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Contents

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A Statement on the Pre-Convention Discussion
by the Reorganized Minority Tendency

35¢

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Why the Factional Attack?

Our political tendency has produced two major documents in preparation for this pre-convention discussion: "Decline of American Imperialism and the Tasks of the SWP" and "The Rebuilding of the Fourth International." These documents present the main outlines of the political line that we wish the party to adopt both in its approach to the American scene and to the problems of the international movement. In essence our material calls for a return to a revolutionary outlook which relies upon the proletariat as the only truly revolutionary class in modern society, which sees the need of our international movement to become the leadership of the proletariat, and which today seeks to deepen the roots of our cadres in the class itself.

The response of the majority leadership to our political proposals has been a wholesale and uncontrolled factional attack of such a nature as our movement has never seen. No serious answers are put forward to our political criticisms -- only heated factional attacks on the members of our tendency, their nefarious pasts, their bad writing styles, etc., etc. Everything is done to confuse and obscure our political positions and an atmosphere is being created where serious discussion of any issue is made all but impossible.

Perhaps if the majority leadership felt that our group threatened to seize control of the party nationally one could understand the intensity of the factional attack. But all the comrades know this is absurd. Ours is a very small group which represents no threat whatsoever organizationally to the party nationally or in any local. All we have is our political ideas and a bare scattering of people who support them. Certainly considering the strength of our group, the action of the national party leadership to perpetrate a deep factional crisis in the party seems unreal, irrational.

Then why the attack? Why the intense heat, the personal acrimony, the vicious polemic? We can only conclude that it is that one strength we do have, our political ideas, which is cutting too deep into the central weakness of the majority, its political confusion. This is the only logical conclusion we can reach. Thus the factional reaction of the majority leadership to the presentation of our political point of view tends to substantiate our own analysis of the party -- that today it is in a serious crisis because of its political confusion and its partial isolation from the mass movement.

What is it that we want?

Comrade Kerry and others have suggested that our main reason for existence is to criticize or attack Cuba. But then why do we seem to be going to such lengths to avoid centering the discussion on Cuba if this is what is "bugging" us? Comrade Dobbs thinks perhaps after all we are Cochranites as well as Shachtmanites, Marcyites and Johnsonites and are out to dump our election campaigns. Then why have our comrades worked so hard and dedicatedly in all party election campaigns? No, we are for election campaigns. We want them deepened by directing them towards the working class and Negro people. Comrade Dobbs then goes on to suggest that we agree "on only one thing -- the party leadership should be removed and they, or at least the slickest of them, should take the helm." But this is not our position. We do not wish to dump anybody. All we want is a discussion of our political point of view. Along the same lines is Comrade Dobbs' suggestion that we wish to fight the "bureaucratic jungle." We do not consider the party a bureaucratic jungle nor are we interested in organizing battles against the leadership. We have sought, to the best of our ability, to

assiduously avoid such battles, and have ~~disassociated~~ ourselves from those interested in such a course.

We are interested in none of these things. We urge all those comrades who really wish to discover what we really want to turn to our own political material and read what we propose for the line of the party. This is one place where the party majority leadership seems most reluctant to look to discover what we advocate.

We have important differences around three central questions before the convention. Primary, for some time has been the international question. It is our opinion that the party majority has gone over to the essential method and outlook of Pabloism on the international plane. The Pabloite outlook seeks to substitute reliance upon petty bourgeois forces -- such as the Stalinist parties, centrist groups, and "sui-generis jacobins" in the colonial areas -- for the struggle of the proletariat itself under Marxist leadership in the revolutionary process. This outlook of Pabloism is reflected at different times in different ways but always the one force the Pabloites never really rely upon is the working class. Thus we have seen an erosion of the role of the party and the working class in the international outlook of the majority under the influence of the Pabloites. (For a summary of our views on this question see our resolution "The Rebuilding of the Fourth International").

This outlook has also begun to cut deeply into the domestic perspective of the party. This process has not gone anywhere near as far as the erosion of the international outlook of the party and thus the party is a very different organization than the little petty bourgeois Pabloite groups in Europe. But in many ways this partial erosion of the party's American revolutionary perspective is more serious, and should cause greater concern to the rank and file, than the erosion of its international outlook. It is the relationship of a party to the struggles of the class in its own country which is the real "acid test" of any revolutionary group.

Our differences on this level are expressed most sharply in the counterposition of our resolution on the American question with that of the majority's. The majority resolution contains much good material. Like our document, it recognizes the turn in the objective situation in the United States, which after years of deep isolation, now opens up for our party serious possibilities of fruitful work in the mass movement. However, the majority draws no new conclusions from this as far as the orientation of party work is concerned. Instead they propose a "general propaganda offensive" -- the same proposal which they presented in the middle of the deepest McCarthyite reaction. Thus the majority, while recognizing the turn in the objective situation, proposes no real turn in party work. But it is precisely in deepening the roots of our party in the class, that is becoming part of the class, that our party can be revitalized after 15 years of isolation when, through no fault of our own, our precious proletarian cadres were seriously depleted. It is our conviction that it has been this partial isolation of the party from the class which has prepared the party for its present retreat to the Pabloite revisionism it fought so hard against ten years ago.

The majority leadership not only does not accept our proposal for a serious turn in party work in the direction of the mass movement but it attacks us factionally for raising this proposal and caricatures what we have to say by calling us "whirling dervishes." It seems our document is asking too much of our overworked forces. It is too much to expect the locals to make work in the trade unions central to our work and at the same time give work in the Negro movement (and among the Spanish minorities where they exist) an important place in party work. If one views the mass movement as a whole from a class perspective then the problem is not so difficult. Our work in the Negro movement and among Puerto Ricans and Mexicans can be immeasurably strengthened by developing our roots in the trade unions and within the

trade unions establishing relations with militant Negroes or other minority peoples. Thus our work in the class becomes an important link for our work in the mass movement as a whole.

The problem is not a matter of the smallness of the size of our cadre but rather how this cadre is utilized. Today our cadre devotes its greatest efforts to "party building" work far removed from the masses and to work in petty bourgeois circles. Can we be complacent about the situation in the party when in the New York Local only one comrade has any real connections with the Negro movement? It is no accident that this comrade is a trade unionist and is dissatisfied with the direction of current party work. We are afraid, comrades, that this is no time to run a holding operation. The objective situation compels us to do more.

Our differences on the Negro question are closely linked with our differences on the American question as a whole. In the first place we doubt if the party will seriously turn towards real intervention in depth in the Negro movement when it maintains an outlook of limiting our approach to the mass movement as a whole to a "general propaganda offensive." We feel we must do more in the Negro movement than "propagandize." Secondly, we feel the resolution is deficient because it does not give proper emphasis to Southern work. We are convinced a small beginning can be made in Southern work by some of our younger cadres without seriously weakening our work among Northern Negroes or our work in general. Finally, while correctly assessing the progressive aspects of the growing nationalist sentiment among the Negro people, the resolution fails to see a need for working class leadership of the Negro movement itself. Rather many comrades are now putting forward the concept that the present petty bourgeois Negro leadership will be "impelled" to go over to socialism and thus will not need replacing at all. This is a deep distortion of our theory of the permanent revolution which sees national struggles going over into socialist struggles only under proletarian leadership. Thus we see in the concrete how revisionism on the international level eats away at the American perspective of the party. If there is no need for a new proletarian Negro leadership -- in program and composition -- then there is no role in the Negro movement for our party and its leadership as the most advanced section of the working class, Negro and white.

We can therefore see how the majority, beginning with a decay of the role of class and party internationally under Pabloite influence today, sees no need for a serious turn towards the class in its party building work nor a real role for class and party in the Negro struggle. It is this erosion of the role of class and party which necessitated the formation of our political tendency. It is this class struggle outlook that today we are fighting for. It is this which motivates us -- it is this which is our essence. We feel close to all comrades who agree even partially on these two critical questions. We have nothing in common with all those who totally reject this outlook, regardless of their position on more abstract questions. Thus we will bloc with anyone who favors this outlook and we will fight politically anyone who deserts it. This is the principled and sole basis for all our political relations within the party and internationally.

The Split with the Robertson Group

The majority comrades have challenged us to explain the basis for our split with the Robertson group. Of course the rank and file comrades have a right to know why this split occurred and what were the political questions which brought it about. Our tendency is an open political group and all its actions are

based upon political considerations. We are not interested in conspiracies or games of any kind. We feel the situation within the party is too grave to permit anything but the most serious, objective and political relations between all party members.

In fact we feel there may be some value, some lessons the party rank and file can learn from our experiences; from, frankly speaking, our serious difficulties. This is especially true because the split within our tendency was caused by the very same kind of political considerations which necessitated the formation of a tendency to begin with -- the questions of party and class. Perhaps the comrades can get some deeper insight into these two critical questions by studying the extremely difficult crisis our tendency passed through.

The crisis within our tendency was precipitated by a single event in New York and then spread to involve a number of related issues. A minority comrade, Judy McGill, had a trade union difference with the party branch. When the branch voted against her position, she walked out of the party. Some in our tendency supported her desertion from the party and others expressed sympathy for her action. This created a dangerous situation within the tendency and raised the question as to whether or not the tendency members fully understood the assessment of the party we made in our basic platform "For a Revolutionary Perspective." This document reaffirmed our loyal support to the party and our conviction that the party as a whole could be won over to a correct political perspective precisely through a process of its healthy growth. Thus minority comrades should be the most dedicated builders of the party and have the conviction that the working class cadres of the party could and would be won over to our ideas. In order to clarify matters Comrade Wohlforth submitted a memorandum to the tendency "On Orientation" last May which reaffirmed these points and condemned any concept of taking the discipline of the party lightly (See Appendix 1).

This statement precipitated a deep internal crisis in our tendency which lasted from May until November when it was resolved through the reorganization of the tendency around a new statement on this question (See Discussion Bulletin, Vol. 24, No. 10). It became clear to us that a section of our tendency had simply written off the party as a whole without a serious struggle to reorient over a period of time the best working class cadres of the party. In addition they displayed no serious interest in the work of our party in the mass movement and instead sought to retreat into a comfortable "study circle." And finally their evolution seemed at that time to be propelling them rapidly in the direction of a split from the party. The appended material "Towards the Working Class" by Comrade Wohlforth and a letter to Comrade Wohlforth from Comrade Philips should explain clearly the way we viewed the differences within the tendency at that time (See Appendix 2 and 3).

Thus it appeared to us that a section of our tendency had no real understanding of the question of party and class. They wrote off the party as it existed in reality in this country, gave it the back of their hand, and substituted for the party their own little circle. They displayed not the slightest real interest in reaching the working class either through the party, or since they had written the party off, then on their own. Thus having turned their backs on both party and class, they were, in our opinion, a petty bourgeois tendency. Despite their formal agreement with us on a number of questions it was clear to us that there was no principled basis for further collaboration with them as long as they persisted on their course. Even though it meant the loss of half of our minority we had no other course open to us but to reorganize the tendency on

a sound basis of a real understanding in the concrete of the importance of party and class. Even if we had to reorganize out of the tendency 99 per cent of the tendency we would have done so if there was no longer any principled basis for collaboration. There is no other course that principled people can take.

Following the split we devoted our efforts to positive party building work and later to the preparation of our political material for the pre-convention discussion as well. We had presented to the National Committee our own statement explaining where we stood and we expected that the Robertson group would make their own position clear to the party. They never did this. But we wished no further factional conflict with the Robertson group and hoped that our action would have an impact on them and that they would reconsider their course in time.

A number of individuals who refused to sign our reorganization statement did leave the party in the interim -- four comrades who signed the Robertson statement on Cuba and two comrades who refused to sign either statement. But the bulk of the Robertson tendency seemed to pull back from a split course. This to us was a welcome sign and it opened up the possibility that these comrades would reconsider their whole approach towards the party and the class. We did our best in the New York local to keep factional pressure off them and were very much opposed to the factional attacks the majority leadership levelled against them. We felt then, as we feel now, these comrades should be dealt with politically and not organizationally and every effort should be made to integrate them in party work and to assist them to learn from their mistakes.

In fact with the publication of our convention material we sent these comrades a letter soliciting their opinion of our material to see if the passage of time had led to any possible political collaboration between the tendencies. We were not too optimistic about the sort of answer we would get because, while the Robertson group seemed to have pulled back from a split course, there had been no indication in the preceding period of a serious attempt on the part of these comrades to break out of their little circle existence to become a real part of the party, and to relate themselves to any party work in the mass movement. In fact the group in New York seemed to be interested in the City College and Columbia campus community and little else. The main proposal for local party work presented by these comrades since the split in the tendency was a special orientation towards the Maoist Progressive Labor group, also largely rooted on the campuses.

We never formally received an answer to our letter from the Robertson group. However, in the interim the Robertson group has made its position clear on our fundamental resolution on the American question by rejecting support to this resolution in favor of amending the PC Draft Resolution. This is an important political step especially considering that this group's general approach to the pre-convention period has been to vote against everything the majority presents as a matter of principle, almost. While this amendment, like the resolution it is amending, pays lip service to the need for more work in the mass movement, it does not oppose the main orientation of the majority which is simply to continue 'propaganda work.' Thus it clearly rejects our proposal for a serious turn in party work making mass work our central task.

The importance of this basic difference we have with the Robertson group can be seen from the following statement made by Robertson in the first draft of an answer to our letter to them -- an answer we never formally received. Robertson states:

"We see one essential defect in your convention material. It is common and basic to both your American and International resolution. This erroneous outlook is expressed clearly and briefly in two places. It is found in Section 3 of your International draft and in point 1 of the Philips amendment at the last plenum. This amendment was endorsed and appended to your American resolution. We do not believe that the way to combat the revisionists' surrender of a strategic perspective of proletarian revolution is by counterposing a demand for the Trotskyists to undertake (everywhere and with forces no matter how small!) immediate agitational struggles of the working masses. This is a call which perhaps corresponds to felt inner-factional needs but which lacks reality. Your posing of our immediate task in every country as "the conquest of the masses" creates an enormous discrepancy between this declared task and our means. It is a slide into a sectarianism which tends to cut the movement off from opportunities as they are -- witness your indifference bordering on hostility toward developing an approach to the "Progressive Labor" left breakaway from the American CP. Thus you did not support our memorandum on the "P.L." group. The general, but not sole or universal, perspective which the present world juncture demands, in our opinion, is one which places major emphasis on propagandistic work toward the crystallization of Trotskyist cadres. Today in most parts of the world our task is to lay down the foundations for revolutionary parties, not to pretend they already exist and declare "they" should struggle for hegemony over the mass movement."

It is clear from the above that Robertson sees his differences with us on this score as "essential" and not a minor matter. But what are the views which Comrade Robertson thinks are so bad?

Point 1 of the concluding section of the Philips amendment simply stated, "The party and its press must take a conscious turn towards the main arena of our work, the politically unawakened workers of the mass production industries." If our main organ is not to be written so that it can be understood by workers, then who should it be written for? We can only conclude that Robertson wants the Militant written for the people he is working among -- petty bourgeois radicals and students. We feel that the ISR should be able to amply fill this need and our main organ should be written so that working class and Negro militants can understand it for it is precisely the workers and minority peoples who we wish our party to seek to reach.

Section 8 of our International Resolution reads as follows:

"While the concrete analysis and tasks will differ widely from country to country, certain general tasks will be necessary everywhere. We must understand that this is a transitional period to a new period of upsurge rather than being either a period of the "organic expansion" of capitalism or of renewed revolutionary upsurge. Thus our tasks remain essentially preparatory in nature. Or to pose it in its classic form, our task now is not the conquest of state power but the conquest

of the masses in preparation for the conquest of state power. Everywhere and in all countries our cadres must break away from the routine habits of propaganda group existence and reach out, no matter how meagre our forces may be, to establish contact with the masses themselves on whatever political level this can be done. This must be the main orientation of the whole international movement and the major task of each national section. Those sections which do not attempt such work will quickly find themselves bypassed by developments during the period of revolutionary upsurge."

Clearly this section does not suggest that our small forces should expect to achieve hegemony over the mass in the coming period -- only that we should strive in that direction rather than seek hegemony over petty bourgeois radical circles as some of the majority are advocating. And what concretely do we propose? To "seek to establish contact with the masses themselves on whatever political level this can be done." We can only conclude that it is this proposal which Comrade Robertson is rejecting.

We are afraid that Comrade Robertson does not understand in the slightest what the entire national and international struggle is all about. He does not view our propaganda work and party building work as intimately linked with our work to increase our influence in the class itself. Rather he seems to subscribe to the view of the most disoriented among the majority that today we must concentrate on "the crystallization of Trotskyist cadres" far removed from the masses and later on we are to present ourselves to these masses as their chosen leaders. Such an outlook is a truly sectarian one for it is sectarian towards the class itself. No matter how "orthodox" comrades may be, they will not be able to seriously contribute to the rebuilding of our international movement as long as they continue to see the building of our cadres as a process essentially isolated from the class itself. Those rank and file comrades of the majority, confused as they may be on the international question, who seek in some fashion to root the party in the class have a better understanding of the real task of rebuilding our movement than these comrades have.

We can only conclude from this whole experience that the Robertson group is not seriously interested in, or capable of, assisting the process of reorienting our movement here or internationally and that our collaboration with these comrades in a political struggle against the majority is out of the question. The group in a lightminded way has written off the party as "right-centrist" without making a serious attempt to reorient it, has retreated into an essentially petty bourgeois little "study circle," and now openly rejects the need for our party and our whole world cadres to turn its major attention to work in the class itself.

However, while political collaboration is out of the question, we do believe these comrades seriously seek to remain in the party and have shown willingness to carry out their responsibilities towards the party. Therefore, we continue to oppose any factional pressure or organizational attacks on this group and feel that they should be answered politically. The majority is, of course, hindered in answering these comrades politically precisely because it also resists a turn of the party towards the class.

Our Relations With the British and the French

Our relations with the British and French sections of the IC, of course, flow naturally from our whole political outlook. These relations are essentially

those of political solidarity which has been declared and defended openly in front of the party as a whole. Such political relations have a deep tradition in our world movement for we consider ourselves to be politically in solidarity with a world movement -- not an isolated national party.

These relations flow essentially from our common outlook on these critical questions of class and party. Clearly we have defended the same general international outlook as expressed most comprehensively in the SLL International Resolution "World Prospects for Socialism." But the matter goes even deeper than that. These two sections of the IC are sections which are themselves deeply rooted in the class in their own countries and which maintain within their particular countries, under conditions peculiar to each country, the same general orientation which we are fighting for here. The success of this orientation can be seen especially in the case of the British section which has developed under a more favorable objective situation than either the French or our party have been favored with.

In addition, as extremely serious political groups, these comrades agree with our approach towards responsible, loyal work as members of the SWP and our political solidarity is based in part on their acceptance of this strategic outlook just as we agree with their general international outlook. Thus there is no conflict whatsoever between our political solidarity with this international tendency and our complete, loyal, positive approach to the party here despite our deep differences with the leadership. If there was any question of this it is made explicitly clear in a recent letter of Comrade Healy to Comrade Dobbs.

Of course there are political differences between our tendency and the British and the French. These differences however are within a common perspective of maintaining a revolutionary role for the working class and a role for our movement as its vanguard. These comrades do not dictate policy to us and we do not dictate policy to them. Our relations are solely political and our differences are openly expressed before the movement. We are proud of our relations with these groups and feel there is much we have to learn both from their struggles and the struggles and experiences of our party here over the years.

An Unprincipled Combination?

Much is being made by the majority of the theoretical differences within our minority. How can we maintain a common bloc in the party if we are made up essentially of a group of comrades who maintain an orthodox outlook on the Russian question in a bloc with a group of comrades who have traditionally maintained a state capitalist position within the party?

We feel that the internal experiences of our tendency have a certain bearing on an answer to this question. It was not the Russian question nor the Cuban question which split our tendency. Important as these theoretical questions are, our tendency was split down the middle when the questions of class and party were touched. This is the most acid of all tests; it is the concrete test of what different theories mean to political groups.

The split in 1940 was caused, so it appeared on the surface, by the Russian question. But it cut deeper than that. Behind the facade of a difference over this question (or more accurately the question of defense of the USSR during the Soviet-Finnish War), a section of the party was capitulating to alien class pressures and abandoning the building of a proletarian party.

The Johnsonites rejoined the SWP in 1947 despite disagreement on the Russian question, because they agreed with the party on the critical question of class and party. When they later left the party in 1950 their leaving was caused not simply by the important difference over the Russian question but because, under the pressure of prosperity, they had abandoned the need for a party and given up on the class.

A small group of these comrades, the Philips group, refused to go along with their co-thinkers on the Russian question precisely because they maintained a revolutionary class perspective. In 1952, a section of the party, the Cochranites, who had complete agreement with the majority on the class nature of the USSR, prepared to desert the movement and the present party leadership collaborated with the Philips group in a struggle against them precisely around the issues of party and class.

In 1957 a minority opposition formed inside the Shachtmanite youth organization to struggle against Shachtman's final capitulation over the central issues of party and class. This struggle, carried on in close collaboration with the SWP leadership, was conducted by a group which did not have agreement within itself on the Russian question even though leading comrades like Comrades Mage and Wohlforth came over to an orthodox position on this question during the course of the struggle. After the split in the YSL, the group fused with the SWP youth to form the basic cadre of a new youth movement, again even though important sociological differences remained.

Today our common bloc of the reorganized minority is based on deep agreement on precisely these questions of class and party. In the period prior to last November it was revealed that there was no agreement on these critical questions and without hesitation we split with half of our tendency. Should our theoretical differences lead to a difference on class and party we would not hesitate to split again. But this is not on the agenda precisely because the comrades involved in our tendency have proved their seriousness on this score through long years of work in building our party in the class itself.

Our tendency does not need to explain its principled basis for existence. Our documents and our own actions prove this to the hilt. But are we hiding our differences that we have among ourselves? Of course not. Comrade Philips' full state capitalist position is available in two long bulletins issued in 1957. Comrade Philips is presently working on a reevaluation of position but the pressures of his trade union work have not given him the necessary time to complete it. Do the comrades suggest he abandon this trade union work in order to work on a new thesis? In any event, even if Comrade Philips were to maintain every word of the position he put forward in 1957 his role as a part of the reorganized tendency is perfectly in order and principled.

Is Comrade Wohlforth holding back his views or has he sold out to Comrade Philips? But Comrade Wohlforth has just published a lengthy analysis of the Cuba question which not only reasserts an orthodox theory of the Russian question but utilizes as its theoretical taking off point precisely Trotsky's polemics against Shachtman. These ex-Shachtmanites sure are devious. They insist on expressing their Shachtmanite character by conducting a fundamental struggle against Shachtman in his own youth organization in full collaboration with the SWP. Once inside the SWP they assist in building a new revolutionary youth movement. They then put forward the "well known Shachtmanite theory" on the importance of the mass movement. Finally they base their present theoretical deviations on Trotsky's polemics against Shachtman. Not only

that they succeed in dominating our minority with a grand total of three ex-Shachtmanites, none of whom spent more than two years in the Shachtmanite youth (one of them fighting Shachtman) and none of whom even got into the ISL. Very, very devious people indeed!

On Loyalty and Party Building

Every comrade in the party who knows or who has worked with supporters of the reorganized minority tendency knows that there has never been a question on either point for us. Our comrades have worked hard and loyally to build the party despite factional problems and despite our disagreement with the majority line of the party. Perhaps comrades who never have been in a minority do not realize it, but this is not an easy thing to do. It is much easier to give up your ideas and "live and let live" in the party or to write off the party and retreat into a little circle. We have insisted all along, despite the difficulties involved, on both energetic party building work and political struggle against a political line in our party which we feel is doing real deep harm to our party.

This has been our perspective and it will continue to be our perspective. To even raise such questions about our comrades is to us simply uncontrolled factionalism.

Our position on a split from the party is equally clear. We have fought ardently against such a course and have broken with anyone who considers such a course. We hope that those comrades who now question us on this point are not doing so because they wish in fact we would split. Certainly the factional tenor of the discussion seems to be aimed at pushing us to that conclusion. Well, we simply are not going to be pushed by anyone. The comrades can say what they will, we still intend to stay in the party and loyally work to build it -- no matter what. If we are ever thrown out of this party it will be because of our political ideas -- not our actions. This is something that every party member who knows us, knows.

How can you be loyal to the party and still at the same time make such harsh characterizations of the party leadership, comrades seem to be asking? In fact Comrade Dobbs expresses the same thought this way: "There isn't much of a hint of responsibility toward the party contained in the closing sentence of the Wohlforth-Philips opus. 'It is the duty of every revolutionist in the party,' they assert, 'to struggle uncompromisingly for a return of the party to a working class line internationally and an orientation of intervention into the mass movement within this country.'" We feel the comrades here are confusing two things -- loyalty towards the party and loyalty towards the political line of the majority grouping within the party. The two are not identical. Precisely because we feel our loyalty to the party so deeply we feel we must struggle uncompromisingly against the political line of the majority grouping because that line is severely damaging our party and world movement. However, because we are Bolsheviks and believe in democratic centralism we limit this struggle to the periods of pre-convention discussion and at all times loyally build the party as it is with its present political line which we defend in public against all opponents of the party. Once there is a total identification of loyalty to a party with loyalty to a particular political leadership of a party, then democratic centralism ends -- there is no real possibility of loyal opposition to the policies of the leadership. That is not our tradition.

Will we abide by the decisions of the convention? Of course! Including the proposed split with the IC? Despite our strong opposition to this step, certainly. All we ask is to be allowed to loyally work in helping to build the party. Will we maintain our political views and fight for them within the party? You can bet your life we will! In the meantime world events and the experiences of the party in its work in this country can only strengthen our political outlook and lead to increased support for our ideas within the party. The growth of the movement can only aid the healthy forces within the party.

-- June 21, 1963

END

APPENDIX I

PROPOSED STATEMENT ON ORIENTATION

1. The basic political and strategic outlook of our tendency is expressed in our statement "In Defense of a Revolutionary Perspective." That statement explains our fundamental political critique of the present drift of the SWP majority in the direction of centrist politics. It also states in unequivocal terms that, despite the revisionist political position of the leadership, our tendency is an integral, loyal, constructive part of the SWP and our task is both to help build the party as it is today and to struggle politically to return it to its original solid revolutionary perspectives. All the work of our tendency flows from these two aspects of our assesment of the SWP. We recognize that the political rejuvenation of the party cannot be carried out by our tendency if our tendency is not fully and loyally integrated in the work of the party.

2. The task we set before ourselves is extremely difficult and the forces at our disposal are quite limited. Our perspective is a long range one. We seek to reorient the basic proletarian backbone of the party which has become confused and disoriented by the revisionist political trends in the leadership. Such a task will take time. Further, it will take the combined impact of the international movement, our own political work in the party, and a revival on the part of the masses which the proletarian elements in the party continue to remain responsive to.

3. During the course of this long term party work, the comrades of our tendency face two dangers. First some comrades can become so well integrated in the work of the party that they neglect the political necessity of struggle against the revisionism of the leadership. Secondly, and at present this is a much more real danger to the tendency, some comrades may seek to maintain a revolutionary perspective but to isolate themselves from the concrete work of the party. Both tendencies are equally harmful and represent a desertion from the revolutionary tasks that our tendency must tackle. A Bolshevik must learn to work effectively under conditions where there are strong centrist political pressures upon him without either deserting his own political ideas or deserting the working class cadres of the party who can be reoriented. As Bolsheviks we do not take lightly this party, which despite its political sickness, has been produced by 30 years of revolutionary struggle.

4. Through the intensive political discussion prior to the last convention and through our current Statement and the work around it, our tendency has done an excellent job of presenting its Marxist views within the party. However, our tendency continues to display serious weaknesses in integrating

APPENDIX I

all its members into the work of the party and properly orienting them so as to establish the closest personal working links with the proletarian elements in the party. Despite the very, very real difficulties of work in the party, every member of our tendency can find effective, productive work in the party which will help strengthen the party and in the process our tendency. The major obstacle to the effective integration of the comrades into party work remains the comrades themselves, not the party. The comrades who continue to fail to integrate themselves into party work, within the framework of their own personal capabilities, are expressing their own inadequacies as Bolsheviks. No real Bolshevik will allow the centrist politics of the party leadership to prevent him from reaching the working class cadres of the party.

5. The deep political sickness of the party cannot fail to have an adverse effect on the functioning of the party in its day-to-day work. It is therefore inevitable that to the extent that our comrades become active in the outside work of the party, to that extent there will be times when their tactics, as well as those of others they are working with, will come into conflict with the tactics of the party leadership. In addition, the political sickness of the party has already created a certain breakdown in the disciplined functioning of the movement. Under such conditions discipline tends to be exercised in a capricious way with a good deal of leeway being given petty bourgeois elements in the party while an occasional stringent enforcement is applied against our comrades.

6. Under such conditions it is imperative that our comrades function as disciplined revolutionists even if we are the only comrades so acting. Our task is to urge the tightening up of discipline where it is slack, not the application of the slack standards to ourselves. Decay in discipline is always the sign of a drift away from the concept of the essential role of the combat party and thus a drift away from the working class itself. Our tendency, which has stressed so heavily the critical importance of the role of the party, must be the foremost defenders of the integrity of the party even under conditions when that party is controlled by political elements drifting towards centrism. The best proletarian elements in the SWP are most critical of the party's organizational slackness and quite correctly evaluate a political tendency, in part, by its attitude towards the party today, as it is, in the concrete. Therefore our effectiveness in reorienting the party politically will be heavily influenced by our ability to function in a disciplined manner as a minority in the coming period.

APPENDIX I

7. A Bolshevik minority must at all times prepare for becoming a Bolshevik majority. Our tendency is not in business to remain a perpetual minority. We intend, in fact we are going to, become the majority of the Socialist Workers Party and that is all there is to it. We must therefore train our own comrades today to learn to function in a responsible way so that they will be fit to play an important role in the future majority leadership of the revolutionary party in the U.S. Therefore, for the education of our own cadre, we must insist strongly on loyal, disciplined functioning in the party.

8. We recognize no circumstances whatsoever which would justify a member of our tendency, or any member of the party for that matter, in resigning from the party. We predict that there will be many, many situations in the coming period in which comrades will have to see important mass work temporarily injured in order to remain a part of the party. The party to us is more important than any of these individual mass activities -- or all of them together. Our task is to politically utilize these grave errors of the party leadership in order to educate the proletarian cadres of the party politically as to the nature of the political process now going on in the party.

9. Any comrade, who, despite the advice of our tendency, resigns from the party is breaking with our tendency organizationally and politically. As our tendency is a loyal part of the SWP we have no members or supporters outside the ranks of the SWP. As our tendency is above all else a Bolshevik tendency which values more than any other section of the party the necessity of the building of the combat party, anyone who takes this task so lightly as to resign from the party is politically breaking from our essential political outlook. Any comrade who so acts will be recognized by our tendency as a deserter of the revolutionary party in the United States and of the World Movement.

10. Until our tendency fully absorbs the basic Leninist concepts reiterated above, we will continue to be plagued by problems which prevent our full political effectiveness in the party. In other words our ability to solve our own political problems will go a long way towards putting us in a position to help solve the political problems of the party as a whole.

-Submitted by Tim Wohlforth to
Minority tendency
May 18, 1962

APPENDIX II

TOWARDS THE WORKING CLASS

Our Evolution:

Many of the problems our tendency faces today stem from the weaknesses which go back to the peculiar origins of our grouping. We began essentially as a section of the leadership of the youth. Our strength then flowed from the fact that we represented the first new wave of revolutionary forces which has come to the party in the recent period. But there was a negative side to our origins. Essentially the original core of our minority had little or no roots in the party and little experience at anything other than student work. This was partly due to the fact that our energies were tied up with the construction of a youth movement so that we had little time for party work per se. It was also caused by our newness to the party -- some of us coming from the Shachtmanite organization while others were recent recruits directly out of youth work.

When we began our oppositional struggle in the party, in many ways we were not really a part of the party -- we were almost functioning as if we were an outside force. This certainly had a weakening effect on our work and helped the majority isolate us within the party. While we were conscious of this problem from the very beginning, it must be truthfully admitted that it was not easy for us to reorient our work. In fact, it was really only after we made a series of tactical errors in the youth struggle immediately after the last convention that it can be said that we really began in earnest to develop our roots in the party.

To our credit it must be said that once we began on this course about a year ago we have pursued it consistently and with some very solid results. It is this tactical course which made it possible for us to consolidate our forces in the East Bay, to fuse with the working class cadres in San Francisco, Detroit and Philadelphia, and to make a serious impact on the New Haven group. These developments have changed the basic nature of our tendency and for the first time opened up a serious opportunity for us to build an opposition deeply rooted in the working class cadres of the party itself. Only such a tendency can insure the continuity of Trotskyism in the United States. An isolated circle of students and intellectuals is incapable of performing this historically essential task.

APPENDIX II

This does not mean that we have actually fully completed this turn or that there has been no resistance to it. On the ~~contrary~~, from the moment we began on this course of deepening our roots in the working class section of the party, there has been internal dissention and factional conflict within the tendency. This resistance has come from a section of the tendency which finds itself completely isolated from the party ranks, is generally inactive in the party and isolated from mass work in any form. Considering the origins of our tendency as well as the isolation and sickness of the party itself which cannot fail but have some impact on us as well, this development is certainly quite natural. As long as we were faced with the resistance of a section of the tendency to a positive building attitude towards the party, we felt the best thing to do was to seek to encourage these comrades to be active through the example of the active comrades of the tendency. Only when this section of the tendency sought to impose its orientation upon the tendency as a whole did we face a serious situation within our tendency. This is the situation we now face with the presentation of the Robertson-Ireland document with the aim of having it adopted as the line of our tendency. It has now become clear that a section of our tendency is seeking to turn the tendency as a whole away from the proletarian elements in the SWP and turn us into essentially a little circle of revolutionary critics.

For our part we favor the continuation and deepening of the political and tactical line that our tendency has been following over the past year. The essentials of both our political and tactical orientation were spelled out in our basic tendency platform "In Defense of a Revolutionary Perspective". This document was the collective product of the work of the tendency as a whole and received ~~the~~ unanimous endorsement of the tendency. In particular the section entitled "Theses on the American Revolution" and point 10 of the concluding section state clearly and correctly our attitude towards the party and towards the American working class. My statement "On Orientation", issued last Spring, was simply a further elaboration of the attitude towards the party expressed in our basic platform. The amendment to the Political Report, submitted by Comrade Phillips to the last Plenum, is a further concrete amplification of the line of the platform on the American working class. The approach of this amendment will become of central importance to the orientation of our tendency in the coming period. For this reason I am appending it to this article to ensure that all comrades have a chance to carefully study it.

APPENDIX II

This basic line of our tendency is in summary: the conducting of a principled political struggle against the centrist politics presently dominating the SWP combined with an all out effort to develop deep roots for our tendency among the working class cadres of the party and with these cadres to develop roots in the class itself. Our work among student youth is a necessary and important supporting adjunct to this main task.

A Class Analysis:

The central weakness of the Robertson-Ireland document lies in the attempt of these comrades to analyze the party and develop a tactical line towards work in the party without relating the party to the working class and the work of our tendency to the working class section of the party. It is precisely a class analysis and a class perspective that is missing.

This shows up in many, many ways throughout the document. For instance on the very first page Robertson-Ireland attribute the theoretical sterility of the present-day SWP to the loss of the Shachtmanites in 1940. But this is simply not true. Certainly the Shachtmanites took with them many gifted writers and talented intellectual technicians. But theoretical vitality is not the simple product of the ability to handle skillfully ideas and concepts or to write about them fluently. Its essential roots are in the proper fusion of intellectual elements with working class cadres in a party which is deeply rooted in the class itself. From this standpoint it can be stated that the split with the petty bourgeois minority in 1940 actually strengthened the party theoretically. The difficulty was that it did not strengthen it to the point where the party was able to withstand the isolation and stagnation of the postwar years in Trotsky's absence. Of the same character is the section later on in the document which compares favorably the petty-bourgeois WP, acceding to the pressures of the bourgeoisie, with the SWP of today.

This may seem like a small historical point but it is symptomatic of the thinking of Robertson-Ireland. Our task is not to flood the party with sharp intellectuals who will take over where Shachtman left off in 1940. It is our task to contribute to the political and theoretical re-arming of the party as part of the very process of struggling to develop the party's roots in the working class. Along these same lines the highly significant role our party played in the American class struggle

APPENDIX II

during the war and in the period just after the war is treated in an off-hand manner with only a sentence. The result is to project the present crisis of the SWP too far back in its history and thus slighting those positive features of the party's history which allowed it to play such an important and positive role for many years. It was never a perfect party but those who fail to see the strengths it once had will never be able to positively contribute to its reorientation and rebuilding today.

This same weakness of a lack of a class analysis can be found in the document's treatment of the party today. The reasons for the opportunism and political centrism of the party in regroupment and more recently in relation to Cuba and the Pabloites is never explained in this document (unless we are to go back to the loss of the Shactmanites). We are told that this is an "autocatalytic" process, which we gather means these comrades feel it just sort of spontaneously happened. Likewise with the analysis of the resistance to centrism in the party. This is simply described in non-class terms as "restorative forces" and in one place it is suggested that Jim Cannon, personally, was one such force. In actuality, the isolation of the party from the working class, the erosion of its working class base, has led to the development of a petty bourgeois tendency inside the SWP which today has the reigns of the party in its hands. The resistance to this tendency over the years has come from the more healthy working class cadres of the party -- for which Jim Cannon was many times a spokesman. An understanding of these class forces in the party is the beginning of any analysis of the party, or any tactical line within it.

A Working Class Perspective:

The bulk of the Robertson-Ireland document is devoted to our tactics. Needless to say, since these tactics flow from the analysis made at the beginning of the document, these tactics are as devoid of a class approach as is the analysis. Trade union work, for instance, gets only a part of one sentence. There is no attempt to relate the construction of our tendency to the relationship of the SWP to the American working class. For instance we are told that "the role of the revolutionary Marxists within the party must be that of an aggressive, political polarizing force." But we are **not told what** we are to polarize and around what kind of issues.

APPENDIX II

The preliminary discussion on this document, held recently in New York, has helped to clarify further this aspect of the Robertson-Ireland document. It seems that the working class was omitted from the document because the authors question the existence of the working class as a force in our own party. Both Comrades Robertson and Ireland denied that there was a proletarian core or kernel in the party. Comrade Robertson said that to maintain that such a core existed was in actuality to perpetrate "a myth" for the workers in the party have become bourgeoisified, are in fact a conservative grouping.

This is a very, very serious claim. If the party does not have such a working class core, and if we seek to maintain an orientation towards the working class, then it follows that it is our duty to split from this petty bourgeois centrist party. If we remain within it the limitations placed on our functioning by party discipline necessarily limit our functioning to a petty bourgeois milieu -- which is death to real revolutionaries.

But this is simply not the case. These comrades are in reality subjectively justifying their own isolation from the working class section of the party by claiming this section does not exist, much as liberals justify their isolation from the American working class by denying that there is a working class. Not only does the party have a proletarian core but a section of that core has become part of our own tendency. The bulk of the growth of our tendency over the last year has come precisely from this layer of the party. Despite our weaknesses in functioning in the party, itself due to the type of attitude expressed in the Robertson-Ireland document, we continue to have an impact on this section of the party as witness our collaboration with the New Haven comrades.

Of course some of the workers in the party live quite comfortably these days and many more are tired and worn out from years of difficult struggle in an extremely difficult environment. But is this the case with all the working class members of the party? And further, is the present condition of some workers in the party unchangable, uninfluencable by changes in the class struggle? If the comrades hold the latter to be the case then what hope do we have for the American working class as a whole which is certainly as bourgeoisified, if not more so, than that small vanguard section in the party?

APPENDIX II

It is not simply a matter of the workers presently in the party. We must consider the workers who will be coming into the party in increasing numbers in the period to come. Unless Robertson-Ireland maintain that a small circle of students and intellectuals will have more success winning over newly radicalized workers than the admittedly sick, but still proletarian SWP, then their perspective makes no sense. We feel, that despite its sickness, there are enough healthy working class elements in the party, that with our support and encouragement, these comrades can begin work that will in time bring important layers of fresh, young workers and Negroes into our movement. We have complete confidence that within the party we will win over the bulk of these class conscious forces. Does Robertson-Ireland have this confidence in our ideas?

These comrades, as they have no class analysis of the party, begin with a feeling of deep alienation from the party as a whole. This is expressed in a thousand little ways throughout the document. "We have no intention of building centrism", Robertson-Ireland state, and they caution us on having "any mistaken concepts of loyalty to a diseased shell." Along the same lines is their distinction between the discipline of the party and the discipline of the tendency. They claim to reject the former and adhere to the latter. But since our tendency has no national organizational structure and has never invoked discipline against anyone or anything, all this adds up to is a light-headed attitude towards discipline of the party. This mood in the tendency leads to such actions as that taken by Judy, actions which have done great harm to our tendency.

We cannot win a serious influence in the party if we feel so alien from it as to view its growth as the growth of an opponent formation (for certainly all centrist parties are our opponents). We must identify with the party as our party, work to help it grow and expand having full confidence in our own ideas and thus in our ability to win to a correct Marxist program the new forces that come into the party. Discipline is not a tactical matter. If one wishes to seriously build the party (which these comrades do not) then one must loyally and fully accept the discipline of the party. There is nothing that more alienates the best elements in our party than a light attitude towards the discipline of the party. They correctly interpret this to mean a hostility to the party itself, a party they consider to be theirs. It was some of the best people in New York branch that criticized Judy the most for her indisciplined functioning. I sympathize with these comrades, and not Judy, on this point.

APPENDIX II

Rejecting party building and rejecting party discipline because the party is dominated by centrist elements leads logically to only one conclusion -- splitting from the party. But these comrades do not openly advocate such a course. This, however, puts them in a difficult spot. On the one hand they feel they cannot (and by and large these comrades have not) do much fruitful work through the party. They cannot openly do work independently of the party without risking expulsion from the party. The result: the comrades generally do not do work of any variety which brings them in contact with the masses. And thus of necessity they become a little ingrown critical circle isolated from the masses whose only excuse for existence is "study" and factionalism. It is within this framework that the underlined assertion of Robertson-Ireland that "one of our major tasks at this moment is to become a study circle" takes on its real meaning.

Their activity, to the extent that it occurs at all, takes on a "circle building" character. This is expressed in their concept of "'double' recruitment." They urge our tendency to take young fresh elements, indoctrinate them with our views (in a careful manner of course so as not to get "caught") and then sneak them into the party and into the tendency. Essentially these comrades are once again expressing their very real lack of confidence in their own ability to win over fresh new elements who come into direct contact with the party majority. If we are in fact correct in our ideas we need not fear the impact of the majority comrades on young revolutionaries. Of course if we are completely isolated from party work we will not come into contact with these new forces and they may very well become majorityites.

Also this method of recruitment has a very direct influence on the type of new recruit our tendency gets. Since the tendency is prohibited from independently carrying on class struggle actions by its existence as a part of the party, these new recruits are not brought into our tendency through joint participation in struggle. It is the rare individual, who after being so recruited, is not so turned inward and embittered as to be next to useless in influencing other party members or in carrying on serious mass work.

There are other indications in the document of this "circle building" approach. While the comrades recognize that we cannot operate independently of the party they urge us to operate through the form of the party as if we were in fact a separate organization. This is the meaning of their urgings that we

APPENDIX II

"act as united blocs within the party when approaching some outside activity as a strike, campus activity or the like." Comrade Harper similarly urges us to function where the majority isn't. We reject this kind of circle building functioning for we wish to function exactly where the majority is. We have confidence in our ability to win over the best of the active working class majority comrades. We reject any concept of playing games with party discipline, sneaking people into the party, functioning in an indisciplined way when the majority isn't looking or not present (why else the concern to be active where they are not?).

All this talk of pressing "the struggle within the party on an organizational plane" is cut out of the same cloth. We do not want an organizational factional war with the majority. Such an approach will only deepen our isolation within the party -- force us deeper and deeper into our little circle. Our task is not to subjectively oppose everything the majority proposes but rather to seek close organizational collaboration with majority comrades, despite the efforts of the centrists in the party to prevent organizational collaboration through provocative actions. Having established these working relations we must pursue all the more vigorously the political struggle.

For us to consider opening up our tendency to non-party members is simply to invite disciplinary action from the majority. This is clearly an action in violation of the statutes in our party. Furthermore it is completely unjustified. Not one single person has been refused membership in the party solely because of suspected sympathy with the minority. I personally would have opposed on the floor of the New York branch the application for membership of the comrade referred to in the Robertson-Ireland document. I have never even met this person. More important he has never attended a single party function and was completely unknown to the party local. He has a personal problem and he planned forthwith to go to an isolated area where we have no branch. This is an absurd business and gives one a feel of the kind of question which these comrades tend to blow out of all proportion. I have no intention of participating in any meeting at which internal party matters are discussed in front of non-party members. Even in the non-Leninist YSL we did not invite non-members into our tendency until we had a conscious split perspective...

The Robertson-Ireland orientation, taken as a whole, has an internal logic to it that the authors may only be partially aware of, or not aware at all. To state it openly and plainly theirs is a split perspective. A tendency which rejects party discipline (even if only partially) and party building, which seeks to sneak people into the party, which functions in part as an independent entity, which carries on an organ-

izational faction war within the party, which, in violation of party statutes includes non-party members, which is so deeply alienated and isolated from the party ranks that it has in fact already split in content if not yet in form -- such a tendency is going down a road which must inevitably lead to a split from the party. That is the logic of it regardless of the wishes of the individual comrades who adhere to this orientation. The more we act as if we were an outside force, the greater will be our isolation from the party ranks. As soon as we are really, totally isolated we can count on the Hansens, etc., to toss us out of the party -- to the cheers of a relieved membership. With the type of tactics these comrades suggest that we follow the leadership will have little difficulty in finding solid grounds for expulsion.

Whatever else may be said for the Robertson-Ireland "study circle" proposal I am somewhat sceptical as to the theoretical contributions that will come out of such a group. Worthwhile Marxist research cannot develop in the stultified atmosphere of the type of "study circle" these comrades advocate. Only comrades capable of deeply rooting themselves in the class struggle or working closely with and assisting as best they can comrades who are so rooted can make, or ever will make, serious contributions to Marxist theory. What we need is less talk of the importance of theoretical work and more serious work by all the comrades on the real problems we face. Talking circles will not help this.

Our Alternative:

— What is our alternative to the real perspective of Robertson-Ireland to turn our tendency into an isolated circle of critics? We start from our class analysis of the nature of the party itself. We see the party as containing both a centrist wing, which presently dominates the leadership, and a proletarian wing which resists this domination fully and consciously, as in the case of our own cadres, or partially and confusedly, as in the case of many, many of the party's trade union and Negro cadres. Since we view the party in this fashion we do not feel alienated from it. Rather we feel a complete identity with its proletarian kernel. It is our party and we are going to struggle to return this party to the proletarian elements who actually built it. It is the Hansens, the Weisses, the Wardes who are alien elements in our midst. For their politics we have nothing but hatred, nothing but implacable struggle against the corruptors of our party.

Our task is to raise the consciousness of the healthy working class forces within the party. In order to do this we must more and more devote our attention to the developments on the American scene. This is the importance of the treatment of the American scene in our basic platform; this is the

importance of the Philips Amendment that we presented at the Plenum. We must relate the drift of the party in the class struggle in this country with their outright betrayals internationally. It has been this approach which has led to our growth among older party cadre in the past period. It has been this approach which has brought the New Haven people close to us. This must continue to be our course.

We cannot reach the working class cadres of the party as long as we remain an outside alien force within the party. We must deepen our roots in the party. We must become the most loyal, the most disciplined, the most dedicated builders of this party as well as the most implacable, most tireless opponents of the petty bourgeois tendency which dominates and strangles the very life of our party. We must work with these comrades in order to help develop the roots of our party among the working class and Negro people. Yes, we must do all kinds of work, even Jimmy Higgins work. We are not privileged characters. The problems of the party are our problems and we must collectively work to correct them.

Of course we expect the centrists to seek to force us out of the party and out of significant positions of influence within the party. They must do this for our success will mean their political death. What does Robertson-Ireland propose in this situation? Clearly to retreat deeper and deeper into our little comfortable circles. We propose to seek to deepen our roots in the party. The more they seek to force us out the deeper, deeper in we sink our roots. Should they expell some of us, the others must remain in the party and dig in deeper and the expelled members must immediately re-apply for membership and orient all their efforts around assisting the developments within the party. Our success in these tasks will have a tremendous effect on the overall success of the work in this country.

Nothing can be allowed to stand in the way of our building of a proletarian tendency within our party. The building of such a tendency requires the defeat of the tactical line put forward by Robertson-Ireland and the further implementation of the line we have been following this past year.

--Tim Wohlforth
October 2, 1962

Appendix 3

Oct. 8, 1962

Dear Tim:

The history of the revolutionary movement is replete with individuals and little groups of frustrated and rootless petty-bourgeois, who under cover of revolutionary phraseology prepare a desertion of the revolutionary movement.

I hope I am wrong, but the Robertson-Ireland 'document', taken together with the Harper statement on the YSA to which he refers, appears to be heading in just that direction, and at top speed.

I am in agreement of course with the general line of your statement. You make the central points correctly. Hiding behind the very shallow rhetoric is a complete lack of understanding of precisely the two points on which the Minority stands -- the decisive role of the class and of the party.

The revolutionary party is going to be built according to these sophomoric maneuverers, by forcing the party to accept in membership somebody who lives in Puerto Rico or somewhere. It will be built, according to the Harper thing, by sending our forces where the majority isn't. Finally it will be built by "studying". The class struggle, at some undetermined time in the indefinite future will then be the final test. Despite all the phrases, their approach reveals beyond the shadow of a doubt that they have no faith and no understanding in the revolutionary potential of the working class and of the struggle of the Negro people.

If we are to move our limited forces, the movement must be dictated not by petty organizational considerations, but by the rhythm and demands of the mass movement -- if the mass movement is really our primary revolutionary interest. If we are to study, then the living laboratory of the class struggle must be the schoolroom in which we open the books. The concept of a study circle means that in reality its proponents believe that mighty class struggles are not on the agenda, that the need for a combat party is still objectively a need of some indefinite future.

By historical accident, the overwhelming majority of the cadre of the American party, in fundamental contradiction with the current political line which it has impressionistically adopted, must nevertheless fight to preserve and build the Party. Contrary to abstract political logic, the cadre in this country must justify its existence by fulfilling a political function left open by the Social-Democrats on the one hand, the Stalinists on the other. Because of its political line it does this poorly. But it must do this nevertheless. Despite its political line it represents the first line of attraction for revolutionary youth today, and Negroes tomorrow, and the working class a little later. Has its political line yet become an insurmountable and permanent block to this type of growth? Can we do qualitatively better at this juncture in the objective situation in terms of recruitment? Can Robertson demonstrate this? Doesn't Robertson realize that it was the very growth of the Party in the youth field, the attraction of new and leftward moving youth which opened up the present struggle and is attracting more and more of the older working class cadre? What will be the result when such new growth accelerates, as it will? Who will win the new elements who want to be revolutionists. If we can't win them, there is something wrong with us.

Appendix 3

A closer analysis of Robertson's arguments portray their shallow and eclectic character. He arbitrarily selects Cuba as the point of no return, the point at which the SWP becomes organically a centrist party moving to the right, which cannot be reformed, but in actuality must be destroyed. Why Cuba? I could select a half-dozen points in the last 15 years to arbitrarily select a closing date for the Marxist accountant to close his books on. The SWP remains impressionistic. But if we really believe that the workers in Russia, and China, in Cuba and America, will demonstrate their revolutionary will, we must also accept the real possibility that we can and will win a majority, if not of the leadership, than of the ranks of the party. Again, any other course demonstrates a lack of the revolutionary perspective which we hold to be the basis for the impressionistic drift of the majority leadership.

On page 4 of the document Robertson again gives evidence of a complete lack of seriousness. We are told that the SWP is not even a left-centrist grouping "which genuinely desires...the socialist revolution but suffers some internal limitation in the form of ideological or organizational baggage which it is unable to transcend in practice." It has become "opportunist" in intent. This childish babble is made more concrete by the examples he gives us of a genuinely left-centrist outfit, which apparently was not "opportunist in intent." He gives us of all things the Workers Party - USA, 1941-46.

One of the most serious political errors I have made was in leaving the SWP for the WP in 1940, even though almost immediately afterward I joined in the fight of a minority inside the WP for reunification.

The overwhelming majority of the leadership and cadre of the WP split from the Trotskyist movement under the impact of the Stalin-Hitler pact and the pressure of American imperialism. If there could have been any doubt, the subsequent evolution of the WP removes it. Trotsky, by the way, was ready to make all kinds of organizational compromises even with this group to prevent a light-minded and criminal split. But the minority, which did not start off with a split perspective anywhere near as clearly enunciated as that of Robertson, soon was swept away by the political logic of its impressionism, and by a basic rejection, despite its noisy rhetoric, of a revolutionary perspective either in America or in the Soviet Union.

And yet Robertson has the unmitigated gall to present this essentially petty-bourgeois grouping moving under the blows of bourgeois public opinion as an example of a genuine "left-centrist" organization superior to that of the SWP today. What a fantastic and revealing business.

The building of the revolutionary party still remains a slow, hard, tedious task, although the tempo is now beginning to pick up a little. Workers above all do not join such a party lightly. And they do not leave it lightly. They do not carry their organizational convictions packed in an overnight bag ready for instant departure. This may be a handicap in the mass Social-Democratic and Stalinist parties in Europe. It is an advantage in the SWP. Workers judge much by deeds. They are not easily taken in by intellectual adventurers and factionalists

The sooner we realize this, the smaller will be the cost to the minority and the more quickly will we grow among the real revolutionary elements -- those presently in the SWP, and those who are going to join.

Comradely,
Albert Philips