

S P A R T A C I S T L E A G U E
I N T E R N A L B U L L E T I N

Pre-Second National Conference Discussion

Discipline Norms

-Leon D.-Gordon Exchange on Discipline, 4 September 1968 -
21 October 1968.

Woman Question

-Letter to Chris K. by James Robertson, 18 February 1969.

-Letter to the Bay Area SL by John S., 11 March 1969.

-Letter to John S. by Chris K., 18 March 1969.

SDS Division

-Letter to the N.O. (extract) by Nick D., 1 April 1969.

Saling Case

-Introductory Notes on the Saling Case by J.R., 7 July 1969.

-Letter to Jerry E. and the Ellens Group by Harry Turner,
29 November 1968.

-"New Splits in Spartacist" and "Spartacist Aids Rulers"
Workers League Bulletin reprints, issue of 2 December 1968.

-Letter to Healy by Harry Turner, 10 January 1969.

-Letter to Saling by James Robertson, 7 March 1969 (with
appendix of 5 February 1969).

-Letter to Saling by James Robertson, 10 March 1969.

-Letter to Saling by Dave Cunningham, 12 March 1969.

-On the Saling Case - extract from the PB Minutes of
9 April 1969.

-Appeal to the PB and SL Majority by Rick Saling, 1 June 1969.

Military Policy

-On G.I. Work by Joseph Seymour, 25 June 1969.

-On G.I. Work - A Reply by Mark Small, 2 July 1969.

-The Anti-war Struggle Within the Military and the Role of
the "G.I. Union" by Dave Cunningham, 4 July 1969.

LEON D. - LIZ GORDON EXCHANGE ON DISCIPLINE

New Orleans
(received) 4 Sept. 1968

Jim R.
New York

I wasn't very satisfied with the faction fight. The bulletins of the NYC organizer said what I wanted to say. The end of the feud seems to me a great opportunity to throw NYC members into regular, disciplined, political work. CIPA may not be enough. If you don't do something along these lines morale will sag again and people will keep deciding unilaterally which arena they want to work in. This is bad politics for us and bad training for the person who gets away with it. People start looking for pleasant arenas that are compatible with their background and skills. What comrades need for good training is precisely what they have not experienced before.

Now we need very serious contact work. We've had a lot of defections. Just to get back to our former strength might require that 20% of a local's resources be devoted to contact work.

Incidentally, I've noticed that I have a different approach to contact work than most comrades. Rather than rely on classes, I tend to find activists who have questions and stick to them like glue, answering questions, arguing, and debating as necessary. It's an individualistic approach, I guess. Write and tell me if I'm unprincipled. It works.

I think the League needs to be 3-5 times as big as it is now before it can expect any significant fusions of the CLA-AWP variety. You understand these things better than I do. But the only thing we have is correct politics. It would probably take that many people to make our politics clear to the movement in general. I think this is what we need to prepare for fusions.

But lemme get to what probably separates me and you. I think that most labor work in this period is valuable only as training - it doesn't allow us to take full advantage of our politics - it doesn't let us recruit quickly. I would put it about third priority.

I don't care too much where we get Bolsheviks - factory, flophouse, poolroom or prison is fine by me. But we need em bad. College or coffeehouse will do if that's where we have to go for raw material.

You see, I think a young worker is just as "raw" from our point of view as some dude from graduate school. Both of them have to be re-worked, educated and disciplined. It's easier to educate the student. It's easier to discipline the worker.

Education doesn't look like a problem to us. The current membership soaks up theory and begs for more. They'll need it - when they have to talk to workers and blacks who aren't a bit sure that theory matters at all.

Discipline is another story. The League is infected with punkism. People use what little theory they have to justify a veto power over their assignments. "I don't want to," has been embellished a thousand ways. I've done it myself. It's only human nature once you see you can get away with it. But that's not how we want

to train people. We want people to take pride in acting as the disciplined right arm of the League. I wish I had a dime for every stupid thing I've done for the Movement.

Leon D.

* * * *

New York, 4 Sept. 1968

Leon Day
New Orleans

Dear Leon,

We just got your letter today, and nobody else has read it yet but me, so other people may have points they want to make also. But as Jim has been sick for two weeks and is still running a fever, everything is even more behind than usual and other comrades may not be able to write you for a while, so don't expect too much.

On contacts--yes, yes, yes! Contact work means recruits. One fear that I have regarding the internal discussion is that comrades may not be as critically perceptive as they should, and allow themselves to be taken in by the Minority's attributions. The Minority has used the banner of "contact work" as a mystical rallying cry to substitute for politics and justify undergroundism and liquidationism. The fact that we have polemicized against this should not be taken to show that we disapprove of contact work or of lots of other things, for that matter--a frequent paper, regular PB minutes, building some trade union nuclei, etc.

Regarding contact work, like many other aspects of work, one must not make a principle out of past performance, which has its weaknesses. Classes and public meetings are certainly important, and for that matter NYC has not had enough of them. They are part of maintaining a public face, and especially running into people who we don't know yet as contacts, as well as being good education and training for the comrades themselves. I do not see why they should be posed by you or anyone else as antithetical to individual contacting and follow-up. We should do as much of the latter as the comrades can find the time. We all know that the SL is not the only active factor in the world, and there are other forces working on our contacts; contacts who are not followed up and moved in our direction do not stand still forever, but will be moved in the direction of other organization, or their personal lives, or the influence of the bourgeois mass media, etc., etc. Personal discussion with a close contact and contact in social situations and the like is kind of like giving a personal forum--class tailored exactly to the needs, doubts and questions of the contact. It ought to be instinctively clear to everyone how valuable this can be. I only have a couple of reservations, which also ought to be immediately obvious: recruiting work is not a substitute for a public face or a dishonest and implicit way to sneak into the exaggerated clandestinity practices which I know you disapprove of; and some people aren't worth taking so much time and trouble with them. My own experience has been that people who often don't seem at first glance very close to the organization but who are serious, open and interested should not be written off, whereas others who are radical as all hell at first glance are often, on closer examination, not willing to commit themselves to a life as a revolutionary. At Cornell, for example, we were often disappointed with the outcome of work-

ing on the active SDS'ers who were the most outspoken pro-Vietcong people, but recruited a number of people, including myself, who were at best on the fringes of the movement or even turned off the prevalent forms of campus radicalism but were open to SL ideas. But it's certainly possible to carry contacting too far--for example, a group which is not active as a group, never intervenes in meetings, etc. is less attractive to a contact than one which does all the things that the New Orleans local does par excellence. Unfortunately for us, however, we have and seem to recruit a lot of shy, introverted people who know they ought to be doing face-to-face work (for example, buttonholing new faces after a public meeting and inviting them out for a beer and more discussion) but tend to find excuses not to do it. So don't take all of our practice and its weaknesses as a codified example of the best of all possible modes of functioning. This is true of lots of things--because we try to expose the Minority's hypocrisy in yelling about the frequency of the paper, for god's sake don't assume we don't care about the paper and won't break our asses trying to solve its problems.

I think I agree with you regarding fusions with other tendencies. Regarding labor work, I also would put it at about third priority, which isn't to say that we can't do any of it. The first two priorities, in my opinion, are first of all the maintaining of a Trotskyist political line, its circulation to our members and its propagandizing nationally and internationally through a public propaganda organ, leaflets, etc. The second is activity and recruitment in radical arenas (which frequently although not inevitably--another false attribution of the Minority--means petty-bourgeois arenas.) The reason that this is placed ahead of activity and recruitment out of "the mass movement" and trade unions is that at this point, to paraphrase your letter, we don't care too much where we get our Bolsheviks, but we need 'em bad, and right now, given the state of our organization and the state of the movement we will get more recruits faster out of these arenas. Trade union work doesn't at present allow us to recruit quickly. But, as a third priority, it is important for several reasons--occasional recruits of mainly exceptional people who will be open to us, an example of our ideas and a demonstration that they can mean something in practice, and experience and training for our comrades.

Discipline is certainly important. But one must also be tolerant and judicious in its application. Many comrades have something of a cycle to their level of activity--you are one who claimed you wanted to take it easy for six months or so. As you have probably noticed, you haven't been inactive at all, and this is often the case with comrades who say they want to take it easy. In Ithaca one time a comrade took a one or two week leave of absence, during which time she was exactly as active as she had been before, which was by the way considerably active. Comrades sometimes panic a bit about the demands the organization makes on them and dream of all the fun they could have while being inactive for a time, then find that they can't keep their fingers out of the pie. But it's reassuring for them to find out that the organization is not unconcerned with their personal welfare and won't mechanically insist that they do things they don't feel they can do, even if they find out that they can do them after all. Furthermore, there is a certain ebb and flow to circumstances, and we can't keep our people operating at top pitch forever. To keep them constantly in overdrive burns them out; we want to keep our people for the long haul. We want them to have that little something in reserve so that they can perform when they are urgently needed. The National Office works largely on that kind of thing--fourteen hour days at the office in preparation for an SDS conference or an issue of the paper, and then some goofing off. When an organization has fewer resources than it absolutely needs, when it is too small to respond to all the absolutely urgent necessities, a crisis-oriented kind of operation is inevitable.

This is not to say that everybody can always be salvaged by not pushing them

always and forever. Some people are on their way out, and some are too personally selfish to keep giving enough of themselves to maintain membership. But making utopian demands on them isn't enough to keep them either. Some we keep, some we lose. That's one of the rules of the game. When people fall below the acceptable levels of membership, they should be dropped. Some people, though, are fairly lousy members. They should be coaxed, explained to, forced to function at the bare minimum if not better than the minimum. A good example must be set by those whose consciousness is higher. The fundamental solution is to raise their consciousness too. The financial level of the New Orleans local, for example, is an example of lousy financial consciousness. But consciousness works two ways. The more active comrades must try hard not to let themselves be demoralized by the less active members, and to measure their own performance by the best available examples rather than the worst. We have found in the past that inexperienced (in a long-term sense) and active young comrades tend to see the solution of the local's problems as just getting rid of some of the local's members. This seems, for example, to be a tendency in the Bay Area local, where with the defection of Comrade Geoff White a number of rather young but very responsible and talented comrades have had the local on their shoulders. The most serious drawback to deadweight in a local is that the maintenance of non-members as members can demoralize the active members. The way we seek to function is to set up certain minimum norms (all members must pay money, come to most meetings, respond to full mobilizations, do some other work) and be somewhat elastic and educational rather than ultimatic. And we expect more from a lot of people, too. We have kept people around who were sporadic in their activity; some we have lost anyway, and some have become reactivated, and some are just not very good members, who will either get better or worse as time goes on.

The most important thing to keep in mind now is that New Orleans is operating above its capacity, and has been doing so for a while. In such a situation people tend to get on each others nerves and people also tend to mess up some--when you are responsible for doing too much, you can't do it all, or at least not all right. Again, consciousness! Take account of this and try to compensate for it. We are trying to send you reinforcements immediately. The cop out of Ellens, long slated for New Orleans, is a set-back. Joel and Charlotte will be going down there just as soon as they can get enough money to transport them. In the meantime, patience and flexibility are important. We have a lot of confidence in the New Orleans comrades, you know, and think you will come through okay.

Regards from all to all,
Liz

* * * *

New Orleans
(received) 11 Sept. 1968

Dear Liz,
New York

New Orleans is not operating above its capacity. People still have time to read books, some of us go to movies and visit obscure relatives with great fidelity, regularly. The last paragraph of your letter suggests that things must be very difficult - strange things are happening in Nola! Sphinxes are learning to talk. D. writes a letter, even. Surely the world is coming to an end?

What you write about discipline puzzles me. I was not under the impression that many members were in danger of being "burned out". Rusted out, or rotted out, maybe. I'd reserve the tolerance for the ones who work hard.

You're absolutely right. Some people do get on my nerves. How am I supposed to feel when a member won't go on an important intervention because he doesn't think it's worthwhile, and the other active member tells me that it's our job to convince Comrade X that said intervention is a good idea? Now I replied, and I still think, that it's more important to convince Comrade X that carrying out collective decisions is worthwhile as a principle than it is to prove and detail the usefulness of any tactical approach. The big brother of Comrade V's idea is that a minority doesn't have to carry out the party line. We have had enough of that crap this year.

Leon D.

Yours for the revolution, even if it does interfere with our private life.

* * * *

New York, 11 September 1968

New Orleans

Dear Leon,

I can see this correspondence is going to go on for ever.

Now..,about carrying out an assignment. Once it reaches the point of a principle then you are right. And certainly the argument that one doesn't think a thing is important enough is not an excuse when the collective has made a decision. Granted. Sabotage cannot be tolerated. Nor can we tolerate personal weaknesses when the person makes a program out of them--you remember Shelly, who argued that nobody ought to give blood or go into a trade union, and that's why he didn't have to. But with people who do not reach that point, it's better to use patience, persuasion and tact. Obviously when it becomes a showdown and a point of principle, the organization must insist on its discipline. I was talking about avoiding reaching that point when you can. I don't know anything about the particular dispute. You people will have to work that out yourselves.

Cheer up.

Granite hardness,
Liz

* * * * *

New Orleans
(received) 21 Sept. 1968

[Liz]
New York

Let me make one more effort to get some meaning past your optic nerve.

On discipline: If you insist on performance in small things, you are building habits in the membership that help when you must ask for large changes in our lives.

This will mean that in the long run there will be much less need for last-resort disciplinary measures like trial and expulsion. On the other hand, when you use "patience, persuasion, and tact" you are putting the organization on an equal basis with one of its members, coming down to his level, playing in his ball-park by his rules. Rewarding childishness by giving it personal attention does not help people grow up.

The YSA can shift half its membership a thousand miles any weekend on a week's notice - for a tactical intervention! If we tried the same thing we would need six months of "patience, persuasion, and tact" to prepare for it.

Both you and Helen seem to think that discipline is the result of conscious recognition of a principle. That's false. So is the corollary that discipline should be enforced only when a member consciously attacks centralist principles.

When I talk about training, I'm saying that the leadership should actively encourage habits to re-inforce principle. A principle is never safe until it moves from the cortex to the medulla.

This correspondence is likely to go on just as long as you project your own confusion into what I write. I am not talking about right and wrong....Try approaching the problem of general organizational sloppiness.

From the bowels of the imperialist monster! (I bet I can think up more banalities to write before signing than you!)

Leon D.

* * * *

New Orleans
(received) 2 Oct. 1968

Liz,
New York

---...Please write and tell me whether I have won the argument or simply been dismissed as an incorrigible...

Graphite slickness!
Leon D.

* * * *

New York
4 October 1968

Leon
New Orleans

Dear Leon,

No, I didn't write you off as incorrigible. Actually, I sort of wrote us both off as incorrigible. I figure you understand my points and I understand yours. I do think that you have a sort of purely military idea of discipline; it seemed to me that you were pretty much ignoring the role of consciousness, or at least despairing of changing it. A more flattering, but no less true, way of putting it is

that I think you are taking your own high level of commitment as the necessary minimum standard. I certainly wish it were true of all our members, but it isn't. Granted we can't permit lousy members to remain lousy members forever; they either get better or get worse. We only quarrel about how to make them get better.

But you see, I am not unsympathetic to the points you made. I would be delighted to see you propose, for example, a higher minimum SP at the Conference, and would probably vote for it, although my mind isn't made up. Therefore, in fact, I hope we can have a discussion of ways to tighten up the organization, because it might help me make up my mind on the various specifics you mentioned previously. Also I pretty much tend to agree with the things you said in your answer to Janacek about the state of commitment and standards of discipline and functioning in the SL. I'm sure we'd both agree that a sudden, inflexible drastic shift in the direction of organizational "granite hardness" would just have the result of accelerating the political demise of some of our members. And also that excessively low standards for functioning and sloppiness produces demoralization among active members and accentuates the weaknesses of the inactive ones. And that over-tolerance, combined with our urgent necessities which make us press hard on our people sometimes, is arbitrary and unfair.

Still, I insist there are problems. You can't demand from a member at large the standards you have for a member of an organized local, for example. Some people who want to be good members need constant prodding, and you can't really judge them without giving them a chance to shape up under the pressures of a local. You need a local large enough for a division of labor to allow a comrade a chance to show that he wants to make his particular, and sometimes peculiar, talents available. Somebody like Dave R., for example, makes a good addition to anybody's national office and a frightful local organizer, and it's not exactly fair to judge him entirely on the basis of his deplorable failure as local organizer in Chicago. And people can't always be moved around like chesspieces, although we'd be much better off if they could be. And why is it that people in isolation have such a notoriously poor record of financial support to the org.--it can't be that they are uniformly worse human material than the people that happen to be recruited in New York, where nobody is paying less than \$10 a month. What do we do with people with lumpy consciousness--who understand the necessity of this, that and the other thing excellently in the abstract, want to remain members, and have blind spots in certain aspects of their personal functioning, towards money, or writing (literary constipation), or dealing with people, or speaking publicly even when necessary, or coming on time to meetings, or getting up early in the morning? Sure, lots of things--explain the importance of things to them, demonstrate by example, use comradely social pressure to make them ashamed and cringing, yell, threaten, demonstrate concern for them so they know we aren't trying to drive them into the nuthouse, bring charges, lots of other things. Pure coddling doesn't work (down with creeping Lizism!). Pure threatening doesn't work (down with creeping Leonism!). The first gives you a useless member and an insult to everybody else; the second gives you a non-member. And a non-member isn't much help, although obviously you reach a point when you have to throw people out. The question regarding the relationship of a given lousy member to the org. is: Can this marriage be saved? Sometimes it can't, and sometimes it isn't worth it to save it at the expense of other things, like general morale and an equitable application of the rules. And sometimes it can. And I still insist that it's up to the more conscious and active comrades not only to lean on the other members (and shove them sometimes) but also to keep themselves from lowering their standards for their own functioning. Some of us do work harder than others, and it's partly up to us to suppress our indignation over the horrible examples and go on working because the job has to be done. Sorry for all the platitudes, but I mean it.

The point I liked best about your remarks was the point about somebody's remaining a member not being a favor to anybody, along the lines of "oh thank you so-and-so for finally coming to a meeting, and please don't quit whatever you do". That's not exactly what you said, but I think it's the same thing. The org. shouldn't have to sneak around to its members begging them to do it the favor of carrying out an assignment. If somebody wants to cop out, that's partly our problem, but partly theirs too. The West Coast local with its leadership which is about as experienced as I am, which is to say hardly at all, has often had the attitude of "gosh it's terrible that so-and-so supports the wrecking minority, but at least he's still in the organization, and we have to be nice to him or else, god forbid, he'll quit". But as I may have pointed out before these comrades have also gone through periodic desires to throw out all the old guard, semi-active members around as if this would solve all their problems. Super-hardness on discipline is often correlated with over-softness politically and the idea that if anybody quits it's the end of the world. Well, that's inexperience for you, in a word--inflexibility.

How shall I sign this mess? How about pencil-point precision? Or paper-clip flexibility? Clenched-teeth determination? Medicine-drop nastiness? Scissor-edge sharpness? War-horse weariness?

Saber-toothed tigerness!
Liz

* * * *

New Orleans
(received) 21 Oct. 1968

Miz Liz,
New York

Far from ignoring the role of consciousness, I am talking about building it. You've pointed out the gap between understanding necessity in the abstract and the ability to act accordingly. Close this gap, and you get a professional revolutionary who puts political necessity ahead of his personal life. A chess-piece? No, because the defining thing about a chess-piece is that it can be moved and used only in specific ways. Its capabilities are limited by its inherent character - whether it is knight, bishop, pawn, etc.

In chess, that character is fixed and pre-destined. But people can usually, with help, overcome character weaknesses (your "blind spots") to such an extent that the bad habits they brought with them are overridden and destroyed.

What we are talking about is how to even out lumpy consciousness and expand general consciousness. In my answer to Helen I outlined a consciousness-expanding, bitter, pill. I think the people willing to swallow it would be showing the kind of willingness to wake up and clean up that we need. As I designed it specifically to weed out the punks - the incorrigible punks, at least - I don't believe it's a criticism for you to point out that this would be its result.

I must say a few words in favor of military discipline. I think it's utopian to suppose that we can defeat our enemies with a lower standard of organization than theirs. We don't want their bureaucracy, their corruption, or their elitist philosophy of leadership. We need, whether we want it or not, their method of training people to set aside personal ambitions and weaknesses. I think I told you once that

the main thing wrong with the army was that it fought for the wrong side. The corruption and abuse flow from that.

I am not talking about either threatening or coddling. I want the application of uniform standards. If a man has a weakness it's no favor to him to accept that weakness as pre-destined - to treat him like a chessman.

The leadership responsibility is to jump on him and make him exercise until he gains self-discipline. The paradox is that self-discipline originates in external forces. It should have been a project in N.Y. to make Jerry do precisely those things which he hated to do. The project wouldn't have succeeded. Why not? Because the local would have supported the idea only in theory. In practice you would have got this reply: "He isn't good at it, so we shouldn't make him do it."

I have the feeling that a good proportion of the membership is afraid to exercise its authority because it feels that such precedents would eventually come home to roost. So the Shellys back up the Jerrys back up the Kays who sooner or later demoralize the Helens, Sams and Jacks, and Jeffs. And they all blame the leadership for being sloppy and inefficient.

The idea behind the attempted program in my answer to Helen was to back up an isolated leadership with the authority of a National Conference. I want the membership to acknowledge the authority of the American Revolution, and the League, and the elected functionaries of that organization, over their private lives. I want to get an L.O.U. from these summer soldiers and Sunday socialists - for their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor. I'll be the first to sign, although with my ornery personality I can bank on having League discipline applied to me sooner or later.

This correspondence has been good for me. As the famous author, Cascara Sagrada, pointed out: "Literary constipation is a result of theoretical underconfidence." Well, this time I've got an issue between my teeth, and I know I'm right. I'm talking about solving a problem, not accomodating ourselves to it. I want to improve the membership, not define our tactics by analyzing its weaknesses.

I want to keep up this debate, because I am not sure you know what to do with the purely moral authority you have now.

Congratulations on your second beautiful put-down of despicable shit-bird ex-Minority.

I call "saber-toothed tigerness" and raise you tom-cat lechery, rattle-snake readiness, wolverine ferocity, and

Mongoose Audacity,
Leon D.

* * * * *

Attachment, PB Minutes of 24 February 1969

18 February 1969
(corrected)

Chris K.
Bay Area

Dear Chris,

A thing that I didn't take up with you in our phone call today in response to your letter was regarding the Women's Liberation groups in which some of our comrades are active. We recently noticed with a great deal of interest a series on the Woman Question which appeared in the Guardian (issues of 18 Jan., 25 Jan., 1 Feb. and 8 Feb.). The third article of the series was very much the best. This series was by Beverly Jones, excerpted from "Towards a Female Liberation Movement" put out by the Women's Liberation Distribution Center, Washington, D.C. I take this series to be typical or at least symptomatic of the present Women's Liberation groups which seem generally associated with the New Left student milieu and which have been springing up around the country. In any case, the articles were, at a certain level, very perceptive indeed in explaining the mechanisms whereby young women--as students, girlfriends and young mothers--are oppressed in manifold, interacting ways. In effect the series centers on the specific problems of young, middle-class women around the radical movement and what they have to put up with.

However, while these particular problems are a good point of departure to draw in young women, the series of articles of which I speak and so far as I know the bulk of the radical women's organizations (which have been doing some good, flamboyant work on the East Coast lately) fail to emphasize sufficiently a key linkage in making the jump from the oppression of women to the need for social revolution. And I think that our concentration on this connection might make our comrades' propaganda more concrete, persuasive and radical. The connection I have in mind is that of the family, which throughout a woman's life gives definition to her oppressed state: as daughter, as wife, as mother. The family is a central target in the Marxist criticism of society. The program of communism includes its abolition (when society has reached such a point that the family could be replaced by social relations of a superior physical and emotional content--our aim is not to put everyone in a contemporary state orphanage). It is the family--with all the connotations of the transfer of property through the generations, the necessity to control sexual access to women to ensure that a father passes on property to his son, etc., etc.--which generates all of the morality superstructure. In short, the family is the key social unit for the maintenance of capitalism: the worker's family by which the labor force is reproduced, the capitalist's by which his property (i.e., the congealed life blood of the workers) is transmitted to his sons.

Comradely,

Jim R.

P.S. While these thoughts have come to me freshly, I suspect they owe a lot to readings of Engels' Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State and also the early Wilhelm Reich.

Attachment, PB Minutes of 17 March 1969

Austin, Texas
11 March 1969

Bay Area SL
Local Committee

Dear Comrades,

We noted the leaflet on Women's Liberation that you sent us and the letter that Jim sent you about your work in this arena. The opportunity to participate in this type of work is excellent and it is good that comrades are involved. One point comes to mind, however, and that is, why are only women comrades involved in this arena? This is a bad development because of the tendency on the part of the male comrades to take the attitude that this is "women's work", thus reinforcing the subordinate role atmosphere that women are in. This is not to say that comrades should be drawn out of other arenas or that there should be a token man at each meeting but that it does seem to us (from the tone of your letter) that there is a relegation of this work to only the women comrades (Bad, Bad, Bad). Particularly, this is bad in view of the leaflet itself which contained the statement--"The issue is self-determination." It would seem that such an orientation must be fought before these groups begin to develop possible exclusionist and anti-Marxist ideas and programs which would be the worst possible thing. We already have this to contend with in the Black Nationalists and if we can beat it at this stage, it would make our work that much easier.

Of course the issue is not self-determination. The issue is that women must be freed from oppression and suppression to realize their full potential as human beings. Self-determination in their context means, I suppose, the right to determine their own lives as men do. But men don't either and in the present social context this is impossible--the final liberation of women requires the destruction of capitalism and the development of a socialist society. We must fight to link up the struggles of these groupings to the rest of our program and to that of the working class as a whole. And, we must also begin to think about a program for this area of our work. I'm sure that you comrades realize this, so I won't belabor the point.

Secondly, I want to say that Jim's letter was excellent in that it hit at the exact point from which we should start. The family in bourgeois society is the key social unit in the maintenance of that society. I urge you to pick up on Jim's suggestions and develop your perspectives and programs from this key concept.

Comradely,

John S.

cc: PB
file

Attachment, PB Minutes of 17 March 1969

Bay Area
18 March 1969

[excerpt]

Austin

Dear John,

Good to hear from you. I thought the points in your letter were well taken. Right now, only women comrades are involved because, mainly, the women's liberation groups have prohibited male members. Our comrades have, of course, opposed this line. The women in them are very radical however, the problem is that they are new to politics and naive. Our comrades are making contacts and finding that the problem of women, and the points raised in Jim's letter to me, when thought about seriously by these women, have an extremely radicalizing effect on their consciousnesses.

Your point on the "self-determination" line was also well taken, and our comrades worked on that leaflet (and the action it called for) after having raised criticisms and been over-ruled. It wasn't a leaflet of ours in any sense other than any leaflet from any broad organization that we're in is "ours", or course; we just sent it around for general interest in what this new movement is doing here.

Enclosed is an announcement of a class on the question which we will be having here on April 4th, with a presentation by Helene. Helene is going to write Miriam about women's liberation work, in line with the national consulting fraction on the question, but Helene is not a facile writer, and you and Anne should take initiative in sending your thoughts around to other comrades, such as Judy in Ithaca, on the subject.

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Comradely greetings,

Chris K.

cc: files
N.O.

New Orleans, La.
Tuesday, 1 April 1969

New York

Excerpt

Dear Jim:

I think we have to be careful about whom we team up with in our opposition to PL's organizational maneuvering within SDS and other arenas. Our problem in fighting PL's takeover plans for SDS have been complicated, of course, by their recent "left turn" on the national question. Now on black nationalism, for instance, we can "only" point out that they are tail-ending us, and that in practice PL will follow an opportunist course regardless of their new line (e.g., N.Y. Teacher's Strike). But there are real dangers in appearing to bloc closely with any anti-PL people, even some who do want an open, inclusive SDS, and use Marxist rhetoric. In this context I was concerned about a letter Austin received from our West Coast people dealing with our involvement in the Revolutionary Student Union (RSU) around Berkeley. The letter said that, of course, it was basically a rotten anti-PL coalition. That was obvious from the speech given by one of the RSU members arguing for SDS recognition of a separate chapter (East Bay Chapter) around Berkeley. The following PL speaker squashed him. Nothing he had said indicated that the existing chapter was organizationally closed to non-PL people, or denied PL's contention that the RSU and its related would-be SDS chapter were a motly collection of ISC third-campers, luminaries left over from the Berkeley FSM, student-power types, and so on. The RSU speaker's line, basically, was, well, yeah, there was a lot of student power talk a couple of months back (but less now); no, we weren't excluded from the PL-influenced chapter, but there are a lot of independent "socialists", ISC and otherwise, who don't like to work with PL...And so on. No one challenged PL's contention that the RSU people had played around with ideas like getting a Ford or Rockefeller grant for an "anti-imperialist" school, suing the university in the courts for publicity value on issues of "our federally guaranteed rights", and were characterized by lowest-common-denominator politics generally. No doubt some of these charges were exaggerated, but I heard no outcry from RSU people, and their man's previous speech certainly did nothing to scotch them. The motion for recognition of the East Bay Chapter was voted down. PL loves this sort of thing. Now I don't know exactly what we're doing with this RSU thing; certainly there's nothing wrong with trying to win people to our politics, or agitating within RSU that their people get into the PL chapter (RSU apparently has as many people as PL's chapter of influence all together) and such. But our West Coast cdes. have a history of getting into mushy, literary, "independent," I.S.C.-type politics a little too fast and a little too deep. The fact is that we are closer to PL on most questions than to many, or most, of the anti-PL forces; and our loathing of the Maoist bullshit and Stalinist organizational practices shouldn't blind us to that important fact. Additionally, I recall Trotsky's views in the late 30's on the SWP's preferences for orienting toward independent semi-socialist militants rather than toward the CP, and the reasons for his urging that we attempt a breakthrough with the Stalinists rather than chase individual nonparty radicals with our Trotskyist net. Even a great deal of success in the latter course leaves the Stalinists standing square in our path. I think present circumstances in SDS are similar. We can and should vote with PL's enemies on questions of organizational democracy, etc. But to counter them politically we have to stand on their own ground and fight them there, not in the swamp of their enemies to the right, the uncommitted, the shifting center groupings. I hope our Bay Area cdes. see it this way.

Communist greetings,
Nick D.

INTRODUCTORY NOTES ON THE SALING CASE

I.

The Saling case is but a derivative of the Turner case and therefore less relevant and even less interesting to us. We wanted a political fight to the finish with Ellens. The differences were big and real. Ellens ran out in the middle leaving behind the front man in their rotten block, Turner, a disgruntled, disturbed, deeply unprincipled element devoid of significant differences with the SL. (To this day and despite his every effort to magnify marginal issues, one of Turner's two main criticisms of the SL is the wretched press frequency of our central organ. His other point is our "substantial agreement on the Negro question" with the Workers League - which is why e.g. the WL says all Black caucuses are reactionary and we give them conditional support depending on programmatic agreement.)

After the Ellens split, Turner was unable to swallow his bloated pride at the swift and humiliating exposure of his combinationism. He himself revealed the depths of his subordination of politics to heedless personal factionalism when he simply repeated in his November 1968 letter to Jerry and the Ellensites our earlier characterization of the Ellens-Turner group! While we were hardly eager, we were nonetheless initially willing to facilitate Turner's rehabilitation following the Ellensite walkout. This can be seen in our October 1968 written material: The Open Letter (to Turner) by Cunningham and The Trouble With Harry (I) by Gordon.

But Turner chose to burn his bridges back to the SL, mocked us, baited us, committed numerous acts of indiscipline, dumped 70 pages of factional documents on us, stopped paying his financial obligation to the SL. He wanted out; he wanted the vindication of an expulsion. We conditionally and partially suspended him - he immediately resigned - screaming atrocity. And then in rapid succession he showed us what atrocities are.

In his letter of 29 November 1968 (reprinted below in entirety) to Jerry and the Ellensites he admitted:

"We have been aware for some time of Kay's lack of scruple, of candor-- speaking plainly, of downright dishonesty. We can quote you chapter and verse if you wish--such as the crass falsehoods retailed by her at local meetings, for which no factional justification can be found...."

So much for Turner's previous fervid affirmations that he knew of no wrong-doing by his factional ex-associates. Note also his implied willingness to retail "crass falsehoods" if "factional justification" can be found.

He then ran to Wohlforth seeking membership and while that eventually didn't come off Turner collaborated in working up for the Bulletin of 2 December 1968 a wretched piece of lying in the large and in detail on the SL and Turner's split. "Co-incidently" that issue of the Bulletin noted: "We state unequivocally that the Spartacist League acts as the fingerman for the world capitalists." (for free too!) Below we reprint the relevant material from the Bulletin.

Turner neither disowned this accusation nor sought alternatively to explain away his own personal culpability as a former top leader in the SL and perhaps even the fingernail of the capitalist fingerman. (Since any accusation of being police agents is potentially damaging, we took the trouble to prove that the Banda-Wohlforth charge was unserious and only (!) a piece of Stalinist rhetoric.)

Turner's next atrocity was a grovelling letter to Healy (see below) which should be read in entirety to be believed. Apparently in an effort to gain admittance to the Healyite American section Turner gives fulsome praise to the great leader Healy, denigrates his own past in the SL and bends his current views to a grotesque degree attempting to make them fit in Healy's scheme. Turner's biggest political difference with the Healy-Wohlforth crew is on the Negro question. But to get in the Wohlforth League Turner wrote in his 10 January 1969 letter to Healy:

"As to the Negro question, the WL's program, flowing from the basic perspective of the world capitalist crisis, for a struggle in the trade-unions to unite workers on a transitional program, which includes the fight against racial discrimination, is one which we can support."

Turner of course views the WL as objectively more or less racist.

Finally, (no, not finally, there is more, but some we don't know and some we are with good reason holding off going into for the time being) there's Turner and the Labor Committee. When the Marcus Labor Committee joined the capitalist witch-hunt against SDS (see the SP's New America of 22 Jan. '69) we brought in to the Committee a statement and a motion of condemnation later heavily circulated publicly by us. Turner and the WL fraction abstained (!) on this question of principle (in the classic centrist pattern). We walked out and they were thrown out anyhow at the end of the same meeting since the Labor Committee really was going through a definitive right turn.

II.

Now as to Saling himself, the letters by comrades Cunningham and Robertson (reprinted below) give a good part of the story. About New Year's 1969 Saling suddenly surfaced as a gee-whiz SL activist and loyalist after a year of isolation and sullen inactivity. We were perplexed, but would have immediately acknowledged his renewed membership except that his factional asides in correspondence indicated not merely differences, but something perhaps a good deal more alien. So we held off and responded with questions and demands.

Finally on 31 March we received a 19 page document in uncritical organizational defense of Turner (The Trouble With Liz which we are circulating through the SL in xerox copies). The PB had a choice to make: either acknowledge Saling as a bona-fide SL member and fight him to the finish internally or formally drop him on fully adequate and unambiguous grounds accumulated over the previous year. We print below the record of the PB discussion and decisions to drop him at its meeting of 9 April. Note that all the PB members denied Saling's good faith and bona-fide membership and saw him as probably Turner's conscious agent in our midst. In extensive discussion we explored possible intermediate proposals but the PB found no acceptable one.

Saling forfeited his membership, seeking to come back only to fight us. Saling chose Turner. We aim to fight given opponents either inside or outside our democratic-centralist organization, but not both with ourselves the victims of a pincer operation. This is part of what democratic-centralism is all about. Fortunately, we could immediately resolve the contradiction by dropping Saling at once instead of going through a fake internal fight with an external enemy. Such a fake would have aborted a rare and precious National Conference of member-delegates in favor of staging a show solely to relieve the qualms of some uneasy and over-solicitous comrades. Nothing doing. We'd a thousand times rather debate the Turner-Saling issue (among other things) with real SL members, than to debate the Turner issue

with Saling. That's our choice and we made it.

As for what Saling "really" is. We will present our evidence to the Turner-Saling commission at the National Conference along with Saling's appeal reprinted below. But all comrades had better know that already, in the documents printed previously, here or circulated separately, the answers are obvious to anyone with a modicum of experience or capacity for thought.

Solidarity with Saling by an SL member or, the shame-faced version, solidarity with his "trampled rights" is really something else and that won't be disturbed even when and if Turner openly declares that Saling's been his boy all along. It is a species of Menshevism, a feeling that if Saling is protected then the SL can't possibly touch some weak or doubtful or vacillating or cynical member like oneself. And that's a rotten destructive anti-party mood. To defend Saling is to defend Turner because that's what Saling does and to defend Turner is to defend his crimes against us.

III.

So Turner uses Saling as bait to fish for suckers and to tie us up in a discussion of our illusory bureaucratism hoping to make an impression with the if smoke - then fire bit of "common sense" and thereby to take apart the SL - in Turner's case for reasons of offended ego and vanity writ crazy large. For our part we too would like to engage in discussion with any comrades who have been so aloof as not to have absorbed the lessons of our year of faction fight which even overfully fulfilled our characterization of Ellens and Turner and of their course and conduct. And should there be any in our ranks who are in a position to know better but insist on sick cynicism then we assert that behind such an attitude lurks a qualitative departure from Bolshevism and we will root it out! (J.R.)

7 July 1969

New York, N.Y.
November 29, 1968

To: J. [Jerry E.] and the Kay Ellens Group

It was necessary for us to turn our attention to more pressing tasks, or we would have replied to your communication earlier.

Despite the personal note of camaraderie in your letter, it is obviously the considered reply of your group, and we, therefore, treat it as such, in responding to it and the points it makes.

It is difficult to believe that you have actually read our resignation statements with any degree of care. If you have, and if you are not deliberately attempting to distort their clear meaning to your own purposes, then you completely fail to understand their meaning.

We did not leave the Spartacist League at the end of October on our own volition, as the first paragraph of your letter misrepresents. We were forced to resign because of a series of demands which were designed by Robertson for just that purpose. Our resignation statements very specifically depict the situation, and in so doing, turn the organizational manipulation against Robertson. We proved to the remaining members of the SL that his demands were unprincipled, and that our expressed desire to remain in the organization until a culminating conference was real.

What you consider to be "compromising" concessions, were in fact, not only principled, but are excellent examples of political judo. Every concession carried at least one dagger aimed at Robertson. That you were unable to understand the excellent tactics used by us, testifies to your own rigidity, lack of a tactical sense, and poverty of knowledge and understanding of things political.

Interestingly, you do not respond in the slightest to the political content of the resignation statements, or so much as request copies of the two documents mentioned, The Internal Struggle Continues and Ideology and Practice, and, thereby, clearly tell us that your interest in "self-education" is not likely to be overly-fruitful. One must bring to a subject an analytical, critical and eager intelligence, qualities which seem to be seriously lacking in the Kay Ellens group.

You advance the need for your "self-education" as the excuse for your refusal to extend to us the clerical assistance which we requested, and which we urgently required at that time in order to produce and circulate our documents to the remaining membership of the SL, other political groups and unattached individuals. You equate the granting of such assistance with "unity" with us. Please be advised that we did not propose unity between our groups. We asked you only for what we felt ourselves entitled to, on the basis of your earlier expressions of general political agreement with us, on our mutual agreement on the need to build a Leninist party in the United States. We proposed discussion so as to clarify and resolve any strategic and/or tactical differences which might have existed between us, and requested assistance in producing documents which represented our continued efforts in a struggle which you lightly abandoned.

Curiously, neither you nor anyone in your group ever attempted to delineate what your "differences" are with us, either in your letter, in person, while we were all still members of, or since leaving the SL, and this is passing strange for ostensible Leninists. Potential cadre with whom you had indicated basic political agreement have just left an organization of which you also were once members, and

have indicated a desire to be involved in discussion with you. Not only do you not try to win them for your divergent political ideas, but, on the contrary, you push them away from you with all your might.

This behavior tells us a great deal more about you and your group. You do not believe in the interaction of ideas, in testing your conceptions in discussion and debate, either individually or as a collective body. You are mainly concerned with organizational manipulation, after the fashion of Robertson, although lacking his deft technique. This behavior by you does not come as a surprise to us, of course. We have been aware for some time of Kay's lack of scruple, of candor--speaking plainly, of downright dishonesty. We can quote you chapter and verse if you wish--such as the crass falsehoods retailed by her at local meetings, for which no factional justification can be found, or her failure, at a time when she was presumably a member of the minority faction, to inform us about members in opposition who were interested in a continuing struggle within the organization.

At our last count, we found a larger number of those in, and who wished to continue the fight, than Kay succeeded in taking out with her. We estimate that our combined forces would have been able to compel Robertson to call a conference by the end of the year, and that we would have mustered a third of the delegate strength. As Robertson had no greater support behind him, we would have had a real possibility, if not of winning control of the organization, of taking a sizable section of it out with us, of beginning again as a national organization. But Kay was not interested in carrying the organizational struggle through to a conclusion. She didn't wish to allow ideas to ferment in the minds of the SL members, to involve them in discussion and debate. She had concluded that, not only the leadership but, the SL cadre as a whole, with few exceptions, were not worth fighting for. Kay was interested only in pulling a small circle around her. She turned out to be Robertson's best ally--permitting him to salvage the remains of the organization, demoralizing the dissidents within it, and ensuring that he would be able to force us out.

One must conclude from your group's behavior toward us that you fear a relationship with us, that you are afraid that our participation in your discussions will unsettle you, that the Kay Ellens "flock" might begin to stray. The same conclusion must be drawn from your extraordinary letter in response to my phone call. You did not return my call as you indicated you would, obviously, because you wished to avoid discussion with me in carrying out your unpleasant chore of denying us clerical assistance and "unity". How else can one typify your conduct but as simple political cowardice? Is this your idea of how Leninists behave?

Your behavior toward us is in consonance with your general mode of behavior. Your "political" activity, now and for the next period, if one accepts your statements in this connection at face value--a hazardous undertaking, obviously--is "self-education". It would seem that you are retiring to some cloistered retreat, there to study Marxist holy writ, undisturbed by the class struggle. This is, evidently, what you mean by "the real tasks". Not even a suspicion seems to have crossed your minds, that in doing so you separate theory from practice, in violation of the method of Marxism, and the practice of Marxism which you say you wish to adopt. Isn't your behavior farcical?

But your approach to Marxist theory is no more than I would have expected from your group. Kay Ellens is in many ways the mirror-image of Robertson, with all signs reversed, and with even less capacity for dialectical thought. Kay, with her fetishistic attitude toward recruiting through accretion at the factory level, on a molecular basis, ignores all other questions in the building of a Leninist

vanguard party, such as the need to engage the revisionists of Marxism in struggle, to fight their ideas in a press and in open activities, such as the recruitment of radical intellectuals to a proletarian movement. She breaks the dialectical unity of theory and practice, of intellectual and proletarian, which is the Leninist party, just like Robertson, only she departs in the "proletarian" direction, while he makes tracks toward the "intellectuals". She is unable to understand that, while contacting, education and factory work in the Voix Ouvriere manner are necessary activities in the building of the party, an over-all strategic and tactical conception--one which relates the subjective factor, the party, to the objective situation, the movement of and within classes, nationally and internationally, in a particular historical period--is vital.

You patronizingly inform us that our initial and tentative consideration of preliminary involvement in a loose gathering of radicals to try to win some additional cadre, "merely postpones the real tasks". This observation is not only humorous considering its source, but also further indicates that the dialectical conception of change of quantity to quality is completely foreign to you. Marx, in Capital, notes that a minimum number of laborers in a work-place is necessary before labor of average quality is performed. You should read it sometime, not in a cloister, but in an attempt to concretely apply his method and conceptions.

That we recognize our weakness in respect to our numbers, and, therefore, consider a tactical adjustment to reality, needs no apology. Nor is an apology needed for our intention to circulate our ideas among other radical formations. Moreover, we hold you largely responsible for the fact that we cannot as yet exemplify our concepts by concrete activity within the working-class.

The section of your letter which rambles on about your attitude toward authority, and which takes up more than half its space, is either an echo of some ongoing difficulty within your group, or is an attempt to establish some basis for the political "differences" which you say you have with us--perhaps both.

You state, "Since we are fighting for an end to the state, i.e., the highest organ of capitalist authority, it is not exactly compatible with our movement to like authority; it is a necessary expediency for the first stages of our movement. Only cops and those kinds of mentalities like obedience, authority, etc."

The abstract and subjective manner in which you pose this question testifies to your "anarchist" past, and to your feelings of "petty-bourgeois guilt", your protestations to the contrary notwithstanding. Revolutionists "like" the authority of the Leninist party, and work to extend it within the working-class. We "dislike" the authority of the bourgeoisie, and fight its ideology in and over the working-class. We value the authority of proven Marxist leaders, and fight the authority of revisionist and sectarian betrayers. We fight to put "an end to the" capitalist "state", and replace it with the dictatorship of the proletariat, i.e., a workers' state. This we "like", inasmuch as it is a necessary stage toward a classless society, and the withering away of the transitional, workers', state. In everything we do, we take a class approach. We oppose the irrational elements which are an aspect of class society, and rearing in class society, and support the rational aspects of revolutionary authority which acts to build the confidence of the masses in their own authority. Whoever doesn't understand this is no Marxist.

Your refusal of assistance to us coupled with your withholding of the address of "E.C. [Edward Crawford]" which you had promised us, and which we managed to obtain through another source, also make a pattern. Your plea of "self-education" exigency, fails to obscure the self-evident fact that you wish to hamper our acti-

vities. Evidently, you have some ulterior purpose which you are fearful we may interfere with. Isn't this another reason for your organizational maneuvering? We pride ourselves on possessing an infallible method for dealing with the dishonest maneuverers--scrupulous adherence to principle and honesty in politics. The all-too-clever political tricksters accomplish nothing lasting, as the fate of the SL exemplifies.

In this connection, let me assure you that as long as you remain in politics--the road you have chosen makes us doubtful as to your ability to maintain a political entity for long--we intend to treat your group with complete scrupulosity. As soon as we have sufficient copies of our bulletin, Spartacist League Split, we intend to send you copies, despite your odious behavior toward us. Nor will we fail to extend to you the proffer of a principled unity in action, wherever and whenever the opportunity arises.

The revolutionary road has many a fork in it, and erstwhile opponents can sometimes find themselves once again in the same camp. I would particularly hope that someone like Marion would quickly escape from the narrow circle which is your group.

Fraternally,

Turner

P.S. Is it true that your group has come down on the wrong side of the class line and opposed the UFT in the recent strike?

Bulletin

bi-weekly organ of the workers league

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TEN CENTS

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NEW SPLITS IN SPARTACIST **Degeneration Deepens**

BY TIM WOHLFORTH

The process of political degeneration with its accompanied splits and disintegration of the Spartacist League has now reached a new stage with the expulsion of Comrade Harry Turner and a small group of supporters. The Turner expulsion follows shortly after two other splits--the Ross group which is now in the Marcy-dominated Anti-Imperialist Coalition and a group around Kay Eilens closely associated with the VO group in France. Others who have left Spartacist over the past two years include: L. Marcus, Shane Mage, Geoff White, Robert Kaufman, Robert Sherwood and a number of other individuals reducing the organization to less than half its membership at the time of its 1966 founding conference. More than half the original full and alternate members of the central committee elected at this conference have split.

There are extremely important lessons for revolutionists to learn from the degeneration of Spartacist particularly in regard to the central importance for principled revolutionists to begin with the struggle to build the international movement. It is no accident that Robertson's break with the International Committee of the Fourth International in April, 1966, coincided with this process of political and organizational degeneration. From that point on the Robertson group proceeded without principle or perspective, became engulfed in, dominated by the sick petty bourgeois circle in the United States it lived off of having no other objective role for itself than to seek by any means possible to destroy the International Committee and the Workers League.

The political struggle of Comrade Turner within Spartacist from 1966 to this fall reveals a good deal about the nature and orientation of the Spartacist organization. The struggle erupted first over the question of "priorities". Turner had been instrumental in the formation of a committee whose purpose it was to struggle in the trade unions in particular in regard to minority workers. Soon after this committee was formed and began to actually function with hospital workers, Robertson moved in organizationally to shift some Spartacist people out of this committee and into other spheres of work--primarily among the radical milieu.

PARTY

In the course of the fight over this question the discussion turned more and more on to the basic issues of the actual perspective upon which Spartacist operated and the nature of the Leninist party itself. Robertson insisted on an orientation towards the radical milieu and any trade union work was considered simply "exemplary", that is as helpful to reaching petty bourgeois radicals outside the unions. Robertson saw no capitalist crisis, no real movement or changes in the class struggle. Further Robertson saw no role for the Leninist Party and in fact did not view the Spartacist League as such a party or even the embryo of such a party. Rather Robertson saw Spartacist as a "splinter propaganda group" and acted accordingly.

Starting with a rejection of any role for Spartacist as a Leninist vanguard, attacking any attempts to turn Spartacist towards the working class as

"uncontrollable impatience" which threatens to "burn out" the organization, it was to be expected that in the course of the discussion the Robertson leadership found itself going over to the very revisionist conceptions of the SWP it had been denouncing for so long. Robertson's principal collaborator and main spokesman in the discussion, Joseph Seymour, attacked the minority for "transferring the burden of radicalizing the white working classes from the leadership of the black liberation movement, who command potentially enormous political power, at this time, to the obviously much weaker Spartacist League." In other words Spartacist's task, as Seymour sees it, is to urge Cleaver, Carmichael, and Brown to radicalize white workers. Rather than fighting the black nationalists on a class program and intervening in the class struggle, he urged Spartacist to abstain from the class struggle and advise the black nationalists on matters of program.

Turner in the course of the struggle was forced to come to an assessment of the real class nature of the majority tendency in control of Spartacist. He characterized the Robertson faction "as a left-centrist formation resting upon the petty bourgeoisie."

TINPOT

Robertson's organizational practices flowed from his whole political outlook. Beginning only with himself and not the objective needs of the class and the international movement, he sees Spartacist as his personal property, as his own little circle. After having justified his split from the International Committee on the grounds that as a man of "principle" he could not submit an apology to the conference over his refusal to attend sessions of the conference which were to discuss his own contributions, he turns around and submits to Turner a five point written apology. Turner was asked to sign a written document among other things repudiating statements which in Robertson's opinion were "slanders" and finally to break politically with his own son! His son's crime seems to be to have attended an occasional public meeting of the Workers League.

This is not the first time in history that some tinpot despot has unjustly accused revolutionists of organizational procedures they themselves employ.

Important as this internal discussion was it never really got to the nub of the problem. Robertson's repudiation of the struggle for the Leninist party, his hostility to a perspective of working class struggle, his transformation of the Spartacist League into a personal clique, all this flows from the stand Robertson took at the April 1966 Conference of the International Committee of the Fourth International.

PERSPECTIVES

At that Conference, following a presentation on International Perspectives, Robertson gave a presentation of the position of Spartacist. The pre-

sentation revealed fundamental differences in principle, theory and strategy with the International Committee, none of which Robertson had seen necessary to present in the prior discussion leading up to the conference.

Robertson saw no international crisis of capitalism--that is except in the historical sense that one has existed since 1914. He saw only little ups and downs presenting no serious problems for the capitalists nor providing any objective basis of the kind of intense deepening of the class struggle we have seen everywhere in the period since 1966. Expressing, like Keynes, a supreme confidence in the capitalists he states that "'crises' are all in a day's work for the mechanisms and agencies of imperialism in muddling through from one year to the next."

But when it came to the international movement Robertson replaced confidence with scepticism. Rather than seeing the International Committee of the Fourth International as a sole continuator of the fight for the program of Trotsky he saw four international organizations "claiming to be Trotskyist" and the future movement somehow coming out of some sort of amalgam or regroupment of forces within all four "internationals." Clearly he was attending the International Committee Conference under false pretenses as the call for the conference made clear that the conference was based on the conception that only the International Committee had not gone over to revisionism as had the other formations which were nothing more than different splinters of the Pabloites. Clearly Robertson's intention at this conference was to get a hunk of the International Committee for this future amalgam of his.

At the conference he also made clear that he conceived of his organization as only a "propaganda group." And so of course he wished on an international scale not a world proletarian party but some sort of collection of national propaganda groups.

After making this contribution and being informed that all in attendance wished to discuss it thoroughly, he retired from the conference claiming he was tired. He was repeatedly asked to return to the conference so that other delegates, some who had traveled from as far as Japan, could comment on his presentation in his presence. He repeatedly refused to do so. He was then asked by the conference to apologize for this behavior. This he repeatedly refused to do.

Thus the conference was confronted not only with a presentation of conceptions which questioned the very nature of the International Committee itself and threw out its entire international perspective of working class struggle but any possibility of resolving these differences through a serious international discussion process was sabotaged by the arrogance of Robertson who pitted his individuality against the international movement. Could the conference under such conditions do anything else but

expell Robertson? Could they allow this man to go back to the United States as a part of the international movement when while attending a conference of the international movement he treated it with such disdain. To do that would have been a break on the part of the International Committee from the very concept of internationalism as found in the statutes of the Third and Fourth Internationals--a transformation of the Fourth International into nothing more than a collection of national propoganda circles each therefore no more than a reflection of the petty bourgeoisies of the respective countries.

DESTRUCTION

Since April 1966 the Robertson group has lived for one objective political purpose--the destruction of the Fourth Intenational and its American supporters the Workers League. Page after page of the Spartacist and leaflet after leaflet have been devoted to the most vile, unprincipled and uncontrolled attacks against our movement. The principled political struggle against the revisionism of the SWP was all but dropped and a co-operative division of labor emerged between the SWP and Spartacist in perpetrating these slanders. The SWP published all the documents Spartacist rather than protesting this thanked them for their effort. It then took over the major responsibility for peddling this in this country. The SWP then turned around and launched a slander campaign against the Socialist Labour League around the Tate provocation and this became headline material in Spartacist under the title "Oust Healy!" Leaflets were distributed fingering Robert Sherwood and noting that he had gone to Canada as a prelude to the government attacks today on Sherwood. No restraint, no principles, not even when Robertson knows it can mean the prosecution by the bourgeois state of our comrades.

The Spartacist group is not just another tendency. It has deserted the most essential principles of class morality. It is a crystallized expression of the sickest sections of the American petty bourgeoisie who see the revolutionary party as does the bourgeoisie--as its greatest enemy.

We warn American workers. This is not just another tendency. You can expect anything from this group. It is not to be trusted in the least. We for one have had no relations with this group since April 1966 and will never have any.



JIM ROBERTSON

SPARTACIST AIDS RULERS

Soon after Robert Sherwood, faced with a draft delinquency charge and a draft board out to "get him", went to Canada the Spartacist League issued a leaflet entitled "What is the Workers League?" This leaflet of slanders distributed on innumerable occasions over the past year identifies Sherwood as a member of the Workers League and indicates that he has "removed himself to a place of legality, comfort and safety, probably to never again be involved in the class struggle in the U.S."

In order to be sure that Sherwood had this "legality, comfort and safety" for as short a time as possible the March-April, 1968 issue of Spartacist decided to be more specific so that the bourgeois governments involved would have no question at all where Sherwood was. It refers to "Robert Hartley Sherwood's Canada cop-out". Even the middle name is listed as this is the pen name Sherwood uses to write in the Bulletin.

We state unequivocally that the Spartacist League acts as the fingerman for the world capitalists. Such is the ultimate logic for those who start with themselves and their own little national propoganda groups and pit this against the struggle for the Fourth International.

New York, New York
January 10, 1969

Dear Cde. Healy,

Cde. Wohlforth was quite correct in pointing to the omission of international implications of our struggle against Robertson, in his evaluation of our bulletin, Spartacist League Split, a copy of which was sent to you. Our break with Robertson and the question of our political future requires a more exhaustive examination of the past. A re-assessment of the history and origins of the Spartacist League requires us to take a close look at two turning points, the original split from the International Committee of the Fourth International and the Revolutionary Tendency in the Socialist Workers Party, in 1962, and the exclusion of Robertson at the London Conference of the IC in 1966.

Your judgement that the Robertson group is a petty-bourgeois personality cult, unable and unwilling to build a Leninist party in the United States, proved to be completely valid, and, as a finalized conclusion, preceded our own independently arrived at determination by at least two and a half years.

Why wasn't I able to see it at that time? Why was I originally drawn to Robertson's group, and away from Wohlforth and Mueller in 1963? Subjective factors play a large part in behavior, of course. I came to the SWP in 1962 from a Stalinoid milieu, after having spent almost twenty years in the Communist Party. I did not become involved in the internal struggle in the SWP until after the split in the RT had taken place. I then found myself in agreement with Robertson on Cuba as a deformed workers' state. I tended to react in simple Pavlovian fashion to your intervention in the RT, generalizing from my experience with Stalinist interventions in the affairs of national parties. I also reacted quite superficially, empirically and parochially to what seemed to be a more forthright, and principled position toward the SWP leadership, i.e., unequivocal, unremitting hostility. Additionally, I took exception to certain of the tactics used by the Wohlforth group against the Robertson group.

The internal struggle in the SL, in thoroughly educating us concerning petty-bourgeois radicals of the Robertson genre, has also served to shed much light on the 1962 and 1966 events.

Robertson was not, of course, the intrepid warrior against international bureaucratic centralism, but merely an egocentric petty-bourgeois refusing to subordinate his ego to the tactical requirements of an international struggle against Pabloist revisionism. His differences were hardly of a character which would have required a revolutionary socialist, which means, of course, an internationalist, to break with an organization. No August 4th was posed. Your intervention was, in fact, necessary in order to prevent Robertson, with his intransigence, from misleading the RT into taking the easy way out. His leftist posture was, in reality, a method for avoiding the necessary internal struggle to try to win the SWP cadre.

By splitting with the IC, he did, in fact, as you have stated, strengthen the SWP revisionists, who were able to out-manuever a disunited left opposition, and close off the minds of many of those in the SWP, who might have been reached by us. In addition, many waverers, who might have been held by a united left opposition, became confused and demoralised, and gave up the struggle entirely. We can more correctly estimate Robertson's destructive role now, following our experiences with the Ellens group in the internal struggle in the SL. Ellens played a role similar to that of Robertson, on a much smaller scale, as the enclosed open letter and follow-up commentary by me makes clear.

As to the events in 1966, knowing Robertson as we do now, we can also no longer accept his excuse that he was too tired to attend the afternoon session which followed his presentation of divergent positions to the IC Conference. That we accepted it then, indicates the enormous tenacity with which we tended to cling to our illusions.

His explanation really defies the psychological realities. I picture myself in the same situation. I have gone to a world conference of co-thinkers, of revolutionists concerned with building the world party of the socialist revolution. True, I am tired because, as a result of my usual psychological writing block, I have barely managed to complete a perspectives document for that conference, after losing a night's sleep. I have, for the first time before a world body, been able to present some of my divergent positions, including my unique position on Cuba. Is it conceivable that I could have been prevented from hearing the reactions to my positions by this august assembly, except by force? Tired or not, I believe that I would have had to be carried out feet first before having completely heard the responses of the Conference participants. But Robertson, who can show above-average physical capacity when he feels it worth his while, was "too tired"! He was just not interested in the reaction to his remarks, as you stated, just as he was not interested in replying to our political charges. This enormous ego simply ignores those aspects of reality which he finds unwelcome. You were absolutely right in nailing his attitude as disrespectful to the Conference, and the defense of Robertson, in the letter to you from Bob Sherwood and myself, was entirely in error.

You are aware by now, of course, that I moved to censure Robertson for withholding a suitable and principled apology for his absence from the Conference, at a meeting held in New York City immediately after his return from London. At the time, I assumed a somewhat even-handed position, apportioning blame for the second split with the IC, to both Robertson and yourself. The letter to you, therefore, only reflected half of my position at the time.

Whether the forms chosen to disclose Robertson's essence were the best under the circumstances, is another question. The fact is that the bulk of the original RT adhered to Robertson in 1962. Similarly, the Spartacist membership remained solidly united behind him in 1966.

As to the present, when we examine the practice of the WL, we find a performance in keeping with its professed desire to build a Leninist party in the US.

Not only has the WL managed to publish a bi-weekly newspaper without interruption--certainly no easy task for a small organization--but the quality of the Bulletin has measurably improved with each issue. A two-week deadline means, of course, unevenness from issue to issue. Yet, the paper has manifested a consistently rising theoretical quality, along with a highly informative concentration on, and analysis of labor events. This reportage demonstrates the kind of insight and knowledge which can only be acquired through involvement in these struggles. Judging by some excellent articles, within the space of only two years, the WL has also been able to develop new cadre of a high calibre. I can appreciate the ability to develop cadre more fully after our experience in the SL. The relationship in that organization had more of the aspect of a vampire and his victims. Robertson's aura would noticeably expand, as the initiative and vitality of his circle diminished.

Far from carrying the least weight in our re-evaluation, is the performance of the adherents to the IC, the OCI, during the French general strike, in initiating

the first strike and factory occupation, in Sud-Aviation, Nantes. Recognizing that the French workers were increasingly dissatisfied with their conditions, with the attempts to solve the contradictions of French capitalism at their expense, were increasingly to the left of their mis-leaders in the CP and CGT, and, therefore, in a mood to respond spontaneously to the student appeals, one cannot minimize the role of those who light the spark which ignites the powder-train, i.e., those who recognize the temper of the workers, and use whatever strength they possess to provide leadership to move them in a revolutionary direction. The test of a revolutionary party is, after all, the revolutionary moment. The OCI members fulfilled their role at this moment, with distinction, despite their small numbers, and, therefore, their relatively small influence in the French general strike, taken as a whole.

Moreover, we are fully in agreement with the SLL's analysis of the present world situation, and with its perspectives in respect to the deepening crisis of world capitalism, linked with that of world Stalinism. We completely agree that the sharpening inter-capitalist rivalries, and the consequent need for the capitalist rulers to destroy the standards of their respective working classes is now producing a pre-revolutionary situation in the advanced countries, particularly in Europe. The predominance of the US in the world market and in the world imperialist system means increasingly sharp class confrontations here as well. We are fully agreed, therefore, that this prognosis urgently requires that Leninist parties be built which will be capable of seizing the approaching revolutionary opportunities to lead the workers to power.

Some political differences continue to exist between us, however, along with our close agreement with the IC and the WL on the most fundamental questions.

We still consider Cuba to be a deformed workers' state, not qualitatively differing from those of Eastern Europe and China. We, therefore, continue to call for a political revolution to overthrow the Castro Bonapartist bureaucracy to bring the working class to power, as well as for Cuba's unconditional defense. We consider our differences on this question to be essentially terminological. Although terminological differences can be transformed into principled ones, we do not anticipate any events which might do so.

Our differences on China are made clear by an enclosed of a memorandum written in December 1966, which criticized the article in Spartacist #8 for over-emphasizing the irrational aspects of the "Cultural Revolution", inadequate treatment of international factors, obscuring the differences between the Liu Shao Chi right-wing and the Mao center of the bureaucracy, unawareness of the double-edged nature of the Red Guards, and opening the door to pacifist illusions in regard to nuclear defense of the deformed workers' state. We, at no time, however, gave support to the Maoists, critical or otherwise. Our differences on this question seem to have considerably lessened, with the further development of events in China.

On the Arab-Israeli war, we took a position of revolutionary defeatism against Israeli and Arab states alike. We have upheld the rights of the Palestinian Arabs against Israeli chauvinism, and call for an end to the Zionist clerical state and its replacement by a bi-national state within a socialist federation. We do not consider an Arab revolution to be in process. Our differences seem to have lessened somewhat on this question as well, as a result of the aggressive behavior of the Israeli government in seizing and retaining Arab lands.

As to the Negro question, the WL's program, flowing from the basic perspective of the world capitalist crisis, for a struggle in the trade-unions to unite workers

on a transitional program, which includes the fight against racial discrimination, is one which we can support. However we feel that the program does not sufficiently orientate toward the increasingly militant black workers; that the WL does not sufficiently recognize their revolutionary potential in the struggle, and for the building of a Leninist party; that the same black workers, who are today being increasingly mis-directed by Black Nationalists toward reactionary and sterile positions, can be won to a united working class struggle, provided that it prominently poses the question of their special oppression; that the conscious factor, the Leninist party, has a vital role to play in this respect.

We are confident that continued discussion and involvement in common activities will serve to narrow the remaining areas of disagreement between us. We look forward to an ever closer relationship.

Fraternally yours,

Harry Turner

cc: WL

New York
7 March 1969

Rick S.
Seattle

Dear Comrade,

The Political Bureau has come to a general decision regarding the late Seattle Organizing Committee. We have given careful review and consideration to the problem, even holding up a draft letter to you in response to your first two letters, so that the PB might have full opportunity to weigh the situation. We also got from Comrade Harper a report based on her more current knowledge of the Seattle situation. Let me go into the background of information and opinions available to us over the past year, prior to your recent spate of communication.

The last previous communication that we had received was two long reports, totalling 9 pages, from Miriam, dated 16 May 1968 and received by us on 24 May 1968. Among other things she says, in the section of the report "Perspectives", "Rick and I recently had a 'meeting' (are we even an O.C. any more?)" A little further on she says, "Rick is a problem because he is quite alienated from SL too, disgusted with the inefficiencies of the N.O. (except he has almost never sent in minutes though I've nagged him continually) and has some political differences he says, I don't quite know what. The Arab-Israeli question for one." And: "Since January he took over as organizer for me and did absolutely nothing, not even calling meetings, which is one reason we fell apart. In April he moved, and I couldn't even find him for about 4 weeks." And: "I can't get him to move to New Orleans, though he wants to. He puts it off for another year, though he plans to visit there this summer. There is a real chance he will leave Spartacist. He seems sceptical about us (he and I) being able to do anything now, and resists selling Spartacist. So he is not much help, in my demoralized mood." We heard no more from Seattle. This summer, at the time of the Ellens split, we asked Comrade Nelson, the Organizational Secretary then in the Bay Area for a visit, to phone you comrades. He did, and reported that your position at that point was that you sympathized with the Minority but were going to stay in the SL, at least for now. Again, nothing was heard from you for many months, but we continued to send both you and Miriam documents and information on the factional struggle, in the hope that you might see your way to our side as against Ellens and Turner. To get an idea of where things stood between you and the SL as far as far as we were concerned, let me quote a relevant paragraph in a letter I wrote Comrade Harper on 4 January 1969: "Libby was in NYC and said you were in Seattle. What gives with Miriam and Rick? We haven't heard from them for 6 months or more and it's only through indifference that we haven't pressed them from here to either get some expression of membership retention and minimal activity from them or else drop them."

In the light of the letters that we have received from you since (24 January, 2 February and 3 March of this year)--in which you treat your relation with the SL as if you had been a model member over the past period and take us to task for our alleged organi-

zational failures (among other things, coolly stating, "the Majority has readily conceded almost all of the Minority's concrete grievances with regard to national functioning"--presumably you mean their charges that we were too busy framing them up and selling out the workers generally to get the minutes out)--let me point out the reasons for the PB's motion of 12 February 1969 recognizing that Seattle is certainly no longer an Organizing Committee. You have no PO box, therefore no public face nor, obviously, leaflets issued; you have had no Spartacist sales; there's been no regular financial or other communication from you since last May; there have been no O.C. minutes, because you have no meetings. Yet you have the gall to speak of yourself and Miriam as an O.C.!--perhaps, so you can be a voting delegate at our upcoming National Conference? Sheer fakery, and we won't tolerate it, not for an instant.

Apparently, what spurred you to the first of your three letters was a passing reference, in a circular letter on the New Orleans situation, to the tacit default of your earlier perspective of reinforcing our New Orleans local. But you've never referred to that. I must tell you that by this point, were it not for the objectively favorable report on you and Miriam from Comrade Harper, that we would simply have dropped you and Miriam for gross inactivity mingled with a certain indignation and general scepticism toward you.

However, there is a deep-seated, pervasive contradiction in your alleged membership in the Spartacist League. Side by side with your sudden resumption of correspondence and sustaining pledge payment, you assert--from the background of total SL inactivity previously cited--that the points regarding loyalty and inactivity I put to you are too little and that you are "inclined to set somewhat tougher ones". After I explained to you that the SL membership had indeed seen Turner's documents and that there was a set available on the West Coast, you said, "My concern over the accessibility of his documents was not for myself, since Turner sent me copies." Not only had you misled me, writing as if you wanted to see them, but--why did Turner send you copies? Practically no comrade, and none in New York, were sent them by him. This point really demands answering--have you been in contact with Turner? Another thing that makes us doubt you is your suggestion that the communication failure between New York and Rick and/or Miriam is of the same order of magnitude on each side. Take another look at the stack of documents written from here and sent to you! You mention that your ability as a Marxist has so improved that you have remained silent on the issues because you have "developed enough political self-confidence to independently formulate my own position on issues, as opposed to merely judging among positions presented by others". But you have certainly deprived the rest of the organization of the benefits of this new understanding--your expressed sympathy with Turner not rising beyond reflecting organizational grievances and suspicions. And, in your latest letter, you mention that you have had difficulty in defending the Trotskyist line on the labor party in argument with the Freedom Socialist Party. Giving you all the benefit of the doubt, it seems to us that, having declared your "sympathy to the Minority" (by the way, Turner or Ellens?), you are now in an impossible situation, since sympathy for the Minority, in the outcome,

necessarily now means, at the very least, tolerance for their accusations against us of racism, deceit, frame-up and informing to the cops. This is the logic of your situation, from which you'll have to extricate yourself one way or the other.

After considerable thought and discussion in the center, it became clear to us why we could not arrive at a simple course of action toward you and Miriam in order to carry out the general motion adopted by the PB on 12 February 1969 involving perhaps a dozen nominal SL members and associates scattered around the country and the world:

"To proceed to secure re-affirmation of membership of these isolated, marginal members. As a whole, we want to know: (1) if they consider themselves members--i.e., willingness to meet minimum norms of finances, activity, contact with the center and nearby organized locals so they can receive political direction; (2) we must have assurance that organizational integrity will be protected--i.e., there must be no contact with opponents except as opponents, in which the line of the organization is defended."

(By the way, we recognize that Miriam is not in your identical circumstances, but ones sufficiently similar so that we propose to proceed along the same lines toward her, recognizing that the outcome may be different between the two of you.) The reason for the complexity and intractability is that not only are you, in the best case, deeply suspicious of the national organization, but you are in addition thoroughly isolated from us and in one of the most parochial regions of the country. Therefore, the PB in its meeting of 24 February passed the following motion:

"That, unless we can prevail upon the two comrades remaining in Seattle to go to functioning Spartacist locals within an early, definite period, to drop them from the organization for their non-functioning over many months as members (e.g., lack of public activity, financial support, maintenance of contact with the center or even with each other)."

This is a sufficiently elastic formulation. You will never do us any good, comrade, in your present state and isolation. If you find, on careful examination, that you do subscribe to the politics of this organization, that its leadership is not only honest but punctilious about the truth as indicated in carefully documented contention with others over 7 years now, and that your life has qualitatively more meaning as a communist revolutionary, then you will find your way shortly into one of the organized SL groups around the country, as both you and Miriam have several times promised to do.

Concretely, if you are amenable to staying in the organization on these terms, what we had in mind would be for example leaving Seattle prior to our National Conference, tentatively scheduled for late June or early July. Until we hear from you, we propose to hold in abeyance the matter of current membership obligations and privileges. We very much want you to receive the balance of the internal

discussion material from the factional struggle, which documents in their totality, assuming your personal political seriousness, should be the decisive consideration for you. We are holding in abeyance sending you current PB minutes (receipt of PB minutes by non-Central Committee members is in any case a privilege, not a right) and we're holding up depositing your check for \$15 just received. Should you choose to resign, we will return it, since we do not want to take your money without your knowing that we have adopted a motion which immediately jeopardizes your nominal membership.

Your latest (3 March) letter and enclosures reinforce the apparent contradiction that you seem to want to stay in the SL but are so saturated with distrust that you can't draw conclusions, for example, from the outrageous lies of the 2 December Bulletin, not to speak of events on the political plane, such as the total verification of our contentions about Ellens, VO and Turner respectively. Instead, you act as an echo of Turner within our ranks. You wrote of the latest mailing you received from Turner ("which I assume you will have also seen by the time you get this letter"--no, we have not seen it; Turner doesn't favor us with his material. But we will see it. Our Bay Area comrades told us people around them had received copies, and one is being secured for us. Thank you.). You state that this "requires an explanation on the part of our national leadership". For my part, personally, I am not disposed to answer your veiled charges but just to tell you that your new transcendent abilities have penetrated our pathetic deceptions, and leave it at that. It is the worse for you, however, that Comrade Cunningham has decided to take you up on your questions. I will tell you one thing, however, that on general consideration seems to me obvious--Turner, at the Labor Committee meeting at which we broke, committed the outrageously unprincipled act, as part of the Wohlforthite grouping present, of abstaining on the principled question of voting to condemn the Papert article in New America. He knows something is coming his way from us as a result of that, and has moved to deflect it, hoping to take in a few suckers and, moreover, tie us up in writing letters like this, which latter is a reason you may think trifling but for us pretty soon reaches such a level of importance in terms of available time that pretty shortly a termination must come one way or another. (We've just had a solid year of it!) You also "require explanation" about some views expressed by Comrade Gordon--"to the extent that her views reflect the leadership's". She is of the leadership--i.e., she is one of our 5-8 leading comrades, all of whom (unequally to be sure, but very really) make policy--and she is not the least of these either.

At bottom, it is very much too bad that you missed so much of the positive side of the factional struggle--that you never went through the experience of forming and fighting as part of the Majority caucus (assuming that you wouldn't have gone with the Minority--but then we wouldn't have the present question with you either). Instead of being an active agent of struggle in defense of our program and being thereby strongly shaped, you stood aside, partly by circumstance, until Ellens and then Turner had split and the Majority became again essentially synonymous with the SL, leaving you high and dry. This crucial experience leading to a leap in consciousness was not limited to the NYC local. The comrades in Austin, New Orleans, Ithaca as well as elsewhere rallied as "premature" Majorityites.

Among other things, we aim, at the National Conference and in its preparation, to bring the entire organization up to the same plane.

So think it over, Rick. The choice is yours. I've written you a very harsh letter, because you deserved it. Don't make the mistake of just firing off an angry, self-serving one in reply. Wait. See what Comrade Cunningham writes to you. Read over all the material, and think what you want to do with your life. Then let us know.

Fraternally,

James Robertson

P.S. I am enclosing several things for you. One is a letter from Crawford, who is no friend of ours, to Turner in response to the latter's "grovelling" letter to Healy. Another is my letter to you of 5 February in reply to yours of 2 February, which was held up pending this fuller consideration. Additionally enclosed are more general items: (1) PB Minutes of 23 January 1968 (3 pages); (2) "Labor Committee Upholds Deal With Socialist Party" (1 page); (3) Letter "To the Members of the Ellens Group" (6 pages); (4) VII. "On the Black Question" by Seymour (13 pages); and (5) Letter to Austin by Cunningham (38 pages)--61 pages total--too damn much communication!

cc: Miriam
Bay Area SL
file

New York
5 February 1969

Rick S.
Seattle

Dear Comrade,

We were again happy to get your letter of 2 February, since you seemed to make clear that you continue to be and desire to remain a member of the SL. You should know that with us that determination, consistently followed through, is decisive. Consequently, while the balance of your letter raises serious questions, we want you to be very clear that we are interested in a verification of genuine membership and nothing extraneous.

You state you consider that affirmation of membership combined with contact and a loyal front in the face of opponents are even too minimal for SL membership. Except in the case of isolated individual members, such as yourself, we do too. The difficulty is that with isolated individuals, it is impossible to verify anything more. I assure you that in functioning local organizations of the SL, regular activity in such an organization is also a necessary minimum.

Much of your letter, frankly, comrade, is a lousy lawyer's argument about how much in contact you've been, how active you've been, and how well paid your sustaining pledge is. I urge you not to press these points. You can be dropped in an instant for twelve different reasons, each one better than the one before. We are not interested in this, so don't play with us, or we will be. Please understand: just don't kid around. I'll tell you what we are interested in, in view of your latest letter.

In your first letter (24 January) you wrote: "By the way, when are you going to distribute Turner's documents: The Internal Struggle Continues, and Ideology and Practice? I feel that comrades have a right to evaluate them for themselves, rather than just accepting Liz Gordon's glib generalizations." When we replied to your evident satisfaction, you wrote:

"I am glad to hear that Turner's documents are accessible to comrades (since they were written prior to his resignation, I think there really was some sort of obligation to make them available, although their excessive length was indeed a problem). Your patience and forbearance as to my 'skeptical and cynical' attitude is somewhat misplaced, however: my concern over the accessibility of his documents was not for myself, since Turner sent me copies. Consequently, you misread my 'tone': my comments on Gordon's comments were on the basis of having read his documents, and evaluated her characterizations accordingly."

Comrade, it is clear that you had half lied to us, since you'd had the documents all along, and you are therefore half outside the organization. Just don't fool around if you want to stay. We are willing to make allowances. What we've heard from you and from

Miriam's letters are full of every sort of disparagement and contempt for the SL. And, in a year's time, neither of you have done anything affirmatively for us. Naturally, Ellens and Turner struck responsive chords in your hearts. And your correspondence is oh so objective and neutral with regard to a Turner who had already, in Wohlforth's Bulletin, lied that we expelled him--and this in an issue of the Bulletin which called us police informers. Neutrality would place you outside the SL. That's the point we've been trying to get across all along.

Turner says the SL (Majority) is racist. What do you say? Turner's associates say we're police spies. What do you say? If you cannot stand fast, then you determine your non-membership. If you can unambiguously condemn Turner and these accusations then, however much you may have been deceived by him into believing that his criticisms were your criticisms, then you are by right, not merely by privilege, a legitimate member of the SL.

So again, let me stress: don't play with us. Just now is not the time for gamesmanship. Our watchword at this time is, "Better less but better". Our earlier statement stands that you will receive all the documents containing a full development of the discussion before a final determination is made on the membership of those who had not declared themselves one way or another. So do not feel pressed just now. We want you, comrade, but on the SL's terms.

You complain that we're again falling behind in PB minutes. Actually, we've been working very hard lately on PB minutes (along with completing the documents of the factional discussion). However, for comrades such as yourself who'd been isolated and silent over the past year, we have decided to send them no new post-factional material pending clarification. We will of course send you your missing documents which you requested.

Fraternally,

James Robertson

cc: Miriam
Bay Area SL
file

New York
10 March 1969

Rick S,
Seattle

Dear Comrade,

We have received copies of the Turner mailing. In particular I want to call your attention to the third paragraph on page 2 of his letter to the Ellens group. He speaks there, as one who should know, of Ellens' own "downright dishonesty" and "crass falsehoods" with "no factional justification". You have shown profound skepticism of our version of things and sympathy to the Minority's. Here Turner disqualifies Ellens and also himself, since he swore by her when, as is now plain, he knew she was lying. Moreover, he implies that "factional justification" would permit falsehoods in internal struggles. What does this say about his own qualifications for his integrity on this level too?

Frankly, having now read the mailing of which you wrote, I find it incredible that you could have found that this so-called documentary evidence from this pathetic man "requires explanation" from the SL leadership. Have you taken leave of your senses?

We have just received the response of another comrade to the Turner mailing. Lou D. of Philadelphia had until this moment never taken a clear position in the factional dispute. Here is what he wrote on 8 March:

"I have received the following from Turner:

Letter to S.L. 2-26-69

Letter to Healy 1-10-69

Letter to Ellensites 11-29-68

N.Y. Local Minutes 4-17-66

"I guess I respected Turner too much as a serious revolutionist to ever think that he would stoop so low, but here it is, right from the horse's mouth. Turner has not yet wholly "purged" himself of "Spartacism", but he readily embraces Healy, the great phony. I hope they hug each other to death...."

"We have been discussing the recent splits. Although with a few qualifications, I am in support of all the actions and main positions of the Majority."

Perhaps what Lou wrote and what Crawford had earlier written in reply to Turner may restore you to a rational perspective.

By the way, have you seen Turner's bulletin, "SL Split". If you have, I request that you send us a copy forthwith.

Fraternally,

James Robertson

cc: Bay Area
Miriam
file

New York
12 March 1969

Seattle

Dear Comrade Saling:

I intended to wait another week or so before writing you, to give you plenty of time to read, reread and consider at length what Jim Robertson wrote you and the documents he included with his letter. Since then however the documents you mentioned getting from Turner have been forwarded to the N.O. from the West Coast and I have had a chance to mull them over. I wanted to give you my impression of them while they're still in my mind.

Let me say first off that I do not understand, after reading them, how you could at all have been taken in by them. They are the best verification we could possibly have had that our assumptions throughout this fight were clearly on target! Go back, just to take an example, and re-read what Liz Gordon and I both wrote on the relations between Ellens and Turner within the minority. We said from at least early July in oral discussion, and from early August in documents, that the minority was a rotten bloc, had no common political positions besides hating Robertson, that Turner was a front man, Ellens was trying to build a syndicalist mini-VO, was an under-grounder, refused to fight politically, had a split mentality, wilfully broke discipline and all the rest. Turner denied all this, violently. Then the Ellens-Stoute group split, and he still denied it (calling them his "frictional losses"). Then we suspended him, he quit and sent his resignation statement to God, all the SL members and everyone else, still claiming all this was rot. Now read the letter Turner wrote to the Ellensites--he's wounded, the way they used him. And every single charge he brings against them is not only true but is in fact precisely what we told Turner months before was the case! It is an absolute verification of the majority on every single point! And you must remember that these are conclusions we drew in the teeth of violent denials and in the middle of a bruising faction fight! Not bad for openers, what?

You say Turner sent out reams of his material "proving" thus-and-so. That's not true: he doesn't "prove" anything, and I'll prove that we didn't make up tales about him. What Turner is trying to do is simple: he's trying to carry on a wrecking operation from outside, to do what he can to bust up the League. We don't want you to quit; Turner wants you to quit. And so he's sending you, and other people around who he thinks might be a bit sour, all the stuff he can to demoralize them, knowing we don't have time to answer every charge he makes against us--we can't afford to have our staff tied up like that, while Turner spends most of his free time baiting us. You have got to try to understand this, comrade--if we tried to clarify every distortion the Ellensites and Turner have charged us with since they got hostile, every letter would look like my long document, Letter to the Austin Comrades. We are trying our best to operate like a political organization and Turner can spend the next 5 years--he should live so long!--baiting us, but we're under no obligation to answer, and we'd be precious idiots if we thought we were.

I didn't really very much want to write this letter to you in the first place. I have a number of other things to do, and I have to try to allocate my time and energy rationally: there's a leaflet I should be writing at this moment. I'm not writing you because I have to, or because I think, contrary to your assertion, that Turner's latest outpouring "requires an explanation on the part of the national leadership" but because you seem on the verge of dropping out and I'd like to make one final stab at trying to dispel some of your deep suspicion of us here.

Consider Turner's letter to Healy, about how much he's in agreement with him, and then compare what I quoted from the 1966 letter from Turner to Healy in my long document. Doesn't that give you some idea of what kind of mind you're dealing with? I would really like to know what you think it's all about. Read those sections of my article which deal with this in detail. The effect, I believe, is devastating.

Yes, we thought Turner had joined the Workers' League. It turns out he's only in a political bloc with them. The difference is largely terminological, and only means Wohlforth knows what he's dealing with, and is keeping him at arm's length so he doesn't have to go through the same shit with Turner we've been through with him (besides not believing in minorities). The difference between what Turner's done and what we've said we thought he was doing could hardly be detected by a piece of litmus paper, and furthermore it's all in that stuff of Turner's you have.

But we are not cavalier with the truth: we thought he was truly in the WL. We knew from a defecting WL'er he was applying for membership; what we didn't know was that apparently Wohlforth would not accept him; Wohlforth simply wants to use him to attack us. (By the way, how do you reconcile what Turner wrote in his resignation statement, about not bearing any malice or joining an anti-Spartacist League with this kind of behavior, or with the kind of stuff he wrote to Healy?) On the face of it that's why he wrote Healy: he's trying to get into the Workers' League over Wohlforth's opposition--going right to where the real power lies. You really should be able to see all this.

I said that I'd prove we are not making up stories about Turner. You act as if what Turner writes casts a doubt on what we said about him. We say, on the contrary, that it vindicates us. And we are at this very minute stencilling all the latest Turner stuff to circulate in our bulletins on the Turner case. Hardly the method of underhanded slanderers! We're not afraid of what he writes, and we have nothing to conceal--Turner himself in what he writes there definitively, if inadvertently, proves our case for us! And slanders himself, let me say, far greater than we ever could or would. So far are we from being afraid of what he wrote...good god!

One final point: about Turner, the SDS Labor Committee and our "double standard": you've got it backward. During the faction fight this past summer one of the whips the minority used against us went like this: the majority has an orientation which includes the ostensible revolutionary organizations; these groups are petty-bourgeois in composition, and therefore (!) the majority has a petty-bourgeois orientation. Now, Turner happened to be part of this minority, and his hostility toward CIPA for example grew out of it. We never denied our intention to work in the ORO milieu: we went into the Labor Committee to see if we could recruit from it. Turner, after fronting for and participating in a minority which denounced us for our orientation, the minute he got out of the SL joined the SDS Labor Committee. There was nothing the matter inherently with either Turner or us working that route: it's just that Turner had ranted about us previously for doing this and then turned right around and did it himself! That's the double standard. And while Turner attacked us, especially Nelson and myself, for "opportunism" it was he, along with the whole gaggle of WL'ers, who abstained on the one fundamental issue which came up during our work in the SDS Labor Committee, separating revolutionaries from phoney radicals--a bloc with the social-democrats! We voted no and left, and he stayed for a while. And now he's trying to cover his tracks by going on the offensive, by attacking...us.

That's all I have to say, comrade. You can make up your mind as you choose. I hope you'll stay in the SL. But I don't think you can possibly stay in if you take Turner's word as good coin or try to do a "balancing act", a little here, a little there, between us: the contradiction is far too great. But you will have to judge for yourself, and that means not a blind loyalty to us but an honest attempt to give us the benefit of viewing our work objectively, without suspicion. We are out to build a revolutionary party, and Turner is out to wreck us. You will have to come down, ultimately, on one side or the other. And that's your decision.

Fraternally,

Dave Cunningham

P.S. As far as some sort of objective verification of what I wrote above about Turner's material vindicating us. I refer you to the letter from Comrade Lou D. in Philadelphia who has been a bit distant from us since the faction fight. He got the same materials from Turner as you. You'll note by the way from the copy already sent you that he didn't say anything about that garbage "requiring" any kind of "explanation" on anybody's part; on the contrary, it's quite clear he thinks Turner has fallen completely out of his fucking tree! A good response! I think the same way.

D.C.

cc: Miriam
Bay Area
file

Extract on the Saling Case

Present: Full: Robertson, Nelson, Cunningham, Henry
Alts: Seymour, Small Staff: Salant, Gordon
Absent: Staff: Rogers(exc.)
Meeting convened 8:55 p.m.

Agenda: 4. Membership and Organization
b. Saling Case and Others

4. Membership and Organization:

(b) Saling Case and Others: Our informal argument with Saling concerning his dubious membership has now been escalated by receipt of 19-page document by Saling, entitled The Trouble With Liz: A Comment on a Comment on a Statement. Document consists mainly of uncritical defense of Turner with regard to his suspension, with a short section at the end parroting Ellens-Turner "proletarianizing" politics (according to Miriam R., Saling showed her a first draft which she protested had no politics, after which he inserted the final section).

We have been putting questions to Saling and other marginal members regarding their dubious membership (1) organizationally, regarding loyalty and activity; (2) politically, i.e., a choice between the SL and our previously-internal Minorities, which now stand outside the organization. Saling, after a long period of total SL inactivity, reactivated himself in January. In response to our questions to him, Saling stated fulsomely his compliance with the first condition, but has now answered the second negatively, in effect, as his document does not contain a single word in criticism of Turner. Therefore we have every reason not to grant him his sought-after reinstatement. Moreover his otherwise inexplicable conduct carries with it the overwhelming presumption that he was recruited by Turner while a lapsed SL member and that an attempt to send him back into the SL has been thwarted.

Saling is not a legitimate member--he had been carried as a nominal but dubious member on our sufferance. Whatever differences exist in the SL over the recent faction fight (or, now, the Saling Case) we prefer to discuss with legitimate members. The SL leadership has both democratic and centralist obligations; it would be a capitulation to illegitimate pressure by Saling to lean over backwards in an excess of democratic zeal to tie the SL up in a protracted discussion with a non-member. Comrades may wish to take a middle position regarding Saling--to coddle him while not permitting him full membership rights in view of the strain on the organization of producing his document, the danger that his views because they are so extreme would dominate the National Conference and suppress expression of smaller differences among comrades through desire to maintain a common SL face against Saling, etc. This would be unprincipled; all actual members of the SL must have full and equal rights and access to the discussion.

Other dubious members are Houston, Gallatin D., Miriam R., V., Howie B., Maedee McE.

Disc: Cunningham, Salant, Small, Robertson, Nelson, Gordon, Seymour, Henry, Cunningham, Salant, Small, Seymour

Motion by Robertson: We note that Saling's membership had lapsed over 1968 and that he sought reactivation in January 1969 for reasons of factional solidarity with Turner. We deferred action until this became clear, as it is now with his document of 23 March, which is an unconditional defense of Turner without a single criticism. Saling takes no exception whatsoever to Turner's grovelling before Healy, Turner's previous bloc with Ellens in view of his admissions now of her lies within the SL, Turner's accusations within the SL that we are anti-working-class and racist, or the accusations by Turner's associates that we are police agents. Therefore, we recognize that Saling is no longer a member. I.e., he is hereby formally dropped and with grave prejudice. This form of treatment rather than undertaking formal charges is indicated because he was an isolated member-at-large in a remote area, hence the collection of certain conclusive evidence and testing in his case is beyond our reach.

Countermotion by Seymour: That we inform Saling that in view of his ambivalent status we do not believe he has the right to unlimited factional debate, but as a privilege we give him access to the Conference and also permit him limited access to the factional discussion with a reasonable limit on length.

Motion by Nelson: In view of the questions raised by Saling, we note that the following 4 documents express the views of the PB: (1) Cunningham, Open Letter to Turner (8 Oct. 1968); (2) Cunningham, Letter to Austin Comrades (15 Jan. 1969); (3) Gordon, The Trouble With Harry, Part I (24 Oct. 1968); (4) Part II (6 January 1969)

Motion: To include the Saling Case in the special Commission at the National Conference on Turner projected by the PB on 16 Dec. 1968.

Motion: To circulate copies of Saling's document to the membership, along with a statement noting that we prefer to argue about the Saling Case with genuine members rather than argue anything with Saling, coincident with the principle that we struggle politically with our opponents either externally or internally, but not both.

Disc: Robertson, Seymour, Cunningham

VOTES: On Countermotion by Seymour:

For: Seymour

Opposed: All else

Failed 0-4

On Motion by Robertson:

For: All but Seymour

Abstaining: Seymour

Passed 4-0

[see statement clarifying Seymour's vote, attached]

All other motions passed unanimously
Meeting adjourned 1:00 a.m.

Statement by Joseph Seymour

I believe that Rick S. wanted to re-activate his membership purely to act as a pro-Turner-Wohlforth factionalist. I believe he had no intention of accepting the decisions of the National Conference. Therefore, the organization had an absolute right to drop him for inactivity and was justified in doing so.

My motive for a counter-motion and abstention is the belief that his presence would clarify the issues in the faction fight and our perspectives, for the comrades. My action therefore represents a tactical and not a principled difference.

9 April 1969

APPEAL TO THE POLITICAL BUREAU AND SL MEMBERSHIP

by Rick Saling (Seattle)

On May 8, 1969, I was informed by Chris Kinder, BASL Local Organizer, that the Political Bureau had expelled me from the Spartacist League. Since the PB hasn't yet seen fit to inform me of their reasons directly, after almost a month, I am forced to appeal on the basis of cde. Kinder's remarks, and in the following, take them to reflect the PB's views.

His rationale was as follows:

- 1) For a considerable period of time, the Seattle OC's functioning had been extremely lax.
- 2) This "lack of functioning as an SL member" effectively terminated my membership in the SL.
- 3) Consequently, when in January I began to try to function more responsibly, I was no longer a member, and the PB could decide whether to "accept me back" or not.
- 4) Because of my political opposition to them concerning the recent internal struggle, they chose not to (this point is not my personal interpretation of cde. Kinder's remarks, but a flat, unambiguous statement by him). Instead, I was "dropped with prejudice".

I was urged to cancel a planned trip to the Bay Area that weekend, because BASL comrades were forbidden to put me up, and I would not be allowed to attend any internal meetings (though I would still be permitted to attend public events).

In response to protests on my part about "lack of due process", "violations of democratic centralism", etc., cde. Kinder replied that the PB had given my "situation" careful consideration before arriving at a decision, and that they certainly had the power to do what they did.

The PB's action raises questions on several levels. First, there is the question of the formal validity of their proceedings; i.e. are the charges against me true, and if so, what implications does this have for my membership status? Secondly, there is the question of due process, respect for the rights of members vis-a-vis the leadership; i.e., how the PB did what it did. Finally, their action implies a view of what democratic centralism is; this needs to be examined, and is probably the most fundamental and far-reaching aspect of their action.

The Formal Validity of Their Actions

The charges against me, in their concrete aspects, are mostly true: we weren't functioning as an organized Organizing Committee, we didn't maintain contact with the NO, we didn't have a P.O. Box, we were behind an undetermined amount in our financial pledge, etc. I have certainly been one of the first to recognize this in my letters to the NO; necessarily so, since the whole point of my correspondence in the first place was to try to correct the above situation.

But the PB draws the conclusion from this that I wasn't functioning as an SL member, which implies that for them, the above are the decisive aspects of one's political functioning, and that questions of supporting the SL's political line publicly and implementing it in mass arenas are secondary. The NO has never shown the slightest interest in this aspect of my functioning as an SL member, has left unanswered most of my requests for theoretical advice, and has had little to say on the reports in my letters of my functioning in mass arenas (indeed, specifically stated that such reports were "a lousy lawyers argument" as to how active I'd been,

and that they weren't interested). This tends to suggest that the PB is not seriously interested in evaluating my functioning objectively, or for the purpose of offering constructive comradely criticism; on the contrary, my past functioning seems to be of interest to them only to the extent that it can be used as a factional club.

My contention is that the NO has itself, over the past period, failed to fulfill a goodly number of its own responsibilities, and that a number of these concerned the Seattle ex-OC: one of the responsibilities of national leadership is to keep in touch with isolated, politically immature and inexperienced comrades, and, particularly relevant to the present case, to try and prevent them from "effectively terminating" their membership. This latter could have been minimally fulfilled, at the very least by sending us a "shape up or ship out" note, but the NO had been totally indifferent to our lack of functioning. All of a sudden, when I manifest active political opposition, they discover our negligence. And this in a context where I am trying to correct our past negligence!

Thus, since responsibilities had been neglected by both sides, they are hardly in any position to go around arbitrarily defining what constitutes "effective termination" of membership after the fact (this seems like a rather double-edged weapon for them to use, in any case). National leadership has, if anything, a qualitatively higher responsibility for their actions. Since cde. Kinder rejected this line of reasoning explicitly in our conversation, and cde. Robertson, in his letter of 7 March 1969, seemed outraged that I would dare to broach the subject of his responsibilities, I offer the following organizational resolution (extract) from the 1940 SWP convention, which, most unfortunately speaks for itself, in terms of the present case:

"THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF LEADERSHIP

"The leadership of the party must be under the control of the membership, its policies must always be open to criticism, discussion and rectification by the rank and file within properly established forms and limits, and the leading bodies themselves subject to formal recall and alteration. The membership of the party has the right to demand and expect the greatest responsibility from the leaders precisely because of the position they occupy in the movement. The selection of comrades to the positions of leadership means the conferring of an extraordinary responsibility. The warrant for this position must be proved, not once, but continuously by the leadership itself. It is under obligation to set the highest example of responsibility, devotion, sacrifice and complete identification with the party itself and its daily life and action. It must display the ability to defend its policies before the membership of the party, and to defend the line of the party and the party as a whole before the working class in general."

(The Struggle For a Proletarian Party, pg. 228-9)

Due Process and Democratic Centralism

Marxists, as distinct from Stalinists, have never had a contemptuous or casual attitude towards democratic rights, due process, respect for the rights of minorities, etc. In examining the PB's act from this perspective, one can only be appalled at their cavalier disregard for the most elementary standards of due process.

Thus, there are no written specifications as to what might constitute after-the-fact, retroactive, "effective termination" of membership (obviously, since the SL doesn't even have a written constitution or set of rules and by-laws). The very concept of "effective termination" (as contrasted, say, with an expulsion resulting

from a trial) is rather sinister, since it appears to have a rather automatic, arbitrary, and retroactive character. I was never warned that my membership had been effectively terminated, indeed, was allowed to hold the opposite impression, since the NO sent me internal documents, accepted my payment of sustainer pledge, and generally addressed me as a member (though one in rather dubious standing). The PB at no time spelled out any alternative: i.e., warn me that unless I did such and such, I would be dropped. The PB neglected to answer a specific question in my letter of 11 March 1969 as to my membership status, and neglected to answer my question, in my letter of 26 March 1969, as to what I could do or say that would convince them of my intent to behave as a loyal, disciplined member of SL. It was considerations like the above which prompted my protests to cde. Kinder about "lack of due process", and why I was unimpressed with his justifications that:

- a) the PB had given the matter "due consideration", and
- b) they had the power to do what they did (which is hardly the point).

In addition, cde. Robertson's letters contain what can only be described as arrogant and heavy-handed attempts at organizational intimidation, as witness the following quotes:

"Much of your letter, frankly, comrade, is a lousy lawyer's argument about how much in contact you've been, how active you've been, and how well paid your sustaining pledge is. I urge you not to press these points. You can be dropped in an instant for twelve different reasons, each one better than the one before. We are not interested in this, so don't play with us or we will be. Please understand: just don't play around..."

"...Comrade, it is clear that you had half lied to us, since you'd had the documents all along, and you are therefore half outside the organization. Just don't fool around if you want to stay..."

"...So again, let me stress: don't play with us. Just now is not the time for gamesmanship...We want you, comrade, but on the SL's terms..."

"...By this point, were it not for the objectively favorable report on you and Miriam from Comrade Harper,...we would simply have dropped you and Miriam for gross inactivity mingled with a certain indignation and general skepticism toward you..."

On Democratic Centralism

The point was made in my document that leadership has a grave responsibility, when actions involving comrades' membership status are involved, to behave with the utmost scrupulosity. Irresponsibility in this area is one of the quicker roads to political degeneration: the free and unhindered exchange and conflict of views is a necessary corrective to the mistakes and false steps a party will inevitably make in the long-range course of the class struggle.

The basis for membership in a democratic centralist organization has been historically clear and unequivocal. The requirements on members are two-fold.

1) Acceptance of the party's program--which means that individual or factional political opposition must be strictly internal; publicly all members are obligated to support the party line.

2) Submission to party discipline: in concrete terms, this means such things as giving financial support to the party, carrying out the party line in mass arenas, acceptance of party assignments, and various other requirements the party may impose.

At the same time, there is to be as extensive internal party democracy as objective circumstances permit. The exact character of the dialectical synthesis of democracy and centralism will, of course, depend upon the concrete stage of the class struggle at the time.

This is the most fundamental objection to the PB's action against me: that it is explicitly made on a factional basis, reminiscent of the YSA's denial of membership to SL supporters, which violates the essence of democratic centralism. Thus, even if cde. Kinder's formalistic legalisms about my "effective termination" of membership were valid, there would still be no basis for denying me membership. Yet he explicitly stated that the reason was political, that the PB chose not to "readmit" me because of my "oppositionist" politics.

Interestingly enough, the NO's attitude on this question has evolved: in cde. Robertson's letter of 28 Jan. 1969, two "conditions for genuine membership" were posed, and legitimately so: "1) an affirmation of the desire to continue SL membership together with the payment of regular sustaining pledge and the maintenance of more or less regular contact with the center; (2) correspondingly, an affirmation that contact, if any, with the Ellens people, Turner (now with Wohlforth) or for that matter any opponent organization will be as loyal, disciplined members of the Spartacist League confronting our enemies"...

When I indicated my acceptance of these conditions, a new criterion was imposed especially for the Seattle ex-OC, due to the fact that "not only are you, in the best case, deeply suspicious of the national organization [note the blurring of the distinction between party and present leadership], but you are in addition thoroughly isolated from us and in one of the most parochial regions of the country". This new criterion was that we relocate to functioning SL locals, "within an early, definite period". Though this was somewhat of a hardship for me, due to my family situation (my wife is pregnant), I indicated in my next letter to the NO my agreement, since I unconditionally recognize the right of the leadership of a democratic centralist organization to impose such requirements on members.

But now it finally comes out that the PB isn't really so much interested in my compliance with democratic centralism as they are in the fact that I intended to conduct an internal struggle against them. Let me make clear my position: I am prepared to comply with any organizational demand involving the question of democratic centralism. But on the question of my internal opposition to the present SL leadership, there can be no compromise. The PB must unqualifiedly recognize the right to oppose them politically if they retain any respect whatsoever for the democratic rights of members.

Summary

Questions involving my willingness to comply with democratic centralist discipline have been made unambiguously clear in our previous correspondence. If the PB had had any doubts or questions in this regards, they would have only had to state them, and I would have tried to satisfy them.

But they have in practice abandoned democratic centralism as a norm. To prove otherwise, and to repair some of the damage they have done to the SL, they will comply with the following:

- 1) Retraction of my expulsion (or to be technical, my having been "dropped with prejudice"--I won't quibble over technicalities if the PB should decide to save face by doing this in the form of "readmitting" me to the SL).
- 2) A clear statement by the PB that the present leadership will in the future proceed on the basis of democratic centralism, and that organizational threats and intimidation will cease; that all comrades' shortcomings will be dealt with in a comradesly spirit of criticism and self-criticism.
- 3) The convening of a "Commission of Inquiry", to investigate the "departures"

of Turner, Ellens, and supporters, so that the concrete circumstances surrounding these events may be determined, and suspicions dispelled.

4) A clear statement by the PB that those who have resigned or been expelled can be reinstated to SL membership with full convention rights, if they will agree to conform to a suitable set of democratic centralist norms, to be spelled out in writing by the Commission of Inquiry.

1 June 1969

ON G.I. WORK

by Joseph Seymour

The increase in the tempo of G.I. anti-war activity that has occurred in the past year, most evident in the burgeoning of underground papers, is not primarily a spontaneous reaction of soldiers to the war and army life, but rather reflects the increased presence of committed radicals in the army. The influence of Y.A.W.F. and the Y.S.A. is a good indication of this. This fact is likely to be overlooked in view of the primitive character of much of the G.I. press. This is not backwardness, but an attempt to "reach the masses" on the part of fairly sophisticated elements. Because the G.I. anti-war movement is a reflection of the broader radical movement, it has the characteristic ideological biases of the existing radical movement, particularly the anti-war movement, including black nationalism.

At the same time, the mass of soldiers are becoming increasingly discontented. The prospect of an endless war - and the recent developments do not indicate an early settlement - whose supporters even regard as a great mistake can hardly have any other effect. In the absence of a mass left, this increased discontent within the army necessarily takes non-political and non-organizational forms - a general worsening of morale, increased contempt for and willingness to disobey orders, increase in the intensity and extensiveness of hostility toward officers, a smaller proportion of "gung-ho" soldiers, and greater openness toward anti-war propaganda and radicals.

Of the various groupings within the G.I. anti-war movement, Y.A.W.F.'s individual confrontation tactics are obviously ultra-left and obviously losing influence among most G.I. activists. The rest of the G.I. anti-war movement has devoted itself to anti-war propaganda around whatever political axis the particular group holds - pacifist, resistance, orthodox New Left, S.W.P., while limiting its agitation to removing restrictions on anti-war propagandizing. As such, the G.I. anti-war movement is characterized by the same type of moral protest politics that the civilian anti-war movement is. This individual protestism is strengthened on the one hand by the pacifist-resistance wing of the movement, and on the other, by the civil libertarian approach of the S.W.P. which presents anti-war G.I.s as political dissenters rather than spokesmen and potential leaders for the mass of discontented G.I.s.

The main danger facing the G.I. anti-war movement is that it will become a circle of G.I. radicals, seeking to widen the circle through individual accretion, and not even thinking in terms of winning over the mass of G.I.s by leading the fight against the oppressive character of the army. The main axis of work in the G.I. anti-war movement should be to push for a strategy designed to maximize the political force of radicals in the army. The key tactic in such a strategy would be a servicemen's union which not only called for an end to the war and American militarism, but also interposed itself in all aspects of army life. The struggle for such a union would give anti-war radicals the vehicle to establish political leadership over the mass of G.I.s. The demand for a servicemen's union is the logical extension into the G.I. anti-war movement of one of the Marxists' central criticisms of the New Left - that it seek to win over the masses on the basis of the internal contradictions of the system rather than moral revulsion at the injustices of U.S. imperialism.

While the demand for a servicemen's union has generally been accepted by the Marxists, ill-defined but real differences over army work exist. On the union

question, there are differences over a) the degree of emphasis that should be put on agitating and propagandizing for a servicemen's union within the G.I. anti-war movement; and b) whether the program and propaganda for such union should explicitly include demands for reforms in army living and working conditions as distinct from ultimate political demands such as immediate withdrawal from Vietnam and an end to the draft. It should be clear that the union demand must be the central strategic demand within the G.I. anti-war movement (its emphasis in more general anti-war propaganda is something else again) and that the Marxists advocate a real servicemen's union seeking to inject itself into every aspect of army life.

Some Marxists appear to regard the union demand as one of emphasizing the need to reform and democratize the army and, therefore implicitly legitimizing American militarism.

To begin with, it is worth noting that Trotsky in Lessons of October raised the possibility that in Britain the trade unions would be the prime revolutionary organs, so there is no justification for regarding the union form as inherently and inevitably narrow and reformist. The demand for a servicemen's union is basically a demand for soldiers' power against the brass. The particular issues such a union fights on are simply manifestations of soldiers' power. The radical leaders of the union will make this clear to the soldiers, as will the brass, in their own way. The purpose of a servicemen's union, or any other union, for that matter, is not to achieve this or that reform, but to further the interests of the soldiers as much as objective conditions will allow. What must be said to the soldiers is this. The Marxists are in favor of the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Vietnam and everywhere else and an end to the draft. If this came about the character of the army would change and the question of a servicemen's union would become irrelevant, if not reactionary. But these demands are equivalent to the self-liquidation of American imperialism and are impossible without a social revolution. In the meantime, the Marxists must not permit the existing authority of the brass over the soldiers to remain unchallenged. Rather the soldiers' discontent should be channeled into doing this toward the authorities in the most realistic and effective way. In so doing radicals will also pull along less political soldiers, who would not join an anti-war group, as such.

Demands over conditions of army life are necessary to give the proposed union a sense of substance and organizational continuity. It serves no purpose except confusion to call for a servicemen's union and restrict its program to ultimate political demands or G.I. civil liberties, which duplicate other non-union G.I. organizations. Marxists who wish to restrict a G.I. program in this way want a G.I. anti-war or radical organization, rather than an all inclusive union. Moreover, if the union idea catches on, the Marxists can hardly oppose soldiers using the union form to fight for reforms in army conditions.

No revolutionary struggle emerges ex nihilo. It is always preceded by limited, often successful, struggles which break down the masses' fear of authority, increase their self-confidence, and create the necessary political momentum. Even very limited struggles which consciously pit the soldiers against the authorities can be an important contribution to the development of a revolutionary working class movement. Struggles in the army have a significance which transcends the immediate situation in the army. The mutinies in the British navy during the Napoleonic Wars had major political repercussions for the next fifty years.

Given the small forces of the Marxists and the lack of cohesion in the left, it is unlikely that their activities will lead to a significant army organization.

However, Vietnam is probably not the last unpopular and unsuccessful imperialistic war the U.S. will fight. Communists have a responsibility for developing a strategy to win over the army during an unpopular war. The Marxist attitude and strategy toward work in the army during this war may be a valuable contribution to the successful revolutionary struggle in this country.

25 June 1969

ON G.I. WORK -- A REPLY

by Mark Small

Essentially comrade Seymour argues that the current unrest in the army in the main "reflects the increased presence of committed radicals in the army" and that "The main danger facing the G.I. anti-war movement is that it will become a circle of G.I. radicals, seeking to widen the circle through individual accretion, and not even thinking in terms of winning over the mass of G.I.'s by leading the fight against the oppressive character of the army." (pp. 1-2) The comrade argues that the serviceman's union is a major programmatic point with which the militant G.I.'s would break out of their isolation, and analogizes this proposal to the Marxist attitude toward the isolation of the New Left: "The demand for a serviceman's union is the logical extension into the G.I. anti-war movement of one of the Marxists' central criticisms of the New Left--that it seek to win over the masses on the basis of the internal contradictions of the system rather than moral revulsion at the injustices of U.S. imperialism." (p. 2)

There is, first of all, a problem with this analogy. While one counterposes a "mass" orientation against the New Left ideology, the Marxist program is not simply one of bigger and better trade unions, but is highly political in nature--for a Labor Party, immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops, defense of the ghetto, etc. To be sure, we recognize that any Marxist who desires to have influence in a trade union must be a hard-working trade unionist, but a Trotskyist does not regard good trade unionism as a "central strategic demand" (p. 3) of his program--either when he's talking to New Lefters or to G.I. radicals. In short, comrade Seymour seems to have an excessive fascination for trade union organization.

More importantly, though, comrade Seymour has lost sight of the unique nature of the institution called the army which sets it apart from all other situations. What is the army? The army is an instrument of class oppression, the tool with which the bourgeoisie maintains its power; it is, in the final analysis, the core of the state. We are therefore simply opposed to its existence, and we cannot treat it as simply another "oppressive" situation like, say, a factory. In a factory Marxists would certainly be in favor of improved working conditions (while recognizing the primacy of a political transitional program), but for the army Marxists are not concerned with, say, delivering more Coca-Cola to the troops in Vietnam. (Marxists do, after all, take sides in the Vietnam war.) To be sure, one must be concerned about workingclass soldiers who are forced to fight for imperialism under miserable conditions, but his anger should lead to an anti-capitalist struggle through a fight against the war, not a fight for better "working" conditions. (In fact, it is important to note that the social-patriotic Congressmen will usually vote for such things as more G.I. benefits, while the angry G.I.'s are concerned not with improved conditions but with getting out of the army.)

In practice, the army tends to have a powerful politicalizing effect on soldiers since, as Trotsky noted, the army is really a compression of society as a whole. While the average militant soldier may not be very articulate, he is conscious of the hypocrisy of the war and is angry about it (the war is, after all, the central reason for the current unrest--not the shortage of flush toilets) and the Marxists should certainly not be the ones to dilute this consciousness with an invalid (and unpopular) reformist program.

Does this mean opposition to all "reforms" of the army? Of course not. But it does mean opposition to making the army a more effective war machine. One good "reform" Marxists would favor, for instance, is the abolition of the MP system. (Of course, it would be pointed out that this "reform" could come only when the

institution of the army is shattered by the power of the organized proletariat.) Another good reform demand is the granting of civilian legal status to G.I.'s.

The question may be asked, Will the serviceman's union simply carry on anti-war propaganda like the SWP? Unlike the SWP, the Marxists have long had a perspective of linking up anti-war militants with the workingclass through transitional points such as an anti-war Friday. Marxists should also carry this perspective in the G.I. anti-war movement as well, thereby sharply differentiating the Marxists from the reformist SWP-YSA tendency. (It has been noted, for instance, how the SWP failed to develop a possible link-up between anti-war G.I.'s and the striking black hospital workers in Charleston when both groups demonstrated together against Nixon). This perspective is the only way that G.I. radicals can break from their isolation within the army and their isolation from the general masses.

In summary, the demands of the serviceman's union should be the central political ones already noted (immediate withdrawal, against use of army in civilian disturbances, etc.) and whatever other political demands which are important. The slogan "For a serviceman's union" is useful, but the union should be conceived of as a G.I. organization for furthering these political goals, and for improving the militant G.I.'s ability to struggle for these demands (such as defense against crackdowns by the brass, etc.). The only real "soldiers' power" that is possible and desirable is the allegiance of workingclass G.I.'s to the revolutionary struggle of the organized proletariat.

2 July 1969

THE ANTI-WAR STRUGGLE WITHIN THE MILITARY AND THE ROLE OF THE "G.I. UNION"

by Dave Cunningham

So far as I know, there have been no clear differences within the authentic Marxist movement in the present discussion counterposed to the slogan of a G.I. Union; within the group of friends of a locally-produced anti-war G.I. paper, where the present dispute first expressed itself, there was no difference at all on that score. The differences that one finds discussed now are analytic in nature--dealing with the question of the union's program and structure--and by mutual consent have been referred to the process of formal discussion for clarification and resolution.

A literary discussion now is imperative for two reasons: first, because it breaks essentially new ground in a field where Marxists do not yet have available to them a fully-worked out position (at least such is the contention of this thesis); secondly, because of the particular organizational way the dispute arose, something of a fait accompli has come about in that fully articulated tendencies have presented themselves in an area where not only are the guidelines not clearly delineated but that most people outside those already involved in theoretical dispute know little of the differences to date, the manner in which various contentions arose, or the general conception, or have had much of a chance to say anything on a topic of burning importance at all.

Let me say in passing that nobody wants another MLCRC-like brawl. That is, the questions of tempo, allocation of resources and priorities have all been closely considered. At the same time, although the issue is important, it does not demand immediate resolution, since by means of temporary, conditional resolutions it is possible to fulfill whatever work needs immediate consideration.

I take it as axiomatic that military work is at present one of the three or four most important arenas of work now available to revolutionary socialists, one in which government sets priorities, in a manner of speaking. Because of the specific nature of the present upsurge of anti-war activity in the services--as Seymour has correctly pointed out, this is in the main the result of the former campus-based anti-war movement having been drafted into the Army--for the first time in a long time Marxists are, despite the heretofore organizational isolation from working-class youth in the military, presently in a position of offering leadership, direction and a coherent program of struggle. At the same time, because of the grossly defective tactics of "left-wing" opponents like the YSA (who have merely transported the SWP's "single-issueism" on the Vietnam war into the military struggle, aiming only toward getting a few token servicemen into their pop-front "end-the-war" street demonstrations, into on-base Malcolm X Fan Clubs or "free speech" mini-battles with various brass) or YAWF's Bond on the opposite, adventurist extreme, militants who subscribe to the Marxists' program are in the excellent position at the present time of serving as the only political pole of attraction for militants within the service who want to be politically effective, relevant and not merely isolated to the military "issue".

If the above is seen as not only necessary but also in a limited way possible, then this makes it further incumbent upon Marxists to develop correctly and finely-focussed, i.e., timely, programmatic points for already-politicalized militants to deepen their impact and spread their influence in their inter-service struggle. Likewise, a failure to secure these points or see the pressing need for expanding a transitional program here--or, possibly, like PL, to misinterpret the present stage and level of struggle possible within the military (or to fall into the pacifist trap of assuming the "totalitarian" nature of the military makes real, organ-

ized struggle impossible)--is to abandon needlessly and wastefully what for the present seems a most promising arena.

It should be clear from the above that I accept the major thrust and general political conclusions of the Seymour views on program (On G.I. Work). But this is only a starting point for discussion, and is hardly an adequate basis for a fully developed program.

Developing a program means first of all making a correct analysis of the level of struggle presently going on -- in this case, among active-duty servicemen on posts or in Vietnam. There has not been to date a fully-defined Marxist position on what mass struggle (as opposed, say, to individual propagandizing) within the military is possible or what it ought to entail. This is not meant as a jab; indeed, it is one of the contentions of this paper that the present, militant upsurge of dissent among servicemen, ranging all over all kinds of previously taboo categories, is really something quite new. Further, if hardly unique historically, nevertheless it is the product of a congruence of factors not seen in similar terms within this country since the Civil War. Certainly it is markedly different from the "Bring the Troops Home" servicemen's campaign at the end of World War II in at least these two regards: to date it lacks the mass character that the earlier movement had, which stemmed from the betrayal of the democratic rhetoric of the Rooseveltian war years and was further aided by the enormous postwar industrial strike wave which lasted until late 1947; secondly, one must appreciate the very fact that this growing antiwar militancy has developed mostly in isolation from labor struggles, in a relatively quiescent if inflation-ridden wartime economy, and essentially campus-based, has yet felt the need to become more conscious, more "ideological", in order to survive. One should be aware that the discussion concerns the seeds of revolt now, not the flowering. At the same time, the qualitatively small size of the dissent, together with an openness and receptivity to Marxist ideas and criticisms, indicates that organizational limitations have not seriously interfered with the dissemination of these views (which might otherwise be the case had the movement already achieved a mass character). Again, since it is necessary to state that the services are not what they were in 1967, and the military now appearing a more possible arena of struggle, the program enunciated by Marxists must reach beyond the individual counselling of friends and toward a general updating of views.

Most Marxists I believe will agree that it is appropriate and defensible to argue for the slogan of some kind of unspecified servicemen's union, and the dispute to date has concerned itself with questions of structure and programmatic content. This is not so esoteric as it may seem, as the perusal of earlier documents will clearly show that real differences, not hairsplitting sophistry, exist. For the sake of clarity let me say that I believe that the "union" under discussion ought to be conceived of as a real union as we normally think of one, organized and structured along industrial union lines. I believe this is also Seymour's view. It is equally apparent to me that these are not the views of Comrade Small (as stated in his On G.I. Work--A Reply, 2 July 1969), and that there is a conceptual difference here. And to my mind this is the crux of the dispute, rather than the argument over programmatic points (on many of which I am in agreement with Small as against Seymour.) But it is quite clear that by his term "union" comrade Small means something very different from an industrial union, as is clear from his question in On G.I. Work--A Reply: "The question may be asked, Will the serviceman's union simply carry on anti-war propaganda like the SWP?" There must be damned few unions in the U.S. which simply agitate against the war or which have a single-issue propaganda orientation. Likewise, there are several organizations in the U.S. which do "simply carry on anti-war propaganda" (most of them friends

of the SWP) but they are by no stretch of the imagination unions.

Perhaps a short summary of the origins of the dispute may clarify these points under discussion and show why some fundamental political viewpoints, which ought to be more clearly counterposed, are not, and why we have been talking about different things while still using the same terminology.

Comrade Seymour recently presented for consideration a number of tentative planks for a Marxist military program. Holding that mass struggle methods were possible in and appropriate to the military arena as it now exists, he felt the call he had projected necessarily had to be central to the military program. This is necessary for Marxists envisioning mass work to consider, finding a way to give systematic, structured organization and implementation to what otherwise would end up unconnected, abstruse and unconnected demands, as well as generating sympathy among workingclass G.I.s who would return to civilian life with a heightened appreciation of the power and discipline of organized union methods of struggle. He suggested demands like replacement of the Military Code of Justice with the Bill of Rights (i.e., the codification of democratic rights for military personnel), several better-pay-and-working-conditions demands, a policy of systematic opposition to racism within the military, an "anti-celibacy" demand, (i.e., women in the barracks), the abolition of the military police, an end to the draft, immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops from Vietnam and everywhere else, no military involvement into labor or other civil disputes here or abroad, etc. The disagreements jelled in the discussion following. Comrade Small developed the position as is now stated in his Reply to Seymour; my own objections at the time (somewhat caricatured on page 3 of Seymour's On G.I. Work) have on consideration moved much closer to Seymour's, although my most signal objections to the tentative program remain the same.

While I disagree with Small that many of the minimum economic ("bitch") demands were opportunist or unprincipled in nature (i.e., that somehow they strengthen Yankee Imperialism), I nevertheless object to making them co-equal in importance to the political demands, and indeed think that most ought to be expunged from the platform on the grounds they range from the trivial to the retrograde, especially anti-celibacy and the "better flush toilets" sort of thing; these simply do not take account of esprit de corps and a certain laudible willingness to put up with discomforts, and would probably repel the best human material there for their insensitivity and inanity. The "get rid of the military police" plank manages to be simultaneously opportunist and utopian and has a Bondish smell to it (it should be obvious to any Marxist that the M.P. system is the glue that holds the military together, and will not be done away with short of a social revolution in this country; to present this as a demand attainable merely through struggle for trade union rights is provocative and terribly destructive of conscienceness.) While it is likewise true that the military would certainly not honor any pledge of noninvolvement in internal "civil disputes", for the same reason that to do so would mean a disarming of the military arm of the bourgeois state, nevertheless a struggle over this issue for such a pledge would help to tear off the democratic facade from the bourgeois dictatorship and thus aid in increasing socialist consciousness as soon as the military is mobilized to put down the next urban, i.e., Black, uprising. Contrary to Comrade Small's assertion, then, it was not so much the fact of the minimum demands being unprincipled as it was of one of the crucial high political positions. It was for this reason, of course, that so much confusion was generated on minor nit-picking programmatic points, and we never got to the point of deciding whether we were really talking about the same fundamental conception. A major disagreement I had with Seymour was lost in this way, which was that the program errs in the direction of being a hodge-podge, that mixing up major political and minimum bread-and-butter demands was dishonest and disarming, and, because the implica-

tions of the demand were concealed, could not serve the educative function of pin-pointing the nature of the military or the state, and had none of the "escalation" tactics which really underlay a politically transitional program. This is related to, but does not supercede, the criticism of the overly excessive concentration on the economic issues, which must at the end of this discussion be resolved.

Since Comrade Small's reply to Seymour appears the central, articulated political opposition in this debate, I want to answer his major argument. It must be understood that the call for a G.I. Union is not intended in some roundabout, elaborate form to constitute directives to Marxists or sympathizers with a near perspective of military duty. That is, the point of this discussion is not whether or not to consider some sort of ersatz letterhead union controlled behind the scenes, as for example Stapp's American Servicemen's Union. Were this the case, it wouldn't be worth discussing, and it would be a tossup as to whether YAWF's or a "Marxist" setup would be the bigger farce. The call is essential not because of any direct organizational benefit (although this will not hopefully be excluded), but because so far as the class is concerned, the Union seems presently viable and perhaps may strengthen it over all, may aid in building a bridge to the civilian organized labor movement and increase class-consciousness in working-class youth and their potential allies.

But merely by admitting the obvious, the basis for Comrade Small's argument is undermined. What is a union, anyway, but an organized self-defense unit of the class fighting for its interests? A union which is by its nature excluded from fighting on certain fronts, for certain demands, is not only a union but a contradiction in terms. But this does not mean that Marxists thereby support each and every action, or even most, that the union undertakes for itself. Put it this way: there is a certain sui generis quality to mass organizations, especially in the process of coming into being; to attempt to narrow its focus to demands which are only, or primarily, political in nature as opposed to economic or a matter of "our rights" is really analogous to stipulating that it is allowed to fight only for revolutionary, not reformist, ends. There is a praxis quality to a union in birth, moreover, which can roughly be defined as the process of defining itself in the struggle of coming into being and developing its program in the main as it takes on shape. And it has an intermediary and transitional quality. Of course, we do not expect radicals and Marxists to play a passive role in this birth or in the development of its program, and obviously we want these programmatic ideas to get a hearing. Speaking practically, of course, they will, since the whole idea of the union is geared to cut across the isolation and feelings of impotence of already developed radicals in the service.

From one point of view, of course, any reform within the service is illusory and could serve a reactionary function. Given this outlook, one could consistently argue that the struggle for more democratic rights within the military might in the long run actually tend to strengthen it, since they might help get rid of some of the more mossbacked reactionary traditions and concepts of discipline, etc., which are exactly the sort of thing that repel the best, thinking people faced with this nonsense; that in the guise of fighting, viz, Mendel Rivers or Curtis LeMay the cool, efficiency-technology boys of the MacNamara stripe are strengthened. This can be translated as: all right, but why do the liberals work for them?

But we reject this kind of argument, for the very good reason that if one were consistent one would have to oppose minimal union reforms in civil society, also. Efficient management and ultra-reactionary politics are generally not synonymous, and it is not unrealistic to think that the struggle against sweatshop or extremely dangerous work conditions may actually have in many cases increased through their

victories the actual rate and tempo of exploitation in given industries (more subtly concealed, of course). It is I think indisputable that in the main unions strengthen capitalism in that they fight for reforms in an isolated fashion, not in a transitional, revolutionary way; by narrowing demands to strictly economic issues, they abjure politics or play an obscurantist political role, and usually find themselves in the role of setting one section of the class against another. Marxists recognize this, and try to transform them into revolutionary instruments, determining real class interests and potentials as a whole. This should be the attitude taken with the servicemen's union. And Marxists oppose the Stapp fiction not because it isn't a Marxist union, but because it isn't a union. But in reply to Comrade Small one can say that one doesn't conditionally support or seek to transform a thing (assuming it has those features to make it worth transforming) by placing those conditions on it which are by its or their nature impossible to fulfill. And this takes me to the central point of my argument with Comrade Small: in my opinion his conditional support of the G.I. Union slogan itself is incorrect and self-contradictory, since the content he seems to want to pour into the form is virtually incompatible. I think he confuses a Marxist attitude toward the union program with the overall defensive nature and program of the union itself.

Finally, the union demand has an agitational quality too, as it is a demand which can be interjected at critical times to escalate pressure and cut across isolating tactics. Recently at a military base in the South, some G.I.'s presented the brass with a petition asking to hold an anti-war discussion meeting on base. This was rejected on the grounds that the military doesn't accept collective bargaining demands. The alternatives facing the petitioners at this point were these: fold up; go to the civil liberties groups and/or the bourgeois courts; or state they were in fact a collective bargaining unit and then sought to organize rank-and-file G.I. support for their views. They chose the second, allowing the brass to isolate them and portray them as eccentrics interested in things only intellectuals, not workers, would care about - a terribly irrelevant tactic for anyone to choose who really wanted to work in a working class arena. Such is of course the tactic presently pushed by the SWP/YSA (who make it clear in their G.I. defense work, incidentally, that they are not interested in "revolution" but only in "stopping the war" and helping G.I.s) whereas Marxists certainly ought to be interested in the possibilities opened up by a collective bargaining perspective.

4 July 1969