

LEFT WING BULLETIN

LEFT-WING CAUCUS EXPANDS

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LEFT WING BULLETIN

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EDITORIALS

I. THE FUTURE OF THE YSL

We would like to publicly welcome into our ranks the many comrades who have joined our caucus since its formation just a short month ago. We have printed statements from some of them in this issue and urge all the comrades of the Left Wing to express their views through the LEFT-WING BULLETIN. (See pages 5-8). This issue of the LWB is evidence of the broad nature of our caucus. Various conceptions of regroupment and differing estimations of the ISL and the SWP are expressed. We stand united on the fundamental issue: opposition to dissolution of the movement and entry into the SP-SDF.

The current issue of the Young Socialist Review contains an article by Comrade Harrington, National Chairman of the YSL. In this article he raises some extremely serious charges. We refer our readers to the answer of the Chicago comrades to Comrade Harrington (p. 13).

For our part we wish to make one thing absolutely clear: none of us in the Left-Wing Caucus have any intention of splitting the YSL or subverting it in any way. We consider this charge on the part of Comrade Harrington as utterly irresponsible, coming from a leader of our organization, and certainly not one that will promote a sane and comradely discussion in our ranks. It seems to us that its aim is quite the opposite: to push a section of the YSL out of the organization.

We stand 100% opposed to any split. In almost every unit of the YSL across the country our comrades of the Left Wing are working to

The LEFT-WING BULLETIN is published under the following section of the YSL Constitution:

"Article seven, section four: Minority tendencies or caucuses may publish their own material for internal and external distribution, but they must make clear that these publications do not represent the views of the organization as a whole. All national and local mimeograph and mailing facilities shall be open to such tendencies or caucuses for use at cost."

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

Address all communications to: Wohlforth, 305 E. 21 St.,
New York 10, N.Y.

build the YSL.

In fact the very reason for our banding together was to prevent the move of the right wing towards dissolution and entry into the SP-SDF. We urge these comrades not to leave the YSL. Even if they choose to join the SP-SDF we ask that they continue their membership in the YSL and not split from it.

We hope that in the future this type of charge and this way of conducting a discussion will be abandoned by the right wing. We on our part will have nothing to do with it. In order to help restore a comradely atmosphere to the discussion, we ask Comrade Harrington to publicly retract his charges. This we consider his duty as National Chairman of the whole YSL, including its left wing. We ourselves will do all in our power to preserve and strengthen the YSL and prevent any sort of split from occurring. You have it from us in writing, comrades, and you can hold us to our word.

II. WHAT WE MEAN BY "UNITY TO THE LEFT"

In her article in the current YSR Comrade Debbie used our slogan "Unity to the Left" to poke some gentle ridicule at the YSL Left Wing. We would be the last to deny Debbie her fun, but the basic idea expressed is a serious one, and should be taken seriously.

Debbie asks: "But unity to the left of whom or what? To the left of the YSL?" No, comrade, we do not mean what you assume, that we simply want to join the SWP. We are for socialist youth regroupment, meaning the regroupment of socialist youth on the basis of pro-working class, pro-socialist politics. What we mean when we call this unity "to the left" is simply this: we wish to unite first of all with those socialists who, in the spectrum of those with whom unity is conceivable, stand furthest to the left, "left" being defined as pro-working class, anti-capitalist, anti-Stalinist. That is the political basis on which we seek to regroup American socialist youth: not on the basis of a hard and fast "revolutionary" program, not on the basis of acceptance of the guidance of any existing socialist political organization, but in the independent, broad, socialist youth organization, the YSL.

We frankly and openly orient to those youth who are in the process of breaking with Stalinism in the name of real socialism, who are as opposed to the pro-capitalist politics of social democracy as they are to the anti-democratic politics of Stalinism. We believe that it is possible to build a socialist (note well, socialist, not social-democratic) youth movement in America today, and we intend to build such a movement. That is what we mean by "Unity to the Left."

III. FOR AN OPEN AND PUBLIC DISCUSSION OF THE UNITY QUESTION

Three recent actions in the YSL could place serious limitations on the possibility of conducting an open and public discussion of

the unity question.

First, the NAC recently received a request, approved unanimously by the Berkeley Unit, that the pages of Challenge be open to articles opposing the NEC unity proposal. All the comrades favoring this unity on the NAC voted against this request and thus barred Challenge to the minority. Also by so doing they went against the ruling of a higher body, the NEC, which passed a motion in September to allow the minority access to Challenge.

But most important of all, these comrades went against the basic tradition of our movement which calls for an open and public discussion of the differences amongst us. It has been the habit in the past to allow discussions to take place in Challenge; now when an all-important question is raised, involving the dissolution of our movement, these comrades denied the minority access to Challenge.

Following this NAC meeting Comrade Wohlforth sent a protest to all the units of the YSL. He and other comrades of the minority then brought up the issue at the recent N.Y. YSL business meeting where the NAC majority persisted in defending its decision to bar Challenge to the minority. In spite of the fact that one pro-SP-SDF unity comrade publicly defended the minority's right to access to Challenge, the New York Unit turned down a motion asking the NAC to reverse its decision.

In the meantime several protests were sent to the NO from other units and at the next NAC meeting the majority reversed itself and opened Challenge to the minority's views in a limited way. We applaud this step of the NAC majority and hope that it will lead to establishing an open and public debate that will be fair to all in the YSL and will remove from the discussion any contention on this issue.

We hope that with the general consideration that the discussion must be conducted primarily in the YSR and in the LWB, the editors of Challenge will take a sane attitude towards printing future discussion articles and letters. We of the minority of course do not want in any way to inhibit the normal functioning of Challenge and we feel that this matter can be worked out without resorting to a series of detailed notions on the number of inches of space to be given to whom and when.

Secondly, also in answer to the request of the entire Berkeley Unit, the NAC has refused to print a denial in Challenge of the statement made in Labor Action that the YSL supports unity with the SP-SDF. The Berkeley comrades simply requested that on this basic question -- until such time as the membership itself speaks -- this position be referred to as the "draft" or "tentative" position of the YSL. Thus they were asking only for the same rights given in the recent debate in the CP.

In order not to prejudice the discussion and not to give a false impression to the public we of the Left-Wing Caucus ask that in the

future the position adopted by the NEC be labelled so as to make it clear that the issue has not yet been decided by the membership. This seems to us to be a very modest proposal and in all fairness we urge the comrades throughout the country to support us on this.

Thirdly, we note with regret that the New York Exec has refused to allow Comrade Wohlforth to give one class out of four even though the three other classes were given by majority supporters and two of them were actually used to attack the minority. At one of them Comrade Shachtman of the IOL spoke and publicly attacked the left-wing members of the YSL. We consider this an unfraternal act on the part of the IOL and feel that it amounts to interference in the internal political life of our organization. We hope it will not happen again.

We hope that ample opportunity will be given for the minority to present its views in debates and at public forums. Also we hope that no moves will be made to limit the functioning in the organization of members of the minority.

We urge the New York comrades to reconsider their actions and allow members of the minority to participate in the education of the unit. Such an approach will strengthen the unity of the YSL and will lead to an atmosphere conducive for the continuation of the discussion.

We know that the members of the YSL are dedicated to the principles of internal democracy and that they will support us on these proposals. (For the communication of Comrade Wohlforth regarding the Challenge matter see p. 55.)

FROM OUT OF THE PAST WHICH SOME FORGET SO EASILY

It seems, moreover, that our "approach" is wrong because... it leads to splits prior to the revolution. It would have been better if our theorist(Editor of the Socialist Call--ed) of "trotskyism>equals-Stalinism" had remembered the proverb that it is imprudent to speak of a rope in the house of the hanged. Is it not a fact that before the unmentionable virus of "Trotskyism" entered the body of the S.P., that Party passed through three splits, carried out in such a demoralizing way that they resulted neither in numerical growth or consolidation, nor in political clarification? And is it not also a fact that the Centrists in the Socialist Party, who have had but one audible war-cry--"Unity at all costs!"--have followed a policy which has left only a broken shell of the old Socialist Party?

--From the introduction . To Leon Trotsky's Stalinism and Bolshevism written by Max Shachtman

YSL LEFT-WING DECLARATION

The National Executive Committee has adopted a resolution calling for unity with the Socialist Party-Social Democratic Federation. This action calls into question the continued existence of the YSL as an independent organization of revolutionary socialist youth.

The NEC resolution states that it is for unity on the basis of the present political program of the SP-SDF. This program is reactionary and anti-socialist. In world politics the SP-SDF supports U.S. imperialism and its basic policies. In American politics the SP-SDF supports the labor bureaucracy and its alliance with the Democratic Party.

Genuine democratic socialism has nothing in common with these policies. On the contrary, the socialist movement can be built only by political struggle against the class-collaborationist and pro-imperialist politics of the social democracy.

If the YSL unites with the SP-SDF it will be abandoning this struggle -- as is already shown by the refusal of the YSL national leadership to criticize the SP-SDF in public, and by the refusal of this national leadership to attempt to recruit members from the SP-SDF into our organization.

We are members of the YSL because we want to assist in the formation of a revolutionary democratic socialist youth movement in the U.S. We are not sectarians. We are willing to unite with all socialist-minded youth on the basis of the minimum program of genuine socialism: independent political action of the working class and the oppressed peoples here and everywhere throughout the world, against both Stalinist and capitalist oppressors.

We consider that the basic question posed by the proposal for unity with the SP-SDF is: either to build the YSL on a socialist political basis or to liquidate the YSL in its present form on the basis of the anti-socialist politics of the SP-SDF.

We believe that this is a question of such vital importance that it is our duty to form a caucus in order to present our views to the members of the League and to save the socialist youth movement from the political disaster of the YSL liquidating itself into the SP-SDF.

We call on all members of the YSL who remain committed to building a real socialist youth movement here, in America, and now, in 1957, to join with us in this undertaking.

LEFT WING CAUCUS NOW HAS 29 MEMBERS!

10 JOINED IN ONE MONTH!

We wish to welcome into our caucus the ten new signers of the Declaration who are listed below along with the other members of the caucus. We feel that this response is indicative of the desire of a large section of the YSL to continue to build the YSL. These comrades have faith both in their own organization and in the future of a militant socialist youth movement in this country.

We urge all other comrades of the YSL who are considering joining the caucus to send their names in right away in order to make the next issue of the BULLETIN. Those who are interested in the basis upon which our caucus is formed are referred to the "YSL Left-Wing Declaration" reprinted in this issue. (See page 6).

-- The Editors

SIGNERS OF THE LEFT-WING DECLARATION

New York Unit:

Tim Wohlforth, NAC, NEC, former member New York Exec.
Frank McGowan, Minority Representative on New York Exec.
Columbia Fraction
Danny Freeman, Columbia Fraction
Sherry G.
Martha Wohlforth, former member New York Exec.

Chicago Unit:

Scott Arden, NEC Alternate, former YSL National Secretary
John Worth
Margaret Collins

Dayton Area Unit:

Shane Mage, NEC
Judy Mage, NEC Alternate
Herschel Kaminsky
John L.

(Continued on Following Page)

Berkeley Young Socialist Club, YSL:

James M. Robertson, Chairman, former NEC member
Roger Plumb
Dave Carleton
Stan Larssen
A. Thorstein
Jerry Friedman
B. Gibetsky
Marion Syrek, Jr.*
Gerard Abel**

At Large:

Paula Bram
Harold Bram***

* "After reading the YSL Left-Wing Declaration and the first LEFT WING BULLETIN, and especially after Comrade Shachtman's recent visit to this area, I find that I am in full agreement with the Left-Wing position and wish to join the Left-Wing Caucus, and therefore wish to be recorded as a signer of the Left-Wing Declaration." -- Marion Syrek, Jr., March 12, 1957.

** "After listening to Comrade Shachtman speak this evening on 'Socialist Regroupment', I wish to declare my support to the YSL Left-Wing Caucus and be recorded as a signer of the Left-Wing Declaration." -- Gerard Abel, March 8, 1957

*** For statement of Paula Bram and Harold Bram see page 9.

JOIN THE LEFT WING CAUCUS!!!

BUILD THE YSL!!!

* EDITORIAL NOTE: The following letter is a statement of grounds for joining the Left-Wing Caucus.

Feb. 27, 1957

Dear Tim,

We must admit to considerable vascillation while reading the left-wing bulletin, particularly on the idea of "winning over the SP-SDF left wing." Such a struggle does not enhance or bring closer the prospect of unity any more than would an appeal of theirs to us to leave the YSL and join their organization. It is this proposal along with the "unite against unity" appeal of the declaration which prompted my last letter to you in which I stated that "I do not feel that unity with the SP-SDF is capitulation to capitalism or class-collaborationist". That is, I qualified it by saying if the left wing of the SP-SDF together with the YSL and ISL formed a strong left-wing caucus within the united organization, publishing a minority organ (of whatever name), and have due representation and voice as a minority and looking toward the day when this left wing might speak as a majority.

This is the kind of unity we want. We want it with the SP-SDF, with the Dissent group, with the Cochranites, with the stalinoids, stalinos, socialoids and socialos. However, after reading a report of the Shachtman-Haskell debate, we begin to see that this is precisely the kind of unity we are not about to get under the leadership of Shachtman, Martin, et al. And, we do not propose abandoning the YSL to the Martins (if they want to join the SP-SDF, by all means let them do so.) We do propose broadening the left-wing caucus to include those of us who want unity with, rather than membership in, the SP-SDF, as one step in a broad socialist regroupment.

We repeat our previous letter: the function of the left wing of the SP-SDF, the ISL, YSL, etc., in such a unified organization is the formation of a strong left-wing caucus within that unified organization with: 1) The right to publish an organ for the expression of its view, 2) representation on the NEC, 3) the right to express its view outside of the organization as long as it is clear that this view is a minority view, and 4) the right to discuss with, and influence, others, looking toward the time when it might conceivably become a majority. It is because we look forward to this kind of unity and growth in the socialist movement rather than the dissolution of the movement, that we both add our names to the Left-Wing Declaration.

Paula and Harold Bram

(Tim, include this letter in the next LWB). As soon as we get straightened out financially, we will do what we can to help meet the costs.

WHY I SIGNED THE LEFT-WING DECLARATION

By Danny Freeman

I would first like to state clearly and unequivocally my belief in the politics and perspectives of the YSL. This means that I wish to continue to build the YSL on the basis of its existence (as stated in the Declaration) as an "independent organization of revolutionary youth." The future of the YSL as a serious political organization can be maintained only on the political basis of genuine democratic socialist principles which as stated in the Declaration can hardly be called sectarian: "Independent political action of the working class and the oppressed peoples here and everywhere throughout the world against both Stalinist and capitalist oppressors." This political tradition is clearly and emphatically expressed in the Resolution on War, adopted three years ago by the founding convention of the YSL (YSR Vol. 1, No. 1, May, 1954). Parts of this document are particularly worth quoting:

"The YSL is an internationalist third camp, anti-war socialist organization. It identifies with the revolutionary anti-war traditions of socialism -- that is, with those socialists who, remaining true to their traditions and class interests, opposed the two imperialist wars.

"It is however meaningless to express opposition to war without at the same time opposing and organizing against the system which breeds war. The struggle against war therefore goes hand in hand with the struggle against capitalism and Stalinism, and exploitative social systems in general.

"The first duty of the socialists living under Stalinist domination is to oppose the war preparations of their ruling class; our first job is to oppose the war preparations of our ruling class.

"We raise the internationalist slogan: **AGAINST BOTH IMPERIALIST CAMPS!**

"To raise the slogan of 'critical support' or to talk of soft pedalling the class struggle toward either of the imperialist camps is to capitulate to the politics of that camp, since it is the ruling classes of the two camps who will determine the basis and the condition under which such a war could be fought.

"Socialists who today give support to the war preparations of either of the two camps -- or to the political, economic and ideological preparations for such a war -- are betraying socialism.

"To fight effectively against such a war we must redouble our efforts to make the working class conscious of its interests, since only the intervention of the working class and the colonial peoples on the political scene as an independent factor can stave off the Third World War.

"OUR IMMEDIATE ENEMY IS OUR OWN RULING CLASS!

"AGAINST BOTH IMPERIALIST CAMPS, FOR THE THIRD CAMP OF THE WORKERS AND OPPRESSED COLONIAL PEOPLES."

THIS document expresses the basic revolutionary third camp politics on which our organization is founded.

Regardless of the question of the imminence of another (and final) imperialist war (there does exist some possibility in the near future of a Korea-type police action) the world situation of 1954 continues: two counter-revolutionary imperialist blocs compete against each other for world domination, willing to cooperate ("peaceful coexistence") if threatened by their main enemy, the working class and the colonial people throughout the world. We are in the "epoch of imperialist decay" in which the Stalinist bureaucracy feeds on the class conflicts engendered by capitalist society, in order to maintain and further its privileged position as a bureaucratic class. Nothing has changed since 1954 to alter our characterization of this period or our revolutionary third camp position which follows from it.

The Left-Wing Caucus declares that it is apprehensive that the present "unity" perspective of the majority comrades involves a subordination of the political principles of the YSL in order to enter the SP-SDF, on a "non-programmatic" basis. The caucus as a whole, including myself, is said to be a sectarian and Cannonite tendency. This abuse we receive for opposing an entry into the SP-SDF (not a unity based on our political principles) -- the SP-SDF which is, next to the SLP, most sectarian tendency calling itself "socialist" and which, while calling for "critical" support of "our" imperialist government, actually supports the concrete programs on which American imperialism rests.

Comrade Shachtman was obviously correct when he said in a New York speech before the YSL that you can't unit with the SP-SDF on a political basis. Comrade Draper was correct when he stated at an ISL forum that after all, Shachtman is not proposing "unity". After all, unity of political organizations can only be on a programmatic basis. We can "enter" the SP-SDF (perhaps) but we can't merge or unite with it because the majority of its members -- and especially the leadership -- is opposed to our Third Camp program.

The position that we desire regroupment with the SP-SDF, but on some sort of meaningful political basis, does not seem

tenable. The holders of this position are in a contradictory position, since practically speaking, the only way to "regroup" with the SP-SDF is without discussing program; and this tendency is, I believe rightly so, opposed to this course. As for myself, I am willing to unite with the SP-SDF, not when it has adopted my complete political program and theoretical orientation, but when it ceases to allow support to capitalist electoral candidates, when it opposes the Marshall Plan and other programs of that sort which attempt to defend the "free world," when it opposes the French SP and ceases to consider Mollet a comrade (just as we do not consider Foster a comrade), when it generally renounces its support of the State Department. Then and only then am I willing to unite, without considering the SP-SDF's stand on the Russian revolution or its present incapability of working in the labor movement in opposition to the labor bureaucracy. Under these conditions, we could be sure that there was some political basis for unity, even if we were not sure whether the move as a tactic would reinvigorate the socialist movement and help bring about a labor party. I myself and all the YSL comrades, to the extent of my knowledge, consider the labor party to be the most possible development of the working class in the near future.

I do not believe that the formation of a labor party means that a revolutionary tendency or force (which will function in the labor party if it is formed) is any alternative. Rather the development of this force as a force supporting the independent action of the international working class against the opponents, capitalist and Stalinist, of the working class, is as imperative now as it will be once a labor party is formed.

I said before that the proposed "unity" with the SP-SDF is not considered to be programmatic. Since it cannot be programmatic. Since it cannot be programmatic, and cannot be a unity, it would have to involve an entry which is not based on any political agreement, but the political meaning of which is a programmatic and organizational victory for the current politics of the SP-SDF. These politics, objectively, despite socialist labels and declarations, support the American ruling class and its imperialist politics and despite itself, strengthen the Stalinist bureaucracy (however indirectly). Our first consideration must remain:

"OUR IMMEDIATE ENEMY IS OUR OWN RULING CLASS!

"AGAINST BOTH IMPERIALIST CAMPS, FOR THE THIRD CAMP OF THE WORKERS AND OPPRESSED COLONIAL PEOPLES."

AN OPEN LETTER TO MIKE HARRINGTON

March 4, 1957

Dear Comrade:

Your article "On the 'Left-Wing' in the YSL" raises the most serious possible charges against the Left-Wing Caucus of the YSL, and two of its leading organizers.* Your first paragraph states that "With the formation of the 'Left Wing Caucus', the YSL is confronted with an organized, sectarian tendency. But more than that, the politics of this grouping are not those of an ordinary loyal faction: rather, they lead in the direction of a split toward the Cannonites." (YSR, Vol. 3, No. 4, p. 2). The caucus "represents the tendency toward a split and amalgamation with the Cannonites." (Idem.)

The article is studded with similar references. "The sectarians are, on every practical point, for a narrow, tight SWP-oriented socialist regroupment." (Ibid., p. 7). "The leading comrades of the sectarian tendency have Cannonite politics on almost every major political question." (Idem.) "The sectarians are without perspective - except that of building a sectarian movement with the SWP; as a result, their politics lead toward a split." (Idem.)

You discuss the 'theory' upon which the politics of the caucus are based in the same terms. "The comrades of the 'left-wing' bulletin," you write -- referring specifically to a signed article by Comrade Shane, "have ... put forth as their fundamental conception** a set of views on the application of the theory of 'combined and uneven development.'" (Ibid., p. 2); "... those comrades not only assert their 'laws' and attempt to impose them upon reality, ... they derive the tactics of the movement from them as well." (Ibid., p. 3); "since Comrade Shane, and the 'left-wing'," do not hold a position "of reaching the American working class"; "they want to form a tight organization"; "they disdain laying out a perspective." (p. 6), etc.

You cite absolutely no source for your characterization of the Left-Wing Caucus except your own undocumented opinion (on "Cannonite", "split", "not" a "loyal faction", etc., and three paragraphs out of the signed article by Comrade Shane on "Lessons of the Recent NEC Meeting."

Now Mike, is it necessary for you to be dishonest? The Editorial Statement of the LEFT WING BULLETIN (Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 2) clearly states: "The material in this issue and in all subsequent issues represents the views of the Left-Wing Caucus if it is marked as an editorial statement. Otherwise it represents the view of the author."

* It should be clearly understood that in this letter we take no position on theoretical questions, but deal exclusively with the question of the programmatic base of the tendency, and your analysis of it.

** Emphasis ours, here and in succeeding portions, unless otherwise specified.

You pointedly ignore the "YSL Left-Wing Declaration", although you cannot possibly be unaware that it is the only statement of policy of the caucus as a whole which appears in the Bulletin. The caucus, acting democratically, will undoubtedly adopt further "official" points of view, and these will certainly be presented to the YSL as a whole. In the meantime, however, please don't trouble yourself to formulate our views -- or if you do, don't present your formulations as our views.

The same applies to our "leaders." We reserve the right to elect our own leaders and spokesmen, and consider it an outrageous presumption for you to appoint the m for us -- as you blandly expound "dogma" throughout your article.

Miko, the socialist movement has suffered long enough from the sectarian vices of slander and dishonesty. You know damn well that if the caucus includes (and you haven't established it, by any means) individuals moving in the direction of the "Degenerate Workers' State" theory, it certainly includes members with such divergent views as "State Capitalism" or "Bureaucratic Collectivism."

You further know (if from no other source than the reports Comrade Dobbie claims she has made) that not one member of the caucus in Chicago is "sympathetic" to the SWP, in the manner that you represent.

Despite the fact that you know these things, no reader of your article could be aware of the facts of the case. Perhaps, from your factional point of view, you consider it desirable to "forget" facts which make your position embarrassing. And it certainly would be "convenient" for you to tie the Red Herring -- SWPism -- around the neck of the caucus, in place of dealing with its political views as these are actually expressed. (Or is 'realism' too 'real', when it comes to hatchet-work?) You will forgive us if we brand your tactics as they are -- slandorous and dishonest!

Concluding, we demand that you produce documentation for every charge, or issue an immediate public retraction.

John Worth
Scott Arden
Margaret Collins
Chicago

(In addition to national circulation of the contents of this letter in its present form, the letter will be published, in reply to Harrington, in both the LEFT WING BULLETIN and YSR, in the immediately succeeding issues.)

THE DISCUSSION OF THE CRISIS OF STALINISM
AT THE RECENT NEC MEETING

By Shanē Mage

The current crisis of the American CP and the attitude of the YSL in relation to it was discussed by the plenum under two distinct aspects—the question of whether and under what conditions the YSL should form United Fronts with Stalinist youth groups, and the question of what attitude the YSL should take toward the current factional division in the American Communist Party.

The first thing that we should recognize concerning this point is that the YSL Right Wing has made very considerable progress toward understanding the question of united fronts with Stalinists since the last convention and since the NEC plenum last September.

At the Convention, the basic line of the Right wing was one of violent opposition to the concept of united fronts between the YSL and Stalinist youth. Their stand on this was expressed in paragraph 13 of the "Tasks and Orientation" resolution (YSR, Vol.2, no.4, p.6) as follows: "We do not call for united fronts with the LYL or Stalinist-controlled organizations. Rather we seek to isolate them politically and organizationally."

Then, I and a few others argued that this was a terrible political mistake—that the nature of the Stalinist youth had changed enormously in the previous two years. We argued that they had virtually abandoned their virulent hostility toward independent revolutionary socialist youth, that they had attracted many sincere radical youth on a minimum program of peace and civil liberties, and that these youth were as yet relatively little corrupted by the Stalinist slanders against Trotskyism. We contended that the total effect of this opposition to united fronts would be, not to isolate the Stalinists (they were already quite well isolated, thanks to the witch hunt) but to isolate ourselves from the Stalinist youth, and to confirm, in their eyes, the Stalinist image of the YSL as a group mainly devoted to destroying and disrupting united activities by red-baiting attacks upon themselves. We succeeded in getting an amendment added to the resolution which stated that "It is not tactically excluded that local YSL may wish to call for a united front with either a Stalinist youth group (LYL, YPA) or a more limited Stalinist front group on occasion." Unfortunately, this modification of the basic line of the Right Wing remained on paper. In fact, nowhere was it applied in practice.

Five months after the convention, the twentieth party

Congress of the CPSU took place. Then came the publication of Krushchev's "Secret" speech and the Poznan uprising. The Stalinist movement, youth and adult alike, was completely disoriented, the whole system of lies and slander which had immunized CPers from revolutionary socialist ideas lay in ruins, questions of a fundamental and probing nature were being raised in the open forum of the Daily Worker.

By August, some inkling that something was changing in the Stalinist movement had dawned on our Right-Wingers. A resolution adopted by the September NEC plenum on "Work in the Stalinist Arena" attempted to deal with the CP crisis. Alas, these comrades had yet to realize that some change in the YSL's attitude toward the Stalinist youth was now required. This resolution stated: "United Fronts: Our position here remains essentially the same. What needs to be added is a caution that the ability of the Stalinists to dissemble themselves and the softness of their current line gives rise to illusions among liberal students about the possibility of working with Stalinists. "Thus, as late as last September the YSL Right Wing was talking in terms of hardening our "Isolate the Stalinists" line!

Again, Tim and I spoke out against this policy. We warned that the YSL was throwing away the finest chance in years to make real organizational gains from the Stalinists. We urged that the YSL adopt a large-scale orientation toward the Stalinist youth - to seek out joint discussions wherever possible and on all questions, to form united fronts wherever we could get in contact with LYL or YPA type groups, and to attempt to get YSL members to work inside LYL. We were answered with ridicule and charges of pro-Stalinism.

By January, the Right Wing had learned something-- it was now no longer a matter of "our position remains essentially the same." Instead, the previous position was categorically repudiated: "We do not have a policy excluding Stalinist organizations from United Front activities..." True, we cannot claim that this improvement in the Right Wing's position has come about in response to our correct arguments. It was brought to pass by their own contact with harsh reality. The fact is, that what we of the Left Wing have consistently warned about has happened-- the line of "isolating the Stalinists" has completely isolated us from the Stalinists, so that the YSL has been totally unable to win over new members from the ranks of the LYL or YPA.

What more shocking evidence could there be than the report of the New York units activities (keep in mind that this unit is bigger than any three others in the YSL)? The reporter summed up the New York units "Work in the Stalinist Arena" roughly thus: "We have tried to get in contact with the LYL. We have been unable to find them." And indeed, how can these comrades be expected to "find" the LYL in a process of

disintegration when, while it was still relatively healthy, they were unwilling (and perhaps also unable) to establish any contacts with it of the sort that can only be formed by joint discussions, joint actions, close personal and social relationships?

On Political Responsibility

When a serious political tendency feels that it has to revise its stand on an important issue it has two choices -- it can either admit openly that its previous position has been mistaken, and try to understand the exact nature of this mistake in order to educate itself and to avoid similar errors in the future, or it can state that its previous position was correct under the objective conditions of the time, and show exactly what changes in that objective reality have made a different tactical or strategic approach necessary. Either approach may be justified -- what is indispensable is an honest exposition, to the membership as well as to the leadership, of the fact of a change as well as the reasons for it.

As we have seen, the YSL Right Wing has substantially changed its position on United Fronts with Stalinists -- to be sure, its new position, as we will show, is far, far from adequate in the present situation. But it has changed its line, and in the right direction. Unfortunately, you can look in vain through the NEC resolution on Stalinism to find any analysis of our previous line on United Fronts, either to justify it or to criticize it. Neither is there any examination of the practical results of that line, nor any reference to any "Work in the Stalinist Arena" carried out in pursuance of the resolution of the September NEC plenum. The NEC majority seems to want to pretend to itself that it has not had to make any serious or fundamental changes in its line, that its previous position had nothing wrong with it! When, during the plenum discussion on this subject, I discussed this change of line my words seemed to fall on deaf ears -- no answer, of any sort, was forthcoming from the Right Wing comrades!

The explanation for this does not necessarily lie in a bureaucratic self-defense mechanism. As I will show, the right wing has changed its political position without at all changing its basic attitude on this question, and this creates a grave danger that the new orientation will remain a purely literary one.

The failure of the Right Wing to act in a politically responsible fashion is shown even more clearly by the basic change it has introduced in its attitude towards the nature of American Stalinism. Only last September, the NEC resolution stated that "It goes without saying that we consider both the CP and LYL inherently incapable of becoming 'socialist' organizations." (ital. mine.)

In January, this is what the same Right-Wing NEC majority had to say about the Gates group, a faction with a real chance (according to the Right Wingers) to gain the majority of the CP: "The Gates tendency still has a long distance to travel before it has broken with all of its Stalinist politics, and democratic socialists should not preclude such a break and a democratic socialist development." (ital.

mine). Thus something that, in September the CP majority was "inherently incapable" of doing now, in January, should not be precluded.

Here there can be no question of a tactical adaptation to changed circumstances. If the present position is correct the previous one was wrong. But does the NEC resolution recognize that it has made any change at all on this score? Not by so much as a word! The new YSL member who does not know the previous position of the organization would conclude from this resolution that the YSL has always considered the CP capable of becoming a "democratic socialist" organization, just as a new YSL member would conclude from the NEC resolution on "Socialist Unity" that the YSL has always been in favor of organic unity between itself, the SP, and the SDF on the basis of the political program of the SDF.

Now this is not some unimportant and tertiary question -- it is actually loaded with theoretical dynamite! This article is not the place to discuss the class nature of the Stalinist parties, but the consequences of the new Right Wing stand on the American CP upon their own theoretical analysis should at least be made clear.

The Right Wing considers the CP's to be "bureaucratic-collectivist" parties, to have the class character of a ruling class party. The Right Wing now says that the American CP is capable of becoming "democratic socialist." This means that the CP's are either not "bureaucratic collectivist" parties but something else altogether, or else a ruling class party is capable of transforming itself into a working class party -- a proposition which does not merely involve throwing the entire Marxist class analysis out the window, but also justifies the proposition that the Democratic party is capable of becoming a labor party or people's party; exactly the analysis on which is based the present politics of both the labor bureaucracy and American Stalinism! We can understand why, faced with such a choice, the Right Wing prefers to play the Ostrich and pretend that no change has been made -- but that does not diminish their political irresponsibility, it accentuates it!

Two Steps Forward -- One and a Half Steps Back

As I have said, the formal recognition of the permissibility of United Front tactics toward the Stalinist youth represents definite progress toward a sensible and politically fruitful YSL approach to them. The grave danger, however, is that this new orientation will remain a purely formal one, that no effort will be made by the present national leadership to carry it out in any measure, let alone in the vigorous and imaginative fashion necessary to gain real result

The approach of the Right Wing to the United Front question was so hesitant as to be almost shamefaced. Their major formulation was put in the weakest, most negative, way imaginable.-- "... we do not have a policy of excluding Stalinist organizations from United Front activities; nor are we in favor of including these groups under all circumstances." "we do not have a policy.." Fine. But, comrades, what policy do we have on United Fronts? The answer is, that we do not have any policy at all!

Why is the Right Wing incapable of formulating a policy to replace their previous one? Their own failure to make any gains among the Stalinist youth, and their realization that a policy of excluding them from united fronts makes it impossible to approach these youth in the future brought the Right Wing to within an ace of a pro-United Front policy. But at this point they draw back in horror at the implications of their own thoughts, and rejected any clear proposal to adopt a united front tactic as an important approach to Stalinist youth.

The reason for this is not obscure -- it lies in the evident and proclaimed political orientation of the Right Wing. They want to influence youth in the process of breaking with Stalinism, it is true. But their main outlook is not toward these youth -- it is toward the American Social-Democracy. And this fact effectively paralyzes them when they think of making any real move toward the Stalinist youth.

The dead grip of this paralysis is well illustrated by the sentence of the NEC resolution following the ones already cited: "Due to the flexibility of the current situation and the broader consequences of activity in local areas, all units, fractions, and members at large must discuss with the N.O. all questions of their activity in respect to Stalinist youth organizations." Note -- well, this is the sole concrete guidance offered to the members of the YSL by the resolution -- "discuss with the N.O."

Of course it goes without saying that units of the YSL will discuss their functioning with the N.O. Why then this enormous emphasis on this point, on its compulsory nature? The key phrase of this vague and cryptic sentence is "the broader consequences of activity". Its meaning was not spelled out in the resolution itself, but in the discussion on the resolution by those members of the NAC who will have the responsibility of executing the new line. What they mean by the "broader consequences" is very simply the reaction of the SP-SDF national leadership to local actions of the YSL. They want to avoid, at all costs, any action which will give Thomas & co. a bad impression of their own political character. That this is the decisive and guiding consideration in all work with Stalinist youth was recognized by all the leading members of the right wing (interestingly enough, the two comrades most insistent on this point, most sectarian in their opposition to any cooperation with the Stalinist youth, were precisely the "left critics" of the NAC majority on SP-SDF unity, Bogdan and George! They made no effort at all to explain this lamentable inconsistency).

The desire of the YSL right wing to accommodate themselves to the leadership of the SP-SDF will serve to vitiate almost completely the new turn toward Stalinist youth. Remember that the SP-SDF has an ironbound sectarian hostility toward anything smacking of "Communism" which approaches a "Third Period" quality. It is virtually inconceivable that the SP-SDF will look with any favor on any united front between the YSL and LYL, anywhere. Thus the

decisive consideration weighing on the NAC will almost always lead it to prevent, perhaps against its real wishes, proposed United Fronts between us and the Stalinist youth.

Thus the good effects of the new line on United Fronts are likely to be restricted to the fact that local groups of the YSL will feel freer to approach local LYL type groups for joint discussions and united actions. This was, to a certain extent, already being done before the plenum by some units, notably our comrades in Los Angeles. It is a notable fact that the representative of the Los Angeles unit was the only other comrade to support the amendment introduced by Tim and myself to make a United Front approach the general tactic to be used by the YSL in relation to the Stalinist youth in this period.

The YSL, Gates, and Reformism

The discussion at the plenum on the YSL attitude toward the current factional lineup in the American CP was considered, rightly, a separate topic from the question of United Fronts with the LYL et. al. As a topic considered in itself, it is much less concrete, much less meaningful in terms of organizational activity than is the United Front tactic. However, as a symptom of the basic divergence within the YSL it should not be underrated.

At first glance, it might seem that there was not too much difference between the resolution I submitted and that of the NAC majority, since both expressed a preference for the Gates group as against the Fosterites. The essential differences between the tendencies in the NEC were over the specific criticisms to make of the Gates group and its current evolution.

The NEC resolution expressed its criticism of Gates in this manner: "The danger in considering the Gates tendency is not that it will evolve in a reformist direction, but that it will not proceed far or fast enough in ridding itself of Stalinist politics and attitudes." The resolution never states exactly what it means by "Stalinist politics," but from the context (counterposing "Stalinist politics" to "reformism") it is clear that this phrase means exclusively the Gates group's defense of and attachment to the Russian Stalinist bureaucracy.

The criticisms of Gates in my resolution were far clearer and more comprehensive. To begin with, I had a far lower opinion of the degree to which Gates had broken with Stalinist politics (in any sense) than did most of the Right-Wing comrades (their resolution stated, without any qualification, that the Gates tendency "can be characterized as the anti-Russian, pro-democratic grouping"). I believe that my belief that the Gates group had yet to break fundamentally with Stalinist politics, that its position was only "relatively to the left" of Foster, has been fully confirmed by the continued retreat of the Gatesites on the key question of Hungary, by their failure to make any sort of political fight on this point at the recent CP convention.

The key points on which I criticized Gates and the Right-Wing resolution did not were exactly those aspects of Stalinist politics that dealt with the country we, as well as Gates, live in, the U.S. Specifically, I stated: "equally important, they have made no move to break with the class-collaborationist, reformist, and co-existence aspects of Stalinist politics. In the recent election campaign the Daily Worker supported Stevenson openly and vigorously. The Gates group rejected the perspective of a labor party and proposed instead a 'peoples' anti-monopoly coalition' which would include sections of the capitalist class. New Deal type class-collaboration is similarly the real content of Gates' proposed 'American path to socialism' which is strictly parliamentary and reformist in form." The basic difference between the Left and Right wings in the YSL lies in the fact that we consider these points to be the very essence of socialist politics in America today, while the Right wing comrades consider them absolutely inessential at present.

The basic rationale for this attitude toward the Stalinists (which appears, as we will see, as a function of a more fundamental attitude toward Social-Democracy) is that the movement of Stalinists in a reformist direction should not be criticized because social-democracy represents a step forward as against Stalinism. This proposition needs to be examined, because it has a solid kernel of truth -- the fact that, because of their subservience to totalitarianism, their readiness to execute any turn, no matter how harmful to the interests of the working class at a moment's notice on the orders of Moscow, their persecution (the foreign analogue, or supplement to, GPU murders) or revolutionists, and the general discredit they cast upon socialism, the Stalinist should be classed as furthest to the right of all tendencies claiming to play a role in the working class movement. But this true proposition becomes radically false in the use the YSL right-wing claims to make of it.

This is so because, in refusing to criticize social-democratic tendencies because they are preferable to Stalinism the Right-Wing comrades forget two vital things -- that we are not academic spectators of political evolution, but active participants representing a revolutionary socialist position that regards the politics of both Stalinism and Social-Democracy as anti-socialist, for one thing, and for another they forget the inter-relationships between Stalinist and Social-Democratic politics.

Thus the YSL Right Wing does not conceive of its primary task in relationship to the Stalinists as influencing them in the direction of their own, presumably revolutionary socialist ideas, but as influencing them to become social-democrats. Sonny defended this in the plenum discussion by postulating two distinct phases: "After they break with Stalinism you can discuss criticism of them within the socialist movement." Implicit in this approach is a division of political questions into two types -- those which are strictly subjects for dispute within the socialist movement, and those which differentiate socialism in general from other

tendencies. An example of the first type is the CP's support of the Democratic Party, of the second its apologetics for bureaucratic despotism in Russia. What this neat, schematic approach misses is the class viewpoint. Support to the Democratic party, even if given by someone (like a Stalinist or Social-Democrat) who calls himself a socialist, is support of the political instrument of the capitalist class, and therefore an anti-socialist political act. More important, it represents an anti-socialist position on the most important question of American politics, the need for political independence of the working class. "Reformism" as such is an abstraction, a theory susceptible of academic discussion within the socialist movement. It becomes anti-socialist politics only when it is concretized in the form of class-collaboration such as support to the Democratic party. The underlying reason why our right-wingers fail to define this aspect of the CP's politics as anti-socialist is that they have refused to make such a definition of the essentially similar politics of the CP-SDF (see in particular the article by Debbie Meier "On Unity" in the current YSR. I will deal with this, and another, less honest article in the next YSR).

The key point in considering Stalinist politics, which the Right wing is absolutely incapable of understanding (judging from the recent discussion on the 1956 elections), is that support to capitalism and class-collaboration are an integral aspect of Stalinist politics. The Stalinist bureaucracy is an anti-working class social force. Its main fear, particularly today (though this has always been true), is that the workers under its rule will rise and annihilate it and its corrupt rule. The prerequisite for its continued domination over the workers of Russia (and now of East Europe) is the preservation of capitalism in the "West", for the victory of proletarian revolution in a single advanced country would signify its immediate doom. That is why Stalinism has everywhere sought to tie the workers to the national capitalists, to make a deal with every national bourgeoisie.

Stalinism has been the invaluable political support for social-democracy, the invaluable political support for capitalism. This has taken various forms: indirect -- the repugnance of many workers at Stalinist totalitarianism and their fear of Stalinist conquest have been invaluable to the Social-Democrats in making their pro-capitalist politics palatable to the advanced working classes of West Europe, and direct -- the political support of Stalinism to social-democracy has been expressed either through open support of Social-Democratic parties and governments, or through "ultra-left" sectarian policies which isolated Communist workers from their Social-Democratic class brothers and disrupted any possibility of united action of the working class.

The inter-relationship of Stalinist and Social-Democratic politics is best illustrated by France. Ever since the days of the "Popular Front" the SFIO has been able to exist and play its treacherous role only thanks to Thorez and Co. Within the past year, for instance, the Mollet social-democratic government received

the support of the French CP when it asked for "special powers" (such as the legal right to maintain concentration camps) to prosecute the Dirty War in Algeria. On several occasions since then, the last quite recent, Mollet has been able to remain in power only by CP votes in Parliament. What relevance does this have to the politics of the YSL Right Wing? In its own terms it illuminates the essential relationship between Stalinism and Social Democracy as world political currents, but the "French Question" also came up at the plenum in more direct form.

In the course of the discussion Mike asserted that "A Social Democracy is 100 times better than a Stalinist". In virtual unison, Tim and I interpellated "Does that go for Mollet?" As Harrington said yes Debbie intervened with the assertion that "Mollet isn't a Social Democrat" (and in her YSR article, Debbie even attempts to "develop" this idea, which will no doubt come as surprise to the other parties of the Second International, including the SP-SDF, which up to now have been under the misapprehension that they had a comrade in a "position of power" (a phrase for which we are indebted to none other than the supposed future official organ of our movement, the Call in France, and who have not, to date, manifested a notable eagerness to expel this "non-Social-Democrat" from the highest councils of International Social Democracy!) This lamentable exchange shows the political depths to which the pro-Social-Democratic line of the YSL Rights has led them - they are faced with the choice between whitewashing the butcher Mollet as "100 times better" than his supporter Thorez, or else whitewashing Social-Democracy by dissociating it from the crimes of one of its top leaders and representatives.

Thus we see the crippling effect of the Right Wing's political adaptation to Social-Democracy upon their criticism of Stalinist politics, just as we earlier saw the crippling effect of their maneuvers with the American Social-Democrats upon their hoped for new tactical orientation toward the American Stalinist youth. Only the Left Wing of the YSL has projected a fully effective political criticism of Stalinism, just as only the YSL Left Wing has an approach to regroupment capable of making a real appeal to youth in the process of breaking with Stalinism.

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SOME FURTHER COMMENTS ON THE UNITED FRONT
AND ON THE CP

By Tim Wohlforth

THE UNITED FRONT

Recently, we were able to see in reality the meaning of the NEC majority's position on the united front. At the most recent buisness meeting of the NY unit which is controlled by this "majority", concrete proposals for implementing the united front tactic were discussed. The first

was on Algeria. I proposed in the NY Exec that we call for a joint protest meeting of all radicals including the CP and the SP-SDF to protest the Algerian war and to raise money for the persecuted socialists in France. The Exec decided that such a meeting should be called by the American Committee on Africa and made it clear that for its part it was opposed to inviting the CP into such a venture.

Thus in order to preserve their purity and "respectability" in the eyes of the social democracy they are missing a golden opportunity to reach the CP rank and file on an issue on which many of them would respond warmly. This would give us an opportunity to test the CP leadership and expose them if they refused to cooperate with Socialists, Trotskyists, including as well as to reach the membership directly on an issue which could easily lead to their separation from stalinist politics once the line of the French CP was explained to them. Many of them are not aware of this line.

The next issue was even more clear in its implications and of much greater significance for the YSL as it involved the youth field. The Exec has been working on a proposed city-wide radical youth conference for several months. It has been trying to get the pacifists to arrange it. But as this didn't work out they suggested that the Debs club run the whole business and in that way the whole thing would be under our control. I suggested that if we were serious about the united front and therefore about building the YSL we should invite in all the radical youth in the city to take part in the symposium and in sponsoring it. I suggested the Los Angeles program as a model. This would be the only way to ensure the participation of the various ex-LYL clubs and would provide an excellent opportunity of getting into contact with these people. I reminded the comrades that the NY unit had admitted at the plenum that they could not find LYL oriented clubs which should be invited in. I asked the comrades just what they were afraid of as the LYL was in a state of dissolution and could only gain by such an approach. After a brief discussion my position was voted down by the supporters of the NEC majority.

Thus we see in reality the correctness of Shane's analysis on just who in the YSL is serious about recruiting the ex-LYLers and therefore who is really dedicated to building the YSL.

ON THE CP

I would like to make just a few brief comments on Comrade Shane's position on the Gates group. Before the plenum just on the basis of reading his resolution and not having a chance to discuss its real meaning with him I abstained from voting for it. At the plenum after hearing the real differences between Shane's position and the majority I voted for the resolution but with a statement. I did this because I felt that the basic line of Shane's document was

of a totally different nature than the majority's. It was written by a revolutionist whose main function in life is not to build the social democracy. His support of Gates was of highly critical nature and different in kind from the majority.

Still I felt and still feel Shane has made a mistake in formulating the conception of critical support to Gates. It seems clear to me that it is impossible to characterize Gates as to the left of Foster. In certain ways by partially breaking from his ties with the Kremlin bureaucracy and strengthening his ties with the Gomulka regime Gates did move somewhat. At the same time he moved even closer to the social democracy with his line to dissolve the party, etc. This I do not consider a leftward move in any significant sense of the term.

The main bulk of the decent element in the CP have been and remain tied to neither faction in the CP bureaucracy, this is a simple empirical fact known to all who know the CP. Our task is not to support either faction but to build some sort of broad rank and file caucus of those who are sick of stalinism but who are not willing to join the forces of American imperialism. Such a task is not easy but it remains the only way. Of course in the meantime we should urge that the CPers to vote in such a way at conventions so that neither faction gets solid control of the party and thus ensure a continuation of the discussion.

FROM OUT OF THE PAGES OF THE PAST---BY MAX SHACHTMAN

Neither Social-Democracy nor stalinist totalitarianism leads to socialism, The Second International of the Social-Democrats is bankrupt and in a state of collapse. The Third International of the Stalinists has been formally dissolved by decree. Revolutionary socialists everywhere work to rebuild the world-wide organization of social revolution, the Fourth International.

The road to freedom is marked out by the principles and program of revolutionary socialism, and no other road exists, The organization which proudly champions and fights for these principles and program in this country in the Workers Party.

---From the Fight For Socialism

AN OPEN LETTER TO COMRADES DRAPER AND HASKELL

Hal and Gordon

March 5th, 1957

Dear Comrades,

Recent developments in the YSL and ISL centering around the question of socialist unity have made mandatory a full and complete discussion of the issues involved.

As you know I am no longer a member of the ISL. In view, however, of the close relationship that has existed between the ISL and YSL and the fact that decisions made in the ISL have a considerable influence on the YSL, of which I am a member, I believe it perfectly proper to address you on matters concerning the ISL in an open and frank manner.

I address this letter to you specifically not because of any past association, personal or comradesly, but because the two of you represent that which is best in the national leadership of the ISL. You are, the two of you, the real active national leadership of the ISL (one on LABOR ACTION, the other in the National Office) and at the same time have a history, admittedly mixed, of generally representing the more "left" political position on the ISL Political Committee.

Without going into any detail, or entering into a senseless discussion of what is "right" and what is "left", it is certainly fair to state that on various political and organizational questions you have at times been forced to play the role of a left minority on the P.C. in opposition to the Shachtman-Gates tendency.

You have seldom, if at all, however, carried these questions to the national membership of your organization, to the best of my knowledge, in a sharp fashion. That is, you have struggled for your views in minimal terms (mainly in committee, less often in the N.Y. Branch meetings, and still less often in national discussion articles) and have showed disinterest in organizing support for your positions on a national level.

The recent convention of the ISL bears this out. Though you have presented some of your views to the convention body you have not called for election of delegates on the basis of a division on your differences.

To sum it up simply, you have not, to date, made a real all-out struggle against the open reformist drift represented by the Shachtman-Gates tendency.

Perhaps you felt the issues involved were not of a vital or pressing nature or, and this was certainly sometimes the case, you lacked precise agreement between yourselves. Perhaps you were too immersed in your almost unbelievably heavy routine

day-to-day work load and just lacked the time and energy that an all out struggle would entail. Perhaps, also, you felt that such a struggle would result in the collapse of the ISL, since you viewed Shachtman's continued membership as essential in "holding the ISL together" and believed that if he were politically forced out LABOR ACTION, all that really counted, would cease to exist. Perhaps, finally, you felt bound by ISL "loyalty" and equated any attack on Shachtman with "creeping SWPism."

The truth probably lies in some combination of the above, rather than in one single factor, but this is unimportant. What is significant now is the unity question in all of its ramifications.

Shachtman has taken a stand. The logical political consequences of his position can only lead to the liquidation of the ISL into the SP-SDF.

This is not "phrase-mongering." His unity approach leads not to real unity but rather to the ISL dissolving with members entering the PS-SDF as individuals on the basis of the SP-SDF's current politics. You have admitted as much in your recent substitute "Motion on Socialist Unity."

I by no means agree with the stand you have taken. I think you err in singling out the SP-SDF (which, catch-phrases notwithstanding, is clearly lined up behind the U.S. State Dept.) for especial unity overtures, in positing the line of "an all-inclusive party" in this period, etc.

While we certainly should discuss these differences any intelligent reading of your recent document can only lead to the conclusion that you have far more in common with us than with Shachtman.

It is impossible to press upon you a discussion of our differences at this point though, despite your personal loyalties to Shachtman, you cannot, as serious socialists, avoid such a discussion in long-range terms.

What is apparent now, to the newest member of either of our organizations, is that it is mandatory that you now make an all out political and organizational struggle for your point of view. As responsible socialists you can do no less.

Previous considerations no longer apply. "Loyalty," "the SWP threat," "overwork," "holding the ISL together," etc., no longer have validity. If Shachtman's policy wins out there will be no ISL to be loyal to, hold together, work for, etc. The question now before the ISL is that of its continued existence as a political tendency. We know that Shachtman proposes to liquidate this political tendency into the SP-SDF and that we, despite our differences, oppose his efforts.

Your role in the past despite (or perhaps because of) your extensive individual contributions to the cause of socialism has been an unfortunate one, from your point of view. If there has been a tendency (and to the extent there has been I personally deplore it) of "left" elements in the ISL and YSL to move toward the SWP, the responsibility for this is largely yours. You, the most talented, best informed, able comrades have consistently failed to provide an alternative left leadership to the increasingly blatant reformist politics of the Shachtman-Gates tendency.

By default Shachtman is handed his "majority." He, Shachtman, is making a national tour to reinforce and strengthen his position on the unity question. Are you, Hal, going to make a national tour to posit your opposing point of view? Or, as in the past, are you going to wage a "part-time" struggle -- even though the question now involved is the very existence of the political point of view you've devoted your life to? And you, Gordon, are you going to go on literally working yourself to death keeping Shachtman's ISL functioning right up to the day he cuts the organization's throat?

You, Hal, how long are you going to continue to misrepresent the nature of the SP-SDF in the pages of the newspaper you edit? Lying by omission is still lying. You and I both attended a certain session of the last SP Convention in Chicago, and you and I both know (as do others who were there) that the "story" you printed in L.A. on this session was a "whitewash" job and had almost nothing in common with the reactions you verbally expressed during and after this session. Are you allowed to reprint the SP-SDF "Memorandum of Understanding" or must this be left to the YSL left wing while you sit gagged and, I trust, gagging?

These questions are not rhetorical or aimed at embarrassing either of you. I do not raise publicly my personal experiences as an ISL member, experiences you are both well aware of, and I have no interest in "hurting" the ISL to the benefit of the SWP. Contrary to the runours circulated by persons who obviously prefer to remain nameless I am still a third camp socialist (as are the majority in the YSL Left) and consider the continued existence of the ISL, as a third camp revolutionary socialist organization, of the utmost importance.

If I, and others, can no longer function in the ISL, and must oppose the Shachtmanite agents of the ISL in the YSL, it is because you have failed to oppose Shachtman's policies in a serious or meaningful fashion.

We of the YSL Left, and I'm sure I can speak for all of us on this, consider you comrades in the deepest sense. We have our differences, but they can be discussed in a frank and comradely fashion.... they are not the question before us.

The question we must jointly face reduces itself to one of revolutionary socialism, whatever its coloration, versus reformist opportunism. If you consider this formulation "sectarian" I ask only that you provide another.

I hope I shall receive an answer to this letter, publicly or privately, and trust that it will be your answer, not an answer dictated for you by Shachtman's artificial majority on the P.C.

Warmest comradely greetings,

Scott Arden

SOME COMMENTS BY COMRADE SHACHTMAN ON THE SOCIAL DEMOCRACY

They want socialism, but not the class struggle, which is the only road to socialism. They want capitalist democracy as the basis for socialism, but because they will not defend even democracy with the militant methods of the class struggle for fear of antagonizing their partners the "democratic capitalists", they soon find their democracy and their privileges disappearing. They fear the socialist revolution so much— because the Workers Government would end all special privileges, theirs included— that they find themselves attacking it on the side of the capitalist reaction.

In one country after another their theories have so drugged and paralyzed the working class that it proved ~~impossible~~ incapable of militant and effective resistance to reactionary assaults upon it. It had to pay for these theories and practices in the form of fascist dictatorship and indescribable agonies. The Social Democrats did not gain socialism and they cannot gain it. They did not even maintain capitalist democracy or their position in it—they lost both.

A number of groups and parties throughout the world try to take a position in between that of revolutionary socialism and social reformism. They endeavor to mix the two, which is like mixing fire and water. The result is the obscuring steam of confusion. In the United States, these "Centrist" parties, which are neither flesh nor fowl, nor good red herring, are represented by the Socialist Party. The Socialist Party in the United States is an especially confused and confusing example of "Centrism". It is a mixture of middle class pacifism, "Christian socialism", liberalism, "isolationism", hostility to revolutionary socialist theory and action, and hero-worship. It sometimes speaks more radically than the Social-Democracy, but it has even more bureaucratic leadership than they and differs less and less from them in practical policies and activities. All the experience of such in-between movements shows that if they do not adopt the program of revolutionary socialism, they degenerated completely to the Social-Democratic position. Or else they become stagnant, impotent sects which justify their separate existence mainly on the ground that they are not firm revolutionists and not complete Social-Democrats but only—in-betweeners.

DON HARRIS AND HIS EPOCH

By Tim Wohlforth

Menshevism is something more than a particular evaluation of the Russian Revolution. It involves a whole approach to Marxism and with it a whole method of analysis and thought about politics and history which is the antithesis of the dialectical method, the mainspring of Marxism.

Here I do not intend to dwell on the pros and cons of the Menshevik theory of the Russian Revolution whether as expounded by a Martov or by a Plekhanov or a Dan. Instead I wish to focus on Menshevik methodology. The basis of all Menshevik thinking is a certain static conception of Marxism, not as a dialectical interrelation of many factors developing at different tempos and each in turn influencing the development of the others, but rather a view of history as a series of necessary and absolute stages applicable to all places and times. Thus the Mensheviks in Russia insisted that Russia must go through all the stages of development in the same general way as did the German social democracy.

This general view Trotsky exploded with his general law of combined and uneven development (see the January Labour Review for an excellent treatment of this) and the specific application of this law to underdeveloped countries in our epoch, the theory of permanent revolution. This general view was based on the supposition that stages are sometimes skipped and that the working class in one country never has to repeat in exactly the same way the stages gone through by the working class of another country. The working class can take advantage of the lessons of the class struggle in other countries, just as the capitalist class in, say, Japan can take advantage of the techniques of modern capitalist development so as to race through a whole stage in its development.

However there is a second and highly significant element in Menshevik thought. This element is in fact the most basic of all. It is that in any given historical period the Menshevik discovers one reason or another why the working class cannot carry out its tasks and why we must support other and alien class forces (critically, of course). The classic example of this is found in the Menshevik approach to the Russian Revolution, where they critically supported the liberal bourgeoisie and ended up in this camp instead of the camp of the working class.

These two basic conceptions of Menshevik thought have nothing in common with Marxism even though the Menshevik relies on a schematic conception of Marxism to justify his position. In fact the Menshevik will tell you -- as he did in 1917 -- that he and only he is a genuine Marxist and that his Bolshevik opponents are sectarian and the like.

The Menshevik mode of thought, alas, did not pass away with the passing of the Russian Mensheviks and has a significance in many areas. An excellent example of this has been furnished in

our movement by Don Harris. For months now the ISL and its supporters in the YSL have been talking about unity with the Social Democrats, about joining the SP-SDF with its present leadership as loyal members, and about the role of this SP-SDF in the regroupment process today and in the future of the American working class. However most of this talk has been on the pure tactical level and very little of it has probed into the theoretical questions involved. Comrade Harris deserves the commendation of the whole movement for clarifying the discussion by placing it on the theoretical plane.

He and he alone has offered the only theoretical justification for the present unity move. That the majority realises this is well illustrated by the way in which they immediately defended Comrade Harris's approach and by the way in which many ideas similar to Comrade Harris's have sneaked half-baked into a number of articles written by the supporters of unity.

Comrade Harris's basic views can be summed up in the following manner: 1. We are living in the epoch of the social democracy; 2. The task of Marxists for the next historical period is therefore to build a mass social-democratic movement; 3. With the help of this movement and under the impetus of the labor bureaucracy (which is to the left of the working class) a labor party will be formed; 4. Within this labor party the social democrats, with our aid, will struggle against the liberals for control of the party; 5. After the socialist labor party is formed under the leadership of the social democracy and only then will the difference between social democrats and revolutionaries be of any significance; 6. Sometime after this (we must be in the middle of the 21st Century by now!) the epoch of the social democracy will close and the epoch of revolutions and wars announced falsely by Lenin and Trotsky a century or two earlier will be ushered in.

This grandiose and detailed map of the stages through which the working class must pass is obviously a Menshevik method of analysis. Here we find all the characteristics of the earliest Menshevism. Marxism is reduced to a dead schema. We in America must pass through the identical stages passed through by the British working class. Other comrades with a similar mode of thought blithely talk of the revival of the "Debsian" party (minus all that Debs stood for, of course). A second characteristic found in this theory is the familiar one of handing history to someone else. In this case Harris hands the epoch to the SP-SDF even though it seems to have little interest in accepting this gift, nor does it show any sign of being capable of carrying out the historic tasks laid out for it so magnificently by Harris. Thus the development of socialism, at least for the next epoch, is placed not in the hands of the working class but in the hands of the privileged labor bureaucracy and its lieutenants in the socialist movement, the SP-SDF.

As a concomitant of this Harris feels he must critically support and build, not an independent working-class movement, but the social democracy which supports the capitalist class. This

is similar to the Menshevik support of the liberal bourgeoisie to which they also handed the next stage of the development of the working class.

that

Thus we see/the mode of thought symbolized by Harris and adopted in a half-baked way by the right wing is essentially a Menshevik one. However to label it so does not prove it to be incorrect. I believe Menshevism is just as fallacious in this period as it was in 1917. Let's look at reality. The first important factor ignored by Harris is the development of American capitalism. America is no longer the country it was in 1900. Capitalism is more highly developed, the working class infinitely larger and potentially more powerful, and America is the major world imperialist power.

This presents an entirely different situation for the development of the American working class. The workers are more highly organized and when they move, they will undoubtedly move more swiftly and with much more force than was true in 1900 when the capitalist system still had some capacity for reform.

When the present crisis of U.S. capitalism which expresses itself in the need for massive subsidization of the economy -- primarily for military objectives, in the hope of survival -- exhausts the present and future resources of labor either absolutely or relatively the class struggle will be sharpened on a plane much higher than in the Thirties. Furthermore, considering the international situation its significance will be even greater.

Thus to postulate a whole epoch for social democracy is to state that American capitalism can not only survive for an epoch but also that it can afford the luxury of reformism. Such a supposition can only be substantiated by claiming, in chorus with the liberals, that American capitalism has solved its contradictions at least for the next epoch. If this is your view state so honestly and present us with an alternative view of capitalist development than that furnished by Marx and developed since his time by the Marxist movement.

Also to postulate such an epoch, one must be blind to what is going on throughout the world. Trotsky and Lenin characterized our epoch as the epoch of "wars and revolution" -- the epoch of imperialist decay. When we look at the world we see Trotsky's and not Harris's view confirmed. We see the masses in motion -- in the colonial areas against imperialism and in the Stalinist empire itself. We do not see the social democracy holding out anywhere except in Western Europe where it lives off American aid and military support. The future of these social democrats is likewise bound up in the stability of American capitalism.

Thus we see that all evidence tends to disprove Comrade Harris's theory. However, I for one am not willing to exclude any particular variant suggested as the possible course of the American working class. But I do reject out of hand Comrade Harris's theory that the working class must develop only in the

way he describes.

I think the development will be more radical and that certain of the stages (namely the SP-SDF) will be skipped over. I am open to the suggestion that maybe the working class will go first to the SP-SDF before it comes to revolutionaries. But before I base a move such as the dissolution of our movement on this gamble I insist upon evidence. Namely, I insist that the right wing present evidence of such a movement on the part of the working class. So far it has not done so. And as I have stated, all the evidence seems to point in the other direction.

In order to facilitate the discussion I hope the right-wing comrades will state their feelings on this matter. Do they or do they not agree with Harris's theory? If they do not, what theory do they offer as a substitute?

Also, and this goes particularly for Harrington, I hope they will answer the arguments we raise and not distortions of these arguments. Comrade Harrington please note: I do not exclude a moderate evolutionary development. I just have my doubts about it and demand evidence. Furthermore I do not say that today is the same as 1917. In fact an important part of the argumentation is that it is not, and that is one reason why the rebirth of a "Debsian" movement is at least questionable.

However, no matter which way a labor party is formed (Comrade Harrington, we are FOR a labor party) I do reject out of hand the notion that it will be the bureaucracy that forms it as a force to the left of the working class. The bureaucracy will break from capitalist politics only if forced to in the interests of keeping its privileged position. As a Marxist, I feel that such a basic change as the formation of a labor party can only grow out of the class struggle -- that is, the struggle of the working class for its own interests -- interests which conflict with the bureaucracy as well as the capitalist class. Thus no matter how the labor party is formed, those who are closest to the working class and at the same time furthest away from the bureaucracy will play the greatest role in its formation.

The SP-SDF represents in its ideology the labor bureaucracy. Today the labor bureaucracy is not social-democratic. The day it becomes social-democratic will be the day when it needs to do so as a protection against the militant pressure of the working class, to prevent it from taking power. To hold otherwise is to deny the whole history of the development of the social democrats as well as to deny Marxism which sees as the motive force in our epoch the working class, not a privileged stratum which, while part of the working class, uses its apparatus in order to protect its separate interests from the workers and in order to defend the bourgeois order to which it is inextricably tied.

Those who enter the SP-SDF are entering the camp of the labor bureaucrats and will find their hands tied in the struggle for a labor party which will be in part a struggle against this very same labor bureaucracy. This is the proposition before us and it is this that Comrade Harris is trying to find a theoretical justification for in his Menshevik theory.

THE SHAMAN AND THE SWAMP

By S. Aesop

Once upon a daydream, not too long ago, in a mighty nation, not too far away, there lived two groups of people, very far apart.

One was called the Redmen, no one quite knew why; the others were called the Others, because they were. The Redmen were very very few but there were lots and lots of Others. This was not always the case, it was said, and the tribal tablets told of a time when lots (but never lots and lots) of Others were Redmen. This was long ago.

The Redmen were a quarrelsome lot, few as they were, and did not live together. They lived in separate tribes, each being the True Redmen tribe, and when Redmen from two tribes met they sometimes argued most noisily. They only agreed, all of them, that one day the Great Power would fix it so everyone would be a Redman. And they, or most of them, tried to help the Great Power, from time to time, but never did too well.

Nevertheless, in between quarreling, and changing tribes, the Redmen thought hard about the Great Power and performed many rituals and made strong incantations to bring its day closer. Each tribe had its own ritual and sometimes several -- for though the tribes were small there were many views and oftimes a tribe would be divided into clans each with its own ritual.

Now one day it came about that all the Redmen began to quarrel about a new idea. This idea was that all Redmen should join together and make one bigger small tribe instead of several smaller small tribes.

It would seem that this idea came to them because the biggest tribe of Redmen -- which was not really a Redman tribe but only just said it was -- because this biggest tribe's Mighty Medicine Man had died and the new Shaman could no longer hide the badness of his ritual. It was a very very bad ritual indeed and real Redmen began to leave this tribe.

Now it happened that each of the little tribes (except for one that lived on a high plateau, and another that lived in a swamp) wanted these Redmen to come live with them, or best yet, as was stated, for all Redmen to get together and form one bigger small tribe.

One of these little tribes was very excited. Its strongest clan was run by a sort of Redman who was called Mighty Shaman. He was headman because he had made his own ritual, could make awesome incantations, and mainly because out of the many tribes he had been in he had made this one.

Mighty Shaman's tribe was small and old but it lived right

next to a younger and stronger tribe. This younger tribe bowed down to Mighty Shaman and used his ritual and made his nephew, Little Shaman, headman because Little Shaman knew the ritual real well and could make almost as much noise as Mighty Shaman.

The Redmen in Little Shaman's tribe were even more excited about tribal unity and talked about it all the time.

But Mighty Shaman had a strange idea all his own. In his wanderings he had once lived with the tribe in the swamp and he always regretted leaving. He had heard that another tribe (of very pale Redmen to be sure) was coming back to live in the swamp and make it even better for swamp dwellers.

Now it should not be thought that the swamp was not a nice safe place for a Redman to live. It was. In the swamp a Redman could ooze down into the warm mire up to his neck and almost no one would know he was a Redman if he did not tell them.

Besides, in the swamp a Redman was safe from the Others. The Others (or some of them) were sometimes very mean to the Redmen and would not let them hunt or fish in certain places and even worse. But not in the swamp. In the swamp the Others did not do bad things to Redmen and if the swamp tribe behaved well (which they were very good at doing) and kissed the feet of the Others and took parts of the Religion of the Others into the tribal ritual (which they did) why then they were allowed to hunt and fish all over.

Well, Mighty Shaman decided he was lonesome for the swamp and called together his Pow-wow Council. Some of the witch-doctors on the Pow-wow Council thought the slime was too deep in the swamp but they were hooted down by the elders who kept thinking of how warm and safe and comfortable it would be.

So it happened that Mighty Shaman called in Little Shaman and told him to prepare the younger tribe to march into the swamp. Little Shaman went back to his tribe and incanted long and loud. The other leaders of his clan finally gave in because he allowed them to think that the real reason for going into the swamp was to pump out all of the mud and build a fine strong tribe which would gain many Others.

Some of Little Shaman's tribal brothers rebelled, however, and formed a new clan. They pointed into the swamp at the unhappy younger swamp dwellers, and also they said that they did not want to give up their ritual for that of the swamp. They called for a new bigger tribe of all Redmen, including the unhappy swamp dwellers, on firm dry land and with a good ritual.

Mighty Shaman and Little Shaman and their lesser headmen became very unhappy because of this. They sent out the story that the new young clan was not loyal to the ritual and was made up of scouts and spies from an enemy tribe.

This was a big un-truth but it scared many of the undecided members of Little Shaman's tribe and some of them stopped thinking rebellious thoughts and came again to sit placidly at the feet of Mighty Shaman.

They noticed, however, that Mighty Shaman's feet gave off a strange odor and were covered with clay and slime, due to his explorations in the swamp.

Many of them just could not stand the odor and they went to the new clan and made it strong.

Finally the Shamanites could not stand dry land any longer and they gathered up their followers and, after begging the permission of the muddiest swamp dwellers, they snuck into the swamp to live.

They found it so pleasant that most of them slipped all the way down in the muck and buried themselves so deeply that after a very short while no one, Redman or Other, ever heard from them again.

-FINIS-

OUT OF THE PAST

NUMBER TWO

But if the Thomas-Tyler party is torn to shreds and has been left weak and emasculated, the left wing is not. Robust and self-confident, the revolutionary Marxists stand on the granite foundation of principle laid by the great masons of the scientific socialist movement. Even in the moments of the greatest difficulty, of reaction, they remain inspired by their principles, and, unlike the muddleheads and dillettantes, do not abandon them in the pursuit of those will-o'-the-wisp "revelations" of "New Truths" which, upon examination, prove to be warmed-over ashes from the cozy fireside of reformism, class-collaboration, and social-patriotism. The foundations for the new party of the Fourth International in this country, which is sure of its growth and its victory, cannot but be the rock of Marxism, of Bolshevism, cleared of the rubbish left by Stalinism and social democracy.

-----From the introduction to Stalinism
And Bolshevism By Leon Trotsky written
by Max Shachtman

LABOR ACTION AND THE RACKET PROBE

By Martha Wohlforth

The current Senate investigation of labor racketeering is daily unearthing lurid details about the connection of certain corrupt union officials with the underworld, vice, government, and business. This committee, the Senate Select Committee on Labor and Management Practices, will keep these unsavory details in the headlines, day after day, for months and even years. The effect of such an atmosphere of hysteria on public opinion provides an unequalled opportunity for an attack on the entire labor movement and for an intensive drive to put through anti-labor legislation at every level of government. A "right-to-work" bill has recently passed the state legislature in Indiana, a major industrial state with 600,000 union members. A similar bill failed by only two votes in the Idaho Senate. In Delaware, leaders of both parties are making a strong effort to push a "right-to-work" bill. The NAM has released a new batch of anti-labor propaganda. Labor leaders have virtually given up all hope of repealing the anti-labor legislation in the eighteen states where it now exists. They frankly state that the "Congressional climate is not conducive to any move for Federal action to shut the door to state rule over union security (N.Y. Times, March 4, 1957).

In the midst of such an attack on the union movement, when the very right to strike and organize are seriously threatened, it is the clear duty of every militant socialist to come to the defense of labor: to point out to the well-meaning but misguided liberal public the dangers inherent in the situation: to destroy the illusion that the bourgeois government, the enemy of labor, can solve the workers' problems for them.

Labor Action has failed pitifully in this important task. Several articles by Ben Hall and Jack Wilson have put forth an attitude of virtually uncritical support to the labor bureaucracy (albeit the "progressive" section of that bureaucracy) and its policy of cooperating with government investigations of unions and denying to union officers the right to hold office if they invoke the Fifth Amendment. Several union papers, among them Hotel and Ford Facts, -- which fortunately, in this case, have a far larger circulation among workers than does Labor Action -- have taken a far more correct and more militant stand on the question than has Labor Action.

The official union policy, recently adopted by the AFL-CIO Executive Council, is that union officials have a responsibility to cooperate with governmental investigations of labor organizations and that those who invoke the Fifth Amendment have "no right to hold office." In addition, the Reuther leadership of the UAW stated that it actually "welcomed" the government investigation.

The most basic flaw in Labor Action's approach is this: at the outset it should have stated the obvious, namely that the problem of racketeering can never be solved under capitalism. The most im-

portant fact that the present investigation is clarifying is that labor racketeering could not exist without the active participation of a section of the ruling class. Illegal activities among the corrupt elements in the unions are inextricably linked with business, big and small, and with city, state, and even Federal government. The Senate committee may be able to get a Hoffa or a Dio (though even that is not too likely) but the big, well-known and highly respectable men who are undoubtedly behind the Hoffas and the Dios -- these the Committee would not want to get even if it were able. Furthermore the personal motivations of the racketeers, consciously expressed by many of them in the hearings on welfare funds last year, reflect the pressures of this profit-oriented society: "The guys on the other side of the bargaining table have Cadillacs and diamond rings," they say, "why not us too?"

Secondly, Labor Action has failed to adequately point up the dangers of entrusting to the enemies of labor a task that should be done by labor itself. Ben Hall admits (LA March 11) that "some commentators maintain that the unions should have voiced a strong unanimous protest against any government investigation." But the unions could not do this, claims Hall, because they failed to clean their own house soon enough and now would be accused of "covering up" for the corrupt elements. It is indeed unfortunate that this government investigation had to occur, according to Hall. But it was made necessary; it is the "evil consequence" of labor's having permitted rackets to flourish for so long. And since it is necessary, claims Hall, there are certain advantages to labor: it will create a climate in which Carey, Reuther, etc., the "progressive" labor bureaucrats, can speak out openly against Hoffa and Beck, and it will speed up their own drive against the racketeers; and the \$350,000. appropriated to the committee, more than labor could ever afford, will enable many facts to be uncovered which the unions can use. So it is not such a bad thing, after all, even though of course it is doing tremendous damage to the prestige of the labor movement.

Of course we socialists cannot excuse the casual and permissive attitude toward corruption which has existed for so long in the labor unions. This, however, is no reason why we have now to jump on the bandwagon, give up all faith in the ability of the labor movement to do its own job. It is not possible under capitalism to eliminate all corruption in the unions; but very significant progress can be made, and the very process of the struggle will sharpen the consciousness of the workers.

On this issue many elements in the unions are far more outspoken than Labor Action. In the Feb. 2 issue of Ford Facts, organ of Local 600, the UAW's largest local, Carl Stellato came out with an attack on the Senate Committee and on the AFL-CIO Council's support of it. He pointed out that labor is quite capable of cleaning its own house, and that the job should not be entrusted to the very people who are the most powerful and outspoken enemies of labor. Had Labor Action reported Stellato's attack, it would undoubtedly have been quick to point out that Stellato is the most outspoken opponent of Reuther in the UAW, and was seizing this opportunity to

make a demagogic attack on Reuther, whom Labor Action has consistently supported through the years. Demagogic or not, Stellato's remarks are perfectly correct, and doubtless reflect much dissatisfaction and pressure from the ranks.

Hotel, organ of the New York Hotel Trades Council, AFL-CIO, has devoted considerable space in its Feb. 25 and March 4 issues to an attack on the official AFL-CIO policy. According to Jay Rubin, Council President, even some of those who voted for the AFL-CIO policy have expressed misgivings about the ultimate consequences. He stated that "it is their feeling that the door has been opened to intervention in union affairs by people who have no interest in labor except to undermine and destroy it. Those taking this view ask whether Congressional committees are really concerned with eliminating racketeers or whether they are seizing upon wrongdoing by a few individuals as a means of launching an attack on the labor movement. ... Among those taking this position are some who are most concerned with cleaning corrupt elements out of the labor movement. But they are frankly doubtful that the job will or can be done by Congressional or other governmental committees and urge that the task is one for labor itself. ... because 'what affects any part of the labor movement affects all,' the International also must speak out against labor's enemies and their efforts to use the sins of a few to smear and destroy the many. The open-shop elements such as the National Association of Manufacturers ... are eager to see labor investigated not because they are concerned with the elimination of racketeering, but because they want to discredit union organization ... cleaning out the few corrupt elements 'is the job of labor alone.'" Rubin also emphasized that the only way the job could be done was to see that control of the unions "is in the hands of the members."

We see, then, that several progressive labor leaders are far more aware of who their enemies are than Labor Action's writers are. This important question is scarcely mentioned in Labor Action. The reactionary composition of the committee is well known to socialists, but at least they should be reminded of it, which Labor Action does not do. McCarthy, Mundt, and McClellan are notorious. Of McClellan the N.Y. Times says, "He fits without apology among the Southern conservatives." The only so-called "friends of labor" on the Committee are McNamara and Kennedy. The pervading tone of both Hall's and Wilson's articles is one of pessimism and lack of faith in the working class to solve its own problems independently of the bourgeois government.

The "Principle" of the Fifth Amendment

A third weakness, and a very serious one, in Labor Action's treatment is its discussion of the Fifth Amendment. Hall seems overwhelmed by the vague promises in the moral codes of the AFL-CIO Council to uphold the "principle" of the Fifth Amendment. The code states: "We recognize that any person is entitled, in the interests of his individual conscience, to the protection afforded by the Fifth Amendment and reaffirm our conviction that this historical

right must not be abridged." It goes on to say, however, that if a union officer invokes the Amendment "for his personal protection and to avoid scrutiny by proper legislative committees, law enforcement agencies or other public bodies into corruption on his part, he has no right to continue to hold office in his union." This is clearly an invasion on the constitutional provision that an individual does not have to testify against himself, no matter what the reason. If exceptions are made in the case of racketeering, who knows where the line will be drawn next? To prove a person guilty of any crime requires (or should require) evidence other than the accused person's own testimony. It is the elementary duty of a socialist to defend the civil liberties of any person, no matter how despicable his personal actions or his political views may be.

Hall gives four rationalizations for the Council's position:

- 1) It defends the "principle" of the Fifth Amendment. As stated above, defense of a "principle" means nothing unless one is willing to defend it in all its aspects.
- 2) It does not direct its fire at Communists. "By omission it makes a distinction between racketeers and Communists." Wouldn't you agree, Ben, that it might have made slightly better distinction than that?
- 3) The statement is "carefully worded so that it does not apply ... to any and every use of the Fifth Amendment at Senate hearings." So the Fifth Amendment can be used on some occasions. If there are any occasions where it cannot be used, it might as well not exist.
- 4) "The Council does not suggest that such witnesses be penalized by the government for refusing to answer questions," merely that they are not entitled to hold office in a union. The only trouble with this code, Hall goes on to say, is that enforcement of it is left up to each International union, and in many cases they won't bother to enforce it!

Hotel is again, on this point, more aware of reality than is Labor Action. Hotel states: "Some in labor also have expressed concern at what they regard as a surrender of basic constitutional rights. They argue that the Fifth Amendment must be defended in principle and that no right can be given up without imperiling all, including ultimately the right to strike and even to organize." (Emphasis added).

Labor Action Out of Touch with Labor

Labor Action has its ears so finely tuned to the labor bureaucracy that it fails to hear the grumblings of discontent in the ranks. The statements of Rubin and Stellato provide ample evidence that the policies of the AFL-CIO Council are not being swallowed without protest. But no word of these or similar protests has found its way into the pages of Labor Action. Who should Ben Hall choose to mention as his sole reference to the existence of opposition in the unions to the policy of the Council? No other than Dave Beck! Beck stated that he opposed the policy of the Council regarding the Fifth Amendment and that he would protect the right of Teamster officials to invoke the Amendment. The fact that the Teamsters Union is one of the most corrupt and undemocratic unions

in existence does not mitigate in any way the correctness of Beck's stand. It is significant, I think, that Hall did not, while justly attacking Beck for his crimes against the working class, defend the use of the Fifth Amendment in all cases.

The primary purpose of the Labor Action articles appears to be the description of the various corrupt practices of some union officials. This we can read in gory detail in any daily paper. But a socialist analysis of the real causes of corruption in the labor movement, the role of the labor bureaucracy and the government and their relation to the class nature of our society does not seem to be forthcoming.

This type of reaction is but the latest example of the orientation of the ISL (and the YSL's right wing) to the labor bureaucracy. It seems that in every case where the working class ought to do something, these people find some reason why someone else ought to do it for the workers -- either the trade union bureaucracy, the liberal movement, the social democracy, or the bourgeois government itself.

This orientation is an integral part of the overwhelming drive toward respectability which impels the ISL to regard entry into the SP-SDF as the only solution to its problems. There are many militant comrades in both the ISL and the YSL who consider that the most urgent task for revolutionary socialists is work in the union movement. These comrades must be made to realize that this work will be greatly hindered, if not made actually impossible, unless this bureaucratic outlook is reversed.

AN URGENT APPEAL FROM THE EDITORS OF THE LEFT WING BULLETIN

We have recieved a large number of requests for the first issue of the LWB from all over the country. We are sorry to announce that the first issue is completely out of stock and we have been forced to turn down a number of requests. We also have a dangerously low supply of the LWB for our files.

We urge anybody who has an extra copy or copies of the first issue to please send them directly to us. We will be gald to reimburse anyone for the postage involved.

We wish to publicly apoligize to all those whp have been inconvenienced by this. We have increased the run of this new issue and should be able to handle all requests without any difficulty.

---THE EDITORS

LETTER TO A YSL COMRADE

By Shane Mage

Dear Comrade,

Feb. 28, 1957

In this letter I would like to discuss some of the important points raised in this discussion of socialist unity and socialist regroupment.

I think our starting point should be the fact that no one in the YSL is opposed to socialist unification. This is very encouraging to me -- I think it is a sign of political maturity that our organization is free from any hint of an ultra-leftist sectarian insistence on complete theoretical and political agreement. In fact, if any significant number of members of the YSL held such a view, the very existence of the YSL would become impossible, so important are the political differences among leading members of the organization!

The political differences dividing the Left and Right wings of the YSL are thus not at all based on a different opinion as to the need and importance of socialist regroupment. The disagreement is over with whom we should try to unite, and on what basis. Precisely because of this we should try to keep firmly in mind the basic reason why we want socialist regroupment in America today -- otherwise we run the risk of becoming so involved in organizational details and unimportant considerations of all sorts that we forget what it is that we want to achieve by socialist unity.

I think we all, no matter what tendency in the YSL we belong to, can answer that basic question in essentially this way: we want socialist regroupment because we want to form an organization which will be more effective in promoting socialist politics among American workers and American youth. We of the Left Wing go further and define the "socialist politics" we wish to promote explicitly as "independent political action of the working class and the oppressed peoples here and everywhere throughout the world, against both capitalist and Stalinist oppressors." I believe you also conceive this as your political objective as a socialist, and I also think that most members of the YSL who are for unity with the SP-SDF would agree. The question is how can we best apply it in America today.

I answer that we have to start with the possibilities open to us as socialists in America, with the famous "objective situation." I am sure that you're well aware what this means -- that the various socialist groups in the U.S. are not small propaganda groups ("sects") because they want to be, but because the general climate of cold-war prosperity and witch-hunt repression make it impossible for us to form any large scale movement among workers or students. It follows from this that we will not be able to grow out of this propaganda group existence and become a "significant" political

movement as long as the same general economic conditions continue to exist. Now I don't think anyone in the YSL will say a radical economic change is around the corner -- so we are left with a basic perspective of a slow and gradual radicalization of the American working class.

Under these conditions, what will be the organizational form of the American socialist movement? I think we can confidently predict that it will be similar to what it is today -- a relatively small propaganda group (and, remember, we can grow a hell of a lot without beginning to get out of that category!) But this is no reason at all to get discouraged -- socialist politics and socialist ideas are relevant and significant precisely because they represent the future, not the present, imperative necessities of the American Labor Movement. It is very possible for us to grow today, because the war prosperity is wearing thin, the witch-hunt has gotten tired for want of handy victims, the international objective situation has, despite "Doctrines" of one or the other sort, moved away from the immediate threat of major war. The first signs of radicalization are observable today in the American working class, and in the more narrow circles of the Left the emergence of the workers' revolution in E. Europe and its effects on the Stalinists have given us major opportunities for growth in that quarter. The stakes in this discussion of socialist unity are essentially whether or not the YSL will be able to intervene in a positive way to promote the growth of a healthy socialist movement out of this present period of regroupment.

On this basis we can examine more closely the proposals offered by the two tendencies in the YSL. The Right Wing proposes that the YSL (and ISL) dissolve itself as in independent tendency and enter the SP-SDF on the basis of the present politics and leadership of that group. The Left Wing counterposes to this the idea that the YSL should seek to attract to itself all radicals who agree with the basic definition of socialist politics I cited earlier, whatever their differences on a host of other important political and theoretical questions (such as Third Camp, nature of Stalinism, Colonial Revolution, Road to Power). In this respect the YSL would pose itself, in the youth field, as the center of regroupment for the left, hoping that a similar regroupment would take place speedily among "adult" socialist organizations. To an extent, the YSL Left Wing caucus today represents this sort of regroupment -- we seek to include, and actually do include on a basis of full equality, members who differ on many questions but who agree on the need to maintain the YSL as a revolutionary socialist organization.

In discussing these counterposed approaches, I think we have several criteria in mind. If any socialist organization is going to be a propaganda group, shouldn't it be judged first of all on the basis of the propaganda it puts out, ie., on the basis of its political line? Secondly, because even the best

socialist propaganda is worthless if it only remains on paper, what possibility does this organization have to intervene in the actual process of growth of the radical working class consciousness that is today coming into existence? And thirdly, what possibility does it have of today gathering around itself the best elements of the present socialist groups?

Now as to the first point, what is the political line that the SP-SDF is putting forward to the American workers, and will continue to put forward if the ISL and YSL join it? We have qualified their politics as pro-capitalist and pro-imperialist -- and you know that this definition is regourously exact. Do you think that propaganda for the sort of program contained in the SP-SDF "Memorandum of Understanding" aids the cause of socialism in America? If not, doesn't the presence of a supposedly "revolutionary" group like the ISL in the SP-SDF really serve to cover up for the politics of the SP-SDF leadership, to set the seal of genuine socialist upon them? Certainly, in many instances it is important for socialists to join groups with atrocious programs (like trade unions) in order to reach important numbers of workers with their program. But who can say that the SP-SDF has even as many workers in it as the ISL?

Some people have put forward the position that they are for entering the SP-SDF, but only if it changes important aspects of its political position first. Like most center positions, this one is likely to be torn apart by the fire from the two extremes. The Right Wing can say, with absolute accuracy, that the only way to get into the SP-SDF is to accept their terms without reservation -- they would never take us on any other basis. And we of the Left add to that that this is a compelling reason why those who think socialist unity must take place on a socialist (or at least not anti-socialist!) basis cannot be for unity with the SP-SDF.

This seems to be the position of Bogdan in the YSL, of Hal and Gordon in the ISL. But what is the actual political effect of their stand? Don't they, by agreeing with Shachtman and Martin that socialist unity means primarily unity with the SP-SDF concede the main point? What they are doing now, it seems to me, is to establish the basic principle of unity with the SP-SDF. On the basis of this principle, the Right Wing will be able to procede to negotiate unity on their program of complete acceptance of the SP-SDF political line and discipline as the basis for unity. Faced with this eventuality, the center group must split -- some comrades who see no alternative will go along with the majority (a majority only thanks to them) and enter the SP. Others, who are intent on participating only in real socialist regroupment, will refuse to go along with a program which they reject, and will seek to form an alternative center for regroupment together with us of the Left Wing. We will welcome them, of course, but wouldn't

the whole situation at that time be far healthier and better for regroupment (for instance, insofar as the YSL would continue to exist as a center for regroupment) if they had earlier drawn the logical consequences from their political position and joined with the Left to obtain a YSL majority against SP-SDF unity?

As I have stated, the socialist regroupment we of the left advocate would be based squarely on the minimum socialist politics that I outlined. Thus, despite the fact that it very well might have a stand with which many of us disagree on various theoretical questions, it would be able to put forward a really socialist political program to American workers and youth, and we, as a revolutionary tendency, would be able to function within it loyally and with complete freedom. From a political point of view, isn't this infinitely preferable to the Right Wing's proposal which would confine the YSL tendency to an impotent minority in the SP-SDF, and unable to struggle for its views internally, because it has pledged in advance not to take over the SP-SDF (and because, if it did attempt to get its basic political views adopted by the united organizations, that would merely lead to a new split, reducing us to where we are today!)

Now as to the second of these criteria, the possibilities for intervention in the radicalization of the American working class. We all conceive of this radicalization as leading to and through the formation of a labor party. As I showed in my report on the plenum in the first issue of our Bulletin, the Right Wing conceives of this process as a mechanical succession of stages, basing themselves on a formal and a-historical comparison with the experience, half a century ago, of the British labor movement. I don't think I have to add anything to that exposition here, but I think I can clarify this point a little more by examining the actual processes leading to the formation of a Labor Party, and the likely relationship of socialists to them.

Let us look at two examples of the developing radicalization among the American workers: the recent call for a Labor Party by the biggest local in the UAW, and the Dues Protest movement in Steel. Both of these represent a single process -- the rebellion of the workers in America's basic industries against the domination and corruption of their unions by a solid, entrenched, privileged, conservative bureaucracy which serves as a heavy restraint on their class struggle, both in the factory and in politics. This is apparent in the Dues Protest movement, despite the excessively narrow and limited character of its program. It is no less true for being somewhat more indirect in the UAW. Ford Local 600, the UAW's biggest, has continually, under the leadership of Stellato, been the center of rank and file opposition to the Reuther bureaucracy. Its clear call for a Labor Party represents an extension of its intra-union struggle into a straightforward rejection of Reuther's entire political

position of acceptance of an support to the Democratic Party. Now, what can we say about the relationship of the SP-SDF to this process, in reality and not in Max Martin's visionary schema? Our starting point, as Marxists aware of the history and nature of international social-democracy in that the social-democrats, from the viewpoint of class nature and social role, are no different from the labor bureaucrats -- that in fact, in virtually all instances, the social-democratic leaders are simply the political instruments and spokesmen of the labor bureaucracy, and sometimes even more committed to the preservation of the capitalist system than the labor bureaucrats. Is this general proposition untrue of the U.S.? Not historically -- in Debs' time the actual leaders of the SP worked out the theory that the political party and the trade unions were separate arms of the working class, therefore the SP should not interfere in the affairs of the unions (I speak of the Hillquits and Bergers as the actual leaders of the SP, the men who controlled its machinery, above all its electoral and publicistic apparatus. Debs was always the outside leader, who considered himself "above factions" in the life of the party). This meant that, in practise, the SP sided with the Gompers bureaucrats against the revolutionary SP left-wingers like Haywood, who was forced out of both the AFL and the SP.

In the 1930's, when a new and radical generation entered the SP, it seemed to be breaking with this persistent practice, to attempt to organize the SP to pursue a class struggle policy in the unions in a democratic and disciplined fashion. This led directly to the split with the SDF, right-wingers who refused to separate themselves from labor bureaucrats like Dubinsky, who had left the SP at the start of its leftward movement, because they were unwilling even to accept consultation with rank and file SPers in their unions. The high point of this development was reached when the SP split with the SDF and accepted the Trotskyists as members -- but the SP under the pressure of "Popular Frontism" and the New Deal retreated from its left-wing peak, and rejoined the labor bureaucrats and the SDF in supporting LaGuardia, though it had to expel its own left wing to do this.

Today the radicalizing process is long since completely undone, and the SP has returned well behind its starting point by mergin with the SDF, which had steadily and consistently moved right. The political basis of the SP-SDF fusion was complete support to the politics of the labor bureaucracy -- pro-U.S. imperialism in world affairs, pro-Democratic Party in the U.S. Can we expect the SP-SDF to intervene in the labor movement in the way that socialists must in order to speed the formation of a Labor Party -- as open and declared opponents of the Reuther-Meany bureaucracy? To ask that question is to answer it. Despite the fact that the American labor bureaucrats today feel no need for a "socialist" covering, and consequently the official social-democracy is tiny and isolated from the labor movement, the identity of social nature and class interest between the two is what decides!

The final one of the three criteria I set forth was: what represents the best possibility for regrouping today the best elements of the various left-wing groups?

Our starting point here again must be the objective conditions behind the discussion of regroupment in America. It is evident, I think, that the only change in those objective conditions which can in any way promote the regroupment of socialists is the world-wide crisis of Stalinism. Those groups which previously looked toward Russia as representing the realization of Socialism are the ones which have been thrown into confusion by the events of the last year, whose members are questioning their whole previous outlook and seeking a way to form a genuine united organization of American socialism. Doesn't it follow from this that our primary concern should be to find a way to unite with these socialists, to find a way to win them to our political position?

Does unity with the SP-SDF help to achieve this regroupment? On the contrary, I would expect it to preclude it. First of all, the SP-SDF is not for this sort of regroupment -- it wants as members only those who accept its basic politics, not those who seek to maintain their own ideas (and that is why Shachtman is having so much trouble getting the SP-SDF to want even him as a member!) Secondly, the politics of the SP-SDF are positively repulsive to these people, particularly to left-wing youth who seek to act as genuine socialists, not to be forced into the role of apologists for Stevenson and Dulles -- they could just as well stay with Kruschev! And third, the conditions which the Right Wing itself sets for unity are completely undemocratic and should be sufficient to repel anyone who continues to believe that Russia represents a progressive force -- for the actual proposal says that this regroupment should be open to everyone, but that under no circumstances should its political program accept the idea that Russia is any sort of socialist or even workers state. This means that members of the organization will be told that they have no right to get it to adopt their position, even if a majority agrees with them (as it most certainly would if even a large section of those who consider themselves socialists joined it). Can democratic socialists make such a proposal? Can serious political people accept it?

Compare the appeal which the Left Wing of the YSL could make to these groups if it had the majority of the organization. They would be asked to join on the basis of socialist politics, not State Department politics. They would be welcomed as first-class members with full democratic rights, including the right to have their viewpoints adopted if they so desire and get a majority for them, of course within the framework of the basic principles that they would genuinely accept by joining. The largest single organization of the non-Stalinist, non-sectarian left, the SWP, would not be precluded from participating in this regroupment (as it would be by the SP-SDF), but would, on the contrary, place it under considerable pressure to do so.

What I have tried to do by this comparison of the Right and Left wing positions on these points is to show that, in addition to being a principled socialist political stand, the Left Wing proposal for regroupment is more practical, less "sectarian", and of course far more in the interests of the development of American socialism.

One final point. I have heard that the leaders of the Right Wing, particularly Comrade Schachtman, have been accusing the YSL Left Wing of being "agents of the SWP." Now I don't know what effect a formal denial of this by us can have, since we will undoubtedly be accused of hiding our real views, but I can categorically state that this is untrue. We are not out to take as many people as possible into the SWP. We are out to build the YSL as an independent socialist youth organization, including members of all socialist tendencies.

My own political sympathies for the SWP are, of course, well known. I feel that it is the only socialist organization in the U.S. that has maintained a consistently revolutionary political outlook, that has been able to maintain its socialist opposition to Stalinism while correctly gauging the importance and progressive character of colonial revolutionary movements even under the Stalinist mis-leadership. I have never concealed my views on this point.

But the YSL Left Wing is not founded on this basis -- it is founded on the basis of preserving and building the YSL! It includes people who represent different political views on the colonial revolution, people hostile to the SWP as well as those friendly to it. We want you to join with us. We do not make as a condition for that your changing, by so much as a comma, your present views (whatever they are) on the Chinese question, on the Russian question, on the SWP.

What we want to build is a strong and united socialist youth movement in which proponents of all socialist views can discuss their differences while acting for socialism. We feel that a YSL genuinely committed to this proposition could have enormous appeal to radical youth of all tendencies, and could grow very rapidly in size and influence. Adoption of the Right Wing's perspective, if it is carried out, would mean a split in the YSL. We are completely against a split -- we will, if we win, urge the Right Wing comrades to remain in the YSL, even if they join the SP. We want to make the YSL the center for socialist youth regroupment. I certainly hope you will help us to do this, and in any event I look forward to receiving your answer to these thoughts.

-- Shane Mage

A CHALLENGE TO COMRADE ARLON AND OTHERS

By Tim Wohlforth

Comrades Arlon, Debbie, Bogdan, and a number of others who are at present supporting Martin on the unity question, resent very much our characterization of the present unity move as "capitulation to social democracy." They attempt to discuss the issue as solely a tactical one and not one involving political capitulation.

In the last issue of the LWB I gave one example of current YSL and ISL politics which can only be described as capitulation. I cited the refusal of the YSL-NEC majority and the ISL to recruit from the SP-SDF or to urge the left-wing comrades there to carry out a thorough fight against the SP-SDF merger.

In this issue I will give another example. I will do this in the form of a challenge: I challenge all these comrades who support the right-wing unity proposal, but who insist that this support in no way limits their political functioning, to write an article for Labor Action criticizing (in a friendly way, to be sure) the politics of the SP-SDF.

I warn you in advance that there is an excellent chance that such an article will not be printed. In fact LA's editor, Comrade Draper, has made quite clear his resentment on this fact. Should your article not be printed I for one will protest to the best of my ability the refusal of L/A to print such an article. What Martin and Harrington will do is another matter.

I will gladly suggest a list of subjects for such an article, subjects, such as the SP-SDF's support of American imperialism in the Suez crisis.

This is no small issue, for in this country the spokesman of the social democracy is the SP-SDF. It doesn't suffice simply to attack the French SFI. It is the responsibility of any real socialist to express his criticisms of the treacherous politics of the SP-SDF in this country--- the country in which we live and function politically.

All the comrades should think for a minute on what is involved here. Before we even enter the SP-SDF the comrades are refusing to criticize the social democracy publicly in our own country. What can we expect from such comrades once they get into the SP-SDF and once they will be exposed to the threat of expulsion? (The SP-SDF has had plenty of experience in expelling radicals!) Once in they will undoubtedly play the role of "policeman of the left-wing" as Comrade Haskell so accurately has put it.

Thus we have before us another example of the capitulatory nature of the present unity move. To those comrades who feel that this is simply a mistaken tactic and not integrally related with the whole politics of the right wing I repeat my challenge: write an article critical of the SP for Labor Action and see what happens. I would only be too happy to be proven wrong on this point.

Editorial Note—

In order to be in keeping with the general spirit of things we would like to suggest a few slogans to the "majority" as a basis for further activity on the part of the YSL. We hope these will come in handy to somebody.

JOIN THE YSL! ! ! !

AND BUILD THE SOCIAL DEMOCRACY ! ! ! !

AGAINST THE ALLIED BLOC! ! ! !

AND THE MURDEROUS STALINIST IMPERIALIST DOGS! ! ! !

FOR THE SOCIAL DEMOCRACY! ! ! !

JOIN THE YPSL ! ! ! !

AND WE'LL JOIN YOU! ! ! !

CLASP HOOPES TO YOUR BOSOM! ! ! !

UNITY TO THE RIGHT! ! ! !

A SHORT REPLY TO COMRADE MEIER'S TRIVIAL COMMENTS

By Scott Arden

March 6, 1957

The publication of Comrade Meier's article "Some Trivial Comments on the meaning of the voting process, and in particular of an 'abstention' in organizational and democratic functioning" in the last issue of the Young Socialist Review (Vol. 3, No. 4, Mar. 4th, 1957*) establishes once more, for the benefit of any doubting Thomases, Norman or otherwise, that the YSR is truly a democratic organ.

We shall not dwell on her article's title, which is enough to bug the eye and fray the typewriter ribbon of an ordinary mortal, except to concede its essential honesty -- seldom has the promise of trivial comment been so thoroughly carried out.

More important is what she says, which if one is analytical (and she does provoke this approach) amounts to:

- 1) Certain members of the YSL have been acting up rather badly.
- 2) This takes the form of their not voting for the positions put forth by the Martin group. The "people" in question have dared to abstain instead.
- 3) We all know that you do not have to agree with a position, or understand it, to vote for it. Understanding is a bourgeois anti-socialist prejudice.
- 4) If you happen to walk into a room when a vote is taking place, don't hesitate. Fasten your eyes on the nearest supporter of Comrade Martin and imitate the movements he makes. Discussion, exchange of ideas, presentations of points of view, are all very nice but insignificant. Go to the john if you must when this kind of thing starts, but get back in time to vote.
- 5) If you don't do so you are guilty of COUNTER-REVOLUTION, as well as other stuff.
- 6) Fellow Martinites, if you have 'abstainers' in your Unit, force them to justify not voting with you. This approach works particularly well when applied to newer members who because of their insecure background in the YSL tend to be susceptible to pressure from "the established leadership." Embarrass the hell out of them and in the future they'll not dare to do other than vote with you on every question they do not understand.
- 7) Gneez, Max, did you really lose the membership referendum?

Comrade Meier makes these seven points in a manner we would

* I cite the source in this careful fashion only because uninformed comrades might think me guilty of inventing this title.

not dream of imitating. The illogic of what she says seems to mean little to her and we must therefore extend to her our deepest sympathy, since basically she is a very nice and well-meaning comrade.

If we are, however, allowed the right of examining her logic, we must raise certain questions.

Most obviously, Debbie, you say: "At one time, in the Chicago SYL, there existed a general practice of asking the abstainers to state their motivations. In general this is a good policy and, if practised by other YSL units, might help to clarify some of the questions raised here."

How "other YSL units" apply to "At one time, in the Chicago SYL" (my emphasis) is not of particular interest. I was a member of the Chicago Unit of the SYL a year or so before you were recruited and do not remember such a practice but this too is not important.

What is important, and if you have any typewriter ribbon left I hope to hear an answer, is why, pray tell, is it more necessary to explain an abstention than a vote pro or con?

I, personally, usually explain any "abstention" vote I make (just as I do any "pro or con" vote) so as to eliminate any doubt in the minds of others as to my motivations. This is, however, a privilege (not an obligation) and I do so only to make my position clear.

But logically, aside from your bias toward the "official leadership" (demonstrably unrepresentative), what's the difference between Pro, Con, or Abstention? Why, applying your criteria, shouldn't the member just back from the john, who voted for Martin's position only because he saw certain hands raised, be as subject to a demand that he justify openly his vote?

The "precious right to vote" is irrelevant, especially since you yourself point out that an abstention is a positive vote.

Is it not, Debbie, contrary to your specifications, obligatory for every socialist to cast his vote in the most intelligent and informed manner possible?

We do represent, however distorted, a vanguard element socially speaking, and the only responsible course for any member who really is undecided on the issues involved in any particular ballot is abstention.

You cannot deny, in any case, that the "viewpoint" you present on this question is one geared to aid the present artificial majority in the YSL leadership.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

To the Editor:

I have just read the first issue of the LEFT WING BULLETIN, and on the whole I find it quite interesting and worthwhile. On page 20, however, I note the following remarks about YSL Chairman Mike Harrington: he "... is a pacifist, believes in God, and holds a menshevik position on the Russian revolution ..." I gather from the context that the writer deems these to be undesirable qualities.

It would appear from the above that the Left-Wing Caucus has established restrictive membership clauses, based on matters of little or no relevance to the issues at hand, which would place many socialists permanently beyond the Pale. I for one would be among their number, since I firmly believe in the existence of a Supreme Being, and I make no apologies for this belief.

It seems ironic that with its first breath of fresh air, the Left-Wing Caucus should already be encumbered with the ugly carbuncles of reactionary prejudice. And while it is not my place to tell the Caucus how to conduct its affairs, it would appear that now, at the outset, is the best possible time to rid itself of such disfiguring intellectual boils. It is my understanding that 98% of Americans believe in immortality; it would therefore appear that the LWC must eventually lower its barriers if it ever hopes to build a mass movement.

I trust the members of the LWC will give these remarks their earnest consideration.

California, March 13, 1957

Sincerely,
George R. MacKenzie

Dear Comrade MacKenzie:

Let me first make it clear that our Caucus does not exclude those who happen to believe in God. Anyone who agrees with the "Left-Wing Declaration" is welcome, and agreement with the Declaration is the sole criterion for membership in the Caucus. Statements made in the BULLETIN by individual contributors like myself do not necessarily represent the views of the Caucus.

However, as far as my own views are concerned, you are quite correct in assuming that I consider belief in God, pacifism and menshevism to be undesirable qualities in a revolutionist. These positions I do not consider to be "the ugly carbuncles of reactionary prejudice" but simply a defense of Marxist methods and politics.

I myself speak as a conscious Marxist. By raising in this way the question of Comrade Harrington's views I was simply questioning whether the leading spokesman of the right wing also was a Marxist. Of course I feel the right wing has a perfect right to

pick its own spokesmen but at the same time their choice is a reflection of the nature of their politics.

As Marxism is based on a materialist conception of nature it is obvious that any religion is in conflict with basic Marxist methodology. If one chooses to believe in God and be a Marxist one must at least attempt to reconcile these mutually conflicting approaches.

Marxists have always opposed pacifism, feeling that any attempt to disarm the working class in the face of the destructive power concentrated in the hands of the ruling class has in reality a counter-revolutionary effect.

Menshevism as a methodology and as politics also plays, as it did in 1917, a counter-revolutionary role. Martov, for all his good intentions, placed himself on the wrong side of the barricades in the most important historical event in the history of the working class.

Now any comrade can hold any and all of these views and remain a member of the YSL. I for one will defend his right to do so and have even recruited such people myself. But such a comrade has no right to consider himself a Marxist, for at least in these fields he is not. Whether he can still apply the Marxist method in other areas is doubtful, to say the least.

In the case of Comrade Harrington, who holds all of these positions and who also has informed me that he opposes the dialectic, we are presented with what our euphemistically inclined sociologists call "a syndrome of characteristics." When we add to this his lack of seriousness about his ideas and politics, evinced by his refusal to present these views openly to the movement, I feel we can be justified in calling into question the seriousness of the right wing's politics, for which he speaks. If the right wing wishes to openly repudiate Marxism, this is its privilege: then we can conduct a different type of discussion. So far every person in the right wing I have spoken to has the impression that he or she is a Marxist.

Fraternally,
Tim Wohlforth

March 6, 1957

To All Units of the YSL:

At the March 5 meeting of the NAC a motion unanimously passed by the Berkeley Unit of the YSL calling for immediately opening the pages of Challenge to anti-unity articles was discussed.

After a short discussion, all the NAC members favoring unity voted against the Berkeley request and the one member who opposed unity voted for it. The majority argued that the minority was being denied access to Challenge largely because of space considerations.

The minority member informed the committee that on several occasions in the past Challenge was opened to discussion of questions raised in the ranks. These included a discussion on civil liberties of fascists, on the Chinese Revolution, and on liberalism. He pointed out that the present controversy in the YSL is far more significant than any of these as it involves whether or not to dissolve the organization.

He also referred the comrades to the following motion passed at the September plenum and still in force: "The minority to be allowed access to Challenge in the form of a discussion article, at least." He then reminded the comrades that less than a week ago Comrade Shachtman had publicly called for an open and public discussion of the unity question in the ISL and wished that the YSL would do likewise.

I urge all units of the YSL to discuss this matter at the earliest possible date and to inform the NO as to their feelings on the matter. I am sure that you will all agree that the right of a minority to express itself publicly has been an important part of our tradition and our conception of democracy in a youth movement.

So that this discussion can proceed in an open, public and democratic fashion I urge all units and members of the YSL individually and collectively -- whether or not they agree with the minority -- to protest this move on the part of the majority of the NAC. I also urge all of you to write for further information on the matter from the NO.

I am confident that everyone in the YSL wishes to proceed in the most democratic fashion in discussing this basic question of unity. It is in this spirit that I address this appeal to you.

Submitted by

Tim Wohlforth
Member NEC, NAC

Copy to NO and all units

SP-SDF MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Editorial Note:

The following document is now in the public domain as it has been reprinted in the Reading Labor Advocate, we have been informed by Comrade Harrington.

It is important that every comrade in the YSL thoroughly acquaint himself with it as this is the political basis upon which you are being asked to "unite" with the SP-SDF. The document itself is so rotten that the SP-SDF did not make it public until considerably after the unity had been consummated.

We of the Left-Wing Caucus have defined the SP-SDF's brand of "socialism" as "State Department Socialism" while the left wingers in the SP have questioned whether the politics expressed in this memorandum are "socialist" in any sense of the word.

The comrades supporting Martin et al seem to have the greatest difficulty describing the SP-SDF's politics. Debbie finds it "hard to find out what its program is" and Jim B. together with Arlon defines it as "politically amorphous" and question whether it has "real politics and positions in the usual sense of the words."

We urge these comrades to read this document. You will find the basic politics of the SP-SDF clearly expressed here so that Debbie will have no trouble finding them out and Jim B. will discover that its politics are just about as real as you can get. So real in fact that it hurts.

So lets quit kidding ourselves. One may be for unity with the SP-SDF or against it. But let all at least understand what the SP-SDF is and on what basis it just united.

(All emphases in original unless otherwise specified.)

Foreign Policy Statement

As believers in democratic socialism, we feel that sure and abiding peace requires the progressive achievement of a universal fellowship of free men and free nations. The political expression of this fellowship will be the conscious management of the world's resources and technology for the good of all the people, for the universal abolition of slavery and for the end of exploitation and war.

To this end democratic Socialism -- or Social Democracy -- with its historic proclamation of the unity of the workers

of the world has always been devoted, and our united Socialist movement in America will take its rightful place in the ranks of Socialists everywhere who believe in, and struggle for, this Aim.

We Socialists believe that the struggle against the factors that lead to war -- the battle against exploitation, against imperialism, and against that newer and more terrible form of imperialism, totalitarianism -- must be continued and intensified. Today man lives under the shadow of three enormous fears. The first and most immediate is that we may use the marvel of growing mastery over atomic energy for an act of collective suicide. The second and more remote in time is that uncontrolled increase in population, exhaustion of resources and the barriers to cooperation set up by national, class, and ideological divisions may drive mankind, despite its collective achievements in science, down to a level a little above subsistence. The third is that the growing power and influence of totalitarianism, operating under false but appealing slogans that enlist the sympathy of the have-nots and that warp the judgment of those not in the orbit of our civilization may either win out in the struggle for men's minds or force us into ever-increasing armament, saddling democracy with too great a burden or forcing upon us a state of tension and fearful apprehension that may result in the war we all abhor and would do all we can to prevent.

In this crusade to prevent war at the same time that we ward off hunger and the spread of appeasement of totalitarianism, we must work out a cooperative war on the world's poverty, in which the more industrially advanced nations would give economic aid in the task of helping industrially backward nations to raise their living standards and to line up with us in the battle against a totalitarianism that fattens on men's hunger and discontent. Toward this end we must erase the last vestiges of colonialism and despotic control of others. We are aware that misery, disease, poverty, and oppression are the poison weeds that breed communism, and that colonial peoples have an inalienable right to fulfill their aspirations for freedom and home rule. We extend the hand of friendship to all colonial peoples engaged in genuine democratic liberation movements not initiated, engineered, or directed by Communist plotters.* We call on our government to expand and democratize the Point Four program launched by the preceding administration and to aid in the achievement by colonial peoples and by all nations of genuinely democratic governmental and economic systems. We know that such economic help to backward and undeveloped areas -- aid given to the peoples and not to the military or economic masters of a land -- is one of the most practical methods of establishing and strengthening democratic institutions and of repelling and defeating the machinations of Communist propagandists.

Strengthening the United Nations

In pursuit of our aim to make maximum war upon hunger and

* Emphasis added -- Ed.

exploitation American Socialists find their allies around the world in the Socialist International and the Asian Socialist Conference and they look for the strengthening of the United Nations as a step in the development toward federal world government. We believe that at the heart of a practical program for the achievement of peace ultimately must be our insistence upon world-wide acceptance of universal, enforceable, not unilateral and not illusory -- disarmament under a strengthened United Nations. This drive must go hand in hand with the cooperative war on the world's poverty outlined above.

Such a crusade must not be based on any illusion that peace can be achieved by appeasement of the Communist imperialism that threatens the world's peace and freedom by its persistent drive for universal control over men and nations, over the bodies and minds and souls of men. We realize that until universal, enforceable disarmament can be achieved, the free world and its democratically established military agencies must be constantly on guard against the military drive of Communist dictators, * lest the gains made by the socialist movement in the last half-century -- as indeed its hope for the future -- be lost in an enslaved world. This position is an acceptance of a world frame of reference in which the united Socialist Party can continue to fight against the social evils of our times, including militarism, and for a socialist world.

We still believe that there is a Socialist alternative to both a hot war against Communism and appeasement -- at least, an alternative that must be tried before we throw up our hands in the kind of despair that may be the forerunner of the total war we fear. We believe that a democratic and Socialist offensive against totalitarian aggression must be advanced -- an offensive that calls for unceasing attack on poverty, racial and social injustice and colonial exploitation, which are not only intolerable in themselves but are the best breeding grounds for new totalitarian conquest. Socialists do not seek to compromise the struggle against dictatorship and injustice but to divert it into channels and forms where it can more easily be won. Their hope lies in the transfer of the conflict between democracy and totalitarianism out of the realm of atomic war, and worse, at a time when the weapons that we have fashioned and that both sides possess threaten universal extinction, mass suicide in which both totalitarianism and democratic countries may be engulfed.

Helping the Have-Not Peoples

We believe that it is possible by cheerfully working together to raise the standard of living in economically underdeveloped regions, and by intelligent and understanding and sympathetic cooperation to win the people of these regions to enlistment in the struggle against totalitarianism. We maintain that through the United Nations rather than individual governments a program should be carried on involving billions of dollars of

assistance to these peoples. This program would first help the people to help themselves to industrialize and to utilize scientific knowledge for constructive purposes. It would, second, enable them to resist the blandishments of Communist propaganda and third, it would do much to line them up with democracy rather than with totalitarianism in the continuing battle for a democratic peace.

We Socialists urge that there be a more intelligent and far-seeing American leadership in this cooperative struggle against poverty and exploitation. The Marshall Plan and the Point Four proposal under President Truman's administration, the proposal of a pool of atomic energy for peaceful purposes under the present administration, are expressions of the American spirit at its best (Emphasis added - Ed.). We must do all we can to infuse that spirit into more of our fellow Americans, to implement it and to give it a more socialist underpinning and direction.

In adopting this general statement of Socialist aims in foreign policy, we realize that there is room for some disagreement on implementation, though none in regard to our belief that totalitarianism must be resisted with all our power and that we must build up the world economy, raise the standard of living, defend democratic rights and human values all over the world and provide the economic basis for world-wide democracy.

Detailed application of the general principles herein set forth to current issues of foreign policy is not a matter of easy and automatic deduction. Socialists the world over are united in opposition to preventive war but they have not achieved unity of method in dealing with such problems as German and Japanese rearmament and the recognition of the communist government on the Chinese mainland. Disagreements on these questions do not follow the lines which have divided the Socialist Party and the Social Democratic Federation, and eventual agreement can be worked out better in the united party facing realistically as they arise than in a party where consideration of honest differences arising out of issues with which time has already dealt. In any case we call upon all Socialists everywhere, and upon all men of good will, to join together in the struggle for peace, cooperation, brotherhood, and Socialism in America and throughout the world.

REPORT ON POLITICAL PERSPECTIVES

1. The United Party recognizes that its first duty in present day America is to increase the awareness of its fellow citizens in the values of democratic socialism. Its second duty is to work with all its power of persuasion for the establishment of a labor party, which would tend to become democratic socialist in principle.
2. Until such an organization is formed, United Party groups shall be encouraged to take such action as will best advance socialist education. Recognizing the contribution that a politically organized labor movement can make toward such a party, Socialists will take steps such as to enhance the value of trade union political action.
3. The United Party at this time also reiterates its belief that the Democratic and Republican Parties as presently constituted, cannot, and will not, properly represent the best interests of the vast mass of working

people and farmers of America, in spite of the presence of some liberals in the Republican Party, and a greater number in the Democratic Party.

4. Because of the obstacles and difficulties encountered in carrying on independent socialist electoral action in the coming period, the United Party will put its primary organizational emphasis on carrying on non-electoral campaigns and community activity for the maintenance of civil liberty, against segregatory policies, for the extension of social welfare measures, for a foreign policy which would reduce the threat of war, and general educational activity for a Socialist reorganization of our economy.

5. In localities where the socialist program can be enhanced by such action, or where, traditionally, socialist campaigns have received support, continued socialist political action should be encouraged.

6. In various parts of the country some of our members have been involved in labor-liberal organizations (such as the ADA, the Liberal Party of New York State, CIO-PAC, LLPE, etc.). Members of the United Party in these organizations are urged to stress the importance of independent political action.

7. In the absence of independent Socialist electoral action and in the absence of independent liberal-labor candidates, it shall be the privilege of individual state and local organizations to allow their individual members to support candidates for public office who have been endorsed by liberal and labor groups. (Emphasis added - Ed.)

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