

WORKERS PARTY
4 Court Square
Long Island City 1, N. Y.

March 8, 1947.

TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE WORKERS PARTY

Dear Comrades:

The question of unity between the Workers Party and the Socialist Workers Party has once more been placed upon the agenda. At a special meeting called to consider the question, the National Committee of our party considered the question again and made a number of decisions on it. These decisions have already been communicated orally to the membership in several cities where a report on the question was delivered by Comrade Shachtman. In the other cities, the report is being delivered to branch meetings by Comrade Gates. This circular will reiterate the facts and conclusions presented in these reports for the discussion of the question which is now being organized in the party and for the eventual final decision on the matter which will have to be taken by the membership in a regularly convoked convention.

In order that the discussion takes place on the basis of the fullest understanding of the question and with the utmost objectivity, it is well to recall briefly the position taken on this question in the past period by our party. All the necessary documentation on the subject is already in the hands of the membership in the form of the pamphlet on "Unity" by Goldman, which includes as appendices all the important resolutions and correspondence on the subject.

The initiative and the work of reunifying the Trotskyist movement in the U.S. by means of a fusion between the WP and the SWP was taken more than a year and a half ago by the leaders of the then Minority of the SWP, Goldman, Morrow, Bennett and Williams. In brief, the resolution they submitted to the leading committees of the SWP proposed that the party undertake negotiations with the WP for unification in view of the fact that the slogan of unconditional defense of the Soviet Union had been retired into the background by the SWP, and of the fact that the WP had demonstrated in the course of the war that it was a revolutionary Marxian internationalist organization. The Minority resolution further proposed that the actual unification be preceded by a period of practical collaboration between the two parties which would not only test the feasibility of unity but would at the same time help ameliorate the antagonisms that had developed in the course of six years of separation. Immediately after the presentation of this resolution to the Political Committee of the SWP, a plenary meeting of the National Committee of the WP, assembled in Detroit in August 1945, adopted a resolution by unanimous vote which, in substance, corresponded with the position of the SWP Minority. This resolution in favor of unity is reprinted among the appendices in the Goldman pamphlet and therefore does not need to be summarized here.

The SWP leadership, while it did not formally reject the proposal for unity, or commit itself formally one way or another, soon showed in practice, especially in the form of its exceptional hostility to the Minority in its party, that it did not take a friendly attitude toward the proposal for unification. Only two joint meetings of the representatives of the two parties were held. The SWP representatives declared that they had no authority to negotiate for unity of the two parties and that they were present only for exploratory purposes so that they could report back to their leading committees. Our representatives, on the other hand, made a firm and positive proposal for unity and even went into detail, at the first meeting, as to how we proposed to effect the unification in practice. It is especially important at the present moment that every comrade be exactly aware of what our original position and proposals were. We said orally, and repeatedly confirmed it in written letters and statements, the following was our basis for unity

In view of the numerical superiority of the SWP over the WP, which we did not even think of contesting, we declared ourselves ready, from the very outset, to assume the position of a minority in the united party, with all the rights and obligations that a minority must assume. By this we meant concretely, as we stated to the SWP, that we would dissolve our independent party; give up our public press, LABOR ACTION and THE NEW INTERNATIONAL; give up our independent public activity; acknowledge the right of the present SWP and its leadership to be the majority in the leadership of the united party; and in general give up any form of independent and separate existence. We acknowledged, further, as flowing from these propositions, that the program and policy of the united party would be the program and policy of the present SWP, and that as a consequence it would have control of the principal party institutions, including the press, and control of all the public activity of the party. As a minority in the united party, we were ready to pledge ourselves to abide by the decisions and discipline of the majority until such time as these decisions were reversed by a majority of the party membership in the manner provided for by the party constitution. We further - again at the very first meeting with the representatives of the SWP - made a declaration that we were ready to give all the necessary guarantees not only against the danger of a split following on the heels of the unification, but also against precipitating a factional fight or a violent polemical discussion in the party immediately after the unification, all in order to establish the maximum assurance that the unity would be cemented as firmly and solidly as possible. To the above we added that in view of the fact that this was a unity proposed between politically similar but not politically identical tendencies, in other words, in view of the known political differences between the two tendencies, which were and are by no means trivial, we proposed, as a minority in the united party to issue an internal bulletin of our own, for educational purposes, and not for the purpose of launching a factional fight.

These were our proposals from the very beginning, and you would have to look far and wide to discover a situation in which one side was prepared to make such extensive concessions in the interests of unity with another side, without asking for any concessions in return. Our propositions were the only ones made in the course of the two joint sessions for the simple reason that the representatives of the SWP made no propositions of any kind. They did not accept or reject those made by us, and they offered none in place of ours. At a later stage, when it became clear that our proposal to issue an internal educational bulletin of our own was being presented in the SWP as an obstacle to unification, the SWP Minority again took the initiative to promote the fusion. In a letter to our party, the Minority suggested that we withdraw our proposal for an internal bulletin and that we make the following proposition instead: that both sides recognize the right of any minority to issue a bulletin of its own in the united party and that we, for our part, would pledge ourselves not to exercise that right in the first period of the existence of the united party. It should be noted that the right of a minority to issue an educational or even a factional bulletin of its own has never been questioned in the entire history of the Trotskyist movement. Even in the violent struggle in the SWP in 1939-1940 no objection at all was made to the fact that the then minority repeatedly issued internal bulletins of its own, as had minorities in the Trotskyist movement in the U.S. and elsewhere before that time. Our proposal was, therefore, in no sense extraordinary. Nevertheless, in order to remove any argument that might conceivably be used against our proposal for unity, we unhesitatingly accepted the suggestion of the Minority and communicated our decision to the SWP; that is, we requested only the recognition of the right of a minority to issue an internal bulletin and declared that we would not exercise that right in the initial period of the unity. It goes without saying, we understood also that it might not be necessary to exercise that right at all if a genuinely democratic party regime were established in which everybody in the united party would have ample confidence, thus obviating the need for any minority to take such measures to bring its views before the membership as a whole.

Yet, despite this whole series of concessions, the SWP leadership, instead of being brought closer to the idea of unity, became increasingly hostile to it. Not even the increasing sympathy for the idea of unity that developed in numerous sections of the Movement could persuade the SWP leadership to alter its anti-unity position. In August 1946, on the eve of the regular national convention of the SWP, its Political Committee published the document entitled, "Revolutionary Marxism vs. Petty Bourgeois Revisionism." The title is sufficient indication of the contents. Page after page was devoted to a violent attack on our party as petty bourgeois, revisionist, anti-Marxist, anti-Trotskyist, anti-Fourth Internationalist, as even being "on the other side of the barricades," as moving rapidly towards Social Democracy and as having nothing in common with the revolutionary principles of our international movement. Every page was devoted to digging an unbridgeable gulf between the two tendencies. In its concluding chapter, the statement of the Political Committee of the SWP proposed that the Movement set up three new criteria for distinguishing the revolutionary Marxist tendency from all others, the adoption of which was clearly calculated to establish an irreconcilable political and organizational hostility toward our party. On the basis of this document, the Political Committee reporter on the question of unity at the convention of the SWP which followed in Chicago, succeeded in obtaining a unanimous vote against unity with the WP, except for the four votes in favor of unity cast by the remaining representatives of the Minority.

We must note and lay appropriate stress upon the fact that nowhere in the Statement of the Political Committee of the SWP, nor in any other political documents of the SWP, was there so much as a word devoted to our proposal for an internal bulletin, nor even a hint that this question, or anything like it, was an obstacle, let alone the obstacle, to unification. The opposition to unity was motivated exclusively upon the argument that the theoretical and political differences between the two parties made unity and coexistence within a united party impossible. We kept emphasizing, in line with our conception of the character of the revolutionary Marxist party, that the differences were compatible with membership in a single party. We kept emphasizing that the contrary point of view was the point of view of that "monolithism" against which the Trotskyist movement had always fought. We emphasized, not only to the SWP but to our own members that the mere fact that the SWP would agree to unity with our party would by itself already be a refutation and abandonment of the monolithic conception of the party, if not explicitly then at least implicitly, if not in whole, then at least in part.

It is true that in addition to this "basic" argument against unity with the WP, namely on grounds of political incompatibility with membership in one party, some attempts were made to reject our proposals on the ground that we were not "really" for unity, that we were only engaged in a maneuver. Under the circumstances, it was impossible for any thinking person to take this argument seriously. We answered the argument a dozen times by saying: All that is necessary to expose the "maneuver" of the WP proposals for unity is for the SWP to declare itself in favor of unity and to demand that the WP make good in deed what it offered in words. Then, if the WP dissolved its public organization and accepted the position of a disciplined minority in the united party, the charge of a "maneuver" would be proved groundless and the entire movement would be the gainer. On the other hand, if the WP would refuse to carry out the proposals that it itself had made, it would stand exposed and it alone would suffer discredit. The fact remains that at no time did the SWP leadership declare itself in favor of unity and at no time did it call upon the WP to make good on its proposals in practice.

That is how matters stood up until recently. Any other version of this stage of the negotiations on unity belongs in the realm of mythology.

The question was put on our agenda again a few weeks ago by a visit of Comrade Smith, an authoritative representative of the Committee in Charge (CIC) of the Extraordinary Party Convention (EPC). Smith met successively with Shachtman, with the members of the PC of the party and then with the membership of the NC in plenary session.

Sometime before Smith's arrival in the city, our PC came across the text of the call for the EPC. The agenda for the Convention, as outlined in the call, was entirely satisfactory to us. It provided for reports and discussions on the most vital questions before the Movement. However, the call for the EPC contained a most extraordinary provision. In dealing with those organizations which were not an official part of the EPC, it stipulated that they could attend the Convention and participate in the discussions prior to the Convention only if they committed themselves in advance to abide by all the political and organizational decisions of the Convention. This provision which referred unmistakably to our party, was utterly unprecedented in our movement, unwarranted in the particular case, narrow-minded and infantile. That was the unanimous opinion of our PC when it considered the call. The PC decided to address a most restrained letter to the CIC, stating our desire to participate in the Convention to the fullest possible extent, and at the same time stating our complete disagreement with the provision described above. The PC also decided to hold up the dispatch of this letter because it was reported that a representative of the CIC would soon visit New York, thereby affording us the opportunity of discussing with him our letter and the full meaning of the absurd provision so as to remove all possible ambiguity and misunderstanding before we adopted the letter as a final text.

At the first meeting between Smith and Shachtman, this latter matter was gone into. Shachtman showed Smith the draft of our letter to the CIC and emphasized the unacceptability of the provision, pointing out, as did the letter itself, that the party leadership is in no case authorized to make such a commitment. In reply, Smith set forth the following view: If the WP does make the formal commitment to pledge itself in advance to accept all the decisions of the EPC, it will immediately be considered by the CIC as a sympathizing organization with full rights, it will be able to participate with full rights and without restrictions in the preparations and sessions of the EPC and, finally, what is most decisive, that the CIC was sure of the achievement of unity between the WP and the SWP. He stated specifically that the SWP had called a special meeting of its NC to take place on February 15-16 to discuss the question of unity again, and that if the WP made this commitment in writing in the form of a letter to the CIC, Smith would positively assure a favorable vote on unity by the SWP plenum. On this ground, namely, that the commitment was inseparably connected with and contingent upon the achievement of unity between the two parties, Shachtman said that he would recommend a favorable action to our PC.

Smith was invited to attend a meeting of the PC called to discuss the matter and an emergency meeting of our NC which was convened a few days later. The NC meeting was attended by all the members except two who are on the west coast and who could not attend because of the short notice on which the plenum was called.

At the meetings of the PC and the NC, Smith once more set forth the position of the CIC. He reported that the Secretariat of the CIC had adopted a resolution containing two points. One was a criticism of the SWP for having adopted a position on the unity "at its national convention last November without waiting to hear the opinion of the CIC. The other was a criticism of the SWP for having expelled Morrow and Jeffries at their convention on the grounds that such an expulsion was "inopportune" and deprived the two comrades of the opportunity to participate in the discussions for the EPC. The exact text of

these motions was not presented to us but was summarized orally by Smith.

In the discussion of the CIC's provision for our participation in the EPC, virtually all the comrades of our NC expressed the strongest criticisms of the proposition. In part of his reply, Smith endeavored to defend the proposition on the ground that there was a precedent for it in the history of the Communist International. For his precedent he cited the case of the admission of the KAPD (Communist Workers Party in Germany), a small, ultra-leftist organization which the leadership of the CI at one time sought to win to its side. According to Smith, the Comintern demanded of the KAPD that if it wanted to participate in the Congress of the International, it would have to pledge itself to accept in advance all the decisions of the Congress. The "precedent" was ill-chosen. What happened in actuality was almost exactly the opposite. Under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky - even though it represented a mass movement of millions throughout the world, and even though it had behind its program the tremendous authority of the successful Russian Revolution - the Comintern nevertheless went out of its way to try to draw to its side vacillating and unsure groups, no matter how tiny. These groups were as far removed from the program of the CI as the Socialist Labor Party in this country, the IWW, the French Syndicalists, Spanish Anarcho-Syndicalists, and ultra-leftist groups like the KAPD. Even though its strength was enormous in comparison with these tiny groups, the Comintern leadership was intelligent enough not to approach them with ultimatums. The policy actually pursued toward such groups is exemplified by the report that Karl Radek, speaking for the Executive of the Comintern, delivered to the Third World Congress in 1921 about the relations of the International to the KAPD. He said:

"The motion of the Executive proposes that the KAPD, after having been a sympathizing member of the Communist International for six months shall now have a concrete period of 2 to 3 months in which to decide if submits to the decisions of the Communist International, and in this way come to a unification with the United Communist Party of Germany (the official Comintern section) on the basis of this decision.....Thus although from the founding Congress of the KAPD onward the antagonism of the KAPD to the Comintern was clear, the Comintern sought to build bridges to itself for the KAPD, not out of consideration of a catch-all policy, which aimed to bring together Tom, Dick and Harry, but out of the viewpoint that with the standpoint represented by the KAPD, errors would manifest themselves in the revolutionary Communist movement of the proletariat in all countries. Where the new revolutionary strata awaken and throw themselves into the political fighting arena, it is clear that these strata cannot everywhere and always have a good eye for political necessities. And inasmuch as it was a question here of the mistakes of revolutionary proletarians, the Executive said to itself that it must do everything in order to win these proletarians for the International. And at the Second Congress of the Communist International, the Executive surmounted all the obstacles just in order to give the delegates of the KAPD the possibility of participating in the Congress, and to see, for its part, the standpoint that the big overwhelming majority of the Communist proletariat in all countries adopts. The Executive went so far that it wanted to give a decisive mandate to the representatives of the KAPD, although the latter declared in advance to the Executive that they would not submit to the decisions....." (Minutes of the Third World Congress, in German, pp. 339-341)

In a word, the "precedent" cited by Smith, and about which there appears to be such agitation in the SWP today, speaks directly against the proposition of the CIC and shows the state to which the best traditions of Lenin and Trotsky have fallen in sections of our movement.

Entirely apart from the question of the relations between the CIC and the WP there is the question of its relations with other groups that exist every-

where. They are, to be sure, small groups, but our own movement is a very small one too, and it has no "right" to be haughty towards any other groups on grounds of size alone. At a time when our own movement is so small and so isolated, it should be searching night and day for contact with all sorts of groups which have broken or are breaking with the Social Democracy and Stalinism; it should be bending its greatest efforts to establish the most friendly relations with such groups, to bring them closer to our movement, to evidence the greatest patience with them, to show the most genuine readiness to discuss with them formally, to avoid the slightest impression that we consider everything in our own movement "settled," cut-and-dried, or that we seek to impose our views upon them merely by superior voting strength. Instead, the CIO takes a position where it faces all such groups with an ultimatum that could have been worked out only by narrow-minded bureaucrats, however honest and well-intentioned - or by political infants, an ultimatum to which few groups will pay any attention.

In the discussion at the PC and NC meetings, it was also pointed out by many comrades that, standing by itself, the proposal for such a commitment by our party would create an absolutely ridiculous situation. If, for example, both the WP and the SWP attended the EPC under the conditions set forth, both would be obligated in advance to rewrite (or reaffirm, as the case might be) their programs to correspond with the decisions of the EPC. In that case we would have a situation where two separate parties would present identical programs to the masses - one party presenting the program with real conviction, the other party presenting it without conviction and only out of consideration of discipline. That would make a fine spectacle of our movement indeed!

Nevertheless, a decisive majority of the NC voted to comply with the proposal of Smith. How is this to be explained? Smith declared, again and again, that with such a letter from the WP in his hand, he could appear before the plenum of the SWP and be absolutely sure of a decisive vote in favor of unity. He added that while some of the SWP leaders were still opposed to unity, the principal leaders, including Cannon, Stein, Warde and others, were in favor of it. On the grounds of this assurance, which was subsequently confirmed by the SWP plenum, our NC plenum decided in favor of the formality of pledging ourselves in advance to abide by the political and organizational decisions of the EPC. We made it perfectly clear to Smith that this commitment would be considered valid and operative by us only if unity was achieved between the WP and the SWP, and that failing such unity we would not have the slightest hesitation in regarding the commitment as a mere scrap of paper without any binding value upon our party.

The plenum was able to adopt such a decision without great difficulty because, formality apart, it is entirely consistent and substantially identical with the position our party has taken on the unity question since it was first raised in August 1945. I call the attention of the comrades again to the fact that for a year and a half we were prepared to unite with the SWP into one party in which - we said openly - we would be a disciplined minority from the very outset, in which we pledged ourselves to abide by the program and policies of the majority and to work loyally under its leadership. We were prepared to do this without the benefit of a special convention where we would immediately have the opportunity of seeking to become the majority and even without the benefit of a preliminary, thorough and democratic discussion of our differences, in the course of which we would have the opportunity to present our own point of view.

Our course on the unity question was unanimously endorsed by the last convention of the party. What our February 5 plenum of the NC decided was in conformity with the position we have advocated in the past. Where we were ready

to submit, in the united party, to the discipline of the SWP majority and to abide by its decisions, we are now ready to submit to the discipline of the EPC provided there is unity between the two parties. And this is only another way of saying that we reiterate our readiness to abide by the discipline of the majority in the united party.

We have now gained something in addition, however, which was neither offered to us nor demanded by us in the past. Now the unity is to be preceded by a discussion of all the questions in controversy, in which not only the point of view of the SWP but also the point of view of the WP will be presented in the form of fundamental documents and articles. Furthermore, we were previously ready to take for granted the fact that the united party would, at least for the whole first period, have as its official program and policies the program and policies of the SWP. Now, by virtue of the fact that the united party will have the program and policies adopted by the EPC, we have the opportunity of presenting for discussion our own program and policies and fighting for their adoption in the wider arena of the EPC, where it is not automatically guaranteed that all the views held by the SWP today are assured a victory.

It is true that in our letter to the CIC and in the first negotiations that we have already had with the SWP since its plenum, we have not raised the question that we raised in the past, namely, the recognition by both sides of the right of any minority in the united party to issue an internal bulletin of its own. In the first place, it should be borne in mind that we never presented this proposal to the SWP as an ultimatum. It was put forward for its consideration. In the second place, the SWP never declared that this proposal was the reason for its opposition to unity. Insofar as it expressed any position on it, it was more or less noncommittal. At the very first meeting between our representatives and those of the SWP, as far back as September 1945, the leader of the SWP, Cannon, declared. "The question of unity cannot be settled by your insisting on a demand for a bulletin or by our rejecting the demand." In the third place, we have never abandoned our proposal. It should be clear to everyone that our pledge to abide by the decisions of the EPC is not in any sense a pledge to vote in favor of every proposal that may be made by the delegates of the SWP to this convention or by anyone else. We are pledged only to abide by those proposals which are adopted by a majority at that convention. We are not in the slightest degree committed to refrain from presenting for consideration and for vote any proposal, be it on a political question or on a question of party organization, that our party decides to present to the EPC. Our views on the kind of organization the revolutionary Marxist party should be, on the kind of regime it should have, on the free presentation and interchange and discussion of ideas that should be assured in it, on the rights and duties both of majorities and of minorities, on the restrictions that should be placed upon them or that they should place upon themselves, and on a whole series of other matters on which we hold very firm opinions - these have not changed in any important particular and have not been abandoned. If the SWP does not agree with any or all of our views, that is not yet decisive. It is the delegates to the EPC as a whole who will decide. We will not fail to present our views to these delegates and to seek by all legitimate means to get a favorable vote on them.

For the reasons set forth above, our NC plenum was faced with no special difficulty in adopting its decision, that is, in reiterating the previous position of the party in favor of unity. The comrades who disagreed with this decision, and they constitute a minority, will present their point of view in the PARTY BULLETIN as part of the discussion on the question which is now opened in the membership as a whole and to which everyone is invited to contribute freely. There were comrades at the plenum who, though voting for the proposal of the majority, expressed reluctance or apprehensions about the dan-

ger that our tendency would not enjoy its proper democratic rights in the united party unless we accompanied the restatement of our position for unity with the reaffirmation of our proposal that the right of minorities to issue bulletins of their own was mutually recognized. The reason why this was not done at the plenum has already been indicated above. But the party leadership made it perfectly clear at the plenum, and it is important to emphasize it in this communication, that it firmly intends to take all the necessary measures and present all the necessary proposals to the EPC to adopt motions and resolutions that will embody our conception of how the revolutionary Marxist party should be constructed, our conception of the relationship between majority and minority in a party and our conception of the kind of continuous ideological life that distinguishes a living Marxist party. Our tendency in the Movement, like all others which are legitimately part of it, has a right to an untrammelled ideological existence and to the fullest opportunities to develop and win support for its ideas in conformity with our best traditions. Our views on these questions are well known. No one need expect that we will abandon them or abandon the fight for them. Whoever thinks otherwise is laboring under a sorry illusion.

Just as the NC encountered no special difficulties in reiterating our party's position, it finds no difficulty in reporting its position and all the true and relevant facts to the membership as a whole. Our report requires no distortion of any facts, no suppression of other facts, no invention of non-existing "facts." Neither our party as a whole nor its leadership is concerned with prestige politics, nor with face-saving devices for which, moreover, it finds no need.

However, as shown by letters already received at the center and by questions asked at those branch meetings where the report has already been discussed, our comrades are very much interested, and properly so, in the reasons for the position taken on the unity question by the SWP plenum. The SWP plenum position in favor of unity is considered by virtually all our comrades as a reversal of the position vigorously maintained by the SWP for a year and a half. Inasmuch as our comrades can see no evidence of anything radically new in the situation, nor of any change in the views or position of our own party, they are interested in learning the reasons or arguments that have motivated the change in the position of the SWP leadership.

This question, although interesting and important, cannot in our view be considered of decisive significance by us. Our basic position in favor of unity was taken a long time ago, before we even knew what decision would finally be taken by the SWP. Our basic position on unity was maintained even after the formal rejection of the unity by the SWP. It cannot and should not be altered by any such secondary considerations as the reasons given by the SWP for its change of position. These reasons are the affair of the SWP and it has the full and uncontested right to present it to its membership and to anyone else.

We have the right to concern ourselves with this question only insofar as it is proper and necessary for our membership to know all the important facts related to unity and insofar as the reasons given by the SWP have a serious effect upon the achievement and consolidation of a united party on a sound basis.

In situations such as now exist between the CP and the SWP, the air can easily be clouded by all sorts of exaggerations, distortions, rumors and gossip, and even downright falsifications spread by irresponsible persons. It would be a most foolish thing to be influenced, let alone upset, by irresponsible gossip, rumors and lies. They can only create nervousness, jitteriness and lead to the disorientation which is guaranteed when subjective reactions are allowed to prevail over calm, objective consideration.

For these reasons, I am appending to this communication a copy of a circular letter to all of the leading members of the SWP, dated February 8, 1947. I append it in full for two reasons: (1) because it is not only an authoritative and official expression of opinion of the SWP leadership but has obviously constituted the basis of all the reports of the SWP plenum decision given to the membership of the SWP; (2) because, while much of the letter is of no interest or consequence to us, the sending out of excerpts alone might lay us open to the distracting charge of quoting out of context.

It is not necessary to comment at too great length on the February 8 circular of the SWP. The explanation given in it for the proposed change of position in favor of unity, when compared with the well-known facts, which are available in the documents appended to Goldman's pamphlet on "Unity" and which are supplemented in this communication, corresponds more to the particular requirements of the SWP leadership. I repeat, our party has no use for prestige politics and no need for face-saving. We need only repeat calmly that those views which were denounced by the SWP leadership as anti-Marxist, anti-Trotskyist, anti-Fourth, revisionist and even counterrevolutionary, remain our views in every respect, today just like yesterday; that our position on unity of the two parties as set forth a year and a half ago, remains basically unaltered because we have had no cause to make any basic alterations in it. Anyone who wishes may make a contrary claim. Serious people will have no difficulty in judging the merits of the claims made on each side.

We deem it necessary, however, to make a few corrections about statements of facts, explicit or by implication, which are made in the SWP circular.

1. The commitment made by our NC which pledged it in advance to accept the decisions of the EPC did not give us the right to have merely fraternal representation at the Convention without voting rights. It was expressly stated by the representative of the CIC that if our party undertook this commitment it would be entitled to participate in the EPC with the same rights as all other full participants, namely with voice and vote. Neither Snachtman, the PC, nor the NC of our party was presented by Smith with any formula that would confine our representation at the EPC to a fraternal basis or deprive us of voting rights. Consequently, either Smith was unauthorized to present to us the proposal that he made, in which case the commitment we undertook could not be considered binding, or else the report in the SWP circular on this point is incorrect. Which of these two is actually the case can and will be established without difficulty.

2. While there will evidently be a proposal presented to the EPC to prohibit all discussion on the principal disputed questions after the Convention, our party has in no way obligated itself to support this proposal. Anyone who wishes to has an undisputed right to make the proposal, even if a proposal of any kind to prohibit discussion at any time has never before been made in the history of the Trotskyist movement. We have an indisputable right to argue and vote against such an abhorrent innovation, and this right we have not abandoned and do not intend to abandon. A perfectly clear understanding of this point is essential. About a year and a half ago, we declared to the SWP representatives, of our own free decision and without solicitation or pressure, that we ourselves would refrain, during the first period following the fusion of the two parties, from opening up or conducting a political or factional discussion on the disputed questions; that we wished to utilize this first period to concentrate the efforts of everybody upon cementing the fusion solidly, from top to bottom. An active political or factional discussion launched in the branches the morning after the fusion could very easily be detrimental to the interests of consolidating the unity as well as the interests of our own tendency. What would be needed first of all is an intensive

period of common work, both inside and outside the party, during which all mutual suspicions and hostilities could be eliminated, so that if a political discussion did take place later on, it could occur in an atmosphere of mutual receptivity, objective consideration of views and without immediately precipitating the old, rigid factional alignments. This view of ours can be found stated more than once in the documents appended to the "Unity" pamphlet. However, we distinguished clearly between an active political or factional discussion aimed at achieving immediately a change in the party's line, on the one side, and an educational discussion on a theoretical and scientific plane, which does not precipitate a factional discussion or factional fight, on the other. We are quite used to this clear distinction in our own party, as every comrade knows. Such an educational discussion can and should go on permanently in a revolutionary party, especially on such controversial questions as now agitate our Trotskyist movement, that is, questions on which only an idiot can contend that the last word has been said. The idea that such a discussion should be "prohibited" even after a convention is fantastic and utterly alien to us as well as to the whole tradition of the Trotskyist movement.

In 1920, under the very guns of the Kronstadt and other uprisings, when the fate of the Soviet power literally hung by a hair, the Tenth Congress of the Bolshevik Party adopted a tragic decision to prohibit factions for a time. But even this unprecedented decision, adopted with the well-intentioned aim of ending a terribly violent factional fight which seemed to imperil the very life of the Soviet Republic, was carefully accompanied by a series of provisions for the continuation, the very day after the Congress, of the discussion of the disputed questions on a theoretical plane and in special discussion bulletins. To believe that our little Trotskyist movement, whose position is not comparable in the slightest degree with that faced by the Bolsheviks in the gloomy days of Kronstadt, should adopt a decision which goes so much further in the suppression of discussion than in 1920 in Russia, is an infantile or bureaucratic monstrosity from which we must earnestly beg to be excused. It will be interesting to see what Trotskyist champions this idea at the EPC. Our commitment in no sense obligates us to support such champions or to vote with them. We have not agreed to any such proviso nor have we signed it in advance. That is a misunderstanding of our decision. It goes without saying that we shall combat such a proposal with all our strength.

3. The references made to Johnson in the SWP circular do not correspond with the facts as we know them. Whether or not Johnson has affirmed his complete political solidarity with the SWP on all questions except the Russian Question, is his affair, and once the facts are made clear, is exclusively the subject of political judgment. In view of all the other references made to Johnson, our PC at its last meeting, adopted a motion to request - not to require, but only to request - Johnson to express himself in writing on the references made to him in the circular of the SWP. We await the response of Johnson, who was unable to be present at that PC meeting. This much, however, can be said right now:

If a "knife" was put to our throats at the plenum, the members of the NC were completely unaware of that fact. The NC did not adopt its decision on unity under the threat of a split from the party by Johnson or anyone else. In the first place, anyone who tried to force the NC to adopt a position against its will and conviction by means of a threat of a split, would be a common blackmailer. In the second place, a committee which voted against its convictions because it was threatened with a split, would deserve nothing but a contemptuous boot to kick it out of the responsible position to which it had lost all rights. In the third place, no threat of split was made by Johnson or by anyone else. And in the fourth place, the minutes of our PC for the past few months contain statement upon statement by Johnson protesting against all rumors and gossip to the effect that he and his political friends

are committed to or are contemplating a split from the WP in order to join the SWP as slanderous, because they maliciously violate the truth and because such a step would be in flagrant contradiction to the principle repeatedly enunciated by Johnson and his friends in political documents known to the party.

So much for the factual points in the SWP circular which require comment here.

We note, finally, that the circular speaks of an agreement between the SWP and Smith to support a proposal at the EPC to condemn "the political line adopted by the WP, condemn the split of 1940, the maneuverist character of the unity proposal and the Goldman split which accompanied it." As previously indicated, every delegate will have the unrestricted right to submit any resolution, motion or proposal to the EPC. This includes the right to present such a proposal as the SWP circular speaks of. Corresponding to this right is the necessity of assuming all the consequences that follow from the exercise of the right in any particular case. Ordinarily, we might well say that the proposal for a condemnation outlined in the circular would not be taken seriously by anybody in our Party, and would be dismissed with a shrug of the shoulders. But only ordinarily. Since this is not an ordinary situation, but one in which earnest efforts are being made to achieve a solid and workable unity of the two parties, the same attitude is not possible. The consequences that would follow any decision by the EPC to condemn our party and its past in such a manner as seems to be proposed, to condemn us for the split of 1940, to condemn our position on unity which we happen to think has been confirmed, and to condemn the minority for joining us in 1946, could only place a question-mark over the possibility of an effective unification of the two parties and compromise it from the very beginning. It would seem clear to every member of our party and to serious people in general, that a unity of two parties which is launched by one party of the unity proposing or voting a formal condemnation of the other party in the unity, and of everything that the other party has stood for since its very foundation, could not be creditable to those responsible for the proposal or very auspicious for the unity.

To draw the conclusion from these comments that it is necessary to abandon our position for unity would be a pretty light-hearted political absurdity. We had no illusions about the difficulties that would be encountered along the road, and we have no illusions about them now; We do know this, that the difficulties cannot be overcome by hypocritical diplomacy or by smearing over in silence the differences that we have. That would be the worst possible preparation for the kind of unity we seek, namely, a solid and durable one which does not explode the day after it is effected. Speak out what is! That is a precept that we wish to follow in this situation too. It does not mean shouting everything from the housetops. It does not mean making a mountain out of every mole-hill. It does not mean treating the least important questions as if they were the most important, or secondary questions as if they were primary. But it most certainly does not mean passing over in wishful silence the difficulties and the disagreements that really do exist in the hope that this silence - and not a frank and forthright discussion - will somehow or other make the difficulties and disagreements vanish miraculously.

We are now definitely on the road to unity with the SWP. We are convinced that it is necessary, possible and desirable. Properly effected it would mean a big step forward for our movement as a whole in this country and for our own ideas. It would be a vast source of encouragement for the sections of the Fourth International all over the world, and even though neither the SWP nor the WP is or can be affiliated at the present time with the Fourth International, we are basically its comrades-in-ideas and we have deep obligations to build it up to maximum strength.

The unity has not yet been achieved. After seven years of separation and violent polemics between us, it would be idle to expect that the unification could be realized over night. But we are on the road to unity, not only because both organizations are now formally committed to the unification, but because they have both already taken the concrete steps that are needed to effect the unity in practice.

The leading committees of the two parties have already selected representatives to meet periodically and regularly in a parity committee whose specific task is to organize, promote and supervise the immediate collaboration between the two parties in all fields of the class struggle where it is possible. This collaboration has, of course, a specific aim: the preparation of the two parties for unity. By working together in the practical activities from now on, great progress can be accomplished in eliminating habits of non-collaboration which have been formed in the past, in eliminating also mutual antagonisms and suspicions that exist. This practical collaboration will also provide the best test of the practical feasibility of the unity. It will answer the question -- positively and favorably, we hope and firmly believe -- that was often, and quite properly, posed by the leadership of the SWP in the past: "Will the unity work?"

The joint committee representing the two parties has already arrived at unanimous agreement on several proposals for collaboration. The details will be communicated to you in official party circulars. In brief, we have agreed already to the following:

To merge all our international relief and solidarity work into a single centralized body and under a united direction. Henceforth, branches and members in all cities should join and give support to all the activities of the American Committee for European Workers Relief, in which the members of the SWP are already now active. From now on, in every city where the two parties exist together, arrangements should be made for the party fractions in all mass organizations (trade unions, veterans organizations, Negro organizations, tenants' organizations, etc.) to meet jointly for the purpose of discussing and carrying out common actions. In every city steps should be taken immediately to arrange for a united May Day meeting.

As further agreements are made, they will be communicated to all members.

Corresponding to the joint national committee, similar committees representing both parties should be set up in all localities where branches of both organizations exist. On a local scale they will have the same task as the joint national committee has on a national scale. They will organize, promote and supervise all joint local activities **between the two parties**. In case of disagreements that arise out of the joint activities in any locality, the dispute may be referred to the joint national committee for consideration and advice.

In the matter of collaboration, it is necessary to emphasize one more point. The two parties still exist as independent **organizations**. The fusion has not yet been accomplished. **One of the purposes of the collaboration is precisely to prepare the ground for a smooth and orderly fusion. This means that we must seek to achieve collaboration in all practical matters wherever possible. Our comrades would be well advised to yield on any small or trivial points on which there is disagreement. If the value of a joint action is great, and the importance of the disagreement is small, it would be silly to argue too much over the small disagreement. If the mutual suspicions and antagonisms are to be eliminated as rapidly as possible, it is necessary to avoid picayune quibbling and a small-minded approach to problems. Our comrades should go out of their way to demonstrate that this is not our approach.**

But this applies only to disagreements which are trivial. It does not and cannot apply to big and important disagreements. It should be understood that the collaboration is possible and mandatory only in those fields - and they are numerous - in which we have basic or substantial agreement with the comrades of the SWP. Where such agreement does not exist, then we each follow our own course. The simplest example of what I mean is a trade-union situation in which we hold that it is necessary to support, let us say, a Reutherite slate and the SWP holds that it is necessary to support a Stalinist slate. This is obviously not a minor disagreement and in such a situation we do not have a basis for collaboration, for a common policy, for common action. But it is precisely in such situations where we come before the workers with different positions in the practical fields of the class struggle that we must try to have an agreement at least to this extent, namely, that we shall not counterpose our different positions in public with a sharpness and hostility that creates unnecessary obstacles in the path of unification. In other words, in those cases where we find that we must appear in public as opponents on any of the practical questions of the class struggle, let it be as "friendly opponents."

If the collaboration works well and smoothly, then the period between now and the actual fusion can be shortened correspondingly. If it is felt on either side that the collaboration has not yet shown conclusive results, it will be necessary to extend the period of collaboration. If the practical collaboration shows, in spite of the best will and the best intentions on both sides, that common work is not possible, then the whole question of unity will obviously have to be reconsidered. We must do everything within our power to see to it that the collaboration does work. We are confident and we have all the necessary reasons to believe that it can and will work. It is toward that end that the sincere and ardent efforts of the party, and of every member in it, must now be bent.

With Party greetings,

MAX SEACHTMAN
National Chairman

New York, NY
February 8, 1947.

TO NATIONAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND ALTERNATES:

Dear Comrades:

INFORMATIONAL MATERIAL FOR THE PLENUM

New developments which will have to be considered by the Plenum, to be held February 15-16, are as follows:

1. Workers Party. The decisive action of our party convention in rejecting and closing discussion on the previous unity maneuver of Goldman-Shachtman, together with the expulsion of Morrow, produced big repercussions nationally and internationally as was to be expected. Now that it has been made perfectly clear by the resolute action of our convention that the SWP will tolerate no monkey-business with discipline, and that unity maneuvers are firmly rejected and excluded for the future, new developments on a new basis are shaping up. As you know, we have a visit from Ted and Smith. Together with them we have discussed and prepared some new moves designed to put an end to all ambiguity and bring all questions to a head and a definitive settlement in connection with the Extraordinary Party Convention now definitely scheduled for the fall.

Prior to the arrival of Smith and Ted we had had a meeting with Johnson. He affirmed his complete political solidarity with us on all questions except the Russian question, and his earnest desire to be given a formula that would facilitate his struggle and open the road for unification. At the same time, Shachtman had announced his wish to participate in the EPC and in the discussion preceding it, and wanted to know under what terms and conditions this could be granted.

The information furnished us by Smith and Ted made it clear that the genuine orthodox Marxist tendency is assured of a firm majority at the EPC on all of the disputed questions. Previous experience and discussion has prepared this victory of authentic Trotskyism in the world movement. In the course of the discussion we found complete agreement between ourselves and Smith on all questions concerning the EPC. We agreed to stand jointly for the following program:

1. The EPC should not only confirm the orthodox line as laid down in the previous documents of the pre-conference and the Committee In Charge, and now brilliantly amplified in the new theses of Germain on the Russian question, but should specifically condemn the theories of bureaucratic collectivism, national revolution, retrogressionism and the conception of the Stalinist parties in capitalist countries as non-working class bodies.
2. All discussion should be closed on these questions once they are decided by the EPC, and may not be reopened without the authorization of the CIC. Membership thereafter should be conditional on acceptance of the political and organizational decisions of the EPC and disciplined application of them in all political activity.
3. On the SWP-WP question, the EPC should condemn the political line developed by the WP, condemn the split of 1940, the maneuverist character of the unity proposal and the Goldman split which accompanied it.

Assuming the victory of this program, which seems to be absolutely assured, the question then arose as to what attitude shall be taken towards those elements inside the ranks of the Movement who hold one or more or all of the views which the EPC will reject and condemn. Following the tradition of our movement, as well as political realism in the present situation, we could only arrive at the

following conclusion: Those who accept the decisions of the EPC and obligate themselves to carry them out in practice, may remain in the organization. Those who refuse to accept the decisions are to be automatically expelled. Any who may "accept" the decisions with tongue in cheek and then proceed to violate them, shall be expelled.

The next question then arose: What conditions, if any can we offer to those groups formally outside the organization, including the WP or any section of it, who express a wish to participate in the EPC and the discussion preceding it. On this point we worked out the following formula, in line with the already adopted resolution of the CIC:

Unaffiliated groups desiring to participate in the discussion prior to the EPC must give a written undertaking to recognize the authority of the EPC and pledge themselves in advance to accept its decisions on both political and organizational questions. On that condition they may participate in the pre-EPC discussion and may have fraternal representation at the EPC, without voting rights.

This formula was presented by Smith to Johnson and promptly accepted by him. At the same time he announced that he would accept it and carry it out in any case, regardless of the position taken by the WP majority or any of its other factions.

Smith then presented the same formula to Shachtman. Shachtman showed him a letter already drawn up by their PC which requested the right to participate in the pre-EPC discussion but which stated the EP could not in advance agree to accept the EPC decisions. However, after a six-hour discussion Shachtman announced that he would accept the conditions, and invited Smith to attend a meeting of the PC of the WP where the question would be laid before them. At this meeting of the PC, after a long discussion and many protests from the right-wing against the harshness of the terms and unavailing protests for amendments or modifications, this body also voted unanimously to accept the conditions and to call a Plenum within 48 hours to consider the matter.

This Plenum of the WP, called on such short notice, was held Wednesday night. There the same process was repeated. Johnson aggressively defended the formula, condemned the split of 1940 and their whole course which had led up to the unity maneuver and second split of 1946, and announced that he would accept the conditions in any case. Shachtman, confronted by the resolute stand of Johnson with the prospect of remaining alone in the party with the right-wing, spoke for the acceptance of the terms. So also did Goldman. The right-wing, protesting against the terms as a "capitulation" and characterizing the proviso that further discussion after the EPC is to be prohibited as a "death sentence" on their tendency, finally voted to accept.

Yesterday we had another meeting with Johnson. He informed us that his faction has 70 members. They firmly agree with the SWP on all questions except the Russian question, and this they are willing to lay aside in order to concentrate all their efforts on hearty and loyal collaboration with us to build up the party in the USA.

Our PC has not taken a vote on the question. We are discussing the matter, both formally and informally, and plan to leave the decision open until the Plenum convenes. I must tell you, however, that the majority opinion is definitely crystallizing in favor of going through with the proposition as outlined above. I personally am convinced that, taking everything into account nationally and internationally, it is a correct and necessary step and that we should proceed aggressively to its complete execution. Stein has the same opinion. Even those comrades in the PC who are inclined to emphasize the

disadvantages and dangers of the proposition admit the difficulty of logically motivating a rejection of the formula, or of finding a better one.

I don't need to enumerate the negative aspects of a unification with the Shachtmanites, even under these harsh terms. They are quite clear to everybody. But the thing as a whole, in my opinion, is more of a plus than a minus; and this must determine our position.

It will be seen at a glance that this new formula is far removed from the original proposal of Goldman-Shachtman, which our convention correctly rejected. It is not the same thing at all. It is a new approach to the questions, made possible by the convention decision, and is qualitatively different. Then, the Shachtmanites were the initiators, basing themselves on a disloyal faction in our own ranks and demanding a special bulletin of their own for permanent discussion after the unification. This time, after the original unity maneuver ended in a fiasco and boomeranged in the development of a strong faction in their own ranks putting the pistol of a split at their temples - this time, we are taking the initiative and we are laying down new conditions. The new conditions provide that all discussion of the disputed questions must be finished before the unification. Not only is there to be no special bulletin, but there cannot be any discussion whatever of the settled questions; and this must be agreed to and signed in advance, with the additional proviso that any violation of this agreement will result in the expulsion of the violators.

Under these conditions I think it would be very unwise for us to falter or haggle over the acceptance of the program, since it contains all the provisions which we could logically demand in the circumstances. That would be like chasing a street car that has already been caught.

There will be many difficulties and irritations in carrying out a unification after the seven-year fight, even if all the Shachtmanites come into the unification with good will. There will be even more irritations if a section of them come into the unification with bad will. On the other hand, if they come with good will and manifest it in a constructive attitude in the first period - and any other course would be absolutely suicidal for them - we have much to gain from the unification. The most important gain would be the elimination of the last remaining rival organization to the SWP as the organizing center of labor radicalism. After the elimination of the Lovestonites, the Huste organization, the Socialist Party "militants," Proletarian Party, the Cehlerites - the elimination of the WP as a separate organization - after a seven-year fight - would clear the field entirely for the SWP. This could not fail to make a strong impression on the minds of all radical workers, including the dissident Stalinist workers, and attract them more strongly to us.

At the same time, the unification would be a powerful blow against centrifugal tendencies throughout the Movement, and aid the Movement leadership in the task of unification and concentration. This would create the possibility for the first time of introducing a serious discipline to regulate and control the irresponsible individuals and groups who have been running wild up till now.

These in my opinion, are the two main considerations. They far outweigh the minuses, serious and important as the latter may be. But if everything goes well there can be other plusses too. The WP is a much smaller organization than ours - they have about 400 members - but we shouldn't conceal from ourselves the fact that along with quite a number of fast talkers and "discussion" fanatics, they have also some good activists who seriously want to build a revolutionary party to fight American capitalism. Johnson assures us there are many more than we are inclined to think. In any case, we should open the door

for them and give them one final fair chance to integrate themselves in the party. A serious thought should also be given to the leadership of the CP. We know their faults and weaknesses, and their mistakes which have often amounted to crimes - all of which, from a political point of view, comes under the general head of centrism. But with the knife at their throats, confronted with a virtual ultimatum; capitulate to the Movement or definitively break with it - they decided - under protest - to capitulate. This action speaks for them, not against them. It entitles them also to one more chance - and a fair chance - to find a way to collaborate with us. This must be said in all seriousness if we are truly serving great political aims and are capable of subordinating everything, including personal sentiments, to the service of these aims.

2. Morrow. Following from the above, the same formula offered to the Shachtmanites should logically apply to Morrow. Having been expelled by the party convention, he naturally cannot be readmitted into the SWP by the Plenum. But if he signs an undertaking to recognize the authority of the EPC and pledges himself to obey its decisions, he also should be given the opportunity to participate in the pre-EPC discussion. We can easily agree to this, even though it is a bit "irregular." This concession on our part would help the leadership of the CIC to disarm the opportunist and unprincipled elements who represent our expulsion of Morrow as a device to deprive the right-wing of an ideological representative in the discussion before the EPC. But looked at properly, it is no concession at all. The more Morrow writes and the more his writings are translated into other languages, the simpler everything will become for the comrades in other countries.

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We think it would be a good idea for the out-of-town members to bring this communication to the attention of the leading comrades locally and have a preliminary discussion with them, so that the Plenum can have clear reports of the first reactions of the party comrades to the new developments. It goes without saying that the new proposals, if endorsed by the Plenum, must be submitted to the party membership for discussion and eventual decision by a special party convention.

Fraternally yours,

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