

DISCUSSION ON UNITY WITH THE SOCIALIST PARTY

(Following are summaries of the reports made on this question by the reporters for the PC majority and minority--Max Shachtman for the majority, Gordon Haskell for the minority. These summaries are notes taken by a convention delegate.)

Report by Max Shachtman for the Majority

We are a sect, but we must not be sectarian. We must watch 24 hours a day for a chance to get out of a sectarian existence. When such an opportunity arises, two dangers arise: from the right and from the left. Some want to dump all our theoretical baggage; others, from a sectarian point of view, want guarantees and blueprints--the hallmarks of sectarianism.

A few years ago, there was the case of [Irving] Howe and his friends--opportunism. Today they are turning to the left in a mild professorial way, talking about socialist organization. Today we are faced with the problem of sectarianism. ...

What is new in the situation? What is new, is the end of the domination of radicalism by the CP. People want an end to impotent sects; a movement free of dogma and bureaucratic authoritarianism. The larger group is that of the union militants; we need a policy to win them to socialist organization.

First comes the question of what should be the framework; we must focus on the SP as the possible framework. It is the only existing possible framework ...

What is the program of the SP? Asked that it be circulated among the delegates. We propose to accept it. As ours? No. But accept it as basis for a united organization. Comrade Haskell wants a neutral program that isn't objectionable; that shows progress is possible--not a Third Camp position now but a diluted program. OK, here's the program--nice, mushy generalizations which by and large everyone can interpret as he sees fit. One can say, "Our Socialist Party has differences within it..constructive dissent..." What's wrong with this program?

We have been chided; they say we want unity with the Right Wing [of the SP], but they wanted unity with the left wing. What's this business about program? Can you tell me our comrades can't loyally support the British Labor Party or the German Social-Democracy?

From an organizational point of view, the SP is known for the freedom of tendencies within it. It has a left wing; there is no expulsion for ideas; sometimes they threaten but nothing happens; there is no rigid discipline.

We are better, yes; but the general public believes that the Leninist concept is bad; that "democratic centralism" is bad; and we don't want to spend the rest of our lives explaining it. We just want the same party rights [in the SP] as the next man--no more, no less.

The say, "Shachtman will be the policeman of the left" [in the SP]. All right with me if you want to call me this. I know my left wing, its good points and its bad points. I don't want the left wing to capture the SP. I don't want to Marxify Louis Goldberg [of the former SDF] and Sam Friedman [of the SP]. I want to get at new elements and bring them along. I stopped the Oehlerites in the SP and promise to do the same in the future. ...

Draper's favorite charge is that our position represents political adaptation to the right wing and to social-democracy. Yes, we want an opening to the right; where do you want an opening? ...

There are great possibilities; this can open the way to the masses; it can lift the American proletariat higher than the European--if it rejects its narrow, sectarian, sterile view. Everything obsolete and sectarian must be rejected before the brighter horizon.

Report by Gordon Haskell for the Minority

We have proposed an "all-inclusive party" as our basis for unity. You are proposing to liquidate the ISL without any political conditions; without regard to what the program will be, or what the stand on regroupment; without any commitment from the SP. Your only condition is: take us in without discrimination.

What is this SP into which we want to liquidate as fast as possible? We want the SP to assert that it wants to be that all-inclusive party, and then agree to our entry; then we can be loyal members. What makes us so impossible for them? Why can't we get their agreement on this?

What's wrong with the Socialist International program referred to by Shachtman? No doubt the French SP agrees with this program too, as it endorses the Algerian war.

Why do we want an agreement as a precondition? Some say: if you can get the SP to accept you, isn't that good enough to show signs of a change? But look at the SP's recent articles: they tell us, "Repent--confess--be quiet for ten years, and then maybe you'll become first-class citizens of the party..." You deplore it, but you want to liquidate the organization on the basis of wrong stand. The National Committee of the SP voted "not to enter into negotiations" with us; the majority voted for it, only four opposed. Then there are the SP's public acts; the articles in the *Call* against us.

Now the PC majority is for liquidation while the SP's public actions against us seem to be growing. Other SP'ers I know say entry isn't possible; if it doesn't work out, we will have only demoralized and disoriented comrades. You can do this for nine months, maybe a year or two, but don't know how much longer.

In the SP we should have a right to our own press, to our own ideas, to equality of membership. The PC majority says our views will be presented along with others'. But the SP gave the SDF full equality, membership on top committee, etc. I don't say we must have our own magazine; I say we must have agreement on kind of movement we want to have, and the rest will flow.

As Shachtman paints it, we have had a hard, tough life and now a bright dazzling future lights up before us. A new, easier life is vastly appealing. But there is no such easy, broad avenue to the American masses. Shachtman's prospect is not very likely.

Our unity with them will be the unity of two sects; no great things will happen. A new epoch is starting; we don't have to rush into anything. We are just beginning to feel the first breath of wind, so why do we have to rush into the first harbor? Further developments must take place. How long can you focus the organization on that perspective?

SUMMARY Speech by Haskell for the Minority (Excerpts)

I am not claiming that our failure to recruit in the last ten years was due to foreshadowing of this line. If we can't recruit thousands, then only hundreds, maybe tens...

I don't want to conceal my differences with Draper. He thinks that the PC majority's line on political action is one of adaptation--I don't. It is not unusual that comrades have different motivations but agree on political line.

We have to agree on minimum security before entry. On the one hand, all you have to do is to get SP to agree to our entry. On the other hand, we propose conditions, because this is not a unity of revolutionary tendencies, but the cohabitation of two sects under one roof.

One SP'er said to me: After 17 years you're in a blind alley, so come right in. If you [the PC majority] want an all-inclusive party, why aren't you in favor of getting them to say so, so they won't say you're just giving up your organization? Our *Dissent* friends feel that way, and it would be disastrous if the SP did too.

Summary Speech by Shachtman for the Majority

Contrast what we propose with what the Trotskyists did in 1936. Today everything is out in public. In 1936 it was bureaucratically done by Cannon and Shachtman, with Zam, Altman and Tyler--all secretly. Our friends were told at the last minute: follow us, please. Which policy is better? We gave up our press; we crawled into the SP branches. The SP'ers were unprepared for us in 1936: "who are these people?" they asked. We had to have a split in the Trotskyist movement.

I say Haskell is wrong about our morale. Our self-confidence hasn't been this high in ten years; our comrades have the highest morale. There has been a tremendous advance: SP leaders are friendly; the youth organization is for us, has an infinitely friendlier attitude. For the first time we are friendly with CPers, and this is organically bound up with our SP line. These CPers say to us, "Go to it"--they are dying to get into SP themselves. They say: you be the guinea pigs. The Cochranites are intensely interested, though they say they don't think we can make it. The Jewish Bund comrades, several hundred, are very interested. There has been some breakdown in the icy coldness with the *Dissent*-ers. McAvoy was so impressed with our line that he applied for SP membership. True, he was rejected; they wanted a security check. But it proves our attractive powers; we have gained new audiences everywhere.

Comrades ask: what if this line fails? You and I both have no alternative; we'll think about it together...

A few hundred ex-CPers, like John Gates, would like to enter SP too. I've told that to SPers. They're opposed. Do I deliver an ultimatum that they have to adopt my regroupment line, admit CPers, Gates, Sweezyites, etc.? My line is simple: to have them adopt the line of unity with the ISL, to unite with the ISL. ...

I am politically upset at Hal's [Draper's] line in the current *Labor Action* [July 8, 1957]. If you say: you're a scoundrel, thief, liar and fake, how can you influence politically? ... Don't stand in the way, like Draper's article on the eve of the convention. I consider it unwise factionalism. Don't give our opponents any weapons.

DISCUSSION ON SOCIALIST POLITICAL ACTION

(Following are excerpts from the reports made on this question by the reporters for the PC majority and minority, Ben Hall and Hal Draper respectively, from notes taken by a participant.

The majority had withdrawn its own resolution on the question--one which clearly came out against running socialist candidates against candidates of the Democratic Part supported by the labor movement--in favor of a more general and less clear amendment sponsored by D. Meier. The background of the discussion was that the majority was not overtly defending at the convention the position which it publicly supported.)

FROM: Report by Ben Hall for the Majority

What is new in the resolution is the section dealing with socialist candidates. We do not propose to support bourgeois candidates: we oppose them. The question is how and why we put forward this line. We cannot come forward as their rivals and opponents. Our policy must be based on the working class and its movement. We come forward as a loyal left wing in the union movement. ...

This marks a change on political action: under what conditions do we run socialist candidates? It is not a problem for the ISL but would be a problem for a united socialist movement. It should oppose bourgeois candidates, but it must look toward a labor movement which does support them. It must avoid setting itself up as a sect bersus the labor movement. "Ah," you will say, "this is opportunism; the right wing wants to support bourgeois candidates; you want to say merely that you don't want to oppose them." This represents a problem for us who base ourselves on the labor movement. We propose not to run socialist candidates when this pits a tiny socialist movement in a head-on collision with the labor movement.

We have accepted the Walsh-Meier amendment, which permits the running of socialist candidates under certain exception conditions. [Reads amendment.] Our former section on this approached the problem negatively. The criticism was made of it: "you look to bureaucrats and porkchoppers; we we look to workers." But look to the socialist community; in its vast majority, it is for bourgeois candidates.

Are you for peaceful coexistence of the two tendencies? How do you propose to achieve it? Are you for their acceptance only if they adopy policy of no-support to bourgeois candidates? We do not want to subject one to the other, as in Weinrib's amendment. We have to have this policy for a united socialist movement. ...

We have to take union militants as they are. He may say: I agree with you , but how about political action? The mass of workers are for bourgeois candidates: must we demand that they support our line? Can we ask him to join us and therefore come into head-on collision with other workers in his shop? ...

Our proposal is not for all time; it is for the first stage of a reunited socialist movement. It facilitates the entry of militants into a reunited socialist movement. After we have absorbed them, we can take another look and consider other tactics. ...

Draper argues for running socialist candidates, but he doesn't take into account how the "officialdom" feels.

FROM: Report by Hal Draper for Minority

The question is: what ideas do WE bring into this united socialist movement?...

The question has been complicated by this extraordinary thing that the Political Committee was driven to do. Under heavy fire, it dumped the heart-passages of its Political Action section, and adopted the Walsh-Meier amendment (which had been put forward to *reject* its line). It has dumped its own "hard" section on the issue and adopted something which is a queasy hodgepodge. It now offers something for everybody. For critics, it can say, "Let's fuzz it up." For its own PC supporters, it claims that the two are "identical." Comrade Hall maintains that the old version and the new amendment are identical. Yet in the first section of the resolution, the *motivation* that the original PC version was based on still remains there. ...

For whom are you writing this resolution? If for others, then why not a clear, rounded-out resolution? If you are directing yourselves to the "sectarians," then how do you clear them up, how do you enlighten them? You do not enlighten them when you do not integrate into your resolution our criticisms of the labor bureaucracy.

You say: our policy must be a "wise one," not a "rash one. Is that our problem, that we are carrying on a "rash" policy in the trade unions? or it is rather the danger of our people adapting to the labor bureaucracy--for example, taking porkchop-per jobs? If you're for this latter policy, all right, discuss it; but don't pretend that the danger is that of "rashness"!

You say, "in the spirit of ultra-left sectarianism they would undermine the confidence of the working-class not in its leaders but in itself" etc. Who are these monsters who are "undermining" etc.? The Stalinists? The SWP? To whom are you addressing yourselves? And don't you think it might be necessary to say something in some way about the fact that we DO want to "undermine" confidence in the conservative leadership? (Note that word "undermine" they use, and get the flavor...) "We never undermine the labor movement," etc. you write: but why not a word about our criticisms of the labor movement, about our being the best critics of the labor movement, about our special role?

You say, "'Socialist unionists do not aim to *graft* some special credo of their own upon the labor movement." Note that word "graft," "foist," "impose"... No, but we socialist unionists do have a *credo* (something we believe in) that we propose to the labor movement to adopt, a PROGRAM, a militant progressive socialist program. Our special role is in proposing a special program for the labor movement.

Your resolution is in part a collection of platitudes, as has been said; but it is only a onesided collection, only certain platitudes. You set down a certain approach; it is a distorted, skewed, onesided approach. We need the balanced approach which is attempted in the minority resolution.

The question of whether in a particular case we do or don't run a socialist candidate is in part an organizational question, in part a political question. Like: do we have enough forces to get a candidate on the ballot? Is it worth the effort politically and organizationally? can you expect a big response from the workers in a particular case? Yes, political considerations are involved. Can you get to their minds and ears? It is a question of organizational effectiveness and of the political gains that may be effected thereby.

The new [Walsh-Meier] amendment threw out 90% of the majority's main arguments. It says: we don't want to alienate the advanced workers; it said this consideration must be *weighed*. But the PC majority had said that this line *will* alienate workers; it said that we won't say "Don't vote for Mr. Democrat." While the new amendment said the consideration must be weighed, the PC majority had already weighed it and had said, no, don't run candidates. The majority says: if we run socialist candidates we will alienate ourselves from the workers. But it is false to counterpose the running of socialist candidates to separating ourselves from the workers.

The pressure on us does not come from the rank-and-file (as the Newark comrades point out). The pressure is being put on our leading cadres by the "progressive bureaucrats." These progressive bureaucrats tell them, "You don't have to give up your convictions--just come to work for us," etc. That's their line.

The Socialist Party did not separate itself from any workers when it used to run candidates; but today, when it no longer participates in elections, it DROPS in the estimation of the workers. The crux of the question is: for those workers who are disillusioned with the old policy of the labor movement, it is our task to put our alternative before their minds.

There may be broad socialist movements that will attract workers who still support capitalist candidates. But OIR movement must be based on those who are, or can be, disillusioned with capitalist politics..

Ben Hall inveighs against socialists who attack the labor leadership with the wrong "tone"--who just attack contracts and demands and have no answers themselves, who are always accusing the leaders of "betraying the workers," who are always yelling that "everything stinks," that's all. Whom is he talking about? *Our comrades never behaved in such a stupid fashion. ...*

The majority says we must make sure we don't run candidates. But a broader sociali-st movement can be built and strengthened only by running candidates, among other things. ...

[The following is a section of Draper's report which was written out in manuscript but never actually delivered in this form for lack of time. However, its content had figured in the pre-convention discussion.]

There have been comments in the League on the *timing* of this new line by the ISL leadership--such as: "Even if they believed it, why did they have to come out with it right now? It looks cynical, when they come out with such a line just at the time as they are applying for admission into the Socialist Party."

While it cannot be denied that they have a point, such comments are *not* entirely fair to the Majority. If I were merely interested in denouncing the Majority, I might be tempted to make use of such criticisms. But, paradoxically, the situation is far too serious for mere denunciation. At any rate, that is how I feel as I watch this PC Majority turning down their new road--and leaving me far behind as I persist in still believing a number of things which we all believed in only yesterday.

So, without denunciation, but trying to patiently explain, I invite you to think about what is in the process of happening to the ISL. Unfortunately, we will scarcely get a chance to discuss this from any wide view: the Majority does not want to admit openly that a terrific political *change of life* is in process. Its formal position is only that the question of "unity" with the SP is the only question, plus certain tactical matters associated therewith. They resent it when I "politicalize" this SP question (as they put it)--that is, when I link it up with their politics; but they try to make sure that their politics does not come out.

So what I want to point out is that this new policy of theirs is not simply a cynical bone thrown to the SP, as if to say, "See how right-wing we are ourselves!" This new policy was not simply born as an idea to tickle right-wing SP'ers.

It is rather the consistent political fruit of the new road which leads Shachtman *both* to this new policy *and* to the SP orientation. That is, it does not simply grow out of the SP orientation: there is a "New Road" in politics which is behind it.

That New Road line can be most succinctly labeled as Shachtman's theory of the "opening to the right." That vague phrase really means: "Turn to the right." It means: we must dump--get away from--bury--this "too radical" past of ours, that very "radicalism" which we sought to distinguish as "Independent Socialism" and which we counterposed to both reformism and Stalinism. It means: we must flee for shelter from the pressures and difficulties that our exposed position gives us, and we must flee *to the right*.

Ever since the ISL was born, we have conceived of the power of Independent So-

cialist ideas as consisting precisely in the fact that we have an *alternativeto* offer to both rival ideologies: capitalism and Social-Democracy, and Stalinism. We *counterposed* our ideas to them.

That was a hard row to hoe. We have hoed it for over 17 years. Perhaps the miracle is that we have lasted so long, under such difficult pressures, pressures that have broken the backs and collapsed the guts of so many, many groups.

Over on the other side, in the Trotskyist movement, on the (politically) pro-Stalinist side--the Cochranites, there has also developed a reaction against this difficult stance. Instead of trying to counterpose their own perspective to both reformism and Stalinism--in their own Cannonite way-- the Cochranites lit out in the direction of liquidating into the general Stalinoid movement, becoming an amorphous "non-sectarian" tendency within it, even without an organization of their own.

And over on our side, we have a bisymmetric phenomenon, one which you can understand only in the light of this type of pattern: namely, the tendency to give up these "sectarian prejudices" of ours that we hold a kind of socialism which must be *counterposed* to both reformism and Stalinism, one which must live *independently* (as long as there is no mass labor or socialist party)--one which has an attractive power, however few they be now, to those who are casting around from those two bankrupt tendencies.

We used to talk about "raising our banner"--the "banner of revolutionary Marxism"--but that was in days now considered days of "jargon." Now we have got to make ourselves "respectable," acceptable to the right, we must adapt to them, merge into them... It is a sort of "Cochranism of the right"; that is, it moves in the direction of the SP just as Cochran moved in the direction of the Stalinoid circles.

This is not only a consequence of changed politics; it also, in turn, gives impetus to change and adapts politics to suit; there is an interaction.

That is the process that is under way. This resolution is, so far, the brashest example of it.

The ISL leadership is going through a veritable political paroxysm, triggered off by Shachtman and the SP orientation.

Some comrades are under the impression that the SP orientation and liquidation into the SP is simply an "organizational" step which can be taken while keeping our politics of yesterday intact. Absurd! Shachtman knows that; I know it too. No; the SP orientation comes out of a political crisis, but the pity of it is that this PC majority (in particular Shachtman) is, as a result of its crisis itself, incapable of putting this crisis before the League. It adopts the posture that the crisis isn't there.

In this light, the present "New Road" with regard to capitalist candidates is only the *corner of the iceberg*, sticking up out of the waters. To be sure, it is a wonder that there is even this much to see. *For Shachtman doesn't want to discuss the ISL's politics at this convention.* He is interested in only one thing: get liquidated into the SP, and you'll learn the political accompaniments later!

So the Political Committee majority "suddenly" adopts this New Road line on capitalist candidates. "Overnight" they raise their hands for it. But it is not really that sudden. Their politics had already been hollowed out.

(Following are manuscript notes for presentation given by Hal Draper on the dispute at the convention on "Arms to Hungary." In its issue of June 24, 1957, Labor Action had printed the Political Committee's draft resolution on "The Road for World Socialism and the Anti-Stalinist Revolution," drafted by Hal Draper. However, the majority of the PC had voted to take out or change two sections. Draper therefore submitted two amendments on these sections, published in the same issue, as follows:

Amendments

The following amendments are submitted by Comrade Hal Draper.

(1) ON ARMS TO HUNGARY.

In Part II, second paragraph, after "Political aid!"—replace the sentence beginning "We do not advocate . . ." with the following:

"We do not call for such actions as would turn an anti-Stalinist revolution into an inter-imperialist war. With this in mind, we do not call on any of the imperialist powers, including the U. S., or on the UN, to intervene in this battle militarily or by sending arms."

(2) ON THE SOCIAL-DEMOCRACY.

In Part II, section (3), last paragraph of section—replace this paragraph with the following:

"In the most concrete way, not in theory but in demonstrated life, the lack

of a revolutionary policy to the west of the Iron Curtain was one of the factors which blocked the extension and victory of the East European revolution in 1956. It is therefore the continuing responsibility of the socialist left in the West ("something we can do") to transform this factor, namely, the complete degeneration and theoretical bankruptcy of the official Social Democratic leaderships in Europe, who represent nothing more than petty-bourgeois socialism in the working-class movement; that is, the policy of reforms within the framework of maintaining capitalism, at its best, and social-imperialism, at the worst. Nevertheless, despite the political character of its leadership, we note our continuing view that the place of revolutionary socialists is within these mass social-democratic parties in Europe, and not in sects outside them."

Albert Gates gave the presentation for the majority, and Draper for his own amendments. Due to lack of time Draper's presentation concentrated solely on the first, dealing with the question of whether the United States should have sent armed aid to the Hungarian Revolution of 1956.

The following are his manuscript notes for this presentation.

ARMS TO HUNGARY?

The point is not to denounce the Hungarians for *wanting* arms; nor to denounce them for getting arms. In fact, the point is not to denounce them at all! We were on their side. For that matter, we don't denounce the Algerian nationalists for their terrorism (though we ourselves are not for terrorist methods).

The point is: *we do not call on the U.S.* to send arms.

Compare the situation of the Irish revolution in the First World War and the Kaiser government, which was willing to help them, for its own reasons: would *we call* on the Kaiser to send arms? (As distinct from the question of the right of the Irish revolutionists to take arms from wherever they can get them.)

Why not? Because WE cannot, and do not, take political responsibility for support to our own imperialist government in IMPLEMENTING this call.

This position was thought out, and discussed out, in regard to the Spanish Civil War too. (This, of course, was not the only case. There was the issue of the Italo-Ethiopian war and of economic sanctions (and collective security).)

Shachtman has suddenly announced that Dan iel Bell was right about the questions of arms on the Spanish Civil War! He now claims that our slogan "against the U.S. embargo on arms to Spain" was just a shamefaced way of being FOR the U.S. sending arms to Spain (as Bell claimed). This is not so. We were against the U.S. policy of preventing ANYONE from sending arms to Spain, even private sources, and rightly against. This is not equivalent to demanding that the U.S. government itself send arms to Spain.

Secondly: Shachtman echoes Bell's ridicule of the demand "independent workers' aid to Spain ONLY"--i.e. we do not demand U.S. government intervention. According to this line of ridicule, this meant that only "poppuns and jackknives" could be gotten to the Loyalist government. (a) This is not so. There was a reality: gun-running from France over the Spanish border to provide arms to Spain, AGAINST the Blum embargo. The embargo policy (Blum's or Roosevelt's) was designed to prevent this. (b) In any case, the point was to stress opposition to *imperialist* intervention.

Compare the "ridicule" that could be heaped on the idea of individuals (mere individuals) going to Spain to fight for the Loyalst side, as compared with sending the army! (But since Stalinism had a mass movement, its International Brigade did play an important role.)

In any case, the point was: against CALLING ON THE U.S. to send arms. Remember the international context of the Spanish Civil War, as an international focus of conflict between the fascist axis and the capitalist democracies. In fact, at that time, there was a wing of the movement that claimed the war was ALREADY an international war and refused to support the Loyalist side on that account. We said no, that it could BECOME an international imperialist war breaking out around this as a spark, but that it had not YET become so. But imagine: the U.S. sends a shipload of arms; the Germans sink the ship; the U.S. waxes belligerent: WHAT DO WE SAY ABOUT THIS? Do we say simply, "Aw, let it go, send another ship"? Or: "Arm the supply ships and shoot back"? or don't we say this?

This issue is even clearer in the case of the Hungarian case. Everybody felt so. In the U.S. there was much more unanimous sympathy for the Hungarians than there was for the Spanish Loyalists; yet, from right to left, virtually no one was in favor of a call to send arms--except the Hungarian Fascist emigres in the U.S. and the extreme Right in the U.S.

This was so because it was so clear that a call to send arms either HAS TO BE BACKED UP, or it is hot air, insincere.

You want to send arms to Hungary--"realistically," a la Dan Bell? Then take responsibility for this demand! How are the arms to be sent? Presumably by an air-drop. The Russians shoot the plane down. Do you call on the U.S. government to shoot back, or not to shoot back? Do you arm the plane or don't you? Or do you simply

send a complaint to the UN, pick up your marbles and go away? Or, if you are serious about taking responsibility, do you next send an armed squadron over, to get the arms delivered?

And if armed conflict, between the U.S. and Russia, breaks out because the U.S. government is trying to carry out YOUR demand, do you then say "This is not our war--Third Camp--no political support" etc.? *You cannot make a demand whose consequences you are not willing to accept.*

Or would the case be any different if it was the UN that sends the arms? I must patiently remind you: (1) the UN has NO arms to send (except, of course, what would be provided by the U.S. or any other country). (2) What would it send--old rifles from the Indian army? And WHOSE planes would deliver them?

Behind this question, and involved in this question, is the issue of the relation of socialists to OUR OWN IMPERIALIST GOVERNMENT.

Let us make a distinction. There used to be heard a pseudo-Marxist formula which went, ""We make no demands in foreign policy on a capitalist government." That is absurd, and I have been debunking that for two decades. But once a comrade has learned that that pseudo-Marxist formula is false, maybe he concludes that therefore all bars are down. No. The Marxist position is: We make no demands on our own imperialist government *which involves our taking responsibility for ourselves for the imperialist consequences of the demand.* We take no political responsibility for what THEY do in implementing THEIR imperialist policy. We do not call on our imperialist government to come to the military aid of a "good cause"--because we know that they will be carrying out their own imperialist policy, not the "good cause." Both World War I and II started with an issue of the defense of national freedom., ostensibly.

So, in present-day politics and in our Marxist training and tradition, the question of "sending arms to a good cause" is a question which wholly involves *our attitude toward our OWN imperialist government--nothing less than that.*

The trend of the PC majority is to feel: our attitude toward our own imperialist government is too "hard," too "sectarian," too "radical," too "anti." Soften up a bit [they feel], bend a bit; the main enemy, after all, is Stalinism; of course, of course, we're not FOR the Western war camp--we're for the "Third Camp," also for the Father, Son and Holy Ghost; but--can't we just support them a leettle bit, in order to give it to those Stalinists? Nothing serious, you understand, just a couple of fingers...

No, we can't. We can't just give a couple of fingers...

This brings me to a third point. Shachtman has been thinking this over for some years now; that is perfectly obvious. He started in connection with the 1951 convention. To my then draft of an international resolution, he added a section which included: "Even if, at the outset, a labor government should not yet be a socialist labor government..." still we "defend it" in the next war. The PC had to change this basically [see the 1951 resolution on this point], and Shachtman voted against the PC's action on this. This episode was followed, later, by the notorious article Shachtman published in the N.I. on "Socialism and War Policy," which caused something of an uproar. Shachtman retreated. Then there was the article by Robert Magnus, in which that comrade took a big stride toward social-patriotism, representing the victory of the Western camp as being the "lesser evil." In the course of this article, he advocated support in the next war to a BLP-governed England "even though mobilized in and subordinated to the American war bloc." In the Political Committee, in the pre-convention discussion before the 1954 convention, Shachtman indicated more than once that he agreed with this. I pointed to this, on the other hand, as a crass example of the pro- danger in the party. But I couldn't get him to take a clear stand on it. In my draft of the international resolution at the 1954 convention, therefore, I put in a specific repudiation of the Magnus position. I pointed this out specifically in the Political Committee. Shachtman remained silent on it. At that convention,

he admitted that he agrees with a formulation like Magnus's. In my summary speech for the resolution, I specifically and clearly repudiated this view of Shachtman's; I told the convention that the resolution repudiated it. Shachtman said nothing. A motion was passed (accepted by Shachtman) which called on the PC, and on Shachtman in particular, to present the views on this question and make possible a discussion. Shachtman postponed and postponed, and never did present his views on it. (You see, the time was not yet ripe for him to give us the benefits of his thinking...)

In the present resolution, before this convention, I have deliberately repeated, in the text of the resolution, the passage which repudiates that Magnus position and also the view which Shachtman admitted holding; and I drew this to the attention of the PC in presenting the draft to them. It is no small point.

For an organization that is politically and theoretically alive, it would be an impossible situation for the leader of an organization to remain in such a position. I have challenged Shachtman to speak up and give his views--and I'm talking only of those views already smoked out of him. An educational discussion should not be evaded.

INDEPENDENT SOCIALIST LEAGUE
114 W. 14th Street
New York 11, N.Y.

September 30, 1957

Dear Comrades:

The following is the text of the letter sent to the National Executive Committee of the Socialist Party-Social Democratic Federation regarding the ISL proposal for unity. The SP-SDF is holding a plenum of its NEC on October 19.

* * * * *

September 25, 1957

National Executive Committee
Socialist Party-Social Democratic Federation
303 Fourth Avenue
New York, New York

Attention: Herman Singer, National Secretary

Dear Comrades:

At the July, 1957, national convention of the Independent Socialist League, the delegates adopted by unanimous vote a resolution in favor of unity with the Socialist Party-Social Democratic Federation. Immediately prior to our own convention, the national convention of the Young Socialist League, adopted a resolution along the same line. I have been instructed to communicate this decision to your Committee and to call your attention to the most important elements of our viewpoint.

Our resolution on unification takes note of the complete discredit and collapse of the Communist movement in the United States and the effect this has had on stimulating a reconsideration of the problems of socialism and the socialist movement in this country. It says:

"What ruined socialism in the United States was its identification with Russian tyranny by a majority of radicals as well as by non-socialists. It will not arise from its present state of fragmentation and isolation--more, it will not deserve to do so--unless it comes forward unambiguously as a democratic movement.

"It takes its position against capitalism, against Stalinism, and for socialism, making clear in its platform and the social system it proposes to substitute for capitalism in the United States is now what prevails in Russia or other nations dominated by the Communists.

"It stands for democracy everywhere and gives moral support and encouragement to those who fight for it in every nation. It defends democracy in the United States and strives to extend it and in all the capitalist countries of the world. But it stands equally for democracy in Russia and its satellites. It insists that the people deserve at least the same democratic rights there as we demand here."

The Independent Socialist League is aware of the efforts being made, some deliberate and others unwittingly, to assemble a movement in this country out of elements which, while rejecting the Communist Party, none-the-less support the Communist regimes in the name of socialism, or regard them as some kind of working-class or socialist states. "Such a coalition," states our resolution, "could hardly play a genuinely positive role in the growth of a socialist movement as we conceive of it." It is our view, as the resolution continues, that:

"What is required is a clearly democratic socialist pole of attraction as an alternative to Stalinism. If it can be created and built, it will speed up the process of rooting out the last vestiges of Stalinist influence and induce all other groups to shake off the remnants of its ideology. The first elements of such a center exist among those already committed, like the Independent Socialist League, to democratic socialism. These are all the groups and tendencies that clearly oppose Stalinism; whose socialism is in no wise identified with it; who declare that socialism and democracy are inseparable; and who maintain that socialism cannot be imposed by dictators above but must come from the democratic decision of the people.....

"Of all the groups, one stands out uniquely: the Socialist Party-Social Democratic Federation. In size, it is not larger than others. It, however, is already broad enough in character to serve as an inclusive movement embracing a wide range of democratic-socialist tendencies. It represents, to the interested public, socialism in general; unlike the Socialist Labor Party, it is not hostile to the labor movement; it is small but it is not discredited and enjoys the respect, if not the support, of many militants in the labor movement. It can play a special role in unifying and rebuilding the movement.....

"The Independent Socialist League decides firmly in favor of unity with the Socialist Party as it is at present constituted and without posing any conditions of an organizational or political kind save those that are incontestable for all members enjoying equality of rights and duties."

Our decision in favor of unity recognizes that there are differences of opinions among us all on many questions of historical, theoretical and even political character. We are for a unification that will be honest, healthy and durable, and will be assured by mutual good will and understanding. Our resolution states:

"To effectuate unity with the Socialist Party we do not believe that it is necessary for either side to gloss over or conceal actual differences or criticisms of their respective positions on questions of immediate importance. Rather it is possible to discuss them not in a harsh or hostile manners but in a non-polemical, non-factional spirit.

"The Independent Socialist League has neither the intention nor the desire to unite with the Socialist Party in order to capture it, for even if this were possible, such a 'victory' would not only be meaningless but, what is worse, it would defeat the very

"objective of converting the Socialist Party from its present position of isolation and weakness to an effective influential broad democratic socialist movement in the best traditions of the Debs period. Without for a moment abandoning our right to present our own views on the policies and tactics of the socialist movement, we favor the exercise of this elementary right in such a way as to serve the aim of building the Socialist Party, of bringing into it new and numerous elements from the labor movement, the Negro movement, the student youth, the intellectuals and professional people, and not in such a way as to sterilize the party by making it a vanishing battle ground for hard and fast factions or sects."

I call your attention, finally to the position taken by our resolution on a question before the socialist movement of prime importance in winning for it the support of socialist-minded trade-unionists--support without which socialism can never become a significant movement in this country. It is the controversial question of political action policy. Our own stand in favor of independent political action in the form of a Labor Party is probably well known to you. But we recognize that there are divergencies on this question even among those who share the goal of a Labor Party. The question is not an easy one to resolve. Our resolution states:

"One line of divergency here lies between those on the one hand who would support bourgeois candidates on the old party tickets under certain conditions, and those, on the other, who propose to support only the candidates of the labor movement against the old party machines. This difference will probably persist until labor forms its own party and perhaps even after. A reunited movement must permit the cooperate coexistence of both these views within the framework of a single organization and provide suitable political and organizational forms for their living together without imposing the line of one upon the other. However, we feel that one of the primary tasks of a socialist organization is to clearly and unambiguously, as an organization, oppose support to the capitalist parties and candidates and to dispel illusions about the possibilities of working within, defending or reforming one or the other as the lesser evil. But while favoring such a policy for the party we feel that for the reasons described before, and as on other matters in this broad, inclusive party, no discipline should be imposed on this question. What is involved here is not just a formula to suit the convenience of small groups with divergent views. It is the only practical way to make it possible to bring all those union militants who can be brought into a united socialist movement without waiting for a drastic change in their views on every question."

We are well aware, comrades, that there are many questions in your mind with regard to the ISL uniting with the SP-SDF. There are suspicions and even antagonisms. They have their roots in old conflicts, in difference in origin, and in the course of political development that have brought us to the position of proposing this unification. We, for our part, are ready to discuss all questions that may be in your mind, and to discuss them earnestly and frankly with the desire to remove all obstacles that exist in the path of building a united and effective democratic socialist movement in this country as a living part of the world-wide movement. We are not concerned with narrow

factional or sectarian advantage. The day of the sects has certainly come to an end. We are not concerned with negotiating over post and position, but only with sharing the revived opportunities to build the Socialist Party-Social Democratic Federation. We are profoundly convinced that these opportunities are here and must be utilized to the full by all of us looking to the future rather than to the past. Our resolution says:

"Socialism is on the eve of a new beginning. When it first emerged in this country from a sectarian existence at the turn of the century, it had to break out of the hard shell of the old Socialist Labor Party which rigidly and mechanically subjected all the activities of its members to organizational censorship and controls. To free the movement from stultification, to unleash the initiative of its supporters and to win over new elements among workers, farmers, intellectuals, it was necessary to found a new party, to make a new start: the Socialist Party. In many respects the task today is similar."

We welcome the opportunity to join with you in performing the task.

The Independent Socialist League understands that the Socialist Party-Social Democratic Federation cannot take official action on our proposal to unite into its ranks except by decision of its next national convention. Similarly, final action on terms of joining the ranks of the Socialist Party-Social Democratic Federation would have to be taken by a national convention of the Independent Socialist League. For this very reason, however, it seems to us that the membership of the organizations and therewith the convention delegates would be in the best position to arrive at a decision if preliminary exploration of our proposal has been undertaken. We therefore suggest that you designate representatives of your National Executive Committee who are authorized to meet with representatives of our Committee for the purpose of informal consideration of our proposal and of any questions or proposals you may have to present to us.

As I have already indicated, the Young Socialist League is in substantial agreement with the Independent Socialist League on the question of unity with the Socialist Party-Social Democratic Federation, and therewith the Young People's Socialist League.

With Socialist greetings,
For the National Committee of the
Independent Socialist League,
Max Shachtman,
National Chairman.

INDEPENDENT SOCIALIST LEAGUE

114 West 14 Street
New York 11, N.Y.

September 30, 1957

TO ALL BRANCHES:

Dear Comrades;

Through an inadvertance the National Office failed to inform you that the discussion on political action which the Convention referred to the incoming National Committee to organize and which was to begin on September 15 has to be postponed because no contributions for publication have been received. We are therefore advising you that the discussion will begin on October 15. This should allow sufficient time for all those who wish to participate to prepare their contributions for publication in the Forum.

You will be happy to hear that the new pamphlet for the ISL on Socialist Unity with an introduction by Comrade Shachtman, bringing the question up to date, is already set and ready for the press. We expect that we shall have it ready for sale in a week or ten days.

This is an extremely important political pamphlet for the ISL. In carrying the convention resolution on Socialist Unity and Max Shachtman's introduction, the pamphlet should serve as an invaluable aid in the general discussions taking place throughout the country and more particularly in the execution of the policy of the ISL.

We are asking the branches to send in their orders now, not only that we may be in a position to begin its circulation, but so that you may prepare now its circulation in an organized way, directing your activities in the profitable directions. We want to treat the circulation of this pamphlet in the same way we did the pamphlet by Benson, with the added reminder, that this pamphlet is directed more specifically to the major political decision taken by the recent convention and should be placed in the hands of every Socialist Party member, and every socialist, organized or not.

Fraternally,

Albert Gates,
National Secretary
Sam Bottone,
Administrative Secretary

INDEPENDENT SOCIALIST LEAGUE
114 West 14 Street
New York 11, N.Y.

October 3, 1957

Dear Comrades;

The following exchange of correspondence between Max Shachtman and Norman Thomas is being made available for informational purposes only. It is not expected that it will be used other than under discreet circumstances. The letter from Norman Thomas came after an attempt to get him to speak at a meeting of the ISL in New York City. The questions which were raised are without doubt those in the mind of every SP-SDFer. We feel that the letter represents a sincere effort for clarification, clearing the way for a further stage in the ISL's proposal for unity with the SP-SDF.

Following are the relevant sections from Norman Thomas' letter and Max Shachtman's reply.

Fraternally,

Sam Bottone,
Administrative Secretary

* * * * *

Max Shachtman
Independent Socialist League
114 West 14 Street
New York, N.Y.

September 20, 1957

Dear Max:

From our former conversations, you know that I would like unity on a proper basis. I am aware that, especially in Detroit, you have some valuable people. I think, however, that it is necessary, as far as I am concerned to get a clarification that does not now exist on such points as these:

Would the ISL explicitly and honestly abandon existence as an organized caucus, open or secret, in the Party?

Where do you stand on Leninism?

I would not want to impose on a democratic socialist party absolute identity of opinion about Lenin but it is of primary importance to say that Leninism is not democratic socialism. Out of Leninism grew by natural processes the Stalinism which we repudiate. This although I personally believe that if Lenin had lived, he might repudiated Stalinism or been repudiated by it. You see, I am more and more of the opinion that communism as it developed wasn't a mistaken form of socialism but a betrayal of socialism."

Sincerely yours,

Norman Thomas

October 1, 1957

Dear Norman;

I want to do all I can to rebuild a democratic socialist movement in this country that is capable of dealing with the political problems of our time. To me, this means a healthy union of all socialists under the banner of the Socialist Party-Social Democratic Federation so that there may be a maximum concentration of efforts to utilize the growing possibilities now offered us. The Independent Socialist League has, I believe, a worthwhile contribution to make to this union if it is achieved, as you put it in your letter of September 20th, on a proper basis. Past relationships have created difficulties for unity between us. I welcome your request for clarification that will remove remaining obstacles. I do not want unity attained by force, by stratagem or in the dark of the moon. I want it by intelligent understanding of what all of us really want and of how we hope to resolve our common problems.

First: the Independent Socialist League does not want or intend to form or maintain "an organized caucus, open or secret, in the Party." I would not want you to take this statement, which I make emphatically as the general view of our comrades, merely as a matter of personal assurance. It represents above all good common sense. The Party is today exceedingly weak. We do not want to unite with it in order to make it weaker. As the Independent Socialist League's convention resolution put it, we do not want to convert the Socialist Party-Social Democratic Federation into a "vanishing battleground" of dispute among factions and sects, but into a broad movement including all socialists who are ready to cooperate earnestly and responsibly despite the differences among individuals or even tendencies.

Any Independent Socialist League caucus would automatically establish walls between Party members. What we want is to break down such walls which generate and stimulate prejudices, antagonisms and artificial or outdated factional alignments, and prevent the Party from deciding the urgent problems of the movement in an atmosphere of mutual influencing of comrades by the free exchange of opinions and free thinking about them. We do not want a loose federation of hard factions under the common name of the Party, threatening it with bitter internal battles, interminable dispute and new splits. We want a durable unity and a broad socialist movement. We must learn to live together in a single political home, where regard for the unity and progress of the Party determines the respect we have for each other's views and the relationship we maintain in discussing them. That is why I oppose the formation of any open or secret Independent Socialist League caucus. By the same token I would regret the formation of a caucus by anyone else.

Naturally, we would not like to see any attempt to introduce or enforce rigid intellectual conformity or political conformity. Many of us know from bitter experience the result of "monolithism," and we abhor it as alien to socialism, either as an organized pol-

ical movement or as a social order. Our generation knows only too well the crimes committed in the name of "democratic centralism". In your preface to "The Aims and Tasks of Democratic Socialism," it is pointed out that "many socialist tendencies helped to form the whole." That is true. The comrades of the Independent Socialist League generally represent in the broad socialist movement a tendency whose counterparts are to be found in many of the sections of the Socialist International. As their special obligation, so to say, all tendencies owe loyalty to the Party as a whole. We are ready to assume that obligation in full and in all sincerity, with conscious regard to the special tasks we share in building the Party in this country. We are not asking for special consideration or special rights. We do want exactly the same rights as all other members of the Party, not more and also not less. We do not believe a smooth and fruitful unity can be based on approaching or dealing with any comrade, or group of comrades, in such a way as leaves them with the feeling of "second-class citizenship" or "trial membership" or any other kind of special status - that of inferiority or that of superiority.

I mean every word of it - and I am sure I speak for all our comrades - when I say: we are prepared to lean over backward to prove in deeds that any concept of a "raid" on the Party or the "capture" of the Party is utterly alien to our views and intent. We regard all the party comrades as our equals in the work of rebuilding socialism, not as a narrow or slightly refurbished sect, but as an effective * in this country. In turn, we want to be regarded by all others as their equals. That would be one of the best assurances of a sound basis for the unification.

Second: the Independent Socialist League does not subscribe to any doctrine called Leninism. It does not have an official position on the subject and I am pretty certain that nobody could get the League to commit itself officially on a term which has been so varying and conflictingly defined as to make discussion of it more often semantic than ideological or political.

To me, and surely to most of our comrades, Leninism is a question primarily of historical importance in our time. Most often what is in people's minds is the Russian Revolution and democracy as the road and aim of socialism. In our view the Russian revolution has long ago been crushed. What is the fundamental and urgent political question is the relation between democracy and socialism. These questions concern socialists today and I want to outline my views on them.

We regard the Russian revolution of 1917, which Lenin led, as a socialist revolution that established a genuine worker's government. I have always defended this proposition and so have our comrades. You yourself have often in the past taken a similar view. I think it worth while here to note the fact that four years after the revolution, Morris Hillquit, a pretty severe critic of the Bolsheviks, wrote these interesting words: "It is pretty idle caviling to dispute the Socialist character of the Russian revolution....The Russian revolution has taken possession of the government in the name of the workers. It has effectively expropriated capitalist owners and nationalized the greater part of the industries. It has also written into its program the socialization of the land. Measured

by all practical tests it is therefore a Socialist revolution in character as well as intent. If it has not come as a result of the course of historic and economic development outlined by Marx, it has occurred through the working of another set of social conditions and forces, which have proved potent enough to create and maintain it. Its continued existence, year after year, in the face of almost incredible domestic difficulties and embittered foreign attacks, proves that we are not dealing with a mere freakish episode, but with a monumental historic event. This will remain true even if the Soviet government should not prove able to maintain itself indefinitely and should yield to another and substantially different form of government."

Now, I believe that the Soviet government finally yielded to "another and substantially different form of government" under the rise and consolidation of Stalin's power. I believe it to be as different as counter-revolution is from revolution, as different as the destruction of socialism is from the movement toward socialism. When you say that one grew out of the other "by natural processes," I would agree with that if it means "as a result of objective material forces." To that, I believe it important to add that Stalinism based itself to a considerable extent upon some of the ideas and institutions defended by Lenin. These it exploited or distorted to serve its own totalitarian and anti-socialist ends. Mainly, they were put forth originally in the desperate, groping attempt to get out of the blind alley formed around the revolution by the walls of the terrible backwardness of the country and the isolation of the republic.

I have in mind, most particularly, the decision of the Tenth Bolshevik Congress to prohibit factions inside the party, which played an enormous role in facilitating the rise of totalitarianism; and the point of view which became a principle defended by all the Bolshevik leaders that all parties must be outlawed and kept outlawed. I must say that I unthinkingly accepted this proposition for years in the Communist and Trotskyist movements. But the grim realities of Stalinism forced a reconsideration of many questions. This one was not the least important. Fourteen years ago, I tried to re-examine this vital question, and I hope you will bear with a quotation from my article of 1943:

"The idea of one party in power is one thing, and not at all in violation of either bourgeois or worker's democracy. The idea that all other parties must be, not in opposition, with the rights of oppositions, but in prison, violates both bourgeois and worker's democracy, and it is with the latter that we are concerned here. Even if every non-Bolshevik group, without exception, had resorted to armed struggle against the Soviet power, it was a disastrous mistake to outlaw them in perpetuity...

"The whole Bolshevik party was politically miseducated and ideologically intimidated against the very idea of more than one party in the country, and for this miseducation none of its leaders can escape his share of the responsibility...

"The revolutionary Marxists must learn, and then must teach, that the struggle for democratic rights is not just a clever device

for embarrassing the undemocratic bourgeoisie, that the struggle is not confined to the days of capitalism. On the contrary, it is precisely when the new revolutionary power is set up that the struggle for democratic rights and democracy acquires its fullest meaning and its first opportunity for complete realization.

"The revolutionists after the overturn of capitalism differ from revolutionists before that overturn not in that they no longer demand them, but in the fact that they are for the first time really and fully able to promulgate them and to see to it that they are preserved from all infringement, including infringement by the new state or the bureaucrats in it. The right of free speech, press and assembly, the right to organize and the right to strike, are not less necessary under the dictatorship of the proletariat, but more necessary and more possible.

"Socialism can and will be attained by only the fullest realization of democracy ... That is what the revolutionary Marxists should teach. But first of all they must learn it, and thoroughly. It is one of the most important lessons of the Russian revolution and its decay."

In the past fourteen years, I have expressed these views with increasing insistence and emphasis. I consider them today to be of fundamental importance to the coexistence and cooperation of all socialists, whatever other matters they may differ on. It is from this socialist standpoint that I want to fight against the Stalinist regime, the Communist movement, their supporters, defenders and apologists. I am completely agreed that the regime is not just a "mistaken form of socialism" or any kind of socialism, but its betrayal and negation. And as you know, for years I defended the view that far from being some kind of socialism, the Russian regime represents a new form of totalitarian exploitation dominated by a new ruling class.

But I cannot see the political wisdom, or the factual foundation, for considering such an anti-socialist regime as the logical, inevitable and authentic continuation of a socialist revolution. This is precisely the main claim to socialist justification and legitimacy made by the Stalinists. I want to be able to say in any polemic it is necessary to conduct against them: You have not carried out the ideal and principles of the socialist revolution to a logical conclusion - you have betrayed and destroyed it. And I believe that the basic and relevant facts enable me to make this assertion honestly, and sincerely. By defending everything that was said and done by Lenin or the other leaders of the revolution? Certainly not! But by emphasizing the radical differences between the revolution and the present regime.

I have looked back on some of your own writings of fairly recent times and find them highly relevant to my point. You have written: "In Lenin's time the Communist Party was itself democratic." And: "Everybody knows that Lenin started with an extreme approach to equalitarianism." And: "It is true that in the very early days of the revolution the degree of worker's control in the factories was very great." And - more along similar lines.

Now I want to be able to say, in such debates as I have mentioned, that the Stalinist regimes have wiped out and betrayed all of that. To me, this is dictated by good political sense and is justified by ascertainable facts. I consider it of high political value and significance to say, as you do in your letter to me: "...if Lenin had lived, he might have repudiated Stalinism or been repudiated by it." If anything, I would put it more emphatically, for it is my deep conviction. I say this without any thought of absolving Lenin or any other Bolshevik leader from their own responsibilities, excesses in the revolution, or of mistakes afterward. But also without any thought of making ... mandatory upon all members of a democratic socialist party what you called "absolute identity of opinion" on a subject that is primarily of historical importance, and on which a pretty wide diversity of view exists - as it should - in every part of the Socialist International with which I am familiar. Only a sterile sect demands uniformity of opinion on all questions: historical, theoretical, philosophical, political and tactical. A political movement should and can be built only upon the degree of agreement that is necessary for it to carry out its political tasks of the day effectively. Organizations like the Socialist Labor Party or the Socialist Workers Party are sorry examples of the former. I would like to see the SP-SDF as an encouraging model of the latter.

From my standpoint, an adequate and acceptable basis for the necessary degree of agreement is offered (I was pleased to note this upon re-reading the document in recent times) by the declaration of the Socialist International, "The Aims and Tasks of Democratic Socialism," as presented with the prefatory statement by the Socialist Party in this country. In the words and spirit of that preface, I subscribe to the declaration as a sound basis for the unification of all democratic socialists in this country today. I will not say that I agree with every word in it or with every omission from it. But I accept it as adequate for our problem. I accept the prefatory statement that: "Some will be disappointed that the statements are so general. Others will recall that Socialists themselves differ widely on important immediate issues. A few will look in vain for a complete blueprint of a socialist society. The American Socialist Party, too, has some differences with the sentiments expressed, and this is doubtless true of every party affiliated or otherwise connected with the International. In the Socialist International, there is room for constructive dissent."

I cannot hope that even this long letter has dealt with the questions you and other comrades have in their minds exhaustively or with the fullest satisfaction. But I hope it suffices to throw a clearer light on these questions than now exists. And I hope that it will bring a little closer the day of unification toward which the ISL is eager to make its contribution in our common cause.

The views I have set forth are necessarily my own and in my words. But I feel sure that they are fairly and honestly the consensus of our comrades, even if others might put forth substantially the same views in different words.

I think I can say the same about the consensus among the comrades of the Young Socialist League. They are naturally less involved in direct association with old and outlived doctrinal disputes and organizational or factional conflicts. So much the better for our time and our task, I say. I know you have expressed some distrust about one of their members. I assume you have your reasons. I must say, however, that this is a personal case which cannot have political importance and that, so far as my own experience goes, I have found no grounds for questioning his loyalty to the movement. I would doubt that the YSL is composed of angels. But I have no doubt about this, that in almost forty years of socialist activity, which began in the youth movement and was never divorced from it, I have not seen or worked with a better or more devoted and enthusiastic group of young socialists than these comrades. They would be a pillar and a credit to any movement they supported. I am especially appreciative of their work and their importance because I am highly aware that a socialist movement that does not make its greatest headway among the new generation will never succeed in really breaking out of the isolation that afflicts us all.

I ought to -at any rate - I want to say one closing word about yourself. It is to express my esteem for the part you have been playing in the work of a new beginning for socialism in this country to enable it to face forward with some real confidence. I think I know that it has not been an easy job; I do know that it has not brought everybody's approval. I would like to see the job done. To restore socialist comradeship between us is one of my hopes. Your help in realizing it, in putting many of the old conflicts that divided us into the old lumber room, has been precious, and not to me alone. I look forward with frank impatience to the time when you and I, and all our comrades, can appear on the same platform, not in order to debate or to tear each other down, but to build up a socialist movement that will make us happy and proud.

Sincerely yours,

Max Shachtman