

---

PARTY BULLETIN

---

---

contents

---

1. UNITY NEGOTIATIONS
  - a) Letter from S.W.P. Minority
  - b) Reply by Comrade Shachtman
2. REPORT FROM SAN PEDRO BRANCH
3. LETTER ON "QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS"  
by SCOPA
4. LETTER FROM SAN FRANCISCO ON SMITH

---

VOL. 1 - NO. 2 (New Series)

December, 1945

---

November 15, 1945

Max Shachtman, National Secretary  
Workers Party  
114 West 14 St  
New York City

Dear Comrade:

The SWP plenum on unity in reference to the proposal of the WP negotiating committee on a tendency bulletin in the united party, merely states the following: the WP "would insist on the right to publish their own discussion bulletin under their own control." Ostensibly, therefore, the SWP majority does not take a position on this question. However, in the actual life of the party it has become clear that the majority advances the tendency bulletin proposal as a great stumbling block to unity.

For our part, we do not believe that this is the real stumbling block to unity. Nevertheless we believe that it should be removed. The plenum refused to take note in its resolution of our distinction between the right to a tendency bulletin and the exercise of that right. We believe that the WP should make that distinction and pledge itself not to exercise the right in the united party under the following conditions:

(1) That the SWP cooperate closely with the WP for the purpose of preparing the membership of both parties for unity, and that after unity there will be real cooperation of the SWP and the WP;

(2) That the SWP recognize the right of a minority to issue its own bulletin for the purpose of convincing the membership of the correctness of its views.

Needless to say, nobody could demand nor could the WP comrades agree, to refrain forever from exercising the right of a minority to issue its own bulletin. No reasonable minority would exercise that right without great justification, but no reasonable majority would ever prohibit it from exercising it. If the right is used unjustifiably, a majority should easily be able to discredit a minority for doing so. But a united Trotskyist party is so all-important today that for the sake of it we appeal to the comrades of the WP to pledge themselves not to exercise this right, subject to the conditions indicated above.

Fraternally yours,

Felix Morrow  
for the SWP Minority

November 27, 1945

Felix Morrow  
SWP Minority Group  
214 West 16th St.  
New York, N. Y.

Dear Comrade Morrow:

Our Political Committee has agreed to the proposals on the question of the tendency bulletin made by the Minority Group of the Socialist Workers Party in your letter of November 15. Your proposals afford us still another occasion for reiterating and amplifying our position. It has been stated with sufficient clarity in our written communications to the Socialist Workers Party and at the two oral discussions that took place between the delegations of the two Parties prior to the recent Plenum of the SWP.

What was involved from the very beginning of the discussion on the unity of the two organizations was not a determination of the Workers Party comrades to issue a tendency bulletin of their own on the very first day of the existence of the projected unity Party, regardless of circumstances. For example, so far as our Political Committee was concerned, this was made clear in the first report made by its representative to a general membership meeting of the New York Local of our Party, a report substantially repeated to most of the other Locals of our organization several months ago.

As you know, the question involved in reality was the right of the minority in the united Party to issue such a tendency bulletin. The SWP Plenum Resolution is literally correct in stating our position as an insistence "on the right to publish their own discussion bulletin under their own control". In the oral discussions between the delegations of the two Parties, it was not we but the principal representative of the S.W.P. who called attention to the fact that, for example, the leadership of the American Trotskyist movement, himself included, had freely permitted the Ochler group to publish an internal bulletin of its own inside the organization in 1934-1935. Therefore, he added, it was not a question of the "right" to such a bulletin "in the abstract", a right which could presumably be granted; but rather a question of our "attitude". We could not then and cannot today construe this otherwise than as a reference to our opinions about the present majority faction of the SWP. These opinions we expressed candidly to the SWP delegation. We pointed to what is generally known, namely, the fact that our comrades do not have sufficient confidence in the present leadership of the SWP, particularly with reference to its record toward inner-party opponents

and critics, and are therefore concerned with assuring their democratic rights in the united Party by having the minority's right to its own bulletin jointly acknowledged by both sides. We are perfectly ready to admit that abstractly considered this lack of confidence may prove to be exaggerated, or even groundless. In like manner, we admit that common work and common experiences in the united Party may cause the comrades of the Workers Party to abandon their opinions on this score. They are not ready, however, to abandon them merely on demand. What they are prepared to abandon in the interests of unity, has already been made amply clear and precise. We consider it enough.

We can go further and say that even the question of the right to issue a tendency bulletin is, in a sense, only the formal side of the matter. Ordinarily, it would not occupy the place of importance it has been given in the discussion on unity. As you so rightly put it, "we do not believe that this is the real stumbling block to unity." The "stumbling block" is the conception of the SWP Majority Group of the kind of Party revolutionary Marxists should have and build. Our Party shares with the Minority Group of the SWP the conception of the Bolsheviks which was fought for with such emphasis and clarity, especially since 1923-1924, by Trotsky and his supporters. The SWP Majority, in practice and often in words as well, holds the conception of a "monolithic" Party, which flies in the face of our whole tradition. We are compelled to say now that unity of the two organizations is possible only if this conception is abandoned. It is primarily in this sense that the question of the tendency bulletin is so important. It serves as the concrete test, at the present junction, of the conceptions held on the kind of Party we must build -- a sterile "monolithic" faction, or a united democratically-centralized party of action in which there is freedom of opinion and grouping, and the assurance of democratic rights for all views compatible with the fundamental program of revolutionary Marxism.

This is how the real issue stands. To it, the other considerations can well be subordinated, including the matter of whether a minority would issue a tendency bulletin the morning after the unification, a year afterward, or at all. It is in this sense that we are prepared to accept the proposals of the SWP Minority.

Fraternally yours,

MS/CW

Max Shachtman  
National Secretary,  
Workers Party

Copy to:

J. P. Cannon, National Secretary  
Socialist Workers Party  
116 University Pl.  
New York, N.Y.

800

San Pedro, Calif.  
November, 1945

Dear Paul,

I have been asked to remit information about Pedro's sundry activities.

We are running two classes. One advanced class on American Labor History, for members and advanced contacts, and an elementary class, the outline for which is enclosed. The elementary class has an attendance of about fourteen or fifteen, a couple of new members and the rest are contacts and prospects.

We run a monthly forum, the leaflets and ads for which I will enclose when indicated, and we run a monthly party, the invitation for which is also enclosed.

We are running a minor sub drive for LA and of course the requested NI drive, responses for which will be remitted by Lucy.

We are also running a recruitment drive, which will extend over a period of time, in friendly competition with the LA branch.

There has been some complaint on the part of the newer people that their education isn't sufficient to cope with contacts, so as you can see by the minutes, we are going to have educationals devoted to contacting every so often. This first one will be in the form of two people as contacts and one as the contactor, in which we hope to dramatize the usual questions and problems we run up against in contacting, to be followed by questions thrown out by anyone in the branch and general discussion, both on political questions that come up and on questions of approach. We will have the educational director send in our educational program, which the Exec has planned carefully with an eye to taking care of the questions that don't come up at classes or at forums. Also, we have instituted a monthly bull session for members to air all their questions and have opportunity to have complete political discussion on such things as China, Russia, the National Question, general perspectives etc.

As soon as the class on American History is finished, we will start having classes on the educational outlines; so right now we put in a plea that they come out regularly. We plan to run say three or four sessions on each bulletin, with different people leading it. The way our contacting situation looks now we'll be running an elementary class almost constantly.

We should have the six members we gave ourselves six months to get within something closer to six weeks.

Contacting, Smith campaign, Union work continues as usual. That's all for now sir. More later.

Rickie

801

November 1, 1945.

Editorial Board of the Bulletin:

Dear Comrades:

In a recent Internal Bulletin there appears over the initials M.S. an EDITORIAL NOTE to the QUESTIONS TO THE ITALIAN COMRADES AND THEIR ANSWERS.

In the interest of objective, if belated, consideration of the information and ideas presented by the Italian comrades on some aspects of the situation in Italy and the national question, I attempted to get Comrade Schactman to withdraw his EDITORIAL NOTE. This he declined to do and I am therefore compelled to call attention to the following:

1. The QUESTIONS TO THE ITALIAN COMRADES AND THEIR ANSWERS were submitted for publication in the Internal Bulletin over a year ago by individual members of the San Francisco Branch and officially by the Branch itself. Because of the long delay in publication some of the material has obviously lost its timeliness. If, nevertheless, we have, during the course of a year, persisted for its publication, it is just as much for the democratic principle involved as for the educational and informational value which the material still retains.

2. Comrade Schactman in his EDITORIAL NOTE says: "The questions, as is evident from reading them, could have no other result than to misrepresent our party's position and to discredit it in the eyes of the Italian comrades."

An unbiased reading of the questions will demonstrate conclusively that there is not a single one which does not raise for clarification, fairly and objectively, or inquire into, some of the problems of the Italian situation, part of which are related to the national question.

3. As sole proof of its charge that the questions to the Italian comrades resulted in misrepresentation of the position of the party, the EDITORIAL NOTE singles out, in its words, "the question of our alleged position toward the Italian Committee of National Liberation...which our party presumably considers 'progressive'. The question is asked for the purpose of eliciting from the Italian comrades a 'refutation' of our 'standpoint'..."

This is a far-fetched and untrue assumption. An examination of the questions will show that not one of them referred specifically to support of the Italian Committee of National Liberation. As author of the questions, for which I take full responsibility, I did not formulate such a question simply because I knew very well that the party did not support the Italian Committee of National Liberation nor could I imagine any Trotskyist supporting it, and it was consequently not an issue requiring "refutation" by the Italian comrades.

The question which related in any way to the subject read: "Does it (the Italian Trotskyist Group) consider the 'national liberation' movements progressive?" I submit that this is a legitimate and loyal question

2

dealing not with an alleged but real issue. The Italian comrades, in answering this question, noted that "The only 'national liberation' group is the Committee of National Liberation..." which they then submitted to an analysis. Neither the question nor the answer can be construed as implying support by our party of the Italian Committee of National Liberation.

4. The EDITORIAL NOTE attempts to link the questions with the Peck letter. It says: "One of the comrades who attended the 'questions - and - answers' session, Peck, after hearing the 'authoritative' voice, drew the indicated conclusions. He attacked our party in the organ of the British section, the Socialist Appeal, opening his letter with the statement that 'I have just heard the Schachtmanite position on the national question!...'"

It is not necessary to misconstrue Peck's words. According to Peck, who was a staunch Cannonite supporter, the source of his conclusion regarding the party's support of the Italian Committee of National Liberation came from a conversation with comrade X, a conversation to which neither Comrade Schachtman nor I were witness. Whatever Peck got from that conversation, it is not very likely that an old experienced comrade like himself could have mistaken the voice of Comrade X as "authoritative". It is admitted by all that the comrade in question is new, inexperienced and without sufficient theoretical background. What he is presumed to have said can in no wise reflect on the written questions which were given to him to be answered by the Italian comrades. They stand on their own merits.

5. The EDITORIAL NOTE implies that, in misrepresenting the party's position, the questions contributed to the political confusion of the Italian section, hampering its development and effectiveness, and added to the deterioration of their relations with the party.

Since we have shown that the questions did not misrepresent the position of the party, it follows that they could not be responsible for contributing to the evils outlined by the EDITORIAL NOTE. However, the matter goes deeper than that. Whatever the source of the initial misunderstanding it is a fact that this has long been cleared up. The Italian section through documents, personal contact, correspondence, etc., has been aware for some time now of the real position of the party. What, then, is the real and more lasting cause for the party's dissatisfaction with the politics of and relationship to the Italian section? It is simply this: the Italian comrades do not agree with the party position on the national question. At bottom, therefore, it is not a question of belaboring an initial and temporary misunderstanding, which can and has been disposed of, but rather, of clarifying the political issues and, from Comrade Schachtman's viewpoint, of convincing the Italian comrades of the incorrectness of their position.

For our part, we, who supported the Resolution of the San Francisco Branch on the National Question, find, generally, in the ideas expressed by the Italian comrades, not a source of confusion, but the application by them of the traditional principles of Trotskyism to the Italian scene. It is incumbent on those who think otherwise to meet the questions and answers politically and to take them as a point of departure for political analysis and criticism. The EDITORIAL NOTE, in skirting the real issue, can only hamper rather than aid objective consideration of the basic problem.

Fraternally,

Scopa.

803

CORRECTIONS TO THEQUESTIONS TO THE ITALIAN COMRADES AND THEIR ANSWERS

- Page 1, Line 10 of Answer to Question No. 1: Substitute "disarm" for "de-tain".
- Page 1, Line 14 of Answer to Question No. 1: Substitute "anti-fascist" for "anti-soviet".
- Page 2, Line 9 from top of page: Substitute "Red" for "But".
- Page 4, Line 1 from top of page: Insert "together with" after "struggle".
- Page 4, Line 8 of Answer to Question No. 5: After "revolutionary" insert "situation. The only way for the vanguard to grow, for a Bolshevik Party to gain support of the masses, is to recognize the reality of the approaching revolutionary".
- Page 4, after the No. 6 insert the question: "Are there any Bordigists in Italy?"

The following questions and answers were omitted from the QUESTIONS TO THE ITALIAN COMRADES AND THEIR ANSWERS:

7. Would you describe German occupied Italy as a German colony? Has the Italian bourgeoisie been expropriated by the Germans?

A. No, Northern Italy is merely the section of Italy under military domination of Germany. As far as we know, there has been no expropriation of the Italian bourgeoisie by the Germans in the North.

8. Is Italy in the category of an oppressed nation with its own national struggle against the German oppressor?

A. No. The task of the Italian workers is a class struggle against both the Italian and German bourgeoisie, and their allies are not the American or British imperialists but the German workers and the European proletariat in general.

9. Is there a people's movement in Northern Italy struggling against the German oppressor?

A. Yes, but this movement is directed equally against the Italian bourgeoisie and for the Socialist Republic. The capitalists of Northern Italy support neither the Germans nor the workers' movements, but convinced of the ultimate defeat of Germany await the coming of the Allied armies for the more effective protection of their rule.



October 29, 1948  
Berkeley, Calif.

Political Committee, W.P.

Comrades:

Labor Action has already received our article on the Anti-Smith picket line here in Oakland. Just a few words might be of interest to you with regard to our dealings with the local SUP on this matter.

The attached letter was delivered to their Organizer the day we found out just when Smith was to be in the Bay Area. The Organizer stated that before we could discuss matters of a joint committee, we would have to thrash out whether there was indeed sufficient tactical agreement between our two groups to warrant joint action. Merely in order to facilitate the matter, I agreed to meet with their Organizer before their branch meeting, so that their meeting could have the benefit of preliminary discussion between us on this matter.

Red and I met with their organizer and another member. They started out by stating that their idea was to mobilize the labor movement, and that all efforts should be bent towards that aim. We agreed that this came first, and pointed out that already the previous night Red had gotten a resolution through the SUP meeting attacking Smith, and that copies of this resolution would be sent to the AFL Council, and all shoreside unions.

They told us of several unions in which they were getting resolutions introduced. (In at least one or two cases these never materialized). We pointed out that in view of the Detroit experience with such resolutions passed by CP controlled CIO councils, it would no doubt be necessary for us to distribute leaflets to union meetings informing the membership of CIO council decisions and calling on them to come to the picket line. We suggested that if such leaflets were written over the joint signatures of our two organizations it would permit us to distribute our forces so as to ensure a maximum circulation to such leaflets. This they flatly rejected, stating that they will put out leaflets only over their own signatures, and that even if this meant that workers in some unions would be getting almost identical leaflets over the signatures of both organizations, while others wouldn't even hear of the picket line, this was all to the good.

Further, they rejected flatly any suggestions that the two organizations try to mobilize maximum forces to picket, even if the CIO should not move. Finally, they rejected flatly the formation of a joint committee of the two organizations to plan strategy, consult on all matters pertaining to the picket line, publicity, etc. They said that this was trying to form "A united front for a united front." We stated that this would seem to be no criminal idea, as lo and behold, we were even then the closest organizations on the matter - in fact, the only ones which generally agree that the fascist should be met by massed working class action on the scene of their activities.

The final upshot of our conference was that they agreed to exchange information with us on action taken by unions and other groups which our two organizations were contacting, and on anything else of importance. Further, they agreed (at a later date) to have our picket captains consult on anything which might happen on the picket line of mutual interest, and try to act together there.

After Smith had been stopped from talking in San Francisco, and his Oakland meeting was announced, we again contacted them to discuss what to do. (I would like to point out that to my knowledge they at no time tried to contact us about anything.) Here again they said they would not move without the labor movement, this time embodied in the Council for Civic Unity - a group composing CIO, Jewish and Negro and other liberal organizations. We said that we couldn't wait for them to make up their minds at a Thursday meeting, when two great union mass meetings were being called for the same night to which leaflets should be distributed. By this time there was no question in anyone's mind (from phone talks with the leaders of a number of organizations) that there would be a mass picket line. So we went ahead, put out our leaflets, distributed them widely, and showed up early on the picket line with the biggest and most striking placards (including a red one with large white letters "Workers Party". We and the YPSL from the campus started marching at about 7:00 PM (the time at which the doors were opened at the auditorium). Red, our picket captain, took charge of the whole line with the help of the YPSL captain. The Cannonites arrived when there were a couple of hundred people marching, but refused to join the line till the Council for Civic Unity people showed up. By 7:30, when the Council sound truck appeared, there were over 1,500 marchers in the line. Red was still directing it, giving the slogans, talking to reporters, starting the songs, etc., etc. Of course, the sound truck took over. With a sickening drivel about "the united community", injunctions to stand and sing "God Bless America", and finally, with a demand at about 9:00 PM that everyone stand still, sing the Star Spangled Banner, then leave their placards and go home, the sound truck fouled up the line.

Some of our people, as well as the Yipsels, wanted to try to keep the line going. We decided, however, after some hesitation, that as the sound truck was getting everyone to go home, it would be better for us not to give any ground to charges of trying to cause trouble or anything of the kind.

After the line had gone home a number of us went into the meeting. Smith was roundly booed by some thirty or more people in the rear of the hall. His audience consisted of about 150 old ham and eggheads. His speech was insipid, with no anti-Semitism or anti-Negro remarks during the 3/4 hours for which I listened to him. It seems that he is definitely pulling in his horns in this respect, at least for the time being. In fact, his whole speech was so flat and uninspiring that I personally have serious qualms as to whether we aren't giving the man too much importance. It is quite obvious that the ham and eggheads aren't the audience he wants. He is just using them to give himself an audience, to try and feel his way, and to get financial backing. The whole reason for the picket line, and future ones, is to train the picketers, and especially to get our own people in the groove after four years of private activity.

One side-light. One heckler who made himself particularly obnoxious to Smith was arrested on insistence of the ham and egg attorney. We raised

bail for him, and most probably he will not even be fined when he gets to court...

Of course, the unfortunate aspect of this whole Smith business is that it has completely disrupted the rest of our work for a whole week. If he speaks in San Francisco in a couple of weeks, and then again here, he will have done a fair job of sabotaging us. Though we sold a number of pamphlets on the line, and distributed LA, we didn't make a single contact. On the other hand we had to give up our own scheduled public meeting, a class, etc. No one could do contact work all week as they were taken up with getting out leaflets, distributions, etc.

My own conclusion from this whole experience is that we should use much discretion in throwing our whole forces into such activities at the present time. Now the labor movement has been aroused and picket lines will be formed with or without us. I am going to propose to the branch that in the future we do not consider that the burden of this work should fall on our overloaded shoulders. A leaflet to contacts and sympathizers, a distribution to the places where we regularly distribute LA, then a militant contingent on the line should be enough. I will let you know what the branch thinks of my analysis.

Fraternally yours,

Larry O'Connor

San Francisco, California  
October 14, 1945

Socialist Workers Party  
San Francisco Branch  
305 Grant Avenue, San Francisco.

Dear Comrades:

Gerald L. K. Smith has announced that he will come to San Francisco on October 26th. We feel that all possible effort should be made to rally the labor, left, liberal, and anti-fascist organizations against him.

The revolutionary socialists have been the only ones who in the past have understood the necessity of militant counter-action to the fascist menace. If we are to rally the labor movement here for a militant picket line and/or counter-demonstration, preliminary agreement and joint action between our two groups would double our effectiveness.

We are confident that your desire is as strong as ours to mobilize the labor movement against GLK Smith's fascist campaign. We therefore propose the immediate formation of a joint committee composed of members from our two parties which will coordinate their efforts in obtaining a united front of all anti-fascist groups.

In the event that you have any doubt as to whether the policies on tactics of the two organizations are similar enough to warrant their constituting themselves the core of the united front against Smith, we suggest that the question of policy and tactics be the first point on the agenda of the joint committee.

The time is short. We would like to have your reply as soon as humanly and organizationally possible.

Fraternally yours,

Gordon Haskell  
for the San Francisco Branch  
Workers Party

P.S. ...