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**Conversations
with
Wohlforth**

MINUTES OF THE SPARTACIST-ACFI
UNITY NEGOTIATING SESSIONS

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PREFACE

The 8 sessions of unity negotiations between Spartacist and the American Committee for the Fourth International (ACFI) took place from 18 June to 8 October 1965. The minutes, taken by the secretary in shorthand, are correct and complete almost to the word; the first six sets of minutes were adopted by the two negotiating committees during the course of the talks.

As transcripts of the spoken word, the minutes may be somewhat confusing to the reader, to whom the specific incidents debated may not be common knowledge. Other numbers of our Marxist Bulletin series provide explanation and documentation of the earlier history of relations between Spartacist and ACFI. To summarize briefly here: The two groups were originally a united Revolutionary Tendency (RT) within the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), and both looked for political leadership to the International Committee for the Fourth International (IC) whose leading section was the British Socialist Labour League (SLL). In 1962, while still inside the SWP, two leaders of the RT, Tim Wohlforth and Art Philips, under the guidance of the SLL's Gerry Healy, deliberately forced a split in the RT ostensibly over the dispute within the RT over the nature of the SWP. Because of the fraudulent nature of the split and the organizational atrocities of Wohlforth-Philips, the majority of the RT comrades refused to be part of Wohlforth's "Reorganized Minority Tendency" (RMT). In 1963-4 the Wohlforthites were instrumental in deliberately bringing about the expulsion of the RT from the SWP. Shortly thereafter the RMT (having split internally, the unstable bloc with Philips having blown up) engineered its own expulsion from the SWP. The former RT majority around Robertson-White-Mage organized around the publication of the SPARTACIST and later became the Spartacist League. The RMT changed its name to ACFI, publishing the Bulletin of International Socialism; this tendency now calls itself the Workers League.

Negotiation and Its Aftermath

The negotiating sessions themselves have something of an abstract quality. To the Wohlforthites they were just a game, as Wohlforth did not seriously intend to unify. The negotiations were begun at the insistence of Spartacist on the basis that the formal political positions of the two groups were too similar to justify separation on organizational grounds. ACFI replied by attempts at fraternization which were no more and no less than an attempted raid, while refusing to state that unity was possible or principled. It was not until the 5th session that Wohlforth made this admission, and throughout, the ACFI negotiators continued to insist that splitting the RT in 1962 had been "principled". Relations between the two groups deteriorated visibly throughout the last few negotiating sessions, culminating in a frank show-down in the 8th meeting over the 1962 split and the wretched record of ACFI. Logically, this might well have meant the cessation of all attempts to unify. At this point, Gerry Healy instructed ACFI to proceed with unity forthwith. In this sense, the negotiations are unreal: they actually had little to do with bringing about the Northern (Montreal) joint unity conference which followed them. The Spartacist side had from the start been willing to unite; ACFI had no control over its policies, having as an article of faith entrusted absolutely and in advance all decision-making to the British.

Following the Northern conference, both groups sent delegations to the April 1966 IC Conference in London at which the united U.S. section was to have been set up. At that Conference, however, occurred what is undoubtedly one of the most hilarious organizational atrocities ever: James Robertson, Spartacist's senior delegate, was expelled from the Conference ostensibly for failing to apologize for missing a session (see SPARTACIST #6). What lay behind the facade was that the Spartacist delegation had presented to the Conference, in the context of general political agreement and willingness to accept international democratic centralism, our differences with the SLL's position on Cuba, the roots of Pabloism, etc. As had been shown earlier by the 1962 split, the IC leadership would not permit U.S. Trotskyists to fight for their political positions inside the IC. Following the IC Conference, the political deterioration of the IC line (its embracing of Mao's "Cultural Revolution" purge and of the Arab militarists of Egypt and Syria as leading an undefined "Arab Revolution") rapidly reached the point that seeking to heal the organizational rupture was no longer posed.

History is Bunk?

Throughout the negotiations, Spartacist's careful and scrupulous attitude toward our record is belittled by ACFI as "bookkeeping", "archaeology", etc. Their own attitude seems to be a kind of learn-by-doing, as an excuse for their history of opportunist zig-zags and political gutlessness. "The net effect from all this is to learn once again it is not very worthwhile to go over old documents," Wohlforth (who, by the way, likes to style himself a theoretician!) says in the 4th session. Confronted with ACFI's vacillations, Maze-lis replies: "we're very proud of the fact that what we're saying now is not what we said then. We have developed, there's nothing wrong with that." (8th session) The opposite approach characterized the Spartacist negotiators. In the words of Al Nelson:

"If you don't learn from history, you are doomed to repeat it." This is the basis for our raising "old" questions (they aren't old).... You said there are formulations in our '63 documents we should both forget. No indeed! The truth is that on almost every major point and tactic in dispute between us over the last years, you have been in error--mostly by your own admission: on the youth question, nature of the SWP (which resulted in our split), on PL, on your assessment of the level of struggle and tasks of the revolutionary party. In '63 you supported the party majority on Black Nationalism and submitted only an action amendment. On the American question your position was that now was the time for the conquest of the masses. We have to agree on what the mistakes were in order to come to a position now. (4th session)

It is because our actions and positions have stood the test of time that we have brought out the actual documents of both sides in the 1962 split (Marxist Bulletin #2 "Nature of the SWP--Revolutionary or Centrist?--Discussion Material of the RT"; and #3 Part I "The Split in the Revolutionary Tendency") while Wohlforth cringes and hopes nobody will notice.

1962 Split

The Wohlforthites sought to justify splitting the RT by alleging its majority intended to quit the SWP. Their claim is given the lie by the fact that we remained in the SWP--until the RMT framed up and then informed on our comrades and continued to act as the attorney for the party Majority in expelling the RT from the youth (for a scathing and accurate account, see Nelson's remarks to the 5th session, pages 4-5). In the same session Wohlforth admitted he forced the split to avoid abiding by RT decisions: "We and the British came to a common judgment at the time of our split. We had no intention of carrying out your line."

Several salient facts about the 1962 split are dealt with elsewhere. The issue, whether the SWP was still a revolutionary party or had become centrist (see M.B. #2), is now clearly resolved in our favor. The organizational atrocity resorted to by Healy-Wohlforth is discussed in detail in M.B. #3. Neither of these points (i.e., the nature of the SWP Majority, the mechanics of the split ultimatum) is debated much in the negotiating sessions. What is discussed herein is who "struggled" inside the SWP. It must be understood that the practical result of Wohlforth's insistence that the SWP was still a solidly revolutionary party and possessed a "proletarian core" was to justify his bloc with the Pabloist central party leadership of Dobbs and Co., defining the largely impotent right-wing oppositions (Weiss, Swabeck) as the main enemy. That this analysis of the party was a cynical fabrication became clear almost immediately, when the ACFI group left the SWP and proceeded to deny that it had ever been a truly revolutionary party at all! As Robertson pointed out: (8th session)

All through 1962 Wohlforth oscillated back and forth, doing something very peculiar to the word "centrist". "Centrist" means nothing if not flux, change, motion, heterogeneous elements lumped together. You insisted that centrism was a finished category, and to say the party is centrist is to say it's finished, that everyone in it is a centrist. Yet centrism means that in the minds of the members are all sorts of contradictory ideas. You made a mockery of the meaning of centrism for the sake of polemical convenience, at the same time carefully avoiding comrade Dobbs. You labelled Weiss and Swabeck the main enemy in the SWP, aided and abetted by the hirelings Hansen and Warde, but not the central party leadership, not Cannon and Dobbs. You worked this angle for only a little while, until the fall of 1963. Since nothing happened in the SWP between the spring and fall of '63 you became dispirited and ready therefore to walk out of the party (maybe you decided the party didn't have a proletarian core after all)....

The Wohlforth tendency continued to exhibit its characteristic lack of backbone and principle at the 1963 SWP Convention. The main issue facing the SWP was Black Nationalism; their capitulation to it was the first application of their Pabloism to the terrain of the domestic class struggle. The SWP defined itself as a "white party" which could have little role in the recruitment of Blacks to revolutionary consciousness. At the 1963 Convention the SWP started

on the course of enthusiastically tail-ending the Black Nationalists from Elijah Muhammed to Rhody Mc Coy. In these negotiating sessions ACFI constantly insisted that the "American Question"--divorced from the Black question, a separation which is artificial in any case--was the important fight. The RMT's long counter-resolution on the American Question declared that the trouble with the SWP was that it had lost contact with the American proletariat, predicted imminent economic crisis and insisted now was the time for the conquest of the masses. In their analysis they were, of course, hopelessly disoriented. But more importantly, what the Wohlforthites would love to overlook now (with their present oversimplified, grossly insensitive position toward Black oppression) is that in 1963 they supported Black Nationalism. Were it not for the fake super-proletarianism of their British mentors, they would probably be supporting it still.

Admits Left/Right Difference

For even when our political similarities were most striking, differences between ACFI and Spartacist tended to follow a pattern: Spartacist showed political seriousness, principle and spine, while ACFI caved in at any opportunity. In the 8th session ACFI spokesman Mazelis expounded a policy of conciliation:

We would have no objection as part of a struggle in a living movement to distribute this welfare workers committee leaflet, calling for negotiations or indicating some confidence in the U.N., as part of a struggle, making it clear where we stand but not refusing to go along with these people. The same thing goes in part for the Fifth Avenue Peace Parade next week. The same thing goes for PL.... You take an Oehlerite line on tactics.

In the same session he was forced to admit that the Spartacist tendency was discernibly to the left of ACFI.

As part of our continuing insistence that a Leninist organization must take responsibility for its past, we are publishing these minutes. In the long run, opportunist, unprincipled conduct will hang its perpetrators by their own rope.

24 April 1970

SPARTACIST-ACFI UNITY NEGOTIATIONS

1st Session.....18 June 1965

Present: Spartacist: Robertson, Turner, Stoute (Harper, secretary)
ACFI: Wohlforth, Mazelis, van Ronk (Michael, alternate)

Meeting convened at 8:00 p.m.

Chairman: Robertson

1. Organizational:

- (a) Chairman - It was agreed to have a rotating chairman, alternating at each meeting.
- (b) Minutes - It was agreed that minutes be prepared jointly by Harper and Mazelis, submitted to the committee for approval, then duplicated.

2. Initial remarks and Agenda:

Robertson: Spartacist would like to do the following in the course of these meetings:

- (1) Clear up certain ambiguities in ACFI communications to us.
- (2) Discuss the various policies of our two organizations and see whether they are compatible within a single organization, including policies on PL, Cuban Revolution, the IC and international organization, SWP including groupings, etc..
- (3) Discussion of broader and more fundamental political questions; and exchange of documents. Spartacist would like to receive 'Rebuilding the Fourth International' and companion material from ACFI.

We hope that there will be a growing awareness that our policies are compatible and that no part of the present work of either group would be 'murdered' by unity. The basic question is, Can we live with each other? Both groups already claim agreement with 'World Prospect for Socialism'. Finally, in our view the question of unity in this country, while not identical with, is inseparable from the question of relations with the IC.

Wohlforth: We have concrete proposals to offer tonight, for discussion between the groups, material we think should be discussed, and for common activity. The points presented by R. are acceptable.

At this point an agenda for the evening's discussion was worked out:

- 1. Clarification of recent communications
- 2. Concrete proposals
- 3. Policies

3. Clarification of recent communications:

- (a) Question raised as to which Spartacist proposal ACFI was accepting: (1) agreement to accept conference decisions, in which case we would proceed at once to a fully fused discussion; or (2) exchange of major documents and circulation of comments and fraternal representation at Spartacist conference.

Wohlforth: Accepting the latter. We feel we can't make judgment about fusion until we ascertain where Spartacist stands; we don't yet have enough information to make such a judgment but have enough to now we are definitely interested. We want as close

contact as possible, personally, between the two groups, and as much discussion as possible between the two groups. Seek to ascertain whether enough--not total--agreement exists on what the tasks are that have to be done in this country at this time and to have discussion around this as well as on theoretical questions.

Disc: Stoute, van Ronk, Mazelis, Wohlforth, Robertson

(b) International Questions:

Wohlforth: We favor a unified Trotskyist organization that should develop as part of an international movement. This requires a combined process: discussion between comrades here and among comrades of the IC. An opportunity for this will be provided by the International discussion coming up in January.

Robertson: We need more elaboration on this. Our fundamental position is that any group which seeks to stand alone in a single country is centrist. We must seek to be part of an international movement. We don't mean mere 'political adherence' but must struggle to build an international movement of a disciplined democratic-centralist character. We believe in an international body whose sections function under discipline.

Wohlforth: We agree on the question of the international movement--our formulation was a necessary formulation.

Disc: Turner, Wohlforth

Van Ronk raised question of Spartacist position toward Posadas group and the letter which appeared in SPARTACIST No.4 from Red Flag.

Wohlforth: The publication of this letter without comment could be interpreted as an association with a basically revisionist grouping to attack the SLL. You have never published material critical of the Posadas group.

Robertson: The SLL deserved criticism for failing to raise a hue and cry over the jailing of the Cuban Trotskyists. We feel free to criticize the SLL where merited as we have no organizational bonds with them presently. We don't share the Posadas line on nuclear war, guerilla warfare or their Pabloist view of the overwhelming objective onrush toward socialism. We haven't criticized the Posadas views publicly because we haven't had to contend with them in this country. However, we would be happy to print in the next SPARTACIST an ACFI letter on Posadasism, together with our editorial endorsement.

Turner: Our own views, conflicting with those of Posadas, appear in the SPARTACIST.

4. Concrete Proposals:

Wohlforth: Within the framework of fraternal relations, we feel the letter from Spartacist did not go far enough toward providing for a meaningful experience. We favor going much further. What is lacking in the Spartacist proposal is the process. We

feel we should have a real, fundamental, discussion and therefore propose:

- (1) In areas where both have members (primarily N.Y. and Bay Area) a minimum of four joint meetings between the memberships as a whole, one session each on the Russian question and Negro question (the Spartacist documents) with a Spartacist reporter (it should not be necessary to set these meetings up debate style), and two more meetings presenting the views of ACFI with an ACFI reporter, on the IC resolution and on our history project (on Marxism in the U.S.), the type of movement we want to build here, tactical questions on work within the SWP, and other questions.
- (2) In other areas where either group has people, a member of the other group will visit for a minimum of one meeting.
- (3) A joint social in N.Y.
- (4) Press: Spartacist has a ban on the public sale of the BULLETIN. This would be understandable if there was hostility between our groups, but with fraternal relations it would be incorrect. We have no objection to our comrades selling the SPARTACIST and we have no objection to your comrades selling the BULLETIN.
- (5) Common activities: We should seek ways to work together over the summer on our common activities. Propose issuance of a joint leaflet in N.Y. giving critical support to the SWP and PL candidates.

Robertson: Before agreeing to proposals on joint membership discussions and fraternization, we want to wait a bit and see how the discussion proceeds in this committee. We want to find out whether these negotiations seem to be going towards unity. If so, then we are willing to open up the process of fraternization. But if these negotiations are not going toward unity, there would be the question of one group using the discussions and fraternization for their own organizational advantage. There are only two alternatives--we are either going to unify or there will be a war to the death between our 2 organizations. Given the close political agreement between our groups, there is not room for two separate and competing organizations. We want to find out first, through these meetings, if a momentum is building up for unity.

Wohlforth: It is not our position that the choice is between unity or implacable war to the death. The proposals we have made are the same as you made to us late last year. Our 2 organizations have reversed positions. Then you offered to sell the BULLETIN and made other offers of joint collaboration. This means you feel we are politically less close now than then. You have a political responsibility to make clear why you feel further from us now. Disengagement, not hostility, would be the way to describe our relations in the last 6 months, and would be the proper alternative should unity fail to take place rather than implacable war to the death between our organizations.

Robertson: There are no significant political differences between our groups. A major difference we did have, on the Negro question, has been vacated in the last period. Our reserve is because of distrust stemming from our earlier relations with

you and from your attempts to by-pass our leadership. The hostility between our groups flows not from hostile politics but from organizational competition. Specifically on your proposals:

- (1) We will wait and see on the joint oral membership discussions
- (2) On touring different locals--the normal procedure is a joint tour just before or after a unity conference. We shouldn't act like a fused organization while we are not yet that.
- (3) On fraternization, we are still two different and competing organizations. Where we both exist we can have joint socials, further/personal fraternization, which we are for, as opposed to a presently false blurring of organizational lines.
- (4) We have no 'ban' on the BULLETIN--indeed, we expect our membership to study it carefully. But we do not propose to build the public circulation of a competing organ, whose similarity in line to our own would only cause further confusion.
- (5) On the joint leaflet on the N.Y. elections, we have a statement already drafted and approved by our organization which we were about to circulate publicly. But we will hold up on issuing it and bring it before this committee for consideration as a joint statement.

For us, first comes agreement in this committee, then comes organizational intermingling.

Wohlforth: On the question of either unity or war to the death--we begin from the theoretical and political tasks. We struggle against groups if we feel their politics would hurt the working class. If we don't unify, then disengagement would be our proposal. This was Trotsky's position in a number of countries where he had 2 groups. No one has the right to seek to destroy an organization of the working class unless that organization has a line that would mean death to the working class. This is the Leninist position.

Disc: Mazelis, Turner, Van Ronk, Robertson, Turner

Wohlforth: We feel that there has been a complete reversal in the positions of our 2 organizations since last fall, when we were opposed to going beyond written exchanges. If you favor unity you must be for fraternization. Your position is completely inconsistent. The wish to avoid fraternization can come only from fear. A real Trotskyist group longs to be raided. It invites raids. Why do you hold back?

Robertson: We are eager to have you sit down and talk to each one of our new members for hours and hours--but to do this you've got to join our organization first. There is a principled basis for unity, though we need discussion on how much 'trouble' it would be to merge our 2 organizations. Should you be negotiating in bad faith, our insurance will be to get your agreement that there is political agreement for unity--then should you pull back from unity you will lose. When you agree that there is a basis for unity, then the organizational barriers between us will start going down. This is our basic attitude on our part toward these negotiations.

Wohlforth: The discussion thus far has shown that we do not agree on exactly what we are negotiating. We favor discussion from a different vantage point, and do not wish our contact to be limited only to socials. It is the position of our organization that tactical questions are subordinate questions. The primary emphasis must be on a theoretical discussion. This fundamental theoretical discussion must be no. 1 in the relations between our two groups. Robertson's proposal to discuss theoretical differences in the negotiating committee will not solve anything. We must discuss within a broader framework.

Disc: Turner, Van Ronk, Robertson

5. Policies:

Wohlforth: We both agree that our representatives are empowered to set up an agenda for discussion on this committee and that at the next meeting we begin the discussion on policies and the broader theoretical questions. We should agree to proceed on the points that both have raised, including our history project.

It was agreed that at the next meeting an agenda for questions to be discussed over a series of meetings would be worked out.

6. Other:

Joint Social - to be held July 10 at Wohlforth's. The secretaries will work out a joint announcement.

Election Leaflet - Spartacist will provide ACFI with its draft during the coming week and it will be discussed at the next mtg. It was agreed that the author of the draft could be present and speak on this point.

Alternate - Spartacist wants to select an alternate. Agreed.

Meetings - It was agreed to hold weekly meetings, with the next meeting on Friday, June 25.

In closing Robertson reiterated that sufficient agreement exists that we can be a single organization, and handed out to the ACFI delegation recent information materials consisting of Spartacist reprint on Malcolm X; pamphlet 'Behind the Harlem Riots'; and Harlem Organizing Committee brochure and leaflet.

The meeting adjourned at 10:25 p.m.

[The foregoing minutes were adopted at the 2nd session of the Unity negotiations held 27 June 1965.]

SPARTACIST-ACFI UNITY NEGOTIATIONS

Second Session.....27 June 1965

Present: Spartacist: Robertson, Turner, Stoute (Henry for point 2); Harper, Sec'y.
ACFI: Wohlforth, Mazelis, Michael (alternate for van Ronk)

Meeting convened at 8:20 p.m.

Chairman: Mazelis

- Agenda: 1. Minutes
2. Joint Statement on Elections
3. Policy toward Progressive Labor
4. Future discussions
5. Announcements

1. Minutes: Minutes of 18 June were approved as corrected.

2. Joint Statement on Elections:

Wohlforth: We are generally in agreement with the Spartacist draft and consider parts of it excellent, especially the point on Epton, but some small points we feel were formulated indefensibly, e.g., Epton's proposal for workers to review the actions of the police is a good one, but Epton raises it independent of the demand for self-defense. We also need a popular, agitational leaflet to rally people to vote for the SWP and PLP candidates, since the present draft is primarily a critical, propagandistic statement. This longer, critical statement after correction should be published in the Spartacist or Bulletin or both.

Disc: Turner, Mazelis, Henry, Stoute, Wohlforth, Stoute, Henry, Stoute, Mazelis, Robertson

It was agreed that ACFI would prepare a draft of the popular leaflet for the next meeting. Spartacist agreed with the tenor of the ACFI criticisms of the present draft statement and an editing committee of Henry and Michael was appointed to iron out details and bring back a revised draft to the next meeting.

3. PL Policy:

Robertson: For a bit of perspective, here is what we said about Progressive Labor while we were in the SWP:

"...PL is an aggressive, empirical, inexperienced, serious grouping aiming at present to build a Leninist combat party on the basis of an overly primitive and excessively organizational approach." and "Thus PL is a heterogeneous, leftward moving formation of a broadly centrist character, having broken with Stalinism on a sound basis of working class struggle and having passed a serious test of loyalty to elementary principle over the Cuban crisis. But PL is quite without, indeed seems to deny the need for, a historical, theoretical or concretely internationalist outlook. Without both recognizing the need for and achieving a Trotskyist clarity about the nature of the SU and of Stalinism, no formation (above all one formed as a breakaway from Stalinism) can acquire an authentic and durable revolutionary quality." (from "Memorandum on the 'Progressive Labor' Group" by Harper, Nelson and Robertson, 6 January 1963).

We first became interested in PL when they took a hard line over the Cuba missile crisis. Some of our comrades were on the Cuba trips and others were in Harlem Defense Council until they were expelled for Trotskyism. We have had close relations with PL on the West Coast and in Chicago, and are on good terms with their Southern organizer. I would say that the leftward motion within PL seems to have stopped; however, with their organizational hardening up, information about them has become more difficult to obtain. Our present

impression is that PL is not yet a resolved entity. Our most serious working relations had been in Harlem and were disrupted by the expulsion of our comrades. After that HOC has been organized and picked up others. The indigenous forces in HDC have remained ostentatiously friendly, and we have united front relations with them in Harlem. Now we seek to pressure PL through the May 2nd Movement (M2M), but our present contact with PL is much less than we would like. What we want from PL is similar to what we want from the SWP: there is an element in both groups that wants to build a revolutionary party in this country. We want to have a political clarification and confrontation with PL and have never been interested in merely picking up a member here or there. We want to see a deep split within the cadre. We want to see the formation of a large, effective propaganda group in this country, and PL can make a contribution to that. When you were in the SWP, out of party loyalty you denounced PL; then, coming to an awareness that they have something to offer, you went too far in the opposite direction--e.g., you passed out their leaflets calling for a boycott at the time of the last elections. What you are doing now seems proper. Some of your comrades have said that the most serious possible bar to unity would be that it might disrupt your work in this area--that is why we are very anxious to find out your policy on this question.

Michael: No differences would seem to be present from what you have said. Basically I would say that there are many people in PL that are open to a Trotskyist viewpoint and to a line contrary to that of the leadership. In some convention articles people took a line contrary to that of the leadership on the Negro question, and many at the convention were sympathetic to this line, although not willing to openly express support. People not in the leadership are very open to Trotskyist ideas. For example, the Gilly articles as long as they were not labelled Trotskyist were very impressive to these people. My experience has been that it is possible to make contact with a lot of people and to get our ideas across. One cannot at this point say exactly where the organization is going. 70-80 people in the organization are receiving the Bulletin, and it makes an impression on them.

Wohlforth: In looking back on our work it is easy to see and admit errors. We obviously made an error in our assessment of PL when we were in the SWP. At that time we didn't have enough information on them, nor the same perspective as we now have on how to build a movement. But looking over our work, I don't see how we could have foreseen what we have achieved, the basis of a Trotskyist group within PL, so that the struggle within that organization has been internalized. This of course required the sale of Challenge and distributing their literature. This is what the SLL comrades must do in the BLP. I feel that our tactics in the past are related to our tactics in the future, and any criticisms you have should be concrete. When you begin such a relationship you have to be more than merely pedagogic. We have been critical: we ran a series of 4 or 5 articles, including a complete analysis of the Trotskyist position on Maoism, and put out special supplements. We concentrated on issues on which there was struggle within the organization. The Negro question was a critical turning point--the first time the international orientation of PL cut into what had been the healthiest side of their work. I think we made an impact at the convention--not that our positions got many votes, but perhaps 30% of the delegates had some sympathy toward our position. This discussion is important because it concerns questions that will be raised again and again in our work in the U.S.--how to intervene into centrist organizations.

Mazelis: What is implied in Tim's comments is that of course where we felt you to be in error was precisely that you didn't do what we attempted to do. It is not sufficient to approach them merely on an organization-to-organization basis (we felt you made some mistakes on that level also). However, we felt you were able to achieve some success in your work on Epton defense. It clears the air to discuss these questions in the way Turner and Robertson did. We have no hesitation to

confess our errors when such is the case. When we were in the SWP we had an inadequate understanding of the nature of PL. We needed more than the political statements of the leadership. They didn't have the orientation toward mass work that they have now. Our intervention in PL came at the right time and has followed developments. I would agree that the leftward motion is not continuing. We think it has passed a peak of a sort and that PL will stop attracting as it did.

Robertson: We aren't interested in flogging a dead horse--just in getting a perspective. It doesn't seem that our differences now are that great. We were quite unhappy about the ban on dual membership. In one area they would have accepted an open, non-organized Trotskyist, but that was shelved in the course of events. We had had hopes for H., wanted her to stay in PL, but she wouldn't. What we thought was necessary at all costs was to avoid the organization of a premature caucus--that is what the Stalinist wing of the leadership would react to most violently, and harden all the cadres against us. We wanted to build a joint group in Harlem. It worked so well they had to throw us out. An outsider had to be sent in to do the job--the indigenous people didn't understand. Now we don't have many toe holds in PL--that is partly why we are intervening in the Free University. We never had as much interest in the Negro question in relation to PL as in relation to the SWP. It wasn't the decisive question for PL that it was for the SWP when the latter seized upon Black Nationalism as a way of eliminating the role of the party in a primary area in this country. If we Trotskyists in this country can unite, it will increase our gravitational pull on PL. We want quite a lot out of them but just now don't have such good tools to grasp.

Turner: There doesn't seem to be much of a difference.

Mazelis: Does the friendliness of the Harlem members extend to D. and V. too?

Robertson: Our fraction in Harlem CORE got through motions in defense of Epton and Anderson--they know and appreciate this.

Wohlforth: The political questions within an organization are the life of the organization. If we looked at PL abstractly we would have posed internally other questions relating to Maoism, the colonial revolution, etc. These questions can be hammered home with individuals but don't have the impact as did the Negro question where many felt the working-class orientation of PL was being threatened. It is difficult for Spartacist comrades to see questions as we do because they are not as deeply involved in PL as we are. If we had unified last fall we could have made a much greater impact. Because of our consistent work we have been able to develop supporters within PL, at the expense of doing as much public work as Spartacist was able to do; but we felt this was necessary. We would strengthen this work if we could because PL has not yet reached a definitive turning point. We want to reach their ghetto and trade union members.

Robertson: Do you think we did right with the Harlem Organizing Committee? We have offered PL help with their election campaign, which will be one more way of bringing our forces into contact with them. Our present orientation toward M2M is an open one and we will do more. It is easy to have united fronts with them in Harlem. HDC does not have all that much of a mass orientation anyway. When we entered HDC we were foregoing some important direct mass work, but we felt it was worth it.

Michael: The position of the PL leadership is that Trotskyism is counter-revolutionary and that it functions to disrupt revolutionary movements. But this is by no means the feeling of people in the organization at large. There is a lot of

confusion. Denunciation of Trotskyism was stricken from their convention resolution as a question demanding discussion. It is difficult for a PL member to look at our stuff in the Bulletin and then say we are attempting to destroy their organization. I think things will stay open for a while. There is a gap between the leadership and the rank-and-file on questions like this.

Hazelis: On HOC, what I have seen looks quite positive, but we are not aware of the details. What we see now is positive. The only thing is that we would stress the importance of a continuing orientation toward the Harlem PLers themselves. On the question that has been raised at one level or another, i.e., should the orientation be toward the organization as a whole or toward picking up people? Our work in PL was not a raiding operation. When they saw we were reaching people, they viewed it as a raiding operation. We have followed the development of the central leadership and participated in give and take with them, for example over the Negro question.

Wohlforth: On the relationship of PL work to our whole work--we see that the essential need at the present time is for the theoretical development of those that wish to become revolutionary Marxists, people who want to be and feel themselves to be Marxists but who are actually empiricists as is PL and the best of the SWP. The essential character of the movement today is excessive emphasis on activity in struggle and deep hostility to theory to guide this struggle. Our intervention is always aimed at bringing theoretical clarity and development. This must be done from the outside. There are several thousand people who have rejected the Democratic and Republican parties, the CP and the SWP and who want to build something new. Because of the existence of these people, our essential task is to work with them and develop them. We must be wary of counterposing ourselves to these people rather than being their theoretical arm. We must be careful that we are not just one more competing organization. We must be the ones who bring theory to the revolutionaries, the conscious people among the revolutionaries. Therefore we give more emphasis to working in organizations than to setting ourselves up as a separate organization. This should be the orientation of any group this side of 1000. I have been feeling for some time and the British have been feeling for some time that the next step in the political and theoretical development in the Trotskyist movement must be a conscious understanding of how we seek to go about building the American movement--the American question. We have therefore been asked and have been considering preparing for the International discussion a resolution on the American question, and we feel the Spartacist comrades should do the same thing. This would be the best way to clarify agreement or disagreement on our tasks. I feel this is the way we should function. One final point: I feel we have made very good progress on the discussion on how we might work together toward PL. Because we have shown so much agreement we could go ahead and in a concrete way work on the basis of this agreement. We are not going to have meaningful functioning in any arena if we have two groups opposing each other in military formation. Meaningful collaboration necessitates that at the same time that we see agreement we work together concretely to bring about better relationships between our two groups.

Turner: Your approach on not counterposing organizations but becoming the theoretical arm--what is your feeling toward HOC? Is this a counterposed organization, or do you feel that this organization can also function in Harlem?

Wohlforth: The situation is so mixed up in the Negro movement that I would say you did the right thing. If CORE, OAAU, etc., had anything to offer, I would say you were premature. But you are dealing in a vacuum. It is the only thing you could do. I think it was a good idea and would work out well in this area, though the same approach might not work out elsewhere.

Robertson: We did not seek HOC but it was thrust upon us. We still have a fraction in Harlem CORE. On being the theoretical arm of the movement and not counterposing organizations--as soon as you act, as soon as there is concrete expression of a line, there has to be an organizational form, and sometimes this form gets in the way. If you gain size, you draw people around, you give classes, etc. We are co-equally interested in work concerning other organizations and their political development, and also in building our own organization. It is not a simple process to build a large propaganda group that can begin to intervene in a meaningful way. We must win over the the Trotskyist movement whole chunks of other organizations while carrying on the work of the Spartacist organization (or any other Trotskyist organization). Even if there were no broader significance to our mass work, it has an exemplary quality: "See what we will do when we have more." Secondly, such work gives familiarity and experience to our members. In trade union work, we have been inching our way toward building an industrial fraction, but a big white collar fraction on the other hand is dropping into our lap. On PL we differ in details, but these differences are within a recognized common approach. We believe that a close political agreement exists between our groups such that unity is possible and desirable; but without your admitting this we don't see how we can take our relationship beyond united fronts. You have not yet even agreed that we are qualitatively closer to you and should seek unification than you are for example to Workers World, etc. Without your agreement that there is a principled political basis for unity how can we press forward organizationally? On preparing a document on the American question for the information of the British, it will be up to our organization to decide as we are currently straining to get out our convention documents.

Wohlforth: We feel that common work will facilitate the unification process just as common discussion on all levels will. A bar to that work and those discussions hinders the unification process. My own opinion is that we will come to the conclusion that while disagreements may exist it is not a bar to unification. We don't understand this military to military sort of thing. Contact between our groups will break down barriers to unification which may exist among members or leaders. I would hate to see common work by-passed for this discussion process, for this will take awhile.

Robertson: We don't see the necessity for a long delay in unification. We have in our briefcase all the steps to bring about unification. As far as joint collaboration without this agreement, there has never been a unity without proceeding as we are proceeding now. The representatives on this committee speak for their organizations. In negotiating unity you proceed organization-to-organization. We will go through the discussion here, though we already feel a sufficient basis for unity exists. Some of our comrades don't want unity, but every single comrade agrees that unity is necessary anyway, and they feel that if the unification is gone into in good faith that old hostilities will be overcome. The present stumbling block is that we must get your agreement that unity is permissible. How can we do anything else?

Turner: The more we talk the less reason there seems to be for a division between our groups. Tonight's discussion shows how close we are politically. It would seem that it necessitates recognition from your group that all the discussion thus far shows that every reason for unity exists. With the opportunities that exist, our combined organization could achieve a qualitative acceleration in our work, using our resources and talents in a combined way resulting in more and better output on all levels. It is necessary at this point before beginning close collaboration that we get this agreement that the political basis for unity exists. We can get no less from you before proceeding.

Wohlforth: I don't think we are demanding too much in wanting to see first the documents on which your organization will go forward from your conference. I feel strongly that when we do see these documents that the formulations therein will not in themselves be a bar to unity. We need to see the documents, but don't anticipate that they will include such material as to bar unity. It is not necessarily critical if you don't write an American document, but it would be good if you could.

4. Future Discussions: It was decided to discuss next Wohlforth's history project "The Struggle for Marxism in the U.S." This topic will cover all aspects of the SWP, including our own 1962 split, current SWP groupings and convention perspectives, etc.
5. Announcements:
 - (a) Joint Social: Leaflet copy is ready. Groups will share profits. There will be a literature table.
 - (b) Reactions to possible unity: Robertson announced he had received two responses to the possibility of unity between our groups from non-members of either group. Malcolm Bruce expressed great joy at the prospect; Bill Winnick also strongly favors unity.
 - (c) Next Meeting: Holiday next weekend interferes; next meeting set for Friday, 9 July.
 - (d) Minutes: Because of the delay in meeting again, it was agreed to circulate draft minutes beforehand and, if unanimity is found for their approval, to proceed to mimeograph them in advance of the next meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 10:10 p.m.

These minutes approved at meeting of 9 July 1965.

SPARTACIST-ACFI UNITY NEGOTIATIONS

Third Session.....9 July 1965

Present: Spartacist: Robertson, Turner, Stoute (Harper, secretary)
ACFI: Wohlforth, Mazelis, Michael (alternate for van Ronk)

Meeting convened at 8:10 p.m.

Chairman: Stoute

- Agenda:
1. SWP: (a) historical; (b) current
 2. Minutes
 3. Election Statements
 4. Social; Topic and time of next meeting

1. SWP Discussion:

Wohlforth: The essential feature of the American Marxist movement has been its failure to really develop theory, and while certain progress has been made in some periods toward coming to basic working-class consciousness, and even going beyond that in adherence to the world movement and later the Trotskyist movement, through its entire history it has never mastered the Marxist method. Rather it sought to build a movement with theory inherited from past leaders like Marx or worked out elsewhere and imported. Americans learned lessons rather than the method leading to those lessons. Cannon came out of the midwest fusion of the Populist-Wobbly movement, and the Cannon-Foster faction within the CP (while the healthiest of the factions) was representative of that empiricism. Cannon learned from Zinoviev, etc., a way of treating political questions in an organizational way. Trotsky warned him against this, but this tradition has remained to this day. SWP was a bloc between Cannon and Trotsky in which Cannon took the political line of Trotsky but developed the SWP in his own way organizationally. The struggle of the SWP with Shachtman showed the failure of the SWP to develop theoretically. It was Trotsky that insisted the struggle center around questions of dialectics and method. Discussions between Trotsky and the SWP leadership revealed that Trotsky was anything but an uncritical supporter of Cannon, was worried about Cannon's adaptation to the liberal-trade-union sections and the incapacity and unwillingness of the Cannon people to break from that sort of collaboration. Cannon's conduct during the Minneapolis trials has been used as a precedent for today. In the post-war period Cannon failed to understand the international conjunctural situation and came up with the theory of inverted American exceptionalism. But world capitalism was restabilizing itself and the American struggle would thus retreat. The International never understood this fundamental turning point in world history (1946-47), but instead the line of Pablo was that this was a period of ascending socialist revolution. Cannon never confronted the problem of Stalinism in the post-war period, but felt that the SWP would be thrown into leadership. Degeneration of the SWP during the '50s was then not merely a simple reflection of negative conditions, though these accentuated the sickness of the party. Internal problems forced Cannon into an international bloc he never wanted, explained this on the basis of 'orthodoxy'. This was short-lived and prepared ground for growth of revision. The crisis of the SWP has been brewing for 20-25 years. The central cadre of the party was fashioned in this sick situation. Understanding the history of the SWP is related to our tasks of building the movement today. Are we simply to be a more orthodox copy of the SWP or recognize the necessity of theoretical development, of applying the Marxist method, of going beyond 'orthodoxy'? Our tasks are essentially Iskra tasks, bring theory and consciousness to an economist movement. Study of the history of the SWP is essential to our own development and tasks.

Robertson: Your document was a good and serious effort to understand the SWP, but was best in its particular analyses. However, it would seem that you have loaded too much on American empiricism. Actually it is American exceptionalism to single out what happened in the U.S. alone as reason for the decline of the Marxist movement (though it is undeniably true that the American movement had a theoretical incapacity). To counterpose the sickness of the U.S. to the world movement would be good if objective development confirms, but it doesn't. In the U.S., the most significant failure was that of the American working class to develop any political movement of its own. You often talk about 'theory' and 'method' but are weak in definition. In order to deal with Marxist method it is necessary to understand it, not merely to refer to it--'theory' by itself is an empty word. Theory is a sufficient simplification of reality that it can be shoved into our heads and give us an active understanding as participants of what is going on--that is, what we hold in our heads is also a factor. Program generates theory. What are decisive are programmatic questions. The SWP in post-war years had a theory that was inadequate on Yugoslavia, China, etc. Pabloism was a revisionist attempt to fill that gap in a way that turned the movement toward programmatic shift and opened up the whole world movement for degeneration. Largely for objective reasons the SWP moved into the post-war period deproletarianized, isolated and with an aging cadre; a qualitative transformation took place. It is important to appreciate what the main driving forces were in the degeneration of the SWP for no party has ever performed anywhere in the world longer better than the SWP has and that includes the Bolshevik Party--no party has ever outlived the aging of its cadre. The SWP managed to hold a revolutionary line for some decades--the 50s was the worst period any movement faced anywhere. The entire world Trotskyist movement had developed an estimation of Stalinism which was developed on the basis of a single kind of experience--the pre-war role of the Stalinist parties in the face of working class mobilization in struggle. In the post-war years the SWP line had a ritual character. Program is decisive. Wohlforth's analysis is fine, but has an idealist streak. His 'theory' and 'method' have a categorical quality. Though I have come down hardest on the critical side, I thought "Marxism in the U.S." was a good statement.

Turner: Wohlforth's document will be helpful for those who have not gone through the struggle in the SWP, though there is a tendency to oversimplify in the document. The subjective aspect of Cannon has been elevated and made into a factor beyond the normal weight that should be assigned. After all, the entire international movement failed to deal with the new situation that had arisen--the failure was not merely Cannon's but that of the whole movement. In raising questions about the application of Marxist method, it would have been useful to concretely show method in application in terms of dialectics rather than just repeating the word 'method.'

Wohlforth: The points raised on the need for more concrete material on theory and method are quite welcome. As far as R.'s questioning my placing too much emphasis on American empiricism, failures of the whole international working class were obviously involved. I mentioned empiricism because this was the way the theoretical failure developed in the U.S., while in Europe, especially France, the failure was in the direction of formalism. As to the criticism that the document was weak in definition of theory and method, I wanted to show what they were through concrete analysis. The "Assimilation" document goes into it theoretically, and I consider it to be a complementary document, was how Marxist method should have been applied to the major problems of post-war period. Theory and method are not simple reflections of reality, but have an independent existence precisely because they are an abstraction from reality of the underlying process which may not be apparent through simple reflection. Theory seeks to reflect independent reality from beginning to end, not just present reality. The Pabloites had a theory that reflected a period of the expansion of Stalinism. Program does not generate theory; rather one comes to pro-

grammatic conclusions on the basis of theoretical understanding. There is an interaction between program and theory. Program in the concrete becomes part of the process and leads to theory; your mind is part of the reality. The weakness of the SWP would have failed in a good period in another way. It was headed for failure in 1946 by its false combination of sectarianism and opportunism, and would have led to the destruction of the SWP as a revolutionary party barring theoretical development. Can't say no party performed better than the SWP. It is to the Bolshevik party we must return today, not to the SWP. Trotsky was the continuator of the Bolshevik party, but he was incapable given his time of creating a new formation that would be able to withstand his death. The Trotskyist movement was a failure but the Bolshevik movement was not. Bolshevism had within it greater revolutionary forces, more cadre who understood Marxist method, than any movement since. We will be playing only a transitional role. We don't come out of the old tradition; the SWP did not create a cadre capable of doing what Trotsky did in the world movement. It is not that the analysis of Stalinism developed in the 1930's is inadequate to explain current reality, but that they didn't understand the method by which that theory was arrived at. Stalinism is degenerative, not progressive. Cannon is a key person in the history of the SWP, and in essence Cannon is the SWP. The degeneration of the SWP is related to the degeneration of Cannon. We are not Cannonites. We do not want to return to Cannonism. We want the destruction of Cannonism. Cannon subordinated politics to organization. Organizational questions should not have a life in and of themselves. Our role is not simply to gather together workers where we can find them but to take to the working class the theoretical understanding without which the working class is incapable of organizing itself into a force to overthrow the bourgeoisie. Must have a conjunctural analysis of the development of capitalism as a world system in order to supplant the bourgeoisie.

Robertson: On theory being a reflection of reality--you have defined this as current reality. But that is impressionism. The greatest reality is during crises when superficial reality is stripped away. 1923 was such a turning point--that is how I used the word 'reality'. I don't like the word 'process' because it has an objectivist tone. Slaughter is the most outstanding Marxist theorist today because of his denial of the autonomy of 'facts' and his insistence that what we think is part of the process and part of the social outcome. We differ on program generating theory. If you sought to adhere to program at the time of failure of theory, you would either have to freeze or else seek a stronger guide to action, examining full reality, not just present nor just past. Only Cuba allowed one to finally make sense of the entire post-war problem; the problem was not solved historically until the Cuban developments. But anticipations were possible. Regarding Cannon's worth as a Trotskyist political leader, as late as 1948 his writings on the Wallace campaign were a model. Trotsky was not part of the old Bolshevik cadre but issued out of Bolshevism partly in opposition to the Bolshevik party which fell apart. The SWP has produced us. We are a link, for better or worse, from the Bolsheviks to Trotsky to SWP to us. Cannon was the best Communist politician produced in this country. It is not a question of copying the SWP but of going beyond. Future Trotskyists will have to meet the measure of Cannon's strengths as well as his weaknesses. This is a real challenge. We have to learn from him positively as well as negatively. On Phillips's criticisms of your history project, some were correct, but basically he was making a Philistine response.

Turner: On the subjective factor of Cannon vs. the whole objective situation in which Trotskyism found itself--even in its most positive periods, Trotskyism existed in a context in which Stalinism as a world system looked and was large. The Trotskyist movement, even while Trotsky was alive, was not able to make a dent in the European Stalinist movement. The failure was not basically that of the individual, Cannon. While the individual can play an important role in all the processes of

history, you cannot eliminate the objective forces. For example, in the degeneration of the Bolsheviks, Trotsky never considered the subjective to be the main factor.

Mazelis: It is wrong to say Trotsky did not come out of the Bolshevik party. He joined in 1917. This was qualitatively different from us coming over to the SWP. We came over to Trotskyism, not Cannonism. Our development must be viewed separately from the SWP. Trotsky came over to Leninism. What we learned in the SWP was not of the order of what Trotsky learned from Leninism. The British movement is already on a higher level than the SWP ever was here. We feel Cannonism was unable to develop Marxism but this is not saying we and the British have developed it, but we have scratched the surface. The 'Assimilation' document was an extremely important contribution, and the international conference will make other contributions.

Michael: Robertson gives the impression that program yields theory, that you have a program that draws you into contact with events taking place and then cast about for theory. This view doesn't take into account the things one uses to construct a theory.

Robertson: The best way to look at these questions is in situ--truth is always concrete. In the first workers' movement in Russia a new problem was broached. The Bolsheviks and Lenin had an incorrect theory, a sufficient but not a correct theory, but up to the supreme moment they had the correct political conclusion of not making alliances with the liberals. In 1917 Lenin became a Trotskyist. In the alliance of the proletariat and the peasants, the proletariat must take the lead--there was something new in the Russian situation which cleared this up; the old experience was not enough. Trotsky made these predictions in 1904 without there yet being a party to carry out the program's content. The Bolsheviks remained steadfast to their program. None of the individuals or groups at the time had the whole truth.

Turner: The basis of Marxism is materialism. In the beginning was the deed. History, life, pose certain tasks which men must solve, so they project a construction. To the extent the construction is related to the reality, men solve the tasks. This is fundamental to Marxism. There can be no disagreement on this.

Wohlforth: You are mistaken. Theory is more than a reflection of reality, it is an active part of reality. We must get out of a mechanism which has almost destroyed the Marxist movement. Theory is an interacting part of reality itself. Cannon was not a communist politician because he was never a communist in that he never mastered the fundamental of communism which was necessary to combine theory with the building of the party. Cannon was the world's best factionalist. He kept control over the party but he destroyed the party--a criminal act. The best communist politician in the history of the SWP was Wright--he almost understood. There is a basic difference between us: The Spartacist group has yet to complete the theoretical break with the SWP and Cannonism while we have taken this step and have done it in large part under the urging of the SLL. It was they who urged us to take on the history project. They had already come to the understanding of the need to break with Cannon. On program begetting theory--this is completely wrong. We are fundamentally counterposed to that position. That is not Marxism. You must begin with reality not with program. Lenin was in no sense an empiricist. He sought to implement a theory which wasn't totally wrong. His program was an adequate reflection of his theory. Trotsky didn't develop the theory of the Permanent Revolution out of program. He started with the reality of the 1905 revolution which led to theoretical understanding which led to program. "Working out theory to explain program"... "In the beginning was the deed"...I'm not interested in this, this is nothing. In

this discussion we are concretizing what we mean by theory and method. Read Lenin's Notebooks--he uses the word 'process' 500 times. Process is essential to dialectics. If Robertson rejects the concept of process, he rejects the dialectic. To ignore or refuse to accept process loses that which is central to the dialectic, the internal process of life and matter. Everything is always in process. We continue to have important theoretical and methodological differences. This rather than barring unification and discussion, necessitates discussion, makes this dialogue and process between us more urgent.

Robertson: The question has been raised as to what is the program of a party. This is a class question, anticipation of the limits of what that class or section of the class can hope to achieve for itself, the codification of the possibilities of a class, for the workers a question of the victory of the socialist revolution--that is what program is. What is it that shapes theory? The appetites of men shape out their intervention. The SWP was not a bloc with Cannon--that implies they had different programs which they did not. The SWP was the American branch of the world Trotskyist movement, it was not the SWP vs. the Trotskyist movement. Theory does not always grow and develop. We know less about the world now than was known at the time of the Bolshevik revolution. We know less of the world at present because we have less means to change the world. I did not say Lenin was an empiricist, but that there was a certain theoretical weakness in the program of the Bolsheviks which was shared by Lenin, a slight empiricism. Trotsky did not start with the Revolution of 1905 for the theory of the Permanent Revolution, but had seen the need 18 months before that for a labor dictatorship. Because of this Trotsky seized on the Soviets more quickly than the Bolsheviks. Internal contradiction is the heart of dialectics. The word 'process' grates on me, invoking an image of "process industries" such as the automated American oil refineries; hence I object ... because we (or our absence!) are part of the 'process'.

Turner: Wohlforth should avoid trying to score debating points, but consider what is being said, not take words out of context and try to give it some implied meaning. That is not a dialectical approach. Generally we have very unimportant and minor differences, as far as the discussion here reveals.

Robertson: We don't propose to take a vote on your document, on views on these historical questions and on methodology. We ourselves have a running internal discussion on method.

Mazelis: I disagree strongly with Comrade Turner, with his entire approach. We have very serious differences, as the discussion shows. But we shouldn't be afraid of differences, they should be thoroughly explored, and not avoided. As W. said, they are anything but a bar to unity. It's perfectly understandable that you wouldn't have a position on a particular document. It's another thing that it should be stated the way you stated it--you don't anticipate taking a position. There are important differences between us.

Wohlforth: You will take a position on method at your coming conference whether you want to or not. Marxist method will or will not be reflected in your documents. Spartacist will not be able to avoid taking a position on method.

(b) SWP - Current

Robertson: We are bringing out a series of Marxist Bulletins going into the history of our quarrels, so we will not bring it up now. We must have clarification on our own split, but will wait till the documents are fully at hand. A rotten bloc is in the making in the SWP. We are in favor of a bloc for party democracy, nothing else. Party democracy should be foremost the leadership's responsibility, not that of various minorities. Most of the present SWP minorities are to the right of the SWP leadership. Some, under pressure of events, have been hopping around. Miller has denied democratic centralism for a decade. To develop a bloc with a right-wing minority against the center is unprincipled. Unification must be on the basis of political program. We above all cannot cross class lines on domestic politics. The opposition to Black Nationalism on the West Coast is from the right--the 'jobs or income now' approach is to the right of a program of Black Nationalism which is a fantasy of the SWP. There has been a recrudescence of Weissism, pro-Maoism. However, we want to encourage all tendencies to defend the readmission of the expelled, and would repudiate that support only if it were put forward in a context that was a repudiation of democratic centralism.

Wohlforth: Our views are not the same. As we gather from SWP internal bulletins that have come into our possession, within the various tendencies there is at least a small, conscious Trotskyist force which is around Lynn Marcus. We have 99% political and theoretical agreement with Marcus on all questions. He has submitted to the SWP convention a document that is a complete break with Cannonism--a more complete break than Spartacist has yet made. He and a group of some half-dozen represent a clear Trotskyist position. Within the mess of the SWP there are elements moving to the left and right. Kirk's current document is better than his previous position; has an understanding that his previous documents never had of the coming conjunctural crisis of American capitalism. He is making a complete attack on and break with the party leadership. We see Kirk as evolving to the left, but highly confused. As far as Miller and Philips are concerned, they are evolving as one would expect--they are empiricists. A bloc with them would be in principle, however, on the American question. The American class struggle is the key for blocs in the party. We can bloc on a class line in this country against the majority, while being split on international questions. Swaback is finished. Seattle finished. The SWP is going through acute throes. Our task is to bring theoretical clarity into this despite difficulties.

Turner: From what I saw of Marcus while in the SWP, he seemed to take a number of positions of the Weiss group and to be to the right of the SWP leadership.

Wohlforth: The Weissites were Pabloites.

Mazelis: Spartacist is not fully aware of Marcus's development, but we assure you it is no exaggeration to say we are in 99% agreement. We feel that his development has taken place under the influence of the Bulletin at least in part which is directed at people like him. Our constant hammering has paid off. Marcus seems to be taking a strong stand on all questions.

Wohlforth: On the St. Paul and Madison people, here we have the evolution of a group of old party members, some out of the party and others not too active. The Brusts who are with ACFI were on leaves of absence from the party for a year or two and have since resigned. Around them are other party comrades, some out, some in, and they have connections with some YSAers. There is the probability of building a Trotskyist group in Minneapolis, largely of workers.

Robertson: There must be a genuine political basis for the alliance of any two groups, not a left and right bloc against the center. Almost all minorities in the SWP at present are to the right. We would be willing to have a bloc with Philips on the basis of your last documents. For every bloc it is necessary to have documents, written evidence. We have friends still in the SWP. But they have been sealed off in good part. Some have been squeezed out. But some have been in the party a long time, are well known comrades. Our line on the current SWP oppositionists is to pick and choose allies on the basis of political questions, not "we'll get all comrades together against the party leadership."

Wohlforth: Spartacist friends in the SWP should consider supporting Marcus's documents if they find them politically acceptable.

2. Minutes: The minutes of 27 June were accepted as corrected.

3. Election Statement:

Michael: The revised draft brought in by Henry hasn't incorporated the changes I suggested.

Disc: Robertson, Wohlforth, Robertson, Turner, Stoute

Michael will write up amendments and bring them back for approval. ACFI has not yet prepared the draft for the popular leaflet.

4. Party: People should be appointed by each side to help clean up afterwards. ACFI is handling liquor, Spartacist is handling food.

5. Time and Topic of Next Meeting: 2 weeks from tonight, on the IC resolution.

6. Miscellaneous:

Turner: On your forum on Algeria. The fact that we have been meeting regularly and frequently makes it inexplicable that we were not notified you were having this forum. Our members received a mailing, but Robertson did not receive a copy. Smacks of united front from below tactics, a provocation.

Wohlforth: The decision to have a forum was made last Wednesday, didn't know we mailed to your membership. The mailing went to the Bulletin mailing list. No one in Spartacist who doesn't receive the Bulletin would have received a mailing. Spartacist can have their literature on our lit table should they wish.

Turner: Having been creating a unity atmosphere, this last minute approach smacks of a desire to by-pass the Spartacist leadership, and I felt it should be discussed.

Wohlforth: The idea came up at the last minute; we felt we should have a forum because of the Algerian discussion. We have in no way communicated with your rank and file.

Robertson: Here is the chronology from our end. I subscribe to the Bulletin but did not receive a mailing. This is the first public forum you have had. We were planning a joint activity where our contacts and periphery are being brought in by our mailing list and invitations. Then unannounced you set up your very first forum which to us looks as if designed to pull our ranks to your group's activities.

Mazelis: We are operating independently. It is you who have been reluctant to proceed jointly. We had hoped a number of Spartacist comrades would come to the forum and take the floor. I personally organized the mailing, which included Comrade Robertson. I can definitely assure everyone that this was sent, and any mixup was not our doing.

Wohlforth: If the Spartacist comrades would like to announce their class they may do so at the forum.

Turner: That was the way it looked to us. We should try to make every effort to proceed in a non-provocative manner.

Meeting adjourned at 11:35 p.m.

(Minutes of this session approved at the fifth session, 30 July 1965.)

SPARTACIST-ACFI UNITY NEGOTIATIONS

Fourth Session.....23 July 1965

Present: Spartacist: Robertson, Stoute, Nelson (alt.) (Harper, secretary)
ACFI: Wohlforth, Mazelis, Michael (alt.)

Meeting convened at 8:15 p.m. Chairman: Michael

- Agenda: 1. Election Statement
2. IC World Resolution
3. Future Discussions

1. Election Statement:

- (a) The corrected revision of the second draft was agreed upon; will be published in Spartacist and Bulletin.
(b) On the popular leaflet, ACFI will bring draft in to next meeting.

2. IC Statement:

Wohlforth: The 1961 IC document, "World Prospect for Socialism", was essentially an analysis of the international situation, capitalist development in the post-war period, the Stalinist countries, and the colonial revolution. "Rebuilding the Fourth International" is an evaluation of the International, making an important and definitive assessment of Pabloism, and, flowing from that, the need to rebuild the FI through the International Committee. The concluding section is the most important. The Fourth International founded by Leon Trotsky no longer exists. The task is to rebuild it, not to set up a new international. Marks a turning point in the assessment of reality that is becoming increasingly clear, the diverging course of the two international groupings since the last document, and the struggle to rebuild the International, regrouping forces around the IC, and the theory and practice of building national sections.

Nelson: With a few minor exceptions the document looks very good to us, and we find no major points of difference. We are pleased to note it develops several themes we had taken up in our 1963 international resolution, "Toward the Rebirth of the Fourth International." The development of the IC document on the basis of the intersecting crises of Stalinism and capitalism in the post-war period is good. In our own document we went into this, and used it as a basis to examine the crises that had beset the Trotskyist movement. If ACFI can agree with this IC document, it marks significant progress in our unity negotiations, since the document incorporates the perspective that Spartacist held in our earlier documents on the necessity in each country to build strong national parties as opposed to a section in your 1963 international resolution, "The Rebuilding of the Fourth International": "...our task now is not the conquest of state power but the conquest of the masses in preparation for the conquest of state power. Everywhere and in all countries our cadres must break away from the routine habits of propaganda group existence and reach out, no matter how meagre our forces may be, to establish contact with the masses themselves on whatever political level this can be done. This must be the main orientation of the whole international movement and the major task of each national section. Those sections which do not attempt such work will quickly find themselves bypassed by developments during the period of revolutionary upsurge."

At that time we in our international resolution, "Toward Rebirth of the Fourth International," section 18, said:

"The task of the international revolutionary Marxist movement today is to re-establish its own real existence. To speak of the 'conquest of the masses' as a general guideline internationally is a qualitative overstatement. The tasks before most Trotskyist sections and groups today flow from the need for political clarification in the struggle against revisionism, in the context of a level of work of a generally propagandistic and preparatory nature. An indispensable part of our preparation is the development and strengthening of roots within the broader working-class movement without which the Trotskyists would be condemned to sterile isolation or to political degeneration in the periods of rising class struggle and in either case unable to go forward in our historic task of leading the working class to power. Above all, what can and must be done is the building of a world party firmly based on strong national sections, the assembling of a cadre of working-class militants won and tested in the process of the class struggle and on the firm basis of the revolutionary perspective of the Fourth International, the program to realize workers' democracy--culminating in workers' power."

Insomuch as the new IC document represents a change in your own perspectives in terms of what you saw two years ago, I think it is a good thing, one more obstacle removed on the road to unity. The document coincides more with our own analysis of the degeneration of the world movement and in particular the American movement, where it puts in its proper perspective the objective conditions which were a large contributing factor in the degeneration of the SWP. The main error of the existing parties after Trotsky's death is that they tried to preserve Trotskyism as they knew it rather than go ahead. You had placed much more stress on the subjective factor. The IC document does a good job of pin-pointing the weakness in Pabloism, the abandonment of the transitional program and their dropping any reference to dialectical materialism as a method. While you are often abstract, they are nicely concrete. The most serious omission in the document is that there is no section that developed the application of the Permanent Revolution to the colonial revolution. Implied but not explicit. Our '63 document "Toward Rebirth...", has a section that nicely develops what is missing (Paragraph 12):

"The theory of the Permanent Revolution, which is basic to our movement, declares that in the modern world the bourgeois-democratic revolution cannot be completed except through the victory and extension of the proletarian revolution--the consummation of workers' democracy. The experience of all the colonial countries has vindicated this theory and laid bare the manifest inner contradictions which continually unsettle the present state of the colonial revolution against imperialism. Precisely in those states where the bourgeois aims of national independence and land reform have been most fully achieved, the democratic political rights of the workers and peasants have not been realized, whatever the social gains. This is particularly true of those countries where the colonial revolution led to the establishment of deformed workers states: China, North Vietnam...and Cuba. The balance, to date, has been a thwarted success, either essentially empty, as in the neo-colonies of the African model, or profoundly deformed and limited, as in the Chinese example. This present outcome is a consequence of the predominance of specific class forces within the colonial upheavals, and of the class-related forms employed in the struggles. These forms imposed upon the struggle have been, for all their variety, exclusively 'from above,' i.e., parliamentary ranging through the bureaucratic-military. And the class forces involved have been, of course, bourgeois or petit-bourgeois. A class counterposition is developed out of the complex of antagonisms resulting from failure to fulfill the bourgeois-democratic revolution. The petit-bourgeois leaderships with their bureaucratic forms and empiricist methods are ranged against participation by the workers as a class in the struggle. The involvement of the working class is necessarily centered on winning workers' democracy and requires the leadership of the revolutionary proletarian van-

guard with its programmatic consciousness of historic mission. As the working class gains ascendancy in the struggle and takes in tow the more oppressed strata of the petit-bourgeoisie, the Permanent Revolution will be driven forward."

We would like to submit this section as an amendment to the IC resolution. To repeat my original statement, the IC document is one we support, a good document.

Mazelis: It's very hard to know what to make of most of the things Nelson had to offer. One of the clearest points he made was at the end, that is, that it would appear that he would seek to amend or add to the resolution where it doesn't state your view, or enough of a developed view of the colonial revolution. I agree that the resolution as it stands, being more of a summing up of developments in the world movement, and not an international resolution, has these omissions. It is important that this be dealt with, be discussed, but does not have to be specifically in terms of this document. Of the other points you raised--really, I don't know what to think. There is an element of absurdity. I cannot agree with the way you approach the whole discussion, a book-keeping kind of approach, a cross-referencing of documents--I think it's absurd, patronizing and petty, and politically it's fantastic. There are no grounds for the kind of conclusions you draw. I don't think the discussion tonight should be primarily on these kinds of questions. If you don't agree with the formulations of our '63 resolution, it is you who were in contradiction to the IC. You are twisting things around to show that in '63 you were right and we were wrong and that now the IC agrees with you. In '63 we had noted that today is a period of the conquest of the masses. I don't disagree with what you read from your '63 resolution, except for the beginning of it. The example of the British movement should prove that reaching out to the masses is exactly what is necessary. On the degeneration of the SWP--you are more absurd, you simply don't make sense. There is no disagreement between us and the British and the French on the SWP. As far as our assessment of Cannonism, there is no disagreement. Summing up, to put it mildly it struck me funny, it is silly, the stress that you put on (1) discussion of the IC document simply in terms of past differences; (2) in discussing these differences, twisting things to try to show that you have won the IC over to your views.

Robertson: To say that this document is in agreement with our former positions and in disagreement with yours is not absurd. As far as I know, the British wrote this without any thought in their heads about the past documents of either of our groups. While we are quite in agreement with the IC document, we feel it less than "World Prospect for Socialism", and in its own terms. I found lack of guide lines here for the actual building of sections of the FI. The document ended at its half-way point. I agree with Wohlforth that the old FI has been killed. Some generalization on the role of Pabloism in the colonial world is essential because the Pabloites have made the "Third World" the center of their perspective. Two other criticisms: ambiguity near the end of section on Algeria. The final paragraph on Cuba begs the critical question. Algeria and Cuba were treated in different language, unlike the IC statement in the Newsletter which spoke of Algeria and Cuba in bracketed language. This document draws the line of the IC on Cuba between our two positions. They say Cuba is not a healthy workers' state. But what is it? They should come forward and say. On Stalinism, it is a careless formulation to use the word "exploitation", suggests a New Class theory and capitalist extraction.

Wohlforth: When Robertson says it is a question of whether or not the IC document agrees with the positions of Spartacist as against those of ACFI, the IC document clearly states essentially what we were trying to say in '63 on the question of the role of the working class where it talks about on p. 12:

"The intervention in the class struggle is not separate from the theoretical discussion upon which we have insisted. There is no development of Marxist

theory except insofar as revolutionary parties fight in practice to penetrate living reality with that theory, enriching it in the course of the struggle, to negate the revisionism which has destroyed the International originally founded by Trotsky. It is not enough to make formal theoretical corrections on the one hand and to carry out intensive activity in the class struggle on the other. Such a procedure might give the appearance of limited success, but only when Marxists see themselves and their consciousness as part of the living class struggle, developing with it and transforming its quantitative ebbs and flows into an enriched theory from which to develop the programme of the International, is the unity of theory and practice actually recognized. Only in this way will the cadres of the sections of the International be trained. Their internationalism will be worthy of the struggles of the international working class, because it develops as a living part, the conscious and most vital component, of these struggles."

What they are saying here is what we said in '63, regardless of the size of your movement you don't have a two or three stage development: our tasks today are propagandistic, tomorrow the mass movement, etc. Rather, the process of solidification takes place along with the process of intervention in the mass movement. Why is this old dispute being raised, since in concrete work the Spartacist comrades are simply carrying out this perspective? That is, despite your small size, you are seeking to become involved in the mass movement. Essentially Spartacist today agrees with what we said in '63--a bookkeeping judgment would be that Spartacist has been won over to our position. The net effect from all this is to learn once again it is not very worthwhile to go over old documents. No difference exists between us on this today either because you have been won to our position or we didn't disagree then, that there was a difference in formulation and emphasis. Doesn't help us to go over the old dispute. A movement cannot be built isolated from the masses. Objective conditions change the way you intervene but not the essential objective: conquest of the masses. The comrades of the Spartacist group would be making a mistake if they felt the IC or the SLL does not mean what they say on p.9, 2nd paragraph: (about the empiricism of Cannon and of the American movement). The ideas in our history project came from the British and were inspired by a trip to England in Feb.'64 and there is fundamental agreement between ourselves and them on it. They are in fundamental agreement with our history project. Omission of the Permanent Revolution? There was a really clear difference between the '63 international resolutions of our two groups, and this was on the revolutionary perspectives of the petty-bourgeoisie, leading to Spartacist's position on the Cuban revolution. The IC document in no sense has the assessment you do of the role of the petty-bourgeoisie in the colonial revolution. We have this in common with the British. They do not have your position on Cuba, so the amendment you suggest is one with another theoretical line. It would be better to submit your material on the general theory leading to your position that the petty-bourgeoisie is capable of creating deformed workers states than to introduce it through this amendment. "Exploitation" is used in the sense that the deformed workers states reflect capitalist exploitation to an extent; they are ambiguous transitional formations with capitalist norms of distribution.

Nelson: To reply to Wohlforth on why we raise old disputes, the purpose of these sessions is to examine and discuss the theoretical and political differences that may or may not exist between us. Part of this discussion is the matter of our agreement with the international resolution and our relationship with the IC. I disagree that we should approach the document 'separately and objectively' as you suggest. We must examine our common histories on points that are developed in the IC document. There were some differences between us that involved differences of appraisal. You said we differed on the role of the petty-bourgeoisie. However, both our documents made explicit that the petty bourgeoisie was, as a social stratum, incapable of successfully carrying through

a workers revolution. In every case, they have fallen short. You have not yet come to a dialectical understanding of the nature of Stalinism as a political system, but have continued to maintain the model that existed in the 30's and the theoretical conclusions stemming from that model. The USSR played a counter-revolutionary role. A whole series of events had not yet taken place which relate to an analysis of the kind of states issuing from revolutions with petty-bourgeois leaderships. We are examining your positions, and you are supposedly determining what our positions are (but you had no difficulty in determining our positions at the time of the last convention). We saw our role as propagandistic and you saw yours as conquest of the masses. We had different positions, and we had separate documents--that is how serious our differences were. This can't be glossed over. Differences must be examined to determine past mistakes and get them out of the way. We have discussed other old differences and come to some conclusions which allowed us to go forward toward unity. The IC document's treatment of Cuba is not that ambiguous. On p.8, paragraph 1, the document says "The building of an independent workers' party and the establishment of workers' councils in Cuba as part of a proletarian internationalist orientation, with the extension of the revolution to Latin America and a revolutionary alliance with the workers of the USA and the rest of the world..." It seems to me that this assumes a social revolution has taken place with a bureaucratic leadership.

Mazelis: I agree with Wohlforth that the term "exploitation" should be looked at differently than, for example, a reference to "Soviet imperialism" would-- I don't think there is any different evaluation on or softness toward state capitalism. Robertson is right when he says the document we are discussing wasn't written with an eye to the past documents of either of our groups. However, these points are all that our discussion should be. Nelson's contribution was made within a scholastic and subjective framework. Old differences can and should be discussed within a proper context, and I don't feel he has done this. He has stressed these old differences, and in an extremely scholastic way. On PL we admitted our mistakes. We aren't afraid to admit mistakes. We must discuss differences as they evolve, bring them to the present, if the differences are real and if they find expression in our work. We have to see if the overriding method is the same--not say "this document says what we said then... we were right and you were wrong." The process we want with Spartacist that we think is being achieved at some level is to bring differences up to date, not see them simply in the past. On the '63 documents, I tend to think there was a real difference there, not just in formulation. We feel Spartacist has made a lot of healthy steps forward since then toward the mass movement. I don't think there are no mistakes being made now by Spartacist. This kind of assessment of past differences is how we should approach things, and not as Nelson has.

Robertson: Especially in light of tonight's discussion, my most serious criticism must be taken up. I feel compelled to call upon the ACFI to recognize that unity between us is possible and desirable, otherwise we will lose momentum toward unity, especially if things continue like your sharp attack on us in your summary at the Algeria meeting, calling us "Shachtmanites," etc. We don't make our criticisms of you in this manner. We find more agreement with this document than we do with you, despite the fact that one of the conditions of your existence is that you not have any differences with the British. Two years ago when you had a bloc with Philips your American document had a semi-syndicalist approach. We are a propagandistic group, and our mass work is related to and subordinate to this. We recognize the need to do mass work and that is why we kept trying to get into CORE, etc., while we were still in the SWP. You should stick more closely to the British--then you will share

their strengths as well as their weaknesses, like the SWP when it leaned on Trotsky. For our part, we continue to find even fuller political grounds for unity, and in addition we find greater organizational need for us to unify. We need to fuse with you even though you are only 1/5 to 1/10 of our size.

Wohlforth: Or 1/3.

Robertson: We are continuing to grow. Since our last meeting with you we have picked up organizing committees in the deep south and in Connecticut. We have picked up a black cadre in Chicago--not just one or two Negro comrades but a black cadre from the anti-Willis movement--and elsewhere a new supporter in the SWP. We need your abilities. You think you are 1/3 our size? Frankly, we have been doing our best to check your claimed membership, and we find your claims mostly bluff. To ascertain the relationship of forces at the time of unity we will propose to get signed statements of membership from each comrade and then we will see where we stand. What do you mean by membership anyway? You speak of an Iskra program. Do you have democratic centralism? In terms of standing disagreements with you and/or the IC we see a recession of them. We would like to see some movement forward in these discussions. We can go on endlessly finding documents to discuss--there are lots of things we could talk about. But the main point isn't just this but to find out if unity is possible and desirable. If we don't make progress in this direction there will be more incidents like the Algeria discussion, and momentum toward unity will die.

Wohlforth: I have been concerned about the animosities between our two groups. We feel extremely upset by the movement of the Spartacist comrades to take political differences we have not had time to discuss and bring them to the public and insist that the discussion center around our differences on Cuba at a time when we had made no agreement on public political debate. This will set back progress toward unification. We have been denied our request for rank and file discussion, and the things we want to discuss have been pushed before the public. The tone of my summary was perhaps a subjective response to your action. I propose that we make a decision to regulate discussion between our two groups--to postpone public debate till we have privately discussed disagreements among ourselves. I find it hard to declare that there is a political basis for unity when (1) a tremendous amount of differences exist and (2) your action which was not an action of good will. I have a strong feeling that we are very close to achieving at least one notable objective, no matter how things evolve in the future, of removing artificial differences. What were our differences on the American question in 1963--I would like to see this clarified. We had assumed that on this question our differences had been removed. In '63 there were formulations on both sides that both sides would like to reformulate. We made too many concessions to some of Philips' formulations. But you tried to amend the majority document rather than ours, though you are not now claiming the SWP's position of '63, but what I wrote you should do. I propose we try to get this question cleared up. Are the two groups separated by a different assessment of the American movement and our tasks today? We say "No, we are not separated, because what is crucial is what we have become today"--this should be the context of discussion. Discussion on how many members each of us has is beside the point--absolutely beside the point. It would be like the British asking you how many members you have compared to them.

Robertson: That is exactly what we want. We want as many votes as we are entitled to on the basis of our membership.

Wohlforth: That is not what you should want, but to ascertain whether or not you belong in the International. Politics, not numbers, comes first. I am sure the IC is not going to query you, and are not interested. They will be concerned only with your potential to build a movement in this country, which is related to your theoretical development. In these discussions we have to show an ability to admit our mistakes. The learning process is different from going back and saying "we were right then". We were half Shachtmanites in 1961, and at least I think that you have developed since then. It is not whether you were right and we were wrong, but whether you have learned something.

Stoute: About mistakes, it is not that we are afraid to admit making mistakes --we always assess our past positions--but what we wrote then still looks good to us today, and we are still carrying out the same line. If you think we have made a mistake, point it out to us and we will evaluate it. You mentioned that we should make a decision about public political debate. On Algeria and Cuba, this is not a new question but a question we have both been discussing in the past years in our publications; not something new but already public. We don't raise question in a polemical manner like you did in your summary. In your summary you didn't attack our position but destroyed a position we never held. You found it necessary to call us "Shachtmanites". We don't use the same tone toward you as we would use towards a Shachtmanite or Stalinist. You seem to feel it necessary to make it very clear that there is not one little bit of difference between the British and you.

Nelson: "If you don't learn from history, you are doomed to repeat it." This is the basis for our raising "old" questions (they aren't old). Are there differences between our groups on the American question? I say no essential differences. Wohlforth is being demagogic in raising the straw man on relative size and what the attitude of the IC would be. Our discussions have the purpose of political clarification. Discussion should be in terms of where we have come from, how have we gotten here. You said there are formulations in our '63 documents we should both forget. No indeed! The truth is that on almost every major point and tactic in dispute between us over the last years, you have been in error--mostly by your own admission: on the youth question, nature of the SWP (which resulted in our split), on PL, on your assessment of the level of struggle and tasks of the revolutionary party. In '63 you supported the party majority on Black Nationalism and submitted only an action amendment. On the American question your position was that now was the time for the conquest of the masses. We have to agree on what the mistakes were in order to come to a position now. We know our common history. We see a basis for a principled unity to be consummated now, no obstacles to unity now, and all our discussion is raised in this context. The question of numbers, this is important so that the minority in a party or national section will have proportional representation. On public debate--first you did not notify us of your intention, could have been eliminated if we had had a joint forum. Maz. said to come down and speak from the floor. Algeria and Cuba are tied up together. We were compelled to reply to your position on Cuba, especially as sections of the radical public know we are engaged in unity discussions.

Mazelis: Not that we are opposed to discussion of these questions. Robertson's arguments were demolished by Wohlforth at the meeting, but we paid the rent and the purpose of the meeting was not to discuss our differences with you. Robertson should have gone into the questions at much less length. We were upset because the whole character of the meeting was changed. This is in line with your military confrontation policy. On our histories over the past few years--there is not really much agreement--we are not speaking the

same language. I wonder if you really understand and mean what you say when you say "Over the past 5 years you have been wrong on every major question". Our admission of error over PL is in no way an admission that you were right. We have shown we know how to make an assessment of PL. Since then, it is you that have been dead wrong and not us. We don't agree with you. We think you were dead wrong. We are proud of our '63 document, and are sorry you don't support it. When we admit some errors and see a forward development on our part, Robertson says "empirical zig-zags". We feel we have gained. We gained from our bloc with Philips. We are not ashamed. We feel you have not developed in the same way. We are interested in discussion with you, in unity with you, in working together, precisely because you have developed, whether you realize it or not. You have developed against your own will.

Robertson: We did not artificially raise the issue of Cuba. You can't discuss Algeria theoretically without bringing in Cuba, Egypt, etc. You invited our people to come down and we saw this as opening up discussion with our members. If there is going to be an opening up of discussion, it will not be a one-sided discussion. Yes, you demolished "our" position on the "petty-bourgeois state"--a position we don't hold. It won't work, it's not smart to use these tactics, it's really not. On the '63 American question documents, we submitted an excellent amendment to the majority document. With our amendment it gave thrust to the SWP position, to set down roots in mass struggle. The declared position of the SWP was not their actual one. Our amendment looks good today. Your document turned the SWP document inside out. We have been following out our position, and in our sections have a balance between propaganda and activity. Hindsight is a tool we have, a powerful test of method. We don't think you have "Marxist method". We see a difference between your protestations and your actions. You do what you want, and tack on justifications. Of course politics comes first, but number is important which is why Wohlforth snapped "1/3" when we said "1/5 to 1/10." We said there never was a basis for a split. Healy's calculations were predicated on our demolition. The only reason you must deal with us today is because of our numbers. We have always been prepared to be dealt with on the basis of democratic centralism. Unity is a necessity given the extent of our agreement. We gather from reports from Europe that there has been a mistaken reversal of the relationship of forces between us in this country. This will be and is being set straight. Our mistakes--they're really not very many. Speaking personally, I reacted insufficiently in the summer of '61 in letting you try to oppose the party over the youth (letter to Ed), in that I tried to control you rather than fight you. In "IDORP" I let the phrase "the SWP is our party" slip through ill-defined--I was sloppy and had to pay for it. In the fall of '62 I failed to recognize early enough that you would bloc with the Majority to get us thrown out. These were serious errors. They might have led to our destruction. I would say in general, however, that we have done very well. Remarkably so, and the documents as we go over them look pretty good. It is not bragging to say that our purpose has been straight as an arrow. I repeat--is ACFI a democratic centralist organization?

Wohlforth: At the Algeria meeting, there is a difference between what we did and what the Spartacist comrades did. We did not address ourselves publicly to our theory. We were ambiguous on purpose theoretically on Cuba. The essential lessons of Algeria could be achieved largely within that framework. In our whole history we have never had a public polemic with Spartacist. However, you chose to have a public polemic. In our opinion your theory leads to bureaucratic collectivism. We don't feel we should say this in the Bulletin. On past differences, where we were supposed to have been wrong on everything and you were supposed to have been right on everything except for your errors

in not being tough enough toward us, I think it is primarily a difference of method. I do not see how at one and the same time we have erred, followed a zig-zag empiricist course, have nothing approaching Marxist method, and then in the same breath you think a principled basis for unity exists. If we felt you didn't approach Marxist method, we would be forced to come to the conclusion that there isn't a basis for unity. We feel you have developed and have a different position than you used to whether you recognize it or not. You may have an incorrect method abstractly and in your Cuba approach, but this doesn't mean in your general work you don't have anything approaching a Marxist method --if you didn't your work would be different. Robertson says his purpose has been straight as an arrow. Marxism doesn't move like an arrow. We feel our assessment of the SWP was correct and because of that assessment we now have a relationship with the most viable section of the SWP. We have always refused to let the SWP alienate us from the rank and file of the SWP. The position we took at that time was correct. You haven't done what we did as regards PL --a serious tactical error, and a big one. On the American question, what we proposed the party should do flowed from our analysis of the American and world situations. The SWP did not share that analysis, did not have a method of proceeding from the conjunctural analysis to concrete tasks. Our position on the Negro question stemmed from that analysis. You made concrete amendments to a document which didn't have a correct analysis. I still wonder whether we share the same conjunctural analysis. You had Hansen's theory at the last meeting. Marcus seems to agree with our conjunctural analysis, being a theoretical person. On democratic centralist functioning, we are a democratic centralist organization. However, I have a very deep suspicion that we are not in agreement with you as to what democratic centralism is. Democratic centralism is an organizational question that flows from the theoretical tasks, the nature of the period, and the nature of our movement. We must have democratic centralism, but not always the same organization at all times. We have no temptation to set ourselves up as a party at this time.

Stoute: What does your deep suspicion on what we consider democratic-centralism flow from?

Wohlforth: From your "military formations" policy, Spartacist buttons, etc.

Nelson: On the question of our theoretical development, and the expression "our purpose has been straight as an arrow" as being un-Marxist: theory is verified and tested by history. We have an analysis, and positions based on our theory, they are on paper, and over 3-4 years we have had an opportunity to test them. Our theoretical development has been consistent--not slamming around from excess to excess, on the Cuban State, Black Nationalism, and the SWP. If you think in fact that you were correct, when did the party become something other than revolutionary? At the '63 Convention you felt it was still revolutionary, yet you were ready to leave in the fall of '63. When was the process of the party's degeneration consolidated? There seems to be a rather curious quality about your statements concerning the future of our group--you seem to assume a separation between our groups for a long time to come. We are prepared to move this night to consummate unity. There has always been a programmatic basis for unity. The existence of two separate and identical forces is detrimental to the development in this country of a revolutionary movement. Politics demand that we unite. For you to maintain a separate course and to seek to maintain a separate course is to play a role detrimental in this country to the building of a force capable of building a revolutionary party.

Wohlforth: Our assessment of the development of the discussion over the last 2 weeks is that unification now would be a proposal to have an internalized war to the death, would not be a serious unification. I believe your assessment of our role would motivate you to do this, you will feel it necessary to conduct a struggle against us within a common organization. This will not be unification but destruction. This is why we are not proposing that we unify tonight and why we propose an entirely different course than we have been following thus far. What has been prepared over the last couple of weeks is a deepening antagonism between the two groups. We need more common action. Only when we have comradely relations between the two groups can we have unity. You aren't really prepared to say we can have unity tonight; you may mean we can have unification in three months. We need more discussion here and internationally. What you mean by "unity" is really "let's internalize the fight". What we mean by unity is an end to the struggle.

Robertson: We will certainly have to discuss democratic centralism. We will bring in documents to the next meeting. This is appropriate since the majority of any new organization that would be formed will come from the Spartacist side. But unity presupposes a willingness to unite. It will take months and years of common struggle against common enemies in a common organization to erase the old line between us, these are the hard facts. Of course unity couldn't be completed tonight but would take several months, but you don't even yet agree that there is a political basis for it--this is the obstacle to progress. You won't agree that unity is politically feasible. This is what we want to talk about. We are ready to unify now. Why can we unite with you despite your zig-zags, etc.?--Because you have an umbilical cord to the SLL and they are stable. That will keep correcting you when you get off course, but the trouble is, you generally tend to overcorrect. Your present terrible mistake is refusing to unite with us. You seem to believe that if we don't unite we can have a beautiful coexistence. That is POLYVANGUARDISM. Such a theory is deleterious to the working class. As regards PL, you made a serious error last fall in sending in Danny and Fred as open members of ACFI. We were trying to develop indigenous pro-Spartacists but you went in openly and this brought about a hardening up against Trotskyists organizationally. At the time we didn't have suitable opportunity for our policy. As late as two weeks ago, Epton thought the Bulletin and Spartacist were publications of the same group. It is a serious and elementary mistake to think we want to start with politics and tactics rather than theory. We mean program. We aren't talking the same language. Cannon always talked program. You are wrongly separating Cannon and Trotsky on this matter.

Wohlforth: The antagonisms and political assessments which have been brought out tonight have political and theoretical roots impelling factionism, external or internal. They express political differences that need to be clarified, not removed entirely. If we simply make a statement there is no political bar to unity, there may be unity but it will be a unified war. You comrades recognize this. If we agreed to unity you would write to your comrades saying "Wohlforth is prepared to unify, prepare for the internal war". No sane political person would make the assessment you have made of us tonight and still say a basis for unity exists. Because of all this we have to clarify things more. We haven't clarified our differences on the American question. You are saying that just discussing our differences is impeding unity. You aren't serious political people if you say this, it's a game.

Nelson: Wohlforth has turned the basis for our friction on its head. Frustration will continue to exist and there will be in fact a war to the death as long as our two groups are competing organizationally and internationally in the same arenas. This is the source of friction. As a unified organization we will be able to control these things, not have an internal war to the death. In the 3rd and 4th Internationals, when there was more than one organization in the same country, one or the other had to be destroyed. Only one party will make the revolution in this country. Politics and program, not abstract questions, are decisive. There is no such thing as "method" abstracted from the actual building of a movement.

Stoute: If you don't think there is a basis for unity, why have you come to these meetings in the first place. The kind of differences you suggest might be a bar to unity were all within the framework of a common program. This sort of difference will come up even if we were not two separate organizations and should be expected within a national organization, even if no differences existed in the first place. The real reason you have not agreed to unite is something other than what we have been discussing.

Mazelis: To say we are appended to the British is a moronic kind of statement, and I can't believe Robertson believes that. It is completely cynical and insulting to us to say we maintain our existence by having no differences with the British. This amounts to calling us politically unprincipled, and I don't think we have to prove that this is wrong, that as a matter of fact we do have some honest but quite compatible differences with the British. The basic problem is not one of having obviously compatible differences, but Nelson says we have been dead wrong on most major political questions in the past years. What are our current errors then? Even if there were none now, if what Nelson says is true we would have differences in six months. Don't you think we should approach things in the way we want to approach them? We are trying to create the basis for unity, not prepared to say tonight there is a pre-existing basis for unity. We think we see development on your part, but we feel we have also developed.

4. Topic and Time of next meeting: 30 July, on democratic-centralism.

Robertson distributed a Spartacist leaflet attacking Workers World for endorsing Jesse Gray who is running in the Democratic primary. He also distributed Spartacist correspondence with Deacons and a cover letter.

Meeting adjourned about midnight.

SPARTACIST-ACFI UNITY NEGOTIATIONS

Fifth Session.....30 July 1965

Present: Spartacist: Robertson, Stoute, Nelson (alt.) Harper, Secretary
ACFI: Wohlforth, Mazelis, Michael (alt.)

Meeting convened at 8:22 p.m.

Chairman: Nelson

- Agenda:
1. Minutes
 2. Democratic Centralism
 3. N.Y.C. Mass Election Leaflet
 4. Epton Campaign Work
 5. Discussion on SWP
 6. IC correspondence
 7. Time and Agenda of Next Meetings

1. Minutes: Minutes of July 9 were approved as corrected (corrections incorporated).

2. Discussion on Democratic Centralism:

Robertson: The burden is on us to show how we think a group of our size ought to function, since in the event of unity the comrades from the Spartacist would initially be the majority. You have received our bulletin on the Smith case. Other documents explaining our position are "For the Right of Organized Tendencies to Exist Within the Party" and "Rescind the Suspensions!" We approach the question from the point of view of factional democracy. I was disturbed by comrade Wohlforth's remark last week that PL, the SWP, and Spartacist all claim to be democratic centralist organizations. But PL and the SWP seek to ban factions, while Spartacist defends the right of principled factions if properly regulated. Regulation is necessary to direct factionalism toward its legitimate end--arrival at a political line. The SWP used its regulatory powers for the purpose of suppressing the internal life of the party and reducing it to a mere safety valve every two years. There is also the question of the kind of balance that should be struck between the democratic and centralistic aspects. During the whole period of the American Trotskyist movement, the range of conditions under which Trotskyists have struggled has not been sufficiently great to justify any shift from the previous balance, i.e., the American party has never been either a mass party nor an illegal party; it has always been a propaganda group. In comparison with the total range in which democratic centralism was projected by the Bolsheviks to operate, we have experienced only a narrow range. We are a small propaganda group operating under conditions of legality. We don't deprecate the organizational question. It is one of the programmatic points defining a Trotskyist-Leninist organization, and the way an organization functions carries strong inferences about the role of that organization as a working class and revolutionary movement. The Russian movement split in 1903 over what was basically an organizational question: whether the majority will rule, what membership means. It would have been wrong for Lenin to have said these were "only organizational questions." While it would have been better to have had a clean, clear split (e.g., over an issue such as whether or not to have a bloc with Liberalism), nevertheless the issue was raised in this way, and it was important. Finally, if we try for a crystal clarity on organizational questions in these negotiating meetings, what the rights and obligations of membership are, there will be less grounds for anyone claiming to be "surprised" later.

Wohlforth: We don't see how we can comment on the case of Smith since in our opinion it's a messy business. In order to make a fair judgment one would have to have gone through this particular experience and know the person involved.

It is difficult for us to come to any kind of conclusion about the extent of our agreement or disagreement since we don't have a Constitution or similar document in front of us. On what I said last week, I meant that merely saying that we are democratic centralist is not enough to indicate basic agreement in practice. The SWP, PL, Spartacist, and ACFI too, all claim to be democratic centralist. In the SWP content violates form, while PL lacks even the form. The SWP has a resolution before the coming Convention banning permanent factions, a departure from their previous formal position. On the content of democratic centralism in the history of the SWP, we may have a difference, for we don't look back on the SWP as a model on either organizational or political questions. Cannon was always an unprincipled factionalist, and Trotsky intervened against him. In Trotsky's opinion, Cannon was a Zinovievist. Trotsky was unhappy with the way in which Cannon handled the Shachtman struggle, and only a few days before his death he threatened to break with Cannon. Cannon always felt a common front of the leadership against the ranks had to be maintained, and this helped lead to the destruction of the central cadre. The artificial separation of the ranks from the leadership leads to clique relationships. (This of course does not mean certain types of problems, like personal problems, should not be taken up first by the leadership.) Organizational questions cannot be raised apart from programmatic or political questions. We should not take the 1903 experience as a model, because Lenin's own development was not complete at the time. Had he been what he was in 1917, it would have been different, not that he was wrong in 1903. This was the birth, not the full development, of the Bolsheviks, and we should not seek to repeat the whole history of the Bolsheviks in 1965. Trotsky always insisted on methodological struggle. We have no differences over formal formulations--disciplined cadres, assignment to tasks, moving around, etc., but at the same time, in dealing with someone incapable of this type of functioning but who still maintains political agreement we should seek sympathizer status. We're not saying you were wrong on Smith, but we are certainly not saying this was a model. I'd like to see your Constitution when you get it worked out. We feel a certain attitude around Spartacist, a formalism on the organization question, a rigidity.

Nelson: There are two weaknesses in your statement on democratic centralism. First, your not knowing what our position really is without a Constitution. We are not brand new, and our attitude on democratic centralism is not at all new. Part of our thinking on this subject was involved in our choice of the two articles in our pamphlet, i.e., "Building the Bolshevik Party" and "What is Revolutionary Leadership?". Second, in part on the historical basis of the organizational question and the basis of this alone that we could come to agreement or disagreement. There is a relationship between the task of the vanguard party and its organizational forms. What you said last week about the SWP, PL, and Spartacist all claiming to be democratic centralist--this is an agnostic position. You know we are not the same. You know our background, our stated positions, etc. Your weakness is that despite statements to the contrary you disconnect the political basis of organizational attitudes much too much. Your attitude toward Cannon is purely subjective, that Cannon is no more than an organizational front man for Trotsky, nothing more than an organizational judo expert, or in the words of Marcus just "a window breaker." In your own words, Cannon becomes Foster. Shows a weakness in your understanding of the role of the organizational question in the building of a revolutionary party. Cannon's tactics toward the Progressive Party are still considered a model. Individuals and groupings in the SWP complained that their intellectual capacities were being squashed by the bureaucratic Cannon. Trotsky didn't dismiss the question but saw that it was a smokescreen for fundamental political differences. Trotsky insisted on discipline in building the F.I. The Smith case is a concrete example of the way we operate and how we view the obligations of members. It is not messy, as you claim, but clear-cut. He committed a breach of discipline, and when he attempted to defend and justify it we brought charges; however, his final expulsion was not for the original breach but

for his public attack on Spartacist. The Slaughter article, in the section "Lenin and Inter-Party Struggle", does a nice job in condensing a formal statement on the role of the organizational question in the revolutionary party:

"Political and organizational questions therefore cannot be separated. In an epoch where the construction of a leadership of the working class is the most vital historical problem, it is exactly on the questions of concrete planning and discipline for revolutionary work that political differences become explicit. Some Marxists seem to conceive of the party as simply a contractual discipline to stop individuals from going off the rails as they react to class pressure. But it is more than that: it must become the vanguard of revolutionary action, the representative of the general interest of the working class.

"In the construction of a revolutionary party there is a constant need to strive to maintain a correct relationship between democracy and centralism. The balance of this relationship tends to change with the objective situation. During times when the revolutionary movement operates under legal conditions, as in Britain today, it is essential to have full democratic discussion on all questions concerning the working class and the party. This does not, however, mean that democracy is a free-for-all, with nothing being decided. To the Marxist democracy is a weapon in the struggle against capitalism. Discussion is necessary to arrive at decisions upon which the activity of the party can be based.

"The constant training of new leaders in the revolutionary party requires the greatest patience by the leadership. Local autonomy and initiative, allowing the leaders and the rank and file to learn from their mistakes, is essential for the branches of the revolutionary party. The more experience the revolutionary leadership has the more flexible it will be in assisting the ranks by theory and practice to understand the need for a democratic centralist party." The main point of this is that democratic centralism is the form of the revolutionary party, and this form flows from its political tasks. Balance varies according to the objective situation. The general balance between democratic and centralist haven't changed that much in the history of the SWP. The British comrades during their early struggles didn't seem to be as horrified as much as you are in hindsight about Cannon. Healy in reply to our protest over our exclusion from the old minority tendency quoted as a model for the minority to follow the relationship of the SLL to Cannon and the SWP. You shouldn't try to read the Cannon of 1962 back into his earlier history. He maintained a revolutionary party in this country admirably under adverse conditions, and maintained it longer and better than any other national section. The SWP and YSA Constitutions are examples of our attitude toward democratic centralism.

Mazelis: You seem to want a vote of confidence on the question of Smith, and this would not be proper. The Smith case must be judged from an overall political standpoint. We need not only examples of Spartacist functioning but also a Constitution to discuss or a resolution. We feel there were serious differences between Cannon and Trotsky on the organizational question, and we agree with Trotsky. We are threshing out this question in the absence of written material, and while we can get somewhere we cannot get all the way. You misunderstand our position on Cannonism and the SWP, take it out of context when you refer only to "window breaking" or "Foster". This doesn't mean we equate Cannon with Foster or Debs, but it doesn't mean we view Cannon as a Marxist or Communist politician either. Our history project document deals with this in detail.

Stoute: We stand in the tradition of the SWP--the old SWP stands for something we can say we are in agreement with now, that we can apply to our movement today. This of course doesn't mean we endorse everything Cannon ever did. Your attitude is that we must either wipe out everything the SWP has been or must embrace it totally. This is not the way it is. I would like Wohlforth to elaborate on his statement that Spartacist is a rigid, military, formation.

Robertson: Nelson made a valuable point that examples of our application of democratic centralism are of far more value than our Constitution for your information, since our Constitution will be absolutely standard. There is something that has not been taken up. "For the Right of Minority Tendencies to Exist" discussed at length and concretely the question Wohlforth said would be of greatest interest to him: relationship of a minority to the organization as a whole. We will have a Constitution, but you won't learn as much from it as you can from the material before you, and it is in that sense we introduced it. We don't care whether you think we are right or wrong, but want to show you how we proceed, the concrete application of a certain type of discipline. If you feel we are formalist, I will say we are an organization with several currents in it; this stems from your presently being small enough to have complete homogeneity--therefore democratic centralism seems like sheer formalism to you. You should be thankful we are formalists. The SWP has learned to dispense with these formalities. Since we are a larger organization we must bring less personal and more impersonal forms into play. We have an internal life and this must be regulated. You are loading a lot on Cannon's shoulders. Shachtman always said Cannon was a Zinovievist, but where did Trotsky say this? To reduce the experiences of the SWP from 1928 to 1940 to Cannon is overstressing the central figure. You want to see documents? We have taken over the experiences and practices of the earlier Trotskyist movement. We use "Struggle for a Proletarian Party" to train our new members with (in it, by the way, Cannon says "pay attention to what I say here, not to anything I may have done"). It is not automatic by any means that we have as yet gone beyond the SWP. On the role of leadership, the leadership is elected to handle the infinity of day to day problems, reserving for the entire organization decision on fundamental differences. Cliques were certainly rife in the SWP. One thing we have strived to do is shatter preferential access to information. Our comrades are heavily informed and this creates a much healthier organization.

Wohlforth: We have refracted differences on this question, derived from other differences, such as on the SWP, and our general approach to building a movement. I now agree with Robertson--having a constitution here wouldn't prove anything. I am sure we would find any constitution you presented acceptable. The difference is in approach to politics and building a movement. On ACFI being a homogeneous group, we strive to create a homogeneous group (though we are opposed to monolithism). The way you strive to have a homogeneous group is the way you have democratic centralism. Discipline flows from political cohesion. Any disciplinary problem is in essence a political problem, including the 1903 split. Cannon sought to create organizational, not political, homogeneity. We don't disagree with what Cannon says in his book but with the experience of the Cannon regime. However, Cannon wrote his own history. Trotsky intervened in the 1932 Cannon-Shachtman fight and used the term "Zinovievist" regarding Cannon. Trotsky intervened in the Field question and in 1940, urging political rather than organizational fight. Our difference on this question is similar to our differences on method, theory, and program. Our feeling is that you are formalistic about organizational questions. This will find greater reflection when we discuss tactical questions relating to our work in this country.

Nelson: I see that "method" has raised its saintly head (it always does), unscathed and pure. I am listening to the words. You have profoundly oversimplified Cannon's role. As far as seeking to create homogeneous groups through organizational means, such a thing is not even possible. However, the main point I want to make is to question the "purity" (pardon a certain sarcasm) of your intentions. I dislike hearing pious words when dirty actions have preceded. Back to the "bookkeeping". You express a desire for avoiding "organizational excesses"...yet you played a key role in the organizational excesses of the SWP and YSA against us. Your words fall on slightly calloused ears. I happened to go through this (comrade Michael didn't--it might be good for him to hear this).

You became the "theoretical arm" of the party in their desire to get rid of us. It was your document "Party and Class" that provided the Majority with the basis for our expulsion. This was not just naivete on your part. Then in 1964 in the YSA I and the comrades of our tendency were fighting the frame-up suspensions. We defended ourselves not primarily on technical grounds, but brought out the political reasons and context of the suspensions, the question of Party-Youth relations, etc. Comrade Mazelis played a despicable role that night. The Majority was unable to deal with our arguments and with the damaging evidence against them. Mazelis, as the most capable person in the room, took the floor as lawyer for the Majority, stating that with our line on Cuba we could not function as disciplined YSA members. When we tried to lean on the Constitutional technicality that YSA members can belong to any adult political organization, Mazelis claimed that the YSA in fighting us was fighting Menshevism in the YSA (I have the notes right here I took that night). This was your role in facilitating our expulsions from the SWP and YSA. You were able to do a better job than Jack Barnes, Peter Camejo, or Barry Sheppard were able to because they didn't have your background and understanding. This is your past again. These past actions do not coincide with your words tonight.

Michael: I didn't live through all this. This is the second week you've brought up these old questions, and I don't see why you are doing this. I don't think this will help. You can put all this in a bulletin and I'll read it, but I am interested in what our differences are today. What are our tasks today? If we discuss this first, we can then have a clearer discussion on these old questions. I can't see that this sort of discussion helps us.

Mazelis: I agree strongly with Michael. I don't intend to take up the gauntlet. I do feel we made mistakes--but not the ones Nelson stated. This is the wrong way to discuss democratic centralism and the wrong way to go about the whole process of unification. Not because we are ashamed but these questions can only be clarified in light of our positions today. Nelson has given us a sarcastic and subjective outpouring of the way he feels his tendency was wronged by us. We have a completely different viewpoint. Later at the proper time we will sum up all these questions. It will be part of a summing up and not this kind of abstract bookkeeping, as he himself refers to it. I don't feel under any obligations to take up these points just because they have been raised here tonight. They will be taken up later, but in the right way. We want to relate them to developments up to the present.

Stoute: You said we seem to have a disagreement on whether or not a revolutionary movement should be made homogeneous on the basis of politics or organizational rules. We don't propose to bring about homogeneity on the basis of org. rules. However, one never has complete homogeneity and this is why we have org. forms. You said we can't settle this question tonight. How will we settle this question? You know what we are made of. You have a better knowledge than anyone else where we stand on all these questions.

Robertson: You may not like what Nelson said, but these things are vivid in the minds of our comrades. This is your past as well as ours. This is the single obstacle in our minds; repetition of this extremely bad conduct must be avoided. Wohlforth is standing the question of political homogeneity on its head. One struggles for political homogeneity not because it gives real democratic centralism but because then you don't need recourse to the organizational rules. I deplore factions if by argument you can prevent their formation in advance. Most political leaders spend much of their energy on internal struggle. But whenever organizations meet new situations, differences develop. Wohlforth made a mistake--we are most interested in political homogeneity; but when you don't have it you must function by rules. My reference to Comrade Cannon's "Struggle for a

Proletarian Party" was answered by Wohlforth's counterposing Theory and Practice. But words are part of practice and can't be separated out. You have found comrade Cannon to be the source of the ills of the strongest national section of the Trotskyist movement bar none. Many Spartacists would call themselves Cannonites. We look upon the earlier period of the Trotskyist movement in America as our heritage, to be accepted, critically.

Wohlforth: On the question of past differences between our groups, we have not objected to their discussion and feel this is an important part of the unification process and have discussed them ourselves in our communications. However, we feel that at this and the last meeting such discussion has been broadened artificially. We didn't get much clarity at the last meeting, and tonight is another example. You feel that in order for us to understand what you mean by democratic centralism you have to discuss what Mazelis said on a particular night. Maybe Nelson was saying Mazelis knows what democratic centralism is because he correctly attacked you for Menshevism in the YSA. But I had a feeling Nelson was saying something else--"that whatever Mazelis says now doesn't make any difference because he finked". If you want to discuss this, you can put "finking" on the agenda. This has been brought in artificially and has not led to clarity. We must try to view this discussion process as aimed at its goal. It would seem proper to first probe the level of agreement and disagreement today. We can then make judgements on the past if one of us wants to keep a record. Our conclusion is that the split in 1962 was principled; you think it was unprincipled. We should put this on the agenda so that it can be discussed in a positive manner and not poison all our discussions. To the extent that we presently have differences on democratic centralism, these are not sufficient to bar unity. Since Spartacist feels such an identity with Cannon, I am worried as to whether or not Spartacist comrades proceed first from political to organizational questions or vice versa. Your failure to understand the real role of Cannon will lead you in one way or another to make errors on the organizational question. We have a feeling you may have made an error (on the Smith case), but we don't know enough. We might have a sharp difference with the way you handled the case. However, whatever differences we have on this question would be subordinate to differences on all other questions. We have a difference in emphasis on the org. question, but this is subordinate to the political questions. We should hold up on discussion till we see what is the level of current agreement. In that framework we can have a real discussion on past differences. Human beings have a correct desire to justify themselves. We will do our best not to discuss these differences now, as we were tempted to do at the last meeting.

Nelson: Politics determine--that is why we are here. The friction that exists between us is that our two groups are very similar politically yet continue to remain organizationally separate and competing. Continuing this separation on the basis that we have to examine further and still further the basis for unity is in the course of time becoming quite thin to anyone with eyes to see. It is not artificial to bring in "old" questions. We went through a common experience in the same party. Your role towards us in the YSA was not one of exposing Menshevism. Our record and our documents show the struggle of a Bolshevik minority to maintain itself in the face of bureaucratic suppression. Unfortunately for you, this can't be pushed under the rug. Because of your past role, we have to get understanding of what proper minority rights are. We have the scars to show your past attitude. Now the wheel has turned. The minority split originally was over whether or not you and your supporters were willing to accept a minority position in our common tendency. You denied our tendency had the right to democratic centralist organization. One instance of this was when our tendency selected a representative to go on the YSA local exec. You refused to support our candidate, running your own instead and letting the majority choose the weaker

one. This was unprincipled. The differences we had could have been maintained within a common tendency. The question of discipline was the origin of our split. In your "history project" you analyzed Cannon's history, but when it comes to your own history then suddenly you aren't interested. You can't separate what we are now from where we came from.

Mazelis: We don't want to discuss it now, not because we are not interested but because it is a question of how you deal with it and the framework in which it is raised. We will deal with it in the proper way. Your subjective interpretation can't lead us anywhere. The incident you mention has a certain importance, but you are exaggerating it. We did not vote for the representative not because we didn't accept democratic centralism but because of the situation. A trip to England by Philips was being made at the time. During a crisis in the organization we felt it was wrong for you to wield your majority as you did. Your way of interpreting these matters is not our way. Since this incident preceded our split by two weeks, we simply didn't wish to be bound by any decisions.

Wohlforth: I think we can show what we mean by the relation of organization to politics and why we feel it is necessary to discuss the split in the tendency as a separate point. We and the British came to a common judgment at the time of our split. We had no intention of carrying out your line. If we felt differences today were of the same depth we would not be interested in unity. We have no intention of playing games. We want to find out before we unite whether or not there is enough political agreement that we can maintain your line. A split is forced upon people when they can't carry out the line of the majority. We are not putting forward the position that our differences in 1962 were not important. We will have unity if there is enough political agreement that either side could abide by the majority. We should be discussing now only our present attitude toward the organizational question.

Stoute: The 1962 split was unprincipled and shouldn't have taken place. It was unjustified politically and was basically around organizational differences. How you reacted organizationally at the time is where our disagreements came in. Do you think the concept of democratic centralism that we sought to put into practice in 1962 was wrong? What kind of minority rights would you expect?

Robertson: Your position on the 1962 split is now a serious political difference between us. You had a cavalier attitude toward democratic centralism within our tendency. You supported the SWP hatchet job on us on the basis that organizational questions are not important. You acted as the policeman of the majority over us when they desperately wanted to throw us out. Your actions show a difference in the revolutionary fiber of individuals. You lied to our Bay Area comrades. There must be some reflection on your part on what stood between us then now that the question of unity is raised. You have been wrong on every major question since then and don't show any reflection. It was a bad split and the proof is that we are still faced with it. I told you then that perhaps someday a split would be justified but it wasn't clear then, and it still isn't as long as we proceed along parallel political lines. What were the differences then? You wanted personal and political capitulation; you demanded we go before the party as liars. We were begging for democratic centralism. You took our money to send Philips to England while telling us it was for "consultation on the trade union question"; now you admit it was to work out the details of our split. Cannon never did the things you have done! We want unification because for us politics comes first. You must realize that you can't build a movement the way you acted. You casually say now "we had no intention of carrying out your line." Your actions drove a lot of people out of the minority, old party cadres, good people with maybe one more fight left in them. We blame you for blocing with Dobbs in order to get us. These are not "subjective questions". This is what looms largest: Will you do it again?

Nelson: It would have saved a great deal of trouble if what you advance now as the real reason for your split with us in 1962 had been the reasons given your own supporters and to the SWP then. However, the comments you made then can still be read in documents. The comrades on the West Coast knew Philips was lying through his teeth when he gave his "reasons"--that is why they voted him down 17-0. It was phony demagogery, designed to stampede political opinion. Because of this good comrades were lost. You drove out the people whom originally you had bragged of attracting? And there was no political basis for it. The people that left had a good history in the movement, but you wasted them, and people continue to be wasted. The existence of two separate groups with such similar lines has made us a laughing stock among serious people. Two groups cannot continue to exist in the same areas fighting for the same people. We will either unite or one will be removed from the scene. If you call this "military", go back to Lenin and look at the ruthless struggles he waged. This is the criminal side of dishonest and unpolitical approach. You want to fraternize with our rank and file? They have read the documents, and they feel that politics determine over organization.

Wohlforth: As I was impressed at the last meeting and more impressed this week, and as we suspected from the beginning you are opposed to unification. In fact, Robertson clearly states now that we have a real difference and unless it is resolved there can be no unification. We have not in the slightest changed our position on the origin of our split. If you feel this is the one difference, there will be no unity. This is not a parallel with 1902. The split was principled and later proven so. As far as the origin of the split, I tried to explain as clearly as I could and don't expect you to accept this. As we look back on our past there were questions on which we admitted errors, but we have no apologies on the split. It was correct, clear and proper. If you wanted to function as a tendency with us you could have signed our statement. Robertson gets all excited and I smile because I view it so differently, I can't take it seriously. He views it differently because he has a different method. He ought to understand that we believe what we say. This was not an incident of which we are ashamed. We felt the split was a good and necessary thing, and the French and British felt the same way. We had no intention of submitting to your discipline. We were not interested in that type of functioning and felt the work involved was too important. We are not going to get any further clarification than this. It was a very good and healthy split. The comrades in this room do not express seriousness. They thrust in questions in which they know we will get disagreement. The main difference is that Robertson feels we are a bunch of bastards. Instead of progress we are getting retrogression, and it is not the fault of ACFI. You have brought up questions to show we are rotten finks rather than seeking to find areas of agreement and proceeding from there. You tell us we are lucky to be dealing with you instead of with your snarling ranks. You should encourage them to read the Bulletin instead of factional stuff from the past. You are preparing your membership not for unification but for a deeper split, and as the responsible leadership you are responsible if that is the end result. Obviously the Spartacist group is hostile to unity because they take every matter and turn it into snarling dispute that would disrupt the final step--concrete common work. More common work or no unity. We are going to work in common first or there is not going to be any unity. If you think we are going to waste our time in hostile confrontations, we are not, because we have more important things to do. I urge that we proceed first to make clear the principled basis. We should take up the important theoretical and methodological differences and only then proceed to past differences. We must proceed to fruitful common work. It is absolutely important to prepare unification but you are preparing your comrades for a split. You should bombard us with fraternization.

Mazelis: The last session and especially tonight have in large measure reflected retrogression. Wohlforth's remarks were another last ditch effort to try to salvage whatever progress we have made, and go on to the final stage. You talk of immediate unity and then prematurely raise issues the way you do. We are more honest about unity, want to proceed in such a way that when the bitterness comes out it will be in a good context. That is why we propose to start working together. You simply call us finks again, and don't even begin to understand what our motivation was, you don't try to put yourselves in our place. We have tried not to take you up on this. I can't stress too strongly that this will get us no place. You are sabotaging unity. We plead for an end to this approach. You must have no political mind at all if you expect to raise questions in the way you have.

Nelson: You should be honest and not resort to debators language for the minutes. If you will examine the history of the attempt to unite our two groups, it is one year since we made the first proposal for unity, right after you were expelled. Retrogression? Do not complain of a process which you have set in motion. Any outsider can tell from seeing our positions which there is a basis for unity between us. We emerged from the SWP with greater differences than there are now, but there was still a basis then for unity. These differences could exist within a single organization with democratic centralism. This would be parallel with our relationship to the IC, i.e., we might have to carry out a line at variance with our own opinion, but as long as we had the right to participate in the arrival at the line we would do this. The issues you have reacted to our raising are live issues. The issue of 1962 is extremely pertinent. What would be our position in relation to the IC given this defense of your 1962 role? The IC nailed the French Pabloites to the wall for expelling the majority of the French section. Would you repeat the same action today were we in a common organization? The differences within our tendency then were far less than those separating us from the Pabloites, and we continue to maintain the split in 1962 was unprincipled. These issues must be discussed. It is clear that there has never been a political basis for the separation of our two groups. It is from this separation that factionalism comes.

Robertson: At the time of our split you said it was absolutely unprincipled to have any contact between our two groups. Now you say you have not changed your position on the split. Common work is not our problem. Michael has been drawn into common work...on our initiative. You were able to give an exact run-down on what the differences were between our groups but still you are not willing to admit that unity is possible. What are we preparing our ranks for? We frankly don't know what the outcome with you will be. We have told them everything we say here. On 1962, we are not proposing that you grovel. We are not asking you to sign a statement that you did wrong. But you will have to hear these words. We do not see any political good will on your part (by this I don't mean "friendliness", the fake seduction tactics you used on the SWP and PL). If the split in 1962 was such a good thing, why then are you in this room now? All you can come up with is the Pabloist theory of Spartacist getting better despite our own intentions.

Wohlforth: We feel the split was principled, justified, and necessary in 1962, but that the Spartacist group has evolved and that being in a different position outside the SWP and facing different problems, that unification today is possible. So far in our discussions we see no barrier to unification. The most important differences have in fact been discussed already--differences in method. We are willing to go back to ACFI and the IC and propose to them that we make a statement that unity is both principled and desirable despite differences in method. But I will also have to state that there is a grave danger that these methodological problems are so severe that they are forcing the Spartacist group into an

attitude of hostility toward us and preventing the natural process of unity, and that while there seems to be a principled basis for unity, until we have worked together we cannot tell whether it would work out. If Spartacist is sincerely interested in unity they will go back to their organization and propose that in the negotiation sessions a serious effort be made toward seeking agreement on political questions and common collaboration. Common work will help break through the present stalemate and lead to fruitful discussion. Finally we must try to handle the question of past differences in this same spirit and seek to make the best of the current process. By common work and collaboration we should hold discussion on areas where both groups can become involved in and function as a common group and a common tendency, e.g., the comrades in SDS should seek to function as a common fraction.

Nelson: You are now ready to go to ACFI and the IC and say that the political basis for unity exists. We came into these sessions with this position, and we said if you would agree to abide by the decisions of a joint conference that you could have full privileges. Without your agreement we would have a literary exchange but no organizational fusion.

Robertson: My own first reaction to your proposed agreement is a favorable one. We have already willingly drifted into common work, e.g., our involvement of one of your people in the Garment Center Anti-Viet Nam war committee. You have made a valuable statement, that unity between our groups is principled and desirable. In turn you state you want common work. You insist that we clarify issues that suggest agreement rather than discuss past differences. But fruitful discussions are not simply "positive" ones, not simply putting a good face on things. I would like to postpone decision until we have a chance to review the minutes of this and earlier sessions. It is a big step.

Wohlforth: I agree "fruitful" and "positive" are not necessarily the same. This agreement should be complemented with a clear statement that past differences are not on the agenda. We can discuss them later. Nothing is gained by discussing them week in and week out. Unity is not tied to resolution of past differences. One of the points of unification would be tabling any discussion of past differences for a year. They must be put aside. This is one of the proposals we would make. We are not going to unite with you in order to fight over who did what in 1962.

Robertson: Tell us one thing...where is the reevaluation that has led you to believe that unity is now permissible? You stated several times tonight that it was a great split in 1962. When did the change take place? The only explanation you have given is comrade Pablo's explanation. We have to discuss at one or another point our differences. There is a contradiction in comrade Wohlforth's remarks, that you did right in 1962 and now are interested in unity and preparing your ranks for it. How can you justify the split in 1962 while saying that we oppose unity? In the future should you change your conclusion on PL, for example, will we then face a new split? It is this quality which gives us the gravest apprehension. How can you square your affirmation of your past record with unity now? This contradiction which we see in you does not bode well. It seems to me from tonight's discussion that a split would be on the order of the day next time we have differences, and we will have differences. That is why we introduced a discussion of democratic centralism, so that we will have a way of dealing with these differences when they arise within a common organization, especially differences of a magnitude comparable with those in 1962, i.e., differences that weren't all that much.

Wohlforth: It is clear we haven't changed our minds. It is not clear whether you feel unification is possible. You must make up your mind whether you think unity is possible, or impossible on the basis of our position on 1962. We don't expect you to understand our motivation on this question, and must make it clear to you that we will not have an interminable number of discussions on past differences. That would be your way of stating that unless we capitulate you will not unify with us. If this is so, it will be an admission that you really feel the past break was principled. We have come to conclusion that the bar to unity is not principled political differences, but whether or not you really want unity. Spartacist must stick spoons in their mouth and hold back the out-pouring of previous differences. We need experiences in common work.

Nelson: On the question of postponement of discussion of past differences, I don't know. Subordination and regulation, certainly, if subordinated to the whole of which they are a part. If your proposal is based on a genuine desire to go forward, then the movement forward would find translation into concrete organizational steps toward the unification process. Otherwise it is no more than your continually restating "we're here because we're here". That is the reason those discussions have grated so much. We have to go forward into positive organizational steps.

Robertson: We will take your proposals to our REB and consult. Obviously the rest of the agenda is tabled pending clarification of this.

Next meeting: Thursday, August 5.

Meeting adjourned at 12:30 a.m.

SPARTACIST-ACFI UNITY NEGOTIATIONS

Sixth Session.....5 August 1965

Present: Spartacist: Robertson, Turner, Nelson Harper, Secretary
ACFI: Wohlforth, Mazelis, Michael

Meeting convened at 8:00 p.m.

Chairman: Michael

Agenda: 1. Minutes of 4th Session
2. Proposals
3. Election Statement
4. SWP Discussion

1. Minutes: Minutes of the third meeting have not yet been stencilled. Draft minutes of fourth session have been submitted for approval. Approval can be relayed by telephone and minutes typed up without waiting for next meeting.

2. Proposals:

Robertson: At the last meeting Wohlforth finally agreed that unity is politically principled and desirable "despite differences centered on method." He also made the following set of demands: (1) common work and joint collaboration should be pursued; (2) that we should have common fractions where possible; (3) that past disputes be tabled to the end of this series of our negotiating sessions; and (4) in the event of unity, discussion of past disputes be tabled for at least a year.

We don't see these questions merely as "past disputes" but as having a bearing on whether or not unity will be fruitful--"The past is the future." If the 1962 split was principled, then unity now is unprincipled. However, as long as we have this discussion at some time in the course of the negotiations, that is all right with us. What we are interested in in this discussion is not whether you were wrong or right in 1962 but how you can square a stated desire for a non-spurious unity now while maintaining the position that you were right in 1962. In such a case we don't believe we can have a unity that will last, not necessarily that we saw everything correctly then. This must be discussed directly rather than approached sideways the way it has been. This is the only issue. On your points from the last meeting, we are glad you have finally admitted unity is politically principled and desirable--we have been urging this for some time. (1) On common work, it is our understanding that, largely on our initiative, this has already been coming into existence. Michael was introduced into the Garment Center Viet Nam Committee. Sam and Fred are working together in local 1199. (2) But there is a limit. We can have common blocs, not fractions. What we are against until we have completed the preliminaries to unity is any artificial fusing of our organizations. Our fractions not only discuss tactics but also any differences arising among the comrades. Fractions decide policy and that is their right. (3) On past disputes, we would prefer not to wait, to go into them now. Wohlforth's analysis at the last meeting of the extent of our agreement and disagreement was straight to the point. However, we will agree to wait till the end of this series of discussions in order to appraise the past as it relates to our future. (4) On agreeing to table discussion of past differences for one year should unity result--we propose to table this question till concluding the final discussion, and then we will see where we stand on what we project for a unified organization. In addition, we have at this point one proposal to make to you; that is, we urge the earliest completion of the present series of discussions in order to initiate concrete merger steps, now that Wohlforth has admitted that unity is principled and desirable. (Turner and Nelson concurred in these points.)

Wohlforth: Agreement then seems to be general except for the one point, the question of common fractions, and this would seem to be merely a matter of formulation. I meant common caucuses. A caucus moves ahead depending on agreement of two parts, not on simple majority vote. What we should strive for in our common work is to function together and not against each other. This requires discussion and attempts to formulate a common line while leaving open to each side the right and necessity for their own fractions to work and come into the caucus with their own policy. The main thing is to get the common work going and then see how far it can go and how necessary the individual fractions are.

Do you mean that the bar to unification at the present time is our adherence to our original position on the split in 1962 and related questions? This is the first time this has been raised by you in this series of negotiations or at any time. Why are you raising this as the central issue now? We felt that while there was no basis for unity while we were in the SWP, now that we are out there may be a basis. I can tell you now that there will be no coming together on the question of the 1962 split. Our general feeling is that there is enough agreement between the two groups on basic political questions to make unification possible and that differences on method can be resolved within a united organization. The major question in our minds is whether these theoretical differences will effect the way we work. This is what drove us apart in 1962. Rather than going back to 1962 and seeing if we now agree on the differences that divided us, we should see whether differences divide us today. This should be the way we explore. This is the only way unification can take place. Unifications never take place over the issue of the old split. This can be discussed in time but should be put off in a united organization so that the wounds will heal and the organization pull together. This is the spirit with which we approach it. I can't understand why you ever proposed unity to us to begin with, since you know our position on 1962 and since you never stated in your letters that you first wanted to discuss the 1962 split and see whether we had changed our position. Seeing how this past question is being raised as an absolute block to unity, we should proceed immediately to this discussion. I urge comrades to strongly reconsider their inconsistent position that on the one hand there is a basis for unity and on the other that no unity is possible unless we change our past positions. There will be no reconsideration of our past differences. We feel you were clearly wrong but had hoped you had learned something in the interim. You should take the same attitude toward us if you really want unity with us. If you don't want unity, you will function just as comrade Robertson proposes. The last thing we want, and the reason we have dragged our feet, is a spurious unity, a unity leading to a split. We don't want to enter into either an external or an internal factional battle with you. This would hurt our work in this country, paralyze us. We urge you to reconsider. You might be surprised, might find out there is a basis if you tested it out. The question is not what happened in 1962 but in 1965. If we proceed along this line there is an excellent probability of unification. The only thing that would hold it up would be if we find we cannot work together in common work.

Mazelis: We have an opportunity to make a major step forward toward unification tonight. The general tone and substance of Spartacist's reply makes this possible. We can't stress too strongly that to us the process of unification is a deadly serious process and not something we take lightly., If we can make a breakthrough toward unification it has got to be on this basis, one that will not lead to an immediate or almost immediate split along the same lines which would hurt all concerned. You must have assumed that because we found ourselves outside the SWP we had changed our minds about it. You should have raised this somewhere along the line. Because we were suspended, because we took action that led to the suspension and expulsion, doesn't mean we changed our position of 1962. If Robertson saw the 1962 differences might be a bar to unity, then

we should have an early discussion on this. I think we can have a more objective discussion than the ones of the last few weeks. I think we won't wind up agreeing with each other but hope we can end up understanding each other. In 1917 Lenin and Trotsky didn't put forward that before unification they had to have agreement on past disputes. Even in the case of Pablo and the SWP, what we were demanding was not simply a rehash of past differences but taking them in context and exposing their revisionism in the course of a discussion with the Pabloites.

Nelson: Our main concern with the 1962 split lies in the contradiction we see between your stated position tonight that there is a principled basis for unity and your maintaining the position that the 1962 split was justified, was a good, clean, justified split. We said from the beginning we thought the split was criminal because the political differences were not substantial enough to warrant a split. Last week you said that in 1962 you had had no intention of abiding by what you felt to be an incorrect line toward the Party and no intention of abiding by the majority decision. You think the 1962 split was a correct split but there were no great differences then. This implies that there would be no obstacle to your repeating it. You told us last week that this was a contradiction we had to live with. What has changed since 1962? The burden falls on you. If the 1962 split was correct and nothing has changed since then, what is the basis of your seeking unity with us and what will prevent a recurrence of 1962? Under these conditions unity would be a "visit" by the ACFI comrades rather than genuine unity. You must explain this contradiction.

Robertson: We accepted what you put to us last week as an ultimatum. Wohlforth has responded strongly, saying this is the first time we have raised the question of the original split. But in our initial July 1964 unity letter and repeatedly since and in 1963 we said the only barrier to unity was that you saw yourself as being closer to the SWP Majority than to us. We said at the time of the split that "this split lightly made will not be lightly healed." We were against the split at the time and have been for unity at each point since. You were putting words in my mouth when you had me saying there would be no unity. We said we don't see how there can be a real unity, and we gave the reason. Because we expect the same kind of differences to come up now as came up then. You exploited a tactical nuance of the kind that we would expect to come up several times a year. We hoped you would at least see now we hadn't wanted a split from the SWP in 1962. One year later you said we had pulled back. You gave us an ultimatum last week about postponing all discussion of past differences and now you turn around and say you are willing to take them up immediately. Tonight, however, we came prepared to deal with the SWP. If it is agreeable to hold off a week the discussion of past differences, I am willing to accept your latest modification. The 1917 unity didn't come about only because there were new tasks but because implicitly or explicitly there were real changes in the positions of people. Trotsky had hated the Bolshevik party but now he accepted it. In our opening letter to you and in all our correspondence we raised in a central position the old split as the central obstacle in our minds to unification.

Wohlforth: In your July letter you said the barrier to unity was obviously removed by our expulsion from the SWP. This was proper. You concluded that our actions showed that we no longer held what you felt was our 1962 position, and thus unity was opened. This was proper. We wanted to find out if formal agreement covered fundamental differences. Orientation is reflected not by program but in how a group functions--this is the real test, not program. We have a big question mark about you. There are important questions of method which might be reflected in functioning. We know of no other way to proceed than to tackle this question directly. Organizationally one learns more by empirical practices than by evaluating the past. We have to test by your action whether or not you

are applying the same wrong method you did in 1962. Your tactics in 1962 and as long as you were in the Party did damage to our work by poisoning the SWP and making it impossible for us to clarify issues. We will document this when we discuss this point. You looked at it differently. Our whole approach from 1962-64 was essentially an unsuccessful attempt within an arena that you had played some role in poisoning. We both adhere to the 1962 IC statement--this is good. Nelson's question was fair, and this answers it, whether since we split in 1962 won't we split again. The only guarantee on the question of splits is not words but action. That is why we need common action now--as a test. Our differences have always been reflected most clearly on tactical problems. We now see that bringing this up has a logic which was not clear to us last week. So we should move to this at the next meeting and break the deadlock.

Turner: We want to be convinced that we are going to have a real unity that will not be ripped apart without there being any real political differences. The basis for the break in 1962 was not political, based on real disagreement, but tactical, and was of an unprincipled nature. We are not asking you to "recant" on 1962; however, we must come to an understanding and evaluation that our future relationship will be based upon a comradely, honest relationship which will produce a really unified organization. A discussion of the past along these lines can't be ignored or avoided. There must be a discussion of the past, not as a barrier to unity, but so that we can be convinced that you people are really serious. We want to have a unity that will be a gain, and this is the question that is being raised. If you are going to feel that the tactics and approach you took in the past were "valid, correct, and necessary," and you will do the same in the future, then whatever unity is created will crumble at the first serious tactical difference. We are not attempting to heap indignities upon you, but this must be discussed. We want to build a living movement in this country.

Mazelis: On Nelson's point which I think was well taken, we will try to tell you in more detail at the proper time why we think the 1962 split was principled and why we feel that the tactical and organizational differences at that time were the reflection of deeper methodological and political differences. This is why the tactical differences at the time generated as much heat as they did, and why we feel your outlook cannot explain why such heat developed and why it developed on your side also. Putting things in perspective and looking at the whole past relationship between our two tendencies inside the SWP and out, we have taken an approach toward unity which naturally you have not taken since you have a different way of viewing the original split. We have tried to see if there are growing differences between us, and in the course of this discussion we feel we have clarified the methodological differences, especially on history, which exist. But despite methodological differences, we have not seen growing tactical differences. However, oral and written statements are not enough. We must have common work, not just common statements, on a more extensive basis. In working together we can see if methodological differences are leading to sharp tactical differences. We are definitely hopeful. If we can agree on this, then we have come a long way. We need more than words. We need trust of each other. The nub of the dispute is your view of the 1962 split as an unprincipled and unpolitical action. Though we view it as politically principled, this does not preclude reunification. The differences we had in 1962 about what was then the axis of our work--the SWP--necessitated a principled split. The axis of our work now is not the SWP. We may have outgrown these differences. Both may have developed. We want to test out if we have grown to the point where these questions will not arise.

Nelson: We had better have a discussion on 1962. After 1962 we were fighting a combination of you and the party majority, and you were developing the "method" which you now have. You subordinated your own political role in the Party, blocked with the Majority--on the Cuban missile crisis, on Black Nationalism, on our right to exist in the SWP and YSA. Now you ascribe our past differences to differences of method. Then you said we were bent on a split, but you split our movement. In doing so our effectiveness as a polarizing force in the party, and since we have been out, have been greatly decreased. If you view your past performance as a model to be repeated, we don't need this kind of unity.

Turner: We can discuss this at the next meeting. Tonight we should go on to the next point.

3. Election Statement:

Spartacist feels revisions are needed in the joint leaflet.

Discussion: Nelson, Wohlforth, Mazelis, Turner, Mazelis, Turner, Nelson, Wohlforth, Robertson, Turner, Nelson.

It was agreed to substitute "Because it is a partly independent movement with mass support, the Mississippi FDP has a potential of developing as a genuine expression of the Negro people" for the current statement on the FDP. The popular leaflet will be finally adopted at the next meeting.

4. The SWP:

Robertson: The most serious discussion in the SWP is taking place around the American question. Miller-Philips and Marcus-Lawrence are opposed to the Majority. You have asked that our friends stand on the basis of the Marcus-Lawrence document. In 1963 we amended the Majority American resolution which we saw as having a correct appraisal of the economic conjuncture and as posing the correct central task of a propagandistic role. However, the resolution left out the living side of any such resolution--the attempt to develop activity and become engaged. This we added in an amendment which the majority bitterly declined as hostile to their intent. In formally voting for resolutions, it is what they say that is important, not what intentions are behind them. The 1965 document of the SWP is not amendable; it consists solely of abstentionism. On the Marcus document, "The Coming American Socialist Revolution", the Appendix was not bad. However, as regards the main presentation...I can only say that if you are 99 per cent in agreement with it, I will make the prediction that before long you will find that the 1% is an extremely large 1%. It has an economist quality throughout. What struck me even more obtrusively is the following sorts of things: on pg. 14 appears the sentence, "A workers' state, socialism, is brought about only..." To equate a workers state with socialism is about as elementary a conceptual error as a professed Marxist could make. A workers state, i.e., coercion, is that transitional agency directing the passage to socialism, i.e., a class-less, state-less society. On page 10 Marcus presents what he takes as a key connection in his argument: "The material means of existence of modern life represent the product of many kinds of labors. It is therefore impossible for man individually to liberate himself from alienation. He must accomplish this socially. Marx underlines: '...individuals must appropriate the existing totality of the productive forces.' This is the 'secret' of the United Front and the transitional program." This is typical of Marcus' treatment throughout centering on the United Front as an all-powerful, extra-temporal fetish of some kind. Directly relating the United Front as the solution to human alienation skips over huge intervening layers of history, theory, and class struggle. The United Front is a specific tactic for unsettled periods to both mobilize a broad mass in struggle and to strengthen the authority of the vanguard party within the class. The UF can also be the beginning of soviet power should the given struggle reach such a pitch. The document has a very

peculiar quality indeed. The SWP leadership will be riled by it and be able to rip it to pieces. The summary is interesting, but basically it is a right-wing and objectivist document.

With the exception of three criticisms we are in substantial agreement with the Miller-Philips document and our friends might well stand on this in the SWP pre-convention discussion. This document is a considerable advance over the 1963 document of Philips-Wohlforth which was wrong in economic prognosis as against the Majority. The time-table of events is a vital part of politics. Philips with more justification today is awaiting the economic crisis which he saw as imminent in '63. Our criticisms of the present document are that Philips treats Black Nationalism ambiguously. However, there is no attempt to use BN as the majority does to avoid building a revolutionary party of black and white workers. The most serious error appears at the beginning of several pages of otherwise effective and correct description of why the Federal troops slogan is wrong. Philips states that the issue is not one of principle. This implies that the bourgeoisie are prepared to carry through the democratic revolution in the south. This document has a theoretically primitive quality also expressed by absence of much attempt to generalize. We are four-square in support of the Miller amendment on the organizational question in the SWP, which takes out the deliberate ambiguity of the Majority's attempt to prohibit factions without using the words. We hope our friends will also introduce a motion to the convention to readmit the expelled Spartacist comrades. We have heard that Marcus is planning to introduce a motion to readmit the expelled ACFTI comrades.

Wohlforth: The Marcus international proposal calls for the readmission of the comrades of both groups. You said that the majority's economic perspective in 1963 was essentially correct and ours incorrect? I feel we have a fundamental difference on the American question. We need discussion on this and on economic prognosis. However, it is not what we said in 1963 but what we think today that is important. Let's discuss this at the next meeting rather than the 1962 split question. The 1% disagreement I have with Marcus is not on this document but internationally--we differ on Cuba. While we have not taken a formal position on the Marcus document, my own impression of it is excellent. Your assessment of the document as objectivist reflects your almost complete lack of understanding of Marxist method. The quote from the document you cited was absolutely excellent. Your opposition to the Marcus document reflects your opposition to our economic prognosis. There are three basic documents, all of which have the identical analysis that the U.S. has been in crisis since 1958-59. These are (1) the 1963 Philips-Wohlforth American resolution; (2) the Fall 1964 basic statement of the American Committee, "The Crisis of American Socialism"; (3) the Marcus American document. Your differences with these is a political problem.

Mazelis: On the Philips-Miller document, I found it to be an excellent job along the lines of a continuation of what we did in 1963, combining the American question and our discussion on the Negro resolution at that time. It certainly merits support, as does the Marcus-Lawrence document. I don't really see how we can have a discussion of this tonight at 10:15 p.m.

4. Next Meeting: There was general agreement with Wohlforth's proposal to hold the discussion of the American question at the next meeting, postponing treatment of the 1962 split until the following meeting. Next meeting set for Thursday, 26 August.

The secretaries were authorized to proceed on the minutes in the absence of difficulties.

Meeting adjourned at 10:25 p.m.

SPARTACIST-ACFI UNITY NEGOTIATIONS

Seventh Session.....23 September 1965

Present: Spartacist: Robertson, Nelson, Watts, Mage(late) Harper, Secretary
ACFI: Wohlforth, Mazelis, Michael, L.

Meeting convened at 8:30 p.m.

Agenda: 1. Minutes 3. American Question
2. Popular Election Leaflet 4. Next Meeting

1. Minutes: The minutes of 30 July were accepted.
2. Popular Leaflet: The revised leaflet on the NYC elections was accepted. It will be mimeographed by ACFI, and cost split between the two groups.
3. American Question:
Wohlforth: The three documents which represent our position on the American Question (1963 Wohlforth-Philips American Resolution; 1964 Bulletin statement on Crisis of American Socialism; 1965 SWP document by L.) have essentially the same economic analysis from a world point of view and lead to the same general conclusions. The '63 document was proposed within the framework of what a party the size of the SWP would do, 1964 document for an ACFI-sized group, while L. in 1965 has greater elaboration on the conceptions of the transitional program and united front. Our position is that essentially capitalism as a world system is in a period of stagnation and decline, and that the fundamental character of the post-war period is formed by the boom and prosperity of capitalism based on the rebuilding and development of Europe and that the period since the end of the 50's has been one of decline and stagnation. Flowing from this are profound effects on the work in the US, the rebirth of radical activity, militant struggle among Negroes, and increased student and trade union activity, all necessitating intervention. In contrast is the position of the SWP Majority expressed in the '63 political resolution and more clearly in the '65 statement. The '63 resolution views the contradictions of capitalism as external to the capitalist system, that the shrinkage of world markets creates a crisis of over production (our thesis is that even if the Soviet bloc didn't exist there would be a crisis--it is not just a reflection of the colonial revolution), and in '65 they admit they really have no analysis and feel capitalism will be stable for a long time. In '63 their lack of understanding was especially revealed in section on Negro question which they saw as a racial struggle rather than being brought into being by the crisis of capitalism, that the stagnation of the economy forced those in the weakest economic position out of the economy. They saw no need for the SWP to do anything, and therefore the central conclusion and heart of the '63 statement was that the work of the SWP was to be propagandistic. This is the heart of the SWP's degeneration and centrism, and this document was the most revisionist ever passed by the SWP. We proposed a line of intervention, recognizing that we must become participants in the developing mass movement and struggle. What was central to our '63 document was to intervene and become part of this new process. Developments since '63 have borne this out. There is now more struggle, more ferment, and we have been giving more stress to relating theoretical intervention (not propagandistic) to actual intervention in order to give leadership to militants in their struggle. The SWP's position is not and never was one of intervention. Not a question of counterposed propaganda or agitation because both are wrong, but seeking to give theoretical leadership to the struggle as it is, on a higher theoretical level than propaganda, simultaneously on a higher and lower level than propaganda, the fusion

of theory and practice. SWP's conception of a propagandistic period was wrong. There is no period in the history of man when you can limit yourself to propaganda, not even period of greatest reaction, and I can't even conceive of such a period. The '63 Majority resolution was wrong and incapable of amendment because its fundamental thesis was wrong. The SWP has implemented this line; this is the reason for its degeneration.

L.: I can summarize significance of my document under 4 headings: (1) political standpoint; (2) general political aims; (3) context which shapes particular form in which document written; (4) to define practical political perspectives of the document. (1) Central standpoint is resolution material from the Third World Congress, the point at which strategic perspective and method were introduced, and the conception of the inter-relationship between the united front, workers control, and the transitional method, and putting this strategic concept and method into the present world, the nature of the real strategic issues in the world today. (2) The general aims of the document are to determine what are the tasks of building a movement in this country. The struggle for ideological hegemony over the radical vanguard is beginning, and this hegemony is the beginning point for organizing the vanguard forces into the basis of a revolutionary party. This standpoint is taken from the 1st section "Feuerbach" of the German Ideology, where Marx and Engels summarize their method for the first time, separate it from any of its Hegelian hang-overs. (3) The context is the conjunctural pessimism and tail-endism sweeping through the entire American movement from PL to the SWP. All these movements are Bernsteinist in a fundamental sense: The movement is everything, the goal nothing. (4) The perspective of the document is the need to build a movement from scratch, to recognize that there is no party in this country which today represents the continuity of Leninist struggle, just a series of groups that can fuse and build a nucleus cadre which can then start to build a movement from scratch. The reference point is Lenin in 1910. The economic question is fundamental. The problem of Marxist economics after we have identified material movements in the basis of society is to translate these movements into social movements in the superstructure, and to show how developments in the political superstructure actually change the course of economic events. Two things are true of this period. It is part of the epoch of decay in which imperialism can only survive by resorting to various forms of statism, and we are in a particular period in which US has established hegemony over the world and has enjoyed economic prosperity based on credit expansion. Marx defines "economic crisis" in Vol.3 when general crisis emerges from such a period, new 1929 threatened, and bourgeoisie needs new formula to prevent economic collapse. They can either squeeze more surplus value out of working class at home which means attacking trade union movement which means undermining their own base, or finding a solution in the colonial world. But every bit of colonial world operating at a deficit and a drag on the imperialist economy. Their solution is to attempt to establish a viable and productive peasantry in the backward countries and lay the basis for primitive accumulation to create an internal market and lay basis for capitalist expansion. Since 1959 US has followed policy of managed social revolutions, general policy of imperialism to support nationalist colonial revolutions as long as they remain within control of imperialism. The SWP et al. failed to see this and merely sees US and its allies as conducting a struggle against the colonial revolution...this is not the case. They are instead trying to circumvent the Permanent Revolution by sucking working class and peasantry of these countries into train of Ben Bellas, Nassers, etc., and to use these regimes to lay basis for reorganization for healthy internal agricultural development, and in turn the imperialist exploitation of these countries. Pabloites see this as progressive. If colonial revolution follows the Cuban-Ben Bella model, ultimate end is victory of imperialism. If imperialists see they are failing to succeed in this policy, they must confront the working

class in their own country. Therefore main task is to show inter-relationship of forces on a world scale and show why main question is not colonial revolution but preparation for conditions for revolution in advanced countries. American Trotskyist movement has not understood for decades Trotsky's conception of united front, workers control and transitional method. Trotsky knew he was dealing with idiots and bunglers, so he wrote in 1938 an example of how the transitional method is applied to today's issues, which today SWP tries to algebraically impose on reality. The only way to build a revolutionary movement in the US is to show radicals there is a meaningful relationship between their personal existence here and now and activities they can conduct here and now and with a socialist revolution here in the US.

Watts: Wohlforth noted the relationship between the superficial economic analysis in the SWP document and their abstentionism. Their basic flaw is that they make no mention of the declining rate of profit. However, not this single error that has led to the disintegration of the SWP but their abstentionism has been reflected in their lack of economic analysis. One other point, on the meaning of the word "propaganda". By this we never meant that propaganda is the objectivist type of stuff the SWP comes out with, simply commenting on the various progressive social developments. This is why we were disturbed by the tendency of your 1963 document--merely widespread activism as a cure for the basic degeneration of the party. The document that expressed their real degeneration was the Negro resolution--this was the worst.

Robertson: The 1963 Philips-Wohlforth document ran the anticipated film of economic development too fast, pointed out a number of tendencies operating to weaken US economy but projected an immediate crisis and also implied the economy had been in crisis for several years--an over-acceleration of time. While forecasting a crisis, the '63 document also clearly projected a crisis of stagnation, i.e., a drawn-out crisis of some sort rather than a crisis in the accepted sense, breaking of bubble and widespread world curtailment of production. Why should the definition of crisis be changed? An attempt to have your cake and eat it too. This has actually in terms of the capitalist economy been an extremely good period despite the weaknesses indicated in both your and the SWP document. Philips has admitted this when he says the crisis predicted in 1963 has been postponed but will come--this is correct. The 1963 PC resolution stated a fairly correct economic prognosis and correctly called for a general propagandistic approach (though they were misusing the term "propaganda"--as Wohlforth has misused it tonight): "Stated generally, the economic trend is one of a turn from relative prosperity through a process of developing stagnation to a pattern of more precipitous decline." Their intention was of course revealed for all to see in terms of para. 41 and the substitute para. 41 we introduced which linked up a general propaganda orientation with intervening in movements such as they are and developing bases within them, that we must intervene or be condemned to sterile isolation and degeneration during the upsurges of the next period. The Majority rejected this amendment, and we then voted against the resolution--without the amendment the resolution was no good. "Propaganda" is political education, linking up theory with events in order to provide orientation in struggle rather than merely offering slogans for immediate mobilization for action. This is related to our perspective, the creation through a process of splits and fusions of an effective propaganda group in this country. We are not presently a propaganda group but something far less. We want to create an organization that can intervene in struggle in at least an exemplary way. We want to polarize the ostensible revolutionary organizations and crystalize out those elements with revolutionary outlooks. To do these things would be a major victory in terms of what is now possible in the US. We also must do our work and participate as we

are now. We object to propaganda only if it is divorced from action. I really don't know what to say about a good deal of L.'s remarks on transitional method, workers control, united front, etc. These are tactics undertaken by a revolutionary party, e.g., United Front. Centrists saw this as a tactic "sui generis", but Trotsky pointed out UF merely that tactic in the appropriate circumstances which extends the authority of the party over the masses. Without being linked up to and subordinated to the revolutionary party, the united front is nothing. Another point, it would be a mistake to simply take the colonial revolution in bloc and suggest that the Bolsheviks and the early CI were simply interested in turning all eyes to the West. Not so. Some of the most effective work done by Trotsky was raising question that not only in advanced but also in backward countries proletarian uprisings could take place, the emphasis being on its proletarian leadership. They were prepared to make a heavy orientation toward these struggles as a possible entrance way into what they at the same time recognized was the decisive theater in terms of the history of the world--the revolution in Europe and America.

Mazelis: Robertson does not really come to grips with the thesis put forward in the L. document. He refuses to see the contradiction between the Majority line in '63 and our line. It is a matter of the basic economic analysis which is not in that document and which is in our document and in the L. document in the most developed form to date. Your incorrectness is shown by your offering a substitute for one page, then rejecting the draft when this one page was rejected. We proceeded in an entirely different way on the Negro question, beginning with an analysis of the Majority document as a whole. Tonight you have stated again that the economic analysis in the Majority draft was correct. Therefore you should have voted for it. I would like to hear tonight a detailed dealing with the L. document, but the points Robertson has raised are not its weaknesses. I think he misunderstands completely the concept of the united front as put forward by L. Also your feeling that the document slights the colonial revolution. One of the strengths of the L. document is that it sums up clearly why Marxists are opposed to the Pabloite conception of the colonial revolution, and you are making an artificial distinction when you say Lenin's and Trotsky's views were different from those put forward in the document. Watts touched on the question of mistakes in past documents. Of course we made mistakes, and let me be the first to admit the 1963 document is far from perfect and has errors from which we can only learn. But its main line, the economic analysis and call for struggle within the SWP, was correct. Certainly there are instances of trying to overcorrect for petty-bourgeois background, etc., and we learned through our own struggle that, e.g., colonization is good, but it's not an answer to the degeneration of the SWP.

Nelson: The '63 document has now become a millstone around Wohlforth's neck, and he now feels it necessary to admit the excesses of the period when he was in alliance with Philips. The basic error of the '63 document was not its economic analysis but that the main working thesis of the document is the premise that the party need only be reunited with the working class to reassume its revolutionary role, i.e., assumes the party to be essentially revolutionary. The document was not presented then as some profound economic analysis. Our quarrel with it then was not so much that it presented a qualitative overstatement economically, but a more serious misunderstanding of the political sickness of the party. Then you posed as the immediate task getting back into the trade unions at all costs which at this stage means going into oblivion. In '63 you stated US was then in crisis and now 2 years later you say "beginning to show signs of..." You still don't, despite all your talk about method, understand the relationship

between party and class. The '63 document is syndicalist--get back to the class and the party will automatically correct itself. This reflects the simple trade union attitude of Phillips. You were wrong in your analysis of the party, the tasks of the party, the relationship between the revisionism of the party and projected tasks. The Majority document was not abstentionist because it had the wrong economic analysis but because it saw no role for itself in shaping the direction of the political movement in this country. The L. document might be characterized as Left Freudian. If I wanted to be quite blunt, I would say it had a crack-pot quality. The United Front is a tactic of struggle to maximize the strength of the working class while exposing in practice the defective line of false leaders, not what you say here:

"Trotsky warns that the struggle for socialism must proceed from demands for the material necessities of life. For example, struggle in the construction workers industries cannot themselves have a socialist character, since the construction workers, in taking over their industry could not conceivably solve the fundamental problems of its existence. However, if slum-tenants, unemployed, construction workers, workers in construction materials industries unite on a common program of housing, schools, etc., proceeding from consumption, they have broken the back of alienation in principle uniting their respective immediate material interests as labor with their material interests as consumers of the products of labor. Struggles of the working class and its allies which thus bridge the division of labor of the working class respecting programs of consumption or other material and social conditions of life exactly embody the key to the fundamental change required in the competence, morality and combat capabilities of the working-class and its allies. Such a political combination for common conditions of life, material, social, political, is a United Front." That's garbage, frankly. This isn't a united front, this is something else; I don't care what you call it, but it isn't a united front! Throughout you display this same kind of sloppiness in confusing the theoretical foundations of the party, transitional program and united front, in a whole series of peculiar--strange--errors, equating "workers state" with "socialism", posing as the task of the United Front determining the "Bill of production", the State Budget, etc. The document as a whole has a strong Economist flavor. It is not a political document. Comrades of ACFI, if you are 99% in agreement with this document, as you stated before, then you are in bad shape. On your relation of size to task, this is not a simple equation. We have been able to make a modest start on what we proposed in our amendment despite the fact that we are several times smaller than the SWP.

Wohlforth: There is a recurrent theme in these discussions which is worth mentioning. We always get to the point where Spartacist comrades take us to task for some past position we held, claiming it is a millstone around our necks, while at the same time they consider it a matter of principle to uphold every position they ever took. In our opinion no position we ever took is a millstone around our neck and every position you have taken is a millstone--because you have shown yourself critically incapable of examining your own past and your own development. We are developing and evaluating our past. The '63 resolution in my opinion on the political level on how to revive the SWP is not as bad as Nelson says, but it does err in that direction. Since 1963 we have a conscious record of development on this question, and we now have clearer understanding of the methodological failure of the SWP underlying their failure to intervene. You have no developed on this level. You do not share our method. You have a tremendous millstone and we don't. In 1963 our essential thesis was American imperialism was in decline and in crisis, and we were right but we dated it too late. The prognosis of a crisis of stagnation has been borne out.

The central position of the SWP was wrong and was a reflection of their Pabloism, that the crisis of capitalism is caused by the development of the colonial revolution. They view the 1950's as a period of revolutionary upsurge and do not see that the economic crisis is internal within capitalism itself. They lacked a conjunctural analysis of the development in the post war period, and to the extent Spartacist supports SWP position they have no analysis. It is the process, not the speed, that is important, and we can be off by 20 years as long as we have correctly analyzed the process. According to our understanding colonial outbreaks are a reflection of crisis in the advanced countries.

L's document can be understood on a number of levels. To read a page which is ABC on the question of alienation and say that this is Freudian is not to understand Marx and not to understand the essential element of Marxist analysis. Socialism breaks down the dangers of alienation. Transitional struggle, struggle posing the question of power, has within it the conception of a new way of organizing society, and this is what workers councils were--a way of uniting sections that were divided and reorganizing society in a different way. It's not Al's fault he doesn't understand. It is Spartacist's line that everything is program, no theory or method. Thereby the United Front becomes a coalition of specific parties in Germany; the "transitional program" is a document written in 1938. This approach is a manifestation of the cause of theoretical stagnation among Marxists, to know the particulars but not the process that produced it and adapt it to current reality. Spartacist is a left extension of the SWP, and will remain so as long as they don't break from the method of the SWP, as long as they don't go back to the history of the SWP and understand it. Therefore it is quite natural that you support their 1963 document.

Watts: I have 3 points: (1) You may be correct in saying the '63 Majority document was deficient in that it had a tendency to depict the nature of the crisis as stemming from progressive loss of markets, isolation as the colonial world becomes more and more revolutionary, leading to political and economic crisis in the US. But if on this basis you say it doesn't matter, therefore, what Philips said in the first 20 pages of your document, which is what you just said that this was the most important tactical point, then I see you left without any basic analysis of the American economy now. (2) L. commented that in recent years the US has demonstrated, e.g., Cuba, greater tactical flexibility with respect to colonial revolutions. But this is recognized by everyone, that the US is willing to support confined movements which could build some reasonable economic structure in the colonial countries and make them even more profitable fields of development. However, recently there seems to have been a reversal. One must realize that the Cuban revolution has been successful in creating a state which is roughly analogous to that in China. The political and social process at work in the colonial world must be studied carefully, and this task still remains to be done. We agree with you that an analysis of the colonial world and Stalinism is a major task, and we are devoting a good deal of attention to this. (3) I want to support Nelson's charge of L's general sloppiness. Take for example the following quotation from L's document:

"The first practical principle of the strategic perspective is to rid oneself of all foolish notions about the 'nobility' of the workers or the claptrap that it is merely necessary for the workers to seize the factories and elect their own government to set the world to rights. Unless we begin with the fact of the profound moral corruption of the workers and their profound incompetence in management, we shall never discover a solution to these key obstacles to socialist victory. The first and always the most fundamental task and perspective of the strategic perspective is to change the human nature of the working class as a whole entirely."

(presumably before the revolution can be successful, if I understand this correctly, and I do not believe I am taking this out of context). If you mean by this the working class must be changed in the sense of realizing the need for and participating in a vanguard party, we would agree with you. But if you mean the working class must before it can make a revolution rid itself of its profound moral corruption and learn how to run factories, gain competence in management, then this reminds me much more of a humanist approach rather than a developed Marxist approach. As it is written this seems to be terribly sloppy and misleading to say the least.

L.: If what Nelson has selected is the prime example of the poor character of the document, then he is on very bad ground. The concept of the relationship of the working class to power is from the German Ideology. If you look this up you will drop your criticism on this point. If you will refer to footnotes 12 & 13 on the United Front, you will find that the paragraph you find so objectionable is exactly what Trotsky had to offer on the soviets being the highest form of united front. The concepts of united front and soviet are identical. The paragraph Watts cited could be subject to ambiguous interpretation. The working class as long as it is alienated, i.e., obsessed with the bourgeois way of existence, is incapable of taking power. However, once workers see themselves as united, once the division of labor is broken down, once they see various problems capable of solution in terms of the labor power that they as a single organization represent, then the mystery of capitalist production is beaten. The secret of the united front is that when the working class sees itself united, as Marx points out, there is a qualitative change in its consciousness. United front by its very existence creates change in the confidence of the working class, and this causes them to be attracted to us and not the labor fakers. The UF is a primitive form of soviet which represents a profound social change in the organization of society. Only when the workers are organized as a united class for themselves is there the possibility for workers power. Once the working class is united, the mystery of production is destroyed and the workers say "let us resolve what we shall produce." On what we mean by economic analysis, not what bourgeois economists mean. Credit cannot solve any basic problem, only delay and aggravate it. The capitalist manager must try to solve the basic problem by confronting the working class and reducing wages. This is what we mean by economic crisis. The capitalist system must now temporarily create vast amounts of credit, but eventually must either open up the colonial world for a new wave of colonial expansion or confront the working class in its own country. Not a question of picking the date but seeing how the ruling class is compelled to create a social and political conjuncture. Then comes ferment, motion and intervention. The working class does not take the road of political struggle by autonomous means, and this is where Philips wrong, this is Dobbs' position, but is impelled to take a revolutionary road, just as has happened with Ho Chi Minh, a liberal, in Vietnam. A conjunctural perspective is realizing the problems posed to the bourgeoisie and how the bourgeoisie are compelled to create the conditions of class struggle, and ultimately create the class struggle itself. The document emphasizes from beginning to end that the only solution to this problem is a revolutionary party, and to say it is economist is to be merely oblivious. Finally, on the question of colonial policy which you raise, this is the ABC's of capitalism. How does capitalism progress--by expanding production, by realizing surplus value and profit by employing new labor and new means of production. But this has come to a halt in the advanced countries, and they expand instead in Latin America, in Africa, in India. We saw this in '57 in Cuba, how consciously the bourgeoisie supported Castro revolution. The only solution is to create a prosperous and productive peasantry and create an internal market for capitalist accumulation, otherwise will have to confront class struggle in own country, the last resort. On Robertson's remarks, they are irrelevant to the whole document and its political purpose.

Mage: I disagree on the last point. Expanded production does not consist of increasing variable capital but constant capital. Marx made a prediction which turned out not to be true, that expanded production would also involve an increase in variable capital. In fact, the statistics of American economy show very clearly there has been a substantial decrease; over the course of the century there has been no increase in number of hours worked, while the population has trebled. It is not then the problem Rosa Luxemburg saw of penetration into non-capitalist areas that is the sine qua non for expanded production, but investment opportunities inside the developed countries which leads us to the nature of the capitalist crisis. There is only one crisis, the one that became open in 1914 and continues to this day and will continue until the elimination of capitalism. All one can discuss are what are the stages and development in the course of the permanent crisis, i.e., the forces of production have outrun capitalist property relations and national boundaries and demand the reorganization of society. The predictions of Marx in the 1870's have become concrete reality and dominate our epoch. If we discuss political intervention, it is not at all that capitalism is in crisis--this is what is ABC--but what is the form the crisis is taking right now, here in our country, the concrete economic prognosis on which we must base our intervention into the class struggle which of course goes on independently of whether we or the capitalists want it to or not. L's explanation of what he means by united front seems perfectly orthodox, so it would make much more sense if he would use the orthodox formulation, that the working class must cease being a class in itself and become a class for itself. Alienation will be overcome by overcoming the particular forms of alienation which exist today. A socialist revolution doesn't solve any problems at all but provides an opening to the future and the conscious impetus to overcome them further. The revolution removes barriers to the solution of problems. It creates a possibility and a new consciousness which can develop or wither. L's concept of alienation is too limited; it will continue until we have built a communist society. On L's concrete economic prognosis, the question of a crisis of stagnation, the quintessence of stagnation would be, statistically, the American economy from 1933-41, and one might argue that the period 1957-1963 is comparable. Stagnation is above all a relative factor, while the decisive factor of American capitalism is that there have been revolutions in the world, that the S.U. has established a non-capitalist economy and that after the Second World War China took the same path. So the problem of capitalism is not the growth rate at home but above all the historical context. Stagnation does not now consist of a growth rate of 1% a year, but of a growth rate 2% a year less than that of the Soviet Union. Except for the last 2 years the US has been lagging behind the Soviet Union. The reason for this is the classical one of the effects of the nearly full investment of the available potential surplus value which would cause such a vast flood of cheap commodities that the rate of profit would be completely wiped out and a crisis occur, so that the solution must be to prevent the consequences of a healthy growth. To keep up with the S.U. means major crisis in the U.S.--this is the contradiction, while to avoid a major crisis in the U.S. means to fall slowly and steadily behind the S.U. The solution must be found militarily. If you can put enough pressure on the S.U. and China, this will force on them such a heavy arms burden that it will slow their rate of growth. But these arms would ultimately be used and the consequences would be self-destructive. At the same time the American economy has grown much more dynamic than even a war budget can control. There is a vast potential expansion of productive capacity which means that 1/2 the industrial working class today is working in obsolete industries and will be thrown out of work at the next recession. While this recession may be overcome, it means that the prosperous condition of the working class today is an illusion, based on expansion and not on the market, so that even a relaxation in the rate of growth can mean vast increase in the rate of unemployment. This is what I think is in the cards for American capitalism within the next 2-3 years, and only the radical extension of the war in Vietnam has delayed it.

Robertson: First, as regards points touched on by Mazelis and Wohlforth re the Majority 1963 documents on the American and Negro questions. Wohlforth described the American document of the SWP Majority as their major document, their decisive document, unlike presumably their Negro and International documents. We see this in the opposite light, that they were least interested in the American document--it came in late and trivially, and since they didn't expect any "action" over this were able to write some fairly decent words to cover-up. Their action documents were their Negro and International documents. The Negro document is in our opinion truly the worst document the SWP ever produced. It repudiates explicitly through page after page a revolutionary perspective in the US with their theory of two vanguards and two separate organizations for the black and white workers. In our opinion it could not be amended simply with action amendments, and we were appalled by your attempt to do so. But in the least active sector, over the American question document, they were able to allow words to cover up intentions, i.e., something we have always observed with Pabloites--the lapse into orthodoxy where there is no challenge. In this area we were correct in introducing an action amendment, and when they rejected it we then properly voted against the document because we were then voting against a significant, vital and declared omission in what would have otherwise been a sufficiently correct document. On the question of the nature of the capitalist crisis, I use the term "crisis" not in the sense of the crisis of the capitalist order but rather the particular character of the economic cycle. There has for some time been a revisionist tendency, long associated with Huberman and Sweezy, to attribute the absence of sharply defined peaks and bottoms to an economic cycle in the post-war period to the idea that the bourgeois state has developed a sufficient capacity to intervene so that the crisis expresses itself in a condition of stagnation. I think that this vastly overstates the effects of the so-called Keynesian measures, and the usual arguments that are advanced to support this are impressionistic--unemployment insurance and the like have very little effect--and the "control" measures operate too little and too late. To expect therefore that the nature of capitalist crisis today centers on stagnation is a way to say that the economy of the post-war world, which has generally performed quite well, therefore has another kind of crisis. (In a sense it does have another kind of crisis, such as Mage took up, a certain ability to transfer crises within the economic sector into the military sector.) But to suggest that there is some lesser outcome to contradictions within the economic sector is wrong and suggests too great a modification of the capitalist order. In fact, the very thing L. mentioned, the vast inflation of the credit structure, introduces above all the potential for a sharp crash. A great deal of what has been raised tonight "educationally," e.g., that the transitional program is not just a document written in 1938, etc., is simply beside the point, intended to imply that these things are coming as a revelation to the other side. On the L. document, I'm afraid I must confess that I too have not understood a word of Marx, Engels, Lenin or Trotsky if this is the ABC of Marxism. In fact, in rereading the document, I thought of a cartoon that is a favorite of mine. Several workmen have just unwrapped a very large canvas and the art dealers are looking at it. In the middle of the large white canvas is a perfect black dot. And one of the art dealers is saying to the other one, "I don't care if he is the world's greatest painter, I still think he's kidding."--this is the quality I carried away from reading the L. document. As to whether the aim of the bourgeoisie in the colonial world is to create a prosperous peasantry in order to find a new base for exploitation--I don't even want to deal with this. That is a very original contribution indeed!

4. Next meeting will be 1 October at Mazelis'. Subject will be the 1962 split in the Revolutionary Tendency, and its continuation in 1963-64.

Meeting adjourned about 11:15 p.m.

SPARTACIST-ACFI UNITY NEGOTIATIONS

Eighth Session.....8 October 1965

Present: Spartacist: Robertson, Nelson, Stoute Harper, Secretary
ACFI: Mazelis, van Ronk, Michael

Meeting convened at 8:40 p.m. Chairman: van Ronk

Agenda: 1. Discussion on Split and Past Differences
2. Good and Welfare

1. Split and Past Differences:

Mazelis: The issue is not whether we can agree on all past differences but whether we can understand or communicate with one another. If we can, unity will still be possible. The 1962 split was principled because your tendency showed a complete lack of understanding of the ABCs of struggle inside the SWP, and we have no regrets. Behind our tactical difference lay a fundamentally different method, a different approach on how to build a revolutionary party. Impossible to function as a common faction barring your agreement with us on the statement of reorganization of the tendency--this was an absolute minimum, non-negotiable. We had no choice and have no regrets. The evolution of certain members of your group has confirmed to a large extent our initial feelings on the nature of your group and the way it was headed toward a split and away from serious struggle in the SWP. After these people left, your group then pulled back from a split. We of course made mistakes, and had to in order to learn. We were feeling our way. The central difference between us is that we seriously struggled and developed and you did not. Our approach to the 1963 Convention was basically very good, although our submitting material relating to our split in 1962 to the Majority was a blunder, as we have acknowledged. We are proud of the Convention material itself. We learned a lot later in the struggle against Philips and his Economism and Cannonism. It is easy for you to say you were right about the SWP because it continued to degenerate, but you should have struggled against this degeneration. Summing up: You failed to break from the method of the SWP Majority; you prematurely wrote off the party in 1962; you supported the Majority's economic analysis in 1963; you refused to vote against the reunification itself; and you were commended by Hansen for this and for your Cuba position; the main fire at the 1963 Convention was against us as agents of the SLL, while you prided yourself on separating yourself from the SLL; your subjective, empirical approach is shown by your line on the history of the SWP and our methodological differences, and finally by your attitude toward the Marcus document, rejecting the ABCs of Marxism itself. Three times in three years we have addressed ourselves to the American question, but you have refused to submit a contribution to the IC Congress. You attack the Marcus document but have nothing to offer as an alternative. You justified your counterposition on the Negro question rather than the American question in 1963 by the attention the Majority gave this question; however, we must choose our grounds, and the American question is decisive. You are "orthodox" rather than Marxist in a real sense. You don't apply

Marxist method but work out an "orthodox" line. You are politically Cannonites, like the WP of 15-20 years ago. You share the weaknesses the SWP had then, but not its strengths, its proletarian character. We have learned that a different approach is needed, that it is necessary to go beyond Cannon's unbelievable theoretical backwardness. In conclusion, the obvious question is why are we trying to achieve unity? Situations change. The methodological differences we had in 1962 paralyzed our functioning. Because we face different tasks today than we did then, we must explore working relationships and attempt to resolve our important differences. If we are to unify, it must be with the understanding we will not fall apart at the first tactical difference; therefore we want to learn beforehand as much as we can about you and your working. If we can get assurance we can struggle together, then unity could be attempted. Unity should be approached within the framework of international discussion leading to the International conference. These discussions have been fruitful despite some very difficult moments. We should continue to work together in outside arenas and test our level of agreement in practical work. [This presentation was read from Mazelis' prepared statement.]

Robertson: That was a rather imaginative re-creation of the history of the evolution of the two groups; however, the real history is a matter of documentary record which we have done our best to reproduce (see Marxist Bulletins 1, 2, 3 and 4). Your "method" can be described only as mindless, empirical zig-zagging--chasing after one will-o-the-wisp after the other, then bounding off again. During that time we have been bruised by you three times in passing: the documents are (1962) "Towards the Working Class"; (1963) "Party and Class"; and (1964) your 12 August reply to our letter suggesting unity was the order of the day. The present discussion must be examined in the light of these "contributions". What separates us and poisons the prospects for unity is the profoundly unprincipled blow we have received at your hand. Over the past year our political differences have tended to narrow (not that they were ever wide), e.g., PL, nationalism and the Negro question, but we still face problems in terms of working together. If you state 1962 is your model, then we know you are not serious in talking about a unification. Each of the three documents I mentioned was written in a deliberately fraudulent manner, yet every so often Wohlforth turns around and gives a precise and exactly correct appraisal of our positions, so we know that he is fully aware of our correct positions. Your position in '62 was a closed and consistent work of art, perfectly reminiscent of the Stalinists in Stalin's day who dealt with Trotskyists by claiming they were simply agents of a fascist power and conscious enemies of the Soviet Union. Thus Comrade Wohlforth consciously falsely described our position in his conclusion: "To state it openly and plainly, theirs is a split perspective [italics in original]. A tendency which rejects party discipline even if only partially, and party building, which seeks to sneak people into the party, which functions in part as an independent entity, which carries on an organizational faction war within the party, which in violation of party statutes includes non-party members, which is so deeply alienated and isolated from the party ranks that it has in fact already split in content if not in form, such a tendency is going down a road that must inevitably lead to a split from the party."

This was created out of the whole cloth, and when the other comrades in the tendency outside New York had a chance to measure whether or not we had proposed to violate party statutes, they did not believe you people. Some of these, especially those who were politically neutral between us, were demoralized by the split and dropped away, and you advance this as proof that we were close to splitting from the party! Not a single one of those who from our viewpoint understood what the fight was about dropped away; those that did were your people on the West Coast who quit when they found out you had been lying to them. And tonight you say that the proof we were planning a split was that people like Jim P. and those in S.F.--who supported your political analysis--dropped out! Which side is creating castles in Spain? Wohlforth, in both his '62 and '64 documents, suggested we saw as the root cause of the SWP's degeneration their 1940 loss of the Shachtmanites. The single sentence that this is "taken" from read approximately that in 1940 the SWP suffered a double blow, that half the party split and Trotsky was murdered. This stunning double blow to the SWP is passed off by Wohlforth as "Robertson weeps tears over the split with the Shachtmanites", suggesting that something very different was meant by us. Something else that's funny: I was condemned in these documents by Wohlforth for suggesting that one of the things that kept the SWP from going off the rails at this time was James P. Cannon, and this was condemned as outrageous subjectivism, to attribute this great a role to a single individual. Yet this same Wohlforth two years later sees Cannon as the SWP for 35 years! Talking about "method", in 1962 a big argument was waged over whether the SWP possessed a Proletarian Core. We said this was nonsense, that the party's working-class backbone had been broken up and driven out during the early years of the witchhunt. Wohlforth insisted [page 32 of M.B. 2] that the proletarian core existed, and that the failure of Robertson-Ireland to see its weight in the party proved their petty-bourgeois nature. "Toward the Working Class" was the only effort made by Wohlforth over what was to him then a very serious question, that the proletarian core of the SWP was everything. We brought in several documents, especially Ireland's "What the Discussion is Really About", where we analyzed the possible ways you can speak of a "proletarian core". We never got an answer to anything--all we got was a split.

You didn't have it so good in 1963. In "Party and Class" you made it clear you were addressing yourselves to the party Majority so that it could fight us "politically rather than organizationally", implying that they should "get us", but politically. But a big hole had opened up in your past thesis that we were hell bent on a split (your whole justification for splitting with us). This is the fact that we were still in the party! You had to admit that your story of our "split perspective" was cooked up. In 1962 in your circular faction letter to Bertha, you said: "therefore under no conditions, since we disagree on the most fundamental question of all, the party, can we have anything to do with Robertson-Mage." Five months later we got an offer of collaboration--though it was simply an invitation to us to support your Convention document. We then recruited the intermediate people between us, comrades Chatham and Turner. I remember when Wohlforth leaped up and said, "But Robertson thinks the party is centrist". They already knew this, and joined our tendency. You say you took the brunt of the 1963 Conven-

tion? Have you really forgotten that Convention, that hate-filled atmosphere when I took the platform after having been called a "Negro-hater"? We attacked the party where it was doing the rottenest thing on the American Question, throwing away the American Negroes, which you theoretically endorsed with only tactical amendments to their document. Something else to set the record straight--we fought long and hard against "For Early Reunification" and voted against it. You are distorting the fact that we abstained on an oral motion, read to us once, that we would accept the Majority decision on this question. We voted against the positions of the Majority contained in their document, but did not vote against accepting the already-adopted Majority line. Your distortion of this is another example of your fakery. After unity was also adopted by a majority of the IC sections, we criticized Healy for not turning up at the unity conference on the grounds that it should be made into a good, clear split. Obviously the SLL and French would never have gotten in, but things would have been clearer then. Hansen outmaneuvered Healy tactically and split the IC. That you didn't argue with us about--you were just interested in trying to make out we were against the IC. Over this period (1962 to the present), on the Negro question, PL, the proletarian core, your line towards the SWP--you see yourself simply as "developing" while we see you as oscillating and zig-zagging. Take your line on the SWP for example. All through 1962 Wohlforth oscillated back and forth, doing something very peculiar to the word "centrist". "Centrist" means nothing if not flux, change, motion, heterogeneous elements lumped together. You insisted that centrism was a finished category, and to say the party is centrist is to say it's finished, that everyone in it is a centrist. Yet centrism means that in the minds of the members are all sorts of contradictory ideas. You made a mockery of the meaning of centrism for the sake of polemical convenience, at the same time carefully avoiding comrade Dobbs. You labelled Weiss and Swabek the main enemy in the SWP, aided and abetted by the hirelings Hansen and Warde, but not the central party leadership itself, not Cannon and Dobbs. You worked this angle for only a little while, until the fall of '63. Since nothing happened in the SWP between the spring and fall of '63 you became dispirited and ready therefore to walk out of the party (maybe you decided the party didn't have a proletarian core after all). Eventually you precipitated your own exodus by violating a standing (though not justifiable) party regulation, knowing that it would lead to your expulsion. Wohlforth doesn't lead his people but maneuvers them into positions, assuming they aren't going to see things clearly and act on that basis. His method is to figure out a way to stampede his own people so as to carry along the weaker and otherwise resistant elements (the same technique he tried, unsuccessfully, to use against us in '62). This is not our method.

On the '62 split: We made it clear that had the IC simply issued orders to us we would have accepted the line, as we would accept it again. But you wanted to break us, wanted us to sign a statement of agreement to a policy, not simply to carry out the policy. This was deliberate, because you wanted a purge. A shabby split was carried out by Wohlforth for organizational and personal reasons. Healy should have known better. Healy moved in an unprincipled way;

he tried to purge this section and to break its back. It was not a question of discussion and a vote somewhere, then our carrying out the line, but of breaking us. We were asked not to accept but to affirm our agreement with something we did not agree with; "Even if only two people sign, they will be the tendency." Comrade Wohlforth immediately ran down and told Dobbs (see Wohlforth's "Letter to Bertha"), told his leader.

You've talked at great length about your struggles in the SWP. The Majority raided a tendency meeting of ours, and we responded very correctly by defending the right of factions to exist. You had not a word to say at the time, this was "only an organizational squabble". You've always been very cavalier toward organizational questions--when it's worked to your advantage. Now the Bulletin is filled with material about how the SWP has done away with inner party democracy and factions and the rest. But we fought against it in the party while you were silent. We always compelled the Majority to reveal themselves. Thus they expelled us for no deed on our part but for our "bad attitude", and they had to put out five internal bulletins to justify it, and they've had to adopt a new special resolution which bans factions.

Now, where do we go from here in the light of your actions against us? (we regard you as a gang of organizational wreckers). Mercifully you're an appendage of the British who are a stable political formation--otherwise you would have blown away long ago. However, you are so appended, you have people of talent among you, you're situated in this country and you hold a general political line similar to ours despite your excesses. What we want to know is the possibility of honest collaboration on your part--that's why this extremely squalid history has meaning to us. We want to know whether your past "method" is a model, to be repeated. If we are to unify, we want to know whether, for example, you are prepared to accept (not agree with) membership in an organization which has the position ours would on our own common history, for we must educate our members and we're not going to burn our existing Marxist Bulletins (the best thing of course is that new alignments would develop within the new organization). As far as we are concerned these unity negotiations have not been particularly fruitful and haven't taught us much we didn't already know--things are about as we thought they were. We think unity is indicated providing you are not laying down the basis already for preparation for a new split. We want to be able to function and that's why we want democratic centralism. Normally, if we weren't going to have a session up North in a couple of weeks, we should at this point go over the 10 points raised in your initial letter where you suggest we're pro-India, pro-Chiang, white-chauvinist, etc. What we'd like to see (after the Northern conference) is examination of a number of transitional measures towards a joint national conference following the IC Conference. If the Northern meeting and IC Conference make explicit an acceptance of a united group as an IC section, then we would be in favor of a joint convention, in the meantime bridging the gap with a series of parity committees coordinating our public activities. But what we want to know in the meantime is whether you can accept life in an organization which makes an evaluation of the 1962 split as being unprincipled. If progress toward unity goes well, the question tends to

become increasingly academic. So, we still think unity is possible, though these negotiations have not been particularly encouraging. You have fastened ever harder to your position that the 1962 split was great. If that was really so, we shouldn't be sitting here now. And that's what we said at the time. Not that much has changed in the two year interval since, except that a few verifications have come in (we predicted the outcome in the SWP). One more thing about your then position on the character of the SWP (which you now say was never really revolutionary!). Within one month after our split came pretty good verification of the essentially centrist character of the central party leadership (their reaction to the Cuban missile crisis). And within a year their reaction to the Kennedy assassination showed they were far more rotten than most classic centrists. This was a matter of a year--not the 12 packed years 1922-1934 in the Soviet Union. The majority of our tendency was willing to abide by your position if we could only argue and be voted down. Or, if Healy had sent us an order--"do this"--we would have done it, as long as we did not have to personally affirm it within the tendency. But you wanted to get rid of us. You say it was necessary as we wanted to split from the party, but you were dead wrong, and by word and deed on our part you have been shown to be wrong. But you are so blind, so obsessive, that you wouldn't see it and haven't seen it through tonight.

Stoute: In assessing common histories since the split, one thing stands out--there would be big differences now had the split taken place over a real political difference. At the time we had a political difference on the nature of the SWP and a tactical difference on how we should function in it. Now you should be able to look back on your position of the time and recognize you were wrong. This is important because we do not want to repeat the unprincipled split, to unify now and then have the same thing happen again in a year or two over a similar matter. We struggled to exist in the SWP as an organized political tendency, whereas your policy was to minimize political struggle and also one that would tend to lead toward the dissolution of the tendency. You also used to charge we wanted to avoid mass struggle and merely have a "study circle". Yet as soon as we were thrown out of the SWP we were told we were doing too much mass work and not enough theoretical work, that now we need "method". A few months before the split Wohlforth said, "The SWP is centrist through and through", but at the time of the split said that the SWP is revolutionary through and through. And now your position is that the SWP has never really been revolutionary! This kind of zig-zag makes me feel that we are not dealing with real political questions, and that it is somewhat unreal to discuss what are the political lines and differences of the two groups, because your political positions always hinge on some kind of maneuver. All this is reflected in the big organizational problem which is now posed: the problem of democratic centralism. We don't want to see the same thing over again. On our handling of the Negro Question in 1963, it is artificial to separate the American Question and the Negro Question. (Mazelis: What did you submit in 1963 on the Negro Question?) We submitted the article "For Black Trotskyism" and a statement of our critical support to the Fraser resolution ("Revolutionary Integration", 1963).

van Ronk: Leading up to the '63 Convention I was formally uncommitted within the party, though my sympathies were with the Minorities. When the Convention itself came up I found myself in a position where I had either to vote for political documents or make vague gestures. It was not that I felt the documents of the Reorganized Minority Tendency were perfect, but they gave me something on which to take a political stand, though at the time I was more sympathetic with Robertson's position on the party. You did not give me anything on which I could take a stand politically, and this was crucial at the time. The Committee's view on the party has been borne out. You viewed the party as centrist, i.e., a finished product, but it was the Committee that struggled at the Convention politically while all Spartacist did was submit an amendment or two and a statement on which there was no vote. (Robertson: We submitted two resolutions.) You submitted no resolution on the American Question and that was the key. You abdicated the struggle. I felt a hard struggle should be made. Your analysis that the party was a finished, hardened centrist thing harkens back to the period when you were in extreme opposition but submitted no documents on the key questions. This is true of your group today--you have strong political positions, but submit few documents to the world at large. This is because you have nothing to say, and the reason is that you take your politics as given. This is not Marxism. The conclusions of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky are extremely important but we cannot simply take them as given, and you do. We on the other hand have a large literary output. This is because we are in the process of examining a lot of things, re-examining all kinds of things, and we are struggling towards method--this is what method is, acutally, and not what Jim said, "deriving theory from program" (good grief, man). Yes, there were political differences then, even though we didn't fully understand them. If we had, then certainly we would have had a much more fruitful political discussion then, and perhaps be spared this. There were political differences; there are political differences; the essential nature of that split was principled.

Nelson: When you place the minutes of these negotiations side by side with the actual documents of 1962, then you explain to us how the split was principled, because they don't say the same thing--not at all. Compare "Toward the Working Class" with the statements by comrade Fred that it was simply a matter of your not being willing to abide by positions that a majority of the Tendency held... that there was a split in the offing and therefore you weren't willing to abide by decisions. You coolly explained that this was something set up a long time before October--a cynical but fairly accurate description of the process that preceded the split. You were quite frank a couple of sessions ago, and that's not what's in "Toward the Working Class". This is what we are jumping on, not the positions, because all the positions then were phony--you attacking positions you knew weren't ours, and presenting in some ways positions that weren't yours. You can say a thousand times that 1962 was principled, but the record says different, in black and white. You can't explain "Toward the Working Class" in light of the proceedings of our negotiation sessions. Fred said in his

presentation that "Party and Class" was a blunder (Fred: I didn't say "Party and Class" was a blunder, I said submitting the Appendices was a blunder.) The part of your document that referred to our positions, then, was, you admit, a blunder. The point I'm making is that the common denominator of "Toward the Working Class", "Party and Class" and the August 12 letter is that they are a pack of lies. "Toward the Working Class" was designed to stampede the out-of-town comrades into a vote for you and against us. But they recognized this on the West Coast. Fox went out there and spoke to them on what was printed in "Toward the Working Class", and he got thrown out of town with a 17-0 vote. How do you explain that in terms of principled splits? The same with the 12 August letter. Each of these documents ascribes to us positions by innuendo and outright lies. Talk about method. Political methodology doesn't stand apart from theoretical underpinnings, and the political methodology that is the common denominator of all these documents is the lie. It's one thing to fight hard for a political position, but when you're lied to and shafted--that doesn't go away. It's happened three times. First it caused a split in our tendency. The second time it caused our expulsion from the SWP. And now it appears to be preventing our unity. Van Ronk, you once said, "We finked on you. You finked on us. We were both wrong, so let's forget it." But there is an essential difference between the intentions and results of "Party and Class" and what you claim was our finking, i.e., the material presented by comrade Myra Weiss to the '63 Plenum which indicated the relationship between the Reorganized Minority Tendency and the SLL. "Party and Class" was designed to get us expelled from the party. It was deliberately submitted to the Discussion Bulletin too late for us to reply, and it was only by the accident that I was working in the national office that enabled us to see it in time for us to reply contrary to your intentions. This was a knife in the back. You say the 1963 Plenum equals "Party and Class" and therefore cancels it. But comrade Healy had already written Dobbs earlier in 1963 saying that Tim was a representative of the IC, or words to that effect. Healy exposed Tim, at the time that you were playing the role of Loyal Opposition in the SWP. What Myra presented was to offset the slanders you presented to the party, and not designed in order to get you thrown out. You weren't thrown out on this basis, while we were thrown out on the basis of what you did.

Speaking of "methodology", let's take a case in point. In 1961 Wohlforth thought we should make a power play in the YSA in order to fight the party. When the YSA was lost, Tim turned his back on it --the party's the real thing, when a few months before the YSA was the end-all. A big blunder, then overcorrection. Then, in May 1962 the document "On Orientation" characterized the party as containing elements of centrism. In October 1962 the party was dominated by a centrist tendency. A few weeks later the party was still revolutionary--this at a time when an enormous centrist development had clearly taken place--the capitulation over Cuba. The SWP ceased to be a revolutionary party at that time, and was already preparing unification with the Pabloites. The capitulation to Black Nationalism was the final manifestation that they had abandoned any perspective of building a revolutionary party in the U.S. Yet at that time you said the party was still revolutionary and possessed a so-

lid proletarian core. We don't want you to grovel, but to judge your positions politically. On every single point your tactics were widely at variance with the reality of the party's behavior. Van Ronk, when you said that at least the ACFI comrades were struggling in 1963 you missed the last session when Wohlforth admitted an analysis of the party contained in the ACFI American Question document was largely incorrect, i.e., this oversimplified position of Philips that all that is needed to regenerate the party is to get its feet back in the working class. To wind up, it's not so much our particular positions, but the profound political instability exhibited by your tendency and your demonstrated willingness to lie and to resort to the unprincipled methods more appropriate to bourgeois politics, and such as the SWP uses. You say we haven't outgrown the SWP, but you haven't broken with them yet in that sense. Your whole past three years is nothing but a kind of fiction in terms of the written word.

Michael: You comrades seem to have characterized the SWP at the time as being rotten, non-proletarian to the core, and a diseased shell. Yet you maintain you wanted to remain in the party in order to recruit to your tendency. Your documents stress work where the Majority isn't working, you refuse to carry the blame for the things the Majority was saying--well, how could you have reached people in the party with such an attitude? It's obvious that you would alienate these people. They still believe in the party and they're not going to see you working seriously to build it. When you label a group, you tend to represent all the people in the group as having the same characteristics. Since you viewed the party as worthless, there would be a tendency to view all the comrades in the party as worthless. At the last Convention it was our comrades that waged a political struggle, not yours. We had a discussion last week on the Marcus document which we feel is a continuation of our work on developing the American Question. But you didn't reply to it in a serious way. You made jokes about it. Your approach to the Garment Center Vietnam Committee was the same. This approach tends to alienate people. Even in your current work the same sort of approach is evident.

Mazelis: Michael hit on a couple of very important points I was going to make. Robertson, you're bookkeeping again. On the question of who left the party after the tendency split, we are talking about who were your comrades after the split, not before. Then Petras was not with us. A section of your group was looking for an out, and you catered to these people. Peter and Roger dominated the tone of your group. Cary left, Edith left, Cowley left. We continue to feel exactly what we felt then--we're not ashamed of what we said in "Toward the Working Class". At the same time we're very proud of the fact that what we're saying now is not what we said then. We have developed, there's nothing wrong with that. Comparing "Toward the Working Class" with what we say now shows we were fundamentally correct then, yet we have developed. Our understanding was not complete at that time, either of your group or of the nature of the party. Our basic approach was correct--we wanted to struggle, we weren't giving up, and you were. On our position on the working-class core of the SWP, we're not ashamed of that either. We're not

saying that this wasn't overstated to some extent. But if you're going to say who was more correct, it was us. Following our break with you we continued to collaborate with these people and developed through this a whole grouping in the proletarian cadres in the SWP. The fact that we weren't able to continue working with them after a certain time doesn't mean that the work we did with them was worthless. We are very proud that we went through that process with them. After we broke with Philips and his group we continued to be able to reach a layer of people completely unreachable by you, among the older cadres of the party. I don't see how it can get us very far simply to throw around the word "lies". I've thought about the question of the "proletarian core" and there were perhaps 50 people, 15% of the party, that we were able to connect up with on one level or another and have an exchange with them. You couldn't do anything with these people--you could only affirm your own purity and orthodoxy and explain how rotten the SWP was. You can do a lot of good things, and have shown that as an organization. But you cannot struggle together with others, you cannot struggle in other organizations, and this is a very, very important weakness. The basic difference between us is on how to build a movement, a basic methodological difference. The whole composition of the party is changing, but to you all that matters is this question or that question. You fix a label and put a date on. Cuba is a deformed workers state and that's that. That's not the way we approach things. The fact was that the older cadre of the party was leaving, had to be struggled for. This was important to us, and that's the thread running through our work from 1962 to the present, that's why it's not a question of zig-zags, that's why we think we were right then. We've developed; it's not a question of zig-zags. How can we explain "Toward the Working Class" in light of the party's position on Cuba? That document showed we wanted to struggle and reach people in the party, and you did not. This is precisely what we want to explain in these sessions, how to build a movement. I don't see any contradiction.

Who took the brunt in '63? You gloated that we weren't going to get thrown out, and that's obviously a way of saying we took the brunt. You attacked the SLL in no uncertain terms at the Convention precisely at the time you should have been cutting the ground from under the Majority notwithstanding whatever differences you had with the International. About your "accepting" the reunification, we never said we weren't going to carry out the decisions of the Convention. You chose the technical point of "acceptance" to show very clearly to the Majority that you were differentiating yourself from the IC at a time when you should not have. You didn't have to do that to remain in the party. They didn't throw us out for voting against the reunification. We felt you should have voted with us against the reunification itself. We never said that you didn't state your opposition to reunification in other senses, as in your resolution. You accuse us of lying when that is not the case at all. This is an indication of a very casual attitude toward theoretical struggle on your part, as is your statement that you haven't learned anything from the negotiating sessions. The Negro Question and the American Question are not the same, and in any event you took a very abstract and incorrect theoretical line. You made no attempt to analyze the crisis of capitalism as it revealed itself at that time.

You inform us you are interested in working in unions, but you have not analyzed the situation in the labor movement. You share an empirical disdain for an arena where not much is happening. There's no getting around it--you haven't devoted any attention to the American Question. Your politics are given--it doesn't matter that from 1961-1965, the whole life of your tendency, you had nothing to say on this question. We've waged a very serious struggle inside the SWP, hammering away at them on the American Question. We didn't want to write off the SWP prematurely without a struggle, didn't want to place premature labels. This was tied in with the fact that the SWP did not formally break with the IC until 1963, although it was of course clear where they were heading. Instead of struggling against all this, above all over the American Question and exposing the Majority on that level and showing how revisionism had eaten into their line at home, you ignored this and simply fixed a label. This was part of your alienated attitude which made it impossible for you to reach or relate to anyone in the SWP, just as you haven't been able to relate to anything in PL. You saw our serious orientation as playing around. Show us where we adapted to PL or anybody else the way the Majority adapts in their opportunist little zig-zags which we are not guilty of. We went after PL knowing exactly what we were doing, and we succeeded in part because of that, we internalized the struggle in PL, and that struggle is still going on. If we had been working together in PL we would have had the exact same problems we had in the SWP. You accused us of selling out by distributing the PL leaflet calling for a boycott of the presidential election. To this day we have not the slightest guilt about this, not the slightest guilt whatsoever. This ties in with other things I will mention. We would have no objection as part of a struggle in a living movement to distribute this welfare workers committee leaflet calling for negotiations or indicating some confidence in the U.N., as part of a struggle, making it clear where we stand but not refusing to go along with these people. The same thing goes in part for the Fifth Avenue Peace Parade next week. The same thing goes for PL. The same thing goes for the Garment Center committee. These are things that tie together some of the problems. If you study the way the SLL has struggled in the YS and Labour Party, I think you could not with your line have done that and still have been part of the struggle. Because that struggle entails a lot of distributing leaflets we don't like. You take an Ohlerite line on tactics. This sums up our differences. I would conclude by reaffirming the points I made before. Our record both in the SWP and PL is one we are proud of, that we feel confirms the points we have been raising. Our group sees the need for a serious relation to these various movements and a serious struggle within them. This relates precisely to your seeing theory derived from program. This relates precisely to the point we made about how you viewed the SWP. You're acting the way the SWP did at that period when it had practically nothing to do with outside organizations, concentrating on shopkeeping, building the party, etc. The whole situation of the SWP shows that this attitude is not enough, that you have to struggle in a living movement.

Robertson: I had hoped there might be some reply to my perspectives. My initial presentation had two parts: (1) a running critique of our past; (2) where we stand today and, if you people opt for unity

on the basis I indicated, how we can go forward. If someone at a public meeting should ask, "you people have just united--why did you split?" we couldn't just have a free-for-all. (Mazelis: This is something the exact handling of which would have to be discussed--it's obviously a problem.) It's a question of accepting rather than agreeing--something that does seem to be an obstacle. In reply to comrade van Ronk on was the American Question the key in 1963? No. You have an obsessional notion that no matter what the relationship of forces or the motion of the class or what is happening that in a given country at any particular time the national question must dominate. This is an oversimplification. In 1961 and 1963 this was simply not true. We were in a party whose revisionism was expressing itself stage by stage in those areas where there was motion and struggle in the world. This is where the inner-party struggle took place. Philips sounded fairly ridiculous by saying the Majority has forgone a proletarian perspective, therefore we must turn immediately to the mass of the American workers. That is posing the whole question quite irrelevantly. The big exception was the Negro struggle in the North and South--and this was the area we picked up on, oriented to theoretically and practically--indeed it would be hard to improve on that one-page amendment we introduced as an outlook on the American scene. Another problem is that ACFI is an excessively literary tendency, that you don't really mean it if you don't say it in 50 pages. Where comrade Trotsky was seeking to develop an international propaganda group between 1928-34, he listed a half dozen key points in the crystallization of left oppositional cadres around the world, and they were on an international basis. Our situation is no better than Trotsky's was at that time. Obviously, for a mass party how one responds on the domestic terrain is decisive. But to say this is always true of very small propaganda groups, including the SWP, is a vast oversimplification. You charge we have a low literary output because we have nothing to say. There are two sides of this: (1) we aren't a predominantly literary tendency, and (2) Wohlforth can turn out with the least amount of effort the largest number of words this side of Joe Hansen, and Marcus is no mean man with a pen either (though perhaps it would be wiser if he could be placed in some kind of restraint or under sedation). Nor do we consider ourselves a finished or closed tendency, or a systematically all-sided propaganda group even. We are a part of a propaganda group in two senses: (1) we are involved in this country; (2) we are politically part of the International Committee--this is part of the reason we are interested in the organizational side of unification. You on the other hand are almost exclusively a literary tendency, with everything poured into that. But if you compare us and yourselves with most Trotskyist sections of our size over the past 30 years, you will get an idea of a fairly normal balance between activity and propaganda that much more closely corresponds to ours. On any topic you can drop 50 dubious, embarrassing pages. It doesn't matter that you haven't any involvement in the arena or may know nothing about it--but by God you've got those 50 pages! Your American resolutions are of that sort.

What is the relationship between theory and program? Program is decisive. Theory is a part of program. By program we mean the steps in the taking of power by the working class. Since you are facile at writing, you inflate the essence of writing, i.e., method

and theory, into the whole. You've turned inside out, whereas the Philips-Wohlforth tendency used to say that class orientation and rooting oneself in the class was the all-decisive thing. Before that it was "the party", being at one with the party. Now it's "method". Michael talks about "working with the Majority". Alas, he obviously never read comrade Harper's document which pointed out that in the course of mass work where you have fractions it has been found easier to do one's work where the Majority presence was not overwhelming. This was turned inside out by the Control Commission which expelled us, operating on the paraphrase of a quotation from that document by comrade Wohlforth. The idea of working where the Majority wasn't overwhelming was presented as just running amok. Dobbs presented your interpretation very well. Such a thing isn't possible, much less to be desired. But we found we could function more easily where there was a fairly proper mix, where we didn't have a little Sylvia running to bring the Majority down on our backs as at CCNY (she wasn't very powerful herself, but could always bring in the Majority). You see, the Majority wasn't a loyal Majority. The Majority consciously tried to prevent our recruiting people to the SWP because from the extent you draw people around you and bring them into the party they are predisposed to then consider your positions after they join the organization. Therefore the Majority tried to keep us out of mass activity. So, Michael, you should carefully consider whether the phrases that got us thrown out of the SWP were not really paraphrases with new meanings, or whether they were what we had really said.

On the more minor question of who dominated our group and whether we intended to split from the SWP or not, Petras is cited. He left several months after the split, but never had anything to do with our political viewpoint, always having agreed with Tim, and was demoralized by the split and his loss of faith in Tim. You can't name a single person central to our tendency and who agreed with us on the nature of the SWP that left the party. Those who dropped away were those you had won or were orienting to, and they did drop away --as a result of the split which you made. Those who dominated our tendency were those that wrote the documents: Robertson, Harper, Ireland, Mage, Stoute and White. They're all still functioning, even Ireland who's been out in the boondocks all this time. Even he who'd been the least active of our cadres bitterly defended his party membership. In the SWP we always made it clear we had fundamental agreement with the IC-SLL, but we were perfectly prepared at any time to indicate we were not at one with them, because we were not and are not now at one with them. We have basic political agreement, but not exact, and there's no reason we or they should take such responsibility. If you don't like it, that's too bad, but that's the way it's been. We've been the ones who've opposed that, wanted an organizational common front; but the one thing the IC can't have is its cake and eat it too. It can't keep us at arm's length and at the same time expect total defense where we disagree. Until there are organizational bonds, that's not even a question. At present there's no reason to subordinate organizational considerations where a political matter is relevant and where we think the SLL has a short-sighted position. It's enough to get hung for our own positions, not those of others.

Finally, and this is probably most significant, in relation to Fred's remarks about passing out the PL leaflet calling for an election boycott, the welfare anti-war committee leaflet that called for negotiations and U.N. intervention, the Parade which you comrades continue to be sponsors of, under the slogan "Stop the War Now"--these reveal a systematic rightist bias on the part of your comrades. And you just pass this off by saying everybody has to do things they don't like! It's possible to work in a group without voluntarily doing those things you profoundly disagree with. Don't tell me that the SLL comrades got out there and pushed Gaitskill's right wing garbage and the rest of it. They did whatever minimum tokenism they had to in order to stay in. No one made you stay in the Parade Committee, no one would have been thrown out of that Vietnam committee for not passing out that leaflet. Your remaining in PL didn't depend on your handing out that leaflet. No matter what your position is, you'll always find someone to the left and someone to the right. You have to use judgment, judgment on whether to voluntarily pass out anti-working-class lines, opportunist lines. It is hypocritical to on the one hand make the record by calling in your paper for a vote to the SWP and being actually indifferent to the question so that you will for convenience sake pass out a leaflet calling for boycott. This is a very severe political criticism of you, mainly reflected organizationally. The political expression has been suppressed by your ties with the British. But the way they function toward the CP and the BLP is very different from the way you function toward the SWP and PL. You've always shown a far more conciliatory (politically and personally) ingratiating quality in the course of your work than we--strikingly so. If the bond were ever severed between you, we would be concerned about the loss of a small number of radical comrades. The question of these three leaflets, these three incidents, was of a profound, not an episodic character. This is not a generalization of "atrocities" stories. Wohlforth and I had a similar problem some years ago when we were deciding whether the SWP leadership was right or whether Healy was right. Eventually it became possible independent of the circumstances to determine a profound opportunism on the part of the English Pabloites, endorsed by the Pabloite International Secretariat. This was when they circulated, without comment, in their public "internal" bulletin the documents of some purely and characteristic Mensheviks who had broken from the predecessor of the SLL. But as for us in this room, we know the circumstances also, and we can say, yes, there's a right-left difference showing up between us. I don't care whether you call it left and ultra-left, but it's a right-left difference. (Freddy: That's right, we agree on one thing.) That's right.

Stoute: At the time the split took place, and prior to it when we were discussing the nature of the SWP Tim accused us of not doing enough "shop-keeping" at the SWP headquarters. Now we're being accused of just proclaiming our purity and not actually working in mass arenas. But we're also criticized for doing only mass work and not concentrating on theory and method. All this seems very contradictory. To me it proves you are not proceeding from any consistent analysis. The SWP Majority wanted to get rid of us partly because we wanted to work in mass arenas, and not solely around party headquarters. They tried to keep us out of areas of struggle because they didn't want us to recruit anyone. If we hadn't been interested in recruiting there would have been no problem. Regar-

ding the way you have worked in PL and in the Parade Committee, and in light of the right-left difference that has shown up here tonight and the points Mazelis raised about the way in which you work with people, I'm beginning to wonder if you see working with us in the same light.

van Ronk: I'm glad we're getting out of the archaeology and into current politics. One thing that's been very grating in these sessions is the sort of ledger-keeping you engage in, Robertson: "In document 21a you said so and so. In 37c you said so and so. We, on the other hand, never change our positions." As a matter of fact I remember you once said to me, "I haven't changed an essential political position in the last 10 years." Well, I have! At the 1963 Convention the essential thing I thought Wohlforth and Co. had was that they took the leadership of the opposition; they did not tail-end, and your amendment on the American Question was a tail-end. I was attracted on that basis, on the need to intervene politically. As far as the content of the Wohlforth American Question document, there are things in the document that I...I blanch as a matter of fact. (We had our showdown with Philips later and we learned something from it.) The content that I disagreed with in the document was mostly expunged from the politics of our present organization in the process of our dispute with Philips, which was very fruitful. If I were at the '63 Convention today I would still choose Wohlforth and Co., because now I would be able to see how you people equivocated very badly on the international question, which, as I see things now, is far more central. It's hard work to do the literary work we do, but it's necessary to keep abreast. We don't believe in a dichotomy between mass work and literary work. If you're not in the mass movement, your literary work won't be worth a damn; but you've got to documentarily evaluate your work in the mass movement also. So we criticize you on the one hand for your high-bred purism and on the other for your WPA-type activity. There is no inconsistency in our point of view. In Marxist method, the two criticisms are not mutually exclusive. You say you haven't done much work on the American Question per se but have done a lot on the Negro Question which is the same thing. I think you've got the order reversed, for the Negro movement is responding to pressure of American and international world capitalism as a whole, and this requires evaluation on all levels to be able to accurately pinpoint any single question. It's commendable that you're doing work on the Negro Question, particularly if you're involved in the field, but to view the American Question as an appendage to the Negro Question--I can't believe my ears. You say, we derive our method from our program; again you've got it reversed. Methodology is an understanding of how things actually work in intervals, concretely. From this we derive program. From this we understand what programmatic demands are necessary, then proceed. Then we proceed to the question of power. On the leaflets we've distributed that were discussed--first of all this is not what we conceive of ourselves as having been created by history to do. If you could take our Bulletin and could show me concretely in black and white, as you've done in our discussions, that we're incipient right-wingers, I'd be disturbed. But I think you're nit-picking. You've got to view who and what we are, as you've been saying, over a period

of time. Finally, as to what has been gained from these sessions. Just from the discussion tonight, I question your ability to learn. Your politics are given. You're not attempting to keep up (you've got to keep applying method). Marx never had Marx to read--Marxism is a method. We don't see evidence of your applying it, we don't see the essential literary output. Perhaps we put too much effort into literary output, but there has to be more than you do. Your nonchalant intellectual attitude towards these sessions raises the question in my mind, "Can these comrades learn?" Or is it all already known?

Nelson: I'm afraid I'm going to resort to some of that hard "ledger-keeping" again. Going back and evaluating what people said at certain points is called "archaeology" by comrade van Ronk but it's called theory and preservation of history by others. As to who took the brunt at the '63 Convention, at that time it was very easy to be for Black Nationalism, and your tendency was at that time for Black Nationalism and its theoretical implications. The only amendment you put forth on the Negro Question was an action amendment. Comrade Mazelis explicitly wrote that he supported the theoretical foundations of the party's position on Black Nationalism. I'm not saying you embraced it fully but it was easy to be for it at that Convention. Once outside the SWP and away from the pressure of the Majority you changed your position on both Black Nationalism and PL. There was no fight inside the party on the American Question. In 1963 it was only a minor point on the Convention agenda. The tough question in 1963 was the Negro Question. The whole party was running around beating themselves with sticks, ashamed they were white and the SWP was a white party, and anyone who thought differently was some kind of racist. We were under extreme pressure for months; our position was repugnant to the Majority, while yours was sort of "ho-hum". Robertson has characterized your tendency tonight as having a certain rightward bias. On thinking back, you backed up on your position towards Black Nationalism--after the fight was over. But when the screws were on your attitude was conciliatory. In the general context of the SWP you always had a conciliatory attitude toward the Majority and on occasion actually worked in bloc with them against us. You were "the loyal oppositionists".

Mazelis says how can we accuse you of being opportunist towards PL. It was us at the 1963 New York Branch Conference that introduced the memorandum on PL. And it looks damn good today. Your comrades got up on the floor and denounced it along with the Majority--PL was just a bunch of Stalinist adventurers--we had to fight both you and the Majority on that view. At the time the Majority was coming up with one atrocity story after another on PL, because they didn't want anything to do with PL, they wanted to avoid confrontation with PL, and you joined them in this. After you split from the party and faced the big, cruel world--then PL looked a little better to you. You call this "learning from mistakes". But it reflects the fact that your tendency has been very susceptible to pressures and tends to move organizationally to the right, and politically to the right in the process, where desirable. On the Parade Committee, having been caught with your pants down, I thought

you'd back up--but you're defending your role! Don't you know what you signed your name to, what was in that "Call"? It's the State Department position. It's the SANE position--"this war is not in the interest of national security". We broke from the Committee, not because we couldn't have a speaker, but because we couldn't go along with their discipline. We weren't going to carry their signs or take responsibility for their political line. You comrades did, along with the SWP that played the broker. You're in the same barrel. On the matter of small lies being part of the big lie, as a method, there are a couple of small things. In "Party and Class" Wohlforth quotes from a letter that was never actually sent from Robertson on our attitude towards your Convention material. The first sentence stated, "We see one essential defect in your Convention material..." and characterized this as the overstatement by Philips on the task of the party to do all things simultaneously everywhere. In the next sentence in your document Tim turns this on its head when he says, "It is clear from the above that Robertson sees his differences with us on this point as essential." This was an entirely different meaning. In the 12 August letter there is a sentence that refers to "difference of a methodological character", etc. Tim is "affirming" that "we felt then and we feel now that if we could reach a firmer agreement on the Marxist method, then these tactical questions would resolve themselves. But if we cannot, the 'growing disparity' between our two groups cannot help but be more and more accentuated." That "growing disparity" that you "quote" was "the growing disparity in size" between our groups! This method of distortion is used consistently in all your documents. You fake things. Revolutionists are supposed to be honest.

Mazelis made a big point that a number of our people allegedly left the SWP though our tendency itself did not split. What is the record? on our "Declaration On the Cuban Crisis" 30 November 1962, our first document following our internal split, 24 comrades signed. Of that 24, 14 are still with us, 4 are active sympathizers, 3 were West Coast comrades who were driven out as a result of your split, and 3 were minimal comrades who can be chalked up as minimal attrition. That's a damn good record. And this was three years ago, before the pre-Convention discussion, before the Convention, before the Control Committee hearings, and before the SWP and YSA expulsions. And 14 are still active members.

On our position that theory is part of program and that program is the road to power--I don't see how you can abstract methodology from the whole question of theory and program. All depend on how you view your role in the revolutionary struggle. What are we getting out of these sessions? It comes down to honesty of intention. The purpose of these discussions was supposedly to explore whether or not there was in fact a basis for unity, a probe. By the 5th or 6th session Wohlforth conceded he was ready to go back to his organization with the recommendation that there was a principled basis for unity. But the main point is that this was known beforehand. Wohlforth knew all along where we stood on every issue, and I'm sure other ACFI comrades knew also. On your allegation that we do not develop theory, we view our analysis of the process which created deformed workers states in Cuba and China as a major theoretical contribution to the world movement, while Tim harks back to

the structural assimilation theory, largely lifted from the 1946 discussion material of Germain. Our position resolves the question of China which the SLL has not yet resolved--the contradiction of their positions on Cuba and China, the former being capitalist and the latter a deformed workers state. The French comrades and the VO group have not resolved this question either. And we've made other theoretical contributions. I'm annoyed by Mazelis' comment that we've consistently attempted to avoid struggle. If there is one single characteristic of your group in terms of performance, it has been the tendency to avoid struggle, to avoid confrontation. In 1962 you were afraid of being a minority in the national tendency so you took the easy way out, getting an ultimatum from Healy expelling the majority. In the SWP it was us who were the strong tendency. We consolidated our forces despite what was designed to organizationally kill us in 1962. We fought the party politically. In 1963 we had a major document on the international question, an amendment to the PC resolution on the American Question, and documents on the Sino-Soviet and Negro Questions. At each point where there's been a test of the fiber of our respective groups in coming to grips with issues in struggle, you've slid off to the side, ducking a harder fight. The right way is usually the difficult way. We've attempted to engage PL politically, to win over a chunk of their organization. All you've done is inoculate PL against Trotskyism, encouraging an organizational rather than a political response.

Michael: Some of the things you people write are pretty impressive. Your characterization of PL three years ago is pretty sharp, and the ACFI people may have disagreed with you then, but I think one can attribute their change in line to a certain growth. The approach ACFI used to PL was different. A comrade was sent to the Lower East Side club to do work, passed out right-wing leaflets or left-wing leaflets however you want to characterize them, sold Challenge, delivered it to newsstands, participated in demonstrations and impressed people as being very serious and interested in building the organization. At the same time this comrade's line and what he believed in were easily distinguished. He didn't do this by going in and screaming "Trotskyism" all over the place. He did it by getting involved in discussions that involved PL and counterposing PL's line with a line that didn't necessarily have to be labelled "Trotskyist" but which in fact was Trotskyist. If a committee we're working in happens to take a line we're not happy with, we don't just walk out and demonstrate across the street and counterpose it. We'll stay with these people, but they'll know what we stand for. We agree with you in many things, e.g. we certainly don't want the anti-war campaign to continue behind rabbis and ministers and we will fight that inside these committees, but we're not going to reach these people by simply marching out. We'll make it clear where we stand.

2. Good and Welfare:

Robertson: I have three points:

(a) A letter from Bill W. to be read at his request. (b) Copies of our press release on the split with the Parade Committee. (c) The minutes of the 5th session are now ready, and the 6th session minutes will be ready shortly.

Mazelis: The joint election leaflets are ready to be picked up.
Meeting adjourned.