussion. Please print enclosure for conference.

yours for it all,  
Art C.

THE PRESENT STATE OF THE WOMAN QUESTION DISCUSSION

--by Joseph Seymour

Thus far, five documents on the woman question have been produced, covering a wide range of issues and only partially overlapping. Both the written and verbal discussion have developed unsystematically. This document is an attempt to summarize the issues under dispute.

On Special Communist Work Among Women

At the heart of the discussion is the reason for and conception of special communist women's organizations, specifically the women's section of the party. Three distinct conceptions of the women's section have emerged without being clearly demarcated from one another.

The first conception is that the vanguard party in its role as "tribune of the people" has an absolute responsibility to organize all oppressed groups against their oppression. This conception contains the essential core of poly-vanguardism since it equates the struggle against oppression with the separate organization of the oppressed. It projects a coalitionist or pluralist theory of socialist revolution, in which the working class plays a leading, but not unique role--the first among equals. This is an anti-Marxist concept.

The relationship between the vanguard party and various oppressed groups differs qualitatively in different circumstances. The working class through its party simultaneously leads, organizes and substitutes for various oppressed groups. Certain oppressed groups (the aged, children, the physically handicapped and aboriginal populations) are incapable of being organized. Other oppressed groups (American blacks, Ulster Catholics) are characterized by a high degree of self-consciousness and organization. The vanguard party must fight for the leadership of these oppressed groups against already existing organizations. Women occupy a middle ground between groups incapable of organization and groups characterized by a high degree of political consciousness and organization. Women generally do not have their own mass organizations and the vanguard party generally organizes women from an atomized base.

The second conception behind the women's section of the party is that since women are specially oppressed, they are generally drawn into the communist movement on the basis of their oppression as women. This is false. In certain periods the issue of women's oppression will be very important in drawing women into the communist movement. These periods will occur when struggles against the oppression of women loom large in society as a whole. In general, women will be won to the communist movement on the same basis as the men of their class, ethnic group, etc. The women's section of a communist party which calls for the forced collectivization of agriculture will not recruit peasant women, regardless of its position on the oppression of women. The political loyalties of peasant women will be largely shaped by their role as peasants. It is for that reason that the women's section of the communist party must be based on the full



program of the party, and not only on that section dealing with the special oppression of women.

The third conception, which is the Leninist conception, is that the women's section is a tactic designed to draw in backward and apolitical women into the communist movement. The women's section of the party is distinguished not by its program, or even programmatic emphasis, but by its organizational form, activities and propaganda tone.

A mass communist party in this country should probably establish a women's section. However, the failure to establish such a section would not render the American revolution impossible. And the vanguard party can effectively fight the oppression of women directly, rather than through special communist women's organizations. In addition to the importance that Comrade Brosius attaches to a future women's section, she attaches considerable importance to it in our current propaganda "...our position on the women question, which includes the notion of a section is particularly effective in fighting and recruiting militants from other organizations..." Given the prevailing political attitude in the "women's liberation movement," a heavy propaganda emphasis on our commitment toward a women's section will only be seen as catering to feminist poly-vanguardism in the manner of IS. Just as the Labor Party formulation generally evokes reformist conceptions, so a heavy emphasis on separate communist women's organizations will evoke poly-vanguardist conceptions regardless of our subjective intentions. Whatever assessment we make of the future value of a women's section, it should not be used as a major propaganda issue in the current "women's liberation movement."

#### On the Nature of the Current "Women's Liberation Movement"

All five documents agree that the current "women's liberation movement" consists of petty-bourgeois, liberal and radical activists, rather than politically backward women drawn into politics as a response to their oppression as women. Comrade Davidson qualitatively overstates the degree to which radical feminism is a reaction to male chauvinism and women's liberation abstentionism of the New and Old Left. This error in analysis leads to an unjustifiably positive attitude toward the current "women's liberation movement."

Comrade Foster believes the "women's liberation movement" was not simply an extension of "New Leftism", but contained important careerist aspects leading to reformist as distinct from petty-bourgeois radical, organizations. Comrade Foster is correct and my earlier writing identify the "women's liberation movement" too closely with "New Leftism." However, our interest in the "women's liberation movement" is in its radical feminist, New Left, anarchist, and Maoist elements, rather than its careerist-reformist elements.

#### Feminism and the Working Class

Comrade Foster objects to Thesis 5 which states, "The existing women's liberation movement is organically incapable of drawing in working class women," on the grounds that bourgeois ideology is capable of penetrating the working class, as witness the rise of Black



Nationalism. While it is true that bourgeois ideology is capable of penetrating the working class, it is not true that any bourgeois ideology is capable of penetrating any section of the working class at any time. To take the most obvious cases, feminism cannot be popular among male workers and Black Nationalism among white workers. Bourgeois ideology can penetrate sections of the working class only if it conforms to their partial or apparent interests and to the extent that petty-bourgeois strata are capable of exercising social authority over the working class.

Black Nationalism could acquire a mass base because the black petty bourgeoisie wields real social authority over the black masses. Precisely because of their segregation, the black petty bourgeoisie (preachers, teachers, civil servants and intellectuals turned ghetto agitators) have real social authority over the black working class. Petty-bourgeois women have no such social authority over working class women and, in fact, have virtually no social relations with them at all. The women population is so heterogeneous and atomized that it is questionable whether women are a real social group at all. That is the reason there has never been a mass, working-class feminist movement.

To say that feminism is incapable of acquiring a working-class base does not mean that it is not dangerous for the vanguard. Feminism is an obstacle in the construction of the vanguard, particularly in a country without a mass working-class party. At times, feminism can be very attractive for young, educated petty-bourgeois radical women. Feminism recruits out of the same social-political milieu as a communist propaganda group. Feminism can also attract exceptional workers--the same type of worker who might be attracted to pacifism, anarchism, Stalinism or Trotskyism.

#### On Current Perspectives

While both the Brosius and Gordon documents recommend the creation of a women's commission and continuation of W&R as a publication, their motivations and conceptions are very different.

For Comrade Brosius, the paper and commission constitute exemplary or symbolic special work among women, which should always be carried out regardless of tactical advantage. Comrade Brosius states that the failure to establish a women's commission means the party does not take the struggle against the oppression of women seriously. "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." Thus, for Comrade Brosius the women's commission becomes a principled, not a tactical question.

Comrade Brosius conceives of the women's commission as a permanent body with ill-defined and wide-ranging tasks designed to direct the "thorough integration of the woman's work into the party." Among its tasks would include having a representative on the trade union commission to insure that proper attention be paid to the women question by that body and to oversee the development of women

comrades and sympathizers. By contrast, Comrade Gordon suggests a women's commission with limited, clearly defined tasks directed toward our external work.

Comrade Brosius conceives of W&R as the paper of a future women's section, which should presumably be continued regardless of tactical advantage. Comrade Gordon projects the continuation of W&R as a tactical experiment.

### Conclusions

The women's section is a standard tactic designed to bring backward, apolitical women into the communist movement. In general, women are recruited to the women's section on the same political basis as the men of their class, ethnic group, etc. The current "women's liberation movement" is an aspect of contemporary petty-bourgeois radicalism and our work in that arena should not be seen as qualitatively different from our work on campus or in the anti-war movement. Feminism is incapable of establishing a mass working-class base, but can be a serious obstacle in the construction of the vanguard. If we are to establish a women's commission, it should have limited, well defined tasks directed to our external work. If the W&R paper is to be continued, it should be done as a tactical experiment.

--9 November 1972

THE HISTORY OF THE EAST OAKLAND WOMEN

--by Nissy G.

The purpose of this paper is to help familiarize comrades with the history of the Berkeley-Oakland women's movement and the SL's interaction with it. I am viewing this experience from my politics at this time, but unfortunately I was not in the SL during the period covered in the paper so my information from the party side is limited.

\* \* \*

Berkeley Women's Liberation began in 1967 as a discussion group composed of radical women who were finding their special oppression as women to be a block to their effective functioning as political people. The issue of women's oppression had never been raised by the New Left, nor were these women aware that it had been raised by the Old Left either. Literature on the subject was difficult to find. They set themselves the task of developing an analysis of women's position in society based on an understanding of their own experiences and advancing this analysis among the various radical groups in the New Left. The prevailing New Left had not yet embraced feminism at this time and, in fact, denied the existence of the special oppression of women and supported such slogans as "the only position for women in SNCC is prone." The position that "the personal is political" developed within the small group as an answer to those who insisted that the oppression of women was a personal problem, and that the women involved might stand to gain more from psychiatrists than from women's groups.

There was a split in the original Berkeley group between those who wanted to organize new groups and start developing a program and specific actions, and those who wanted to continue as their own discussion group. In Fall 1968 the activist wing called a meeting which drew a large number of women, who were arbitrarily divided into about 10 small groups each convened by one or more experienced member from the old group. In the next few weeks the membership resorted itself on the basis of schedule, friendship and political preferences. The Wednesday night group, convened by Lisa Mandel, came to consist of those women who wanted a "more political" group. And in fact it was a group of subjectively revolutionary women who consistently pushed for a political rather than personal orientation for the women's movement, and many of whom later joined various political tendencies including the Communist Party (CP), Progressive Labor Party (PL), the Revolutionary Union (RU), Weathermen, Revolutionary Youth Movement II (RYMII), and the Spartacist League (SL).

Although politically heterogeneous, the Wednesday night group was a distinct tendency in the Berkeley Women's Liberation Movement (WLM). The majority of the members of this tendency considered themselves socialists and there were also a few who considered themselves anarchists. They were designated by the rest of Berkeley WLM as "the ones with the class analysis"--that is, although they were for the most part poly-vanguardist and without program, they saw the class question as primary and fought for an orientation towards working-class women. They also pushed for participation of the Berkeley

WLM in campus struggles (such as the Third World Student Strike) and the anti-war movement (Oakland 7 defense committee) and tried with little success to raise the woman question in these arenas.

The discussions within the small group were largely personal, but these personal problems were seen as social in origin and solvable only by the overthrow of capitalism, which would be necessary in order to eliminate the oppression of women as well as everyone else. The group's political reading included The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State by Engels, Lenin on the Woman Question and The Second Sex by Beauvoir. These varied studies and activities reflected the contradictory aspects of the group which was politically serious and hardworking, but, like the women's movement as a whole, had a cliquist and personalist approach.

Disillusioned and demoralized by the response of the "male-dominated movement," both in its anti-woman attitudes and its failure to orient to the working class, a section of the group started to discuss the formation of a collective to do "working-class organizing." It was at this point that the real political disparities in the group began to show up. Differences were especially sharp between an anarchist (who later joined Weathermen) and an SL member, Comrade Brosius. It was at this point when the group was on the verge of breaking up that SL politics were advanced. In response to the anarchist interpretation of the Russian Revolution as having been led by the masses who were tailed by the Bolshevik Party, Brosius prepared to speak on the Trotskyist view of the Bolshevik Revolution but unfortunately the group stopped meeting formally before this occurred.

Brosius argued in the group, and after it disbanded, against the formation of the Hayward Collective and explained the irrelevance of a tiny, independent collective (about 30 people) with no program entering the factories to organize workers, and explained the dangers involved if they did manage to win any leadership on this rotten basis. Had there been a strong intervention by SL into the woman's movement at this time, when its members who had a subjective orientation towards the working class were groping for a new political direction, it is likely that it would have been very successful. Unfortunately SL was just then embroiled in a bitter internal struggle. It also had no strategy towards intervention in the women's arena. Although there was a history of struggle in the communist movement against women's oppression, that history had been distorted by the Stalinists, and had not been continued by the Socialist Workers Party (SWP). The SL had not yet explicitly developed program or strategy on the woman question to counterpose to the eclectic feminist workerist approach the group was developing. It was not even possible to counterpose Spartacist trade union activity which existed at that time only in the embryonic transport caucus. As it was, working without the benefit of party experience and guidance in the arena, SL was not able to split the group and bring a section of it into the party. SL's minimal intervention did influence the group politically as shown by its activities and literature at the Berkeley WLM Conference, but lacking a clear and correct alternative, most of the group went on to form the abortive Hayward Collective,

while others joined the RU, the CP and PL. The formation of the Hayward collective in Spring 1969 ended the regular functioning of the Wednesday night group, but there were two more important political events at which members functioned together--the Panthers' United Front Against Fascism Conference (UFAF) and the Berkeley WLM Conference.

When the UFAF Conference took place in Summer 1969, the women's movement as a whole was split in its attitude towards the Panthers' politics, exclusionism and their violence towards the left, and in general more critical of the Panthers' Stalinist positions on the woman question and the family, and of their consistently chauvinist conduct and propaganda.

The first evening had been scheduled for speakers from the women's movement. When it became clear that this was going to be cancelled in favor of a long speech by Aptheker--clearly an attempt by the Panthers to court the CP whose money they wanted for their defense campaigns--women rose in protest, both against the slight against the women's movement and against the hated revisionist CP politics. Panther goons went around demanding that people sit down. Those protestors who were isolated from the others were physically assaulted. One black woman was carried screaming from the balcony by three Panther goons. At the same time SL members were being excluded and physically abused outside. Brosius, who had been inside protesting with the Wednesday night group, rushed outside and witnessed her comrades being frisked by Panthers, after which their literature was tossed down the steps and they were excluded from the conference. (See Spartacist West #17, "Panthers--Rebirth of the Pop Front")

These violent incidents against the left continued throughout the conference and subsequently became characteristic of Panther politics. The Panther women themselves were shaken by the Panther attack on protesting women. Rumors and horror stories about the treatment of women inside the Black Panther Party (BPP) began to be circulated. This was during the period of the BPP's formal position of Pussy Power, an excuse for a theoretical justification of how women were being used sexually by the party.

While many women were privately critical of the Panthers after the Friday night incidents, most were against any public criticism on the grounds that it would "harm the United Front," and that the Panthers, "with one foot in the grave," had the right to do anything they could to protect themselves, including bloc with the CP. One section of the Wednesday night group (Wanda, Diana, Nissy), acting as a left pole, drew the support of a few others in the woman's movement and put out a critical leaflet on the following day calling for a meeting at which the attack against the women as well as the exclusion and beatings of PL and SL were discussed. This meeting evoked accusations from right wing SDSers and CPers of objective racism and feminism (putting the woman question ahead of the race question), but there was some support from Berkeley WLM, where the Wednesday night group had gained a degree of authority and influence, although most of this support was based solely on criticism of the Panthers' attitude towards women, rather than against violence on

the left, or broader political disagreement with the Panthers. Wanda also fought within the Hayward Collective on this question but received almost no support.

Berkeley WLM finally came to an end as an organization with the Berkeley WLM Conference. The idea for the Conference originated in the Wednesday night group which wanted to vote Berkeley WLM to be a socialist organization. They did not understand that a socialist organization must be organized around a program, and there was none. There had been months of "program" discussion meetings, and quite a bit of literature had been written, but it was actually descriptive and propagandistic, rather than programmatic. What was lacking was the intervention of a conscious communist organization, with a program to give real political content to the polarization between socialists and feminists which occurred at this conference.

The two poles were the Wednesday night group (socialist, forming into the Hayward collective) and the Mother Jones Brigade (feminist-personal liberationist, although anti-capitalist, later to publish It Ain't Me Babe, a national newspaper characterized by these same politics) with the balance of power held by the Tuesday night group (anarcho-Maoists associated with the Berkeley Tribe and Tom Hayden's International Liberation School). One member of the Tuesday night group, Lisa D., later became part of the EOW.

The "traditional feminists" of the 60th Street collective received almost no support when Margie stood up and tearfully complained about being oppressed by "male Movement dupes." They produced no documents and were seen as outsiders, having just arrived from New York. They cannot be considered to have been an effective force during the conference.

The socialists, with the support of the anarchists, won the first battle which revolved around the nature of the women's movement, on the basis of the Wednesday night group's document "Womens Liberation and Socialism." This document, written with influence from two SL members, was later published by the Socialist Workshop. There was not complete agreement among the various subjectively revolutionary elements; however no other tendency had an analysis developed enough to counterpose.

The key organizational question should have been the relationship of WLM to the rest of the "movement." There were several documents on the question and much argument pertaining to it, but it was never really focused, and in fact, the differences were slight. Even SL had not rediscovered the Leninist position of a woman's section or transitional organization affiliated and politically subordinate to the party, until just recently. This, as much as the lack of a developed program, would have made a strong intervention impossible at that time even if the cadre had been available.

Everyone agreed that the WLM should be autonomous, although autonomy was defined differently, differences centering around degree of involvement in the New Left. No one suggested affiliation with any ORO. The RSU (Radical Student Union) Women's Caucus proposed common action with other left groups based on programmatic

agreement and leading to more permanent alliances. They also proposed participation in left organizations by means of women's caucuses. The Mother Jones Brigade proposed influencing the left by withholding support from male chauvinist, male-dominated organizations. These differences were not fought out initially but surfaced later during the most intense fight of the conference, centering on questions of centralization and representation.

Here again the Wednesday night group acted as a left pole on the floor of the Conference. However their proposal, which accepted the small group as the basic unit of representation and dealt mainly with the need for a politically empowered steering committee and centralization, was not actually the best proposal submitted. There was a better written proposal for a politically representative steering committee which was unsigned.

The Tuesday night anarcho-Maoists circulated a leaflet entitled "Steering Committees are Death," and led a bloc of all the various anarchist, individualist, do-your-own-thing, anti-elitist and anti-leadership wings of New Left politics. Although they had voted for a socialist women's movement, they now voted against a proposal for a representative steering committee empowered to make political decisions (unsigned), in favor of an amorphous, constantly rotating leadership based on the small groups proposed by the Mother Jones Brigade rather than on political tendencies within the movement. Without the organizational forms to back it up, the vote for socialism was an empty victory although, without a programmatic basis to start with, it's unclear how one would have been developed even if the organizational proposal had won. So, Berkeley WLM just withered away as a political force, although small groups continued to meet and probably do even now.

Most of the women in the Wednesday night group (including three of those later to become EOW) had formed the Hayward collective, along with their husbands and lovers and friends. Although the Wednesday night group had a semblance of agreement, this larger group had no excuse at all for political unity. After individual efforts in organizing at the point of production, in the community, at high schools and junior colleges; after the mass leafletings at factories and participation in various demonstrations and strikes, the collective split over the question of terrorism vs. organizing. The majority had been recruited to Weatherman politics although in the long run they did not all join. The minority, which included three of those from the Wednesday night group and two men, knew that the Weathermen were crazy. They knew there was not a revolution going on in the United States, that the North Koreans were not going to sail into San Francisco as a liberating army, that the third world could not encircle the imperialists. They did not believe that the American working class was inherently racist and reactionary, but saw them as the force that would make the revolution that would bring about socialism. However they agreed with some of the criticisms that Weathermen had made of the collective, especially that they had been reformist in their trade union strategy.



In reaction to their own reformism the minority of the Hayward Collective took the position that American trade unions were racist and male chauvinist and that since they excluded the most revolutionary elements of the working class it was unimportant for communists to work within them. The women in the minority decided to revert to the perspective of organizing women around their own oppression. This decision was supported by the men and the women split. They began searching in the women's movement for collaborators. They were attracted by Tooth and Nail, a feminist journal directed at working-class women, put out by a grouping around the 60th street collective (their old political enemies from the Berkeley WLM Conference) who were at this point also working in communications with the perspective of organizing women there. There then formed an uneasy alliance which I will hereafter refer to as the feminist collective.

At this same time, a group in Berkeley called Liberation Women's Union was also talking about doing organizing in communications. Of the two women who had actually been hired, Nissy had been a member of the old Wednesday night group who had not joined the Hayward Collective and Mirra had been strongly influenced by it. They had had a brief encounter with the 60th street women and had been turned off by their extreme feminism and anti-union position. In general, the Liberation Women's Union was an RU front, but this particular group didn't know that and just used the name. The group did participate in an RU-sponsored trade union organizing conference where they came in contact with Comrade Kat of the SL, who was trying to organize a caucus in communications. Impressed by Kat's knowledge of the industry and the union and by her serious, long-range approach, the two women employed in communications began to work closely with her. A caucus was formed, including Kat, Bill, the two women's liberationists and a couple of ISers. The program put forward by the SLers was formally accepted after no political discussion with very little understanding of it, especially of the broader political issues. For example, neither of the women's liberationists had ever heard of the labor party demand before. There was little understanding of the functioning of a caucus or its discipline.

The communications group of the feminist collective had already started putting out leaflets and calling meetings of contacts. The Hayward section of it was eager to include their old friends and collaborators from Berkeley WLM. There were big arguments about the question of being "organizers." The 60th Street women considered any separate meeting of "organizers" to be elitist and racist, since there were no black members. The Hayward women (Wanda R., Diana C., Lisa M.) opposed this position, but only the women who had just joined the caucus fought against it in meetings and insisted on calling a meeting of prospective organizers to discuss program and perspectives. They invited Kat to this meeting.

The political divergence between the caucus and the feminist collective became apparent at this meeting, as well as the differences within the collective itself. The main questions continued to be that of bringing communist consciousness to the class from without, and the necessity of working within the unions. Kat fought for the program but the other caucus members that were present, not under-

standing it were unable to do so, and didn't clearly identify themselves with the caucus.

The caucus program at this early stage of development was not fully formulated, and was very different from its present program. It was long and unwieldy, concentrating mainly on overturning undemocratic clauses in the union by-laws. There was no explanation made to the contacts of the connection between the parts of trade union work and its overall revolutionary strategy and party building. Of course, it is inadvisable for security reasons to immediately bring up the question of the party to any trade union contact, but to people who already consider themselves communist organizers, as these women did, it is crucial. The broader political issues, such as labor strikes against the war, workers' control of industry, and the labor party, were unexplained and unconnected to the rest of the caucus program.

Since the politics were not clear, personal motivation prevailed. Arguments from the feminist collective in favor of organizing women around their own oppression had a strong pull since that had been the original motivation of these women for working in communications. Kat was unable to split the group and lost one caucus member, Nissy, to the feminist collective.

Soon afterward the communications group of the feminist collective used male exclusion as an excuse to formalize the split between itself and the caucus, which, in reality, had already taken place over program. However, even some of the more feminist members were unhappy about using this as a basis, although everyone was happy to have the split over. The group soon fell apart because of lack of political agreement and commitment, just as Kat and SL had predicted it would, forcing some of its members to realize their mistake.

Frought with personal tension and lack of political clarity, the feminist collective finally split. Those seriously committed to politics left the 60th Street house and moved to East Oakland. The Grande Vista house was set up as a political collective, but the old arguments of elitism and racism continued to be put forward by Margie, who kept insisting that the group had no right to exist as a political unit. This division stopped collective functioning for some time, although individuals and sections of the grouping continued political activity.

Three of these women (Lisa M., Lisa D., and Diana) who did not work in communications got jobs at a glass factory. Their strategy was to contact working-class women, draw them into a mass, city-wide women's organization they planned to create and thereby instill the organization with "working-class politics." Later, when Oakland Women's Liberation (OWL) was formed, they did draw women from work into participation in various small groups, demonstrations, forums, and action groups.

Within the factory, they worked with the Revolutionary Union (RU) on a newsletter, The Fist, although they were in sharp disagreement with the RU on many points, particularly the woman question. They fought within The Fist for inclusion of political articles on

the war and the woman question. The RUers pushed consistently for low-level economist articles.

The Fist was at first enthusiastically welcomed by workers at the plant, but after several months of "all talk and no action," workers became bored and ceased to read it. At this point, the EOW there tried to think of an action to initiate and decided on a sex discrimination suit against the company. They put out a leaflet explaining it and convinced a few workers to sign along with themselves.

At first the RUers supported the suit, but later decided it was divisive to the class and fostered reformist illusions and reliance on the federal government. They threatened a public disclaimer in The Fist. The two tendencies fought it out at a Fist meeting at which the EOW, lacking a Trotskyist analysis of the Stalinist errors on the woman question and party organization, ended up opposing the RU from the right; the RU was attacked for subordinating the struggle for women's rights to manipulative party-building. With the support of the independents, the EOW won the vote against a public disclaimer, after which the RUers effectively excluded them from further meetings by keeping the whereabouts of these meetings secret.

Upset by the reformist and anti-communist course on which their politics had led them, the women stopped further activity at the plant, although they continued to bring contacts to OWL, particularly to the social functions of the Gay Group.

It was not until after they were won to Trotskyism and became SL sympathizers, that they again began to struggle politically with the RU within the union, this time from the left.

In this period the first difference with RU arose over a motion to send the local bureaucrats to a COPE (AFL-CIO fund-raising organization for the Democratic Party) dinner. The EOW opposed this, raising the need for an independent labor party, which the RU attacked, blocking with the bureaucracy. A similar polarization occurred again over the question of labor strikes against the war, where the RU joined with union leaders in opposing the EOW resolution, calling instead for a labor anti-war rally. The EOW appeared as a clear left pole in this meeting, winning the support of several Fist sympathizers.

The call to form Oakland Women's Liberation was put in a local newspaper in 1970 by the women at Home Place West, a collective of returned peace corps volunteers with vague Maoist, anti-imperialist, poly-vanguardist, "serve the people" politics. They saw the working class as important because it is oppressed, and they saw the problems with the New Left movements being one of class composition. The remedy they argued was to get out of Berkeley, recruit working-class and "third world" people and follow their leadership. The call to form OWL was consciously unpolitical, separatist and parochial. As they stated in their document at the OWL program weekend: "calling women together in the hopes of building an organization, they had no plan, no strategy, no clear analysis of what an organization of women in Oakland should become. They only knew that they did

not want to give specific direction or assume leadership in OWL..." This subjective orientation towards the working class, along with serve-the-people workerism and feminism, appealed to a growing sector of the women's movement and New Left which saw itself in opposition to the petty-bourgeois movement and wanted to do "working-class organizing."

The first meeting drew different collectives and individuals with the same motivations as the Home Place women. The following two groups plus the Home Place women made up the early leadership of OWL and, as much as they were willing to put out their politics, served as attractive poles for the other women in the organization: the East Oakland Women (EOW) and the Women for Armed Revolution (WAR). WAR was a secret, presumably terrorist, Maoist collective led by an ex-RUer. WAR, along with members of the EOW, worked in communications and formed the Operators Defense Committee (ODR). WAR was the most explicit group in OWL about separatist politics. To quote from volume II of their magazine Women for Armed Revolution, "We see the need for an independent revolutionary white women's movement. We feel that movement is possible because of the effects of caste and class on women." They viewed all white people as essentially racist so in order to be revolutionary this white organization would have to follow third world leadership.

The EOW could be called a tendency because of a great deal of past common work. They had no program but did have some amount of political agreement, in contrast to the greater heterogeneity of OWL as a whole.

The organizational structure of OWL made it difficult for political clarification and polarization to take place. In fact it made it difficult for political discussions to go on at all in the organization as a whole. There was a steering committee whose job was organizational; it had no political power and was in no way politically representative of, or responsible to the membership. The real work of the organization went on in the action groups which were politically independent of each other and the organization as a whole. Some of these groups like the Health Collective were formed around special interests, some such as the Crankey were small "consciousness raising" groups which had graduated from discussion to action. Some such as the gay group were formed specifically for social reasons, and some like the Labor Committee for the purpose of affecting the politics of the organization as a whole. They were all to greater and lesser extents politically heterogeneous groupings and for this reason functioned along clique lines. The only responsibility these groups had to the steering committee was to send a member to help with routine organizational work. A brief discussion of the more important action groups, their activities, political thrust and the role they played in the program discussions is in order here.

The Crankey was a pictured skit. The group that was creating it was the strongest advocate of "do your own thingism" and along with the Health Collective fought most consistently for the lowest level program so as "not to exclude anyone or turn off new women."

The Health Collective put into action the "serve the people"

politics of its members by running a pregnancy and abortion counseling project out of the local YWCA. Even this limited service was stopped when the YWCA insisted that the collective remove Angela Davis and Mme. Binh posters from the office. Rather than mobilizing OWL to protest, the collective realized that in fact the Y could run the service as well as they could and left it to them. A member of EOW began to push an orientation toward organizing hospital workers rather than trying to service the community itself. The proposal gathered support, but by this time the theoretical differences in the group which had already showed up in the study group and the program discussions made common practice impossible. The issue should have been community versus workers control, but instead the group dissolved in a wave of anti-communist accusations against the EOW member.

Oakland Gay Women's Liberation was started by OWL women for social purposes, to meet other gay women and talk about common problems. Later it was seen by the gay members of the EOW as a place to recruit women to communism through an understanding of their own oppression. This attempt was predictably unsuccessful, and ended with the exclusion of communists from the group. The EOW were joined by the other political women in the group when they split. These women were successfully drawn into the larger political struggle in OWL, during which they supported the EOW at crucial points but did not follow in their transformation to Trotskyism.

An unpublished OWL brochure said of the Operators Defense Committee (ODC): "The committee is fighting for such things as sick leave, paid maternity leave, child care, election of union shop stewards, and equal opportunity and equal pay for women. The Committee feels that the election of union shop stewards is necessary in order to make the union meet the needs of its members and in order to make the union meet the needs of its members and in order to obtain on the job representation for workers...." The ODC had about 10 members but could mobilize additional support, especially during the strike, in the communications plant and in OWL. The actual membership was split politically on the issues of communist leadership, male participation, third world participation, and most importantly working with the supporters of the SL who had formed a caucus in that industry. It was this last which actually became the split issue. These differences led to a statement of faction by three members separating the EOW tendency from WAR and also from the caucus. The EOW were pro-leadership, for working on some struggles within the union, pro-integrationists (minorities and men), for support to black and women's caucuses within the unions, although not for initiating them, and for working with the caucus on union issues.

The pro-caucus faction recruited the Owens women to the program of the ODC such as it was, and the lessons they had learned during the strike by following the leadership of the caucus. They also convinced the Owens women of the necessity of developing a program for OWL. This grouping was the EOW. Although there was never any real programmatic basis for unity, only vague general agreement vis-a-vis the rest of OWL, because of their history of past work they saw themselves and were seen by others as a political tendency in OWL. After

the recruiting of the Owens women the center of activity for OWL moved from the ODC to the Labor Committee, of which all were members.

OWL's Labor Committee was initiated by an EOWer in an early attempt to consolidate the tendency and influence OWL. It drew the participation of the IS, Red Detachment and WAR as well as other individuals in OWL who wanted consciously to orient towards the working class at the point of production. The major activity of this group was the setting up of a study group which was intended to deal with labor history but became a course in basic Marxism which, in turn, developed into a debate on Maoism versus Trotskyism. As the debate started, the WAR women dropped out of OWL as they had out of the ODC, the Red Detachment stopped participating in the Labor Committee and intervened only in the study group. This left the EOW and the IS. It was into this body that Revolutionary Women intervened and fought for their program.

Earlier in the summer of 1971 OWL had been in a state of stagnation. The steering committee had to create issues to have meetings about in order to keep the organization alive. It was argued by Nissy G., an ODC member (pro-caucus faction), that the reason for this problem was more basic than the yearly summer slump in political activity, that it reflected the lack of politics in the organization as a whole. She suggested initiating program discussions as a means of initiating political struggle in the organization, and in the long run unifying the organization around a completed program which would direct it in action.

The thing that really started the program discussions moving and raised the Maoism/Trotskyism question was a series of discussions between an organizer from the Third World Women's Alliance (TWWA) and the OWL steering committee. This was set up as an informational exchange which, it was hoped, would lead to joint actions in the future. It became a discussion of how to develop program. The TWWA suggested the OWL steering committee follow the procedure which they had followed. They had been a large amorphous grouping, like OWL, a women's caucus in SNCC. A small group had split and gone into retreat to study Marxism under the leadership of James Foreman. After a few months they had completed a program and used the old group's mailing list to organize a new group around their program. Since there was no political basis for the steering committee to go off together and write a program, no matter how much studying its members did first this raised the question of leadership. Nissy argued that the program would reflect the political leadership and that leadership would be either Maoist or Trotskyist. This became clear to the rest of the steering committee as they discussed possible teachers. Most of these women heretofore had taken for granted that the study of Marxism meant "Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse Tung Thought."

The debate on Maoism/Trotskyism had also appeared in the Labor Committee when there had been a discussion of a study syllabus for the labor committee study group. The proposed Maoist study list was objected to by Jane M., Nissy G. and the IS. The IS made an alternate proposal which was voted down but there was vague agreement to include some Trotskyist readings, "where revelant."

Differences in approach appeared in discussions of the early readings; however the fight really started when On Contradiction was introduced as the basic communist text on dialectics. Although unable to deal with the work philosophically Jane M. raised the historical points and insisted on refuting them in the next class. She and Wanda R. made a presentation on the Chinese Revolution. This in turn raised the questions of united front vs. pop front, socialism in one country vs. permanent revolution, Trotsky's role in the Bolshevik Party and the Revolution, his disagreements with Lenin, the peasant question, the definition of socialism, the woman question and the Stalinist Thermidor.

The East Oakland Women consolidated around Trotskyism. The Red Detachment women went from uneducated Maoism to conscious theoretical Stalinism and recruited a periphery on that basis, including the Home Place women and a section of the Health Collective. At that point the EOW were encouraged by SL to leave the study group and form one around studying SL politics. This was seen as a test of their direction of motion towards the SL. Continued participation in this group was put to the EOW by SL as a misplacement of time and priorities; however it was unfortunate that this study group was not seen as a priority for the Bay Area SL (BASL) as well as the EOW. It was a missed opportunity to confront the Red Detachment with whom the BASL has since tried and failed to engage in public polemic.

The EOW left the study group to form their own exclusive group to include only "women from women's liberation with a history of working-class organizing to do a directed study of Trotskyism with a special leaning towards the SL." This group included the IS members of OWL but no SL members. It was unsuccessful. The Bay Area local then passed a motion characterizing the EOW as having "...major political weaknesses stemming from their New Left origins and lie in the realm of Nationalism/Feminism, economism, understanding of the party and pervasive cliquishness..." and asked them to disband and become individual contacts of SL which they did.

In the meantime the steering committee through the intervention of the EOW had initiated program discussions which were taking place in the general membership meetings and in the action groups. This had been fought primarily by the Health Collective and the Crankey.

Several unsuccessful attempts to write their own draft program and informal discussions with Revolutionary Women members led the EOW to look more seriously at the Revolutionary Women program. Some EOW women went to an open RW meeting where they discussed the concept of transitional program. Impressed by the program and productiveness of the meeting they urged RW to participate in OWL program discussions and the Labor Committee. At this point RW began to intervene occasionally in the Labor Committee of OWL, which began extensive study and discussions of the RW program. In the process of making "stylistic changes" the real disagreements with the program emerged; aware that the class thrust of the program was being changed Nissy informed the SL organizer and asked her to intervene in these program rewriting sessions. She also asked to join Revolutionary Women and to present that program as the program for OWL. It was at this point that the systematic intervention of RW into OWL began, although Nissy was dis-



couraged from joining at that time as it was seen as detrimental to moving the group as a whole. Key differences in the written program included: the role of the family under capitalism; the definition of socialism; understanding of the state; imperialism; the different classes; the role of the trade unions and additional watering down of the specific demands.

The Labor Committee draft and criticisms of it were the basis for several discussions between EOW and RW. Almost all of the EOW were won to the full RW program. This combined with the understanding of the trade union program brought them to full SL politics and they had from that time a perspective of joining SL in the immediate future. However because of the internal problems in the Bay Area local they were not allowed to join for some time afterwards.

There was then formed a Revolutionary Women Caucus within OWL for the purpose of intervening in the program weekend.

Unfortunately the draft program had already been distributed to the general membership of OWL and it was necessary to distribute the criticisms of it to distinguish the RW caucus from the draft which many of the EOW now in the RW caucus had participated in writing. There had been a fight in the Labor Committee at the time about this distribution and the final motion was to distribute it not as a proposal, but in order to familiarize the OWL membership with the discussions of the Labor Committee. Motivation was that OWL membership was getting tired of nonproductive discussions. There was to be a motion from the Home Place Women to have a program weekend to wrap up the program discussions and that it could be forestalled only by showing "progress" towards a program. The motion had been passed with only one RW supporter, Nissy G., objecting and voting to counterpose the original program even though two RW/SL members Mirra and Kelley, were present.

In the meantime the polarization over program in the general meetings, and over theory in the study group, were being reflected in all the OWL work groups to the extent that they were political formations and not just personal cliques, there was no polarization in the Crankey, for example. As mentioned before, the ODC had split over working with the caucus, the pro-caucus faction had gone to the caucus study group on What is To Be Done and by this time been won over to the full caucus program. One crucial struggle had taken place when the EOW had been invited prematurely to an internal SL trade union conference. There ensued an intense argument over the caucus program point on racism. The EOW criticized the caucus program for dealing with the racial division in the class only in terms of the self-interest of white workers and not towards recruiting black workers. The sudden intensity of this argument almost drove the EOW away from SL for good. Political necessity (there was nowhere else to go but out of politics) brought them back for the next session with a rewritten version of the program point. Agreement was reached, with the SL accepting the thrust of the criticism although attacking the moralistic tone in which it was delivered. After this the ODC and the caucus dealt with their remaining difference; shop floor organizations, in a less public way, after

which Margie S. and Wanda R. and later Anna K. joined the caucus.

In the general OWL meetings the politics of the EOW became more and more unpopular as they became harder. There were only a few independents in the Labor Committee and the San Francisco women (who walked out of the gay group with the EOW) who supported them. The Red Detachment women had gained support, although their attempt to exclude Trotskyists from their study group, which had originally been open, had been a setback. The Red Detachment had begun intervening in the program discussion on an explicitly anti-Trotskyist, anti-transitional program basis, and were very effective. EOW began to lose votes, mainly on organizational questions. A presentation by Wanda on the development of the ODC was part of pre-weekend discussion. Vicious criticism followed because of her use of the phrase "pop Maoists" to characterize WAR. This allowed most of OWL to ignore her political points.

The Red Detachment had thus far avoided an open struggle and counterposition of programs. They had no program, but the program weekend organizing committee had recommended documents on programmatic thrust. It was hoped they would write one. The RW caucus had produced a polemical document which clearly explained the thrust of its program and countered all other positions floating around, not only in OWL, but in the left as a whole. The other document distinguishing the RW program from the re-written Labor Committee draft further explained the superiority of the RW program. Finally there was the program itself printed in the first issue of Women and Revolution. The RW caucus was ready. The Red Detachment wasn't. They didn't show up. The Home Place women did come with a document signed by themselves and some of the Red Detachment women. It briefly covered some of the political changes which had taken place in OWL which concluded, "...We now believe that in order to build socialism, women and men of the working class and their allies must struggle against the ruling class--the real enemy--for state power. Uniting men and women of the working class does not mean the abandonment of women's struggles. Sexism like racism divides the people and its allies, male supremacy and racism must be struggled with at all levels. Therefore the oppression of women must be dealt with in all aspects of our theory and practice." However their solution was organizationally fighting women's struggles through a mass organization with a minimum program. They defined a mass organization as "one that will reach out to attract, and recruit women, including white and Third World working-class women, and united around democratic demands calling for the equality of women, for example, equal pay for equal work." They questioned whether Marxists should build mass organizations when there was still no party (they promised to do more study on this question). They said that their priority was to build such a party by "struggling for political unity through study and work with other revolutionaries and bringing workers into this struggle."

They did not, however, wish to continue struggling in OWL. They criticized OWL for attracting only women who were already radical or revolutionary, for its class composition, and for the lack of political struggle around program; however they were the ones who (because they had no program) had consistently avoided such a

struggle. In fact only a few weeks before, one of their leaders suggested this program weekend as a way of quickly wrapping up the program discussions and getting back to "real work." To paraphrase their final remarks which exposed them sufficiently to the remaining independents: "We think it's bad that we don't have a program to counterpose to RW. We criticize ourselves for it. We think it's bad that we can't debate them on the conception of transitional program; maybe we will do it later; we criticize ourselves. Since RW can deal with these things they win and we're leaving."

They and the Red Detachment, besides the RW caucus, were the most subjectively revolutionary elements in OWL and it had been hoped to split some of them off and win them to Trotskyism. Their leaving and RW's unwillingness to take leadership without broader support to their program left OWL with no leadership. The program weekend ended with the destruction of OWL. The consensus was that the organization would disband, although some of the project groups would continue (the Crankey and the study group). There was an invitation to everyone to attend a program discussion meeting of RW.

Of the eight EOW five have joined the SL, one is working in II and about to join RCY. One is in the communications caucus although her status is now unclear because of her relation to the Cunningham clique. One dropped out of politics. The struggle over program in OWL was a crucial part of this recruitment, so to that extent, despite the many mistakes, the intervention was successful. It also helped to establish the SL's reputation in the Maoist movement.

The main problems with the SL intervention into the Berkeley-Oakland women's movement were: the late development of program and the lack of strategy connected with that program; not seeing intervention in the women's arena as ORO work and not orienting enough towards the ORO's in that arena; and most importantly the separation between the women's work and the work of the party and not dealing within that arena with the question of the party. This was particularly important at a time when the Red Detachment and the Maoist movement as a whole was developing its position on the party and now seems to be attempting a national regroupment process. This was also the time of Nixon's visit to China which the Red Detachment had to totally distort to turn it into a "peoples victory." Had SL intervened directly into OWL instead of RW intervening into the EOW grouping in the Labor Committee, the intervention would have been much more successful both in terms of recruitment from that arena and in influencing the Maoist movement.

--17 November 1972

PERSPECTIVES TOWARD A COMMUNIST WOMAN'S MOVEMENT--II

by Helene Brosius

In this paper I will expand on or clarify particular sections of my previous paper Perspectives Toward A Communist Woman's Movement in answer to discussion which has been on-going on the East Coast particularly. In the Perspectives document, Trade Union work and work around the woman program are described as over-lapping areas of work. I would like to discuss this aspect of the paper from another point of view.

The Spartacist League program for the emancipation of women is the dictatorship of the proletariat. Struggles will be waged by sections of the class around specific felt aspects of this program which, on the woman question, we seek to codify in a way which in no sense dilutes the revolutionary thrust of our program. The theoretical foundation of the Marxist position on the Woman Question is the recognition of the institution of the nuclear family as the primary tool for the maintenance of the oppression of women under capitalism. Thus the double oppression and super-exploitation of women in the work force flows from the exigencies of woman's primary social role--in the family. However, as Trotsky emphasizes, under capitalism the family cannot be destroyed; it must be replaced, a task which can begin only under the dictatorship of the proletariat. For this and other (obvious) reasons, the emancipation of women is possible only under socialism. Since the replacement of the family, with the socialization of family responsibilities, is our goal, and pervasive backward consciousness about the role of women in the family hampers the working class in its development of communist consciousness, we must continue to propagandize our analysis of the nuclear family. But seeking to end the oppression of women by waging battles directed against the family itself under capitalism would be a utopian strategy. A mass party will likely carry on activity leading struggles of non-working, working-class women against family restrictions linked to the power of the most conscious section of the working class through the vanguard party. But in the present period our involvement in this kind of activity will be rare and the Trade Union arena will be the most likely point of intersection for exemplary agitation around this question and for raising it propagandistically in the context of our program.

It is an orthodox Marxist assertion that only the working class has the power to pit itself against the bourgeoisie. Students "as students" and women "as women" are impotent to effect fundamental social change and must link their struggles with those of the working class through solidarity with the vanguard party to make the proletarian revolution.

If one agrees that women are, in fact, a specially oppressed grouping in capitalist society, and that the vanguard must serve as a "tribune of the people" and fight in the interests of all the oppressed, one must propose how the vanguard will seek to implement these struggles. I would maintain that through the actualization of these struggles linked to the working class under the leadership of the vanguard and through propaganda around the question (1) divisions within the class can be transcended for the purpose of making the

revolution and (2) sections of working-class females, not easily reached by the vanguard, may be won to the leadership of the vanguard.

While this is not the only way, it is one of the important methods for accomplishing these two key tasks. Many of these struggles will be fought around issues directed at laying the material conditions for drawing women into the work force and, importantly, integrating them throughout the industrial working class, by fighting for such demands as 30 for 40; organize the unorganized; union control of hiring; upgrading at employers' expense available to all; free, in-plant child care centers under workers control and so on, in the context of our entire Trade Union Program. Although many of these demands will not be realized as is mentioned above it is through these struggles that the two aims of this aspect of our work--uniting the class behind the vanguard and winning non-working working-class women to the side of the proletariat, thus neutralizing possible counter-revolutionary movements based on these strata--will be accomplished.

This proposed approach, aimed at concrete expressions of the oppression of women and centered in this period on ORO and TU work, is counterposed to other conceivable methods of work in this area. The other possibilities all boil down to impotent, classless "community organizing" or "mobilizing housewives" separate from the organized working class itself. Clearly "Trade Union work is not just one, but one of the crucial areas, in which we will concretely wage a struggle around our women's program." (Persp., p. 12)

It is the contention of the Perspectives document that, in our Trade Union program, demands of "end sexism and racism," have, in the main, remained vacuous slogans. An exception to this may be found in Workers Action #8 (What We Stand For, p. 2) where the question of woman and blacks' special oppression is explained in the unemployment demand, and the special points on these issues are thoroughly explicated. Hopefully, through the present discussion, the question can begin to become part of our living Trade Union program, not, in this period, through on-going agitational work, which would be out of keeping with our present tasks, but in an exemplary way, in situations which particularly lend themselves to this and throughout our propaganda. Opportunities for exemplary agitation will most likely present themselves in areas such as Communications. Our II work will also offer fruitful possibilities. And even in such areas as Maritime occasions will arise where exemplary activity around the woman question will be indicated (such as the Passenger ship question.) Although, in predominately male unions, the woman question may seem abstract the situation can quickly change (as it has recently in the auto industry). Also, frequently all male unions or sections of unions are used against female ones or vice versa to break working class solidarity. Though in predominantly male unions the woman question is clearly not a primary propagandistic one, on a point of immediate exemplary agitation, it must be an integral, comprehensible and very visible part of our program to lay the foundation for our intervention when appropriate situations arise, and to foster class cohesiveness. To avoid the issue completely because it does not seem "relevant" is opportunism pure and simple.

I do not propose that the focus of our Trade Union work should be shifted toward work around the woman program. Rather I propose a shift in the locus of activity around our woman program from a primarily combat orientation toward the petty-bourgeois women's movement to an additional emphasis in the labor movement. ORO work and propaganda directed at the remains of the petty-bourgeois women's movement will continue to be an important part of this area of party activity.

If one agrees with the above analysis, then it is clear that the function of the Woman Commission and the Trade Union Commission are more than overlapping--they are interlocked. For this reason I maintain that it is necessary that certain individuals have both sets of information in their heads and therefore that some comrades sit on both Commissions. In addition to their other tasks as members of the two commissions, the job of these individuals would include the exchange of information and coordination of both areas of work.

Comrade Seymour muddies the waters when he argues that for me the Woman Commission becomes a principle and that "the paper and commission constitute exemplary or symbolic (!) special work among women." At the Boston pre-conference discussion he argued that I saw a section as a principle but apparently he now has dropped that argument since I don't, in fact, argue for a section at present. In the communist movement we have no time for symbolic work! The commission I propose will have numerous specific and important tasks to perform now including the publication of propaganda which is aimed at building on the work we have already done toward drawing to us women from the waning petty-bourgeois women's movement and radicals from other ostensibly revolutionary organizations--not, at this time, on the "basis of their own oppression," but on the power of our politics regarding the woman question in particular, and recruiting them to the entire SL program. Because I see this division of labor within the party as an urgent necessity, Comrade Seymour believes I consider it a "principle." I argue with much greater strenuousness that we must have a bi-weekly newspaper as soon as it is physically possible. Does this mean that I consider a bi-weekly a "principle," at all times and under all conditions? I also argue that to speak of liquidation of our party press would be tantamount to speaking of liquidation of the party. Surely, then, our press must be a "principle!" Because our monthly Workers Vanguard has demonstrated our unswerving determination to carry out our tasks as the nucleus of the vanguard party, does this mean that our paper is a "symbolic" act?

The only principle raised in this struggle is the one which Comrade Seymour denies. That is that the party must serve as a "tribune of the people"--not with the purpose of organizing them on the basis of their own oppression into separate organizations but in order to bring them to communism under the leadership of the vanguard party by whatever means at its disposal.

To Leninists, a commission is a sub-body of the Central Committee which is composed of leading party members and which exists to direct the implementation of the decisions of the National Confer-

ence, the Central Committee and the Political Bureau. A commission is not itself a policy-making body, but functions as a division of labor within the party, an administrative body to direct activity in a certain area of work according to policy decided by the party. All decisions made by the commission are subject to review by the Central Committee. It is not the task of the commission to lobby for its particular area of work, but rather to integrate its work into the priorities and tasks of the party as a whole. If political differences arise within a commission or between commissions as to party tasks, priorities or political positions, these differences should never be fought out within the commission or between commissions. They should necessitate political struggle within the Political Bureau, Central Committee or the party as a whole.

A Commission of the Central Committee is thoroughly counterposed to the concept of a "caucus." In a Leninist party, special interest "caucuses" do not exist. If a struggle is needed to fight over the party perspective or to include certain areas or methods in party work, the struggle must be carried out within the party as a whole on the basis of a political program. Such a fight might result in the formation of a tendency or faction, calling on all party members who agree with the proposed program to join with others in struggle for the victory of their position.

A commission is a body which has the purpose of centralizing work in a particular area under strict supervision of the CC. Thus it was necessary, in order to ensure that Trade Union work was carried out in a systematic, centralized fashion, in line with party priorities and according to the decisions of the party, for a division of labor to be established within the party leadership--the Trade Union Commission. Similarly, it is now necessary to form a Woman Commission.

I would like to define what I see as the main tasks of the Commission at this time. These tasks would not be the same as those performed by a Woman Section. Since the Commission is a sub-body of the central committee, it would provide a mechanism for the integration of the work into the work of the whole party. Through this mechanism the party would direct the implementation of party policy and the Commission would be able to inform all sections of the party of the work around the woman's program and link it with other areas of work where possible, such as in the Trade Unions or student arena. The main work of the Commission would be the production of propaganda in the form of articles for Workers Vanguard (under the direction of the WV Editorial Board), the journal Women and Revolution and pamphlets on the question (under the guidance of the Director of Publications). This would include the direction of research on history, economics, and the present int'l. women's mvt. which is desperately needed to expand our understanding of the question. The commission would assist in the political education of members and sympathizers, by the drawing up of reading lists and study guides on the woman question. In addition the Commission would handle national and international correspondence related to this area of work, in coordination with the proper party body.



by L. Davidson

"Feminism and Marxism" very effectively diverts the discussion away from the central issues raised in my first "Reply," once again narrowing the historical scope of the discussion to a focus on the recent petty-bourgeois women's liberation movement. Cde. Seymour poses the straw man of my creeping capitulation to feminism, and then proceeds to knock it down with a heated defense of the generally accepted thesis that feminism is a form of bourgeois ideology. Nonetheless, his paper cannot simply be dismissed as an exercise in polemical irrelevancy--his fundamentally incorrect approach to the woman question manifests itself throughout the discussion. In addition, it is necessary to clarify his distortions of my position, as well as of his own: a distinct difficulty with carrying on an extended debate with Cde. Seymour is that he rarely stands on one position long enough to catch him on it...A simply example of this problem: he charges that "Cde. Davidson's analysis of the 'women's liberation movement' leaves out the decisive importance of feminist ideology...in fact, the term, feminism, is not mentioned in the passage cited." My esteemed opponent should be a bit more careful about tossing around such "evidence" for my feminist deviation: despite his assertion that "the main operational part of the 'Theses' was the need to concentrate more on attacking feminism as an ideology"--in fact, his "Theses on the Women's Liberation Movement" do not once mention the infamous term, let alone the need for a concerted struggle against it within the nonexistent "women's liberation movement"!

#### The Spectre of Feminism

There are many forms of bourgeois ideology against which we now spend little time struggling. We devote more energy on our "sectarian" polemics against the Worker's League than on defeating the religious prejudices of backward workers, for example, as part of our generalized regroupment perspective, recognizing that we cannot seek the "conquest of the masses" with the limited forces of a tiny sub-propaganda group. Similarly, our present interest in struggling against feminism is only insofar as it is capable of attracting potential communists. Cde. Seymour's contention that "organized feminism can be a conscious and serious opponent of the communist movement" contradicts his assertion that "feminism is incapable of acquiring a working-class base." Pure bourgeois feminism does not present the same sort of obstacle to a revolutionary party as revisionism, because it makes no pretense to speak in the interests of the working class. Because the communist movement can lose individuals to an alien ideology does not mean that we must spend our time struggling against it. Scientology, for example, another form of bourgeois ideology, can also be a conscious opponent to Marxism--the communist movement has certainly lost people to scientology!

It is only as a component of Stalinist or Pabloist polyvanguardism that feminism appears as a revolutionary alternative to authentic Marxism, for those whom we seek to recruit: those women's liberation activists who seek a working class revolution and socialist transformation of society, and believe they are aiding it through

their work with women. The error of our early intervention in the women's liberation movement was less one of avoiding struggle against feminism, and more that of insufficient use of the work as a vehicle for struggle with the ostensibly revolutionary left.

It is difficult to understand why Cde. Seymour appears unable to extend to the "women's liberation movement" the orientation outlined in the RCY "Youth, Class and Party " (largely authored by him) on our approach to petty-bourgeois movements in general:

"The Marxist attitude toward the petty-bourgeois population is not one of hostility. Rather, we seek to win as large a section of the petty bourgeois as possible to identify their interests with those of the proletariat. Likewise, our attitude toward petty-bourgeois protest movements, where these objectively represent the interests of the oppressed (e.g. opposition to the Vietnam war), is not one of hostility, but one of critical support. We intervene in petty-bourgeois protest movements to win them over to the view that the fight against all forms of capitalist oppression must be led by the working-class movement. Marxists are implacably hostile to petty-bourgeois protest movements insofar as they reflect the view that petty-bourgeois radicalism is the vanguard of the struggle against capitalist oppression."

(An additional point on the ridiculous controversy over whether the "women's liberation movement" ever actually existed: Cde. Seymour has never objected to the use of the term "radical student movement" in his own writings--certainly a formation composed of equally heterogeneous class currents! For a fuller treatment of this question, I direct the reader to the discussion in the Brosius document.)

For those confused enough to imagine that the Gordon and Seymour documents are not fundamentally counterposed, I would direct their attention to a closer examination of the second and third paragraphs of Cde. Gordon's paper, where she outlines the analysis (essentially identical to that in the "Reply to Seymour"): that of a women's liberation movement encompassing contradictory class forces, inevitably "distorted by bourgeois ideology into utopian and reformist deadends"--"in the absence of a strong proletarian pole and a principled revolutionary leadership." Why does Cde. Seymour not attack this document as an objectivist defense of feminism, trans-class women's movements, and pervasive polyvanguardism?

Contrary to Seymour's assertion that I excuse the development of a separatist, polyvanguardist women's liberation movement as inevitable, the central thrust of my argument was that this was avoidable--I maintain that if there had existed, from the inception of the women's liberation movement, a clear and forceful pole of Bolshevik intervention by the SL on the basis of our fully developed revolutionary program and perspectives for a trans. women's org. linked to the vanguard party, that our work would have had a qualitatively greater impact on future developments, possibly undercutting much of the appeal of polyvanguardist feminism, and splitting away under our leadership a significant section of the radical petty-

bourgeois movement. The appropriate analogy is that of the SWP's civil rights work (or lack thereof): one can rightly argue, as Cde. Seymour does, that a powerful intervention by the SWP in the early Southern civil rights struggles, as proposed by the RT/SL, while not preventing the development of black nationalism, could have deflected much of its appeal by providing a clear alternate pole of communist leadership based on a program of united class struggle for black equality, armed self-defense, and the full range of transitional working-class demands. Our analysis in hindsight does not seek to distribute "blame" for the rise of black nationalism on Martin Luther King, Stokely Carmichael, and George Breitman in proportion to the rottenness of their politics--scientific Marxists generally avoid such peculiarly moralistic criteria--rather we seek a scientific analysis of the interaction of these elements and the forces they represent, focussing of necessity primarily on those who were accountable to Trotskyist orthodoxy--those in the SWP who had to betray the thrust of their formal politics to suck up to the nascent black nationalists.

Despite Seymour's claim: "In Cde. 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," a careful reading of my "Reply to Seymour" will reveal my actual position, which correctly identifies not only the class basis of feminist ideology, but also its contradictory nature, as an essentially incorrect response to real oppression:

"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."

The RCY perspectives pamphlet opens its discussion of the relation between the radical student movement and the working class with the following statement: "The anti-labor sentiments of the New Left were not an automatic reflection of the petty-bourgeois nature of students. Rather, they reflected to a certain degree the conservative character of the leadership of the American labor movement!" Does this constitute an objectivist defense of the anti-working class ideas prevalent in most of the New Left?

Cde. Seymour charges that W&R poses "feminism not as a conscious counter-ideology to Marxism, but as a kind of women's liberation equivalent of trade union militancy"--a "passive pool for recruitment." If followed to its clear conclusion, this line of argument reflects a dangerously workerist bent: The clear implication is, that, unlike feminism, simple trade union militancy is a "passive pool for recruitment," a source of "political innocents," not political opponents. The fundamental precepts of Leninism teach us that our primary opponents in the course of fighting for political hegemony over the working class will be precisely the most developed

proponents of militant trade unionism--the trade union bureaucracy, whose traitorous defense of capitalism appears cloaked in the mantle of that most deceptive form of bourgeois ideology. I am sure that Cde. Seymour would not care to defend this implication, preferring instead to withdraw this argument as a somewhat hasty formulation.

### The Blind, The Lame and The Women

Every time I have seen Cde. Seymour engaged in verbal battle on the woman question, he has demonstrated his erudition with a quote from Marx of which he is particularly fond: "Mankind thus inevitably sets itself only such tasks as it is able to solve, since closer examination will always show that the problem itself arises only when the material conditions for its solution are already present or at least in the course of formation." Because the material preconditions for the complete emancipation of women will exist only with the creation of a classless communist society and the replacement of the family, Seymour concludes, though never explicitly, that there is no actual material basis for a struggle on the woman question under capitalism--women are oppressed, but like the physically handicapped and mentally retarded, lack the potential for independent political consciousness and organization--not only have women "not regarded themselves as an oppressed group whose condition could be changed,"--"it is questionable whether women are a real social group at all"!!!

Cde. Seymour sees only half the picture--while he perceives (one assumes) the material basis of women's oppression, he is blind to the already existing material preconditions for women's equality. It is significant that he simply ignores this crucial point in my earlier reply, revealing his inability to defend his fundamental departure from a materialist position on this question. An appropriate quote from Lenin should help to illustrate my point:

"By destroying the patriarchal isolation of these categories of the population who formerly never emerged from the narrow circle of domestic, family relationships, by drawing them into direct participation in social production, large-scale machine industry stimulates their development and increased their independence, in other words, creates conditions of life that are incomparably superior to the patriarchal immobility of pre-capitalist relations."\*

\*"The poor woman-weaver follows her father and husband to the factory and works alongside of them and independently of them. She is as much a breadwinner as the man is." "In the factory... the woman is quite an independent producer, apart from her husband." Literacy spreads among the women factory workers with remarkable rapidity....Mr. Kharizomenov is perfectly right in drawing the following conclusion: industry destroys "the economic dependence of the woman on the family and on the husband...At the factory, the woman is the equal of the man; this is the equality of the proletarian...The capitalization of industry is an important factor in woman's struggle for her independence in the family." "Industry creates a new position for the woman in which she is completely independent of her family and husband."

It is in the contradiction between the existing potential for the liberation of women from "their stupefying and humiliating subjugation to the eternal drudgery of the kitchen and the nursery"--through the development of large-scale machine industry, the industrialization of household labor, and the integration of women into the paid labor force--and the need to maintain the family, the special oppression of women, and the resultant divisions within the class--it is in this tension that the potentially explosive energy of a mass communist women's movement originates. When Lenin states "the women worker must free the women worker," he is not defending federalist polyvanguardism--he is pointing out the untapped store of revolutionary potential represented by the working women (and not simply their backward, counterrevolutionary tendencies.)

There is one place in "Feminism and Marxism" where Cde. Seymour accurately identifies my position: he attributes to me the "subjective concept" that "people become communists because communism offers a solution to their own oppression." By denying this, Cde. Seymour reveals a fundamentally petty-bourgeois academic bias which directly conflicts with Marxist materialism. It is true that much of the radical intelligentsia is attracted to scientific socialism by the aesthetic appeal and theoretical rigour of its coherent and consistent worldview--but to generalize this to the idea that the masses will be won on the same basis, represents a definite departure from Marxism. Cde. Seymour appears locked into the reality of the present period, in which ex-students and advanced workers are drawn to the SL by the correctness of our largely abstract program. We do not, however, expect to indefinitely maintain our present isolated and impotent relation to the class--as the vanguard we will lead the masses in struggle to the realization that "communism offers the solution to their own oppression," by demonstrating concretely that the interests of any specially oppressed grouping is best achieved through unity with all oppressed groups under the leadership of the revolutionary proletariat and its vanguard. The identification with a particular social group will be transcended in the course of the class struggle, not as a precondition to it. To deny this is to deny the validity of the transitional program as a means for unifying the class through revolutionary struggle, substituting for it sterile academicism.

This is reflected in the discussion on program: although Cde. Seymour formally acknowledges elsewhere the need for a dual programmatic focus, both against the special oppression of women, and for the overall party program, his final document takes a clear and unequivocal position: that the "women's section of the party is distinguished not by its program, or even programmatic emphasis." (my underline). This position is consistent with the idea that masses of women cannot be won to communism "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" (from "Reply to Seymour").

The program of the women's section (like the existing program of W&R) is not a partial or reformist program, different from the SL program. The revolutionary vanguard adapts its basic program to

work in different arenas, emphasizing those sections with the greatest relevance, while maintaining the same central core of revolutionary proletarian struggle. Thus the program we advance for Bolivian tin miners, Berkeley students, and Buffalo steelworkers (as well as New York feminists) is the same program, specifically adapted to the needs and consciousness in each particular case.

Lenin correctly recognized the need to raise such a program which linked the struggle for proletarian power with the demands directed against the oppression of women. Such a program "wins us the confidence of the mass of women, who feel themselves exploited, enslaved, and crushed by the domination of the man, by the power of their employers and by bourgeois society as a whole. Betrayed and abandoned by all, working women come to realise that they must fight together with us. Must I avow, or make you avow, that the struggle for women's rights must also be linked with our principal aim--the conquest of power and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat? At present, this is, and will continue to be, our alpha and omega. That is clear, absolutely clear. But the broad masses of working women will not feel irresistably drawn to the struggle for state power if we harp on just this one demand, even though we may blare it forth on the trumpets of Jericho. No, a thousand times no! We must combine our appeal politically in the minds of the female masses with the sufferings, the needs and the wishes of the working women. They should all know what the proletarian dictatorship will mean to them--complete equality of rights with man, both legal and in practice, in the family, the state, and in society, and that it also spells the annihilation of the power of the bourgeoisie."

The Comintern resolutions focus on the need to draw the masses of women into working-class activity at all levels--trade unions, factory committees, and the vanguard party, which necessitates an awareness of, and struggle against those social conditions which deny women access to the potential political power of the proletariat: Their isolation in the home, their conditioning into patterns of submission and passivity, and the backward prejudices of the male proletarians. Thus it is precisely their special oppression which excludes women from political activity. Cde. Seymour's approach, which would render abstract our demands directed against this oppression, essentially denies the need to mobilize women for the revolutionary struggle. It is true that the socialist revolution can be victorious without "the aged, the children, the physically handicapped, and aboriginal populations!" but the active support of the masses of women is necessary for the achievement of the proletarian dictatorship, as was often affirmed by that notorious feminist conciliator, Vladimir Ilyich.

--21 November 1972

March 14, 1972

[New York]

Dear Marv,

[the following is excerpted from a letter the rest of which is personal]

I think our disagreement as it concerns my impression of Nancy's situation is a question of degree. You say the party's task is to free her to do political work. How much is free? My definition would mean 1/2 of her time (12 hours a day) without any responsibility for Karl. The burden of raising a child is a constant pressure. The kid must be fed, changed, entertained, put to bed at regular intervals, constantly supervised--no weekends, no holidays, no 8 hour shifts, no time off for good behavior. In order to be able to work creatively and energetically on anything else you need, not only freedom to spend time on other projects, but time to think, to read, to play to refresh yourself. And you need to know when that time will be available ahead of time. It is a women's right (and a man's, I only say woman since it is usually the woman who is expected to take care of the kids) to have that time, not a privilege she should have to beg for. Now you can say it is the responsibility of the bourgeoisie under capitalism and I agree that it is and they can't. You can say that the party can not take on that responsibility, that its too taxing for your small forces. I don't see why it would be so hard, especially since you now have only two kids. And, more important, it seems "funny" to me that you haven't tried.

You say you discourage having children and therefore the comrades know what they are getting into. I don't think anyone who hasn't had a child really does, but that is beside the point. Instead of punishing parent-comrades with your you-made-your-bed-now-you've-got-to-lie-in-it attitude and minimal help, I think you should reevaluate their usefulness to the party. If, with children, they are too much of a burden despite their talents--drop them. But if their worth outweighs the handicap they bring to the party, I think the cloud should be lifted from their heads and they should be given maximum assistance so they can function to the fullest.

And what about women who come to the party with children already? Am I wrong in thinking you aim to draw working women into the party? Most working women have kids. The burden for the party for their freedom will grow, not diminish. Will you exclude them because their children are too great a burden? And if not, how much good work will they be able to do after work with kids to boot?

It seems to me that working women with children with or without husbands are potentially very stable revolutionists, since among other things the burden of childcare will for the most part be lifted from their shoulders. How will you tap that rich resource of revolutionary energy if you can't work out a system that will free women to join you? Even worse, would you require or encourage men who are political and separated from their wives who aren't as political to leave the burden of the children to their wives since their political work was more important. I think that would contradict your



statement in Spartacist #17-18, page 13, para.1:[not included in letter but cited for reference here--MT:

"On the ruins of the former family, we shall soon see a new form rising which involve altogether different relations between men and women, and which will be a union of affection and comradeship, a union of two equal members of the communist society, both of them free, both of them independent, both of them workers. No more domestic 'servitude' for women. No more inequality within the family." Alexandra Kollontai] and yet it seems in line with the party having no responsibility to kids and little to the folks.

Last there is the question of the period of history we are in. The movement has failed for several generations to bring about a revolution in this country. Are things at a high stage of development now? Does not a person have a responsibility to build his life as well as work for a revolution under the circumstances? At some point it may become necessary for a party to demand such a sacrifice as having no children but now?

I'm very sorry and a little ashamed that I didn't bring up these questions with Nancy and Chris while I was there. I was shy and liberal about it and I do criticize myself. Even so I'm glad I talked about it since it has forced us all to examine our ideas and compare them with Art's and Joe's. I'm not wedded absolutely to my position even now. Art says I have a feminist bent that needs to be corrected, but somehow what he had to say left me saying yeah, yeah, yeah, but I didn't feel that he had pulled me out of the swamp. What do you all say?...

Kathy K.  
New Orleans

[cc (excerpt): N.O., Revolutionary Women, Joe V.]

New York  
April 4, 1972

.38

[New Orleans]

Dear Kathy,

Marv showed me the letter you wrote him concerning your disagreements with Spartacist League policy toward comrades with children and we all thought it would be best if the reply came straight from the horse's mouth.

First of all, I think you overrate the amount of burden, restrictions and limitations that a child places on his parents. I can think of no examples among the parent-comrades in the SL (there are several), myself included, who are parents first and communists second, consistent excuse-makers (I can't do such and such because I have to take care of my kid), who don't contribute their share of the work or fulfill their responsibilities. Admittedly, it is more difficult, but it can be done. And of course the argument can always be made that they would be able to do even more if they didn't have children, but I think that on the whole their level of commitment and the amount of time and energy they spend on org. work is on a par with the non-parent comrades. I also think that those persons who have left politics because they supposedly couldn't manage both their political and family responsibilities, really left for other reasons, using the family excuse merely as a convenient handle to make their way out.

Second, there is a certain amount of collective responsibility for the children of parents in the organization. There has been childcare provided at internal conferences, the non-parent comrades have done a lot of babysitting (they may not volunteer, but they don't refuse either). Another example is that one comrade on the West Coast cared for another couple's child for an entire summer, so that both could work and not see their earnings devastated by having to hire a paid babysitter. Marv and Bill have volunteered, often, and not only so that I would be free to go to a meeting when Chris was busy but also so that we would be able to go out to do something for fun.

Most of what I have said already is beside the point. You seem to base your position on the premise that everyone in the party is equal, which unfortunately just doesn't happen to be the case. I am not a highly politically competent and leading member of the organization with peculiar talents and it seems highly logical to me that those who are are the comrades who need the utmost freedom to carry out their work and not be hampered by responsibilities of collective childcare for somebody else's kids. The most important thing is that the work of the org. be carried out as efficiently and as effectively as possible, not that my own particular personal situation be catered to. If I were a leading comrade of the SL then there would probably have to be some provision made to free me as much as possible from the responsibilities of childcare, perhaps in the form of a stipend to allow me to hire a babysitter.

The other side of the question is that it was my decision to have a child and I therefore must take the responsibility for that decision. If other highly politically responsible comrades make a conscious

decision not to have children so that they will be able to devote their entire lives to political work then I don't think their decision should be thwarted by having somebody else's kids thrust upon them.

That's what the general approach of the SL toward members with children is and should be. However, this policy contains a certain inherent danger in that it can be carried too far by everyone else assuming that I and/or Chris are always responsible for caring for Karl. If we can find a babysitter for some specific occasion that's all well and good, but if we can't no one else is obligated to relieve us. This isn't the case but I do think that certain mistakes have been made. If I am given certain responsibilities by the org. I do need to be free to carry them out. One example is that both Toni (the other woman in the New York local with a child) and I have been expected to care for the babies while working on the technical production of Workers Vanguard. Putting out the paper involves a four- or five-day period of highly intensive, exhausting work and to have to take care of an infant at the same time makes it nearly impossible to work. You not only have to take time out to feed, change and entertain him with the deadline getting closer and closer all the time, but you also have to try to concentrate above the constant whining and crying of a baby who's not particularly happy about being cooped up in a 3' x 3' playpen for twelve-hour and longer periods of time. As one comrade put it, having the kids around during WV production is "disastrous, revolting, smells bad and everything else"! This problem is being resolved--from now on other comrades will be mobilized to babysit during WV production. The fact that this situation is only now being changed is partly because a lot of comrades were simply unaware of the problems involved and partly because the situation had qualitatively worsened--when Karl was a few months younger he was much more content to spend long periods of time in a confined space. Once the problem was officially brought up and discussed, measures were taken to correct it which again points to the general correctness of SL policy on the question. Another situation which I find nearly impossible to cope with is having to take Karl along to local party meetings. The meetings are several hours of total torture trying to keep Karl still and quiet so that he won't disrupt the meeting. Sometimes I think I might as well stay home since I'm only aware of what's going on in the meeting about half the time anyway. This situation needs to be changed but no one denies that some change is necessary. The problem has never been discussed which is just as much my fault as anyone else's. I did have a couple of ideas at one point but I neglected to raise them.

The dynamic that exists within a couple is different from that between the parents and the party. The decision to have a child involves two people, both must take the responsibility for that decision, and I think the sharing of childcare should be as equal as possible. This isn't to say that if one parent has four meetings one week and the other only two that the former misses two of his meetings because those are his nights for watching the kid. In other words you do need to take into account the several responsibilities of the two people. If one has more than the other he will necessarily have less time to spend with the child. But you're right--raising a child, particularly an infant, is a constant pressure and it's impossible for one person to do it all, or even most of the time and still remain a

rational human being. You need time "to think, to read, to play, to refresh yourself," time simply to be alone for a few minutes without a kid hanging on your legs screaming for attention. You have to have relief from the constant pressure. And I don't think that the relative "worth" (as opposed to actual responsibilities) of the two parents is so much a factor here--the politically weaker of the two needs a chance to grow and develop so that he can become a valuable comrade. Two people (with "minimal help" from others) can handle the situation pretty well if each participates to the extent that he is able. Most couples in the SL with children operate this way and I think it's the healthiest. At any rate it's up to the individuals involved--it's not the party's job to monitor personal relationships.

You say that you "don't think anyone who hasn't had a child really does know what they are getting into." Most people would argue that it is a question of consciousness--that the highly conscious person would know exactly what he was getting into and therefore would choose not to have children. I think it's mainly a matter of degree. You don't need to have a child to know that you will have added responsibilities, limitations on your freedom, etc., but you don't realize the extent of the problems until you're faced with the actual reality. Another aspect is that a lot of people, particularly women, idealize and have illusions about love, marriage and children, which was certainly true to some extent in my case. But I think that I would still choose to have a child now, after I do know what it's all about--i.e. I don't regret my decision.

I don't really understand what you mean by parents being "too much of a burden [to the party] despite their talents." If you are referring to a member whose children are cared for collectively by the party then your formulation does make sense. But if you mean that a parent-member is a burden because he has to spend part of his time caring for a child (which he could otherwise spend on political work) then what you say doesn't make sense to me. If a comrade (with a child) is carrying out the work required of party membership his contribution is as meaningful as anyone else's. If he were dropped, he would be making no contribution! He has an overburdened personal situation, yes. But a burden to the party? Other comrades have other "burdens"--having to spend 40 hours a week earning a living for example.

Yes, we would like to draw working women into the party, but you have a misconception about what the composition of the party (even when it has a mass, working-class base) will actually be. The party will be made up of the most advanced sections of the class and pro-working class elements (petty-bourgeois intelligentsia) and will not be a mirror of the class--i.e. composed of the various sections of the class in the same proportion as you find them in society as a whole. Working-class women will probably be one of the least represented sectors and working-class women with children even less so. The fact that they are enmeshed in an overburdened personal situation, that they have already (before reaching any consciousness) made a decision to have a family which they must look out for and protect tends to make them into a conservatizing force all that much harder to break from their ideological underpinnings. And when you say "It seems to me that working women with children with or without husbands are poten-

tially very stable revolutionists since among other things the burden of childcare will for the most part be lifted from their shoulders" I am practically horrified! Do you mean to say that working women will join the party because the party will provide them with childcare?! I would hope that we would recruit people on the basis of their consciousness in seeing the necessity for a socialist revolution and their ability and commitment to work toward that goal, not on the basis that the party would provide some or another (in this case childcare) service for them. Your comment about the Kollontai statement cited in the Spartacist article "Towards Women's Liberation" stems from the same petty-bourgeois reformist attitude--i.e. that the party is a microcosm of the society it is trying to create. If we were to spend a great deal of concern trying to convert the party into a model society with model relationships between all those involved, there would be scarcely any time or energy left over to devote to the real task of the party--the overthrow of the capitalist state! Furthermore it isn't even possible to construct such a "society." You can't insulate a group of individuals from the surrounding capitalist system which encroaches upon their lives from all sides, which makes it necessary for them to accommodate themselves to it in some ways in order to survive and in order to protect themselves from it. Only when a society is established which is not based on exploitation and coercion will it be possible for "altogether different relations between men and women" for everyone!

"Last there is the question of the period of history we are in." You imply that since the state of the revolutionary movement is at such a low stage of development that the level of commitment of party members needs only be at a comparable low level. What you seem to fail to realize is that in order for the movement to overcome its past failures, to move to a higher stage of development that a tremendous amount of work, time, energy, money and everything else is required of every member. With our present forces it is a tremendous burden to do all the work needed to move to that next stage and some necessary aspects of our work have from time to time been sacrificed. You say that "does not a person have a responsibility to build his life as well as work for a revolution under the circumstances?" Do you deny that the life of a professional revolutionist is a meaningful, enriching one and that to build one's life as a revolutionist is indeed "building one's life"? Furthermore, the SL does not "demand such a sacrifice as having no children." Most party members do discourage it, but the official position of the party is that having children is a personal decision. On the other hand, I think it is quite difficult for women to totally break with their upbringing in capitalist society and find complete fulfillment by being a professional revolutionist. For me, having a child is part of a total life experience. I find caring for Karl debilitating and often times very annoying, but he gives me a great deal of pleasure, too. Watching a child grow and develop is fascinating and an enriching experience. If other comrades were responsible for Karl 12 hours a day and the other 12 he were asleep, I'd miss him!

I'm pleased that you brought up your ideas and questions. They have helped me to clarify my own thinking and have generated a lot of interesting discussion on the part of the other comrades. I'm sorry it took me so long to get this letter off, but I have been extremely

5.

busy for the past week or so getting out the current issue of our paper.

Women's liberation through  
socialist revolution!

Nancy

cc: SLNO  
Women & Revolution--New York  
Joe V.

SOCIALIZATION WITHIN THE PARTY AND PARTY PURPOSE

--by Amy Sanders and Paul Abbott, (New York)

1. Exploitation and other social inequities have a material basis in class society. In seeking to do away with the exploitation and oppression, the Leninist party is organized to lead the class in its struggle to abolish the material base and the superstructural phenomenon which rest upon it. Existing within class society, the party cannot achieve the conditions of classless society within itself at this time. The institutions of socialized childcare, health-care, socialization of wages, etc. are among those which the class as a whole must win and which cannot be legislated within the party.

2. The general policy of the party is that comrades are individually responsible for themselves in areas which are normally considered non-political. Thus, if a comrade has certain medical problems, they are considered to be the responsibility of the individual comrades, not the party. Equally, the decision of comrades to have or not have children as they see fit is a personal decision for which the party can generally not take responsibility. In allowing comrades to dispose of their personal time and money--after fulfillment of political obligations assumed with party membership--the party must allow comrades' individual consciousness to be their guide in many areas, neither assuming the debts and liabilities nor commandeering or forbidding the luxuries comrades take on. The SL does not generally pay personal debts, finance private air conditioners or even pay necessary medical bills of comrades. As part of this policy, the SL does not generally assume responsibility for either childcare or child support (though on occasion it may do so, just as it will occasionally pay medical bills).

The results of the personal responsibility for having a child, the burdens of caring for and supporting it cannot be equalized among SL members, many of whom have chosen not to take on those burdens in addition to the normal duties of a professional revolutionary. Correspondingly, whatever co-operative or other private arrangements comrades may make to provide for children are generally not the concern or responsibility of the SL. As personal arrangements, they may be worked out among parents and any other comrades or persons affected. It is understood that as with any collective arrangements, that if such arrangements interfere with the party work of any comrade (parent or otherwise) the party may intervene.

Non-parent comrades may certainly assist in childcare or child support by their personal choice, hopefully displaying sensitivity to the needs and desires of parent-comrades for free time in order to relax as well as do political work. In certain special circumstances (conventions, conferences, etc.) comrades may be required to babysit. However, when it is necessary to obtain assistance in caring for or supporting children, every attempt should be made to shift the locus of the burden outside the organization. Particularly, the decisions of some comrades to have children should not be thrust upon other comrades who have chosen not to.

It should be noted that it is essentially impossible to distinguish operationally between those who have had children after join-



ing the party (whose decisions we may assume to be carefully and consciously weighed), and those who come into the party with children. It is unfortunate but unavoidable that, short of becoming a service organization for its members, the SL cannot recompense those comrades, particularly women, whose past errors in judgement and/or general condition of oppression has resulted in their being burdened with children they would not otherwise have had.

3. Exceptions to the party's general policy of personal responsibility for children, finances and other matters are usually made on the basis of the parent-comrade's being an organizational functionary, i.e. a full or part-time employee of the organization. When such comrades are unable to meet their needs through the normal courses which are closed to them as a result of their party work, the party fully or partially assumes the financial, health, and other support for such comrades in order to have their services on a more extensive basis than would normally be possible or required.

It must be remembered though that the party's assets are greatly outweighed by the various tasks that it must perform. Consequently, in the selection of functionaries as in virtually all other areas, the party must endeavor to obtain the greatest possible amount of work with the least possible expenditure of time, money, or cadre-power. Thus, certain unavoidable traits or responsibility of comrades such as children or sickness will inevitably be a consideration in the selection of functionaries--given two comrades of equal ability, one of whom can be supported for \$50/week while the other requires \$60, the normal party choice would be the comrade who can carry out the necessary tasks with the least expenditure of party money.

--20 November 1972

ON CHILD CARE...

--by Sue Shepard and Toni R., (New York)

This paper was written in haste, in response to verbal positions stated by Comrades Abbot and Sanders on the child care question. The lateness of the Abbot-Sanders document neither allowed us to read it before preparing this paper nor allowed for pre-conference discussion in the locals on the question. Thus the full burden of this relatively minor and practical issue is being pushed unnecessarily onto the Conference. The raising of this question to a Conference level is an absurdity; the discussion and solutions must necessarily be local and should continue as needs change.

Not wishing to waste delegates' time with this matter, and to place the discussion in the locals where it properly belongs, we recommend that the child care question be tabled at this Conference.

Background on N.Y. Child Care

Plagued with babysitting problems in the N.Y. local, members have formally, in the local meetings, and informally discussed the question of how much responsibility should and can the organization take for comrades' children. The solutions to providing child care are limited: paid babysitting, parental responsibility (either individually or collectively) or as a collective responsibility of the SL/RCY local.

In N.Y. a combination has been attempted. During meetings and classes of the party which require the parents' presence, an assessment of 25-50¢ was made for all attending the function to pay for a hired babysitter. Parents collectively rotated a 24-hour shift between themselves, being responsible for the care of all party children during each shift. Non-parent comrades have been heavily drawn upon for hours when the parents were needed for political work. In this way, all comrades have been drawn into childcare; financially through collections, as a party assignment to fill in for a parent busy with pressing political work and for some, the inconvenience of living in what has become a child care center.

Why is Child Care a Party Problem At All?

Given that systematic, efficient party work cannot be done with children present during the assignment, children do become a party problem since they handicap smooth party functioning--for the parents and also for the non-parent comrades involved in the particular assignment (i.e., a work session, intervention or public SL/RCY forum is disrupted for all by the presence of children).

Also, in order for parent comrades to be functioning communists, to be fully integrated into party work and to develop as well-rounded cadre, locals should recognize that to achieve this without some assistance for child care is nearly impossible for parents.

The major political principle involved in this question is that the work of the party is to build a movement for proletarian revolu-

tion. As part of this prime task, the party needs to build well-rounded cadre and to function smoothly in its political work. A time-consuming problem, such as caring for children, which stands in the way of party work will often need the help of the party for a practical solution.

Comments on the Verbal Positions of Abbot-Sanders

Abbot-Sanders have stated that parent comrades must be responsible for all child care and relieved of this responsibility only when the party requires a special skill or task which only a particular parent can perform. Also, if local assignments are made for an intervention, sale, work session, etc. which both a parent and a non-parent comrade can perform, the parent should babysit while the non-parent comrade should receive the assignment.

Implied in this position that parents should always babysit unless they have "special skills," is that any parent not born a "beautiful people" has mainly babysitting, diapers and bottles as their "political" life. Given that parents have limits already placed on them because of childcare, the Abbot-Sanders position would further limit parent functioning.

Abbot-Sanders have also stated that if parents weren't in the party they would work out their own arrangements for child care, so the same should hold true for parents in the party. They skip over the fact that babysitting for non-communist parents is for personal reasons while child care for parent comrades is for party functioning and responsibilities and is much more time-consuming.

Providing the theoretical underpinning of the Abbot-Sanders position on child care is the attitude of because they (as individuals) have made a conscious decision not to have children, they do not want the responsibility of caring for party children. Besides being an uncomradely attitude, this is moralistic--"suffer forever the consequences of your mistakes, comrades! Whether the parents made "conscious decisions" is irrelevant; what exists is a practical problem which needs a solution.

Saying that the party has no responsibility for child care is basically also anti-working class. While we agree with Cde. Nancy R. that the mass party will not be a mirror of the class, hopefully we will be recruiting advanced workers--and some of those will be parents. The party will have to assist with child care.

As a secondary point, 2-5 hours of babysitting every third or fourth week for non-parent comrades does not constitute a "responsibility" as the Abbot-Sanders position expresses. "Parenthood" is a 24-hour financial, physical and emotional responsibility, whether or not the parent is with their child(ren); this is "responsibility" for children. To place the entire burden of responsibility on the individual or collective parents for child care exclusively is a solution which will deform and/or burn out parent comrades over an extended period of time. The Abbot-Sanders position contradicts the necessity to develop and preserve cadre. We are not saying that parents should have a "free ride," only help with some child care.

## PROPOSALS:

Child care is a daily, time-consuming practical problem which hampers the work of the party and (in NY) absorbs much of the local organizer's valuable time. The question is how much, if any, responsibility for child care should and can the party assume. Abbot-Sanders say essentially "none," modifying this position with "some" when special skills are required by the party which only particular parents can perform. As we have hastily sketched in this paper, we find the Abbot-Sanders verbal positions only avoid the problem and do not offer a realistic solution. We propose the following in order to systematize child care and eliminate much of the worry and time the problem presently requires.

1. that a rotating babysitting chairman (monthly assignment) be appointed by the local organizer; not only parents should be considered. The tasks of the chairman are: to compile a list of available paid babysitters, to contact paid sitters when needed, to determine that parent babysitting assignments can be met, to use the system listed in pt. 4 to fill in other comrades when necessary, to be on top of the situation of when parents need care and to be certain that the time is covered.

2. that for meetings and crisis periods when all comrades are busy that locals take up a collection (25-50¢ per person) for a paid babysitter.

3. that parents each take one day of every week as their regular assignment for babysitting, with extra time being filled in by the procedure listed in pt. 4

4. that for local work sessions, interventions, sales, etc. all comrades should receive assignments, with an SL/RCY alphabetical rotating list used to provide babysitting when parent comrades have received an assignment. Comrades would permanently or temporarily be excused from child care assignments due to pressing party responsibilities or other reasons acceptable to the organizer, and if necessary the local executive committee.

--21 November 1972

LETTER TO SHARPE BY ROBERTSONExtract

New York  
27 June 1972

[Paris]

Dear John,

We are writing this letter and the enclosed one in the face of some difficulties which have caused us confusion and delay....

(6) Marvin Treiger, following a period of rising demoralization and resentment at his inability to develop a role satisfactory to him (more or other than his heavy public speaking, touring and writing assignments) has abruptly quit the organization after a period of surreptitious intrigue against the "heavy-handed regime." He has not yet produced his promised written resignation but we have heard that he came to doubt the viability and/or validity of our movement following the death of its namesake in 1940. His collaborators from before the fusion are most bitter with him. He thrice contacted Stuart in connection with his intention to leave. She has declared this contact from a bona fide renegade to be none of our business. We look forward to a very sharp struggle with Stuart and Moore over the summer, the gap between them and the organization being wider and deeper than before the intensive confrontation with Moore here. Good. It has been four years since we have had internal difficulties. We have tripled our forces; the cadre has been under considerable pressure as the result of rapid expansion; education in principled and now necessary internal struggle is salutary and lays the basis for a further leap forward.

Comradely,  
Jim

\* \* \*

LETTER TO SHARPE BY GORDON

New York  
28 June 1972

Paris

Dear John,

Am writing to immediately correct one not unimportant piece of misinformation which got into Jim's letter to you of last night as a result of an error on my part. The letter said that Treiger had phoned Stuart last Saturday night and that in the Boston branch meeting Monday night Stuart had refused to tell the organization about the content of these calls from a defector. This is simply not true. I got a brief meeting report from Seymour, who was in Boston for the meeting, yesterday and misunderstood his information. Seymour arrived back in New York today and in talking with him Jim and I

found out that this was not the case, and in fact Stuart did tell the meeting what Treiger said, i.e. that he intended to resign and apparently very little else. Stuart did not communicate this information to the national office then, but did to the Boston branch meeting.

I think it is politically indicative that this disgruntled element thought it fit to phone Stuart, who had in any case only been back in the country for a few days, but this is a separate question from any organizational indiscipline, which did not take place.

You must be extremely busy at this moment considering what is going on in your area just now, but I felt it very important to write at once to clear up the misunderstanding.

Comradely,  
Liz

\* \* \*

LETTER TO ROBERTSON BY SHARPE

Extract

June 30

Dear Jim,

Received your letter of the 27th this afternoon and I hasten to reply....

6) I do not understand about Marv, but a more serious problem seems to me to be that of Moore. In March, you wrote that you had been right about the political question but I had been right about the personal one. In my letter of April 2, you will note that when they were in Paris, we agreed to exchange copies of letters, reports, etc., which we have done, even if my letters don't always indicate it. For the moment, neither Libby nor I can, on the basis of those letter and reports, see any political basis for saying that "the gap between them and the org. being wider and deeper than before the intensive confrontation with Moore here." (I don't know anything about Judy's contacts from Marv--indeed this is the first time we had heard of the whole thing). I therefore don't know what to make of the whole thing. I assume George will say something of what has been going on. However, if indeed there is no political basis, there must be some other basis. That is why I remind you of your previous statement of my having been right about him personally.

7) This ties in with (6). We received this morning a letter from Bill containing, in addition to the question of Marv, the statement that he and Judy were 'under indictment' for " 'double recruiting' " in Europe. Not only do I see no basis in his letters etc. for that charge (if indeed it exists) but I would also add that when 7 BL comrades were in Paris, we had a chance for relatively long discussions (couple of hours) with 2 of the leading BL cadre,

and extensive discussions with another (a French woman working in Germany). From these discussions, we could see no divergence whatsoever in what they considered the SL line and what it is, i.e. no political differences. Further, the step of sending 2 comrades (1 a leading comrade) to our conference is surely an indication of seriousness and openness on their part (and on Bill's part). This impression was strengthened by the long talk we had with the French BL'er, and from an excellent letter we got from her today. She had at that time said that she was in Germany for personal reasons. I at one point suggested that, with due consideration given a) her personal reasons, b) her attitude toward SL, c) the relation between BL and SL as it might (or might not) develop, she might in the future consider coming to Paris as the center of a cell. In her letter (received today), she says:

"after our talks in Paris, it seemed to me urgent to propose a discussion within Sp/BL the goal of which would be to accelerate the discussion concerning the relations of Sp-BL/SL-US...

"the problem of an eventual support by Sp-BL of a group in Paris depends mainly on the relations between our two orgs."

She then goes on to request various material (MB's etc). I add that I mentioned explicitly to the BL comrades when they were here that I had had discussions with their French comrade (who had come separately). This hardly seems to me any sign of "double recruiting."

From all this: I see no "gap" between Moore and the org. and no "double recruiting." I think you are wrong about him in a way similar to that of Dec.-March.

8) Bill also mentioned that Dave (C) "has declared himself a tendency." Is that true? (Needless to say we look forward to receiving all the documents as they are produced for the Conference).

Comradely,  
John

cc: Moore

LETTER TO SHARPE (DRAFT UNSENT) BY ROBERTSON

NYC  
14 July 1972

Paris

Dear John,

Your eminently reasonable question of what literature do we want for the Bolfra conference prompts the reply that we haven't the faintest idea. We just received from Comrade Moore their invitation in German; Comrade Moore told us his translation into English will follow shortly. From our fragmentary knowledge of German we can't tell whether we are invited as fraternal representatives or with observer status. This is the first letter from Bolfra we have received since our open letter to the German groups, to which we never got any reply.



Cde. Moore reported that some rank & file members expressed appreciation of our letter and that leading elements didn't like it so much, but this is not much to go on. The Bolfra Bonn organizer who arrived in the U.S. with Comrade Stuart has evinced no interest in political discussions with the SL as such. To my recollection we have received no (!) Bolfra magazines since the second issue after the split.

The Bolfra conference apparently has the character of a founding conference, i.e. with projected adoption of fundamental documents. We know nothing about the documents for it except what we can surmise from a rough translation of the agenda listed in the letter. We have no idea what kind of intervention on our part will be desired or permitted. Comrade Foster is currently prowling around Europe to give us this kind of information. So far as I can recollect Moore's correspondence has dealt with only one question aside from the issue of the KPD-SPD government--the nature of the SPD, about which there has apparently been a lot of discussion.

Thus the only materials which we know to be possibly of interest to the Bolfra comrades would be a documentary record of our contact with the IKD and later with the IKD and the Bolfra:

- (1) the initial correspondence with the IKD
- (2) correspondence regarding the Brussels Conference and the proposals we projected and the minimal ones adopted by the tri-group discussions in London.
- (3) our declination over the Essen Conference intervention
- (4) our open letter to the IKD and the Bolfra
- (5) the extension developed in the PB over the last two years of our understanding of popular fronts and coalition governments i.e. the limits of our critical support
- (6) our views arrived at in the PB at Moore's request on the SPD-KPD government
- (7) a statement that to our understanding we have two points of evident difference with the Bolfra comrades: (a) "freedom of criticism" which seems to us incompatible with and in practice counterposed to the organizational form necessary for participation in the class struggle, politically and organizationally, toward the struggle for workers' power; (b) the question of the nature of the SPD.

We really have no sense of the organization and therefore at the Conference would have to be extremely modest and fraternal, contributing in a background way.

But this comes very late. We only received the invitation with the date of the conference three days before the arrival of your letter.

Tomorrow Comrade Moore will be coming down from Boston to a PB meeting where he will presumably report on the German situation. This is somewhat overshadowed in our minds however by his cliquist overlap with the Treiger defection and the abortive Cunningham opposition as well as by his reported intention to declare himself an opposition faction. We have as yet received no written or other statement from Comrade Moore on his opposition platform; however we assume it will be forthcoming as he has reportedly produced two successive written declarations with which he has been canvassing two branches.

In contradistinction to the French situation, we are running quite blind on Germany. I feel we are like a submerged U-boat running with its periscope sheared off, trying to navigate by secondary means like sonar without fine focus. Some of the most indicative stuff was in an intercepted letter from Moore to Janet Rogers and in your narrative defending Moore against a charge of "double recruiting in Germany"--which we also appreciated hearing because we have not heard anything about such a charge, and would have no idea for whom or to what Moore could be double recruiting. Moore's letter to Rogers suggested that the Bolfra comrades were interested in hearing our ideas on the KPD government, something we hadn't had any idea of; and your account of your meeting with Bolfra individuals in Paris, which we had known nothing about, gave us some feel for what some of the human material was like. It is on the basis of Moore's failure to supply us with any real information that he will be decertified as our representative in Germany.

On what seems to be the certain assumption that Moore will follow through with written oppositional material, we do not intend to permit the fight to go to the localities prior to the opening of pre-conference discussion, but most likely and naturally a majority faction of the Central Committee would coalesce around (1) our Statement of Principles (2) the Transformation document (3) Gordon's "Cliques, Blocs and the Regime." Once Moore has been decertified as a representative of the SL in Europe there would be no functional reason for him to receive carbons of your letters reporting on France. To continue to send him carbons then would constitute a declaration of factional solidarity with him or at a minimum factional neutrality. You should be guided by this understanding in the procedure you choose.

We enclose the second Cunningham oppositional declaration, which appeared after the publication of the first informational bulletin, and its outcome. We have offered to both Cunningham and Moore the opportunity to have published and distributed to the membership one document of not excessive length (perhaps 10-15 pages) together with a reply before the opening of the pre-conference discussion period.

Fraternally,  
Jim

CLIQUEES AND ALL THAT

After procrastinating for a couple of weeks, I see I must finally try to put down a clear account of the situation as I see it, although I do not as yet have all the available materials. Due to the number of false issues that have been dragged in, the question has become somewhat muddled. Although the two are connected, it seems to me important to consider the question of Boston and of Germany separately, and not substitute one for the other (which everybody seems to be trying their damndest to do).

The first point must be to make some definition of a clique, and more particularly to define the point at which criticism, disgruntlement, sarcasm, etc. stop and a real clique may be said to begin. Clearly it does not suffice to scream "clique" to make one.

The fundamental element of a clique is that it represents an implicit political alternative to an existing leadership without defining that alternative in political terms, but rather in either personal or what appear to be simply "technical" organizational terms. As opposed to a bloc or simple maneuver, a clique is by nature never fully self-conscious, since its members recoil from the political implications of what they are doing. Characterizations of comrades as "incompetent" "wooden-headed," "hysterical," "vindictive," etc. may or may not constitute evidence of a clique.

The dividing line between personal "private" opinions and a clique is the point at which a series of characterizations come together to form a political whole which, however, presents itself as a series of isolated opinions which are not linked together. Ultimately, of course, the notion of "private" opinions which are the "property" of a comrade is untenable, since if such opinions are not dissipated and dispelled, they will form part of a political line. Basically, a clique replaces a political attitude with some other attitude. It is necessary for a clique to disguise itself, since it must not admit to having a political basis. A clique is based on a coherent political line, the implications or even recognition of which the clique refuses to make. When it makes such a recognition, it must either change its behavior (if it rejects the political conclusions) or openly become an opposition.

In conditions such as those which surround the "Moore case" it seems to me to be the job of all comrades concerned, including the leadership, precisely because it is the leadership, to sort out the political elements concerned.

Starting from these definitions, my own position is the following:

1) I understand that the resolution voted by the Boston local to "condemn the hardened Moore-Stuart clique" (or whatever the exact wording was) was based entirely on U.S. events. If that is the case, then it seems to me an error which could only confuse the issue to drag in Germany. From our conversations with the K's when they were here, and by piecing together in retrospect bits and pieces from last summer, it seems to me likely that it was a correct

resolution, with the following two reservations: (1) that Bill and Judy frequently acted cliquishly, behavior which was exacerbated by the isolation of the Boston local up to the summer of 1971. (2) That in terms of Boston, I feel that the notion of a "hardened clique" is somewhat contradictory, since the clique, such as it was, was precisely characterized by allowing personal evaluations to become a political line without a conscious delimitation between the two ever really becoming clear. Naturally, this changes neither the fact of the cliquishness nor the evaluation of the disastrous effects a clique inevitably has on the organization.

2) In terms of international questions, I have agreed from the very beginning with many of the criticisms of international functioning which Moore has expressed--the IDB, Marxist Studies, the relative priority of Spartacist, etc. In addition, I have a series of gripes of my own, the most important being that concerning the OCI/IC conference.

3) I note that Robertson's self-characterization in the PB minutes No. 50 (p. 20) as being "a product of the witchhunt...left with the feeling you can't win, year after year of people leaving the movement" formally agrees with Moore's characterizations of him as being afraid to go forward. The essential and qualitative difference within the formal agreement is that for Robertson (and I agree), this pessimism can and must be fought, whereas for Moore (as I understand his position and without knowing the exact state of things in the U.S.), it is becoming or has become a question of putting into place a new leadership, that is, of seeing the present one as being fundamentally unable to carry out its tasks.

Thus the political question at hand has to do with the evaluation, development and nature of international work and the capacity of the present leadership to carry out this work. Since the deficiencies of (2) are serious, they must be corrected. The international question can neither be eliminated (and a judgement made 'solely' on domestic issues) nor can it be made the only issue (as Bill and Judy tend to do).

In my view, a correction and clarification of international work means at the minimum:

a) that the leadership should recognize that its resolve to "crash out the IDB" which was taken at the expanded CC plenum in Sept. 71 was unrealistic and therefore led to false expectations and the consequent disillusionment. Further, that the fluctuating importance accorded to the IDB reveals the lack of a precise evaluation of its place which has been detrimental to int'l work.

b) there has been a tendency to "put off" int'l questions until they become crises. This represents not only a lack of manpower in the production of documents (IDB, MB6), but also a certain provincialism, since the sense of urgency does not pervade international questions in the same way it does US questions. This is a concrete illustration of what it means to say that failure to break out of our national isolation will become a deforming factor. This is of course natural, but must for that very reason be fought all the more

c) It is my opinion that some variant of the proposed international staff with separate responsibility for international docs. is an appropriate way of correcting these deficiencies.

4) In terms of the "Germany question" I feel that the amount and kind of information and material emanating from Moore in Germany has been deficient in the following way: although there have been periodic political reports, the raw information on which they were based was largely lacking. It therefore became difficult to consider them fully, since the most that was possible to do was to accept or not accept the analysis without the basis for any alternate analysis. Without false modesty, I would say that this stands in contrast to my own letters, which had no lack of raw information and whose faults lie in the other direction: the incoherence and hesitancy with which the raw material was put together.

The main reason behind this lack of raw material does seem to be a "personal" characterization of the leadership which became political: i.e. that through incompetence, etc. the NO would not bother with the raw material, cannot understand it, etc. and therefore doesn't have to be sent it. This seems to me true even considering other work Moore had to do, personal considerations etc. I see no way to construe this other than as cliquist behavior.

In conclusion: it is essential that the question of a clique be dealt with, but I would strongly object to using the question of a clique as an excuse for not dealing with the justifiable criticisms that the clique (or others) may have had, or to allowing international questions to suffer because of the clique question. This means including time, etc. for clarification and rectification of the issues in (2) and (3,a,b,c) above.

Sharpe  
25 July 1972

\* \* \*

Cambridge, Mass.  
July 27, 1972

[Paris]

John Sharpe

Dear John,

Libby has showed me a copy of your Cliques and All That. I believe it misses the essential political conception behind Moore's cliquism. Over the years Moore has articulated a competitive rather than a collective concept of leadership, in which people go up in the organization on the basis of personal triumphs. It is that which connects his counterposing himself to Foster and Kinder (two singularly easy comrades to work with) in Boston and his intervention in the IKD split over the head of the national leadership. His achievement orientation has also, many leading comrades believe, warped his judgment on the political closeness of Spartacus B-L and the possibility of winning them to Trotskyism. If no opportunities had

existed in Germany this year, Moore would have created them.

As to N.O. functioning, any comrade familiar with the N.O. could make a far better case about poor functioning than Moore. The tip-off that Moore's criticisms of the N.O. are of a cliquist character is that they are overwhelmingly complaints about servicing him. An objective, rather than cliquist, criticism of N.O. functioning would have been far less ego-centric.

Comradely,  
Joseph Seymour

\* \* \*

COMMENT ON SEYMOUR'S LETTER

--by John Sharpe

I feel--and have always felt--that Seymour's letter [of 27 July] supplements my "Cliques and All That" rather than standing opposed to it, and I am in essential agreement with the points he raises.

Moore's "competitive rather than collective" concept of leadership and his "achievement orientation" seem to me one of the main ways of substituting a political line for another without admitting it. It "replaces a political attitude with some other attitude." It is also, I might add, an attitude particularly rampant among academics, who must "publish or perish." My formulation suffers from abstractness, narrowness and from lack of reference to Cannon's excellent definition of cliques a propos of Abern: "ceaseless dissemination of gossip and complaints about the party regime; subordination of principled questions to organizational and personal considerations; unprincipled combinationism in every faction fight; and ideological treachery."

In the case of Moore, the path by which an "achievement orientation" leads to having to produce in order to excel, which leads to having to be 100% right all the time, is clear. As comrade Seymour states, this in turn leads to warped judgements by Moore, originally on Germany and then on a series of questions, in order to prove himself "right." Ultimately, it leads to deformations which, insofar as they oppose a consistent line, also tend toward a "coherent political line" counterposed to that of revolutionary Marxism.

The fundamental point which I was trying to make--that the significance of the "personal opinions" which are an integral part of cliquism lies in the fact that they tend to coalesce into (unavowed) political positions--remains the same. In the case of Moore, this political thrust emerged in a clear way over the question of Spartacus-BL, although the potential for its existence is shown in the cliquist functioning of Moore and Stuart in Boston in the preceding period.

--14 November 1972

LETTER TO GORDON FROM GOLDENFELD

4 August 1972  
San Francisco, CA

Liz Gordon  
New York, N.Y.

Dear Comrade Liz:

On page 13 of your document "Account of Recent Internal Developments" there are some points in the following paragraph which I believe to be inaccurate.

"Recent phone conversations between comrades in the center and in the Bay Area indicate that a local decision had been made to keep the fact of the Treiger defection from the SL ranks until a membership meeting was held, which meeting however was not scheduled until Saturday, 1 July. In a conversation with full CC member Comrade Gene Goldenfeld during the week, Robertson has discussed the problem of avoiding wild speculations and rumors in the branch but urged Goldenfeld to inform the membership during the week when he contacted individual members for the projected meeting. Comrade Sue Adams, the Bay Area organizer, spoke with Brosius stating she had not been consulted and that Goldenfeld and Cunningham had decided on the interim concealment policy by themselves."

First, on the basis of my conversation with yourself, Jim and Crawford early Monday morning (26 June) the Local Exec decided to schedule a local meeting on Tuesday evening, also deciding a concealment policy until the meeting. Later Monday I received a call from Dave C. in which he reported having just received a call from "New York" saying that our meeting should be postponed until Saturday (1 July) so that Tweet C. could be here to give a complete report. Dave then suggested continuing the policy of internal concealment because of the Local's problems with rampant subjectivity. I agreed. I immediately called Sue A., the Bay Area Organizer, but she was not home until later, at which time we consulted and agreed to the continued policy.

The sentence on my phone conversation with Robertson (Wednesday, 28 June) is accurate. However, several hours later in a conversation with Sue A. shortly after Brosius' call, she reported Brosius as saying to inform the membership about the Treiger events but not about Cunningham. As I could not see separating the two in discussion, I began presenting the facts and evaluation about both as I knew them to comrades, also seeking additional evidence. Wednesday evening I met with Jane M. and Dale R., later being de facto replaced in notifying comrades by Sheridan and Tweet C. on assignment by the PB and by my having to work over 12 hours Thursday.

I support the thrust of the PB's actions in handling the Treiger-Cunningham-Moore-etc. events and am in full solidarity with the faction recently formed in the PB on the basis of the basic documents of the SL, the Memorandum on Transformation adopted at the 1971 CC Plenum,



and the generally outstanding leadership of the present "regime" in implementing a revolutionary course for the Spartacist League nationally and internationally.

For a Leninist Party,

Gene Goldenfeld

cc: BASL

6 September 1972

SL, PB  
New York

Dear Comrades,

Cde. Stuart and I have decided to exercise the option offered by the PB to return to Europe "for pressing academic-career reasons," while carrying on the minority position against the recent course of the leadership. Since the possibility of a struggle for power is out of the question at the present time, we will submit our document and defend it at the National Conference. The reasons for our decision may be summarized as follows:

- 1) Scientific--to abandon the Marxist research which I have been engaged on for the last 1 1/2 years would only make sense in the case of pressing historical circumstances, and I believe it is obvious that the revolution is not around the corner.
- 2) Academic--while the scientific reason is in my estimation the decisive one, the question of 'career' also plays a role--it seems absurd to abandon a degree at the last moment, especially one which will enable me to perhaps support myself with a great deal of free time for political work.
- 3) Financial--if we decided to stay in the U.S., I would be subject to paying off substantial educational loans, which would necessitate a job the character of which would make substantial literary/international work impossible.

Considering the PB's suspicion of my "Pabloite functioning," I suggest that I use the available contacts in Europe to find out their positions, write documents which would be sent to N.Y. and then N.Y. could submit them to the various groupings. Of course, any instructions will be carried out to the best of my ability, and Cde. Stuart's.

Fraternally,

Moore  
co-signed--Stuart

enclosure.

\* \* \*

New York  
29 September 1972

W. Moore  
Germany

Dear Comrade Moore,

Your decision, noted in your letter of 6 September, to return to Germany for "personal, academic and career" reasons, although within the limits of the possibilities offered by the PB at the PB meeting which you attended of 15-16 July 1972, stands in opposition to the PB recommendation that you move to the center to take up inter-

national, editorial and literary work. Your decision explicitly contravenes the prerequisite that CC members place themselves at the disposal of the organization and be prepared to move anywhere, and is therefore tantamount to resignation as an alternate to the CC.

The PB therefore is compelled to demand your resignation as alternate to the CC. Moreover, as previously decided by the PB there can be no question of your representing the SL in Europe, including to Spartacus/BE. The option of a strictly personal return to Germany offered to you by the PB stipulated that you undertake no political work of any kind without specific prior authorization in each specific case.

Fraternally,

Liz Gordon  
for the PB

bcc: Sharpe

Mainz  
November 17, 1972

SL, PB  
New York

Dear Comrades,

Our assessment of the SL, based upon our experiences and thinking over the past few months, leave us with little desire to prolong the association, such as it is. We believe that the organization known as the SL allows for no political struggle for one's views, that 'getting along with Robertson' is the central criteria for membership, and we have no desire to get along with Robertson. Such a membership criteria (sometimes disguised under the rubric "party loyalty," which is an apolitical and fraudulent conception in and of itself) destroys any claim the SL might make to being a revolutionary organization.

In retrospect, our sole mistake in the SL was stifling, somewhat, our reactions to the leadership and thinking that we had to wait for a 'principled difference'--it is clear that the leadership of the SL is in itself a question of principle; we were naive to assume that principled functioning could be expected from unprincipled sectarians (of the Healy-Wohlforth variety).

In passing, we would like to point out for the benefit of SL minutes that the word 'renegade' specifically means class enemy, not Robertson enemy, unless he now believes that he is the whole class. So that you may be accurate, we have no intention of joining the Democratic party or giving information to the CIA.

As to our future plans, we will do our best to destroy the Robertson organization, which should not be very difficult, as we do not intend to emulate the Robertson-Gordon model and pursue revolution in the indolent fashion of dung-beetles. In this light, we want to state that the politics of our resignation will be brought to the attention of those SL comrades who, though basically honest, were broken. We feel that these comrades, as well as new recruits, having a subjective commitment to revolution, can be won--not through 'internal struggle' which the SL makes impossible, but through the conjunction of their own experiences in the SL and our work from the outside. We are developing a full-scale critique in collaboration with other comrades who resigned.

In closing, thank you for a unique learning experience.

Fraternally,

Moore, Stuart

P.S. To clear up any financial matters: any dues computed, especially considering our income, is miniscule compared to the money owed us for mailing in Europe undertaken at the direction of the leadership. (Repayment was promised in July, but is obviously not forthcoming). Further, any such dues can be deducted from the money owed us by ex-Central Committee member Victor V.

BREAK WITH VANGUARD NEWSLETTER[Far East]  
30 August 1972Cde. Edmond diTullio  
Oakland, California

Dear Ed,

...I hope the longshore data I mailed you will prove sufficient for an article. However, the past two months have allowed me enough time for serious study to compel me, exclusive of my profound personal esteem for your self and your political acumen, to sever my tenuous connection with VANGUARD NEWSLETTER.

...I had the chance to read and reread all the documents relevant to the Spartacist-Turner split, including the pamphlet SPARTACIST LEAGUE SPLIT and the series of pertinent SL discussion bulletins. In addition I have studied, with great care, fundamental Leninist/Trotskyist documents on organizational principles, included in THE FIRST FIVE YEARS OF THE C.I.: the WRITINGS 1933-34, 34-35; and in IN DEFENSE OF MARXISM.

My conclusions are:

a) that the 'divergences' between Turner and the leadership of the SL preceding the split were so negligible, and the SL's conduct throughout the discussions so well-balanced, that VNL's only reason for existence must be as a personal vehicle for Cde. Turner and as an "Anti-Spartacist League."

b) that although my own perspective does not presume immediate affiliation with SL, largely because of rather strong disagreements on at least one of their basic positions, I do not feel further affiliation with VNL, candidate or otherwise, would be in any way useful.

I must admit, too, an irrevocable distaste for Cde. Turner's reflex-action critique of surrealism and surrealists; the irreproachable historical fact remains that at the very darkest hour in the history of Bolshevism the surrealists were first to defend Lenin's own principles (I refer to André Breton's immediate and valiant denunciation of the Moscow Trials; to Benjamin Péret's responsibility as Fourth Int'l activist in Spain and Mexico, barely escaping death at the hands of the GPU on several occasions; I refer to Zavis Kalandra (leader of the Czech section of the FI in the postwar period and prominent surrealist sympathizer) and his martyrdom at the hands of the Stalinists in Prague in 1951; among other instances) speaks far better than I can or wish to for the class nature of surrealism and its adherents.

As soon as I return to S.F. I shall be at your service for discussion of the points outlined in this letter, should you consider such discussion worthwhile.

Yours fraternally,  
Stephen S.

P.S. I should add to the above historical references the fact that in the post-1952 period when Pablo, Mandel, and Frank had usurped control of the FI leadership, the surrealists in France were among the very few in that country to actively pursue the political principles upon which the FI was founded.

RESIGNATION FROM SL

.63

10/28/72  
Berkeley, California

To: BASL Organizer

Dear Comrade:

This letter records formally my oral statement of 10/21/72 expressing my desire to resign from the Spartacist League(USA).

My action is entirely personal: I have no theoretical, programmatic or strategic differences with the SL(USA). Moreover, I have no sympathies, political or personal, for any other organizations or groupings and absolutely no intentions to engage in any acts or associations detrimental to the party.

My resignation is based on an unwillingness and an inability to assume the responsibilities of a revolutionary. The commitment and self-discipline required of Bolsheviks cannot exist without a base of consciousness and determination. I lack that necessary determination to act and my contradictory situation was creating tendencies to distort and dilute my consciousness. The satisfaction of personal desires has become paramount and thus the extraordinary sacrifices demanded of revolutionaries are unacceptable.

This decision, seemingly abrupt and disjointed, is really that sudden qualitative transformation integral with and only made possible by a long and deeply quantitative process. It has developed on a conscious level for over a year, being well-defined last spring and close to resolution by September. At that point I discussed the subject with an appropriate comrade. Then at the BASL executive committee meeting of October 7 I expressed my general attitude and intentions fully and clearly. The immediate necessity of resolving my situation, though, was not realized.

However, for the reasons cited above and below, any prolongation of my membership would be unwise, so I am resigning sooner than was expected.

From the party's point of view my resignation seems necessary for the following reasons:

1. The party cannot accept pessimists, dilettantes, skeptics, etc. in its ranks as this would retard and misshape the development of theory and program and weaken the ability of the party to lead the class struggle;
2. This would also tend to demoralize the cadre, infecting the party with despair and opening it to the cancer of cliquism.
3. My participation in the formation of the party's line and the selection of its leadership thru this pre-conference period with no intention of accepting responsibility for the line and the party would be politically and personally dishonest.

I hope this letter sufficiently explains and motivates my action, and I request of the party that it accept my resignation as such.

Jeff B.

Enc: 1. All my copies of sensitive internal material; 2. A check for the week of 10/15/72 to 10/21/72; 3. Miscellaneous.

WHY WE DIDN'T JOIN THE WL/YS

The Buffalo Marxist Collective (BMC) is a group of 30 youth, primarily students, formed by the determination to break with class-collaborationist popular-front strategies and to aid in the formation of a Leninist party in the United States. We have recently entered into a period of fusion negotiations with the Revolutionary Communist Youth, youth section of the Spartacist League. During the past summer the BMC resolved to break with the circle spirit of its subjective Leninism, and its confused and ineffectual centrist practice through a study of Trotskyism and the historical development of the world Trotskyist movement.

Some of us had broken with the confrontation politics of the New Left, while others (in and around the Progressive Labor Party) had found themselves politically adrift after PL's ultra-left oscillation in the summer of '71, Road to Revolution III. Breaking with political infantilism from two directions, but without roots in the Trotskyist movement, we were easy pickings for the social-democratic charlatans of the National Caucus of Labor Committees, as 7 of our members split after sampling a little of Dr. Marcus's reformist cure-alls, the "common-interest program" for the "political working class" to "lick depression in a day." Our conscious rejection of the NCLC led up to intensive political contact with both the Workers League and the Spartacist League. Many of us, convinced that the International Committee (led by Gerry Healy's Socialist Labour League in Britain) represented the "historic continuation" of the Trotskyist movement, almost joined the WL. Yet, after protracted struggle with comrades of the RCY, we rejected the Workers League. Why? Their opportunist toadying to the labor bureaucracy, their abstention on the woman question and their cynical mystification of the dialectic to justify every error, every appetite and every capitulation, persuaded us that their proud "internationalism" must be hollow, without foundation, a form without content, a fake. We felt that it was not possible that a group with such profoundly anti-Marxist positions could, somehow, be right on the question of the Fourth International, and later examination of this did indeed coincide with the WL's cynical opportunism on other political issues.

We Talk With The Workers League

Unable then to transcend the historic left, we renewed our study of Marxism, not however as a collection of classic texts, but as the history of the Left Opposition and the Fourth International in its struggle to construct the vanguard party on the basis of the Transitional Program. After our first exposure to the Workers League, several of us went down to New York and spoke with Lucy St. John, raising in a private discussion collective doubts and criticisms about the nature of their work in the SSEU, their notorious support of the New York police strike and their abstention on the woman question. St. John's answers, however, were not particularly clarifying, but we felt at the time that this was not decisive, and were assured that it would all be "straightened out" in further discussion. All that counted, we were told, was our agreement that the IC represented the historic continuation of the Fourth International.

The magnet of the Transitional Program exerts a powerful attraction. The comrades of the BMC were drawn to the Workers League for precisely the reasons that propelled us a few weeks later into fusion discussions with the RCY. Therefore, although comrade Wohlforth's presentation at the WL's Arrow Park Educational was dull and uninteresting, reflecting a tendency to abstract methodology from the fight of the party for its program in the class we did not dwell on this. Although many of the comrades in the workshops seemed to be mechanically reciting the formulas which the presentation provided, we made on the whole a favorable report to the BMC expecting all our questions to be answered in forthcoming discussions. The dishonesty of Wohlforth's method and the "practical Trotskyism" of his trade union work were not yet apparent. And the Stalinism of his organizational practice had not yet emerged from dim existence and rumor. We arranged for a visit of comrades Wohlforth and St. John to Buffalo.

### Enter the SL/RCY

Since we had made a collective decision to thoroughly investigate the Trotskyist left we invited two members of SL/RCY to make a presentation. While at first we were hostile to the SL based on statements about SL "abstentionism" in the class struggle, we found that we could not defend political points that we advanced from the WL perspective. This was brought to a focus around the WL's "mass press." The Bulletin, the RCY argued, did not reflect the limited reality of the WL's work in the trade unions which was confined primarily to one white collar union. Most of the articles are written from the outside, many of them re-writes from the bourgeois press, while the centerfold features destined for the Bulletin pamphlet series are reserved for methodological profundities. To this conception of a "Bolshevik" press SL counterposed its own: They demonstrated the way in which Workers Vanguard was an organizing tool, directly related to the tactic of posing themselves as a pole of communist attraction in the trade unions on the basis of a full program. Workers Vanguard did not pretend to be the mass organ of a mass party. Things must be called by their right names. Rather, Workers Vanguard was mainly directed towards advanced workers with whom SL had contact through implantation in the trade unions, and towards ostensibly revolutionary organizations, students and intellectuals. Polemics were directed against other left tendencies SL intersected in its actual trade union work, work on campus and in political events on the left, and was thus connected with SL's Leninist perspective of regroupment through splits and fusions. The SL compared the Bulletin to PL's Challenge, pointing out that real mass work was the penetration of the working class through its most advanced layers, not tailing the class at its present level of consciousness. Trotsky's comments on communist press policy are very much to the point.

"What is a 'mass paper'? The question is not new. It can be said that the whole history of the revolutionary movement has been filled with discussions on the 'mass paper'. It is the elementary duty of a revolutionary organization to make its political newspaper as accessible as possible to the masses. This task cannot be effectively solved except as a function of the growth of the organization and its cadres who must pave the way to the masses for the newspaper--since it is



the class line.

### Labor Party

Two recent examples of "bad things turning into good things" are George Meany and I.W. Abel, formerly bad, now good. Joyfully touting Meany's and Abel's right-wing maneuvering vis-a-vis the Democratic Party, the Bulletin proclaims this to be genuine evidence of labor's imminent move towards political independence. Uncritically reporting Abel's remarks at the Democratic Convention, the WL enthuses over Abel's disgruntled chatter about a labor party, failing to add that these remarks were made in a nominating speech for Henry Jackson!

The methodological premise underlying this bureaucratic vanguardism is the conception that the forward movement of the class can push the Meanys and Abels in a revolutionary direction. This is a fundamental revision of the Leninist thesis that the bureaucracy must be overthrown in political struggle through the intervention of communists in the trade unions. It is, rather, typical of Pabloist methodology. As Marxists, we recognize the contradictory nature of the union bureaucracy. On the one hand, the bureaucrats are the conscious agents of the capitalist class in the labor movement; on the other hand, their base of power is the mass organizations of the working class, organizations built through years of militant struggles. The question of calling upon union bureaucrats to form a labor party, as the question of whether or not to extend critical support to a Labor Party or Communist Party electoral candidate, revolves around the question of making or breaking illusions in the working class about its "leadership". It was in this manner that Lenin explained "critical support," likening it to the way in which a rope supports a hanged man. If a left-talking bureaucrat with real influence in the rank and file has been paying lip service to the need for a labor party, we would try to expose him by calling upon him to act concretely on his words--i.e., initiate campaigns in other unions toward calling a congress of labor to construct its own party--all the while pointing out that we do not expect him to do it and publicizing his real record of betrayal of the ranks. To uncritically tail the actions of the most reactionary section of the union bureaucracy and to put leftist meanings into the words of Meany et al. is nothing but cynical maneuvering, treacherously bolstering the sagging credibility of these fossils in the eyes of the rank and file. If successful, the result is precisely the creation of new illusions, new false consciousness in the working class, rather than the breaking of illusions and the building of class, and socialist, consciousness among workers.

Thus the WL has given up any semblance of communist opposition in the unions to become yet another of many centrist and reformist groups competing for the role of left pressure group on the bureaucracy.

### Internationalism

And what of that much-vaunted internationalism of Wohlforth/Healy? The recent OCI-SLL split in Healy's "International" demon-

about politics, and that if we really wanted to be hard communists we would join the WL. We rejected the WL's anti-Marxist attitude toward political debate and clarification and their slanders about "discussion-group" behavior against the SL, whose trade union work is both politically principled and real, unlike the WL's. We subsequently broke off all relations with the WL.

### Dialectics

Wohlforth's claim to "historic continuity" and the assorted correctness of his "dialectical method" is loose talk--dangerous and disorienting. How is it that the WL/YS has supported the police strike, the Indian invasion of Pakistan, the Newton wing of the Black Panther Party, etc.? "Impressionists" and "empiricists" might ask: What is the "process" by which cops become workers, the Indian army becomes liberators and Huey Newton takes up Marxism (prior to taking up black capitalism)? Here is the answer: Dialectics. Congratulations, comrade Wohlforth! Fortunately, Lenin rejected this sort of rubbish:

"But the great Hegelian dialectics which Marxism made its own, having first turned it right side up, must never be confused with the vulgar trick of justifying the zig-zags of politicians who swing from the revolutionary to the opportunist wing of the party, with the vulgar habit of lumping together particular statements, and particular developmental factors, belonging to different stages of a single process. Genuine dialectics does not justify the errors of individuals, but studies the inevitable turns, proving that they were inevitable by a detailed study of the process of development in all its concreteness. One of the basic principles of dialectics is that there is no such thing as an abstract truth, truth is always concrete...And one more thing, the great Hegelian dialectics should never be confused with that vulgar worldly wisdom so well expressed by the Italian saying: *Mettere la coda dove non va il capo* (sticking in the tail where the head will not go through)."

("One Step Forward, Two Steps Back," Selected Works, Vol. I, p. 437)

For Lenin dialectics is more than a few impressions of disconnected aspects of development, but is a totalistic understanding of an object or a process "in all its sides, connections and mediations." Wohlforth's pronouncements about "developing the Marxist dialectic" represent a qualitative regression into the Joseph Stalin-Mao Tse-Tung school of dialectical hocus-pocus, whereby bureaucrats and Stalinist misleaders become "objectively revolutionary" since "objective conditions" that hover above the class struggle turn "bad things into good things" (as Mao so aptly put it).

Wohlforth is also proud of the fact that the "Workers League takes sides," as in the police strike and the India-Pakistan War. SL's Leninist position of revolutionary defeatism in regard to the Indian invasion of Bangladesh was labelled "abstentionist" by the Bulletin. When, however, SL/RCY raised the question of excluding the bourgeoisie at NPAC/SMC conferences, the WL has abstained on the vote. We believe in taking sides too, that is, picking the right side of

not enough, it is understood, to call a publication a 'mass paper' to have the masses accept it in reality. But quite often revolutionary impatience (which transforms itself easily into opportunist impatience) leads to this conclusion: The masses do not come because our ideas are too complicated and our slogans too advanced. It is therefore necessary to simplify our program, lighten our slogans--in short, to throw out the ballast. Basically this means: Our slogans must correspond not to the objective situation, not to the relation of classes, analyzed by the Marxist method, but must correspond to subjective appreciations (extremely superficial and inadequate) of what the 'masses' can or cannot accept. But what masses? The mass is not homogeneous. It develops. It feels the pressure of events. It will accept tomorrow what it will not accept today. Our cadres will blaze the trail with increasing success for our ideas and slogans which prove themselves correct, because they are confirmed by the march of events and not by subjective and personal appreciation."

("What Is a 'Mass Paper'?" Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1935-36, pp. 58-59)

After the SL/RCY comrades left, we called the WL offices in New York and told them that we had spoken with SL and were unable to answer SL's criticisms. When the WL delegation arrived, Wohlforth's first remark was that he was speaking to us under protest, and that after our discussions any further contact with SL would mean a break in our relations with them. Wohlforth refused to answer any of our questions about Bangladesh, women, Cuba and what we had come to believe was the reformist and disorienting nature of their work in the SSEU--forming an electoral bloc with a section of the union bureaucracy, after having previously characterized them as sellouts in the pages of the Bulletin. Refusing to deal with our questions, Wohlforth resorted to verbal intimidation and smokescreen arguments about "method". We were, he shrieked, nothing but a small circle of friends who "hated the working class" and were only interested in "picking" at the authority of the "Fourth International" (i.e., the IC). We replied that our reason for contacting the WL in the first place was precisely our desire to overcome the limitations of our localism, and we insisted that our questions were serious and legitimate. "Pick, pick, pick," Wohlforth answered. Did we agree with the IC on the '53 letter and the '63 reunification?--that was all that mattered. Being Marxists we rejected this merely documentary claim to represent the continuity of the Fourth International. We asked Wohlforth how his "correct" evaluation of '53 and '63 led dialectically to his position for instance, on the police strike.

From this point on, Wohlforth's only tactic was intimidation and slander, abandoning completely "Trotskyist" principle for Stalinist practice. As for women's liberation, screamed Wohlforth, "the working class hates faggots, women's libbers and hippies, and so do we!" The WL hates McGovern because he likes "faggots, women's libbers and hippies." We found this strange, since we hated McGovern because he is a representative of the ruling class. This tirade we felt was a reflection of, and a capitulation to, the most backward prejudices of the working class. Wohlforth argued that our attraction to the SL/RCY represented a petty-bourgeois desire to sit around and talk

strates the hollowness of this claim, proving the IC since Cannon's '53 Open Letter to be nothing more than a mutual non-aggression pact between national parties desperately clutching their "spheres of influence" and unable to wage a thoroughgoing international struggle against Pabloism. The IC (since the OCI split) has acknowledged the incompleteness of the 1953 split, done a 180-degree turn on their evaluation of Cannon, now arguing that Cannon's Open Letter was not a reflex of "American pragmatism" (their old position) but a great act of internationalism!

The SLL finds itself able to maintain its international credentials only through a combination of Stalinist-like hooliganism and active myth-making--such as Wohlforth's statements at a meeting with the BMC: "I loved that man Cannon, I loved him!" Wohlforth has never given the reason for the change from his 1965 position, when he stated: "We are not Cannonites. We do not want to return to Cannonism. We want the destruction of Cannonism." (Conversations with Wohlforth, Marxist Bulletin No. 3, part iv-1965. Published by Spartacist, 3rd session, 9 July 1965)

WL/YS: A Dead End  
Join The RCY!

To the comrades of the YS we say: You were recruited into a cynical and opportunist organization. Healy's and Wohlforth's "internationalist" pretensions notwithstanding, the WL/YS is the most deceitful of dead ends, irrevocably incapable of providing Leninist leadership for the working-class movement, a "Trotskyist" outsider having nothing in common with the Transitional Program of the Fourth International and the first four Congresses of the Communist International.

We, members of the Buffalo Marxist Collective, have consciously and definitively rejected the WL/YS and are presently engaged in discussions leading to fusion with the RCY. Unlike the WL which pretends to be leading the working class through get-rich-quick schemes like the "Labor Party Now" conference and has proved totally incapable of consistently upholding Leninist principles, the SL/RCY is constructing the nucleus of a mass vanguard party in the United States, and struggling for the Rebirth of the Fourth International through splits and fusions based on principled programmatic agreement. We have made a decision to be part of that struggle and we call on all serious revolutionaries in the YS to do the same.

--Buffalo Marxist Collective  
20 October 1972

[distributed to WL "Labor Party" conference]

THE LEFT-WING OF RACIST, ANTI-COMMUNIST UNIONISM

The declared purpose of this conference is to form an organization to work for a labor party. What is this labor party supposed to do? Socialists have traditionally called for a labor party to turn the power of the trade unions into a political fight against the misery and oppression caused by the capitalist system. Certainly among the main goals of a labor party in this country would be the destruction of American imperialism and ending the oppression of blacks and other minorities. But the racist, anti-communist AFL-CIO bureaucracy is a vicious enemy of that kind of labor party. The union bureaucracy supports the capitalist system not just because it endorses the Republican or Democratic parties in elections. Every day and in a thousand ways, the union bureaucracy supports capitalism by selling out strikes, by keeping blacks out of skilled jobs, by keeping women's wages less than men's for the same work, by working closely with the CIA to keep the unions in Asia, Africa and Latin America from fighting U.S. imperialism.

For an Anti-Communist "Labor" Party?

The Workers League (WL) Bulletin (24 July 1972) hailed Steelworkers' head I.W. Abel's talk of a labor party at the Democratic Party convention. What the Bulletin deliberately underplayed was that Abel's mention of a labor party was made in a nominating speech for Henry Jackson, a leader of the extreme anti-communist, militarist wing of the Democratic Party. The AFL-CIO bureaucracy's non-support to McGovern is not a step toward a labor party. It is a step toward Nixon. George Meany has continually attacked McGovern for being soft on communism. The AFL-CIO's so-called neutrality is back-handed support for that wing of the ruling class which wants to use pure military muscle in Vietnam instead of diplomatic maneuvering. If George Meany ran Henry Jackson as a "labor" party candidate on a campaign to cut off wheat shipments to the Soviet Union and bomb North Vietnam back into the stone age, would the Workers League support him? We can only assume the WL would.

Are the Cops Your Class Brothers?

The WL supports those forces that want to turn the unions into weapons against the black people. In 1970, the New York City cops' "union" went on strike to strengthen its power against politicians and juries they thought were being soft on black, Puerto Rican and student militants. If the cops had won that strike, they would have become a power unto themselves. They would have stepped up their terrorism against the black ghettos and their brutalization and murder of militants and radicals. And the WL enthusiastically supported that strike! Since then, the WL always supports the cops in the labor movement. At the last AFCSME convention, class-conscious unionists made a motion to throw out the cops' delegates, which included representatives of the Attica prison guards. And WL supporters voted against that motion! The WL insists that these racist murderers are part of the labor movement. What kind of "labor" party would the cops support?

The Labor Movement & The Equality of Women

One of the main goals of socialism and of the kind of labor party that we want is the equality of women, particularly working-class women. Not only doesn't the WL fight against the oppression of women, but they ridicule and insult anyone who talks about the equality of women. Writing about Bella Abzug and Gloria Steinem at the Democratic convention, the Bulletin (24 July 1972) called them "womens' libbies" and "the Fates." The WL is not attacking Abzug and Steinem for the right reasons--because these servants of capitalism want to tie the fight for the equality of women to the capitalist parties and to tokenism. No, the WL is attacking them just because they are women talking about the rights of women. To call Bella Abzug and Gloria Steinem "the Fates" and "womens' libbies" is no different than calling Jesse Jackson and Basil Patterson "sambos" or "black libbies."

Toward a Class Struggle Labor Party!  
Throw Out the Union Bureaucracy!

The Workers League abandons the most elementary socialist principles by pretending that we can build a labor party on the basis of the racist, anti-communist union bureaucrats. The Workers League is calling for a "labor" party with reactionary politics--with George Meany's politics. But we don't want that kind of labor party. We want a labor party that will support the working people abroad in their struggle against American imperialism. We want a labor party that will struggle against the oppression of blacks and Spanish-speaking minorities. We want a labor party that will fight for equal rights for women. And to build that kind of labor party, the existing union bureaucracy must be destroyed--both its openly reactionary Meany wing and its liberal Woodcock-Wurf wing. There is no way to build a labor party that will fight for the real interests of the working class and of all the oppressed except through the hard fight for a class-struggle leadership in the unions.

SPARTACIST LEAGUE/REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST YOUTH

21 October 1972

## RESIGNATION FROM THE LENINIST FACTION OF THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY

October 29, 1972

Central Committee  
 Leninist Faction  
 Boston, Massachusetts

Dear Comrades:

The recent developments in the political direction of the LF are not encouraging and we are particularly concerned over the break in fusion discussions with the Spartacist League. As reported in Leninist Faction Report #17 the reasons are as follows:

...SL broke off all discussions with the Leninist Faction at this time on the grounds that the LF was not really interested in fusion and was playing games ("proof" of this was our maintaining that we could be in a common organization with SL despite our position on democratic centralism and our maintaining that VNL, SL and the LF could be in a common organization).

--LFR, 10/15/72, p. 2

We should briefly look at both these issues, democratic centralism and a three-way fusion with the SL, LF and VNL. What has become ever so clear since the Ashtabula Convention, as illustrated by Comrade Paul Abbot in his document, "Party, Class, and Consciousness," is that the unifying conception behind these separate propositions is precisely the misconstrued relation of the vanguard to the class.

First, democratic centralism. The point in conflict here is that the LF holds the position that minorities have the right to publish their views in the public press. Comrade Barbara G.'s document does stipulate that this right is to be under the supervision of the CC but this, in itself, is a contradiction. A right that can be monitored by the CC ceases to be a right and may or may not become a norm. The right of proportional representation is a right of minorities, and this right is not governed by the discretion of the CC. It is a right, pure and simple; there is no discussion, etc. If the minority has the required number of delegates they get a seat(s) on the national bodies.

In practice the first issue of the LF's press could contain three articles on trade union functioning, two on the Russian question and possibly three on the International question. The CC would of course attempt to regulate this but which minority positions would be left out? Would this not violate their rights? In short this process could easily turn into a factional football which could seriously endanger the unity of action that is so necessary for a vanguard party.

The petty-bourgeois opposition in our party demonstrates its hostility to Bolshevik organization by its demand that the

minority be granted the right to transform the press into a discussion organ for diametrically opposite programs. By that method it would take the control of the press out of the hands of the National Committee and subordinate it to any temporary, anarchistic combination which can make itself heard at the moment.

--[James P. Cannon,] Struggle for a Proletarian Party, p. 234

When the opposition in the 1940 SWP fight did not win the right to publish their positions in the party press they then demanded their own journal. This quote is not used to link the present LF policy as leading in this direction but to show how this right can easily destroy the purpose of the party press. Certainly on occasions both sides of an issue will or should be presented (e.g., New International, 1940, carried the major documents of both sides on the Russian question) but this should not be the norm and never become a right.

What is at issue here is the 60-year experience since Lenin's final defense of "public criticism." That this is so, one need only examine Comrade G.'s document, "Democratic Centralism," adopted at the Ashtabula Convention. In a concrete description of Lenin's organizational principles up to 1912, Comrade G. shows convincingly that Lenin insisted on public debate within the party press. But 1912 appears as a watershed. After the actual foundation of the Bolshevik Party, she finds eclectically only episodes where a minority view was presented to the public as a whole. The April Theses are cited as an example, along with permission for Bukharin to speak as a member of the Left Communists. Virtually in every case cited, however, it becomes clear on further examination, that the Party would tolerate appeals to the support of the working class only when such views could not be contained internally or when the issues themselves constituted "split issues" (e.g., the April Theses).

The peculiarity of the historical circumstances before 1912 in Russia was underscored by Trotsky when he discusses Shachtman's "historical precedents" for public criticism: "In the Bolshevik Party the opposition had its own public papers, etc. He forgets only that the Party at that time had hundreds of thousands of members, that the discussion had as its task to reach these hundreds of thousands and to convince them. Under such conditions it was not easy to confine the discussion to internal circles....The American Party has only a comparatively small number of members, the discussion was and is more than abundant. The demarcation lines seem to be firm enough, at least for the next period. Under such conditions for the opposition to have their own public paper or magazine is a means not to convince the Party but to appeal against the Party to the external world." (In Defense of Marxism, p. 161) If the LF leadership sees our current circumstance as parallel to those of the early Bolsheviks, one can only lament such quixotic fantasies.



"But," it will be objected, "no one is proposing separate public papers, but only a separate column for minorities under the common party paper. Have we not already explicitly rejected along with Lenin, separate papers?"

Separate columns, however, and separate papers are only a formal distinction. In both cases the attempt is for the minority to seek a litigation before the court of bourgeois public opinion against the party. We can concretize what Trotsky means by "...the opposition has its public papers, etc." when we remember what Trotsky proposed as mutual guarantees for any future minority in the SWP (In Defense of Marxism, p. 101):

"(1) No prohibition of factions; (2) no other restriction on factional activity than those dictated by the necessity for common action; (3) the official publications must represent, of course(!), the line established by the new convention; (4) the future minority can have, if it wishes, an internal bulletin destined for party members, or a common discussion bulletin with the majority."

Notice in passing that Trotsky insists the only restrictions on factional activities should be those "dictated by the necessity for common action..." Here, Comrade G. would nod her approval, but not with what follows: "The official publications must represent, of course, the line established by the new convention." Are we not justified in concluding that it is precisely public debate in the Party press which is conceived as an obstacle to common action?

Here we touch upon the crucial premise behind the theory of public criticism. When the Party discusses theory it is "creative," a maximum of debate and disunity before the public, but when it faces a common action before that public, it "closes its fist."

A closed fist becomes a mere slap, however, if we suppose that theory can be separated so neatly from action. We may cite Cannon's legitimate concern here for the costs to the whole Party if Shachtman and Burnham were allowed to turn the Party's press into an open discussion bulletin. "Incidentally, all comrades who are doing serious work in the mass movement can understand how the agitational value of the Appeal will be destroyed if it is converted into a discussion organ at the very moment we are undertaking to defend the Soviet Union against the whole world, including Stalin. It must be pointed out that the campaign of the Appeal in defense of the Soviet Union is an action..."

Cannon, perhaps, was overly anxious to conclude the discussion over the Russian question, but on the other hand, we must apply the dictum to Cannon that Marx applied to philosophy--the democratic centralism of Cannon must be realized before it can be transcended. We must incorporate into our conception of democratic centralism the truth that theory and program is an intervention into reality. The Party's program guides its action and a contradictory public program necessarily leads to contradictory actions.

We stress necessarily, for a minority would not feel constrained to demand public columns unless it felt the pressure of immediate

actions bearing down upon it. It is precisely in cases where the disputed Party positions directly affect the activity of the Party that the minority will consider the differences significant enough to warrant debate over the heads of the Party majority.

The separation between the theory and practice becomes all the more catastrophic on an international level, however. What is "theoretical" to one national section becomes an activity to another section. If we concede to the national sections the right to public criticism of the international majority we are propelled along the course toward a federated conception of the International.

We must be clear on the significance of the Leninist Faction's Menshevik backsliding on the matter of democratic centralism. If we designate as principled questions those questions which are life-and-death to the vanguard party, then surely the relation of the Party's program to the class it represents is a "principled" question. When theory becomes separated from practice; when the proletariat as it is can be appealed to against the vanguard (the proletariat as it will become), then we are surrendering the vanguard to the empirical conditions of the ideological rule of the bourgeoisie. What other explanation can we offer for Comrade Phil P.'s repeated emphasis that "the disputes of the Party are the disputes of the class"?

The second principled question at issue here is whether or not the SL, LF and VNL can be in the same organization, or more precisely can VNL and SL fuse. We think that the SL is correct in asserting that they cannot be in the same organization as VNL. We also believe this to be the official position of the LF, one which the CC ignored. To completely understand this we must return to the August 1972 Ash-tabula Convention, which has important ramifications for the LF-SL fusion discussions. We will try to quickly deal with organizational aspects so as to get on to the more important political ones.

Despite the fact that Comrade Phil P. presented an amendment on extending discussions to VNL it was never implied that a three-way fusion was even remotely possible. In addition, a serious VNL fusion perspective was never presented by the Minneapolis comrades who appear to be in general agreement with VNL. But let us look closely at the wording of this amendment as their subsequent actions in the SL talks contradict the thrust of this:

...it is highly unlikely that we will continue discussing with both organizations for a lengthy period. The fact is that both organizations claim that there are fundamental reasons for their split. If we decide that is the case, we will take sides. If we decide that is not the case, then we must decide which organization affords the best opportunities for building the Trotskyist party, or whether we would be better off continuing to build our independent organization. (our emphasis)

--Amendment to Perspectives Document on Vanguard Newsletter  
by Phil P.

This statement does not imply that a three-way fusion is possible. This view was concretized by a motion by Rich G. which failed.

From the Convention Minutes:

Motion by Rich G. "That the LF, like the SL, holds that there is no political basis for the existence of the VNL and the SL as two separate organizations."

Voting on Perspectives Documents:

I) Rich G.'s motion on VNL/SL.  
For: 6      Against: 13      Abstain: 7      Lost

One must ask where is the justification for presenting or defending the notion that SL, LF and VNL can be in the same organization. It is not from the Ashtabula Convention as this decision confirms the fact that formally the LF agrees with SL. The convention did not decide which organization was correct but it did decide that a three-way fusion was not in the realm of possibility. But the political arguments bear out this organizational conclusion and do in fact shed light on which organization is the principled one. That the LF CC put this proposal before the SL and continued to fight for it leaves us no conclusion to draw but that it is a totally unserious proposal. Did the LF leadership intend merely to wield VNL as an ax to chop off fusion discussions with SL?

Comrade Turner's tendency originated in an unprincipled bloc with the Kay Ellens faction inside the SL. This theme, one of blocs to make organizational gains, runs rampant in VNL. Many incidents have been discussed, Sherwood, Fender, Letter to Healy, etc. and while any one of these incidents taken by itself may not prove conclusively the opportunist streak that runs through VNL all of these incidents taken collectively do. They gloss over our differences on the trade union program (a principled difference); conveniently they agree with the majority position on Democratic Centralism. Overall, the VNL group is nothing more than a microscopic OCI-SLL bloc, certainly smaller, but nonetheless just as rotten.

But the LF CC is not unaware of this and had this to say in the most recent Faction Report:

...VNL still maintains that it can be in a common organization with us even though we would not have their trade union program. VNL also gives full support to the trade union document written by Fred and Steve, and not to the document of the majority. We discussed Turner's letter to Healy. Turner tried to explain it by saying that the letter clearly indicated he could not be in a common organization with WL. We felt the letter in no way indicated this--if it was meant to indicate this, it was entirely too soft. In general, VNL is pushing for immediate fusion, but we would agree only to further discussions. Our greatest criticism of VNL is their accomodationism, ranging from CRFC work to Turner's letter to Healy to their relations with us (they seem to agree with us too quickly on most questions).

--LFR #17, 10/15/72, p. 1

An organization must be judged not only by what it says, but also by what it does. On the next page of the very same report cited above we read:

At our next meeting with VNL, the CC will propose that in order to learn more about VNL, we begin working with them in the areas where this is possible (perhaps joint interventions).

--LFR #17, p. 2

Despite the fact that this report claims that this is not a proposal for fusion with VNL we can only see the logic of this leading the faction in this direction. The LF is no longer, and perhaps never was, a homogeneous political tendency. The centrifugal forces exerted by the now three or four different tendencies within the faction will soon tear it apart flinging the pieces in the direction of VNL and independent existence. The emergence of the state capitalist position will either drive the faction in the direction of VNL or result in not one independent organization but two.

We find none of these alternatives as acceptable. We have felt that the faction was on a fusion course with the Spartacist League and openly advocated such an action. We felt the D.C.-Oakland split was premature and the decision to discuss with VNL did not definitively represent a movement away from the SL.

We emphasize the fundamental character of the disputes over democratic centralism and VNL. The notion that contradictory positions can be presented to the working class reveals a diletante's conception of theory. A sign of "creativity" in a Leninist Party is on the contrary a homogeneous understanding of its tasks, and as a consequence the creation of a new consciousness in the proletariat. From this perspective it follows that when the LF accepted a Shachtmanite model of party building, the LF turned its face toward the past and not toward the future; it codified itself as a centrist tendency and counterposed itself to the revolutionary politics of the Spartacist League. The same centrist opportunism reveals itself in the policy of peaceful coexistence toward the VNL. We have no other alternative at this time but to resign from the Leninist Faction.

Fraternally,

Dave E., Boston  
Pam E., Boston  
Sam H., Milwaukee  
Tom T., Milwaukee

RESIGNATION FROM THE  
SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY/YOUNG SOCIALIST ALLIANCE

November 9, 1972

[SWP Political Committee  
New York, New York]

Dear Comrades:

I hereby resign my membership in the SWP/YSA with the intention of joining the Spartacist League/Revolutionary Communist Youth, whose program and practice represent, I believe, the historic continuation of Trotskyism in this country. It has become clear to me that the many errors in the program of the SWP have arisen not as isolated mistakes, but as consistent, predictable manifestations of a profound revision of Trotskyist theory.

The SWP today devotes the bulk of its resources to intervention through its front organizations in the various "mass movements for social change." Such a classless "program for revolution" is mere reformism.

In the women's liberation movement, for example, the SWP neglects agitational efforts around the needs of working class women, e.g., free 24-hour childcare centers, free abortion and contraception, equal pay for equal work, equal access to all job categories, in favor of a campaign for the repeal of anti-abortion laws.

Similarly, in the Black movement, instead of attempting to unite Black and white workers around the demands of the transitional program, the SWP treats the Black population of the United States as a separate nation--a nation bereft of unified geographic territory, and more importantly, of any means of production--and calls for the formation of a Black party in support of "Black nationalism." Instead of striving to lead Black and white workers against their common enemy, (exclusively white) bourgeoisie, the SWP calls for "Black control of the Black community," i.e., for Black control of whatever miserable dwellings, schools and petty-bourgeois enterprises the racist capitalist class can spare. In short, the SWP adopts an anti-Leninist conception of nationalism.

In the anti-war movement, the SWP directs its appeals chiefly to students, contenting itself with occasional drives for the endorsements of labor bureaucrats. Moreover, to avoid ruffling any feathers among the petty-bourgeois membership of its anti-war front organizations, the SWP eschews the call for victory to the Vietnamese revolution and so dilutes its anti-war program that bourgeois politicians like Vance Hartke find it quite acceptable. In brief, the SWP follows a policy of liquidation into the "mass movements" on a classless program, a policy stemming from the party's loss of confidence in the revolutionary potential of the working class.

-2-

The SWP's turn to the "mass movements" and its abstention from the task of constructing a Leninist vanguard party rooted in the working class amount in practice to a denial of the need for such a party. Thus, the SWP embraces the same Pabloist error that Cannon denounced in 1953, i.e., the revisionist belief that the creation of healthy workers states no longer requires a working class party with a Trotskyist program.

The party's approach to the Cuban revolution clearly illustrates this revision. Although no working class party existed (indeed, the working class played no role in the political revolution), although Castro, upon consolidating his power, smashed the trade unions and arrested Trotskyists, denouncing Trotskyism as counter-revolutionary, the SWP for years pointed to the Cuban experience as a model revolution. Extraordinary imperialist pressure forced Castro, like Mao, to institute socialist property relations. Had objective circumstances been different, our petty-bourgeois "revolutionary" might readily have entered into a coalition with the nationalist bourgeoisie, as did Ben Bella in Algeria. Both examples demonstrate that only a working class party with a Trotskyist program can insure the formation of a healthy workers state. This detail that the party overlooked in Cuba and Algeria, it overlooks today while tail-ending the petty-bourgeois feminists, nationalists and anti-war "activists."

I have not, in this letter, attempted to produce a scientific treatise on the nature of the SWP and the history of its degeneration. Those finding my allegations somewhat sketchy would do well to investigate the history of the party, if only in an attempt to disprove my assertions. The Trotskyist movement needs serious cadre; it cannot afford to lose them through the demoralizing and miseducating activities of the SWP.

Fraternally,

Dave J.  
[New York]

CIRCULAR FROM BOSTON I.S.

Nov. 1, 1972

Dear Comrades:

The imperialist character of the impending "peace" settlement for Vietnam requires that all who profess to be socialists unite in action to expose this betrayal of the Vietnamese revolution. We therefore propose that a joint public meeting be held, each group under its own banner, with the following points of agreement to provide the principled basis for such a meeting.

1. No imperialist deals--no imperialist commissions.
2. Complete, immediate, and unconditional withdrawal of US troops--disarm the ARVN.
3. For the military support of the NLF insofar as it defends the Vietnamese people from imperialist forces.
4. Immediate release of all war and political prisoners.
5. For the immediate expulsion of the US puppets from the coalition government or authority.
6. For full democratic rights of the Vietnamese people.
7. Workers' control of production--land to the peasants.
8. Arm the workers and peasants --for workers' and peasants' defense guards to defend their organizations and their land.
9. No political support to the coalition government or the PRG--for a workers' and peasants' government.

International Socialists  
Boston, Mass.

REPLY TO BOSTON IS (EX-COMMUNIST TENDENCY OF SWP)

Spartacist League  
Cambridge, Mass.

13 November 1972

International Socialists  
Boston, Mass.

Dear Comrades:

While the Spartacist League completely concurs that the impending "peace" settlement is indeed a gross betrayal of the Vietnamese revolution, we cannot agree to your proposal for a united front public meeting. Your "nine points of agreement" which are to constitute "the principled basis for such a meeting" are in fact a call for a propaganda bloc around the question of the Vietnamese "peace" settlement. As the "nine points of agreement" proposed by the comrades of I.S. represent at once an adaptation to social patriotism and the Vietnamese Stalinists, are full of "third camp" vacillations, and fundamentally opposed to the internationalist, Trotskyist programmatic thrust of the Spartacist League, it would be deeply unprincipled for us to enter into such a bloc.

Instead, to the comrades of International Socialists we propose a bloc for practical action to oppose this sellout by the Stalinists of the workers and peasants of Vietnam to U.S. imperialism. We propose that on the upcoming demonstration on November 18 against the Vietnam War we march separately, each under our own banners in a contingent politically based upon the demands of:

1. Immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all U.S. troops from S.E. Asia.
2. Unconditional exclusion of the bourgeoisie and its political representatives from the anti-war movement.
3. For the victory of the Vietnamese Revolution! Defeat to U.S. Imperialism! No Coalition Government!

The "nine points" you propose to us vacillate on these fundamental class issues in such a way as to be politically unacceptable as the basis for a united front.

Most fundamentally, the International Socialists have an obligation to clarify their use of the term imperialist. Nowhere have you repudiated your historic position that Stalinism is a new form of class rule, that there is "Stalinist imperialism" as well as the imperialism of the bourgeoisie, and that politically both are equally reactionary. Nowhere have you rejected your historic position of refusing unconditional military defense of the deformed workers' states against the capitalist states. In the case of Vietnam you have timidly given military support to the struggles of the NLF against U.S. imperialism and its ARVN puppets by slurring over the social revolution taking place in southern Vietnam, by slurring over the fact that a deformed workers state is under attack by U.S. imper-



ialism. Instead, along with the Vietnamese Stalinists, you have emphasized that the struggle in Vietnam is one for "self-determination." Comrades, what is your position? Your state capitalist and/or bureaucratic collectivist theories of Stalinism would compel you to label the Vietnamese Stalinists as "imperialists" or puppets of Soviet and/or Chinese "imperialism" and would compel you to be neutral if you took your political conceptions seriously. Where do you stand?

Your "nine points" are filled with political evasions and "third camp" vacillations. You call "for the military support of the NLF insofar as it defends the Vietnamese people from imperialist forces." Do the imperialist forces include those of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV)? Or, do you call "for military support" in any manner of the DRV or its armed forces? Do the "Vietnamese people" include only those residing in the southern half of Vietnam? Your position is a "third camp" evasion of a firm stand on this fundamental question. Only the unconditional military victory of the NLF/DRV over U.S. imperialism can open the road to the victory of the Vietnamese revolution!

Marxists are irreconcilably opposed to the formation of any coalition government with the bourgeoisie, which would necessarily betray the revolutionary struggle and aspirations of the Vietnamese workers and peasants. The Spartacist League calls upon the Vietnamese Stalinists to break with class-collaboration and seize the power in its own name. We call for the political and economic unity of all of South East Asia under the dictatorship of the proletariat! All Indochina Must Go Communist! We call upon the Stalinist bureaucracies running the various deformed workers states to give real military aid to the Vietnamese revolution. We say to the workers of these states: "The Stalinist bureaucracies are an obstacle to international communist unity against imperialism, an obstacle to the victory of the Vietnamese revolution! Victory of the workers and peasants in Vietnam, defense of the social conquests embodied in the deformed workers states requires political revolution to oust these bureaucrats! This is the way forward."

In contrast, you have nothing to say to the Vietnamese workers and peasants, to the Soviet and Chinese working masses. You simply tail the maximal demand of the Vietnamese Stalinists in your call for "immediate expulsion of U.S. puppets from the coalition government." To tack on "no political support to the coalition government" does not help the matter. You implicitly accept the political division of North and South Vietnam. Your demands imply an impulse to pressure a treacherous popular front formation instead of calling for a clear break with the class enemy.

Indeed, we need only look at the International Socialists' performance in the popular front National Peace Action Coalition (NPAC) to get an idea of what you mean by "no political support to the coalition government." In gross opportunism you entered the NPAC Pop Front as the "Militant Action Caucus," operating as a "left" pressure group. You solidarized with the ex-Trotskyist SWP in their physical exclusion of the Spartacist League and the Progressive Labor Party from the July 1971 NPAC meeting for protesting the presence of the bourgeois politician Sen. Vance Hartke on the platform.

Comrades, in the absence of a call for a clear break with the bourgeoisie the call for the "Workers and Peasants Government" becomes transformed into nothing more than a figleaf for an opportunist adaptation to a reformist popular front government!

The demand for "immediate release of all war and political prisoners" must be placed in a class context. The correct demand is for the immediate release of all military and political prisoners held by the Saigon government and the U.S. military. The release of U.S. prisoners must be made contingent upon the total withdrawal of all U.S. forces. A blanket call for the immediate release of all prisoners constitutes an adaptation to social patriotism.

The demands for "full democratic rights of the Vietnamese people" and workers' control of production--land to the peasants" can only be met, according to the Trotskyist conception of Permanent Revolution by a socialist revolution leading to the dictatorship of the proletariat supported by the peasantry. Likewise the demand for "workers' and peasants' defense guards to defend their organizations and their land" is meaningless without the demand for socialist revolution. Who will arm the workers and peasants, and for what political ends? Does the IS call upon the Soviet and Maoist bureaucracies to give real military aid to the DRV/NLF, to lift the blockade Haiphong? How can the workers and peasants "defend their organizations and their land" without ultimately seizing power? The IS has no answer.

We reiterate: your "nine points" show a cowardly vacillation and opportunism on the most basic issues of the Indochinese struggle. For us to accept your proposal would commit us to a fundamental betrayal of the working class internationally, and especially the workers and peasants of Indochina. For us to accept your proposal for a propaganda bloc on these "nine points" would require us to drag the irreproachable red banner of Trotskyism through the fetid centrist swamp of "third camp" social patriotism.

We are always willing to engage in principled united fronts and direct your attention to our proposal for November 18. But we will never accede to a propaganda bloc based on the opportunist politics of the IS.

Fraternally,  
Spartacist League,  
Boston Local

New York  
21 November 1972

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Malcolm Kaufman  
Secretary, CRFC

Brother Kaufman,

Thank you for your letter of 19 October to which we are here-with replying. Yes, we think you have avoided a confrontation on the question of your associate David Fender's precipitating police intervention into the Workers League St. Louis meeting. In the pages of the September issue of Workers Vanguard we publicly accepted your challenge to put to the test the truthfulness of this as-  
sertion.

A month then passed and we did not hear from you until after we sent Turner/Fender a prodding letter. At that point Turner de-  
clared that it was not you people but we who were not only evading the question but also we who had demanded a public ventilation of the issue in the first place, when he wrote to us about "your 'challenge'." Certainly you are making common cause with your bloc partners regarding Fender's conduct, Bro. Kaufman. We are inter-  
ested to find out if it is limitless. Will you do the small thing, for example, of acknowledging to us that Turner is wrong in ascri-  
bing to us the initial demand for a public confrontation over the issue? This is a simple thing--you yourself in your letter to us of 10 July made the initial challenge to us. The record is there in black and white. If such a simple admission cannot be wrung from you, then we will know where we stand toward you as a pre-  
sumed socialist.

The point about who challenged whom, in addition to the ele-  
mentary issue of honesty involved, also has significance as to who should exert themselves in seeking public redress. Fender and his co-thinkers and friends claim he is the injured party. Therefore the burden presumably is on you people in your presumed efforts to "clear his name."

We are of course satisfied as to the role of Fender in St. Louis. Numerous witnesses including four SL supporters watched his performance. We have stated in the public press what we saw. Tur-  
ner/Fender and you declare this is a lie and a defaming slander and a denial of Fender's morality as a Marxian socialist. Very well, this is a matter for a commission of inquiry into the facts. In general a debate such as the "public forum" which you originally demanded necessarily centers on opinions, and that is not the issue here. Moreover what opinions? The SL has opinions, but the CRFC presumably has opinions ranging from nominal Trotskyism to "true DeLeonism." (Is the left Maoist, Ross, still in your bloc?)

The situation is further complicated by the lines of retreat which you and your associates seem to be opening up. Turner/Fender supporters in New York have been loudly declaring that there was nothing wrong in principle with entering the Workers League meeting under police protection. This leaves us perplexed, then, as to why you see anything wrong with invoking the cops' protection in the

first place. And in your letter to which we are replying you announce your intention to "expose the hypocrisy of the SL in its own relations with the police" (a wanton, self-serving lie on your part) which suggests that after all you believe everybody is a little bit of a cop/cop-lover so why jump on "poor Fender."

Having said all this, nonetheless, for the sake of preserving our own good reputation for meticulous truthfulness, we are prepared to present our evidence--witnesses and depositions--to any impartial commission of inquiry that you care to convene and to assist you in establishing such a commission by offering suggestions as to individuals who might serve and who are known to us as of good repute in the socialist and labor movements.

Fraternally,

James Robertson  
SL/U.S.

P.S. The November VNL states that we are guilty of the "complete omission" of your letter to us of 19 October which we allegedly received "well before the deadline" in our November WV coverage of our exchange of correspondence. Well we close the issue around the 20th of the month (except for big stories like the Vietnam draft treaty--do you think your letter is of that calibre?). Moreover, your letter is date-stamped by us as received on 26 October! Don't you really have anything to say about Turner's even trivially malicious conduct?