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June 18, 1975

ON DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISM - (S.F.- L.A.) May 26, 1975

For a Bolshevik, Politics and organizations are not separate areas of life which have nothing or little to do with each other. Political changes must have organizational consequences; organizational changes must have political consequences. A true Bolshevik is highly politically conscious and highly disciplined and steeled for combat. (High political consciousness without discipline and readiness for combat leads to dilettantism and politics as a hobby; high discipline and readiness for combat without high political consciousness leads to the spirit of a bourgeois army where soldiers obey without fully understanding what they are doing.) Engaging in politics as if it were a hobby is commonly found among coffee-house "intellectuals" and the university "radical chic". Engaging in politics as if one were in a bourgeois army is common among practically all groups of the "hard" left, both "Trotskyist" and Stalinist-Maoist. One is unserious and the other is obedient; one is faddish and the other is hack. One unavoidably leads to the cliquism of the self-styled intellectual elite. The other unavoidably leads to the cliquism of the "revolutionary" political machine- a would be bureaucracy except that it lacks a significant material or mass base.

Cliquism of all political shades always means that those of more influence or prestige develop a network of clients among the ones who are less influential but eventually hope to become more so. The network is then the basis for the mutual exchange of political services which thus becomes the embryo of a small or big political machine. The clique and potential machine develops an internal cohesion based on keeping information away from the world outside the clique. This makes the clique more immune to criticism since fewer people are in the know. But does this make the clique more efficient since it cannot concentrate on getting things done rather than answering critics? Not at all-- the clique gets sloppier and less efficient since unavoidably an "inside" chumminess develops where one set of flaws of one member of the clique is cancelled out by another set of flaws of another member of the clique and they thus remain good friends in mutual forgiveness and clique tolerance, shielded from potentially unfriendly interlopers. Most striking of all, this is usually an unconscious process of which the actors themselves are unaware.

The world of V.I. Lenin and the Bolshevik party (before its degeneration) was miles away from clique spirit. A rigid and even ruthless separation of political and personal considerations. A systematic approach to all questions which sometimes makes us wonder why Lenin wrote books to answer people we have not even heard about (yes, including books on philosophy and Hegel!!) As a rule, the frontal political confrontation with opponents inside and outside the party as opposed to the organizational manoeuvres of "lining up" the right number of people in the right places. The encouragement and recognition of the independent minded revolutionary; no wonder that Trotsky describes the degeneration of

the Bolshevik party in terms of the dissolution of "the revolutionary vanguard in raw human material, without experience, without independence, and yet with the old habit of submitting to the authorities." (The Revolution Betrayed, pp. 97-98). Independent-minded revolutionaries feel no need to be apologetic or make humble disclaimers when criticizing the leadership; nor do they feel forced to adopt a "me-too" tone of voice. Nor does the leadership of an organization of independent-minded revolutionaries expect or want this either. A steeled combat fighter in the outside does not put on another hat inside the organization when he/she then puts on his/her hands when addressing the leadership.

This collectivity of revolutionaries is led by the motto of freedom of criticism-unity in action. This means a cycle of discussion-united action-discussion where the leadership and the membership are held accountable on the nature and quality of their political performance. Evaluation after performance ensures that those who disagree know that when all is finished they will have the opportunity to argue their case for the benefit of a better performance in the future. ~~A secure leadership will want this evaluation even more.~~ These are some of the principles guiding Bolshevik policy. In practice, there were "deviations" from these guidelines. But two things should be said about such "deviations" first of all, they deviated in both opposite directions-excessive centralism as well as excessive democratism (e.g. Kamenev and Zinoviev revealing plans of the insurrection to the press and getting away with it in spite of Lenin's quite justified bitter complaints). Secondly, it is necessary to make a key distinction: while it is clear that as a matter of fact in the life of Lenin or in that of any other revolutionary leader, violations of the democratic safeguards of a party will occur, it is quite a different matter to convert necessity into virtue and make such "deviations" a prescriptive rule (which is precisely what some who should know better do- see Tony Cliff's "Lenin and the revolutionary Party" IS # 58, May 1973).

In sum, undegenerated Bolshevism was a dialectical synthesis of what liberals, anarchists, social democrats, stalinists and "trotskyist" sectarians regard as incompatible and irreconcilable entities: freedom and discipline, effectiveness and democracy, theoretical seriousness and practical relevance. And, not surprisingly for a dialectician, in aiming for one of these two choices they each ultimately end up achieving neither true freedom or discipline, effectiveness or democracy, theoretical seriousness or practical relevance.

Section 2.

Our political tradition cannot be understood outside of the failure and degeneration of the Russian Revolution and the attempt to build a new revolutionary theory and practice taking into account this new reality. This is in no way a sectarian question. It is even less sectarian a question when an increasing number of

countries have adopted the same social system as Russia. Consciously or unconsciously the "Russian question" almost always lies behind one of the most frequent questions that workers ask of socialists: but, can it work? won't a new bureaucracy take over? has it worked anywhere? doesn't Russia and "all those countries" show that human nature is the same no matter what system you have? To maintain that it is only intellectuals who ask those questions is not only patently false but also shows little respect for workers' intellect-- a socialist version of the "Joe" and "Archie Bunker" image.

The Workers Party and the I.S.L. addressed themselves and made important contributions to Marxist theory on the relationship between socialism and democracy. It went back to the original Bolshevik tradition and further developed, systematized and made more self-conscious the democratic theories and practices of early Bolshevism. It maintained that workers' democracy was of the very essence of socialism, that the revolutionary party was not just an indispensable and useful tool in the carrying out of a socialist revolution and building socialism, but that there was an intimate and unavoidable connection between the kind of organizational tools and political traditions that we build and the kind of society we will obtain when and if we are victorious. The habits and orientations we build among today's revolutionaries will have a great impact on the content and shape of the society we will obtain after the revolution. It is certainly undialectical to separate the two situations. The Workers Party rejected the typical liberal, social democratic, stalinist, anarchist and "orthodox trotskyst" approach of undialectically separating "means" and "ends".

Because it was self-conscious about the issue of democracy, the Workers Party realized that the division of labor is a material force even inside a socialist organization. From this it follows that institutional safeguards are necessary to protect the democratic rights of the membership. As Marxists and materialists we don't believe in the idealist nonsense that the good intentions and political program of the organization and its leadership are sufficient to insure the preservation of democracy in the organization. The preservation of organizational democracy also was regarded as necessary for the successful practical implementation of the Workers Party program-- that is, it boldly asserted that a democratic organization would encourage a better politics and membership in the practical sense. In addition to this practical reason, there was also a realization of the relevance of democratic practices for the sake of preserving the personal and political integrity of the ranks and the leadership, which is by no means a matter of so-called abstract democracy. Briefly, it helps to prevent people from being pushed around.

In a narrower sense, the Workers Party was reacting to the experiences of the Socialist Workers Party under the leadership of James P. Cannon. The question of the party regime had been a recurrent source of friction and dispute inside the SWP. Cannon's organizational methods were a classic example of the machine clique described above. One of the key complaints of the Workers Party was

how the Cannon clique refused to stand on an independent political platform of its own and resorted instead to organizational loyalty and patriotism in order to preserve its organizational hegemony. Cannon's undisputed tactical wisdom too easily became a substitute for a real political platform and program. This unavoidably led to organizational loyalty to the leadership becoming the highest political test and quite naturally to the SWP's thorough political degeneration and decay.

The Cannonite machine developed its own "ideology"-the opposition demanding democracy was "petty bourgeois" (a charge unfortunately echoed by Duncan Hallas in "The Fourth International in Decline", IS # 60, July 1973.- See also Calvin Williams excellent reply in the IS pamphlet "Politics as Religion"). In answer to the opposition demanding democracy, Cannon developed a mythological characterization of the working class (American) with a peculiar mixture of pseudo-proletarian American machismo and some aspects of the degeneration of the Bolshevik Party first under Zinoviev and later under Stalin. In this mythological Cannonite fantasy the virile though American worker (still wearing a cloth cap when our own Lisa Lyons was already drawing them with flashy helmets!!) confronts the sissy petty-bourgeois intellectual talking about freedom and democracy. Poor Big Bill Haywood and Eugene V. Debs- they must have turned in their graves.

In fact, the Workers Party developed a far stronger working class politics and activity than that of the SWP; this orientation was based on the perspective, shared by all Trotskyists, that the end of WWII would bring about revolution against capitalism in the West and Stalinism in the East. Instead, capitalism prospered in the West and stalinism consolidated itself and greatly expanded in the East. It was this and not the prosperity and McCarthyism of later years that was the main and original reason for the decline of our tradition. The previously "industrialized" went back to successful careers including the trade union bureaucracy; the native workers left the organization or were also assimilated into the trade union bureaucracy (having acquired valuable organizational experience and a political education). A slow but steady process of erosion set in which included accommodation to ADA liberalism, gradually increasing lack of seriousness in organizational matters and the ISL eventually becoming an ideological caretaker group within a tiny, de-classed university milieu (not primarily petty-bourgeois in either social composition or ideology), rather than as a propaganda and agitational vehicle within the working-class movement.

It should be pointed out that the increasing lack of organizational seriousness (e.g. political tasks and assignments were, as a matter of course, subordinated to the career need of leaders and members) was accompanied by an increasing lack of political seriousness as well. The New International stopped publication by 1958. The tendency developed a quite unhealthy manner of political functioning. Political turns were made almost totally on the spur of the moment with no thought-out perspectives and strategy. It was not simply that we had become theoretically stagnant; furthermore

our activity was usually not based on any kind of careful political planning; even worse, we hardly ever evaluated what we had done, not simply in the narrow sense of what we had done right or wrong in order to do it better next time, but more fundamentally to assess the general political meaning and significance of our experiences. We developed the most un-Bolshevik method of leaders and eventually members changing their minds about the usefulness of an arena and activity and almost unconsciously abandoning it with nothing explicitly discussed, let alone evaluated. Thus, to this day we have not evaluated our single most important experience of the last ten years- our heavy involvement in the Peace & Freedom Party in California. It is not easy to determine what our leadership thinks of the meaning of that experience for our political development- various criticisms are floating around which have never been openly and explicitly confronted and then adopted, modified or rejected. It is hardly surprising that the former I.S.'ers who are now in the R.S.L. could successfully slander our participation in "Pee and F" (as they called it) and find no response or defense to their charges and thereby helped to undermine the political self-confidence and self-respect of our membership. If I concentrate on Peace and Freedom it is because that's perhaps the most glaring example, given the role that we played there; but the same could be said about the way we have adopted and rejected (without hardly any discussion) important activities, perspectives and theories of the group (i.e. the struggle group approach to the unions).

In the light of my earlier discussion of the character of Bolshevism, there should be little surprise that the decline of our tradition was expressed in terms of the changed class composition and orientation of the group, its abandonment of a combat attitude and perspective and its theoretical deterioration and increasing lack of political seriousness. This, again, makes perfect sense from the standpoint of a Bolshevik analysis where political and organizational matters are always inseparable. Given this analysis our organization must be won back to Bolshevism on all of these fronts.

In the 1940's; our group began as a response to the "hard", politically shallow, organizationally-rigid form of Cannonite clique politics. Unfortunately, during the 1950's and 1960's, we degenerated in the direction of the opposite form of clique politics: "soft", politically dilettantish, organizationally sloppy. Our current healthy moves towards greater discipline and organizational centralism must be accompanied by a conscious effort to preserve democratic structures which will promote political development through political debate. Unless we do this, our correct turn will degenerate toward the Cannonism we were originally organized to reject.)

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Section III - Given this analysis, we definitely need a much tighter I.S. But a tighter I.S. does not need a set of proposals the most salient and important of which restrict the political rights of the membership (e.g., withdrawal of information about E.C. discussion and votes, the virtual elimination of discussion articles in the paper). A tighter I.S. means: 1) a politically harder and more developed I.S., 2) an organizationally professionalized I.S., 3) a combat-ready I.S. In light of the above, I propose the following: I) Given our inability to public a Theoretical Journal, we should embark on a program to revitalize our internal Bulletin. The E.C. is instructed to initiate discussion on two specific topics every six months for the purpose of developing the internal political life and education of the group and clarifying and amplifying its fundamental perspectives. Some of the possible topics are: 1) future perspectives and possible developments in the rank-and-file movement and the labor bureaucracy (with possible subtopics being further clarification of the nature of the T.U. bureaucracy and the relationship between labor and the law in the U.S.A.); 2) the Black, chicano, and Puerto Rican movements - most of our members are quite ignorant on these; 3) events and developments in Stalinist countries (particularly China) and Stalinist movements (particularly Portugal); 4) our women's liberation strategy which is a much broader matter than the question of women's industrialization. (The E.C. is also instructed to issue a bi-monthly national and international news analysis as a supplement to Workers Power coverage (which for obvious reasons cannot cover events in depth). The above material need not be restricted to members and can be used to further the political education of our friends as well.) It is clear that Conventions are not an appropriate place and time to conduct many of our theoretical and political discussions. That is why we need a revitalized internal Bulletin and eventually a Journal. Our agitation will be far more effective when we fully understand where it is leading, the obstacles it is likely to encounter, etc.

II) I welcome J.G.'s proposal that N.C. members must be available to work for the group when it is necessary and desirable. But this is not enough; we must establish the principle that the least we can expect from our members and leaders is that they perform their assignments as well as they would for a bourgeois employer in a non-union workplace!! While this cannot be legislated in the abstract, a positive Convention discussion and vote on this matter could be the beginning of the creation of a political climate in the organization where this is expected as a matter of course and where people feel pressured to behave in this manner if they have not already internalized such work habits.) further propose that we extend to all members the current I.S. training program for organizers (with appropriate modifications for people who have to be organizers in the workplace and not in the I.S.). This goal should be carried out within one year. By the end of the year all members will have learned how to write and produce a leaflet, sell the paper, intervene at an I.S. public meeting, intervene at a union meeting, know Roberts' Rules of Order, babysit, etc. *
III) We must implement a national program of security and physical self-defense. All of us are quite deficient in this area and we must begin to change this in a systematic manner, without panic and without paranoia,

but with relaxed yet firm determination.

Section IV - We need and want more than a highly political and organizationally streamlined group. We also want and need a growing organization which is outward oriented and which will make a complete break with the sectarian milieu. We will break with sectarians out of strength and not weakness; out of political knowledge and self-confidence and not out of political ignorance and fear of other sects. We are going to have more, better, and therefore more practically relevant politics than the sectarians. But in order to expand successfully, we need an evolving rather than a stagnant political development. New worker members will be asking lots of questions: about human nature, about using the law, about religion, about a new set of good leaders changing the unions without smashing the bureaucratic structure itself, and so on. In order to provide persuasive and convincing answers, we will have to be on our political and theoretical toes even more than before when we were involved with the same old familiar faces and ideas of the declassed student milieu. To the extent that we grow, we will have more (and healthy) political differences within our organization rather than less. To the extent that we approximate a pre-party formation rather than a sect we will have a more politically heterogenous membership. To that extent we will need an organization with highly worked out politics (and not just a set of tactics passing for politics) which will keep the members united in pursuit of a well-understood and collectively decided goal in spite of differences. As Tony Cliff put it very well in "Trotsky on Substitutionism" (Cliff et al. Party and Class, page 42):

Because the working class is far from being monolithic, and because the path to socialism is uncharted, wide differences of strategy and tactics can and should exist in the revolutionary party. The alternative is the bureaucratized party or the sect with its 'leader'.

Therefore, it can be misleading and is not sufficient to state as Joel does that "Individual differences on this or that part of our program are allowed" (page 16). Those differences are not simply to be allowed, but they are to be expected if we are not just building another sect. Let us not start creating a climate where people must feel apologetic or embarrassed when they have differences since they are regarded as exceptional or to be explained rather than being taken for granted. While we demand and expect that people who have differences do not raise them on every occasion, no matter what the topic for discussion may be, which is a norm appropriate for an organization which is not action-oriented as we are, we also reject the idea that it is only legitimate to raise issues of disagreement during the pre-Convention period (as is increasingly the case in the ISCB). One reason we have an internal Bulletin is to allow for a discussion vehicle where people can raise differences without necessarily having to bring them up at meetings where something else is being dealt with.

The right to have differences has a most profound practical significance. As historical materialists, we know that reality is in an ever-changing flux and that programs and strategies must change to meet this changing situation. It is sheer dogmatic idealism and/or bureaucratic arrogance to think

and to expect that a given set of leaders will always and necessarily keep abreast of that changing reality. From this perspective it is indispensable to maintain a politically flexible organization which may allow for rapid changes keeping in tune with a rapidly changing situation. Otherwise, we would need nothing less than a full split everytime that a given set of leaders fail to catch up or keep abreast of such a changing situation. The creation of a faction would be necessary even to campaign for a change of line. We would have certainly supported Lenin had he created a faction in April of 1917. From this point of view, J.G.'s treatment of the right to form factions (page 10) is quite inadequate. His analogy with the right of self-determination is misleading. We do not merely advocate the right to form factions as a strategy to win members away from splitting (equivalent to nations separating). We also see the right to form factions as a necessary corrective and method of bringing about a needed change in the politics of the leadership of the group. Such a self-determination analogy would only make sense in a group or party with frozen politics and a frozen leadership and not a developing and fluid politics and leadership.

One of the key characteristics of sectarianism and/or bureaucratic cliquism is precisely the implicit or explicit conception of a frozen politics and leadership. It is a key trait of a leadership which develops an attitude of ownership or squatters rights towards the organization. It is the hallmark of a leadership that fails to continually prove itself politically and organizationally. We believe, on the contrary, that while leadership itself is indispensable, no given set of individual leaders is indispensable and that the good leaders of today may be quite inadequate tomorrow. We want to be able to change all or some of them without necessarily creating a split or a paralysing crisis in the organization. By the same logic, we want a membership which is not just educated on the strategy and tactics of the current situation but who also fully understand the method and politics which lead us to adopt that particular set of strategy and tactics. Otherwise, whenever we make a strategic or tactical turn, we will lose large numbers of members and will have to start all over again almost from scratch. The I.S. has lately had a strong tendency to fetishize strategy and tactics as if they exhausted the fundamentals of revolutionary Marxism. Thus, for example, the way many members think of "industrialization", they would be hard put to find their bearings in the British I.S. which never needed to even contemplate such a measure. Industrialization is nothing more (and nothing less!) than a major and indispensable tactic to implement our rank-and-file strategy in the context of an exceptional country where practically all ties have disappeared between the Left and the labor movement. Unfortunately, even many members who would agree with my formulation don't think of it in those terms in their daily political thinking. The fact that a vital tactic is very difficult to implement still does not make it anymore than a vital tactic!! Let's stop turning tactics into high principle in order to mobilize the membership!

Section V - If we are interested in building a mass movement and if we do not perceive politics as a frozen set of views given for all times, then we will unavoidably recruit people who have important differences with us but who share most of our perspectives for practical work, want to build the organization, and abide by its organizational discipline. We should not

learn the wrong lessons from our past erroneous orientation towards the Trotskyist and sectarian milieu. I always strongly opposed the folly of the one, two, many Trotskyist factions in the I.S. But this was not because they have significant differences with us, but because they have a hopeless and bankrupt conception of politics (inward, sectarian, dogmatist). I stand by and support the E.C.'s decision to recruit the SC. We can be sure that this will not be the last time that we will have to make a similar decision. And it should be clear that what was wrong with the S.C. was not that "they wanted to change us" but that they turned out to have fundamental practical differences with us in our labor and potentially our Black work.

We fully understand that many new worker members will be recruited along different criteria (lower or higher or just different) than students who were recruited in the past. This is as it should be. But we must also aim towards this being a transitional situation. A revolutionary organization cannot for long tolerate two kinds of membership with totally different kinds and levels of political understanding and practice. Therefore, we should not be tempted to legislate in advance a permanent separate type of membership by all of a sudden introducing distinctions between "the cadres" (does this mean the leadership? if so, why coin a new term and not just call it leadership) and "the ranks". All members are to be cadre even though that might not happen within the first six months after they join--but we must strain towards that and not create a more or less permanent way station (for students or workers) in the route to becoming a cadre. We explicitly repudiate the Cannonite formulation that "The leading cadre plays the same decisive role in relation to the party that the party plays in relation to the class" (James P. Cannon, "Factional Struggle and Party Leadership" in Speeches to the Party, page 183) whether applied to old or new members. If taken seriously, this can only result in the worst substitutionist practices and runs contrary to the notion that the organization belongs to all of its members and not to the leadership. The revolutionary party quite rightly refuses to allow its decisions to be determined by the racist and imperialist attitude of the majority of the working class. The leadership of the revolutionary party, on the contrary, must allow its decisions to be influenced by and determined (e.g., at Conventions) by the majority of its own membership.

This is the type of thinking that led Cannon to arrogantly tell James T. Farrell and others that he and the rest of the SWP leadership were specialists in the science of politics and who was Farrell or anybody else not in the leadership to know what were the right political decisions. What elitist nonsense!! We must, therefore, also reject the notion that the organization is politically run primarily or exclusively by its full-time staffers. Such a practice would greatly facilitate "machine-cliquism" and would make a mockery of our professed aim of having a worker-leadership (unfortunately, this is precisely what is now happening in the British I.S.--the election of Convention delegates at the district instead of branch level ensures that it is the speakers and well-known local leaders who will get elected and not the work-place militants and branch activists. Similarly, the abolition of their National Committee and replacement by a much smaller Central Committee also nullifies the power and influence of leading worker members who were on the 40 member NC but who won't get elected to the CC).

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The British I.S. with a much larger mass base, stronger leadership, and a stronger working-class movement than the I.S. in the U.S.A. was faced with a serious crisis in 1974 which was partially brought about by the large gap between the leadership and large sections of the membership. The American I.S., with a much greater isolation from the American working class and in a much larger country, could not for long survive with a few or many [worker] members who on one hand became different from the rest of the working class by the sheer fact of having become revolutionaries and remained as a distinct group within the I.S., as well.

Having only one kind of member is an indispensable part of building a non-elitist I.S. If we want to build a truly non-elitist I.S., it is not enough to say that so-called shit-work and those who engage in it are to be esteemed and respected like anybody else. That is perfectly true--but since we are Marxist materialists and not utopians, we know that unpleasant work is going to exist for some time to come (however one may define it) and we want not just to esteem and respect those who do it, but also have that work shared as much as possible by all of our members. We must avoid a situation where certain members become the permanent specialists on unpleasant work. We don't want to create "leaders" who under the cover of specialization of functions and disclaimers as to how much they esteem "shit-workers" may refuse to go out and sell the paper, or stuff envelopes or what have you, claiming that their time can be more productively spent in exclusively "leadership" tasks.

It is ironical that we often run the risk of being outflanked by Maoists on questions of anti-elitism. While we should reject their populist idealism, we can often take a practical lesson or two from them in this area. There has been a lot of talk in the British and American I.S. on how we cannot be "Renaissance" men and women and that we must specialize. This is perfectly true if it is meant in the sense that every member must develop one or two areas of expertise and specialization; however, this is often used as an ideological cover for ignorance, narrow-mindedness, and sheer philistinism or to justify the essentially bourgeois (and Cannonite!!) idea that The Leaders are permanent specialists in leading and the rest better become permanent specialists in following.

Section VI - J.G. is fundamentally wrong when he asserts (in page 14): "We do not pick a leadership to reflect the ranks, the unevenness of consciousness. Rather we select out the most advanced, conscious elements, to lead, to constantly raise the consciousness of the ranks toward its own level...." I have never heard of anybody in the I.S. who advocated electing the "less advanced". So that is obviously not the issue. The issue is whether we elect people who may have different views from the existing leadership (views which the leadership, quite understandably, regards as being less advanced than its own views--it just so happens that whenever I disagree with the leadership, I always think that their views are less advanced than mine). The real issue is whether we elect a leadership which may within itself contain various shades and emphases that exist within the organization, or whether the democratic rights of the membership are limited to selecting one particular shade of I.S. politics until the next chance at the next Convention. We fundamentally reject the notion that leadership bodies must be immune from differences that exist within the organization although of course we do not propose

a mechanical formula where every shade and twist in the organization must be precisely mirrored in every and all leadership bodies. This is not only a matter affecting the democratic rights of minorities and their right to be represented in the highest leadership bodies if their numerical strength and other considerations warrant it, but it is also a matter of the greatest practical advantage to the organization. The method of full democratic representation allows the leadership to keep in better touch with the organization and with the outside world. In addition, it is very often a good thing to combine, for example, people who represent bolder organizational conceptions with more cautious conceptions even though there might not exist political differences strictly speaking. But this assumes that we do not simply want only one shade, and only one style of politics represented within the leadership. It should not be necessary to add that what I am proposing has nothing to do with the old discredited conception of the I.S. as a factional zoo which usually produced a bare 4 to 3 majority in the NAC, literally paralyzing the organization. I am talking about the Bolshevik model where leaders with real differences (Lenin, Kamenev, Trotsky) were all part of the leadership without surrendering their differences yet collaborating on democratically decided joint course of action.

Section VII - We reject the notion put forward in bourgeois sociology that democracy is essentially selecting one out of several competing elites; that you elect a leadership and if you don't like them you throw them out and put another one in. In this view, the electorate is an essentially passive body which does not participate in the development and implementation of policy. The politicians settle affairs among themselves and the electorate does not know what is going on and comes to regard the political process as essentially mysterious and mystified. Bourgeois sociologists defend this by saying that the electorate can throw out the leaders if they don't like the results. It is the thinking that leads politicians to think (if not say): "We are in the business of politics and you hired us to do a job for you. Let us do the job for you and if you don't like the results, hire somebody else." This again typifies the outlook, advocating a passive mass uninformed of the actual nature of the political process instead of an active mass intervening in the process of policy-making itself.

We, therefore, reject the proposal of a voluntary or involuntary discipline of the E.C. This is a profoundly elitist and undemocratic proposal. It is the leadership that would decide what political information the members are ready to hear and assimilate (we are not talking about security, personnel, or personal matters here). They, individually or collectively, would decide what are the differences that are important and the membership would have no recourse in the matter. This proposal runs contrary to the ability of the membership to judge each one and all of its leaders in terms of their individual and collective political record, a political record which should be open and on which each and all members of the E.C. should stand.

It also makes it impossible for the N.C. to have the information on the basis of which to change the E.C. if it wishes to do so. It freezes the given spectrum of opinion which exists in the E.C. since the membership and the N.C. do not have the power to alter its composition in a way which would affect its internal dynamic in a certain direction. Thus, if we believed that an

E.C. was too cautious, we might be able to make it bolder by replacing its two most cautious members with bolder people without necessarily creating a major crisis in the organization (i.e., replacing all of the incumbent leaders at one and the same time). This proposal will encourage factionalism since emerging differences that go unrepresented will be forced to present a totally alternate leadership. This proposal will encourage rumor and gossip, rather than the other way around; people with no information will speculate as to who is in favor or inclined towards what inside the E.C. It will encourage cliquism in the absence of information which is equally accessible to all members, some people will develop real or imaginary claims to being in the know as to what really is happening within the E.C.

It unavoidably follows from the logic of the proposal for a disciplined E.C. that eventually the N.C. and branch execs should be organized along the same lines as well and that it is only a matter of time before this will be proposed. This is no idle fear. At least one responsible leader of the L.A. branch has already proposed that the branch exec. be disciplined just like the E.C. is. This L.A. leader was drawing very logical, political conclusions. And the same conclusion was made by G. himself when he defended his document to the L.A. branch on May 28.

This proposal is elitist and dysfunctional in a different sense as well. We want to train all of our members in becoming cadres and leaders themselves in the workplace and in the U.S. The 300 members of today will have to be the leaders of an organization of thousands tomorrow. We want to educate our members and show them how a leadership can have differences and work together in spite of that. We want them to see how leadership actually works rather than mystify and make the process a mystery as it is the case in bourgeois politics.

If we have an evolving rather than frozen politics and even more, an expanding working class and minority recruitment, it will be necessary to add and drop people from leadership bodies. We must have full political information on each member of the E.C. so we can know which particular individual should be dropped in order to add somebody else. Also, we must move towards a more streamlined and efficient organization; this means that the membership will be making fewer decisions directly. In this situation, it is imperative that to the extent that this happens, members have more information about the decisions they do not directly participate in. The more decisions that are delegated to executive bodies, the more crucial full information becomes in order to avoid a sharp split between the leaders and the led.

The original motivation for E.C. discipline was patently absurd. It was based on the fact that different E.D.'ers let themselves be lobbied so much that this apparently stood in the way of their taking a quick and decisive lead on CLUW. In other words, since the E.C. was weak and their flesh was easily tempted to sin, the solution is not that they should develop some more intelligent and individualized inter self-control and self-restraint, but in typical Puritan repressive fashion, their solution is to hide their political flesh from the membership in order to avoid temptation!! Let us not take an initial organizational step in the direction of creating a political leadership clique instead of a leadership which fights openly and aggressively for

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its views with nothing political to hide. The same should apply to the N.C.; some concessions have already been made to this climate of political secrecy by some N.C. members writing primarily political letters which were restricted to other N.C. members. This must come to an end, particularly when the letters in question would have been highly educational to our whole membership.

Section VIII

Bourgeois revolutions, like those of the eighteenth century, storm swiftly from success to success; their dramatic effects outdo each other; men and things seem set in sparkling brilliance; ecstasy is the everyday spirit; but they are short-lived; soon they have attained their zenith, and a long crapulent depression lays hold of society before it learns soberly to assimilate the results of its storm-and-stress period. On the other hand, proletarian revolutions, like those of the nineteenth century, criticise themselves constantly, interrupt themselves continually in their own course, come back to the apparently accomplished in order to begin it afresh, decide with their first attempts, see to throw down their adversary only in order that he may draw new strength from the earth and rise again, more gigantic, before them, recoil ever and anon from the indefinite prodigiousness of their own aims, until a situation has been created which makes all turning back impossible..."

Karl Marx, The Eighteen Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, page 19, Foreign Languages Publishing House. Moscow.

Leadership is not effective in direct proportion to the loudness, tone, and volume of its voice. The accomplishments of a leadership most times obviously speak for themselves (e.g., the great improvement of Workers Power). It is the accomplishments and not the loudness and tone of voice that creates respect for a leadership. ~~It is also their ability and willingness to criticize a lot, but so do revolutionary Marxists.~~ It isn't criticism as such which is the issue but the content and purpose of criticism. Therefore, any implication that it's only bourgeois intellectuals who engage in systematic criticism is a gross disservice to revolutionary Marxism. It is easy to distort the views of others and score a cheap point, but that does not help the organization, nor does it enhance comradely respect and collaboration. Just as our leadership rightly gets angry when Chris Harman (ISJ #78) says that Workers Power supports the Portuguese S.P., the L.A. branch has a smaller but real right to get angry when the E.C. implies that we were advocating that every article on Southeast Asia should discuss the nature of Stalinism. Instead, our complaint was that no articles at all had dealt with the question up to the time the resolution was submitted. Consequently, the E.C. reply did not contribute one bit to the political dialogue on the issue, but instead tried to score a cheap and false polemical point. This is unfortunately not an isolated instance. The same type of argumentation can be found in the introductory section to the Detroit Commission Report (I found

the actual specific recommendations positive and unobjectionable). Thus it says (page 3): "There is no way that every decision can be taken from the top, no way every decision can be reviewed from the bottom..." or (also on page 3): "None of our leaders will ever be perfect, indeed at this stage in the development of the group they are bound to be far from perfect, but members who insist on a perfect leadership before accepting direction have no place in the organization." The two key words in these two quotes are "every" and "perfect"--create a ridiculous straw-man argument, beat it down and claim victory when in fact you have ignored the real arguments against your views and consequently you have not really been persuasive or victorious and should make no such claims.

Again, criticism is essential to a revolutionary Marxist organization. Take, for example, the issue of the Socialist Collective. I believe that the intervention of the E.C. on this matter was, as a whole, correct. But I also believe that the E.C. statement on the S.C. resignation was definitely insufficient although I agree with everything it did say. A critical assessment of this whole episode is essential not just in the narrow sense of reviewing our errors in order not to repeat them, but in the broader sense of trying to figure out what all of this meant: was the S.C. merely a fluke? what were its main characteristics and why? can we expect to run into groups like this again within the Black movement? Answers to questions such as these are of immediate practical relevance to successfully carrying out work in the Black Community. But we haven't dealt with these matters and in fact we already seem to be forgetting about the whole episode.

Criticism and disagreement is in no way contradictory to the development of a collaborative leadership and membership. The organization must become a working body and not a debating society where a premium is placed on scoring points. This does not mean curtailing political discussion and avoiding political clarity, nor does it mean hiding differences. It does mean that these differences are expressed with a sense of perspective and proportion and with full respect for each other's positions. It does mean that members argue against the position of a comrade trying to state it at its best and not at its worst. If we fail to do this, we are in fact following sectarian principles in our attitudes towards each other.

Section IX - Workers Power is primarily, but not exclusively, a "line" paper. This Convention reaffirms the motion presented by S.F. at the November 1973 N.C. (which passed by a large majority) that whenever a large number of I.S. members disagree with the majority line on an important issue, W.P. will ventilate this issue in public. This motion was introduced in the context of the so-called Yom Kippur war in the Mid-East, when very large numbers of our comrades disagreed with our majority line (which I share). I felt that we should have had a public discussion on the Mid-East War. I feel now that we should do the same with our position on super-seniority where many members do not agree with the majority line. (I also share the current majority line on this issue.) It is not necessary that an organized faction exist in order that we should consider whether its views should be published in the paper or not. We are not interested in projecting an image of ourselves as a monolith. What conception do we have of our working class readers that we don't want to admit that differences on some issues do exist within our organization? Whom are we trying to fool? Ourselves? Our readers? Are we

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accepting the Stalinist and Cannonite assumption that monolithism or the appearance of monolithism is necessary in order to project the image of a decisive, fighting organization? If we agree with this assumption, we have made a dangerous concession to the politics of our enemies.

While I don't believe that we have any obligation to write public reports of our own N.C. meetings, I believe that if we do, we should present a straightforward account, including important disagreements. Any reader of Workers Power may very well wonder whether any disagreement ever takes place at our N.C.'s. They must believe that we are an organization of supermen and superwomen, and completely unlike any workers they know and who disagree all the time! In fact, such reports on our N.C.'s constitute objectively dishonest journalism which fails to mention the conflict that did occur. It is also an objectively dishonest journalism that shows little respect for the intelligence of its readership. In this context, it is interesting to point out that Socialist Worker has often carried reports of disagreements and split votes at their N.C. meetings.

I want to make it clear that I am not proposing that W.P. become a clearing house for factional views. I propose that we occasionally publish opinion articles (which do not even necessarily have to be in conflict with the majority line). In terms of frequency, this could be approximately every three months or so. Again, Stalinists and Cannonites have reason to hide differences from their readers. That is in the very nature of their fundamentally substitutionist politics. What are our reasons? Those who propose such a conception of the newspaper have a political obligation to explain it and not just to assert it.

Section X - The same logic of respect and honest dealings with our audience which I used as the basis for my conception of Workers Power applies on the question of abstention. Individualists think of the issue of abstention solely or primarily on the grounds of maintaining one's personal purity and clean conscience. Revolutionary socialists think of it primarily in terms of the relationship of the party and the class. We have no objection to lying to our enemies--in fact, that is often an absolute necessity and to be highly recommended. But we take damn seriously the question of lying to our friends, the working class and its allies. Do we want our members to pretend to their worker friends that they fully agree with a position when in fact they don't? What happens when that worker friend eventually joins the I.S. and finds out that our member was lying to him/her all along? It just won't work to ask our member just to say that "the I.S. thinks such and such" because the obvious question that will be asked after that will be "but what do you think?"

It is often the case that we have minor disagreements of detail with the organization's line and we don't bother to bring it up to a friend. That is perfectly reasonable. We should also have a sense of when it is appropriate (in terms of time, place, and manner) to bring up an important difference that we do have. But this is quite a different matter from the establishment of a rule that would prevent us from every bringing up our individual differences--period.

We should always attempt to get members who agree with a line to be the ones who present it in public. When that is not possible, the member presenting the line in public and who also has important disagreements with it should at some point indicate his/her own views on the matter--but the main thrust of the presentation should be defending the organization's line and not his/her differences. The same principle would apply to individual I.S.'ers talking to individual friends. Members do not have the right to abstain from organizationally supporting and/or working on a project based on a political line they disagree with unless they are specifically authorized to abstain by a local, regional, or national executive body of the organization. I am referring here to say a member not running off a leaflet in a mimeograph machine because the member disagrees with the politics of said leaflet. Such abstention would not be relevant to my main consideration above: misrepresentation to our audience.

Section XI - Branches and MAL's are to carry out the national political line decided by the Convention or by responsible national leadership bodies (i.e., E.C. and N.C.). They are also obligated to carry out campaigns and programs unless specifically exempted by higher leadership bodies. Campaigns of the organization cannot be ignored by some branches or changed in such a way as to make them unrecognizable. Comrades in one area who begin a campaign do so on the expectation that comrades in other branches are also working to make it successful. They have the right and the duty to demand that the center and the leadership are intervening to ensure this. (I am in agreement with J.G. here and am copying almost word by word from his document.)

We reject the view that branches are primarily electoral units for purposes of electing convention delegates and that they have few other political functions. Branches are fully responsible for carrying out all national policy. This is not a simple administrative task but a highly political one: How to make the national policy apply to the specific circumstances. Further, we want branches and members trained in our methodology and general line so that they can act immediately in response to political developments.

The policy of national fractions is national policy until and unless reversed by the N.C. or E.C. Branches and branch execs are responsible for seeing that local fractions carry out national policy. Branches are responsible for all I.S. political work in their respective areas including that done by members of other branches. All members functioning in an area are subject to the discipline of the local branch unless acting under instructions of the E.S. (I am in agreement with M.P. here and am copying from his amendments almost word by word.)

Branch organizers are appointed by the branch in consultation with the E.C. They are directly responsible to the branch executive committee. Again, the branch and branch exec are responsible for seeing that the organizer carries out the priority work of the national organization. The main responsibility to carry out the national line on the local level lays with the politically responsible and locally elected leadership and not with locally or nationally appointed organizers. We should avoid taking steps which lead us in the direction of relying on the organizational agents of the local or national leadership instead of mainly relying on politically elected

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bodies for carrying out the line of the organization. Since everybody is bound to carry out the national line, why do we need organizers as special agents to do just that.

We are not federalists. We don't believe, unlike anarchists and liberals, that there is anything sacred or intrinsically superior about local as opposed to national decision-making. In fact, we believe the opposite. But we also believe that there is a relationship between the units of daily joint work and joint discussion and daily units of decision making. Today, a great deal of joint work and joint discussion is carried out by local branches in our organization. Tomorrow we could have districts or even regions which do the same. While this remains the case, a great number of decisions will continue to be made by our local branches. This, again, is not primarily a question of size as such.

The E.C. has the constitutional and political right to place branches in receivership. However, we believe that this is a last resort measure when all else has failed. Since this right of the E.C. is not in dispute, we see little point in the E.C. continually reasserting this, unless it is trying to intimidate rather than convince branches and members. Receivership is a last resort measure for both political and practical reasons. Politically, because we believe that persuasion should normally be sufficient in relations among comrades. Practically, because receivership is very difficult to implement for an organization with such limited personnel resources. How would receivership be implemented? By sending valuable comrades away from their indispensable work in Detroit to the branch in question? By handing power to a minority in that branch? This is conceivable, but it should not be difficult to see the incredible difficulties posed by such a "solution".

Section XII - Expulsion is an exceptional measure undertaken when the behavior of one or more members becomes a clear and present danger to the functioning and political integrity of the organization. Such behavior may include speech--the criterion again being whether such speech presents a clear and present danger to the organization as just described. Racist, sexist, or counterrevolutionary speech can and should certainly be grounds for expulsion.

It is dangerous just to say that people can be expelled for views in the abstract. We must show that the views in question already are or will shortly lead to behavior which places the organization in jeopardy (e.g., a split). This is not the place to discuss this issue in detail but three points should be made here: 1) there will be occasions when some or many of us will think that the organization is headed in a fundamentally mistaken programmatic direction. But our sense of discipline and historic mission of the organization will continue to make us abide by group loyalty and discipline while continuing to build the organization and fight for our diverging views within it in as non-disruptive a way as possible--this is one key reason we object to saying that people can be expelled for views in general and the abstract; 2) the expulsion of the RSL, which was certainly well-founded, was however, justified and motivated in an inconsistent manner. The "Letter to Comrades" gave one kind of motivation while the actual

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motion for expulsion gave a different motivation; 3) we must explain the political background which may have led a member or members to commit an act (in speech or otherwise) for which they should be expelled just like bourgeois courts try to establish the motive that led to the crime. But it is the crime and not the motive for which people presumably get punished; therefore, it is the act (in speech or action) and not the political background leading up to it for which people should be expelled. Again, the reason for this crucial distinction is because of our Bolshevik conception of discipline and of the historic mission of the organization and our belief that dissenting members may retain that discipline and respect for the organization so as to continually and loyally work to build it.

Section XIII - There is a growing point of view in the ISGB and in our own organization that anything more than the briefest Constitution is appropriate for a social-democratic or liberal group, but not for a Bolshevik organization. In response, it should first be stated that our Constitution is fundamentally different from that of a bourgeois republic or organization. Our Constitution can be changed or easily amended every year if need be (or in between Conventions by referendum). This can be done by a straight majority vote at Convention time and without the deliberately cumbersome and almost impossible procedures to change bourgeois Constitutions. So all our Constitution is and means is that there are certain rules that the Organization has decided should only be changed by the whole group through its highest elected body: the Convention. The idea being that these rules should not be changed unless the majority of the whole Organization agrees. The idea also being that if an elected leadership ignores or violates the Constitution, that this would automatically make it a grave issue which will place a heavy political burden on the leadership to justify its actions (and there are serious circumstances where a leadership may be justified in doing so in a combat organization--but again the heavy burden of proof would be on the leadership to show why they did so).

Having said this, I would like to motivate why I support some of the amendments being offered at this Convention. My previous arguments should make clear why I advocate E.C. and N.C. meetings open to members. My intention is to establish the general rule that the organization qua organization does not recognize secrecy in political matters in regard to its members. That is not the case for security, personal, and personnel matters, and my amendment also makes it easy (a simple majority vote) for a leadership body to have an executive session whenever and as often as they are necessary. I also support M.P.'s amendment to the Constitution which deletes the section guaranteeing the right of minorities to publish opposition journals. I believe such a constitutional proviso is totally inappropriate to the kind of organization the I.S. is; that is, it is and will be for a considerable period of time, a specific tendency organization and not a mass revolutionary party. I might be in favor of such a provision being reintroduced when we become a mass revolutionary party!!

I also support the elimination of the provision which states that no more than 1/3 of the N.C. can be from any given branch. That is a provision appropriate for a federalist and not a centralist organization. For the same reasons I believe that we should move as rapidly as possible toward

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a centralized dues structure. That is the only truly democratic central-ist manner of funding the growing expenses of our organization. Our current methods of funding are undemocratic and completely subject to the whims of chance and the anarchy of the capitalist market place. A given branch has better funding not because we have politically decided that it should, but because they had the good luck of having recruited some members who are better off financially.

In sum, let us have more discipline, more professionalization, more political development and more combat-readiness. But, let us reject attempts to confuse all of these with measures which restrict the political rights of our members. Only a fully informed, independent, and politically self-confident membership can make our organizational democratic rights a working reality.

The End.

FOR DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISM, AGAINST A DISCIPLINED EC

--JB and BB LA Branch

The basic thrust of JG's "Democratic Centralism" document is correct and absolutely crucial to the development of our organization. We need greater centralism and tightening of discipline to the line. Moreover, JG's emphasis on the subjective factor is entirely justified. The revolutionary party plays an indispensable creative role in the class struggle, because it can recognize and seize the opportunities offered by changing objective conditions and class consciousness. However, JG's conclusion--that the organization needs a "voluntarily disciplined" EC--contradicts his stated goals. A voluntarily disciplined EC will in fact impede rather than facilitate the development of initiative and aggressiveness throughout the membership and force rather than prevent the emergence of a disruptive, clique-type factional method of politics and policy change in the IS. For this reason, the proposal for a voluntarily disciplined EC must be defeated at the Convention.

Voluntary vs. involuntary discipline is a distinction without a difference. Both prescribe the same organizational and political relationship between the leadership and rank and file. Both are based on the same patronising and protective conception of the needs of both leadership and rank and file. Under voluntary discipline, the EC member can go to the membership if he/she thinks it is a crucial question. Under involuntary discipline--the more self-consistent (if politically less sale-able) position toward which the EC is currently moving--he/she must resign to do so. But in both cases, it is up to the leaders to decide what is a critical division among the leadership, what is a critical issue for the membership to debate.

This is the crux of the issue: should the membership be party to the political differences arising within its leadership? should it be allowed to learn from the actual political discussion which surrounds these differences? Following from this, should the membership be able to decide what differences among the leadership the organization as a whole should and should not debate? And furthermore, should it be able to decide, on a political basis, who should lead the organization? For it is quite obvious--and this is openly admitted by the EC--because the membership will have no idea of the political positions of the individual leaders, it will not be able to elect them on their politics. Instead we will have to choose according to "performance." This is a ludicrous criterion for electing a leadership, because it is quite clear that the most professional leadership in the world will not make the revolution with the wrong politics. To see this, we need only look at the example of the leadership of the German Social Democracy before World War I. Their organizational competence and ability to build a mass party of millions fooled even Lenin--up to the moment that they capitulated to national chauvinism and abandoned the Second International at the outbreak of World War I.

The result of a closed EC is inevitable: the EC will act, be obeyed, and be judged as a monolith, even when it is in fact politically divided. Only the EC will have the information necessary to evaluate its own members' politics. As the organization grows, only the EC will be able to judge the competence of individuals. Elections by the membership will thus become a formality. On the other hand, when and if the leadership is found wanting, it will have to be replaced by an entirely new team. The scheme has an iron logic: it is a recipe for an organization where political initiatives--strategic, tactical, theoretical--are only taken by the leadership and where members in the branches are passive, intimidated--generally afraid to take or push for new actions and new ideas in the face of an apparently (although not really) united leadership who opposes them. It is also a recipe for the politically ill-defined faction fight and split as the normal mode of political change within the organization. For all differences will have to take the form of a confrontation

between the leadership and a section of the membership; and only a well-formed opposition, that is, a full-fledged faction, will have the confidence and strength to do this. All initiative from the center and a disruptive clique-type factionalist politics are the defining characteristics of the entire history of the Trotskyist organizations which have generally adopted this method of leadership.

Discipline And Differences

The EC claims that it is utopian to think that the leadership and membership can act in a disciplined manner in the face of known and acknowledged political differences among the leadership. (See speeches by JG and GW) This is to say that democratic centralism as it is generally understood: "freedom of criticism/unity in action"--is also utopian. For, "freedom of criticism/unity in action" assumes that after the period of political debate, all comrades, leaders and rank and file, will be able to submerge their political differences and take united action. No one can deny that political differences and, consequently, temporary political groupings exist even now within the EC and the membership. These are inevitable and necessary for the organization to go forward. Yet, the EC believes that these differences among the leadership must be hidden away.

On what basis does the EC make this judgement? Human nature? History? If so, they should cite the cases. The one case they do cite, the recent history of the IS, is certainly no proof. The EC says that the organization couldn't function effectively while leading members of the RT (the future RSL) were in the leadership of the IS. This is true. But the problem was obviously not just cliqueishness. As the EC says, this group and their leaders had irreconcilable differences with our politics and a split perspective. Of course our organization and leadership function more smoothly now that those with fundamentally opposed politics have left. But what does this have to do with the argument? The most disciplined possible EC will not prevent organizational disruption if significant numbers among the leadership and membership have adopted a split perspective.

The EC says that even now, unless we have a disciplined EC, EC members are tempted to spend their time organizing the membership around small differences to maintain a constituency so that they can hold on to their positions on the EC. To the degree that this is so, it must be corrected. The membership and particularly the leadership must point out and remove any EC member who can't be self-disciplined, who puts "politicking" for convention elections ahead of her/his leadership responsibilities. In brief, the EC will just have to learn to avoid temptation (or is this human nature?) and get rid of its members who can't, because the remedy of a discipline/closed EC poses too great a danger to the political effectiveness of the IS.

Barriers to Membership Initiative

It is one of the great strengths of both the "Democratic Centralism" and "Bolshevisation" documents that they constantly stress the need for increased aggressiveness and initiative throughout the organization. As they point out, this is likely to be a period of rapidly changing, but very uneven development of working class consciousness. Therefore, the strength of our organization will depend upon our ability at all levels, most especially in the local branches, to sense small changes in mood and seize upon small political openings, both to make breakthroughs in action and to put forward changes in political direction for the entire organization. A disciplined, monolithic EC, with its constant appearance of unanimity,

places an unnecessary barrier in the way of such initiatives both in action and political ideas,

Now, it is obvious that when the whole leadership is in fact unanimous on a particular line, members will generally be reluctant to challenge it with a different position. This is as it should be. However, we have to be fully aware of the powerful braking effect of an actually unanimous EC on membership initiative, so that we can clearly see the extreme dangers in artificially creating the permanent appearance of such unanimity through a disciplined EC.

This point is well-illustrated by the events of March-April 1917 in Russia following the February Revolution. At this time, the Bolshevik leadership was in fact unanimously in favor of the Menshevik position supporting the continuation of dual power (both Soviets and Provisional Government). On the other hand, because of their close contact with developing working class political sentiments, wide layers of the Bolshevik rank and file were fed up with the bourgeois Provisional Government and strongly in favor of "all power to the Soviets." Yet, because the experienced and proven leadership was unanimously against them, the ranks hesitated to change the party's line. However, as soon as Lenin had returned from exile in April, rejoined the leadership, and challenged the line, he was easily able to carry the entire party; for now "all power to the Soviets" was being backed by an important element within the leadership.

The Bolsheviks were able to seize an historic moment in part because Lenin provided a pole around which the membership could rally. But this was in turn possible because the Bolshevik leadership did not think they had to hide their differences from the membership through a disciplined executive. Lenin presented his "April Theses" at a party meeting in Petrograd, without warning anyone in advance (including the party leadership) that he held these views. But there is no evidence that any of the top Bolshevik leaders considered this a breach of discipline. Every one of them disagreed with Lenin and thought he had lost touch with reality. Still, the Bolshevik executive immediately published Lenin's minority views in the party paper, Pravda, and then replied the next day in Pravda with an article for the majority entitled "Our Differences." Had the Bolshevik leadership insisted on a "disciplined exec", things might have gone very differently.

Developing An Aggressive Membership

One point of this example is to show how a really unified leadership can dampen rank and file initiative. From this we can see why imposing the appearance of unity on a divided EC will have a negative effect on the rank and file. Many members will perhaps see this point from their own experience. At one time or another they have probably themselves had some fears about challenging the authoritative leaders. An equally important lesson of this example is the positive effect of an open EC. The rank and file of the organization are best prepared for effective political action and initiative when they know the differences among the leadership and the arguments behind those differences. Thus, in the case of Lenin in April 1917, it was not just a question of his prestige, but of his ability to put forward a coherent theoretical rationale for his view. As Trotsky described the development: "Once the Leninist formulas were issued they shed a new light for the Bolsheviks upon the experience of the past months and of every new day...District after district adhered to them." (Russ. Rev., 1967 edn., Vol I, p. 306) Lenin's ideas gave the party as a whole the ability to rethink the changed political situation and then to act quickly and effectively to change the line. By putting the ideas of all elements within the leadership, majority and minority, at the disposal of the mem-

bership, the party can be best prepared for political action.

If we closely consider the EC's recent initiative in forming the April 26 Rank and File Coalition, we can further see how important it is to keep the leadership's deliberations constantly before the eyes of the membership. The Rank and File Coalition obviously represented a sharp tactical break from our general line of concentrating on hardening our strength within single unions and locals. The EC was taking a classwide initiative to organize a cross-union formation (even though it constantly instructed the organization to reject such initiatives). Of course, there was nothing wrong with doing this, and the action turned out to be a smashing success, although it cannot be denied that it was a new departure and a gamble.

Now, let's suppose for a moment that the EC had considered taking this initiative but a majority voted against it. If the EC were closed, the membership would never have known this type of action had been considered and defeated. The membership then would not have been alerted to the fact that some of its leaders (although a minority) thought the situation was changing, that new sorts of actions might now be viable, and should at least be kept in mind. On the other hand, if the EC discussions and decisions were open, members would have known about the debate and the arguments for and against the initiative. Such knowledge could have only helped to prepare the rank and file to become sensitized to the new possibilities that might be emerging for taking this type of action in the various locales (or nationally) in the future.

The EC, however, clearly believes that in this situation the membership should have been kept in the dark. For they are convinced that reporting out the minority's proposal would undermine the members willingness to continue carrying out the previously agreed-upon majority line. This is nonsense. For it assumes that single-minded action by the membership is possible only if it has a single idea in its mind. The EC also ignores the fact that the kind of opening seized upon by the EC for April 26 will have to be recognized and acted upon, countless times in the future, by the branches with no prompting from the EC. The EC refuses to see the elementary fact that to effectively initiate actions in the class, the whole membership must be able to hold at least two (often contrary) ideas at once. If we are not made available a variety of possible strategies, how will the membership recognize the opportunities for implementing new strategies when these opportunities are presented by changing conditions?

It might be replied to all this that the EC will do its best to educate the membership to a variety of strategies; that, in particular, the EC will carry to the membership critical differences on really critical occasions--such as the kind of great questions posed by the April Days of 1917. We doubt, however, that the EC will make this reply. In their talks to the LA Branch, for example, JG and GW were quite frank in refusing to give any examples of issues dividing the EC on which the membership would surely be informed and consulted. They are doubtless aware that with the type of EC they propose, the membership can count on nothing--even when the most basic questions are at stake and no problems of security are involved. During the later 1930's, for example, the EC of the Workers Party (the predecessor of the SWP), invoked discipline to prevent James Burnham, then a member of the EC, from expressing to the membership his minority position on even such an important question as whether or not the Party should remain inside the reformist Socialist Party (which it had entered in the famous 'French Turn'). Burnham wanted to oppose remaining inside the SP, but the leadership had decided to stay. And even on such an obviously crucial question, they refused to allow Burnham to speak to the New York branch. The effect was, inevitably, to set an apparently

united leadership against the membership—a membership which had many elements within it strongly supporting Burnham's position.

A Recipe For Rotten Blocs

Because the disciplined EC normally faces the membership as a monolithic bloc, it results in a highly disruptive mode of policy change: the organization of anti-leadership factions. The formation of such factions is indeed the reverse side—the normal complement—of membership passivity. Generally unable to mount an effective challenge to the EC on individual questions, there is a tendency on the part of politically dissatisfied members to try to counter the power of the unified EC by organizing themselves around a variety of not-necessarily connected or coherent disagreements into a faction in order to build up their strength. Such factions have as their common denominator only an opposition to the leadership, the proverbial "rotten bloc." But such rotten blocs do not occur by chance. They emerge as the mirror image of the face that the EC presents to the organization—a body which functions with total unity, despite important internal disagreements, i.e., a rotten bloc.

JG contends that the closed EC will in fact end clique-based factional politics, because it will prevent the leadership from forming individual constituencies. Clearly, we cannot tolerate the formation of personal constituencies (clienteles); and it is crucial that leaders and members get rid of leaders who spend their time doing this. Yet, we should not try to artificially prevent the rise of temporary, politically-based constituencies around leaders; for these will arise naturally to link leaders with rank and file members who have the same political position on a given issue. As Trotsky points out:

"Without temporary ideological groupings, the ideological life of the party is unthinkable. Nobody has yet discovered any other procedure. And those who have sought to discover it have only shown that their remedy was tantamount to strangling the ideological life of the party. Naturally, groupings as well as differences of opinion are an 'evil'. But this evil constitutes as necessary an integral part of the dialectic of party development as do toxins in the life of the human organism."
(Strategy and Tactics in the Imperialist Epoch, 1967 edn, pp. 57-58)

The point of democratic centralism is to allow these differences to be expressed and fought out as they really are, as implicating both leaders and rank and filers,—and to prevent them from taking the distorted form of a struggle between leadership and anti-leadership factions. Differences must be fought out politically; then decided by the appropriate body (ED, NC, Convention); then acted upon by the entire organization in monolithic fashion.

It would be entirely self-defeating for the IS at this time to fall back on the Cannonite organizational forms which have been the defining characteristics of the Trotskyist sects at the very moment when, in all other respects, we are bent on freeing ourselves from sectarian practices. The Cannonites assumed that only the leadership could be counted on to protect the organization from the backward consciousness, bad politics, and sloppy organizational habits which the rank and file would import into the organization. It followed that the leadership should stick together. It followed further, that to protect its position (which was necessary to protect the organization), the leadership should try to develop a base. But since this support could not be organized on the basis of political principle (since the leadership was not itself unified on the basis of political principle), what the leadership in fact organized

were pro-leadership cliques, prepared to support the "center" through thick and thin. There could be no other result. In reaction, the inevitable outcome was the formation of similarly unprincipled anti-leadership factions to challenge the leadership for control.

JG says he wants to end the bourgeois politics of circulating elites. Yet, the closed EC is a prescription for just this sort of operation. In particular, it is a formula for unprincipled faction fights which are not so much about politics as control of the organization. Such struggles naturally tend to make (politically ill-motivated) splits. It is out of such clique-based, anti-leadership faction fights that arose all of today's children and grandchildren of the SWP (SL, Workers League, and the rest). And almost all of these organizations of course operate on the same Cannonite principles and constantly give rise to ever newer True Trotskyist formations. If the EC thinks the disciplined EC is a preventative of "clique politics," they should explain why this method has so consistently given rise to clique politics throughout the history of Trotskyism.

We should not delude ourselves into thinking that our future, if based on Cannonite organizational methods, will be any different from the history of previous Trotskyist organizations. The past year can be taken as evidence of nothing. We are fortunate that today there exists wide agreement on a wide range of politics within the organization. But big changes in the objective situation are bound to come and face us with incredibly difficult problems. There will surely emerge serious differences and political groupings around these differences. We cannot allow these to wreck the organization, and the best way to see that they don't is to allow them to be expressed and openly fought out as they are, rather than suppressed and distorted into phoney leadership vs. anti-leadership faction fights. This is the real history of Bolshevism. Indeed, what is perhaps the most striking outcome of the Bolshevik internal party crisis at the time of the April Days was that in the end, despite the fact that the politics of all but one (Lenin) of the Bolshevik leaders had been entirely repudiated by the rank and file, these same leaders were allowed to remain in control. They were to remain there through 1917 and the tremendous conflicts which arose in the party in that year. Could it be that the Bolshevik rank and file retained confidence in the leadership, precisely because the leadership retained confidence in the rank and file?

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- Motions:
1. Amend document "The IS, the Revolutionary Party and Democratic Centralism" by deleting 6th paragraph on page 19 which begins "As a result..."
 2. The IS is opposed to a voluntarily or involuntarily disciplined EC.
 3. All EC deliberations and votes are to be recorded and open to the membership with the exception of those concerning security, personnel, and personal issues, which have always been considered appropriate to executive session.

V.I. Lenin: from "Letter to Iskra" 25 November 1903
submitted by JB and BB LA Branch

The following statement by Lenin, made in the period immediately following the split with the Mensheviks bears directly on organizational proposals put forward in Joel G.'s "The IS, The Revolutionary Party and Democratic Centralism": especially the questions of a disciplined executive committee (voluntarily or involuntarily), and also of what should go into the group's press.

"For indeed, just reflect on the obligations devolving on the Party from the fact that it is dealing now with the masses not only in name, we must get ever wider masses to share in all party affairs, steadily elevating them from political indifference to protest and struggle, from a general spirit of protest to the conscious adoption of Social-Democratic views, from the adoption of these views to support of the movement, from support to organized membership in the Party. Can we achieve this result without giving the widest publicity to matters on whose decision the nature of our influence on the masses will depend? The workers will cease to understand us and will desert us, as a general staff without an army, if splits take place in our ranks over trivial indifferences says the author; and it is quite true. And in order that the workers may not cease to understand us, in order that their fighting experience and proletarian instinct may teach us "leaders" something too, the organized workers must learn to keep an eye on any potential causes of splits (in any mass party such causes have always arisen and will always recur), to properly evaluate these causes, to appraise what happens in some "backwater", in Russia or abroad, from the standpoint of the interests of the entire Party, of the entire movement.

The author is thrice justified when he stresses that much will be given to our central bodies and much will be asked of them. Just so. And for that very reason the whole Party must constantly, steadily and systematically train suitable persons for the central bodies, must see clearly, as in the palm of its hand, all the activities of every candidate for these high posts, must come to know even their personal characteristics, their strong and weak points, their victories and "defeats". The author makes some remarkably acute observations, evidently based on extensive experience, about some of the causes of such defeats. And just because these observations are so acute, it is necessary that the whole Party benefit by them, that it should always see every "defeat", even if partial, of one or other of its "leaders". No political leader has a career that is without its defeats, and if we are serious when we talk about influencing the masses, about winning their "good will", we must strive with all our might not to let these defeats be hushed up in the dusty atmosphere of circles and grouplets, but have them submitted to the judgement of all. That may appear embarrassing at first sight, it may seem "offensive" sometimes to individual leaders -- but we must overcome this false feeling of embarrassment, it is our duty to the Party and to the working class. In this way, and in this way alone, shall we enable the whole body of influential Party workers (and not the chance assortment of persons in a circle or grouplet)

to know their leaders and to put each of them in his proper category. Only broad publicity will correct all bigoted, one-sided, capricious deviations, it alone will convert the at times ridiculous "squalls" between "grouplets" into useful and essential material for the self-education of the Party.

Light, more light! We need a vast orchestra; and we must acquire experience in order correctly to distribute the parts, in order to know whom to assign the sentimental violin, to whom the gruff double-bass, to whom the conductor's baton. Let the columns of the Party organ and of all Party publications indeed be thrown open hospitably to all opinions, in keeping with the author's admirable appeal; let all and sundry judge our "jangleings and wrangleings" over any "note" sounded too sharp, in the opinion of some, too flat, in the opinion of others, too raggedly, in the opinion of others still. Only through a series of such open discussions can we get a really harmonious ensemble of leaders; only given this condition will it be impossible for the workers to cease to understand us; only then will our "general staff" really be backed by the good and conscious will of an army that follows and at the same time directs its general staff.

Lenin

Collected Works, Vol. VII, pp. 117-118

~~Back~~ BRANCH ORGANIZERS

Delete last full paragraph on p. 15 and replace with:

Branch organizers have at least a double function. They are on the one hand responsible for carrying the national line in the branches. They are on the other hand responsible for encouraging members to take the initiative in ways that would strengthen the main thrust of the organization. To insure the realization of both functions and thus to have a disciplined and an active membership, branch organizers should be mutually agreed upon by the EC and the branches. The EC would discharge its responsibility to the national membership by insisting on a person who would carry the national line. By having an equal voice with the EC in choosing their branch organizer, the branch members would not be denied an initiative in regard to their own branch at the same time they are expected to take initiative in external actions. If no agreement between the EC and the branch can be reached, the EC may appoint an organizer who would serve until an agreement could be reached.

POLITICAL EXPULSIONS

Delete third full paragraph on p. 17 and replace with:

Disciplined collaboration is not easy without widespread programmatic agreement. The rights of members to disagree on program are, however, to be protected. Members are free to attempt, in a democratic fashion, to win widespread agreement for a new program. However, there are cases where these rights cannot be extended. A program that explicitly supports racism, sexism, the rule of the capitalist class, or the defeat of the working class is grounds for ~~back~~ ~~back~~ discipline and expulsion. We reject the view in our earlier Constitution that there can be no discipline over ideas. Advancing programs explicitly designed to advance racism, sexism, the rule of the capitalist class or the defeat of the working class as well as advocating racism, sexism or pro-capitalism are then to be grounds for discipline and expulsion. Moreover, attacks on the IS itself which can only lead to a systematic effort to wreck the IS cannot be protected in the way debate or legitimate programmatic alternative is protected. Thus it was correct to expel the RSL, not for explicit overt acts but mainly for attacking IS as a centrist counter-revolutionary tendency whose politics must be destroyed.

WHAT TO DO NEXT IN 1975

(By C.F. - N.Y.)

A new turn toward agitation is being taken by the I.S. Initiated by the national leadership in extreme haste — prior to the National Convention, which normally would determine such a policy — prior to the preconvention discussion which ordinarily should discuss a proposed policy.

What is being done, of course, is to present the membership at its annual Convention with a policy already taken. The Convention will be expected to formalize the new orientation for the organization and return to the locals to expand and press its implementation. In fact, the primary purpose of this convention is to organize and mobilize the membership to carry out the turn.

This may be altogether proper under exceptional circumstances. The majority as represented by its elected leadership has the right to take the organization toward a new tactical or strategic course between Conventions. It is their responsibility to respond to new events; even more, it is their duty not to miss the boat of any new important opportunities, to respond quickly to these and, in extreme cases, even change or reverse decisions of previous conventions (as they are now doing).

There is only one fly in this democratic centralist ointment: the leadership is held accountable by the membership. And when they rush a turn just prior to a Convention and implementation of it during a preconvention discussion, the leadership had better be sure — and they'd better be right. And further, it is incumbent upon the national leadership to prove to the convention delegates that they were justified in disregarding the normal way that basic policy changes are made, that is, by real convention decisions.

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What is being proposed, in the "turn toward agitation" is to take an organization of less than 250, with an industrial core of less than 100 — by means of organization and agitation, that is, through activism, discipline and centralized coordination of functioning, and by putting

forth its ideas in the form of calls to action — ostensibly to recruit and lead workers in mass actions and class struggles, and all this in a brief period of time.

The basis for this claim, is, of course, not superhuman ability on our part. We are to be aided by the deepgoing and pervasive economic crisis which has created, it is claimed, the beginnings of changes in mass consciousness to the extent that a relatively significant number of workers will be responsive to our action calls — that is, to our agitation.

Is this a realistic portrayal of the American scene today? Is this

an accurate picture of present working class consciousness? And is this how the revolutionary party will be built in the United States at this time? These are the central questions posed by the policy of the new turn.

* * * * *

In the hope of dealing clearly with the real issues in question and now peripheral or unchallenged propositions, let me start by stating what my differences with the NC document "THE TURN TOWARD BOLSHEVIZATION" are not about.

No one quarrels with the rank and file strategy, with class struggle unionism methods, with our constant search for an interventionist mode (which is not, however, always the same as an agitational mode). All of us also agree that we have much to learn from ISGB methods (which parallel in many ways those of the SWP and of the WP in their best periods.)

(One of the things we would do well not to learn would be the crude method we attribute falsely to the Bolsheviks, embodied in the constant policy of bending the stick — which we confuse with emphasizing and prioritizing. We have made a virtue and at times even a necessity of this pseudo-Bolshevism as if refinement and accuracy of judgment were unattainable and, indeed, were not essential.)

The question in dispute is not do we need to become a workers combat organization, nor is it do we want to enter an agitational period. Of course we do.

But that does not answer the real questions, which, very concretely are: are the objective and subjective conditions in the U.S. such that we can, today, do more than project the possibility of entering such a period of agitation in the next year or two, provided our cadre and organization are sufficiently prepared. To need it, to wish it, is not enough. Are we today (not in 1978) in a period when it is really possible to double our members — and to make that doubling not just quantitative but qualitative — i.e., can we expect to recruit 250 members with a decisive worker component in the U.S. today — in 1975 — as the NC claims? Are we, in short, really in an agitational period, as distinct from propaganda, rank and file caucus building and interventionist stage?

We know that timing can make all the difference. Indeed, proper timing is so essential that just as "justice delayed becomes justice denied," so a "right" line at the wrong time can be a "wrong" line.

Where are we today? What are our tasks and real prospects today? Are we in a position for a turn to agitation?

There are many examples in the history of our movement to which we can look to see concretely how and when one makes a "turn to agitation." Let us take two of these.

SWP

IN THE U.S. IN 1946-47, THE SWP (the WP was declining) projected a deep-going agitational period and made a turn toward agitation. With an erroneous prognosis of deepening immediate capitalist economic crisis — with a total underestimation of the long restabilization and expansion of international (primarily American) capital, and an overestimation of the revolutionary insurgency of the European working class, the American Trotskyists nevertheless successfully turned toward agitation. For, despite their theoretical errors, they had a lot going for them at that time to justify their turn toward agitation: A membership of 1800, decisively working class, several hundred blacks, a UAW fraction of about 125, other national fractions numbering several hundred, respected rank & file worker leaders with as much as 20 years in the plants, several dozen local union presidents. A disciplined cadre membership, a national committee with many years of mass leadership experience in many industries and a direct personal historic continuity in revolutionary politics and class struggle going back 30 to 40 years — back through the general strikes of the '30s, the impact of the Russian Revolution and the formation of the American CP, personal links back to Debs and the opposition to World War I and back to the IWW.

With all this going for them, they wrongly conceived that they were entering a pre-revolutionary period. But they were not wrong in conceiving it an agitational period and they were not wrong in turning toward agitation.

They had reason to believe that the time for the turn had come:

- (1) They correctly read the significance of a labor upsurge involving two and a half million workers on strike in one 3-month period, increasing militancy and working class politicalization including incipient moves toward independent political action in Michigan and other states.
- (2) They were recruiting 30 to 40 new members a week, largely workers (they projected 10,000 members by the next (1948) bi-annual convention).
- (3) In L.A., for example, they were able to initiate demonstrations against and defeat would-be fascists who tried to establish a national base from that city. Although these demonstrations were initially led by student members which virtually closed down the L.A. school system (including all the black schools), the demonstrations culminated in massive picket lines of 30,000 C.I.O. trade unionists against fascism — demonstrations for which SWP delegates to the AFL-CIO council were responsible, against the wishes of the bureaucrats and Stalinists. It was these subjective and objective circumstances which led to and justified that historic and successful "turn to agitation" in 1946.

By 1948 this period was over and American Trotskyists experienced a dozen years of decline and isolation. Were they wrong in making their turn? They were wrong in hitching their wagon to a faulty analysis of the post-war world as pre-revolutionary, of making a mechanical link between economic crisis and labor upsurge, of not theoretically preparing their cadre sufficiently for possible variants of economic and political developments. And they paid the price for these errors.

But they were not wrong in recognizing the real opportunities of the period, the opportunities of turning toward agitation, action and leadership of mass actions. They were right to make special recruitment campaigns, develop rank and file groups and many other national campaign activities. Revolutionists are always correct in pressing for agitation when conditions are ripe — even though reversals in objective and subjective conditions could take place in the future. Who is to say that the class

actions of today couldn't alter the outcome and even change the conditions of tomorrow's class struggles.

Where are the conditions today which remotely resemble the period of 1946-47? Where is the labor upsurge and militancy? Where is the revolutionary cadre situated to promote and take advantage of such a period? Where, comrades, is the basis for a turn toward agitation in the U.S. of 1975?

ISGB

The ISGB turn to agitation is a second classic case from which we receive inspiration but which we must also understand concretely if we are not to learn the wrong lessons. We have to learn from the ISGB, not mimic it.

The ISGB entered its agitational, worker combat phase in a certain context. It always wanted to be a workers combat organization and armed itself for that purpose (Just as we do). But they also generally knew what was possible.

It was not until 1970 that such a turn was possible in Great Britain for the ISGB. Under what circumstances?

(1) Unlike the American working class, the British working class was profoundly affected by the events of '68 and its aftermath — events which have dominated the working class politics of Europe to this day.

(2) The working class of Great Britain had gone through a unique experience which had helped shape its consciousness and combativity. For years the British working class movement continued to suffer from (a) demoralization following great defeats, The General Strike of 1926, and (b) a steadily declining standard of living relative to that of the continental working class. The profound decay of British capitalism resulted in a situation in which British workers went from a standard of living 30-40% above continental workers to 30% below. The growing shop floor fights, the shop stewards movement in Britain, and wave of political strikes, were a response of the British workers to this historic development.

(3) To these molecular developments and changes in consciousness must be added a third fact: the nature of the ISB. By 1970 with 800 members before its real turn to agitation and recruitment, the ISB was, in per capita terms, 16 times as large as we (and relatively twice as large as the SWP in its own prime and its agitational period). Equally important, the ISB had a leadership with a past, and experience which far more closely paralleled (though it was not identical with) that of the SWP. The ISGB had leaders with 20-30 years experience, leaders who had built a body of theory, especially about their own labor movement, leaders who included individuals with real standing in the labor/left movement (Just as the SWP — in addition to its worker leaders had, at one point in the 1930s, the allegiance of intellectual leaders such as James T. Farrell, Edmund Wilson, Hook, Burnham, and many others.)

It is in this combination of circumstances — not out of voluntarism — that the ISGB was able to seriously project a real, not paper, turn to agitation with a real chance of success.

THE CURRENT CRISIS AND THE TURN TOWARD AGITATION

The "turn to agitation" is a tactic every revolutionary group will and must go through at some stage (or several times) if it is ever to become more than an irrelevant sect. But it does not follow that that stage is always on the agenda. Is it today for us, in the U.S.? Or is such a turn today bound to be counterproductive?

The NC rationale that this is the time to make the turn rests on two errors — objective (economic) and subjective. We take it for granted that none among us will question the fact that the relationship between economic crisis and proletarian response is not a one-to-one relationship, but is an immensely complex one. Further, that working class upsurges and the agitational opportunities opened up by them, are not always linked directly to depression but can arise in periods of economic upturn and growth as well.

It must therefore be clear that the subjective conditions will greatly affect how we respond to economic crisis, just as the more obvious economic situation influences how we approach the class and attempt to bring the objective and subjective into closer correspondence.

THE OBJECTIVE CONDITIONS:

There can be little doubt that world capitalism is going through its first real economic crisis since World War II. As for the details of the crisis, some of the NC anticipations may well materialize. It is my hunch that they will.* Some of the projections and anticipations may well not materialize.

*The crisis of capitalism is real. Deeper than any post-World War II crisis, international in scope, pervasive in all advanced capitalist countries simultaneously, and coupled with a dual crippling inflation and unemployment. After its shaking down process, which will load as much upon the working class as it can get away with, the best educated prognosis of the bourgeoisie is for a relatively brief cyclical upturn which will maintain a built-in high degree of unemployment and high inflation rate. While some of the international bourgeoisie would like to "bite the bullet" now, the majority don't dare, for quiescence is not to be counted on by the working class and an all out assault on the working class is too risky. Their best bet is to take their recovery now through state intervention and try to improve their ability to handle the international class struggle in several years when a new and perhaps deeper crisis is in the offing. This prognosis and ruling class strategy can, of course, be upset should the present episode of crisis create a collapse in any sector or country which in turn might produce devastating effects on the closely interlinked international capitalist structure. They must also not forget the revolutionary potential possible today in many advanced countries by the working class. Since France of 1968, no one should doubt this explosive potential. And one can only marvel at the rapid radicalization of the Portuguese working class after 40 odd years of fascism, and the absence of a revolutionary party. This lesson cannot but leave an indelible impression on American revolutionists who have either experienced first hand or been affected by almost 30 years of quiescence of the U.S. working class.

In the U.S., the present recession has manifested itself in the same way as the international capitalist crisis. While emerging from this recession, the U.S. capitalist class may be in a better trade position due to the lowering of real wages, which manifests itself by relatively lower cost of output per hour. This has been accomplished at the expense of the

(footnote continued on page 6)

But it will be foolish for any of us to ignore the feet of clay of these anticipations and projections. They are based largely on the projections and hunches of the N.Y. Times and Business Week analysts which are, in turn, based on no theory of any value whatever. This "mixed-bag of facts" will not bear scrutiny for consistency or for its sudden discovery of the new 2-1/2 to 3-1/2 year business cycle, which just happens by accident to coincide with our political hunch that 1978 is it!

Nor can we ignore the NC's astonishing certainty of what the range of growth, of unemployment, and of inflation will be throughout the world during the next 3 years.

Apart from the irresponsibility of such statistics sucked out of the infallible bourgeois theorists, it is especially important that the NC also ignores in fact the future options open to the state, the international ruling class and other variables which could have an enormous impact on the NC's "timetable". (That the references to these other forces are indeed just lip service is demonstrated by the fact that they play no role in the NC's projections.)

This being the case, the NC's objective (economic) basis for the "turn" becomes a very shaky basis indeed.

THE SUBJECTIVE CONDITIONS:

But how about the subjective conditions we face today whose importance we cannot ignore — the state of class consciousness and the state of the revolutionary party.

The effect of the past decade on American workers as a whole has been characterized, so far, by uncertainty and caution. Prepared till now to settle cheaply, protective of their jobs, the working class in recent years, has not manifested much combativity. Strikes have declined and so have wildcats. However, contrary to the deep fear that encrusted the working class during the early years of the 1929 Depression, the class today has not been defeated and the potential for radicalization is present. Uneven and combined development in America may even permit American workers to go through stages much more quickly than the political development of combativity of workers. But this has not yet occurred to any significant degree and makes it incumbent on revolutionaries to tailor their strategy accordingly.

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(continued from page 5)

American working class by keeping wage increases short of the rise of soaring prices. With the front loading of wage contracts so that the larger part of increases are in the first year, things are not slated to improve for American workers. And while unemployment has continually risen, SUB has run out for many in auto and unemployment compensation is about to for the many now out of work for a year.