

EDUCATION FOR SOCIALISTS

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ASPECTS OF SOCIALIST ELECTION POLICY

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Introductory Note

Revolutionary Marxists have a long and rich history of utilizing the capitalist election arena for their own purposes. These traditions -- the traditions of Marx, Engels, and Lenin -- in the area of electoral activity have been applied and enriched by the American Trotskyist movement.

Since 1929 when the Communist League of America (Left Opposition) ran its first candidate -- a city council position in Minneapolis -- the Trotskyist movement has participated in the electoral arena with its own candidates. A study of these campaigns -- how they were organized and what issues they raised is important and necessary.

However, another important area of electoral work and the purpose of this selection of documents and articles is to make available the experience of revolutionary socialists with forms of electoral work other than running its own candidates. These include the tactic of critical support, independent political action by labor and oppressed nationalities, and united socialist tickets, as well as forms that socialists do not support, such as capitalist third parties.

Doug Jenness
February, 1971

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I

THE COMMUNIST ATTITUDE TO PARLIAMENTARY REFORMISM

Introduction

One of the least studied but nonetheless rich contributions of Lenin's Bolshevik Party to revolutionary strategy and tactics was the development of a non-reformist election policy. Employing many tactics including boycotts, election blocs with other parties, and running its own campaigns, the Bolshevik Party showed that a revolutionary workers party could use the electoral arena to its own advantage without succumbing to the parliamentarism that afflicted the mass Social Democratic parties of Western Europe.

The Communist Attitude to Parliamentary Reformism (These adopted at the 2nd Congress of the Communist International, 1920) codifies much of the experience of the Bolshevik Party toward

electoral activity. The theses sharply differentiate the reformist from the revolutionary approach toward electoral work and explain that although electoral activity is subordinate to mass action, it can at the same time, if creatively applied, help to build the mass movement.

For further description of the Bolshevik traditions of electoral activity, read Lenin as Campaign Manager, by Doug Jenness (Pathfinder Press, 1971). This pamphlet first appeared as an article in the International Socialist Review, February, 1971.

Doug Jenness

February, 1971

THE COMMUNIST ATTITUDE TO PARLIAMENTARY REFORMISM

*(Theses adopted at the 2nd Congress of the Communist
International, 1920)*

I

THE NEW EPOCH AND THE NEW PARLIAMENTARISM

THE attitude of the Socialist Parties towards parliamentarism was originally, at the time of the First International, one of utilising bourgeois parliaments for purposes of agitation. Participating in parliamentary activity was looked upon from the point of view of developing class-consciousness, i.e. of awakening in the proletariat class hostility toward the ruling class. Changes in this attitude were brought about not through change of doctrine, but under the influence of political development. Owing to the uninterrupted advance of the forces of production and the widening sphere of capitalist exploitation, capitalism, and together with it the parliamentary state, acquired a lasting stability.

This gave rise to the adaptability of the parliamentary tactics of the Socialist parties to "organic" legislative activity in bourgeois parliaments, and the ever-growing significance of the struggle for reforms within the capitalist system, as well as the predominating influence of the so-called "immediate demand" and the conversion of the maximum program into a figure of speech as an altogether remote "final goal". This served as a basis for the development of parliamentary careerism, corruption, and open or hidden betrayal of the fundamental interests of the working class.

The attitude of the THIRD INTERNATIONAL towards parliamentarism is determined not by a new doctrine, but by

the changed goal of parliamentarism itself. During the previous epoch parliament performed a certain progressive function as the weapon of developing capitalism, but under the present conditions of unbridled imperialism, parliament has become a tool of falsehood, deceit, violence, and enervating gossip. In face of imperialist devastation, plunder, violation, robbery and ruin, parliamentary reforms, devoid of system, of consistency and of definite plan, have lost all practical significance for the working masses.

Parliament, like the whole bourgeois society, has lost its stability. The sudden transition from the organic to the critical epoch has laid the foundation for new proletarian tactics in the field of parliamentarism. The Russian Workers' Party (Bolsheviks) had already worked out the essence of revolutionary parliamentarism in the preceding period, owing to the fact that Russia, after 1905, lost its political and social equilibrium and entered upon the period of storm and stress.

To the extent that some Socialists with an inclination for Communism point out that the moment of revolution in their respective countries has not yet arrived, and so decline to break away from the parliamentary opportunists, they reason in fact consciously or unconsciously from the consideration that the present epoch is one of relative stability for imperialist society, and they assume therefore that practical results may be achieved in the struggle for reform by a coalition with such men as Turati and

Longuet. As soon as Communism takes the field it must start out by elucidating the present epoch (the culmination of capitalism, imperialist self-negation and self-destruction, uninterrupted growth of civil war, etc.). Political relationships and political groupings may be different in different countries, but the essence of the matter is everywhere the same: we must start with the direct preparation of a proletarian uprising, politically and technically, for the destruction of the bourgeoisie and for the creation of the new proletarian state

Parliament at present can in no way serve as the arena of a struggle for reform, or for improving the lot of the working people, as it was at certain periods of the preceding epoch. The centre of gravity of political life at present has been completely and finally transferred beyond the limits of Parliament. On the other hand, owing not only to its relationship to the working masses, but also to the complicated mutual relations within the various groups of the bourgeoisie itself, the bourgeoisie is forced to have some of its policies in one way or another passed through parliament, where the various cliques haggle for power, exhibit their strong sides and betray their weak ones, get themselves unmasked, etc., etc. Therefore, it is the immediate historical task of the working class to wrest this apparatus out of the hands of the ruling class, to break and destroy it, and to create in its place a new proletarian apparatus. At the same time, however, the revolutionary general staff of the working class is vitally concerned in having its scouting parties in the parliamentary institutions of the bourgeoisie, in order to facilitate this task of destruction.

Thus the fundamental difference between the tactics of Communists entering parliament with revolutionary aims in view, and the tactics of the Socialist parliamentarians, becomes perfectly clear. The latter act on the assumption of the relative stability and the indefinite durability of the existing order; they consider it their task to achieve reforms by all means, and are concerned to make the masses appreciate every such accomplishment as the merit of the Social-Democratic parliamentarian (Turati, Longuet and Co.).

Instead of the old compromising parliamentarism, a new parliamentarism has come to life, as a weapon for the destruction of parliamentarism as a whole. But the aversion towards the traditional practices of the old parliamentarism drives some revolutionary elements into the camp of the opponents of parliamentarism on principle (I.W.W., the revolutionary Syndicalists, German Communist Labour Party).

Taking all this into consideration the Second Congress adopts the following theses :

II

COMMUNISM, THE STRUGGLE FOR THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT, AND THE UTILISATION OF THE BOURGEOIS PARLIAMENT

1. Parliamentarism as a State system, has become a democratic form of the rule of the bourgeoisie, which at a certain stage of its development needs the fiction of national representation, that outwardly appears as an organisation of the "national will" standing outside of classes, but in reality is an instrument of oppression and suppression in the hands of the ruling capitalists.

2. Parliamentarism is a definite form of State order. Therefore, it can in no way be a form of Communist society, which recognises neither classes, nor class struggle, nor any form of State authority.

3. Parliamentarism cannot be a form of proletarian government during the transition period between the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie and that of the proletariat. At the moment when the accentuated class struggle turns into civil war the proletariat must inevitably form its State organisation as a fighting organisation, which cannot contain any representatives of the former ruling classes. All fictions of the "national will" are harmful to the proletariat at that time, and the parliamentary division of authority is needless and injurious to it. The only form of proletarian dictatorship is a Republic of Soviets.

4. The bourgeois parliaments, which constitute one of the most important parts of the State machinery, cannot be won over by the proletariat any more than can the bourgeois order in general. The task of the proletariat consists in overthrowing the whole machinery of the bourgeoisie, in destroying it, and with it all the parliamentary institutions, whether they be republican or constitutional-monarchical.

5. The same applies to the local government institutions of the bourgeoisie, which theoretically, cannot be differentiated from the State organisations. In reality they are part of the same bourgeois state machinery, which must be destroyed by the revolutionary proletariat and replaced by local Soviets of Workers' Deputies.

6. Consequently, Communism repu-

diates parliamentarism as the form of the future; it renounces it as a form of the class dictatorship of the proletariat; it repudiates the possibility of winning over parliament; its aim is to destroy parliamentarism. Therefore, it is only possible to speak of utilising the bourgeois State organisations with the object of destroying them. The question can only and exclusively be discussed on this plane.

7. Every class struggle is a political struggle, because it is finally a struggle for power. Any strike, when it spreads throughout the whole country, is a menace to the bourgeois State, and thus acquires a political character. To strive to overthrow the bourgeoisie, and to destroy its State, signifies to carry on political warfare. To create a class apparatus—for the bridling and suppression of the resisting bourgeoisie—whatever such an apparatus may be—means the conquest of political power.

8. Consequently the question of political struggle does not end in the question of one's attitude towards the parliamentary system. It is a general condition of the class struggle of the proletariat, in so far as the struggle grows from a small and sectional one to a general struggle for the overthrow of the capitalist order as a whole.

9. The fundamental method of the struggle of the proletariat against the rule of the bourgeoisie, is first of all, the method of mass action. Such mass action is prepared and carried out by the organised masses of the proletariat, under the direction of a united, disciplined, centralised Communist Party. Civil war is war. In this war the proletariat must have its efficient political officers, its good political general staff, to conduct operations during all the stages of the fight.

10. The mass struggle means a whole system of developing demonstrations, growing ever more acute in form, and logically leading to an uprising against the capitalist order of government. In this warfare of the masses developing into a civil war the guiding party of the proletariat must, as a general rule, secure any and every legal position making them its auxiliaries in the revolutionary work, and subordinating such positions to the plans of the general campaign, that of the mass struggle.

11. One of such auxiliary supports is the floor of the bourgeois parliament. The argument that parliament is a bourgeois government institution cannot be used against participation in a political campaign. The Communist Party enters such institutions not for the purpose of organic work, but in order to destroy the whole bourgeois government machinery and parliament itself from within (for instance, the work

of Liebnicht in Germany, of the Bolsheviks in the imperial Duma, in the "Democratic Conference", in the "Preparliament" of Kerensky, and lastly, in the "Constituent Assembly", and also in the "Municipal Dumas", and the activities of the Bulgarian Communists).

12. This work within parliament—which consists chiefly in making revolutionary propaganda from the parliamentary platform, denouncing enemies, the ideological unification of the masses, who still look up to the parliamentary platform captivated by democratic illusions, especially in backward countries, etc.—must be fully subordinated to the objects and tasks of the mass struggle outside parliament.

Participation in the electoral campaign and the revolutionary propaganda from the parliamentary tribune has a special importance for winning over those elements of the workers who, such as, perhaps, the agricultural workers, have stood far away from the revolutionary movement and political life.

13. If the Communists have a majority in local government institutions, they must: (a) carry on a revolutionary opposition against the bourgeois central authority; (b) do all for the aid of the poor population (economical measures, establish or attempt to establish an armed workers' militia); (c) point out on every occasion the barriers which the bourgeois State power erects against really vital changes; (d) develop on this basis the most active revolutionary propaganda without fearing a conflict with the State authorities; (e) under certain conditions substitute local workers, councils for the existing municipal administration. The whole activity of the Communists in the municipal administration must therefore be part of the general work of destroying the capitalist system.

14. The electoral campaigns must be carried on not in the sense of obtaining a maximum of votes, but in that of a revolutionary mobilisation of the masses around the watchwords of the Proletarian Revolution. It must be conducted by the whole party membership, not by the leaders alone. It is necessary to make use of and be in complete touch with all manifestations of the masses (strikes, demonstrations, movements among the soldiers and sailors etc.) going on at the moment. It is necessary to summon all the mass organisations of the proletariat to active work.

15. In complying with all these conditions, as well as with those indicated in a special instruction, parliamentary work must present a direct contrast to the dirty "politics" practised by the Social-Democratic parties of all countries, who enter

parliament to support that "democratic" institution or, at least, to "win it over". The Communist Party can only recommend the *revolutionary* use of the parliament as exemplified by Karl Liebknecht, Hogenlund and the Bolsheviks.

16. "Anti-parliamentarism", on principle, in the sense of an absolute and categorical repudiation of participation in the elections and revolutionary parliamentary work, cannot therefore bear criticism and is a naive childish doctrine, which is founded sometimes on a healthy disgust at politicians, but does not understand the possibilities of revolutionary parliamentarism. In addition, this doctrine is frequently connected with a quite erroneous representation of the role of the party, which in this case is considered not as a fighting, centralised but as a decentralised system of feebly connected revolutionary groups.

17. On the other hand, an acknowledgement of the value of parliamentary work in no wise leads to an absolute acknowledgement in all and any circumstances of the necessity of actual elections and actual participation in parliamentary sessions. This question depends upon a series of specific conditions. Under certain circumstances it may become necessary to leave parliament. The Bolsheviks did so when they left the pre-parliament in order to break it up, to weaken it, and to set up against it the Petrograd Soviet, which was then prepared to head the uprising. They acted similarly in the Constituent Assembly in the day of its dissolution, converting the Third Congress of Soviets into the centre of political activity. In other circumstances a boycott of the elections may be necessary, and a direct violent storming of both the great bourgeois State machine and the

parliamentary bourgeois clique: or a participation in the elections with a boycott of parliament itself, etc.

18. In this way, while recognising as a general rule the necessity of participating in elections to that central parliament, and to the institutions of local self government, as well as in the work of such institutions, the Communist Party must decide the question concretely, according to the specific conditions of the given moment. Boycotting the elections or parliament, or leaving parliament is permissible, chiefly when there is a possibility for an immediate transition to an armed fight for power.

19. At the same time the relative unimportance of this question must be constantly borne in mind. If the centre of gravity lies in a struggle for power outside parliament, then naturally the question of proletarian dictatorship and a mass fight for it is immeasurably greater than the secondary one of using parliament.

20. Therefore the Communist International declares categorically that it considers any division or attempt at a division within the Communist Party united on this aim as a crime against the Labour Movement. The Congress calls upon all elements that are in favour of the mass struggle for the proletarian dictatorship, under the direction of a centralised party of the revolutionary proletariat gaining influence over all the mass organisations of the working class, to strive for the complete unity of all Communist elements, notwithstanding any possible disagreement on the question of utilising bourgeois parliaments.

II

CAMPAIGN FOR A LABOR PARTY !

CAMPAIGN FOR A LABOR PARTY!

Introduction

One of the central tasks facing the American working class is the necessity to break with capitalist politics and chart an independent political course. The relatively small size of the revolutionary socialist vanguard party along with the tremendous organization of the American workers into the CIO, led the Socialist Workers Party, in 1938, to view the formation of an independent labor party based on the trade unions as the most likely first expression of political independence by the mass of workers. The party adopted the slogan for an independent labor party at that time.

For a further explanation of the origins of the SWP's labor party position read Leon Trotsky on the Labor Party in the United States (Pathfinder Press, 1969.)

When the labor party position was adopted it was expected that the SWP would launch an agitational campaign in support of it. However, capitalist preparations for World War II, an upturn in the economic situation and the refusal of the CIO leadership to support the formation of a labor party, led to a climate where the SWP chose to wage a propaganda campaign rather than an agitational campaign.

The 1942 elections, however, showed large scale discontent with both the Democratic and Republican Parties and with the government-imposed wage freeze, speedup and no-strike pledge. Campaign for a Labor Party! was SWP National Chairman James P. Cannon's proposal to the SWP National Committee in November, 1942 to wage an all-out agitational campaign in support of a labor party.

Between 1943 and 1948 the SWP conducted such a campaign and met a favorable response from thousands of rank-and-file workers and many union locals. But the relatively small size of the SWP, the advent of the post-war prosperity, and the McCarthyite witchhunt served to prevent the emergence of a labor party at that time.

Two organizations referred to by Cannon that readers may not be familiar with are:

1) The Workers Party -- this was formed by Max Shactman and his supporters in 1940 after they defected from the Socialist Workers Party. It was dissolved and the "educational" Independent Socialist League established in its place. This formation merged with the Socialist Party-Social Democratic Federation (SP-SDF) in 1957.

2) The American Labor Party -- this organization was formed in 1936 as the New York affiliate of Labor's Non-Partisan League. The LNPL was organized by labor bureaucrats as a pseudo-independent cover for channeling socialist and labor party sentiment behind Franklin Roosevelt.

Doug Jenness
February, 1971

Campaign for a Labor Party!

By JAMES P. CANNON

1. Outline of Proposal for a Labor Party Campaign

EDITOR'S NOTE: This outline was introduced last November in the Political Committee of the Socialist Workers Party, and has since been before the party for discussion.

We must make an important political turn without delay. It is time to start an aggressive campaign for the formation of an independent labor party, to transform the *propaganda* slogan into a slogan of *agitation*. This is the most important conclusion we must draw from the recent elections in the light of the present situation in the labor movement and the attitude of workers and the changes which are sure to come in the not distant future. The labor party is the central issue around which the drive of the workers for class independence can be best expressed in the next period. By becoming the active champion of the labor party the Socialist Workers Party will link itself to an instinctive class movement which is almost certain to have a tumultuous growth, and thus multiply its influence and recruiting power. A brief review of our experiences with the labor party slogan since its adoption in 1938 up to the recent elections will show that now is the time to strike.

I

The adoption of the labor party slogan in 1938 by the Socialist Workers Party was predicated on the stormy development of the elemental mass movement of the workers through the CIO and the assumption that this movement, in the next stage of its development, must seek a political expression. The enormous disproportion between the rate of growth of this mass movement of millions, and that of the vanguard party, showed that we could no longer hope for our party to be the medium for the first expression of political independent action by the mass of the workers.

We concluded that this first expression would take the form of an independent labor party based on the trade unions. Hence, in order for us to link ourselves with the next stages of the political development of the American workers, we had to adapt ourselves to the trend toward a labor party; to work within it in order to influence its development in a revolutionary direction and, at the same time, build the Trotskyist party. Our estimation of the most probable next stages of development, and our reasoning as to the role our party would be obliged to play by the circumstances, were correct. The development was slower than we anticipated at that time. But if we examine the causes which slowed down the labor party development, it will be clear that the movement was only arrested, dammed up, so to speak, in order to break out with still greater strength after some delay. The causes for the delay were transitory and are already passing away.

II

Just about the time that we adopted our labor party position, the economic conjuncture began to improve. This checked the discontent of the workers which had been rising up till that time. Roosevelt still appeared to the workers as their champion and his social reform program was taken as a substitute for an independent political movement of the workers. At the same time, the entire leadership of the CIO, including the Stalinists, who had been the most aggressive proponents of the labor

party idea, supported Roosevelt in a body. They squelched all organized expressions of the sentiment for an independent labor party. The labor party question was thus taken off the agenda of trade union meetings and conventions, and to superficial reasoners the movement seemed to be killed. The campaign of agitation for a labor party which we had planned did not find a favorable field in these circumstances. Foreseeing future developments, we did not abandon the slogan, but in our practical work we had to change it from a slogan of agitation to a slogan of propaganda.

III

War conditions—the huge preparatory development of the armaments industry and later the actual entry into the war—introduced two factors which served to militate against any immediate response to the labor party slogan. The preliminary war prosperity tended to dampen the interest of the workers in the labor party for the time being. They still regarded Roosevelt as their political champion and supplemented their support of him by economic action against individual employers and corporations.

Then began the process of blocking off this economic outlet of the workers' struggle. By a combination of cajolery, threats and treachery—granting of some wage increases, institution of the War Labor Board, labor leaders' pledges of no strikes—the workers have been stymied on the economic field. Once this was accomplished, wages were virtually frozen, while the cost of living rises at a scale which amounts, in essence, to a monthly wage cut. Meanwhile, the employers, taking advantage of the situation, resist the settlement of virtually all grievances. These grievances pile up in the pigeon-holes of the War Labor Board and the workers get no satisfaction.

The workers' discontent is already evident and is bound to grow enormously as the cost of living mounts, as taxes and other burdens are piled upon them and they are denied corresponding wage increases, and they feel balked by the denial of the right to resort to the strike weapon. The entire history of the American labor movement shows that the workers tend to resort to independent political action when they find themselves defeated or frustrated on the economic field. There is every reason to believe that this tradition will assert itself more powerfully than ever in the coming period.

IV

To a certain extent—positively, and especially negatively—the workers asserted a tendency to resort to independent political action already in the recent Congressional and State elections. For the first time the Gallup poll was badly upset and the calculations of all the political experts were refuted by a factor which had not been anticipated—the unprecedented abstention from voting by the workers. The smallness of the workers' vote can be attributed, in part, to the military mobilization, the shifting of vast numbers of workers to new locations, their failure to register, etc. But a very important factor, if not the main factor, in the mass failure of the industrial workers to vote, was their attitude of indifference and cynicism toward the two capitalist parties.

On the other hand, in New York, where the leaders of the American Labor Party found themselves, much against their own desires, conducting an independent campaign, the workers turned out in great numbers to support the American Labor Party. In New York City the A.L.P. polled 18 per cent of the vote, despite the fact that it had an unknown nonentity from Tammany Hall as a candidate, and despite the appeals of Roosevelt—and of Hillman, his chief labor lieutenant—for the Democratic ticket. The vote of more than four hundred thousand for the A.L.P. in New York is a rather convincing demonstration of the deep sentiment of a considerable mass of workers in New York for independent political action.

In the Minnesota election somewhat the same phenomenon is to be observed. Despite the terrible disintegration of the upper circles of the Farmer-Labor Party there, the treachery of the Stalinists, the support of Stassen by the official heads of the CIO and considerable sections of the AFL bureaucracy—despite all this, the Farmer-Labor Party polled a bigger percentage of the vote this year than was the case in 1940 or 1938.

From these two examples, we must conclude that a strong sentiment for independent political action by the workers reveals itself wherever they have a chance to express it through the medium of an independent party.

In the light of the election results in New York, the correctness of the position taken by our party in support of the A.L.P. ticket, and the absurdity of the boycott policy of the Workers Party juveniles, are equally demonstrated. The Workers Party decided to boycott the A.L.P. ticket just at the moment when it was demonstrating its greatest appeal to the workers under the most unfavorable conditions. We, on the other hand, by our policy, linked ourselves to the movement of the future. The lesson of this experience will not fail to impress itself on the minds of the class-conscious workers who are observing developments.

V

We should draw the following conclusions:

(1) The elections in New York and Minnesota positively, and in the other states negatively, show the beginning of a trend of workers' sentiment for independent political action.

(2) The mass sentiment of the workers in this direction must grow tumultuously, as the gap widens between frozen wages on the one side and rising prices, tax burdens and enforced contributions on the other.

(3) The sentiment for independent political action may, and to a considerable extent will, take a very radical turn. To many workers, burning with indignation over grievances which cannot find an outlet for expression on the economic field, the demand for a labor party will signify in a general way the demand for a workers' government—for a change in the regime!

(4) The time is opportune right now for the SWP to start an aggressive campaign of agitation for an independent labor party. It would be a great political error to lose any time in establishing our position in the forefront of this movement.

VI

Our campaign should be developed according to a carefully worked out practical program, designed to swing the entire party into activity and to mobilize its energies for the advancement of the campaign, step by step, in coordination with the tempo of the mass movement itself. The main points of such a practical program are approximately as follows:

(1) Make the labor party the central campaign issue of the party in the next period.

(2) Stage a formal launching of the campaign by means

of a Plenum, an Eastern Conference, or a New York membership meeting at which a thoroughly worked-out motivating speech will be delivered and published as the opening gun in the campaign. The emanation of this published speech from some kind of a formal party gathering will give it more weight than a mere article or statement.

(3) Our literary forces will have to be organized to prepare an abundance of propaganda material on the labor party question—factual, historical, argumentative and perspective. The propaganda material should include a comprehensive pamphlet and leaflets, as well as abundant material in the press. Our comrades in the trade unions must be adequately supplied with information and arguments to meet all opposition on the labor party question.

(4) The campaign should be directed from the center in an organizational, as well as in a political way, following the developments of the work of each branch and giving systematic directions for next steps, and so forth.

(5) At a given stage in the development of the campaign, we should go over to the formation of *labor party clubs* in the unions where circumstances make this feasible, and use these clubs as the center of organization for the labor party fight. These labor party clubs will tend to become, in effect, left-wing caucuses or progressive groups. At the right time, regulating the tempo of our campaign always in accordance with the internal situation in each particular union, we should begin to introduce labor party resolutions. If we can succeed at first in having a labor party resolution passed by a prominent and influential trade union local or body, we can then use this resolution as the model for other unions. From a practical standpoint there is a big advantage in being able to say to a local union that the proposed resolution is the one previously adopted by such and such a trade union organization on the labor party question. Our trade union department, in cooperation with the fractions, can work out this end of the matter without difficulty.

(6) We must proceed according to the conviction that all developments in the trade union movement from now on must work in favor of the development of the labor party sentiment; that the slogan will become increasingly popular; and that we must become the leaders of the fight. Our labor party campaign can be the medium through which we bring the elementary ideas of class independence into the trade union movement. This is the indicated approach for the gradual introduction of our entire transitional program.

VII

Our labor party campaign must be understood as having great implications for the building of our party. *We must conceive of it as our third big political maneuver*, the first being the fusion with the American Workers Party, and the second the entry into the Socialist Party. This maneuver will be different from the others, but the differences will be all in our favor, and the prospects of gain for our party are vastly greater.

(1) This time we will undertake the maneuver with a much better internal situation in our own party. Each of the other maneuvers had to be undertaken at the cost of a fierce factional fight and split in our own ranks. This time, we can enter the campaign with completely unified cadres and without the slightest fear of any internal disturbances as a result of the step. On the contrary, the announcement of the campaign can be expected to call forth enthusiasm throughout the party and a unanimous response to the directions of the center.

(2) The quality of the recruits, on the whole, which we will gain from the labor party maneuver will be different from the recruits gained by the fusion with the A.W.P. and the

entry into the S.P. To be sure, in each of the other two cases we were dealing with the prospect of recruiting politically more advanced people than we will gain directly from the trade unions in the labor party campaign. But in return, the recruits from the other two ventures were in the majority centrists who brought with them the baggage of bad training and tradition and pre-conceived prejudices. That was why the attempt to assimilate them into the Trotskyist movement produced in each case a second factional fight and split. The heterogeneous composition of the Trotskyist cadre of those times also hampered this work of assimilation. The Abern clique based itself on the backward section of the Musteites, and both Abern and Shachtman (not to mention Burnham!) based themselves on the unassimilated elements from the S.P. and the Yipsels.

From the labor party campaign we will get fresh workers whose political education will begin with us. They will come in as individuals without factional attachments from the past, and their assimilation and education will be facilitated by the united cadre of our present party which, in the meantime, has accumulated considerably more political experience.

The third important difference between the labor party campaign and the two previous political turns we have made is in the magnitude of the prospects. This time we must think in terms of thousands—and eventually of tens of thousands—

2. Remarks on the Labor Party Campaign

(A speech at the Political Committee meeting
of November 30, 1942)

You all have the outline. I don't have much to add except that some of the points can be elaborated.

The first point, about changing the slogan from a propaganda slogan to a slogan of agitation, I think is an important one to understand. In our work, generally, we ought to distinguish between three types of slogans: slogans of propaganda, slogans of agitation, and slogans of action. A perfectly correct slogan can be either effective or ineffective according to how it is applied in a given situation.

For example, the slogan of workers' defense guards during the height of the fight with the Coughlinites, Silver Shirts, Nazi Bundists, etc., was a slogan of *agitation*, in some cases leading directly to *action*. But with the temporary slowing down of this fascistic movement, we have moderated the tempo with which we press the slogan of workers' defense guards. The practical necessity for them is not clear to the workers. It is now a *propaganda* slogan. We don't conduct an active campaign because there is not enough response in the present situation. A little later, when reaction gets more aggressive, and the labor movement runs up against fascistic hooliganism again, we will have to renew our agitation for the guards.

Similarly, with the labor party. We have been talking about the labor party, but only in an educational, that is propagandistic way because the movement didn't seem to have any wind in its sails during the last year or two. In the next period things will be different. We draw this conclusion from two points of view.

The fundamental point of view: the situation in which the workers find themselves—with increasing pressure and difficulties upon them, and the fact that they are stymied on the economic field—must push them into the direction of political expression through a labor party. We should anticipate this and begin to prepare our campaign so as to get full prominence in the movement.

The second, subsidiary, point of view: the results of the elections, especially the negative demonstration, showing the indifference of the workers to the Republican and Democratic

of recruits who will come in to our party from the labor party movement. And, given the facts that they will come to us not as a previously constituted faction or party, but as individual recruits; that they will enter a party which is homogeneous in its composition, whose unified cadres have serious political experiences behind them, we can confidently expect to assimilate the new members without an internal crisis.

There is no doubt that the key to the further development in the next period of our party and the expansion of its membership lies in the self-confidence, speed and energy with which we plunge into an organized labor party campaign. Big successes are possible for us along this line; even probable, I would say. Naturally, we cannot promise ourselves any miracles overnight. There will be favorable returns from our campaign from the very start, but we must plan a long-time fight.

We can expect big results within a reasonable time. But even the first big results will only be a down payment on the unbounded prospects which lie ahead of us along this road. The modest recruiting campaign we are now conducting should be conceived, in the light of a labor party campaign, as a mere curtain-raiser. We may hope to recruit thousands in the course of the labor party campaign, and our work from the start should be inspired by this confidence.

New York, November 25, 1942.

Parties, should be construed as the preliminary symptoms of a movement in the direction of an independent political expression.

Now is the time, in my opinion, for us to begin beating the drums for a labor party, with the confidence that we are going to get a response, if not right away, a little later. The more active we are right now, when no other tendency in the labor movement is agitating the question, the more we will gain.

Point 3 under section 5 of the outline is a very important point. When the workers begin to make a break from the capitalist parties toward a labor party, it is quite possible that they will not give it the reformistic connotation which has been associated in the past with the labor party, but that it will symbolize to them, even if vaguely, a break with the whole regime and a move for a new one, a regime of workers' power. This idea was first mentioned by Warde when he came back from Detroit. The more I have thought about it, the more it has impressed me as a very plausible deduction. Under present conditions the labor party idea can have far more revolutionary implications than in past periods when it was advanced as a reformistic measure.

There is no need at all for us to speak about a reformistic labor party. What we are advocating is an *independent* labor party, and we are proposing our own program, which is not reformist. In the past, the assumption has always been that a labor party would surely be a reformist manifestation. It may, in some instances. But in others it may have a more profound meaning in the minds of many workers who adopt the slogan. In England, for example, the slogan of "Labor to Power" has no doubt the same double meaning for many workers. For some it can mean a purely moderate demand that the reformist labor leaders take over the government as agents of the bourgeois regime. For others it can indicate a call to the workers to take power and change the whole system. These things should be taken into account when we weigh the feasibility and effectiveness of the labor party slogan in the present situation.

It is very important that a resolution or other political document considered by the National Committee be clearly motivated; that it be completely objective and properly proportioned. That is, it shouldn't be an "agitational" document in any

sense of the word. I have this conception about all documents concerning policy and line and if my outline proposal appears to contain agitational optimism, I don't mean it in that sense at all. The outline is intended as an objective appraisal, from my point of view, of the situation and perspectives.

Comrade Henderson has reminded us of Trotsky's conception that the economic basis for a successful reformist labor party is undermined. That, of course, is the materialistic foundation for the idea which Warde expressed—that the workers will take the move for a labor party, in a vague way at least, as having revolutionary implications.

I don't speak in the outline about existing labor parties, because our tactics in these cases can be easily decided. Naturally, we are not going to propose to start a new labor party in New York or Minnesota. We work within the existing parties. But I should point out, however, that we haven't been working within the ALP. The clubs are scattered all over the five boroughs. The Stalinists are quite active in these clubs and so are the Social Democrats; but we have not gotten around to them yet. Where there are existing parties, we certainly must participate in them if our campaign is to have any serious meaning.

When I speak of labor party clubs in the outline, I don't mean them in the sense of these ALP clubs. These latter are Assembly District organizations required by law, the legal basis for the election machinery. The labor party clubs suggested in the document are groups formed in the unions to fight for the labor party. For example, in a progressive local union a club would be formed for the object of propagating the idea of the labor party in the local. Such clubs will, in the nature of things, become the natural centers of left-wing organization. They will represent a direct challenge to the whole regime—to the state administration, as well as the trade union bureaucracy—without exceeding, in a formal sense, the legalistic bounds. I have the idea that these labor party clubs can become in the next period a tremendous mechanism for the building of the left wing in the unions.

The question has been raised in the discussion whether there is a trend or only the beginning of a trend toward the labor party, whether the election results are exaggerated in the outline. I tried to state it very carefully, that the elections should be taken as representing the *beginning* of a trend. I emphasized the negative manifestations—that is, the abstention of the workers from voting throughout the rest of the country—more strongly even than the positive vote for the labor party in New York and Minnesota. Obviously, it is not yet a very conscious movement for a labor party. But it is a half-break with the old parties, and that necessarily has its logic. This, together with the fact that we are all confident the next period must promote a politicalization of the workers, justifies us in asserting that there is the beginning of a trend toward a powerful labor party movement.

The ALP vote keeps coming up to plague those who have any reservations in this regard. The fact is that the ALP got 400,000 votes in New York, under the most unfavorable conditions. The leaders were scared of themselves; the candidate, a Tammany hack, had never been heard of before; the pressure of Roosevelt and of Hillman, who was, you may say, the co-founder of the party, swung the whole bureaucracy of the Amalgamated away from the ALP. In spite of all that, the ALP got 18 per cent of the votes in New York City and over 10 per cent of the votes in the state. That must signify something. I think it has to be taken as signifying in part that these workers—those who voted the ALP ticket were mainly workers—have

something in mind different from the old idea of voting for the Democratic party.

I don't think it would be correct to say these are votes against Roosevelt. I would venture to say that 90 per cent of them are still *pro-Roosevelt*. But this vote shows that the workers, still largely for Roosevelt, *are not for the Democratic Party*. That is the important thing. They don't give a hoot for the Democratic Party. All during the time they were led in behind Roosevelt, they weren't led in behind the Democratic Party. On the contrary, their hostility is perhaps greater today than before. I think if you look back at this period of the Roosevelt regime you will see that Labor's Non-Partisan League, the ALP in New York, and other manifestations showed that even then, in order to dragoon the workers to support Roosevelt, they had to provide some kind of labor or pseudo-labor machinery for it. They couldn't just unfurl the banner and say, Vote for Roosevelt.

This election was the greatest test of all. The workers in New York—400,000 of them—stood up independently for the first time. I can't read anything else into this ALP vote except a strengthening of the impulse of the workers to have a party of their own.

What I Mean by a "Maneuver"

I come to a point here which has been discussed and which I am quite insistent upon: that I want to describe this proposed labor party campaign as a *maneuver*, comparing it to the two other big maneuvers we carried through: the fusion of the Trotskyist organization with the A.W.P. and the entry into the S.P. Of course, I don't mean to equate the labor party campaign with the fusion and the entry. It is not the same thing at all. But it is the same *kind* of thing.

What do we mean by a maneuver? It is a tactical turning aside from a predetermined path which has been blocked off in order to accomplish the original objective, to reach the same goal by another road. The thing in common between the proposed labor party campaign and the other two maneuvers in our history is that which is basic: the attempt to build a revolutionary party through another party.

Normally and logically, when you organize a party and adopt a program and invite people to join it, that is the way you build up a party—by recruiting people directly. We came up against the fact in 1934, however, that there was another group developing on the left-wing road. They didn't come over to us, so we had to go over to meet them. This fusion with the A.W.P. was a departure from the line of direct recruitment. Similarly was the entry into the S.P. It was a maneuver, a turning away from the path of building the party by direct recruitment, because a certain set of circumstances confronted us where the most eligible and logical candidates for Bolshevism refused to come into this party. We had to turn about and join them. In the same sense, the united front can be called a maneuver. In the early days of its existence the Comintern reached a certain stalemate in its struggle against the Social Democracy. The majority remained in the Social Democratic ranks and didn't come over and join the Communist Party. Then the Comintern devised the medium of the united front as a means of approach to the Social Democratic workers. This was not a fusion or an entry, but a coming together for concrete actions for specific immediate aims, etc.

What are we trying to do here? It was not a historic law that we must have a labor party in this country, and that we have to become advocates of it and work within it. As a matter of fact, in the early days of our movement Trotsky refused to sanction the advocacy of the labor party. He said *It is not yet de-*

terminated whether the workers will seek their first political expression through a revolutionary party or through a reformist party based on the unions, and we should advocate the revolutionary party based on individual membership. The socialist movement over most of Europe and the world was built up that way. It was only during the stormy development of the CIO, which began to show political manifestations, when it became pretty obvious that the rate of development of this new mass movement of the CIO was so much faster in tempo and greater in scope than the development of the Socialist Workers Party—it was only then that the Old Man revised his conclusion.

The new movement of the masses was developing outside the SWP, on a vastly wider scale. This trend is even clearer now than it was in 1938 when Trotsky first recommended the labor party tactic. In order for us not to be left on the sidelines, we have to go into the labor party movement without giving up our own independent organization. That is what is contemplated in this proposal here. We are going to try, once again, to build our party through another party. We will be inside of it for a long time, although not in the same technical and precise way as in the other two maneuvers. This time there will be no fusion, and no entry. We will maintain the independence of our party all the time. But in some places we can conceive of the S.W.P. being affiliated to the labor party; in other places, where we may be denied entrance as a party, we will participate in the labor party through the unions, etc. But, in every variant, we will be trying to build a revolutionary party through a political movement of the masses which is not yet clearly defined as revolutionary, or reformist, or in between.

From an internal point of view, it is very important, in my opinion, to explain to the membership that we conceive this campaign as a maneuver. On the one hand, we must show them the great scope of its possibilities; on the other hand, that we are maintaining our independence all the time. And we are working, not to build the labor party as a substitute for our party, but to build our party as the party that must lead the revolution. The labor party may never come to full-fledged shape at all. The conflict of the two wings—the revolutionary and the reformist—can reach such a state of tension that the movement will split before the party is fully formed on a national scale. I can even conceive of the existence of two kinds of labor parties for a certain time—a labor party with a revolutionary program and a labor party with a reformist program—which would engage in election contests against each other.

A Political Turn

In the past, under the pressure of circumstances, parties based on the unions have taken a far more radical turn than the ordinary reformist conceptions. The Norwegian Labor Party was almost a replica, in its structure, of the British Labor Party. But, following the war, it formally adopted the communist program and joined the Comintern. The Comintern tried to transform it from a loose party based on delegates from unions into an individual membership party. In the process, eventually, a split took place and the Norwegian Communist Party was carved out of the body of the Norwegian Labor Party. When the revolutionary tide receded and the mass of the workers returned to reformism, things fell back into their old place again. The developments of the labor party movement in the United States, with the stormy developments of the class struggle which are clearly indicated, will least of all follow a predetermined pattern.

I think it is correct to characterize what is proposed here as a political turn. A campaign of agitation, as is proposed, re-

quires a radical change in our activity and, to a certain extent, in our attitude. We have to stir the party from top to bottom with discussion on the labor party question and show the party members that they have now a chance to participate in a fight, in a movement. We should aim to inspire them with the perspectives of the big possibilities which are by no means stated in an exaggerated fashion. At the appropriate time our comrades will begin moving in the unions step by step; perhaps to form a labor party club, perhaps to introduce a resolution, perhaps to circularize this resolution to other places, according to circumstances in each case. All this represents a turn from what we have been doing up to now in our purely routine propaganda in the press without pressing or pushing the issues in the unions.

If we had been imbued with this conception a few months ago we would have taken a different attitude in the New York election. We would have been campaigning for the labor party in New York from the very beginning if we had been as sure then of what was going on as we are now. I personally couldn't support such an idea then because I didn't know; I needed the results of the election to convince me that the ALP was not going to fall apart. It is clear now that we underestimated its vitality.

Comrade Charles has pointed out that the trend of the war, the Allied victories, promoting reaction on the one side, will also provoke more resentment and discontent, and perhaps revolt, in one form or another, by the workers. The assumption is that, in general, there will be a sharpening of the class struggle. How can this manifest itself in the next period? Possibly there will be a wave of outlaw strikes. But I think its strongest manifestation will be in the political field. The two may go together. But, in any case, we should absolutely count on a sharpening of the class struggle and help to give it a political expression.

We must appraise correctly the workers' attitude toward Roosevelt. I believe, also, that the abstention of the workers from the elections in the big industrial centers, did not signify a break with Roosevelt. It showed that they want to make a distinction between Roosevelt's social reforms and the Democratic Party's war program. Their tendency is to support the war under the leadership of Roosevelt, in payment for the social reforms they think they got from him. The thing they consider most is the social reform program. From their standpoint, at the present time, the ideal political situation would be a labor party with Roosevelt at the head of it. Their sentiment is for a labor political expression, but they haven't broken with Roosevelt. We have to be very careful that we don't over-estimate that question or conclude that the elections showed a break with Roosevelt.

The "New Deal" of Roosevelt was a substitute for the social reform program of Social Democracy in the past. That was the basis of its hold on the workers. The bankruptcy of the New Deal can't possibly, in my opinion, push the workers back into an acceptance of traditional capitalist party politics. Their next turn will be toward a labor party.

Once more about kinds of slogans: We must carefully explain to the party the difference between a propaganda slogan and agitational slogan, and an agitational slogan and a slogan of action. I am especially sensitive on this because, in the early days of the Communist Party, in those furious debates we used to have on the labor party, we fell into all kinds of mistakes on the question. In a situation such as there has been in the past few years, the labor party could only be a propaganda slogan. If we had been beating the drums all over the labor movement and tried to form labor party clubs, we would have

simply broken our heads. The time was not ripe, there was not enough response, to justify intense agitation for the labor party. It was necessary to confine it to a propaganda slogan. But now there are possibilities, and even probabilities, of a rising sentiment of the workers and a favorable response to a concentrated agitation for the labor party. In the new situation we would make the greatest error if we were to lag behind events and continue with the routine propaganda of the past period.

There is a difference also between slogans of agitation and slogans of action. This is illustrated by one of the classic errors of the early communist movement in the United States. Propa-

ganda for the idea of Workers' Soviets is, now as always, a principle of the program. But in 1919 the editors of the *New York Communist*, growing impatient, issued the slogan of action in a banner headline: "Organize Workers' Councils." Sad to say, the Soviets did not materialize. The slogan of action was premature and discredited its authors.

It wouldn't be out of order, in connection with the educational preparation of the party for this campaign, if we impart to the whole membership a better understanding of the different ways of applying slogans—as slogans of propaganda, of agitation, or of action—according to the situation, as it is in reality.

III

CAPITALIST PEACE POLITICS: 1948 and 1968

INTRODUCTION

The Progressive Party, which ran former Vice President Henry Wallace as its presidential candidate in 1948, was a capitalist splinter party. A small minority in the Socialist Workers Party, however, believed that by participating in the Progressive Party and supporting its candidates it could be "steered toward a genuine labor party."

This tactical disagreement stimulated a rich discussion in the SWP, and we are including in this selection James P. Cannon's report and summary to the SWP National Committee Plenum, February, 1948 on the question. Cannon's presentation clearly explains that revolutionary socialists oppose all capitalist parties, not just the Democratic and Republican Parties, and view the formation of a labor party, as a class break from capitalist politics.

Cannon's analysis that Wallace's "peaceful co-existence" position was not a genuine anti-imperialist stance was clearly confirmed several years later when Wallace broke with the Progressive Party and supported U.S. intervention in Korea. The Progressive Party, considerably smaller and lacking the support of the Communist Party, ran Vincent Hallinan in 1952. It folded up shortly afterward.

The 1948 elections also signified the first time that the SWP fielded a presidential ticket, although candidates for state and local offices had been run previously.

During the 1968 elections another third party development emerged, although on a much smaller scale than the Progressive Party. This capitalist reform effort was called the Peace and Freedom Party.

In some areas the Peace and Freedom Party received its primary theoretical and organizational leadership from the Independent Socialist Clubs of America (now called International Socialists), a "third camp" social democratic formation. In these states Eldridge Cleaver was the presidential candidate.

In other areas the Communist Party dominated the party and ran Dick Gregory

and Mark Lane as its presidential slate. In New York the CP led a split from the Peace and Freedom Party and formed the Freedom and Peace Party with Gregory as the standardbearer. One of the central differences between the IS and CP strategies was that the IS claimed that it wanted to form a new party whereas the CP indicated that it was interested only in a third ticket.

All of these groups together appeared on the ballot in only 11 states compared to 19 for the SWP presidential slate of Fred Halstead and Paul Boutelle.

The Peace and Freedom Party received a big boost in January, 1968, when it won ballot status as a political party in California. Following this victory, however, it suffered severely from internal factionalism.

The selected articles from The Militant concentrate primarily on describing and answering IS's views on the Peace and Freedom Party as it tried to provide the most complete theoretical explanation for this form of reformist electoral activity. Also the Peace and Freedom groups they were involved with had the added complication of being in an alliance with the Black Panther Party.

The first three articles -- "What McReynolds Reveals About Peace and Freedom," "Peace and Freedom: the trouble with a 'minimum program'" and "Who Benefits from Black Panther, P & F Alliance?" -- are by Tom Kerry and are reprinted from issues of The Militant dated August 16, 23 and September 6, 1968. The fourth article -- "The Panther-Peace and Freedom Alliance" -- is by Derrick Morrison and appeared in the September 20, 1968 Militant. The last article by Mary Alice Waters appeared in the February 21, 1969 Militant.

The Waters article discusses what happened to the Peace and Freedom Party immediately following the 1968 elections. The Peace and Freedom Party ran candidates in the 1970 elections in several states, most importantly California, where it received enough votes to maintain its ballot status for the 1972 elections.

Doug Jenness
February, 1971

ELECTION POLICY IN 1948

by James P. Cannon

(Report to the February 1948 Plenum of the National
Committee of the Socialist Workers Party)

The approach of the 1948 elections confronts the party with the necessity of making a decision on election policy. The new developments -- particularly the emergence of the Wallace party -- created some differences of opinion in our ranks. These differences must be discussed and clarified. I think we can best arrive at a correct decision on our election policy for 1948 if we re-state the fundamental considerations that have guided us in respect to the whole question of working class political action, and deduce our conclusions from this re-statement.

We proceed from a principled line. The basic aim of our principled line is to assist the development of independent political action by the workers and turn it towards a revolutionary culmination.

We are not the only tendency in the labor movement holding the view that the participation of the workers, as an independent force in politics, is advisable and necessary. There are two basic conceptions about the question of independent working class politics which is concretized broadly in this country in the proposal for the formation of an independent labor party.

There is the reformist conception that a labor party, by its very nature, must necessarily be a reformist party, and that reformism is a necessary and inevitable stage of the development of a working class political movement. Against this is the Marxist conception that a reformist stage of working class politics is not necessary and not preferable; we do not advocate that the workers pass through a stage of reformism on the road to revolutionary Marxist politics.

What we do advocate is the revolutionary party of the working class which formulates the program of its historical interests. And this line or ours -- the advocacy of revolutionary Marxist working class politics -- never changes. It persists through all stages of development of the movement. When and if the develop-

ment of the workers along the lines of political action takes a different turn, a reformist detour, we never accept that as correct, but we adopt a tactical attitude toward it. We never lose ourselves in a reformist political movement of the workers and satisfy ourselves with it.

In adopting a tactical attitude ("critical support") toward a labor party, even though it may begin with a reformist program, our aim always remains the same; that is, to advance the revolutionary program of the working class and to build the revolutionary party.

In the early years of the crisis of the Thirties the nature and tempo of the prospective development of the working class in the political sense remained undetermined. As we viewed the question then, there were two possibilities: (1) There might be a stormy development of labor radicalism that would find its expression in the growth of a mass revolutionary workers' party; or (2) the development might take place at a slower tempo, through a program of social reformism. But in any case Trotsky did not hesitate to predict that a mass workers' party was in the making; would be one of the fruits of the great crisis of the Thirties which for the first time shook up the American working class and impelled it toward political thought and action.

The Lovestoneites, at that time, jubilantly seized upon Trotsky's prediction as a confirmation of their theory; they equated a labor party with a reformist party, and they quoted Trotsky's prognosis as a vindication of their theory that this was an inevitable development. Trotsky objected to this interpretation. That does not necessarily follow, he said. It remains to be seen, he contended, whether the mass party of the workers, which comes out of the crisis will be a revolutionary or reformist party at its inception. And he insisted that it was our task to advocate a revolutionary workers' party and oppose the conception of a

reformist workers' party.

The crisis produced everything that was demanded and expected of it by the Marxists, if not in the exact form predicted and at the tempo expected and hoped for. The crisis unquestionably produced the CIO; that is, it prepared all the conditions for the tumultuous development of the industrial union movement with the beginning of the upturn of the production cycle. The CIO was not a traditional trade union movement, as known in America -- based on the crafts with their conservatism and special interests -- but a broad class movement based on the factory workers, the basic proletariat. It was a semi-political movement with profound revolutionary implications. Looked at correctly, we could say the CIO, from the moment it began to assume mass form, was an incipient labor party in itself.

The Labor Party Movement

The rate at which the CIO developed, in relation to the numerical growth of the revolutionary workers' party, produced a tremendous disproportion between the size and scope of the movement of the Marxist vanguard and that of the awakening mass. The CIO grew stormily and embraced millions, whereas the Marxist party advanced slowly, inch by inch, recruiting members one by one. It was this disproportion between the rate of development of the revolutionary party, represented by the Trotskyist cadre, and the semi-political movement of the masses, represented by the CIO, that dictated for us a change in tactics on the question of a labor party in 1938, on the advice of the Old Man. We had to adjust our tactics to the realities of the situation.

The labor party, as Trotsky conceived it in our conversations with him in 1938, in its incipient stage, was taking shape before our eyes in the form of the CIO and its political action committees, etc. We had to recognize this. In order to avoid the isolation of the revolutionary vanguard from the living mass movement, we had to penetrate into its political manifestations, its political action committees, etc. The aim of our participation was and is to accelerate the political development of the CIO and fight for our program within it.

We do not and we never did support the "labor party" unconditionally. We will not do so in the future. We support it "critically." That, I think, should be emphasized at this juncture in our explanations to the party. Our fundamental aim is not in any way changed by the tactical maneuver represented by our critical support of a prospective labor party, or labor ticket, whose program remains yet undecided. Our fundamental aim at all times is to advance our own program and to build a revolutionary party. These fundamental

considerations, which are truisms for all of us, should be restated as an introduction to the consideration of the new variants that have made their appearance in the American political scene.

The labor party movement is much stronger than its formal expression. The invincible strength of the movement for a labor party in America derives in the first place from the objective necessity for such a development. It is expressed by the constant spread of the sentiment in the ranks of the workers -- particularly in the more advanced section of the trade union movement, the CIO. This movement, the real movement, progresses steadily and rapidly. But the actual formation of a labor party, the formal organization, as we know, is retarded by the tremendous conservatism and timidity of the bureaucracy at the top.

This anomaly -- the tremendous lag between the objective prerequisites and the sentiment in the ranks for a labor party, on the one side, and the thwarting of its organizational expression by the combined bureaucracy on the other -- presents a danger to our party. The danger is that we may get impatient; that our fear of isolation may color our judgement in concrete situations, and impel us to seek shortcuts to a labor party, or some wretched substitute for it, over the head of the official trade union movement; that we should run after any bourgeois demagogue who exploits the radical sentiment of the workers which is denied expression in legitimate forms for the moment by the official policy of the bureaucracy. That is a danger.

Such folly could have only one outcome. The end result would be for us to compromise and injure the movement for an independent labor party based on the unions. We would discredit ourselves. And worst of all, we could perhaps sow demoralization and disorientation in our own ranks. That is the most dangerous thing of all. The necessary condition for our effective participation in the political mass movement of the workers is that our own ranks be in order; that our members understand what they are doing, and regulate their tactical maneuvers always by subordinating them to principled considerations. Our ranks need no exercises in wild goose chases. They need, rather, education and hardening in the fight against bourgeois demagoguery and Stalinist treachery.

The Aims of the Discussion

The Wallace movement, which has made its appearance early in the 1948 elections, presents to the party the first serious test of its immunity to these dangers I have mentioned. The discussion which has arisen over this episode -- that's what the Wallace movement is, in my opinion,

not a great historical movement but an episode in the distorted development of the working class of America towards independent political action -- our discussion should serve a deeper purpose than simply that of making a decision on our election policy for 1948. It should serve to clarify the party and prepare it for the future. The discussion presents a good opportunity for us. Over half of our members are new. They have never had the benefit of the past experience and discussion of the labor party question. They still require education in the fundamental principles which govern our political tactics. And it is barely possible that some of our old members need a little re-education on these points.

Let us restate our basic premises: When we speak of developing the independent political action of the workers, our fundamental aim is to build the revolutionary party of the workers because that alone correctly and truly expresses working class independence. Our labor party policy is not a principle at all but a tactic designed to serve the larger principle, designed to advance class consciousness and provide an arena and a means of expanding and developing the revolutionary party and popularizing its program.

I mentioned before the well-known fact that our support of a labor party, leaving its program undetermined for the moment, is not unconditional. It is critical. Under the heading of our labor party policy we have certain minimum demands. There are two. One, we demand that the unions launch their own independent party under their own control. That is the first demand. Second, we propose that this party adopt our revolutionary transition program. But even under these conditions we will maintain our own party with its full program.

So we are not fanatical labor partyites at all. There are very serious limitations and conditions that we put when we say we want and will support a labor party. Now, what will we accept, at the present stage of developments, as a minimum condition for our critical support of a labor party or labor ticket? The minimum condition is that the party must be really based on the unions and dependent upon them, and at least ultimately subject to their control as to program and candidates. Under that condition, as a rule, and as things stand now, we will give critical support to the candidates in the election, even though the party does not in its first appearance accept a program that we advocate for it.

Under that limited minimum condition -- that it really represents the unions engaging in independent political action, and not some variation of bourgeois political action supported by the workers, we

will give critical support to the candidates in the election. But we heavily emphasize the critical nature of our support, and we don't obligate ourselves in advance to give that in every case. It usually depends on the relationship of forces. You can easily conceive of a situation where our strength would be such, or the conditions or the issue would be such, that we find it more advisable to run a candidate of our own against a candidate even of a "genuine" labor party.

Struggle Against the Bureaucracy

We must not forget that our labor party policy is a method of struggle against the trade union bureaucracy in all its sections, the so-called progressives as well as the reactionaries, the Stalinists as well as the red-baiters. This struggle against the bureaucracy, and all sections of it, will never cease or be mitigated until the whole gang is replaced by revolutionary militants. At times we shift emphasis from one side of our policy to the other. That does not change our basic line; it only makes it all the more important to keep the basic line in mind and regulate the tactical applications of our policy by it. Tactics must always serve the basic line, and never become a substitute for it.

For several years our agitation has put more emphasis on the demand for the formation of an independent labor party than on the program of such a party. But this way of presenting the question of the labor party is valid and applicable only for a given stage of development. We are not bound to it for all time. At the present stage in the struggle, when the whole bureaucracy without any exception, from the hidebound reactionaries of the AFL to the Stalinists, are blocking the development of independent political action in an organized form, our emphasis is placed most effectively upon the single demand: "Form an independent labor party and put up independent labor candidates." This concentration on this single slogan, under present conditions, is the most effective way to advance the cause of class independence in struggle against the bureaucracy.

But if and when this slogan is realized, if, under the pressure of conditions and the sentiment of the workers, a labor party based on the unions is formed, or is about to be formed -- there can be no relaxation at all in our struggle against the bureaucracy. We will then simply shift our emphasis from the question of forming a party to the question of the program of the party. We will turn on the treacherous bureaucracy, with no less hostility, with the demand that the program of this party be not simply a refurbished version of bourgeois politics but a program of independent working class politics, and that means a revolutionary program.

Our labor party policy does not contemplate a reconciliation with the bureaucracy at any time.

Local Labor Party Experiments

We have gone through some experiments since we adopted our labor policy in 1938, and have made a number of local experiments in the application of the policy. These experiments are by no means to be taken as holy writ, as "the law and the prophets." They should be subjected, from time to time, to objective analysis and dissection as to whether we have been entirely correct or not in each case. No binding and irrevocable precedents have been established by our tactics in these local situations. In each of these cases we have concentrated on the primary task of getting the unions into independent political action regardless of what the program might be at the moment. And, in determining our attitude, we have usually put the substance ahead of the form.

In New York we supported Alfange, the Tammany hack on the ALP ticket. In Detroit we supported Frankenstein on a labor ticket which had an admixture of questionable politicians in it. We supported the Oakland Citizens' Ticket sponsored by the trade unions. In these cases we thought the preponderant substance was that of independent labor politics, although there were many flaws to be seen. We considered them hairline cases. There was not complete agreement in our ranks on any of these questions. In each case a decision could easily have been made one way or the other and good arguments found for it.

The majority of the party leadership, in considering these hairline cases, decided to give any incipient labor party movement the benefit of the doubt. They were not the pure and genuine labor party formations which we have envisaged and demanded, but the main substance of them seemed to be that. We decided to give the incipient movement the benefit of the doubt.

But as I said, these local experiments must not be taken to mean too much. In the Alfange case in New York, we gave a little bit. Perhaps a little more in the Frankenstein case. While Frankenstein was, in the essence of the matter, a candidate of the CIO unions, he was also a member of the Democratic Party and the Democratic local machine was mixed up in the thing. The Oakland affair was kind of a hodge podge movement with a preponderant labor base. We gave a little there with the idea that a good vote for the Citizens' Ticket would stimulate the movement for independent political action.

But to give a little is one thing; to give too much is another; and to give everything -- that's something else. In

our labor party agitation we have said, in effect: "We demand a genuine labor party based on the unions and controlled by them, with a revolutionary transitional program. But we will accept for the time, and critically support, a labor party launched by the unions, leaving the question of program open for debate within the party." But we must not jump from that strictly limited concession and, in our haste and impatience, work ourselves into a position where we appear to say: "We demand a genuine labor party, but we will settle for anything we can get."

The Nature of the Wallace Party

The Wallace party must be opposed and denounced by every class criterion. In the first place it is programmatically completely bourgeois, as all the comrades have recognized. Its differences with the Republican and Democratic parties are purely tactical. There is not a trace of a principled difference anywhere. And by principled difference I mean a class difference.

A reasonable argument could be made for the support of Wallace's movement in any circle of American capitalism. The fundamental issue that he is raising is the question of policy towards the Soviet Union. Wallace's policy can be just as much a preparation for war as the Truman-Marshall program. Just as much. It is a matter of opinion as to which is the most effective way of preparing war against the Soviet Union -- whether by an outward effort to reach agreement by concessions in order to prepare better and put the onus of responsibility on the Soviet Union before the fight starts, or by the rough and tumble "get tough" policy of Truman and Marshall. At any rate it is a tactical difference within the camp of the bourgeoisie.

It would be very, very bad and demoralizing if we would allow for a moment the antiwar demagoguery of Wallace to be taken by any member of our party as something preferable to the blatant aggressiveness of Truman and Marshall. That would be nothing less than the preparation of the minds of party members for "lesser evil" politics -- based on the theory that one kind of capitalist tactics in the expansion of American imperialism is preferable to another, and that the workers should intervene to support one against the other.

If I read the documents correctly, the argument is made by the Chicago comrades that the capitalists do not support Wallace and therefore it is not a capitalist party. I think it is quite correct that all, or nearly all, of the monopoly capitalists at the present moment oppose Wallace. That is not decisive at all as to the class character of the party. The class character of the party is not de-

terminated by the class that supports the party at the moment but rather by the class that the party supports. In other words, by its program. That is the decisive line.

When Marx and Engels, practically standing alone, wrote the Communist Manifesto 100 years ago they announced that they represented the working class of the entire planet. And they did, even though the workers were not yet aware of it. What kind of party is the SWP, if we put the criterion: "What sections of the working class support it at the present time?" No doubt Wallace can muster a much larger section of the working class at the moment than we can. Truman, with the help of the labor bureaucracy, can get even more. Yet we maintain that we are a working class party. We go further and say we are the only working class party because we are the only one that represents its historical interests in its program. The fascists have to hustle a long time before they get much support from monopoly capital. That doesn't change their nature. That doesn't change their class character as a capitalist agency.

The class character of the party is determined first by its program; secondly by its actual policy in practice; and thirdly by its composition and control. The Wallace party is bourgeois on all these counts; by its program, its policy and practice, its composition and control. The contention that the party is controlled by the Stalinists and the Stalinist unions, in my opinion is radically false. That's the deceptive appearance of things. This accusation is made in the anti-Wallace press, and is screamingly emphasized by the Stalinophobes. If I am not mistaken, some references of that kind have slipped into The Militant. I believe some of our comrades who are advocating critical support of Wallace share this view. In my opinion it is completely false.

The control of the Wallace movement rests in the hands of Wallace and those he supports. He determines the candidates and he determines the program. To talk about getting into the movement to change its program and get another candidate -- that's absurd! The program and the candidate are presented to you in a finished package: Wallace for President, and Wallace's program. He made a speech in Cincinnati where he took up the challenge. He said: "Yes, I accept the support of the Communists, but when they come into our movement they don't come in to support their program -- they support our program." He was quite right.

Of course you have only to look around to see that the bulk of Wallace's organized support at the moment is Stalinist -- the Stalinist party, Stalinist-dominated unions, Stalinist front organizations, etc. But these

Stalinist unions in the Wallace movement function as supporting organizations and not as controlling powers. They roughly play the same role toward Wallace's wrap-ped-up, pre-determined program as the PAC and the Political Committee of the AFL will play in the Truman movement. The essence of the matter is the same. The candidate is not decided by the PAC or by the AFL committee. The candidate is already decided. It is going to be Truman, or some other Truman. The program and policy are decided. The political committees of the AFL and the CIO are merely supporting organizations for the Democratic Party. They represent far more workers than the Stalinists in the Wallace camp, but that still doesn't make the Democratic Party a labor party.

The same is true about the Wallace movement. Get into the Wallace movement and change its program and candidate? Even from a practical point of view it seems to be completely utopian. The whole movement is organized on the basis of the candidacy of Wallace and his program. To join the formation and holler for a different program, a different man -- this seems to contradict the whole premise of the movement. They would say to you: "If you're not a Wallace man, why do you join the Wallace movement?" It would be a very difficult question to answer.

The Wallace movement has another ugly side to it. It appears as a one-man Messiah movement. He is the head of a "Gideon's Army" throwing the bible at his adversaries. That, it seems to me, is the worst kind of substitute for independent political action by the workers' own organizations. Wallace's Messiah movement is a diversion and an obstacle in the way of a labor party. Support for it cannot be considered for a moment. On the contrary, it must be exposed and fought.

Instead of worrying about the Stalinists rehabilitating themselves by jumping on the Wallace bandwagon, we should open up an attack against the Stalinists for another betrayal of the working class movement. They are just as much betrayers of the labor movement as the chiefs of the CIO and AFL. They are sacrificing the class interests of the workers and their instinctive movement for an independent party of their own, to serve the conjunctural aims of Kremlin diplomacy, which coincide for the moment with the Wallace program.

Prospective Political Developments

I read in one of the documents from Chicago an assertion to this effect that by some process the Wallace movement can, or must, or will develop into a genuine labor party. This is predicted on the theory that, under the conditions of monopoly capitalism, a third party must be either a labor party or a fascist party.

This contention seems to me purely arbitrary. Why must it be so? Many variations are possible under conditions of the crisis of American monopoly capitalism. All you have to do is to look at the example of France.

France was stabilized for years, if not decades, in the pattern of certain traditional parties, the outstanding one being the Radical Socialist Party with its demagogic appeal to the petty bourgeoisie and its practice of serving the interests of French imperialism. This party was good enough for "normal" times. But under the stress of the war and the defeat and the crisis that followed the war, this party was smashed to smithereens. And a set of new bourgeois political formations arose, "democratic" as well as pre-fascist.

Why can't that happen in America? The traditional two-party system in the United States has been very well suited for normal times. The ruling capitalists couldn't ask for anything better than this system which absorbs shocks and grievances by shifting people from one bourgeois party to another. But that system can blow up in time of crisis. The aggravation of the crisis which we all see ahead can shake up the whole American political situation, so that the old two-party system will no longer suffice to serve the needs of the American bourgeoisie.

The Democratic Party is a badly shaken organism already. The whole structure can fly apart in times of crisis. It is quite evident now that the AFL-CIO scheme to deliver the labor vote once more to the Democratic Party is meeting strong resistance, even if this resistance is more passive than active. That seems to be one of the undisputable factors of the present political situation. The AFL and CIO chiefs may raise five, ten or even fifteen million dollars for the election campaign. But there is no confidence among them that they can get out the labor vote for Truman as they did for Roosevelt.

The less it becomes possible to mobilize the workers' votes for one or the other of these two old bourgeois parties, the more impelling and powerful will become the urge of the workers to found a party of their own or to seek a substitute for it. That mood of the workers will create a condition wherein American capitalism will objectively require a pseudo-radical party to divert the workers from a party of their own. This development, in my opinion, will most likely precede the development of a mass fascist party. America will most likely see a new radical bourgeois reform party before the development of American fascism on a mass scale.

That is what really happened in the Thirties, in a peculiarly distorted form. Roosevelt revamped the Democratic Party to serve the role of a pseudo-radical, "almost" workers party. By that he choked off entirely, for the period, the develop-

ment toward an independent labor party. The Roosevelt "New Deal" became a sort of American substitute for the social program of the old social democracy. Is a repetition of that performance likely within the framework of the Democratic Party? I doubt that very much. I think there can be only one Roosevelt episode. The whole trend since his death has been in the other direction.

Next time, the role played by Roosevelt -- which was a role of salvation for American capitalism -- will most likely require a new party. In the essence of the matter that is what Wallace's party is. Wallace is the, as yet, unacknowledged, candidate for the role of diverting the workers' movement for independent political action into the channel of bourgeois politics dressed up with radical demagoguery which costs nothing. That is what we have to say, and that's what we have to fight -- vigorously and openly, and with no qualifications at all. We have to be 100% anti-Wallaceites. We have to stir up the workers against this imposter, and explain to them that they will never get a party of their own by accepting substitutes.

Our Task in 1948

The arguments presented by the comrades for joining the Wallace movement and giving critical support to the Wallace candidacy are unfounded. I recognize, as does everyone else, that their proposal is prompted by an ambition to avoid isolation, to penetrate deeper into the mass movement and to gain something for our party and its program. We all recognize that. But from the point of view of principle, as well as practical possibilities, their arguments cannot be sustained.

Likewise, the argument that some comrades in the trade unions want to get into the new party in the expectation that they will find an arena for revolutionary work there. Such sentiments have to be taken very seriously, but to our way of thinking they are not, in themselves, an adequate reason for the party to decide to join the Wallace movement. The best Trotskyist trade unionists are sometimes mistaken, and they are certainly mistaken in this instance.

There is both a positive and a negative side to many of the first reactions from comrades deeply involved in the trade union movement. The fear of isolation, the ambition to get deeper into the mass movement -- this surely is a positive quality. But the tendency of trade union comrades to adapt themselves a little more and more, and a little too much, to the current level of the mass movement -- a tendency ever present in trade union work, with all its daily pressures -- is negative. It requires from the political leadership of the party not acquiescence, but correction. The task of the political leaders of the party is to stand somewhat above the factors which are secondary, local and transitory; to see the problem as a whole and decide from fundamental considerations.

The problem for us in 1948 is a serious one. If we decline to support the Wallace movement and don't run our own candidate, our criticism will not be very effective. We would appear to have nothing to offer. To run our own candidate is a task of tremendous scope for a party of our size. It will require the most extraordinary efforts to get on the ballot in enough states to make a showing. On the other hand, if we surmount these difficulties, which I think we can; if we nominate our own candidates for President and Vice President, and other offices in the states -- we have a good chance to lift the party up a stage higher and put it on the map politically on a nation-

al scale.

We are confronted with the necessity to decide the question, and not turn back from the decision. If we nominate our own candidates as against Wallace, as against all others, we also have an excellent opportunity to carry on the most effective kind of education in the party as to the real meaning of class politics. From all these considerations we should reaffirm the resolution of our August Plenum and decide firmly, that at all costs and at whatever effort and sacrifice may be required, we are going to have our own Presidential candidates in 1948.

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SUMMARY SPEECH ON ELECTION POLICY

(February 1948 Plenum of the Socialist Workers Party)

by James P. Cannon

The differences which have arisen cannot be taken lightly. For some time I have felt that our rather one-sided emphasis on the necessity of forming a labor party, without at the moment stressing too much the program and our fight against the bureaucracy, may have given rise to some illusion and conciliationism in the ranks of the party, particularly among the newer members, as to labor partyism and labor reformism. It seemed timely to take the occasion of our election campaign to clarify and straighten out such possible misunderstandings. But, anticipating a more or less easy struggle against a conciliationist understanding of the labor party movement, we run head on into a dispute over bourgeois third partyism. That is a far more serious matter. Some of the arguments we have heard must arouse the greatest disquiet as to what is going on in the ranks of the party, in their thinking.

Bourgeois Parties Are Not Our Arena

It would be explained this way, that some comrades have unthinkingly made a "shift" from our fundamental line. The slogan: "Build An Independent Labor Party!" is a slogan for the class mobilization of the workers. In some incomprehensible way this seems to have been transformed in the minds of some comrades as a mere demand to break the two-party system of the capitalists. This is not the same thing at all. It means merely a bourgeois party shake-up and not a class alignment.

Now, a break-up of the two party parliamentary system in America is undoubtedly a good thing. It destroys the fetish of the trade union bureaucracy to the effect that it is impossible to operate on the political field outside the

traditional pattern. Splits in the two old bourgeois parties are bound to shake up the labor bureaucracy, loosen things up and create a more favorable situation for agitation for the formation of a labor party. But this break-up of the two-party system and splits in the bourgeois parties come about under the pressure of social crisis. These are not our tasks. Bourgeois parties are not the arena for our operation. Our specific task is the class mobilization of the workers against not only the two old parties, but any other capitalist parties which might appear.

If it is contended that this can be done by joining the Wallace movement, and supporting Wallace, you have to recognize what are the conditions for an effective participation in the Wallace party. Condition No. 1 is that you have to support Wallace's candidacy. That's the condition. It is absolutely futile to say you will go in to fight against Wallace's candidacy. This is not a movement to organize a new party and then debate as to who will be the candidate and what will be the platform. The candidate is already selected, and his platform is already announced.

Here is an advertisement in today's New York Times, which in one phrase characterizes the whole movement. They are asking for money to support Wallace's candidacy. There is a picture of Wallace. It is signed by the "National Wallace for President Committee," Elmer Benson Chairman. This advertisement epitomizes the whole movement. How can anyone talk of going in there to fight Wallace, when his weapons are surrendered at the very moment of joining? One can only go in there to support Wallace for president.

The "National Wallace for President Committee" makes this very clear in its advertisement.

You are a little bit mistaken when you speak about the "hybrid" nature of the Wallace party. I grant you that in the composition of the forces in the movement there is a certain heterogeneity. But the basic character of the Wallace party is fixed, for this election at least. I'll come again to the question of its future possibilities. For this election its character is fixed. It is a Wallace program. There is nothing "hybrid" about that.

The opposing comrades admit that we would have to pay a price to work inside the Wallace party. The admission price is just simply this: Get in there and rustle votes for Wallace for president. If you won't pay that price you cannot get in. You have no grounds even to haggle, because it is a Wallace for President movement. That is a price we cannot pay, because it is a price of principle. It is against our principles to solicit votes for bourgeois candidates under any circumstances. It vitiates the whole concept of independent working class political action.

It is wrong to assume that the Wallace party has a great future -- that it is certain or nearly certain to become a future labor party. And it is doubly wrong to say, "This is the last chance to get in," or something approximately of that sort. A mass labor party in the United States, by its very nature, couldn't be a closed corporation. Even if we grant the assumption -- and that is granting far too much -- that in its further evolution the Wallace party will develop into a labor party, we can join, leave, or rejoin the party at any time we see fit, provided we have real forces in the unions. Hillman, chief founder of the New York ALP, fell out with the party in the 1942 state election. The Amalgamated withdrew and supported the Democratic candidate against Alfange, the ALP candidate. Then, sometime later, Hillman returned to the ALP and became the head of the party. This presented no difficulties to Hillman because he wielded the power of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers.

Influence in mass parties is not determined by how long you have been there, but how much force you have. If we are in the unions and have forces there, we will be a power in any labor party formation that arises, the moment we join it, roughly in proportion to the strength of our forces in the unions and the general propagandistic power of our press.

A Splitoff from the Labor Movement

We can't be isolated if we are in the unions. That is where the mass of the

workers are today; they are not in the Wallace movement. This simple fact deserves some consideration by the comrades who are concerned about isolation. The Wallace movement is not only a splitoff from the Democratic Party in the political sense. In the labor sense, it represents a splitoff from the American labor movement as it is constituted today. The argument that we have to get into the Wallace movement in order to be with the masses runs into a contradiction. The real mass movement, the official labor movement, is not there. The mass of the workers are against Truman, or at least indifferent to him, but they will not join the Wallace movement over the head of the unions. They see it as a splitoff; only the Stalinist-controlled unions -- and they are a small minority -- line up in the Wallace camp.

Some of the comrades here, and I sensed something of the same sentiment in Los Angeles, are enamoured with the idea of getting closer to the Stalinist workers and influencing them. That is all right as far as it goes, but it would be very foolish for us to put all our eggs in that one basket. The Stalinists represent a very small sector of the American labor movement. When the labor party movement really gets under way in this country it isn't going to be a Stalinist movement; it is going to be composed of this great mass of American workers who are standing aside from the Wallace movement, even though not sympathetic to Truman. They want to move officially through their unions, which are not Stalinist unions now and will not be tomorrow.

Comrade Clarke reminded me that in the Thirties the only really militant and aggressive force fighting for industrial unionism was the Trade Union Unity League of the Stalinists. They hollered for it while the AFL bureaucrats remained stagnant and resistant to every idea, every current. Under the pressure of the developing crisis, when the masses really began to move, the industrial movement started right out of the official AFL and bypassed entirely the splitoff movement of the Stalinists. Something similar can safely be predicted on the political field.

The Experience of 1924

We had an experience in 1924 in this country of a third party headed by Senator LaFollette, which was quite different from the Wallace movement in this respect -- that it had a much broader base of support in the labor movement. Instead of merely one small sector of the trade union movement supporting it, as is the case with the Wallace party, LaFollette's party was supported officially by the AFL and by the Railroad Brotherhoods, and even by the Socialist Party, which gave up its

traditional independence. The Communist Party ran its own candidates and for the first time put itself on the national political map. The Socialist Party traded its independence for the privilege of going along with this bourgeois movement supported by the workers. They broke for the first time their traditional principle of no combinations with bourgeois parties and no support of bourgeois parties. That was an important stage in the degeneration of the American Socialist Party. They gave a finger to the LaFollette movement; eventually the bulk of the Social Democrats gave their whole hand to Roosevelt.

This election will probably demonstrate the incapacity of the trade union bureaucracy, even though it is completely united, except for the Stalinist splinter wing, to mobilize the trade union votes for Truman. From present indications, Wallace will get four or five million votes, possibly more. Millions of workers, trade unionists, won't vote for either Wallace or Truman -- they will stay home. It will be demonstrated that the labor bureaucracy can no longer corral the labor votes for the Democratic Party. The market value of the Democratic Party will sharply decline. The ruling capitalists are not satisfied merely to have reactionaries in power. They want some political mechanism to control working class votes, especially now that the workers are organized. Out of that new situation may come a split in the Democratic Party and the development of a new bourgeois party, more "radical" and more attractive to the masses.

It can be the Wallace party, or another. Is there anything about Wallace that is too terrible for American capitalism to contemplate? It all depends upon how hard they are pressed, how deep is the crisis. The Wallace program today is no more radical than the Roosevelt program of the Thirties, which rendered great service to American capitalism. We should not accept the theory that this party must, or almost must, become a labor party.

Impending Developments

In the terrible crisis that is impending in America there are possibilities for all kinds of political manifestations, from the most revolutionary to the most reactionary. We must not let our party become involved in any kind of substitute for genuine working class action. All of the activities of our party must be compressed within the framework of the class line. We must have in view the perspective of the terrific social crisis that is impending, when things will move at such terrific speed that some of the comrades who are impatient today may be left behind. We must foresee the possibilities of a rapid radicalization of the

American working class, which will almost overnight confront us with a genuine class movement on the political field, ten or one hundred times more powerful in its sweep and scope than this movement of Wallace and the Stalinists.

The industrial union movement arose out of an objective need in 1933-34. By 1938 -- four or five years -- a great transformation of the position of the factory workers of America had taken place -- from atomization to organization. Why shouldn't we expect that the political development of the American workers will find its formal organization and expression perhaps even more rapidly, and in a shorter time and on a broader scale? This is what we should count on and look forward to, and accept no substitute in the meantime.

The party must be vaccinated against illusions and a certain conciliation toward bourgeois third partyism. By conciliation I don't mean, of course, that any comrades renounce our class politics. But in their eagerness to get into something, to avoid isolation, they seem willing to support a poor substitute and give it all the benefits of all the doubts. We ought to make a firm decision on the Wallace question. Then we should proceed from there to utilize the party discussion, prior to the convention, to clear up the illusions and conciliationism toward labor party reformism; and to make more precise our explanations of what we mean by critical support of a prospective labor party, what its limitations are, and what our attitude toward it is.

We have to make it clear to our members that our labor party slogan is by no means a substitute or acceptance of less than we have demanded in our full program, but a weapon of revolutionary agitation. And we have to put the full content of our program into this election campaign. We have to explain over and over again that the whole aim of the labor party slogan is to develop a class line of politics. That is the most important thing to make clear. It is far better to lose a little opportunity here and there for a tactical experiment, than to engender any confusion in the minds of the party members as to what we are really aiming at.

Lessons from the Bolsheviks

The Bolsheviks, who were our teachers, were very adept at maneuvers. But as Trotsky explained in his great work -- The Criticism of the Draft Program -- the Bolsheviks didn't begin with maneuvers; they began with intransigence, with granite hardness, and educated their cadres so that they grew up to the ability to carry out maneuvers without losing themselves in them. This great work of Trotsky's was directed against the

Stalinists, who had taken out of Leninism its maneuverist tactic at the expense of principled firmness. But the Bolsheviks never tried to solve fundamental problems -- that is to say, problems of class antagonisms -- by means of maneuvers. That cannot be done. We know where these maneuvers of the Stalinists, which violated class principles, finally landed them.

The maneuvers of the Bolsheviks were always within class lines. I don't know of any effort made by the Bolsheviks to maneuver within the parties of the bourgeoisie. On the contrary their whole tactical line, maneuverist as it was, was to make a sharp cleavage between the working class organizations and those of the bourgeoisie. What was the meaning of the great slogan, "All Power to the Soviets"? What was the meaning of the slogan, "Down with the Ten Capitalist Ministers"? Or later, Trotsky's slogan for France: "A Blum-Cachin Government!" And still later the slogan: "A CP-SP-CGT Government!" They were all class slogans designed to split the workers' parties entirely away from all collaboration with bourgeois politicians.

What was the meaning of Trotsky's irreconcilable struggle against the people's front combinations? Here in one "people's front" was the whole working class of France -- the Stalinists, the Socialists, the trade unions, and they included even the anarcho-syndicalists, plus the bourgeois party of the "Radical Socialists." Trotsky said, "All very fine except for one spoonful of tar that spoils the whole barrel of honey. The bourgeois party. Break with them and make a united front of workers' organizations." He took the same position on Spain. What does all this rich instruction mean for us, translated into American terms? The very least it means is this: If our teachers opposed any collaboration with any section of the bourgeoisie even for single actions, they would most certainly reject such collaboration in a common party.

Here, as in Europe, the Stalinist policy is not the workers' united front, and not a labor party in the sense that we understand it, to develop the independent class action of the workers. It is people's front combinations for pressure on the bourgeoisie for momentary concessions to the Soviet bureaucracy at the expense of the class interests of the workers. We have to fight that and by no means join it or take such a position where we could be considered as giving partial support. We are against bourgeois parties from A to Z.

I understand some comrades were not satisfied with the explanation I made in my presentation as to what a bourgeois party is and how the class character of

a party is determined. I said, it is not determined by the class which supports the party at the moment, but rather by the class which the party supports; that is to say, by its program. That is the basic meaning of a political program, the support of one class rule or another. The class character of a party is also determined by its actual practice. We would not take the formal program of any party by itself, separated from its daily policy and practice, as the sole criterion. Another factor to be considered is the composition of a party. A bourgeois party of the classical type is easily recognized because it has all three of these qualities -- it is bourgeois in program, in practice, and in composition.

The British Labor Party

But then the question is raised -- the fact that the question is raised shows some confusion on the question of the labor party -- comrades ask: "Well, what is the British Labor Party?" If we judge it by composition alone, we must say it is a "workers' party" for it is squarely based on the trade union movement of Great Britain. But this designation "workers' party" must be put in quotation marks as soon as we examine the program and practice of the party. To be sure, the formal program and the holiday speeches of the leaders mutter something about socialism, but in practice the British Labor Party is the governing party of British imperialism. It is the strongest pillar holding up this shaky edifice. That makes it a bourgeois party in the essence of the matter, doesn't it? And since 1914, haven't we always considered the Social Democratic parties of Europe as bourgeois parties? And haven't we characterized Stalinism as an agency of world imperialism?

Our fundamental attitude towards such parties is the same as our attitude toward a bourgeois party of the classical type -- that is an attitude of irreconcilable opposition. But the composition of such parties gives them a certain distinctive character which enables, and even requires, us to make a different tactical approach to them. If they are composed of workers, and even more, if they are based on the trade unions and subject to their control, we offer to make a united front with them for a concrete struggle against the capitalists, or even join them under certain conditions, with the aim of promoting our program of "class against class." We try to push them into class actions against the bourgeoisie. But we do not paint them as genuine organs of the working class in the political sense. That would be a great mistake. It is especially important for us to keep these considerations clearly in mind with the perspective of an American labor party.

If there is one thing that is fairly certain, it is that the trade unions in this country will be obliged to go into politics on their own account, and most likely they will first experiment with a labor party. We may be confronted, in the first stage of this great development, with the attempt to form a labor party of the British type. It is by no means excluded that the present bureaucracy, or another, more adept at demagoguery but no less conservative in practice, could form and head such a party at its inception.

If our members are led to think that a labor party per se is the goal of our endeavors, then our party can easily lapse into reformism and lose its reason for existence. No, we must define our attitude precisely in advance of such a possible development and permit no misunderstanding. We would oppose such a "bourgeois workers' party" as ruthlessly as any other bourgeois party, but our tactical approach would be different. We would most likely join such a party -- if we have strength in the unions they couldn't keep us out -- and under certain conditions we would give its candidates critical support in the elections. But "critical support" of a reformist labor party must be correctly understood. It does not mean reconciliation with reformism. Critical support means opposition. It does not mean support with criticism in quotation marks, but rather criticism with support in quotation marks.

It would be a good thing to read over again Lenin's advice to the British communists back in 1920. He explained that they ought to support the labor party candidates for Parliament. But he said "Support them in order to force them to take office so that the masses will learn by experience the futility and treachery of their program, and get through with them." It was not solidarity with the labor reformists but hostility which dictated the tactic that Lenin recommended. I think his advice still holds good. The labor party is not our party and will not be our party unless it adopts our program. Otherwise it is an arena in which we work for our program.

And if we take such a critical and hostile attitude toward a "genuine" reformist labor party, one based on the unions and controlled by the unions, what attitude should we take towards this Wallace-Stalinist set-up? That is not the beginning, or the promise, or even the pretense of being a labor party. There is no ground to give it any kind of support, "critical" or otherwise.

The Danger of Disorientation

The comrades have emphasized that they do not advocate the politics of the "lesser evil," and I do not mean to say that they do. But that is the possible implication

of their position. And what is only implied in the position of party leaders can be taken literally and exaggerated by the party ranks. That is what we are worried about. The carefully guarded formulations of the Chicago leaders can be "freely translated" to authorize such concessions for participation in this movement, that party members can lose their bearings and a Wallaceite wing make its appearance in the Socialist Workers Party. I would consider that the greatest disgrace -- and the greatest loss. All the little temporary advantages you might gain by supporting the Wallace formation would weigh like a feather in the scale against the loss of a few score of new members who, instead of becoming Bolsheviks, are turned into confused Wallaceites. There is the danger of disorienting our ranks by maneuvering around with this movement.

It has been argued here that "we must go through the experiences with the workers." That is a very good formula, provided you do not make it universal. We go with the workers only through those experiences which have a class nature. We go with them through the experiences of strikes, even though we may think a given strike untimely. We may even go with the workers through the experience of putting a reformist labor party in office, provided it is a real labor party and subject to certain pressures of the workers, in order that they may learn from their experience that reformism is not the correct program for the working class.

But we do not go through the experience of class collaboration with the workers. There we draw the line. We did not go through the experience of the workers when they supported the imperialist war. We drew back when they went through the experience of people's fronts in Europe. We stood on the side and we told them they were wrong. We did not compromise ourselves. If another man takes poison, you do not have to join him in the experiment. Just tell him it is no good. But don't offer to prove it by your personal example.

Is the Wallace movement the future labor party? I believe this is the core of the Chicago contention. They consider it, if not the inevitable development, at least the most probable. If I have correctly understood them, that is a fair statement of their position. This assumption is arbitrary and unfounded. Of the numerous variants of development that can be conceived of, this is the most unlikely. Let us consider a number of other, and more likely possibilities.

Possible Future Developments

Supposing we join this outfit, and give up the idea of putting up our own

presidential candidate, what will we do if Wallace makes a deal with the Democratic Party and decides not to run after all? We have heard the answer: "We will go ahead in spite of Wallace." I would like to see a Wallace party without Wallace in the 1948 elections. It would be a sick looking thing. It could not exist. It would fade and disappear. If Wallace were to say tomorrow, "I am through with this whole business," the "third party" would collapse like a pricked balloon and nobody could blow it up again.

What would we do in such an event -- look around for another Wallace? It will be a sad day for us if our party members get it into their heads they can run after any demagogue who talks radical and promises to cure all evils, and forget that our task is the class struggle that cannot be transcended by any maneuvers. Maneuvers at the best can only be subordinate and auxiliary to the hard slugging for a principled line.

Anybody who thinks Wallace is incapable of making a deal with the Democratic Party, should be reminded that he still has one foot in that camp. He has stated and reiterated that his demand is the reformation of the Democratic Party, and he repeated it the other day as he got off the plane in New York. He said again that he will not go back to the Democratic Party unless it becomes a "peace party" and unless Truman gives up the idea of peacetime conscription.

It is not likely that they will succeed in making an agreement in time for the elections in 1948. But it is possible. As for Wallace's big point -- military conscription -- opposition to that is not the monopoly of Wallace and the Stalinists. Taft is against conscription at the present time. Hanson Baldwin, military expert of the New York Times, has written extensively against the program of universal military training on practical grounds. MacArthur is reported to be against it too. When you see how really narrow is the tactical difference between Wallace and the Democrats and how modest are the demands he makes on the Democratic Party, you should not exclude the possibility of a deal and the bursting of the whole bubble which seems so attractive to you at the moment.

A second possible variant: The Wallace party can get a resounding defeat in the election. Truman can make some more radical concessions to the trade union bureaucracy for purposes of the election. Relationships with the Soviet Union may undergo a change in such a way as to scare off the fellow travelers who support the third party now. The vote can be reduced to a very small one and the party end in dissimulation, like the LaFollette movement in 1924.

A third variant: The party can get a big vote. The situation can change in the other direction. Truman can still further antagonize and alienate the trade unionists. More votes for Wallace. If prices of grain and wheat drop, the farmer is going to look for someone to vote for. So Wallace might get such a big vote as would attract to him more of the Democratic Party politicians who want to leave the sinking ship. It is reported that Senator Taylor, who has been on the fence, has just about made up his mind to accept nomination for vice-president. Many others might flock over to Wallace and it might develop into a bigger party. Why must we assume that it will become a labor party in that case? It will become more and more a Wallace party. It may develop as a full-blown radical bourgeois party with enough support and votes to control a bloc in Congress and demand a place in the administration.

Prospects of a Truman-Stalin Deal

Another fourth possible variant. Suppose Stalin makes a deal with Truman between now and election day. The Stalinists now supporting Wallace would immediately decide that it would be wrong after all to "split the progressive forces of the Democratic Party," and call for a people's front for Truman. Is that excluded? I do not predict it, but it is certainly not excluded. These things have happened before.

There are powerful forces in the bourgeois world speaking in favor of such a temporary arrangement with Stalin. They are not less imperialistic or anti-Soviet. They have a difference over method and tempo. David Lawrence, an influential journalistic spokesman of big capital, who writes for the ultra-conservative New York Sun, advocates a deal with Stalin. For months Walter Lippman has been arguing in the New York Herald-Tribune for some kind of arrangement. Stalin badly needs it, and has already put out feelers, according to many reports. Churchill's threat to throw the atom bomb was coupled with the proposal: call Stalin to a secret meeting and offer him a deal or else. Suppose such a deal is made before the election. What happens to the Wallace party?

The fifth variant: The labor bureaucrats fail to mobilize the unions for Truman. The policy of supporting the Democratic Party -- which can't win anyway -- is discredited. Follows a tremendous impulse from below, reflecting itself in a mass demand for an independent labor party of the workers. Will the bureaucrats fight to the last ditch against the sentiment for a labor party? Some may, but not all. If the sentiment of the masses becomes so strong, under the double

pressure of the resounding defeat of Truman and the acceleration of the economic crisis, which always stimulates the political activity of the workers because they feel themselves stymied on the economic field, what is to prevent a big section of the official bureaucracy from plumping then for a labor party? The launching of such a party by the official labor movement, or a large section of it, would cut the ground from under Wallace's labor support.

A sixth variant -- splits in both bourgeois parties. Where is it written that the Republican Party is united forever? If the crisis is deep enough it can produce a rift in the GOP, a general shake-up of the whole parliamentary system, and a new party merging the so-called progressive Republicans and the New Deal Democrats, etc., while the Tory wing of the Republican Party unites with the Southern Bourbons in another set-up.

I have mentioned six variants, which are all possible. I am not predicting any one of them. My purpose is to show how narrow and unfounded is the assumption of the Chicago comrades, who see only one line of development, and that in my opinion the least likely of all -- the evolution of the Wallace party into a labor party based on the unions.

Local Tactical Experience

Now I come to the question of tactics toward local segments of the Wallace movement, which occupied the attention of some comrades here. I was sorry to hear it, because it is rather pointless to talk about tactics when you are confronted with differences on the fundamental problem. If we settle the fundamental line, not only here but in the party ranks, the tactical application should present no difficulties. The more firmly we settle the principle question, the more scope we can allow ourselves for tactics. Tactics are nothing but finger work. If your arm is broken, your fingers are not worth much.

The party must be educated and re-educated on the meaning of class politics, which excludes any support of any bourgeois candidate, and requires even the most critical attitude toward a labor party when we are supporting it. The task is to advance the revolutionary program and build the revolutionary party under all conditions. When that is clearly understood and firmly settled, then we can take up local tactical questions and easily dispose of them.

Can the party fractions work in some local units of the Wallace movement? Why not? I think it's entirely permissible, on the condition that this is understood as guerrilla warfare which must serve and

not hinder the main campaigns. We will have to consider the possibilities concretely in each case. All around the country these local formations differ somewhat from the national party, which is cut and dried as to candidate and program. We have to consider that, and I think the Political Committee will be sufficiently alert to take advantage of any opportunities to fish around in local movements, especially those which have not yet settled their general character, providing the basic line is laid down and understood by all. That is the necessary condition for fruitful tactical work.

We must allow nothing to blur the main line, or to divert the energy of our comrades from our own campaign. We have to bear in mind that we are going out for the first time in a national election campaign with a very small membership and very little money. It will really require a heroic expenditure of effort and energy to carry it through. We must not put our irons in too many fires. We must not lose sight of the main thing. This is far more important than local tactical maneuvers. The campaign for our own presidential candidates is a thousand times more important than any tactical successes we might have on a local scale. If we can carry this presidential campaign through, it can mean the establishment of the Socialist Workers Party on the national political scene.

We have sanctioned an extensive tactical experiment in the Independent Progressive Party of California (IPPC). Although the Political Committee adopted a motion condemning the Wallace movement nationally, we told the California comrades that we did not consider their work in the IPPC inconsistent with our national policy, provided they conducted their work in such a way as to prepare a break on the issue of the Wallace candidacy.

Our comrades decided to go into this movement before it had adopted its program and determined its candidate, to counterpose to the Stalinist people's front line, the line of a completely independent labor party with independent labor candidates. In our opinion this tactical experiment on a local scale is permissible if they understand that it cannot be kept up after the program and the candidates are selected. We must recognize also that the direction of the IPP movement in California is not to the left, but to the right. That will be crowned by their endorsement of Wallace. By that single action the IPP of California, up to now nominally independent, will be formally absorbed into the national Wallace movement. We will have to take our stand accordingly. So the work in the IPPC out there has to have a time

limit put to it.

It can't be repeated too often -- the Wallace movement has nothing amorphous about it so far as the candidate and the program is concerned. It has a fixed package. It is a Wallace party and a Wallace program.

The Main Line Must Be Clear

Some comrades have spoken in favor of running our own candidates and working in the local units of the Wallace party too. It is a mistake to think we can decide that at a plenum. Let the plenum lay down a clear, definite line, the main line, and then let us take up these subordinate questions concretely where the opportunity exists. Fraction work in the local units of the Wallace movement does not contravene the general line provided it does not interfere with it or become a substitute for it. It is a practical question as to whether we can afford it, whether we have sufficient forces for the double task. There's the rub. It is also a question in each case whether the comrades involved are steeled and educated enough to carry out a tactic like that and not get lost.

Our main line in The Militant must be sharpened, the line on the Wallace

movement and on the Stalinists. Every trace of ambiguity or conciliationism has to be eliminated. We have to attack the Wallace movement and expose it for what it is. We must denounce the Stalinists for once more betraying the independent class party of the workers and selling it out to bourgeois politicians, in the hope of exerting a little pressure in Washington in the interest of Kremlin diplomacy. That is the best approach to the Stalinist workers. Not the slightest trace of conciliationism toward perfidious Stalinism! Our heaviest weapon right there is an attack on this Stalinist policy as an American adaptation of people's frontism. When you meet the Stalinists in the unions -- or wherever you meet them -- attack the treacherous policy of the CP.

The problem of problems before us today is to find a means of arousing the party members for the fullest concentration on the presidential campaign. After twenty years of struggle as a Trotskyist nucleus, we have reached that point where we resolutely decide to put our own presidential candidates in the field. That is the clear word the party must hear from the Plenum. The convention must be, above everything else, the mobilization of the party for our own election campaign.

What McReynolds reveals about Peace and Freedom

By Tom Kerry

Being a man of many parts, it seems there is hardly ever a dull moment in the political life of David McReynolds, whose letter to the editor of *The Militant* appears on this page.

Since receiving the McReynolds letter, dated July 29, we learn that he has "withdrawn" as candidate for U. S. senator on the Peace and Freedom ticket in New York to accept the more modest designation as candidate for Congress on the same ticket.

Be that as it may, and even allowing for the possibility that further "adjustments" may be forthcoming before this article is published, it does not affect the pertinence of the observation by Jon Britton in his report of the P&F convention (*The Militant*, Aug. 2) that the nomination of McReynolds was most "politically revealing."

For the nomination was promoted by the leaders of P&F with the full knowledge of who David McReynolds is and what he stands for, in line with their professed aim of presenting what they call a "balanced" ticket. The concept of the "balanced" ticket may impress some as the slickest vote-catching device in the arsenal of "new politics," but every two-bit wardheeler and precinct captain of both major parties has imbibed at that fount of political wisdom from time immemorial.

McReynolds confesses that he voted for Johnson in 1964 but soon recognized his error and "just a year later" began calling for his impeachment. "Yes," he admits, "I made a mistake." But, he hastens to add, "the record shows that I learned soon enough." No, my dear friend, "the record" shows no such thing!

For the record shows that recently, very recently, McReynolds was ready, willing and eager to be had by another slick capitalist politician, the "good" Democrat, Senator Eugene McCarthy. On July 21 the *New York Times* reported a demonstration held the previous day at the United Nations to promote the candidacy of McCarthy. The article quotes David McReynolds, one of the participants, as saying that, "the future of the country depended on the nomination and election of Senator McCarthy."

No secret

The pro-McCarthy demonstration was held while the Peace and Freedom Party

convention was in session. McReynolds' promotion of the McCarthy candidacy was no secret to the PFP convention. It was nothing new. Just a few weeks earlier in a rather lengthy article published in the July 11 issue of *The Village Voice*, McReynolds disclosed that he had "voted for the McCarthy slate in the primary because, perhaps irrationally, I can't view McCarthy as simply another Democrat. If," he added, "McCarthy gets the nomination the Democratic Party will take on the appearance of the party of quasi-radical social change and America will have blundered through once again." And then comes the clincher: "I know," McReynolds affirms, "that if McCarthy gets the nomination all talk of a radical new party is doomed . . ."

One can't help wondering whether it was McReynolds' views on McCarthy that com-

mended him to the PFP convention as an appropriate candidate for their ticket. Just imagine — McReynolds *knew* that the nomination of McCarthy would doom "all talk of a radical new party," yet he joined in promoting such candidacy and abandoned the project only after he became convinced there was no chance of success.

After finally convincing himself that McCarthy has no chance of being nominated by the Democrats, he openly proclaims, in his letter, that he does not "plan to vote for McCarthy if he does get the nomination." What can one say? Criticism stands disarmed in the face of such seemingly naive and simplistic rhetoric.

Partial record

But the "record" is not yet complete. Painful as it is, we are constrained to pursue the matter further. In his letter, Mc-

Letter from Dave McReynolds

New York, N.Y.

July 29, 1968

I have just read Jon Britton's report of our New York Peace and Freedom Party convention, July 19-22.

I would agree that my nomination for Senate was "politically revealing"—it revealed that PFP is not out to build a party with a narrow base, but rather that it seeks to build a party that can run both an Eldridge Cleaver and a Dave McReynolds. It is true that I voted for Johnson in 1964—the only time in my life that I voted for a major party candidate for President—but it is also true that just a year later, in November, 1965, I began calling for Johnson's impeachment. Yes, I made a mistake. But the record shows that I learned soon enough.

We need a radical new party—on that we would be in agreement—and my only point was that a McCarthy victory at the convention would drain off many who would otherwise support a radical new party. For my own part I do not plan to vote for McCarthy if he does get the nomination, and I have resigned from the Democratic Party because I am convinced the reform movement there has hit a dead end and there is little chance of any "left realignment" of the major parties. Ultimately we need a broad unity of the Left, one which would include the Socialist Workers Party.

In the meantime, my warm regards to Fred Halstead, already on his way to Vietnam.

Sincerely,
David McReynolds

Reynolds informs us that at long last he has "resigned from the Democratic Party." After some four years of Johnson and after having voted as a registered Democrat for McCarthy in the recent primaries, McReynolds has finally decided there is no future in it. Good!

But the question that is posed is not why he took so long to "resign," but why was he in it to begin with. McReynolds is no political fledgling trying his wings for the first time in the political arena. He is a longtime member of the Norman Thomas Socialist Party. Not only a member, but a leader, if you please, of a "left-wing" faction in that party. A practicing "socialist" of long standing, if you will.

These have been a hectic few weeks for Comrade McReynolds. At the recent Socialist Party convention held in Chicago the first week of July, the "right wing" took over lock, stock and barrel. By a big majority the SP convention adopted a series of policy resolutions which repudiate and reject everything the PFP program allegedly stands for.

To savor the full flavor I quote from the July 29 issue of *New America*, official organ of the SP, in its special convention issue. "A substantial majority of the 92 delegates present," we are informed, "endorsed a coalition perspective, whose main thrust is toward organized labor and mainstream liberal and Negro groups rather than the New Left; an electoral strategy which advocates support for major party candidates who 'stand for racial and economic justice and peace;' and a resolution on Vietnam sharply critical of the Johnson Administration policy, which reaffirmed SP support for a negotiated political settlement of the war."

SP vs PFP

To clear the way for his nomination as a PFP candidate, McReynolds says he has "resigned" from the Democratic Party. What about his membership in the Socialist Party, whose policy is diametrically opposed to everything PFP says it stands for? Or will it all depend upon what hat McReynolds wears at any given moment?

To make the confusion worse confounded, McReynolds, as an official of the War Resisters League, recently issued a pronouncement on the Paris "peace" talks. Issued in June the statement affirmed: "It is unlikely that Washington and Hanoi, having finally sat down together, will break off negotiations and engage in a new escalation of the war. In our view the U. S. is phasing out the war. Despite the fact that Johnson has said on many occasions that he would never, under any circumstances, 'abandon' the government of South Vietnam, it seems clear that he is preparing to do precisely that."

Does McReynolds still hold that view? Or has he decided, as a PFP candidate, to keep it hidden in his briefcase for a more appropriate time? From the record, and not the whole of it by a long shot, it is questionable how much McReynolds has learned since his unfortunate experience supporting LBJ in 1964.

But this much, he insists, he has learned—that "the reform movement" in the Democratic Party "has hit a dead end," and that the time has come to seek greener pastures.

Future of PFP

Just what is the Peace and Freedom Party and what is its future? No one seems to be sure, for there are as many answers as there are groups, tendencies, factions, caucuses, and "independents" within it. We are forced to rely on the most authoritative source, the theoreticians of the movement, the Independent Socialist Clubs of America group, which promoted and led PFP to achieve ballot status in California and are now seeking to extend it on a national scale.

In a special supplement to the June-July 1968 *Independent Socialist*, we find the following definition: "In concept, Peace and Freedom is an *all-inclusive* radical party, aspiring to be inclusive of a wide-ranging assortment of radicals with the most disparate and clashing ideologies, including the anti-ideology ideology. This inclusiveness," they add, "is a good trick if you can get away with it." It is indeed, as history records that all such nonclass or supra-class political formations have founded on this particular "all-inclusive" reef.

The trick is to try and prevent the centrifugal forces generated by such disparate and clashing tendencies from atomizing the formation. "The only possible 'cement' for the Peace and Freedom coalition," they insist, "lies in the two characteristics which it actually did develop, . . . the minimum nature of its radical program, and the orientation toward militant issue-oriented action which can unite people in movement."

The ISC theoreticians are adamant in their defense of the minimum program against all who advocate a more "revolutionary" or at least more "clear radical program." They insist that parties can be held together in only one of two ways. Either through ideology, that is, its ideas as expressed programatically; or by its numbers, that is, its "mass membership."

Obviously, one must rule out the "cement" of ideas, since such a binder is totally conspicuous by its absence. That leaves the "cement" of numbers to bind the group together. An absolute prerequisite for garnering large numbers is a program minimum enough to avoid frightening off those

temporarily disenchanted with the performance of the two major parties and their candidates.

Previous results

It may seem new, but this trick has been tried before—with dreary results. But, our theoreticians insist, the PFP is *sui generis*, that is, a party of a unique kind, never seen before in history. They bolster their argument with the theory of "waves." The first "wave" was that which catapulted PFP onto the ballot in California. Then, with the announcement of the McCarthy and Kennedy candidacies, PFP was plunged into a trough.

The spinoff of dissident Democrats who carried PFP to the peak of its first wave ceased, and a reverse exodus to the camp of McCarthy and Kennedy ensued. The next wave is predicated on the premise that McCarthy will not be nominated by the Democrats at their convention in Chicago. If he is nominated, they say, PFP will be finished. If not, the disenchantment of the McCarthy supporters will inexorably lead them to seek another alternative, and PFP will become the main beneficiary of this process—IF!

If no one frightens them off by raising the ante of the PFP minimum program. For those of us old enough to remember, I recall that the Henry Wallace party in 1948 proceeded from the same premise. Under the tutelage of the Communist Party, the third party movement of 1948, the Progressive Party, advanced a "minimum program" of capitalist reforms as bait for the discontent of the masses with the Truman administration.

Fell flat

If anything, Truman was more unpopular at that time than LBJ is today. Not a single poll, and very few if any news pundits, gave him a chance of defeating the Republican candidate, Thomas Dewey. Yet Truman won. The Progressive Party, which counted on at least five million votes, got around one million. Truman stumped the country making radical speeches that put the Progressive Party "minimum program" in the shade. Their "minimum program" fell flat as a pancake. It was the beginning of the end of that exercise in third-party reform politics.

Humphrey is a more accomplished demagogue than Truman ever was. If he is nominated, this country will see a display of verbal gymnastics calculated to dazzle and befuddle the dissenters in and out of his party. The "minimum program" approach will prove a frail bulwark against the storm of demagogic rhetoric with which the people of this country will be deluged. The end result of the policy of seeking numbers at the expense of ideas and program will be to get neither clarity of ideas

nor large numbers, but accelerated demoralization and disintegration.

The results of current PFP policy have not been too happy. One PFP stalwart, writing in the current statewide issue of *Broadside*, published by the Peace and Freedom Council of Los Angeles, characterizes PFP policy as the "politics of crisis."

He observes: "If Lyndon Johnson is a master of the politics of duplicity and Hubert Humphrey indulges in the politics of joy, the Peace and Freedom Party practices what might best be termed the politics of crisis. Since the successful registration drive Peace and Freedom has staggered through a series of crises from the organizational conflicts of January and February, through the Richmond convention, down to the present state of disarray and demoralization of the surviving membership. Though the party has survived, it has survived as a parody of a political party and as a caricature of the Movement." Not being directly involved there is little I can add to that assessment.

In his letter, McReynolds, at least by implication, invites the Socialist Workers Party to join him in creating a "broad unity of the Left." I presume he means by that the Peace and Freedom Party. No, thank you! There *must* be some more pleasant way of committing political suicide.



Photo by John Gray

Peace and Freedom Party nominating convention in Los Angeles

Peace and Freedom: the trouble with a 'minimum program'

By Tom Kerry

Once again the Socialist Workers Party is taken to task for its "negative" attitude toward the Peace and Freedom Party. In last week's issue of *The Militant* our reply was to David McReynolds, PFP candidate for Congress in New York. This week, it is to a letter from a young California PFP member published on page 2 of this issue.

The letter raises some fundamental questions worthy of consideration. But if the discussion is to be fruitful it must be based on what is and not on wishful flights of fancy that have no relation to reality.

We are informed, for example, that after PFP had made the ballot in California,

it "had blossomed into a mass movement," and that the reason the SWP had remained aloof was that it was "psychologically" unprepared to reorient itself "and enter into the mass movement."

To my knowledge not one authoritative spokesman for PFP is foolhardy enough to claim that it has now, or had at the time of the California ballot certification, "blossomed into a mass movement." At best they *hope* that it will so blossom in the distant future. And even that *hope* is largely hinged on what happens at the Democratic Party convention scheduled for the latter part of this month.

As in our reply to McReynolds last week, we begin with the question: What is the

PFP? Is it *primarily* an electoral coalition or only *incidentally* an electoral coalition and *primarily* a serious effort to establish a permanent "radical" political party which seeks to utilize the electoral arena as a vehicle to organize a new party? There seems to be complete and utter confusion on this score.

Again, as I was compelled to do in my article last week, I rely heavily on the one tendency in PFP which has sought to grapple with this problem, the Independent Socialist Clubs of America, which sparked the PFP effort in California.

Let me quote again from their definition of PFP in the June-July issue of the *Independent Socialist*: "In concept," they say,

Takes exception to Militant's 'jibes'

Minneapolis, Minn.

As a member of the California Peace and Freedom Party, I must take exception to your paper's constant jibes at our party.

The Socialist Workers Party chose Fred Halstead for President in November, 1967. When it suddenly discovered, in January, 1968, that PFP had made the ballot in California and had blossomed into a mass movement, the SWP psychologically was unprepared to reorient itself and enter into the mass movement. Instead of joining in the work of building the party, it chose to stand aside and carp at it.

The PFP allegedly does not have a working-class base. What of it? Are thousands of militants, opposed to imperialism and racism, to have to wait until George Meany or some other labor faker forms a "labor" party, one which probably would be prowar, procapitalist and anticommunist? Or is the only permissible course to join a miniscule socialist group like the SWP? Why not try to or-

ganize a mass, antiwar party, based on the already militant, and then go to the people with a structure, rather than wait for that will-o-the-wisp, a union-based labor party? You don't mind if the blacks jump the gun on labor; why should the antiwar movement have to wait on the sidelines? Why should your party push on electorally and not the PFP?

You will say that it is permissible for the SWP to run because it advocates socialism. Fine, but so does Paul Jacobs, our candidate for U.S. senator, and Huey Newton, the PFP's candidate for Congress, to name only two among many PFPers who do.

The PFP does not officially advocate socialism, but that is due, in my opinion, only to the youth and inexperience of its members. One candidate, Mario Savio, frankly says he isn't sure what anyone means anymore by socialism, given the huge range of social formations covered by that term, running from the monarchist British Labour Party to the Mao-cultist Chinese regime. While I think such a position doesn't come to grips with the problem, still, are you prepared to deny Mario Savio's credentials as an antiwar, civil-liberties candidate?

Are you prepared to repudiate a political party whose nonsocialist members are ideologically no worse than a Mario Savio?

Prepared to listen

The youthful members of PFP are prepared to listen to anyone who has solutions to offer, and they are prepared to work to build the party. This year the SWP has been stiff-necked and refused to enter the PFP as an ideological tendency along with all comers. But next year, Fred Halstead will not be running. Perhaps then you will change your minds.

Your paper has talked scornfully about PFP returning to liberalism, as if a party soon to give its nomination to Eldridge Cleaver is in any danger of doing that! The prophets of the SWP have even gone so far as predict, in conversation, on many occasions, that the PFP will not outlast the election, which is just nonsense.

No intelligent observer can fail to see that the PFP has its serious problems and faults, but it isn't a dying party; no party that gets 410,000 votes in a local election first time out is exactly suffering from an incurable disease, unless success is now likened unto illness.

Leonard Brenner Glaser

"Peace and Freedom is an *all-inclusive* radical party, aspiring to be inclusive of a wide ranging assortment of radicals with the most disparate and clashing ideologies, including the anti-ideology ideology."

The ISC theoreticians recognize that so "wide-ranging" an assortment of radicals tends to fly apart when confronted with any serious, controversial question. The trick is how to keep the coalition together. The ISC pundits concede that there are only two ways in which it can be done. One is through the unifying cement of a commonly held ideology as expressed in a full radical program. Given the acknowledged diversity of views in the PFP this is immediately ruled out as utopian.

The only other alternative, they conclude, is to attract large numbers, that is, to become a mass movement. This, they say, would offset the centrifugal force engendered by a "wide-ranging assortment of radicals with the most disparate and clashing ideologies." The ISC theoreticians contend PFP can attract large numbers only through the device of the "minimum program."

"Permanent radical party"

To begin with the ISC leaders insist

that the PFP electoral effort is incidental to the primary objective of establishing a permanent radical political party. They insist there can be no compromise on this score. But how does the idea of the minimum program fit into this expressed aim?

The device of the "minimum program" cuts both ways. An electoral coalition composed of diverse, disparate and clashing tendencies can be held together only on the basis of a *minimum* program. This is as true of the PFP coalition as it is of any other electoral coalition. In addition, conventional political wisdom views the "minimum program" as a guaranteed vote-catcher designed to attract the largest possible number of supporters.

It is this contradiction that has impaled the leaders of PFP on the horns of a cruel dilemma. To build a viable *permanent radical* political party, the unity of radical *ideas* are an indispensable prerequisite. For an electoral coalition, what counts are *numbers*. The idea that numbers alone will provide a cohesive cement to bind together a "wide-ranging assortment of radicals with the most disparate and clashing ideologies," is a pipedream. If, by some miracle, PFP does succeed in attracting

significant numbers it will become a battleground for the contending ideological factions in a war to the bitter end.

And by *numbers* I mean active members, not *votes*. Our PFP correspondent tends to blur the distinction when he reminds us of the 410,000 votes one of their candidates received in a local election. He hails this as a great success. Let us see. If the primary aim is the building of a permanent radical party, electoral activity must be viewed as a means of propaganda and education designed to further this aim.

The case in point is a good illustration of the basic contradiction that afflicts PFP. Our correspondent refers to the election campaign in Los Angeles last June for the office of District Attorney. It was a "nonpartisan" election, that is, the candidates were not listed by party label. Michael Hannon, the PFP candidate, ran against the incumbent, a right-wing racist hated and despised by the black and Mexican-American communities.

The major piece of literature circulated by PFP for their candidate blared forth the message: End Lawless Law Enforcement! Build Respect for Law! Only the political initiates could tell whether it was

a "left-wing" rather than a right-wing "law and order" tract. A reporter for *The Militant*, covering the campaign (*The Militant*, July 5, 1968), observed: "But no innocent voter learned that the Hannon campaign was for withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam, favored black power, or was for the replacement of the corrupt American system by a 'new political system.'"

Failed to educate

The major lesson of this experience was driven home by our reporter who pointed out that: "As a result the campaign failed to educate a single voter about the need for fundamental social change. It failed the first test of any radical election effort."

Was the Hannon campaign anything to boast about? It all depends on what criterion is applied. If the aim was to capture votes through the medium of a "minimum program" it could be so viewed. If, on the other hand, it is viewed from the professed aim of promoting the idea of a permanent radical political party, it was a resounding fiasco.

I am not impressed by the assurance that "many PFPers" advocate socialism, as individuals if not as candidates. Nor am I impressed with groups who call themselves "socialist" joining with anti-socialists and procapitalists in an electoral coalition on a platform of capitalist reforms.

Our PFP correspondent scoffs at the "miniscule" SWP. The question of size is a relative matter. Compared to the total population of this country, and even to the size and influence of the two major parties, both PFP and SWP can be considered "miniscule." Compared to the PFP the SWP is not all that "miniscule." As a matter of fact it is very likely that our candidates will appear on more state ballots than PFP.

But that is neither here nor there. We do not pretend to be a mass party or a party with mass influence. Our strength lies not in numbers but in the power of our ideas. That is why we view our electoral effort primarily as a campaign of propaganda and education. Our election-campaign material is designed to educate and convince, at least the more politically advanced section of the population, of the necessity to abolish the capitalist system of labor exploitation and racial oppression, not to patch it up and make it work.

Which brings me to the question of the agency or agencies of radical social change, which we define as social revolution. At this point our young correspondent waxed indignant. "The PFP," he declares, "allegedly does not have a working-class base. What of it? Are thousands of militants, opposed to imperialism and racism,

to have to wait until George Meany or some other labor faker forms a 'labor' party, one which probably would be pro-war, procapitalist and anticommunist?"

No working-class program

I don't know what he means by "allegedly!" The PFP has no working class base, period. What of it? he asks. True, PFP cannot be faulted for not having a working-class base, but it can for not having a working-class, that is a revolutionary, program—a program that represents the historical interests of the working class, black and white, the only truly revolutionary class in modern, advanced capitalist society, without which there can be no talk of a successful social revolution.

The PFP has neither working-class base nor working-class program. (We leave aside for later consideration the question of the "alliance" between PFP and the Black Panther Party.)

In social composition PFP is based on the unstable, highly volatile middle class, and only on a very small section of that class to boot; and it has a program of capitalist reform. How to classify it? It exists, at present, as a "miniscule," if you will, propaganda group not at all certain of its role nor its future place in the political firmament. A "radical," if you insist, party of capitalist reform, at least radical in rhetoric if not in program and practice.

No, we do not counsel anyone to "wait" until George Meany, Walter Reuther, or any other labor bureaucrat decides to form an independent labor party. That would be advocating waiting until doomsday. If and when a labor party comes into being it will do so as a result of struggle—against the Meanys, Reuthers, and their ilk.

As Marxists we are convinced that the working class, as a class, because of its material interests and its role in the process of production and distribution, is inexorably driven into struggle against its capitalist exploiters.

Unfortunately, the American working class has as yet not progressed beyond the stage of union consciousness. This is largely due to a hidebound, reactionary, bureaucratic leadership, which today functions as labor lieutenants of the employing class. That is why we advocate uncompromising and unrelenting struggle against this leadership to convert the unions into revolutionary instruments of struggle against capitalism instead of pliable tools of the political agents and parties of the capitalist rulers.

We do not hold with the view now current among large sections of the "New Left" that the American working class is hopelessly corrupt and incapable of

change. Such a view does not conform with either history or scientific truth.

Why, of all the sections of our society, is the working class selected as the one social layer incapable of change?

It was not so long ago that the present vocal generation of rebellious youth were stigmatized as the "silent generation." They changed!

It was not too long ago that the masses of black people were relatively quiescent, not satisfied or contented by a long shot, but certainly not in the present mood of nationalist awakening, militant mass ferment, and increasingly open revolt. This is a revolutionary change.

By what rule of experience or reason is the great mass of the working class to be excluded from this process? If anything, the recent French events offer eloquent testimony to the contrary.

Because we are convinced that the American working class as a whole can and will change, we utilize our election campaign to advocate that the workers break with the bankrupt policy of supporting Democrats or Republicans for public office and that they form their own independent labor party and run their own candidates on their own program.

For parallel reasons we utilize our election campaign to call upon the black masses to do likewise; that is, to organize their own black independent political party, under their own direction and control, and run their own candidates for public office.

A meaningful alliance can be forged between exploited labor and the oppressed black minority only if the black masses organize their own party, consolidate their own power, and then as power to power enter into an alliance with an independent working-class party to advance the interests of both.

Is this a realistic perspective? Not if one thinks in terms of this year and this election campaign. But the idea is father to the deed. At least in this election we can advance and promote the idea. For we are convinced that the formation of a mass black independent political party on a national scale, by blowing the Democrat-Labor-Negro coalition skyhigh and setting a powerful example, will compel the organized labor movement to move in the direction of political independence.

But what does the PFP have to say on these burning questions? While they remain silent on the idea of the formation of a labor party and give lip service to the struggle for black liberation, they insist that the road to salvation is only through Peace and Freedom.

We don't believe it!

Who benefits from Black Panther, P&F alliance?

By Tom Kerry

In my two previous articles on the Peace and Freedom Party (*The Militant*, Aug. 16 and Aug. 23), I deliberately refrained from dealing with the question of the alliance between PFP and the Black Panther Party. Not because I considered it unimportant. On the contrary, I consider it of such importance that I felt it deserved separate and extended consideration.

Let me say at the outset that I consider the BPP as the most significant manifestation of a growing movement to invest the "black power" slogan with a revolutionary content. The expressed aim of the BPP is to engage in struggle for power. The indispensable instrument for such a struggle is the political party.

Not an electoral machine that comes to life during election campaigns and lies dormant in between, but a party of revolutionary action that functions on a day-to-day basis the year around, utilizing the electoral arena as but one—albeit an important one—of manifold areas of activity. The BPP has grasped this distinction and has sought to promote the organization of an independent black political party on a national scale to advance its revolutionary aim.

The BPP owes much of its inspiration to the ideas propagated by the late Malcolm X. Malcolm grappled with the question of "alliances," to which he returned again and again in his numerous speeches. He was well aware of the difficulties posed by the problem of an oppressed black minority constituting roughly one-tenth of the total population. He recognized that at some stage in the development of the struggle for emancipation from racial oppression Afro-Americans would have to enter into alliances with other forces.

But he insisted over and over again, that the indispensable prerequisite of such alliances was unity among blacks; that is, the constitution of a mass organization of Afro-Americans, with its own revolutionary leadership, program and control. Such an organization could then proceed, power to power, to make alliances with other revolutionary forces to advance the social overturn of the existing system.

The question is then posed: What is the character of the current alliance between

the Black Panther Party and the Peace and Freedom Party, and does it serve to advance the idea or promote the movement for a mass black independent political party?

To begin with, it should be noted that neither the BPP nor the PFP can be considered mass organizations—far from it. The BPP, which considers itself a "vanguard" party, has just begun to expand beyond its original base in the San Francisco Bay Area. The PFP is a California fluke whose future at this time is very much in doubt.

Electoral bloc

At this stage the BPP-PFP alliance takes the form of an electoral bloc. A number of BPP candidates will be given ballot slots on the PFP ticket, and Eldridge Cleaver, BPP minister of information, has been named PFP presidential candidate. But it is an electoral bloc of a peculiar character. No attempt is made to justify the bloc on the basis that it could serve to elect any of its candidates.

On the contrary, in a recent letter to the PFP nominating conventions in California, Eldridge Cleaver warned against illusions on that score. "I think it would be a very serious mistake," he said, "for Peace and Freedom to get hung up in the illusion of winning power or accomplishing basic change this year or even in the next four years—especially through the electoral process."

Under the circumstances, the BPP-PFP bloc takes on the character of a propaganda alliance; that is, an understanding that the primary objective is to utilize the electoral arena for the purpose of promoting certain ideas, program and organization. There is nothing wrong, per se, with such an alliance, provided there is agreement on the basic ideas, issues and program. However, such is not the case in this instance.

On the central issue involved, the BPP and PFP stand at opposite poles. The BPP seeks to promote the idea that it is necessary for Afro-Americans to build their own independent political party. The PFP is opposed to the idea. True, the PFP has endorsed the BPP 10-point program. But the 10-point program does not specifically

call for the organization of a black independent political party. This omission makes it possible for the PFP to evade the issue by substituting the abstract slogan, "for black liberation," which can be interpreted in any number of ways.

The leaders of PFP have persistently sought to remove all ambiguity on this score. The Independent Socialist Clubs caucus, which with the backing of the Communist Party and its supporters carried its program at the recent PFP national convention in Ann Arbor, had previously laid down certain conditions under which it would support the Cleaver candidacy.

Among them was the following (with their emphasis to underscore the point): "We assume," they declared, "that Cleaver will run unequivocally as a candidate of *the Peace and Freedom Party*, and not as a candidate of some other political formation *who is merely endorsed or 'also supported' by Peace and Freedom*. Specifically:

"(a) While independent (non-Peace and Freedom) supporters of Cleaver are welcome to support his candidacy in their own way, and in fact such developments are to be encouraged, we assume that Cleaver himself will run as the Peace and Freedom candidate, not as the candidate put up by some other independent political formation;

"(b) While there is no question about the propriety of the Black Panther Party, if it wishes, also naming Cleaver as *its* candidate, we assume that in this case Cleaver will be running as the joint candidate of both Peace and Freedom and the Panthers, and not as a Black Panther candidate who is merely endorsed by Peace and Freedom."

CP position

Not to be outdone by the "third-camp" social democrats, the Communist Party entered its demurrer on this question. In a "position paper" circulated by the Southern California district of the Communist Party, we find the following admonition:

"The question of who will be the presidential candidate of Peace and Freedom in 1968 should be judged on the effectiveness of building Peace and Freedom in the white, black and brown communities. The candidates [sic] should be an educator able to effectively present the program of Peace and Freedom, and an organizer who can enroll people in its ranks.

"This cannot be done," they insist, "by a candidate who urges black, brown or white people to organize separately from one another. . ."

"We urge," they say, "that any candidate for President and Vice President agree on a program pledged to use the campaign to build Peace and Freedom as an organization."

There you have it.

Both these groups and their supporters

joined in voting for the reform program at the Peace and Freedom convention in Ann Arbor.

Both are opposed to the idea of promoting the organization of a black independent political party.

Both insist that Cleaver, as PFP candidate, use his position to promote Peace and Freedom as *the* organization for "black, brown and white."

And both have fought to keep PFP on a reformist path, with all the trappings of reformism, including the gambit of a

"balanced ticket," "minimum program," etc., etc.

Does this fit the criteria advanced by Malcolm X by which alliances could be justified? I don't think so. The price paid for ballot status in an electoral bloc which is essentially of a propaganda character is too high. For it does not advance, but serves to hinder, the clarification of the idea of the necessity for the formation of a mass black independent political party. Nor does it serve to promote the movement of those black nationalist tendencies

looking for a correct political solution.

Make no mistake about it. The slick promoters of PFP hope to convert the Black Panther Party into an appendage of Peace and Freedom. They started out by saying: Write your own ticket, we will support you. Then they began to hedge, to lay down conditions, concoct formulas, all designed to squeeze the revolutionary Black Panthers into the reformist mold of Peace and Freedom. If they succeed it will be a great tragedy. But I don't think they will.

The Panther- Peace & Freedom alliance

By Derrick Morrison

The alliance that the Black Panther Party has established with the Peace and Freedom Party poses a number of questions and problems for the black liberation movement. What is the nature of this alliance? Does it help or hinder the growth of the Black Panther Party as a vanguard formation?

Key to this question is how it relates to the building of a mass independent black party that can serve the people in the struggle for self-determination.

In the struggle for the liberation of the oppressed black nation, alliances and coalitions of varying types will be constructed along the way. Revolutionary black nationalist formations, such as SNCC, the Black Panther Party, and some black student organizations, seek to identify and align themselves with revolutionary movements and countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

When Stokely Carmichael, formerly of SNCC, and two other SNCC members participated in the OLAS (Organization of Latin American Solidarity) conference last summer in Cuba, a symbolic alliance was

created by OLAS with SNCC and other revolutionary elements in Afro-America. Cuba has since publicized and supported the activities of the Black Panther Party and the case of Huey P. Newton, minister of defense of the BPP. Just recently, the Black Panther Party has established close collaboration with the Brown Berets, a revolutionary Mexican-American group.

One of the central features of the alliances mentioned so far is that these coalitions involve revolutionary groups, or groups moving in a revolutionary direction. All of these alliances were formed to directly further and deepen the revolutionary struggle of Afro-America. They are political, or long-range alliances. The components of all of these alliances shared the common experience of being oppressed by and in opposition to the racist North American capitalist exploiters.

There are other types of alliances which develop around one or another particular issue. These specific or single-issue coalitions are formed on a short-term basis. These alliances may involve unity in staging a specific demonstration, such as a protest against the Vietnam war; or they

may involve a committee to defend the victim of a frame-up or the rights of political groups that are attacked.

The Student Mobilization Committee is an example of a single-issue coalition. In this organization, people of varying political persuasions, from pacifism to revolutionary socialism, are united in an effort to end the war in Vietnam by bringing the troops home now. NBAWADU, the National Black Anti-War Anti-Draft Union, was a coalition of black organizations and people who wanted to organize the black community against the war and the draft. It was built mainly through the student strike of last April 26.

Last December, antiwar alliances were built to stage a week of demonstrations against the draft. In February of this year, a coalition was built to support Professor Harry Edwards' call to boycott a track meet held by the lily-white New York Athletic Club.

Two years ago, the Fort Hood Three Defense Committee arose to defend the rights of three GIs who refused to go to Vietnam. Because one of the GIs was an Afro-American, and another a Puerto

Rican, nationalists and black-power advocates participated in the defense.

After the brutal attack on LeRoi Jones by Newark police during the rebellion last year, an Ad Hoc Committee of Afro-American Artists and Writers was formed. This committee's function was to raise funds for the legal defense of Jones and rally public support for him.

Specific purpose

All of the above united-front alliances and 'titions were established to fulfill a specific purpose or carry out a specific action. These alliances did not involve any attempt to gloss over the political and ideological differences of the participants.

Many times, white radicals and black militants confuse this single-issue or united-front type of alliance with a political or long-range type of alliance.

A case in point is the defense of Huey P. Newton. From a specific alliance to defend Newton, the Panther Party's working relationship with Peace and Freedom evolved into a political alliance that is supposed to aid in the liberation of the black nation.

A specific alliance with the Peace and Freedom Party to defend Newton is justifiable. In fact, each and every organization that is willing to defend Newton's constitutional rights, even if they do not agree with Newton's political views, should be incorporated in a legal-defense organization. Such a defense organization should include black liberals as well as white liberals. In this way, the task of raising funds and getting publicity would be made much easier.

In my opinion, the transformation of this specific alliance into a political or electoral alliance was a mistake. This was done, according to the Panther Party leadership, because the Peace and Freedom Party is a "revolutionary" organization.

Even if Peace and Freedom were revolutionary, it would still be a tactical question when and what type of working relationship should be established.

But evidence to justify such a characterization is almost nonexistent when you get down to the facts. The Peace and Freedom Party is a zoological collection of liberals and so-called white radicals. The party was able to meet ballot-status requirements in California by tapping anti-Johnson, anti-war sentiment without really winning people to any meaningful program.

As revealed by Peace and Freedom's national convention in Ann Arbor last month, Eldridge Cleaver's presidential campaign has been the major factor keeping the party from disintegrating. While the majority could agree on the nomination of Cleaver as their presidential candidate, none of the contesting factions could even agree on a vice-presidential candidate.

The Radical Caucus, one faction of the Peace and Freedom Party, is fighting for a program that comes down to verbal anticapitalism and support for the Cuban and Vietnamese Revolutions. The Independent Socialist Clubs, another faction, wants a milder program, such as fighting for reforms and limiting itself to such demands as bringing the GIs home now. The ISC, in an anticommunist stance, does not support either the Vietnamese or Cuban Revolutions.

After the California Peace and Freedom Party convention last March, Cleaver, disgusted, worked with the party through the Radical Caucus. After the national convention, Cleaver denounced both factions and moved toward the Youth International Party, the Yippies, which is not a part of the Peace and Freedom Party.

When it comes down to it, the Peace and Freedom Party is the worst electoral ex-

pression of white middle-class liberalism and faint-hearted radicalism.

North American capitalist society is divided into two nations, white America and black America, and into two main classes, the capitalist class and the working class.

It is obvious that the masses of Afro-America have radicalized in a manner that puts them far ahead of the white laboring masses. There is now the potential in the black community for building a powerful, mass black political party. Among white workers the situation is different. The masses of white workers have not radicalized to the point where the building of a mass labor party is possible. In no way can it be said that Peace and Freedom represents the beginnings of either a mass party of working people, or a vanguard socialist party which is organizing today to put together a party which can play a leading role in the future mass radicalization of the workers.

To categorize the Peace and Freedom Party, we have to place it programmatically between the parties of the capitalist exploiters and the vanguard parties of Afro-America and labor.

To dilly-dally in a political alliance with Peace and Freedom is to be diverted from the revolutionary highway into the swamp of middle-class politics. The building of a mass black political party cannot be achieved in a political coalition with Peace and Freedom. The Panthers have become a nationally known party because of their actions, not because of any association with Peace and Freedom. If the Panthers are to continue to grow, they need to cut the electoral strings tying them to this party.

While Panther Party leaders got involved at the Peace and Freedom convention in Ann Arbor, they did not intervene seriously at the Philadelphia Black Power Conference. Over 4,000 black people gathered together at this conference. Predominantly youthful, the thrust and sentiment was for the creation of an independent black political party. Participation by the national Panther leadership in the workshops and in the discussions would have made much headway in organizing this sentiment.

Instead of attending Peace and Freedom conventions, the BPP should be setting up Panther Party conventions. It would be better to run the political campaigns of Eldridge Cleaver, Bobby Seale, Kathleen Cleaver, and Huey Newton on a write-in basis rather than through Peace and Freedom. Electoral activity is only one of many activities along the path toward a revolutionary party.

It is hoped that this article has made some contribution to the understanding of alliances in building a black party.

TROTSKY & INDEPENDENT POLITICAL ACTION

"In asserting the dictatorship of the dollar over the whole world, the ruling class of the United States will introduce the contradictions of the whole world into the very basis of its own dominance. The economy and the politics of the United States will depend more and more directly upon crises, wars, and revolutions in all parts of the world." Leon Trotsky, *The New York Times*, March 3, 1932.

LEON TROTSKY ON THE TRADE
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P & F since the elections

By Mary-Alice Waters

When the Peace and Freedom Party succeeded in obtaining ballot status in California in January 1968, it was at the zenith of its political influence. Antiwar activists from around the state pitched in to help register voters in time for the deadline; radicals and progressives from different milieus became active, many for the first time in years; many believed that a new political movement was being born.

The California success gave a boost in morale and energy to other Peace and Freedom-type groups around the country and inspired them to seek ballot status also. Even the "more realistic" estimates suggested that P & F would be on the ballot in 25 or 30 states in time for the November elections.

Supporters of the Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialist Alliance had a somewhat different estimate. We said that the impressive victory of gaining ballot status in California was a very encouraging sign of the deepening radicalization taking place, particularly around the issue of the war in Vietnam. It indicated the disgust and contempt with which many liberals and radical young people viewed the Johnson administration and their groping for an answer. However, for several reasons we did not think that Peace and Freedom could provide that answer.

The main reason for this estimate was that the P & F organizers were attempting to hold together a political party made up of very disparate forces on the basis of minimum program—withdrawal of

troops from Vietnam and support for the black liberation struggle. While it is possible to draw together large forces in united-front actions around such specific areas of agreement, to build a political party requires fundamental agreement on a whole series of questions. Without such agreement, the Peace and Freedom Party would tend to fly apart, its various components would rapidly become contending factions, many supporters would become disillusioned and drift away. We estimated that the Peace and Freedom Party, as an all-inclusive radical formation would, in all likelihood, not survive the 1968 elections.

Previous developments

Even prior to the elections, this general analysis was confirmed in the development of P & F around the country—the fiasco of their national convention in August, their ability (even in combination with the Freedom and Peace Party) to obtain ballot status in only 11 states, their decision not even to try to agree on a vice-presidential candidate. These and other questions have been discussed in previous issues of *The Militant*. However, developments since the elections have, if anything, shown even more clearly the weakness of P & F.

Some of the most revealing comments on the present state of P & F are those that have been made by Peace and Freedom Party members and leaders themselves. Only one issue of the Berkeley-based *Peace and Freedom News* has been published since the elections, but it featured

a lead editorial trying to explain what happened to P & F. Referring to the California campaign, the editorial says that no one should be surprised that the vote for P & F candidates was so low.

"What does require some explanation, however," the editorial states, "is the fact that among politically active people . . . the November P & F campaigns elicited relatively little interest and enthusiasm. In fact, considerably more people worked on the primary campaigns, which were seen merely as a means of getting our candidates on the November ballot."

Several possible reasons for this are discussed, including disagreements inside the party over Eldridge Cleaver's candidacy. A portion of the P & F coalition felt that a more "moderate" candidate than Cleaver should have been chosen as the Presidential standard bearer, and an even larger portion of the coalition was very unhappy about Cleaver's desire to have Yippie spokesman Jerry Rubin as his running mate. In fact, Cleaver's proposal of Rubin was rejected both at the national convention and at the California statewide convention.

SDS's fault?

However, the editorial dismisses these problems as secondary and reaches the conclusion that the main reason P & F failed to interest and excite large numbers of radicals was the antielectoral bias prevalent on the left in 1968.

Why such organizations as national SDS

were reluctant to become involved in the P & F campaign is not discussed, and it is not clear whether the editors of *Peace and Freedom News* approve or disapprove of the SDS position. They simply end on the assertion that there is a place for P & F: "to provide a vehicle in which radically oriented adults can relate to the militant white movement, and which can develop programs that will benefit and gain the support of white working people."

There are few clues in the paper as to the meaning of that definition of P & F, but it became clearer at the Feb. 1 conference of the Alameda County Peace and Freedom Party. The conference was attended by approximately 70 or 80 people, and while there was no discussion of program or analysis of the past election campaign, several new projects were planned.

The conference decided that as **individuals** they should support the oil workers' strike and the Delano grape workers' strike, but they did not pass a resolution putting P & F on record in support of these struggles (a strange thing for an organization that aims to "benefit and gain the support of white working people"). They decided to launch a campaign to abolish the state income tax; to investigate a stronger alliance with the Black Panthers (there were no Afro-Americans at the Feb. 1 conference); and, in order to curb police brutality, to set up a committee to teach individuals the correct procedures for citizens' arrest so that they can act when they witness cops mistreating people!

They also decided to run a candidate in the Berkeley city elections this spring, but no campaign committee was set up and no concrete plans were discussed. All these projects were put forward within the context of considerable demoralization over the weakness of P & F and the need to "reestablish" an organization.

McReynolds' view

Similar cries of discouragement have emanated from various other P & F sources around the country. One of the most illuminating came from Dave McReynolds, Peace and Freedom candidate in the 19th congressional district in New York City. In the Dec. 19 issue of the *Village Voice*, he pointed out, with a little bitterness, that he had gotten virtually no support from the War Resisters League (for which he works), SANE, Resistance, Women Strike for Peace, the Socialist Party (of which he is a long-standing member), "the Soviet-oriented Old Left," or the hippies. He then continued:

"The greatest frustration came from the Peace and Freedom Party which, having nominated me, then seemed terribly unsure whether it really wanted to run a campaign at all. Once the nominating petitions had been filed, PFP seemed to collapse of exhaustion and was never heard from again. I exaggerate, but not much."

McReynolds remarked that he enjoyed working with the 20 or 30 people who did support his campaign, yet, in his opinion,

"politically, the election in the 19th C. D. was a disaster and a defeat for everyone who ran and for all voters."

Factional disputes

The New York state party was probably the strongest outside of California, but throughout its entire campaign it was plagued with factional disputes. The first one resulted as a split and the formation of the rival, Communist Party-influenced Freedom and Peace Party which supported Dick Gregory for President.

Following the elections, the two groups initiated merger negotiations which were subsequently dropped when no agreement could be reached guaranteeing that some leadership positions in a new merged organization would be reserved for former members of the Freedom and Peace Party. Both groups reportedly claimed that there were no political differences between them.

The second major factional dispute within the New York P & F was between two tendencies, one led by the Independent Socialist Club and the other by the Progressive Labor Party. However, at the statewide convention of the New York P & F, held Thanksgiving weekend in New York and attended by some 125 people, the Progressive Labor Party sent only a few observers who played no active role in the conference.

Members of the P & F in New York have announced they plan to do research on housing problems, rent and tax structures, and plan to hold a series of public meetings in the future.

The type of demoralization expressed by the McReynolds letter to the *Village Voice* has been prevalent elsewhere. In Pennsylvania (where the group was largely dominated by the CP and nominated Gregory instead of Cleaver), the one full-time staff person of P & F told a *Militant* reporter that he thought P & F was dead; that there had been no activity since the elections, and there was no sign of any. He thought most of those who had been around P & F probably voted for Humphrey and were now working with the Coalition of Independent and Democratic Voters.

It's all a little bit of a comedown for a "mass" party that was going to ignite the left and build a permanent, all-encompassing radical political movement.

To see how far down it's come, perhaps the best place to go is Venice, Calif., where the Peace and Freedom Party has launched a "community project," the purpose of which is "to organize a white community into the movement and develop a model for Peace and Freedom's ability to 'reach,' i.e., convince people."

What is P & F trying to convince people of? "To polarize Venice residents by a drive to free Venice from the city of Los Angeles," and establish a provisional government by 1970. That the P & F organizers could be so attuned to the realities and needs of the world revolutionary process today, leaves one awe-struck.

To accomplish this goal, a Venice Survival Committee has been formed and a

Free Venice Organizing Committee. A newspaper, *The Beachhead*, which defines itself as "a poem" is being put out to tell people about the history of Venice, Calif. Other plans include an art festival, a move to abolish auto traffic in Venice, and a walkie-talkie citizens' alert system.

Statewide gathering

A good over-all picture of the P & F in California was provided by their state council meeting held in Los Angeles the weekend of Dec. 21. Only 56 people registered for the statewide meeting—from an organization that at one time was supposed to have 26 chapters in Los Angeles alone. They decided that neither a viable state organization nor the projected spring convention were needed, and a powerless state caretaker committee was set up to look into the possibilities of calling an active members' conference for sometime next summer. The purpose of the conference would be to exchange information and ideas.

What becomes clear from all of these experiments and meetings is that P & F has learned little or nothing from its harsh experience. A year of "organizing" on the basis of a reformist minimum program has produced, in their own words, "little interest and enthusiasm." Yet the solution P & F organizers offer is more of the same, but on an even lower level of political consciousness—tax reforms, housing laws, and city planning. Concern with the central political issues of our day, nationally and internationally, such as the war in Vietnam and the black liberation struggle here in the U.S., has slipped even further into the background.

The organizers of the Peace and Freedom Party thought they would be able to find a shortcut around the difficult task of constructing a revolutionary party. Like those who have attempted the same experiment before them, they are reaffirming that an all-inclusive radical party is a shortcut not to revolution, but to reform.

IV

UNITED SOCIALIST TICKET IN 1958

REGROUPMENT AND UNITED SOCIALIST POLITICAL ACTION

(Majority Report to the November, 1958 Plenum of
the National Committee of the SWP)

by Murry Weiss

INTRODUCTION

[Following the Hungarian revolution in 1956 and Kruschew's revelations about the crimes of Stalin at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, there was a considerable shake-up in the radical movement including mass desertions from the Communist Party.

[In 1957 the Socialist Workers Party called for the regroupment of all socialists who could agree on a common program including joint socialist electoral activity. In 1958 such a campaign was run in the New York State elections. Candidates included Corliss Lamont, John McManus, Annette Rubinstein, Clifford McEvoy, James Aronson, and Henry Abrams; no members of the SWP were candidates.

[The campaign was an open socialist propaganda campaign and represented a broad number of forces in the radical movement including the National Guardian (now called the Guardian), although the Communist and Socialist parties bitterly opposed it.

[The document "Regroupment and United Socialist Political Action" is a majority report presented to the SWP National Committee Plenum in November, 1958 by Murry Weiss. This report analyzed why the SWP supported the united socialist ticket, how the tactic was carried out, and what gains were made. It also answered criticisms of the tactic by members of the SWP including the small cult led by Sam Marcy. Marcy's group walked out of the SWP in February, 1959.

[The draft political resolution submitted by the Political Committee in March, 1959, reaffirmed the general approach of Weiss's report.

[But in July, 1959 the SWP convention adopted the general line of a report presented by Farrell Dobbs indicating that changed circumstances made it unrealistic to continue the campaign for an organizational regroupment.

[Due to the new possibilities opened up for recruiting youth, particularly by the Cuban revolution, and the considerable demoralization of many of the old radicals involved in the regroupment process, the SWP turned away from the regroupment policy in 1959 and began to link up with younger, fresher forces.]

Doug Jenness
February, 1971

* * *

Comrades, the report of the Political Committee on Regroupment and United Socialist Political Action deals with the main field of application and operation of the electoral policy adopted by the last plenum in January 1958. More specifically, my task is to report on how our electoral policy worked out in New York State, where we conducted an experimental pilot operation. Supplementary reports on our electoral work will be made by comrades around the country.

The Political Committee proposes that the plenum, in the light of the year's experience, reaffirm its policy on revolutionary socialist regroupment and approve the main line of our united socialist electoral policy. We do not propose, at this time, to motivate anew and in rounded form our line on regroupment but rather to concentrate our attention on our electoral policy which has been the main arena of the regroupment process during the last year.

I want to stress that we are asking for approval of the main line of our electoral policy as it was conducted: not every tactical step, not every nuance, not every maneuver -- but the main line. The tactic we followed in relation to the New York State United Independent-Socialist ticket was difficult and complex. In order to forge this election bloc we were compelled to make some very important organizational and political concessions. This is naturally subject to critical review. We don't come to the plenum for a vote of blanket approval. It would be entirely contrary to our tradition and to the nature of such an experimental action to make such an appeal to the plenum. We do ask, however, that the plenum approve the main line of the electoral tactic as an integral part of our regroupment policy and thereby provide guidance to the party for the period ahead.

As you know, the regroupment process opened as a result of the world crisis of Stalinism which in turn was impelled by the revolutionary action of the Soviet orbit working class beginning with the June 1953 East German uprising and culminating in the Hungarian revolution. The crisis of Stalinism destroyed the equilibrium of the Communist parties of the world and of the United States. And the inner crises of the Communist parties reverberated throughout the entire radical workers movement. The old frozen relationship of forces among the three main tendencies in the radical working class -- Stalinism, Social Democracy and revolutionary socialism -- was unlocked and

opened to profound changes. That created a new situation for us, an opportunity for revolutionary socialism to break out of the enforced double isolation it has so long suffered -- isolation from the mass movement and isolation from the main body of radical workers in the United States.

At the same time we know that the regroupment process did not arise from, and wasn't accompanied by, a new forward thrust by the American workers. This fact has important bearing on the character and scope of the regroupment process and places certain limits on it. The process is taking place within the same basically unfavorable objective conditions which we have confronted for over a decade. Under the influence of these objective conditions the crisis of the CP in the U.S. unloosed forces that moved in a rightward direction displaying tendencies to shift from subservience to the Kremlin to subservience to U.S. "democratic" imperialism. It also unloosed forces that are susceptible to our influence, provided we show the ability to intervene vigorously and skillfully. The two fundamentally contrary directions of these forces are not easily compartmentalized. In the same individuals and groupings there are inner crisscross currents which have to be assessed objectively on the basis of experience rather than on a priori conclusions.

One thing is sure, however, that the idea that everybody is moving to the right and that therefore there is no basis for a tactic of revolutionary regroupment was emphatically refuted by the experience of 1957 and 1958. On the other hand, the Marxist dialectic conception that in every situation, however unfavorable and difficult, we must seek ground for revolutionary action, has been amply confirmed in the course of our experience this year from January to November -- not to speak of what came before.

The new situation created by the prolonged and agonized crisis of the American Communist Party posed the following questions: how could discredited Stalinism be defeated in ideological and political struggle from the left? How could we help create a more favorable relation of forces for the revolutionary socialist wing of the radical movement in relation to Social Democracy and Stalinism?

These were the questions that animated our approach to tactics since the 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party.

In the presidential campaign of 1956 we observed that the long record of the SWP in electoral activity had given us considerable authority among an important section of the former periphery of

the Communist Party and even in the ranks of the CP itself. Our policy of socialist class struggle opposition to the capitalist system and its two parties had attractive power to those elements in the CP orbit who tended, however hesitantly and inconsistently, towards a revolutionary criticism of the CP and Stalinism. We were particularly heartened by the support our presidential ticket received from two of the most prominent political figures associated in the past with the Communist Party, Vincent Hallinan and Clifford McAvoy, who despite their stated differences with us called for a vote for Dobbs and Weiss as an elementary duty for all socialists. We felt this had profound symptomatic significance.

In the 1957 city elections we gained new valuable experience confirming our observation on the presidential election and laying the tactical groundwork for 1958. In Michigan, on the initiative, as I recall, of the Michigan comrades in consultation with the Secretariat of the Political Committee, we proposed essentially the same socialist coalition ticket policy for the Detroit city elections that we subsequently adopted as our 1958 electoral proposal. The Michigan comrades went through the entire process, calling on all socialist organizations to gather together and consider united socialist election possibilities. They followed up this proposal with a propaganda campaign. They tied up the proposal for united socialist electoral action with a proposal to the labor movement to enter the city elections with an independent ticket. Finally, when the Michigan SWP had fully explored the possibility of united socialist action and couldn't get any significant response, it entered its own ticket.

In the 1957 San Francisco Board of Supervisors election a similar process took place. While a coalition ticket did not shape up, the consistent campaign we conducted for such a ticket gained us wide support. When the SWP entered its own ticket it did so under conditions that were most favorable. All the important independents and a large number of people in the immediate CP orbit supported the Barbara-Jordan slate. And, as in Detroit, the policy proposed had national impact within the regroupment movement.

The most significant result of the 1957 city election campaigns was obtained in New York City. The SWP ticket, headed by Joyce Cowley, gained the support of a large section of the Communist Party ranks and of the former periphery of the CP. This was revealed by the vote itself and particularly by the almost identical vote Cowley and the CP candidate for Council, Elizabeth Gurely Flynn, got on the Lower East Side. Moreover, the fact that a large section of the CP membership

voted for the SWP ticket was common knowledge, widely discussed in all areas of the radical movement.

Later in 1957 we had a rich experience in the Seattle city elections which underscored all the features of earlier campaigns and again had national impact within the radical movement.

In 1956 McAvoy and Hallinan were practically alone in their support of the SWP candidates. In 1957 they were joined by numerous prominent local and national figures, all of them from the former periphery of the CP. And most significantly, the National Guardian editors who in 1955 had called for a conference to consider an independent policy for the 1956 elections but then dropped the proposal when the CP sharply rebuked them, and then had called for abstention in 1956 in order to avoid supporting the SWP ticket, came out in 1957 for all the SWP tickets in the city elections and took friendly note of our united socialist electoral proposals.

Against this background the last plenum formulated our electoral proposal for 1958. Our proposal was essentially very simple: socialists should get together to oppose the capitalist system and its two parties in the state elections. What socialists? Those socialists that took the name socialism seriously enough to oppose capitalist parties and politicians. On what program? On a program that could be agreed upon among those willing to join together as socialists against the capitalist parties. And we had a suggested outline of what such a minimum program should be. This approach left it to the struggle to decide what forces within the radical movement would be ready to move in this common direction of socialist class struggle politics.

What our proposal said in effect was, "Let us go a step further than discussion and support of the SWP tickets; let us try acting together as socialists on the central question concerning the American labor movement -- the question of independent class politics." It was simply an application of our regroupment policy which regarded discussion and common action as two interrelated processes aimed at building a revolutionary socialist party in the United States on an expanded and stronger basis.

Just as the January 1958 plenum convened, we entered into negotiations with the Guardian editors and came to an agreement with them that our proposal, subject to the approval of the plenum, would be presented in the Guardian in the form of an ad.

On decision of the plenum, we published this ad in the February 3 Guardian and you know the reaction it provoked.

All the questions that were later debated on a wide scale, in the June conference and in the electoral struggle itself, were first debated in the form of a flood of letters to the Guardian. The entire radical movement began to discuss the proposal pro and con.

On January 17, before our ad appeared, the former ALP leaders, Morris Goldin and Henry Abrams, took the initiative and called a meeting for January 31 to discuss the possibility of united socialist action in the New York State elections.

Leading representatives of all tendencies in the radical movement, with the exception of the SP-SDF and the Shactmanites, were invited. The SLP of course declined to attend with the usual explanations and denunciations of "reformism." Cochran said he was too busy. Starobin thought that nothing could come of this kind of gathering of sects and sectarians. Muste wrote that he was preoccupied with educational work. Huberman sneered at the whole project.

Present at the January 31 meeting were Goldin and Abrams, John T. McManus of the Guardian, Simon W. Gerson of the CP, Babette Jones, at that time on the Bronx County Committee of the CP, Corliss Lamont, Michael Zaslow of the Socialist Unity Committee, Farrell and myself for the SWP. At later meetings the negotiations were joined by a number of other people who participated for varying periods. Annette Rubinstein, George Clarke, Russ Nixon, Richard De Haan, Otto Nathan, William Price, George Stryker, Otto Skottadal, Irving Beinen, Muriel McAvoy, Elinor Ferry, Steve Grattan, Benjamin Davis, Arnold Johnson, etc....

The two basic issues of controversy were immediately evident at the first meeting: a single candidacy versus a full ticket; and, an avowedly socialist campaign versus a so-called independent campaign.

In preliminary discussions, before the formal call for this meeting came out, Farrell had talked to Morris Goldin and at that time Goldin showed a distinct tendency to favor a single candidate for the office of U.S. Senator on a non-socialist basis. Abrams had the same view. But by the time the meeting was gathered, they had shifted their positions and favored an avowedly socialist campaign. They said they frankly recognized that all the forces available for independent action against the capitalist parties were socialist and they saw no point in concealing this fact.

But while they were ready to concede a socialist campaign, they were adamant and ultimatic on the question of a single candidacy. McManus, on the other

hand, was wholeheartedly for a full ticket but had doubts on whether it should be a socialist or independent campaign.

Obviously what was involved in the debate on a single candidacy versus a full ticket was the question: would this be a genuine anti-capitalist political campaign on the part of united socialists, or would this be another version of the Stalinist coalition policy with independent trimmings? We had just witnessed the latter kind of campaign in 1957 when the CP ran Elizabeth Gurely Flynn for council on the Lower East Side of New York City. Flynn's campaign was really a stalking-horse maneuver for Wagner. At the same time it appeased some of the left sentiments of the CP ranks.

Here we must make an important distinction: while the proposal of the former ALP leaders for a single candidacy was on the surface identical with the Communist Party formula, there is an important difference: Goldin and Abrams wanted a bloc which would include the CP and the SWP. This was completely illusory and impossible, but they didn't know this at that time. The CP couldn't enter a bloc that would contradict its peoples' anti-monopoly coalition policy -- which a single candidacy for U.S. Senate would.

The former ALP leaders wanted to shake up the CP policy. They were bitterly dissatisfied -- some of them for a long time -- with the CP policy which had demoralized and scattered its cadres into the Democratic Party, scuttled the ALP, and so on. They wanted an independent form of political action for socialists. And they wanted to pull the CP onto a new course. Their political motivation was empirical; it didn't at that time and it doesn't now rise to the point of a principled generalization: for class struggle socialist politics against class collaboration. It is an empirical revolt against the policy of Stalinism in the political arena. From their angle of vision it would have signified a big left turn for the CP to support a candidate for U.S. Senate who ran against the Democrats.

The Guardian people, on the other hand, weren't ready to concede anything to the CP on the question of a single candidacy. They started right out from the beginning favoring a full ticket that would leave no loophole for supporting Harriman. They argued persuasively in the negotiations, although on a primarily "practical" basis: "Why do you want a single candidate when for the same petition effort you can get five candidates, with that much more radio and TV time, and with the possible dividend that with the gubernatorial candidate getting 50,000 votes a legal third party would be qualified in New York?" Zaslow, who

from the beginning to the end of the negotiations worked in close collaboration with us, deepened the question: "Why do you insist on this single candidacy, when it appears that all considerations favor a full ticket?" he asked the former ALP leaders. Finally Goldin and Abrams explained: they insisted on a single candidacy because they were trying to get the CP into a united socialist ticket. They knew the CP wouldn't join if it meant direct opposition to Harriman. They hoped they could persuade the CP that a united socialist ticket didn't necessarily contradict its basic political policy; and they hoped they could persuade the SWP that a single candidate didn't necessarily mean support of Harriman.

It became clear very soon that the SWP would under no circumstance fail to oppose the capitalist parties on the gubernatorial level. However, this still left another variant for the seekers of a unity which would embrace both CP and SWP. If the SWP would support the candidate for U.S. Senate, while running its own candidates for the other state offices, and the CP would support the candidate for U.S. Senate, while pursuing its coalition policy on the gubernatorial contest, then they could still realize their objective. The SWP said to this: we would support the independent candidate for Senate only if this candidate were willing to bloc with our slate for the other offices on the simple proposition of mutual critical support against all the capitalist candidates. Otherwise, if it were a stalking-horse candidate for Harriman we would run our own candidate against him.

But what was the attitude of the CP? Goldin, and particularly Abrams, wanted the CP to participate in the negotiations and support their proposition of a single candidacy. Here, however, the acute internal crisis of the SP at that very time prevented it from making any kind of intervention in the situation.

Simon Gerson came to the first meeting, making it clear that he was representing no one, not even his family. He sided, of course, with the single candidate and non-socialist platform but obviously couldn't speak officially for the CP. Benjamin Davis, who could speak for the ruling group of the CP, promised to come to meeting after meeting but at the last moment would beg off on some lame excuse or other. An official delegation of the committee was appointed to ascertain the policy of the CP and couldn't get any clear answer. Finally, it became clear that everyone would have to make up their own minds, without the CP.

Later when the bloc came to initial agreement and the conference was called, the CP frantically tried to turn back

the clock and form a bloc with Goldin and Abrams on the single candidacy issue. But they were too late. The movement for a united socialist ticket was rolling towards the June Conference and it was painfully clear that the CP leaders were only concerned with breaking up the coalition. They never even succeeded in convincing anyone that they were really for a single candidacy except as a gimmick to smash the bloc. And moreover, it was clear that even if the CP leadership was for such a campaign it couldn't muster the party rank and file to go out and get such a candidate on the ballot -- certainly not while an SWP-independent coalition was organizing a united socialist ticket.

Thus the crisis of the CP prevented the Stalinists from effectively obstructing the formation of a coalition for the elections.

Now, what other factors enabled the bloc to overcome the original differences on policy and arrive at the position of favoring a full ticket against the capitalist parties on a program of socialism against capitalism? Contrary to the comrades of the minority, who seem to take this accomplishment for granted, we think it was the main issue and the main objective of the entire struggle. This becomes clear if we compare the New York campaign with the united socialist electoral effort in California last spring.

In cooperation with Hallinan and others we tried to launch a united socialist campaign around the candidacy of Holland Roberts for State Superintendent of Public Instruction. The CP in California threw all its power into the situation, exploited every advantage it had and prevented the Roberts candidacy from expressing a genuine socialist opposition to capitalist parties. It exploited the fact that it was a "non-partisan" election and not a decisive political contest of the major parties where a lineup of socialist versus capitalist parties could be tested by the very election setup. Utilizing this and other fortuitous circumstances the CP prevented the campaign from becoming an identifiable socialist opposition to the capitalist parties. And above all they knifed in to cut down our participation. It was a very bitter struggle.

In New York we faced the same kind of opposition from the CP, although the internal crisis obviously caused a greater paralysis in the CP center and this gave us more time to shape up a powerful coalition. Also the technical format of the elections in New York favored a real showdown on basic electoral policy and tended to prevent any blurring of lines. Keeping these differences in mind we can still get a picture of what was achieved in New York when we bear the California

experience in mind.

The greatest leverage we had in the negotiations was the fact, known to everyone, that the Socialist Workers Party was ready to go through with a ticket regardless of what anyone else did. We said, "There's going to be opposition to the Democrats and the Republicans on a socialist, anti-capitalist basis in this election. We would like to see a united socialist ticket, but in any case a socialist campaign will be waged." Everyone knew we meant business and weren't just bluffing.

Another important advantage, which was perhaps decisive, was the mood of the Communist Party membership and the broad rank and file of the periphery. Our 1957 election vote was interpreted by everyone as a kind of protest vote of the rank and file against the CP's election policy. The feeling of the Communist Party membership and periphery in 1957 was vividly described by a worker from Brooklyn at the June conference: he had voted for Wagner in a previous election and then went home and tried to wash it off his hands. He was sick of that. The ranks of the CP made it plain that if there were socialists running against the Wagners and Harrimans, even if they were SWP Trotskyists, they would vote for them -- no matter what the party leadership said.

So we weren't just in a room with top people. Powerful pressures were operating from the ranks and periphery of the Communist Party. This resulted in the shaping of a bloc within the coalition that more consistently and consciously worked for a genuine socialist campaign. Within the committee we worked closely with a whole number of elements, McManus, Annette Rubinstein, Muriel McAvoy, Elinor Ferry, William Price, George Stryker and Otto Skottadal.

We developed close cooperation with Mike Zaslow. One of the worst manifestations of sectarian smugness I have ever witnessed was to hear sneers and jibes from the minority comrades when this was reported. Just as if it were our task to prevent political enemies from becoming allies, however limited; as if it were the art of politics to repel every possible alliance for your program and then adopt a superior, lofty attitude, making dire predictions on how everything will come to naught. Actually, Zaslow played an excellent role throughout the negotiations. At times he took the burden of the sharpest controversy on the question of Soviet democracy and the place of the SWP on the ticket. He openly fought anti-Trotskyist prejudice and incurred the hostility of elements in the bloc that were most subject to CP pressure.

We worked out a number of temporary and partial alliances within the bloc. For example, in the initial disagreement with McManus, on whether it should be a socialist campaign, we found ourselves in a closer relation with some of the former ALP leaders; and conversely, in the disagreement with the ALP leaders on a full ticket we were in close alliance with McManus. All these groupings and regroupings within the bloc served to pave the way for the common line brought to the June conference.

Now, as I have said, there was and remains serious limitations in the viewpoint of our allies in the bloc. Their break with Stalinist politics is empirical. It doesn't begin with principle as ours does. Actually, this is the characteristic way that all breaks with the false ideologies of the labor bureaucracy, the social democracy and Stalinism begin. And when you're dealing with leading strata, there's no guarantee whatever that it will be more than a beginning, that empiricism will give way to Marxist theoretical generalization. But deeper forces are involved than a few leaders and we seized on the empirical break with Stalinism on this key issue to propose a common action and propel the entire movement forward. I think this was correct.

Many of our allies in this bloc don't agree that it is an elementary principle of socialism never to make coalitions with capitalist parties. Our principled position on this question rests on the Marxist analysis of the class structure of capitalist society and on the whole generalized experience of the international working class, on the experience of the Russian Revolution, the negative experiences of France, Spain and Germany and on the entire experience of the American labor and socialist movement. They don't look at it that way. They would say, "Here in New York we saw the possibility of acting independently as socialists together with you. If we lived in Michigan, we would probably support Stellato and we wouldn't bloc with you. In California we would be for the defeat of Knowland. In 1960 we don't know what the situation will be."

Permit me an analogy to an experience we had in California in 1947. I vividly recalled this yesterday when I talked with Jean Simon. At that time AFL, CIO and independent trade unionists started a movement for independent political action in the industrial towns on the Southside of Los Angeles County. They were determined to run labor candidates for the elections in these towns on an independent basis. Our unionists and our party organization formed a bloc with them. These unionists did not question the basic class collaboration political policy of their unions. They continued

by and large to support the policy of working within the framework of the Democratic Party as a matter of general policy. But in the case of the city election where they could manifest the deepest urge of the militants for independence in the political arena, they wanted to break, empirically, with this policy. We worked in a bloc with them and the bloc encountered many principled dangers which I believe we met successfully. It was a worthwhile experience. Our contact with the militant unionists was deepened and we were able to win some of them to a more generalized, principled understanding of class politics. I know the difference between such an experience and the experience of a socialist election coalition. What I'm referring to, however, is the method of engaging in coalitions and blocs with people who do not start with principle, who have yet to learn principle and who represent forces in motion which if properly engaged can broaden the influence of the revolutionary socialist movement.

After the first period of the negotiations in New York there was, as I have already reported, a period of lull, during which we allowed the former ALP leaders to go through the experiment of trying to win the Communist Party to the bloc. They had a number of meetings with the Communist Party and the CP leaders would come up with some stop-gap proposal. One week it was the flash news that Ralph Bunche would run for U.S. Senate. "That's it! Let's all get behind Bunche." The next week it was Powell. "That's it! Let everybody go into Harlem and support Powell. Everything should be subordinated to that. What are we talking about sectarian off-beat things like a united socialist ticket?"

Within the bloc the reaction to these reports was characteristic: McManus would say quite correctly, but empirically, that the Bunche candidacy was a Liberal Party pipedream that the CP was using as a dodge to keep from getting down to cases on our proposal. We would agree, but point out that even if Bunche would run we would oppose him or any other capitalist party candidate.

This went on until at one of the meetings Russ Nixon and some others rose up in arms and said, "We want an end of this business of giving the CP veto power over what we'll decide to do. They can come in or not but we will decide." That sentiment swept the meeting. It was unanimously decided to call a conference and propose a full ticket on a socialist basis. Abrams said, "I still believe that the single candidacy is best but I'll yield to all the others. This is the only practical possibility."

So we began to get out a conference call, which had only one significance for

us -- the significance of taking an action. For us the main thing about the call was that it set a date and a place for the conference. The conference would decide questions of election policy, platform and candidates. We weren't interested in compressing a platform into a call for a conference. We knew that the struggle for an acceptable platform would come later. So we confined ourselves to pressing for the call to actually go out and to keep any objectionable formulations out of it. Of course, if you begin to discuss the call as though it were a thesis on the road to workers' power, or as a programmatic basis for fusion into a new party, you can have a lot of pointless fun with it. But it's a meaningless exercise. We were fighting to overcome the pressure to procrastinate and stall. We were fighting to get that call out and force the movement into the open. Sure the call had serious defects. But it had the essential virtue of openly proposing a full socialist ticket against the capitalist parties and it left to an open conference of the radical movement the making of a decision.

This was an historic move. The moment the call was issued a feverish atmosphere developed in the radical movement. The conference became the big thing, the major issue of debate in all radical circles.

The CP leaders now began to understand what a terrible thing had happened from their point of view. They began to race, always one station behind, to try to catch up with and board the train. From the moment the call was out the CP was continually off-balance, going from one desperate fumble to another, making one error after another. From their point of view the worst thing in the world had happened. Their whole former periphery was in a bloc to wage an election campaign on a policy opposed to theirs -- and the bloc included the Trotskyists! Common action with the Trotskyists! Legitimizing Trotskyism! Giving the Trotskyists an arena, a platform from which to talk to all revolutionary and radical-minded workers. Could any conceivable catastrophe be worse? Their closed corporation has busted wide open. Here was the SWP, on the inside of the bloc and they, on the outside.

The Worker launched a vigorous attack, but the bloc held together and continued to head for the conference. The CP leaders, Davis and Johnson, suddenly turned up at the meetings of the bloc and tried to blow it up from within, but the bloc held together. Nevertheless, the pressure of the CP on the bloc was enormous. This was manifested mainly in the debates on the two basic issues of controversy: the issue of socialism and democracy and the issue of SWP representation on the slate.

In alliance with others in the bloc we insisted that it was necessary to have

an unambiguous statement on socialism and democracy in the platform; a statement that would clearly oppose the bureaucratic dictatorship of Stalinism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. We argued that only by doing this could we go to the voters with a message of socialism that was not tainted with the crimes of Stalinism. We fought for this position pedagogically, but insistently.

However, in the course of many discussions we were unable to convince the representatives of the Guardian or the former ALP leaders on this point. While they would grant the correctness of a minimum stand for workers' and socialist democracy everywhere, they argued that it had no place in a platform for an election in the U.S. They also contended that if we tried to get a minimum formulation on this question it would blow up the coalition, since there were many deep-going historical and theoretical differences that couldn't be reconciled in any minimum formulation. And they stubbornly persisted in refusing to agree to such a clause in the platform. We had to weigh the significance of this in determining our own course.

Was their refusal to agree to a simple statement opposing the bureaucratic practices of Stalinist regimes and championing the cause of socialist democracy a sign that they were simply captives of the Kremlin, just like the CP leadership? If this were the case the possibility of a fruitful coalition with them in the elections would be extremely dubious. Or was it a sign of the continued pressure of Stalinism and that their break with the organized Stalinist movement was still incomplete. Our assessment was the latter. All the signs pointed to their eventual open break with Stalinism in which they would be compelled to denounce the crimes of the Stalinist bureaucracy. Whether this would lead them to agreement with our position or not was, of course, problematical. But we estimated that in the period of the election itself, they would be unable to hold on to a position of "dummying up" on socialism and democracy in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, etc.

In any case we had to decide how to handle this serious controversy at the June conference where the inner bloc differences would have to be considered in the context of the basic debate with the CP that was looming.

The same is true about the controversy in the bloc on the question of SWP representation on the slate. Originally, it was agreed that the SWP would have a representative on the ticket. But when the CP opened its offensive a chain reaction of pressure bore down on this point. The basic components of the bloc showed the capacity to resist the CP pressure as far as sticking to the agreement for a full ticket on a socialist basis. But they

shifted ground on a representative ticket.

They argued that since the CP refused to participate, this meant that we couldn't have a representative ticket because only one of the two important organized groups -- the SWP -- was willing to go along. Therefore, they argued, to avoid the impression that the ticket was an SWP front, only independents, that is, unaffiliated socialists, should be among the candidates. Obviously, this was a lame argument and it was clear that their opposition to an SWP representative on the slate stemmed from their own anti-Trotskyist prejudice and suspicion. But we faced the choice: to go into the conference where the CP would be working to blow up the bloc and fight on all issues, the inner-bloc controversy as well as the main issue in controversy with the Stalinists, or to single out the basic issue, the full ticket on a socialist basis and subordinate the inner-bloc controversies to the big debate with the CP?

Our decision was to subordinate the controversies over socialism and democracy and our place on the ticket to the main question: socialist opposition to the capitalist parties. That was our decision. We take full responsibility for it. We felt that it was our task, while not renouncing our positions on these points to seize this opportunity to deepen the cleavage between the CP and its former periphery and propel the movement forward. It was our task to prevent the CP from diverting the struggle from the main issue into the inner-bloc controversies and making those the main issues. Oh, how the CP leaders would have loved to do that. It would have rescued them. They certainly would have relished making the main point at the conference: should the SWP have a candidate or not or should there be a clause on socialism and democracy in the platform? But we didn't intend to accommodate them. The main issue at the conference was class-struggle socialist politics versus Stalinist class collaboration.

We succeeded, as you know, in gaining a majority of the conference for a full socialist ticket. We isolated the CP leadership. The top CP leaders left the conference even before the main debate got underway, just after the walloping they got from Hallinan on the opening night. From that moment on the CP was whipped and incapable of gathering its forces for any serious struggle. And they never found an opening in the following two days; they never found a line of cleavage in the bloc because our policy was deliberately calculated to prevent this.

Even the split in the Presiding Committee, which took place under pressure of the CP, failed to provide them with an opening. That temporary split was quite

instructive. After the first session of the conference on Saturday, Goldin and Abrams decided that the conference had polarized into SWP and CP camps -- without a significant independent group in evidence. Actually the SWP and the independents, who were present, had lined up for a full ticket on a socialist basis. But Goldin and Abrams couldn't see it. They had a spasm of fear. Goldin put it very interestingly at a meeting of the Presiding Committee. He said, "That's the situation out there. It's only CP and SWP. We have one choice; we have to go with the CP's proposal or be ruled out of the legitimate left."

How revealing of the terrible grip Stalinism has had all these years, not only on leaders and peripheral figures, but above all on rank and file Communist workers. This terrible fear of being "ruled out of the legitimate left." "Legitimate" was defined as anything the CP sponsored, or at least didn't oppose. Everything else, any movement which dared to oppose or criticize -- that was consigned to the realm of traitors, stoolpigeons and counter-revolutionaries. One of the great accomplishments of the June conference was that it helped liberate the radical movement from this monstrous tradition of Stalinism. It announced a new, wide-open situation where differences on policy and program could be discussed on their merits.

We healed the split in the Presiding Committee by Sunday morning. Goldin and his supporters, who were a minority on the Committee (Goldin, Abrams, Jones, Gluck) had offered an amendment to the Committee resolution for a full ticket on a socialist platform which would have prevented the conference from expressing a favorable position. Goldin frankly saw in his amendment a means for reconciliation with the CP in the name of a search for "broader unity." The majority (McManus, Rubinstein, McAvoy, Ferry, DeHaan, Stryker, Zaslow and Weiss) insisted on a vote from the conference on the basic issue of electoral policy.

It turned out that Goldin and Abrams were only wavering. We gave them lots of room in the debate on Saturday. In general our floor strategy was to encourage the independents to fight for our common position and by Sunday it became clear that the independents were a sizable force in the conference. After the vote we turned to Goldin and said: "We're satisfied that the conference has overwhelmingly expressed an opinion. Now we're willing to formulate a motion together with you that the committee continue to explore all possibilities of arriving at broader unity on the basis of the united socialist election campaign. This was agreed. And, as we anticipated, this common motion served to strengthen the cohesiveness of the bloc and isolate the CP in its

continued effort to prevent the campaign.

Following the conference, our entire attention was focused on the problem of candidacies. The draft program passed at the conference was satisfactory to us with the glaring exception of the omission of a section on socialist democracy in the Soviet orbit. But the movement was again in danger of dying, simply from inertia. I think this danger was reinforced by the dog days of the summer that came around this time. Weeks passed in which it was difficult to get a meeting together. At this point it would have been very simple to end the whole business, settle for the achievements of the conference, and go ahead with an SWP campaign. All we had to do was slow down, allow the decisive deadlines for action to come and go -- and the opportunity would have been lost. The struggle for the principle of independent socialist opposition to the capitalist parties could have died from neglect.

Lamont under the pressure of this whole controversy withdrew his name as a candidate. This in turn raised grave doubts among the Guardian people and the former ALPers as to whether any kind of ticket could be assembled. We exerted all our efforts to convince them that they had started something they had to finish. They had launched a movement together with us, gained support, and the logical and unavoidable next step was to produce the candidacies. We fought for a McManus-Rubinstein slate and continued to fight for our own representation. Again we faced a choice, this time of a somewhat different character than before the conference. We could have pursued the struggle for our position on platform and SWP representation on the slate and won. We could have won in a number of ways including gaining a "majority" for our position at many of the meetings of the committee. But we wouldn't have had a genuine united socialist ticket. That was what the politically immature ultralefts like Stryker and DeHaan could never understand. They said, "What do you need all these people for? You've got us. Have a united socialist ticket with Stryker and DeHaan. Let the majority rule. And the Stalinoids -- let's get away from them." Stryker and DeHaan were very radical. But we weren't interested in masquerade, in a fake united socialist ticket. We were interested in effecting a genuine regroupment, in moving together with those who really represented a significant force among the radical workers and former CP sympathizers in the direction of revolutionary socialist politics.

The choice we faced was not would we get a candidate. The real choice we had was: would we have a full SWP ticket or a ticket of all independents. That was the way it worked out.

When we pursued the argument for SWP representation on the ticket it became

clear that the necessary argument was whether they should participate in any ticket. If we pressed our cause on representation we would get the reaction: "There is no use arguing about representation. We aren't sure we can run at all. And without a candidate of Lamont's stature a ticket of McManus and Rubinstein with an SWP representative would surely be regarded as an SWP front. So why don't you go ahead as you did in 1956 and 1957, run an SWP ticket, and we'll give you support as we did then."

Some comrades may think that would have been a wonderful bargain. We didn't. We thought it would be better to retreat and force them into taking the next step of consummating their split with the CP's political policy. We felt that such an action -- a McManus-Rubinstein ticket -- with our vigorous participation, would have a far more profound effect on the regroupment process than a full SWP ticket.

We didn't take this question of our candidacy lightly. It was a very serious matter. We were forced to choose between running our own campaign or participating in a ticket under disadvantageous and unfair conditions. We made our choice with eyes wide open. Considering the whole political situation and weighing the matter in the balance now, we think we made the correct decision.

Now, how did our decision work out in the course of the campaign? Did Trotskyism lose or gain in the process?

Comrade Gross of the minority said in a statement to the PC, May 13, 1958: "This call [for the June conference] is quite acceptable to the Kremlin (while it is quite harmless to Wall St.). At the present moment, it is true, the Kremlin and the American CP regard the whole affair as 'sectarianism.' But they cannot be in the least disturbed by Trotskyist physical participation, when there is no Trotskyist political participation."

What a false appraisal this proved to be! We were assured by the minority that the CP and the bourgeoisie were undisturbed by the situation. But the CP and the Social Democrats, not to speak of the Tammany Hall machine -- the bourgeois party in administrative power in New York State -- took a different view.

The CP launched an old-fashioned anti-Trotskyist campaign in The Worker precisely on the theme that The I-SP was the expression of Trotskyist political participation. The CP leaders, who were in a position to know, screamed from the roof tops that it wasn't a matter of mere physical participation of the SWP. Their theme was that the SWP had worked its way into the "inner circle" of the committee and was politically influencing its course. And it must be admitted that they had considerable evidence to back up

this claim, although our influence wasn't a matter of diabolic intrigue -- as the CP depicted it -- but political agreement within the bloc on class-struggle socialist politics in action.

Our allies in the bloc, however confused their concept of socialism may be, took a giant step together with us in socialist opposition to the capitalist parties. And this meant a break with Stalinist politics. They knew this and we knew it.

The SP-SDF wasn't undisturbed. Feeble as they are, they gave us some bad moments in this campaign. The SP-SDF made a big attempt to become the instrument that would prevent us from getting on the ballot. They threatened court action to invalidate our petitions if we used the name "United Socialist." Later they made other legal threats and played a treacherous, strike-breaking role against the ticket all the way through.

On the key question of independence from the Kremlin, and of taking as the very minimum a critical position towards Kremlin tyranny, the Guardian made its own break-through in the very period of the election campaign. It denounced the murder of Nagy and took the editorial stand that socialists had the right and the duty to criticize crimes against socialism in the Soviet Union, precisely in order to prevent the cold war advocates from utilizing these crimes for their own purposes.

And please, we don't need to be enlightened on the inadequacies of the Guardian's position and theories on the Russian and Hungarian questions. Such "enlightenment" is particularly odious from the Marcyites, who with all their "leftism" are the most right wing on the basic question of Hungary. For all its confusion and Stalinist hangovers, the Guardian chose to break with Stalinism and oppose its murderous course in Hungary. To my mind this is an infinitely superior position to that of providing "Marxist" rationalizations for the Kremlin murder of the workers in a general strike and revolutionary uprising in Hungary.

Don't give us any lectures, Comrade Marcyites, about the confusion of the Guardian position. They made a break-through to the left. In due course, we will continue and deepen our discussion with them on all the questions that arise from this breakthrough -- including the question of peaceful coexistence and political revolution. Meanwhile, I prefer their position on Hungary to the position of those who want to use the name of Trotskyism to support "objectively" the need for the shooting down of striking workers in Hungary and suppressing the revolution. It just gets to be too much to hear the sneering, supercilious

attitude these comrades have toward people who, yes, are petty-bourgeois socialists as yet. Nobody's born a Trotskyist, not even Sam Marcy. The people in the Guardian orbit are in a process of evolution; they take a step away from Stalinism while maintaining an irreconcilable attitude towards the imperialists, the witch hunt and the labor bureaucracy. They strike out against murderous Stalinism. We welcome that step without any hesitation.

What was the CP reaction to the Guardian's stand on the Nagy execution? Were they "undisturbed by the physical presence, but not the political presence of Trotskyism"? Again the CP reacted as those who feel the blow most keenly. The CP leaders stepped up their slander attack: "Look!" they cried, "here's the proof! If you associate with anti-Soviet Trotskyists you become one of them. The Trotskyists have foisted their anti-Soviet line on the entire coalition. We warned you that if you associated with them you would become anti-Soviet yourself and now it has come to pass."

There was some validity to the Stalinist fears. The Guardian made its own break with Stalinism and embraced the minimum formula we had fought for; namely, socialists have the right and the duty to oppose Stalinist crimes in the Soviet orbit. And then, under the CP smear attack, all participants in the bloc were faced with an inescapable question: either the CP is right about the SWP, and, in that case, what are they doing in a bloc with us? Or the CP is engaged in a colossal frameup. It is a very thought-provoking question and it finally forced McManus to publicly declare that the charge of anti-Sovietism against the SWP was false.

Lamont took a stand on Soviet democracy from the moment of his first public statement in the campaign. At a news conference early in the campaign, Lamont said he thought the Soviet Union had made "mistakes in regard to Hungary and Yugoslavia." He said, "I have been critical of civil liberties in the Soviet Union and I have criticized the execution of Nagy." Of course, Lamont made these statements within the context of his own false position on peaceful coexistence and his humanist philosophy. But the point is that the participants in the coalition did not follow a Stalinist policy in the campaign on the critical question of Soviet democracy. And when the Guardian took its position on Nagy, or Lamont on Soviet democracy, those elements in the bloc who were most susceptible to CP pressures didn't dare echo the CP attacks. This, we believe, is a significant sign of the direction of the bloc as a whole with regard to Stalinism.

Moreover, the SWP maintained full freedom of expression throughout the

campaign. Our candidates in Michigan, New Jersey, Minnesota, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin expressed our position on all questions. So did our paper. We exercised full freedom of action within the bloc. There were no restrictions whatever on us; we wouldn't dream of permitting any. The minority misreads the whole situation on this point. We said what we pleased in The Militant. It is, of course, entirely natural that disagreements among the majority occurred, or may develop in retrospect, on what we could or should have said at this point or that. But the idea that we wrote The Militant to please political opponents is utterly false. How easy it would have been, if we were engaged in the politics of pleasing, to please the Marcyites with articles that simply denounced our allies for every false viewpoint they held. But we weren't concerned with cover-ups and pleasing.

We developed our line in The Militant according to our understanding of how to, pedagogically, over a period of time, unfold a campaign for Marxist principles; to utilize the election campaign to deepen the discussion in pace with the experience, to let actions underscore our words and to encourage our allies to conduct their own struggle for ideological independence from the CP.

Take the episode of Lamont's 10-point program. We disagreed with Lamont on many of these points. There was disagreement on peaceful coexistence, reliance on summit conferences, the United Nations, etc. According to the agreement in the bloc, Lamont had the right to express his personal views in the course of the campaign, while making clear what the common platform was. Lamont made a serious error, as we quickly pointed out, when he spoke in the name of the I-SP for his 10-point program. We took this up immediately in the committee, attacking Lamont's conduct: "The SWP never agreed to such a program and it was never even presented for approval." The committee unanimously agreed that we were correct. Immediately thereafter we had a meeting of the active workers which Lamont attended. Lamont outlined his views on foreign policy and said that he came to hear the opinions of the active workers on program and presentation of program. The SWP membership was predominant at the meeting and in the course of the discussion, our position on the question of Lamont's procedure as well as his gimmick about Stassen was made amply clear.

We followed this up in The Militant with an elaborated and precise article criticizing all points in Lamont's program that we disagreed with. What happened? The Worker launched the most savage attack of the entire campaign against The Militant and the Trotskyists on this very point of our controversy with Lamont. Here was their grand opening,

they thought. They charged the Trotskyists had knifed the peace campaign in the back, right in the middle of the campaign.

The CP didn't miss our open disagreement with Lamont. The comrades of the minority, however, conveniently forget this basic engagement and charge that we wrote The Militant to please Lamont. The CP knew better.

And what happened? Lamont dropped the Stasson proposal and the 10-point program. That's a fact. It was a victory for us. The Stalinists wanted to exploit our public differences with Lamont, but they didn't succeed because Lamont didn't take the bait.

I cannot, within the framework of this report, comrades, give a detailed account of the petition campaign. That's a vast subject. It should be written up and recorded for the benefit of the whole party and all subsequent efforts. There's one point I should make about the petition campaign, however. It was an open test of the capacities of all tendencies within the radical movement.

The CP made an all-out effort to qualify a candidate in a state-senatorial district, which is nothing compared to the vast effort required to put a state ticket on the ballot. It failed and failed rather badly. It couldn't muster the forces, the enthusiasm and the grit to go out and do even that job.

The SP-SDF entered the lists in an attempt to qualify a state-senatorial candidate and it failed even more miserably. It didn't even get the minimum number of signatures.

Even the SLP showed a steep decline in its capacity to wage a petition campaign, coming up with 16,000 signatures, and then, at the critical moment of the legal struggle ducking out of the court fight.

And the success of the I-SP petition campaign is accounted for, as everyone knows, primarily by the capacities displayed by the SWP.

That is not to say that the SWP was alone. This wasn't the case. There was a wide participation from independents on various levels of activity. There was an important group that worked as hard as anyone in the SWP cadre. Some displayed the finest qualities of revolutionary militants. How many people? In that category about 20. I've heard say that's very little. That depends. To me, twenty people of the revolutionary cadre type, that's a new lease on life for the New York SWP. There were, according to carefully assembled figures, over 150 participating in the New York City petition drive, in the upstate work about 75. From all

over the state some 500 people sent in petitions by mail.

Upstate, as in New York City, we made invaluable contacts with our kind of people, people who will undoubtedly be in the same party with us in the future.

There were 919 people who together contributed \$15,000 to the campaign. Considering Corliss Lamont's contributions, which totaled \$6,500, that leaves 918 contributing the remainder of \$8,500.

It's true that the social composition of these I-SP supporters is heavily weighted towards the middle class, with relatively few industrial workers. This reflects both the peripheral character of the group and the unfavorable social composition in the entire radical movement in the U.S., including the SWP. But to neglect to do everything possible to win such peripheral forces to the revolutionary socialist movement is nothing short of criminal, particularly when these forces include many of the present rank and file members and sympathizers of the Communist Party.

The campaign accomplished what we set out to accomplish. It took a census of the socialist vote in New York State. I believe that on objective consideration the vote we got will be reckoned by the movement nationally as an impressive achievement. The upstate vote showed an interesting result. In a large number of counties the I-SP vote showed a plus over the combined ALP-SWP vote of 1954, despite the steep decline in New York City.

We have yet to make a careful analysis of the vote. But the important conclusions were indicated by McManus at the last meeting of the I-SP committee: "Considering what we were up against in the petition campaign and the legal fight," he said, "and particularly considering the vigorous opposition of the Communist Party and the SP-SDF, the vote is quite significant. The decline of the vote in comparison with the ALP's vote of 1954 must be considered in the light of four years of dissolution of the ALP, four years of entry into the Democratic Party by many thousands of radicals under the influence of CP policy. Despite this we have demonstrated what we set out to demonstrate: that there is a sizable group of voters who despite all pressure from the CP and all Democratic Party illusions, stand firm for socialism and vote a socialist ticket when it is present on the ballot."

At the last meeting of the I-SP committee we saw a foreshadowing of the differences and debates to come within the broad coalition. Some of those who went along with the venture, now want to pull back. They are afraid of getting drawn into the SWP orbit. Another section of the bloc is coming closer to us on some

issues. Among the rank and file supporters of the I-SP we have gained since the election a number of new recruits and are in contact with people who are reading our literature, who see eye to eye with us on a positive estimation of the campaign and want to go forward to further close cooperation with us in other fields.

What next, comrades? We are in the middle of a process. We can't blueprint the course ahead. Moreover, in order to formulate the perspectives before the party in any precise way it will be necessary to synthesize our analysis of the results and prospects of the regroupment process with an analysis of the objective situation internationally and here in the United States. This will be done in preparation for the convention.

We are now in a new situation in my opinion. A new and more favorable relation of forces exists within the radical movement. I don't know how long it will last, that will be decided by the struggle, but at the present moment and for the foreseeable future, this new relation of forces must be our point of departure. The new situation is characterized by the fact that within the radical movement we have taken the initiative. That's an unfamiliar position for our movement to be in over the recent years. And certainly it's a new position for us in the radical movement in the country as a whole. It places a different kind of political and even psychological demand upon the leadership and ranks of the party. For a long time we have been forced to orient almost exclusively upon what other forces could and would do: what the labor bureaucracy, the capitalist class, the Social Democracy and what the Stalinists would do. We were in the position of critics of those powerful forces with relatively little opportunity to intervene in action. We were the forerunners of the revolutionary action of tomorrow. We stuck to that position and carried it through. But when opportunity provides the possibility of doing more than that, of taking the initiative and changing the reality in however limited a way, and such opportunities are not seized upon -- that opens the way to sectarian ossification.

The outward symptoms of the new relationship of forces can be very quickly cited: at the June conference for the first time in many years we were the decisive, initiating force in an action of the radical movement and the CP had to orient itself on the basis of what we would say and do. Considering the history of Stalinists excluding and hounding us out of all radical activities and all sections of the labor movement where they had control, it is ironic that the CP had to ask for the right to speak at the conference. We were asked to concede Ben Davis a place on the platform at the opening session -- which we did, of

course.

The same picture emerges in the preparations for the forthcoming Cleveland conference. Here is an important national gathering of the radical movement scheduled for this weekend. The whole thing developed completely apart from the CP. Then the conference secretary received a wire from Eugene Dennis: "Arnold Johnson is arriving in Cleveland to see you." The secretary wondered what the CP may be up to. Johnson arrived in Cleveland, presented his credentials and asked if the CP will be permitted to participate, or "have the Trotskyists stacked everything against us?"

Take a simple matter like the Davies tour, an elementary forum activity. Socialists from other countries, of whatever persuasion, are brought over to break ground here, create discussion, stimulate thinking and help open up doors to more intensive socialist propaganda. We played a prominent role in the venture and the CP was on the outside, protesting and grumbling about it.

Together with many people formerly in the CP periphery we play an active role in the Sobell case and other civil liberties cases, while the CP's participation dwindles in most areas.

And notably in the youth movement we have taken and held the initiative over the past two years. We are the main contenders with the Social Democracy for influence over the radical youth. The Stalinists are still only talking about remobilizing some of their youth and trying to carve out a place for themselves in the budding youth movement.

Thus in many fields, aside from socialist electoral activity, we show a stepped-up influence and activity and the CP has been unable to regain its equilibrium sufficiently to even attempt to re-establish the old practice of exclusion and black-listing Trotskyists.

Two important features of the new situation should be noted: (1) The more favorable relation of forces within the radical movement shows signs of opening new avenues of initiative and influence within the mass movement, particularly in the civil rights field. This is as yet limited in scope and we haven't enough experience to go on. We should certainly avoid any hasty or exaggerated conclusions. But the signs are there and all new opportunities in this field are being explored intensively. (2) The internal crisis within the Communist Party has found its focus around the issues which we have posed and around the question of the inroads of the SWP. This is true nationally. The general crisis of the CP has become a crisis of what to do about the actions of the SWP.

This new, advantageous situation has come about, according to the comrades

of the Marcy group, as a result of the "liquidation of Trotskyism." I hope that in the discussion comrades will take this charge up with all the seriousness it deserves. I confess that I find it very difficult to view it as anything more than a grotesque slander, particularly when it is accompanied by accusations that what motivates the majority of the party leadership is fear of the witch hunt. The New York comrades report that new and young comrades and recruits are submitted to systematic, round-the-clock agitation by the Marcyites on this theme. The Marcyites don't give these new, young recruits a chance to examine the different views within the party in an atmosphere of calm, objective discussion. They hammer away at the thesis: "You're entering a party in which the leadership has liquidated and betrayed Trotskyism for a period of ten years as a result of its fear of the witch hunt."

I make a big distinction between the position of Comrade Joyce Cowley and that of the Marcyites. A big distinction. We're not asking, as I said, for unquestioning approval of everything we have done. Undoubtedly, we have made mistakes. Many, no doubt. Very well. Let's go over the mistakes, see what they are, discuss and assess them. I think Comrade Cowley goes way, way overboard in what she regards as mistakes. And I think she makes a bad mistake when she grants Marcy even a finger on this charge of liquidationism. But I hope that with Comrade Cowley our discussion can take place within the framework of basic agreement on regroupment policy and thereby will enable us to review more effectively and critically the actual application of this policy. With Comrade Marcy, it's an entirely different discussion.

I think the party accomplished a lot in this eventful year. It not only had to carry out a complex and difficult tactic, it also had to overcome all the inner sectarian resistance all of us have to moving quickly in a changing situation with the necessary flexibility. And the party had to do this while it was continuously being harassed by the Marcyite charge that "Trotskyism was being liquidated." Despite this the party leadership and ranks showed the capacity to take advantage of a big opportunity and displayed a firmness and absence of jittery nervousness that was in some respects remarkable.

Now, in its discussion of the year's experience and in preparation for the convention, the party can mature and consolidate its accomplishments and move on to new tasks. We can move with greater energy and decisiveness towards the goal of the regroupment process -- the building of an expanded revolutionary socialist party in the U.S. That means, above all, building the SWP, its press and all its institutions, since the SWP is the most consistent and devoted fighter for this goal.

V

BLACK DEMOCRATS

INTRODUCTION

The mass independent struggles of Black Americans, Chicanos and other oppressed nationalities pose the question of how these sectors of the population should break from capitalist politics. Up until the 1960's it was expected by nearly all revolutionary socialists that Afro-Americans would be among the best builders and strongest supporters of a labor party.

However, the rise of Black nationalism and the uneven development of the Black struggle and the labor movement has made the necessity and timeliness of an independent Black party evident. The Socialist Workers Party adopted this viewpoint at its 1963 national convention (see Freedom Now: New Stage in the Struggle for Negro Emancipation, Pathfinder Press. Also available in International Socialist Review, fall, 1963.).

A more comprehensive explanation, enriched by the concrete experience of the Michigan Freedom Now Party and the Lowndes County Freedom Party, was adopted at the 1967 SWP national convention (See The Case for a Black Party, Pathfinder Press).

Although revolutionary socialists did not promote the formation of an independent Black party before 1963, the SWP did endorse and support candidates of the Black community that ran independently of and in opposition to the capitalist parties, even when they were not socialist.

However, there has often been confusion in the radical movement over whether support to candidates of oppressed nationalities also means support to such candidates even when they are candidates of the capitalist parties or run in the primaries of these parties.

On this question we are reprinting a brief exchange between Johnson, of the SWP, and Trotsky held in 1939 along with comments on the discussion by George Breitman. The Johnson-Trotsky discussion appears in Trotsky on Black Nationalism and Self-Determination (Pathfinder Press). Breitman's comments were written for a National Committee discussion in 1954.

The selection by Farrell Dobbs, SWP National Secretary, entitled "Fundamental Aspects of the Atkinson Question" deals with a specific case of Edward Atkinson, a Black candidate who ran in the non-

partisan primary for Los Angeles city councilman in 1959. Although Dobbs' article discusses some of the differences of opinion among members of the Los Angeles SWP branch on the Atkinson campaign, its value today is in its explanation of why socialists do not support Black Democratic Party candidates and for its contribution to the understanding of the tactic of critical support.

In the 1965 Cleveland mayoralty race, Carl Stokes, now the Black mayor of Cleveland, lost the Democratic Party primary and ran independent of the Democratic and Republican candidates. The Socialist Workers Party critically supported Stokes in that race -- criticized his reformist program and affiliation to the Democratic Party, but supported the fact that his campaign was independent of the capitalist parties and used that fact to help promote the idea of Black independent political action. The article, "Cleveland Negro Almost Upset Machine" by Eric Reinthaler reprinted from the November 22, 1965 Militant describes this campaign.

In 1967, when Stokes won the Democratic Party nomination and was elected mayor of Cleveland, the SWP strongly opposed this campaign. In the same year Richard Hatcher, also a Black Democrat, was elected mayor of Gary, Indiana.

The meaning of these campaigns is discussed by Elizabeth Barnes in "Stokes' Cleveland Victory" and "Stokes-Hatcher Victory: A Real Gain for Blacks?" in the October 16 and November 20, 1967 issues of The Militant, and by Eric Reinthaler in "Why President Johnson Favors Stokes for Cleveland Mayor," in the November 6 Militant.

In 1969, the SWP ran its own candidate against Stokes.

Since the adoption of its position in favor of an independent Black party, the SWP has also endorsed and helps promote an independent Chicano party. The formation of Raza Unida parties in Texas, Colorado and California is providing rich experience for this development. (See La Raza Unida Party in Texas, by Gutierrez and Compean, Pathfinder Press; and La Raza! Why Chicano Party? Why Chicano Studies? Pathfinder Press.)

Doug Jenness
February 1971

CONDITIONAL SUPPORT OF BLACK CANDIDATES

[In April, 1939, Leon Trotsky held a series of discussions on various aspects of the Black movement in the United States with Johnson and other leading members of the Socialist Workers Party. Johnson had proposed the formation of a Black organization for the purpose of carrying on the fight for equality in all fields, including the fight in the political arena. The organization would be composed mainly of Black workers and sharecroppers. Black socialists would work within the organization but not dominate it.

[The discussion turned to consideration of running political candidates. Johnson put forth the idea that the Black organization would run a Black candidate on a program "suitable to the masses of poor Negroes." Another person in the discussion asked: "Isn't that coming close to the Popular Front, to vote for a Negro just because he is a Negro?"

[Following are the replies of Johnson and Trotsky.]

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COMMENTS ON THE TROTSKY-JOHNSON DISCUSSION

by George Breitman

For many years there has been confusion among comrades about the meaning of Trotsky's remarks on critical support of Negro candidates in the discussion held on April 11, 1939 (reprinted in Fourth International, February 1949, p. 59). In the hope that no one will ever again interpret those remarks to mean that Trotsky was in favor of giving critical support to Negro candidates running on the Democratic ticket, here are the circumstances in which the remarks were made:

The discussion that day centered around a proposal that we should help form an independent mass Negro organization, a project that was generally favored, and around specific practical proposals for its formation, program, activity, etc. Under point 12 of the proposals, "The relationship of the Negroes to the Republican and Democratic parties," Trotsky said:

"How many Negroes are there in Congress? One. There are 440 members in the House of Representatives and 96 in the Senate. Then if the Negroes have almost 10% of the population, they are entitled to about 50 members, but they have only one. It is a clear picture of political inequality. We can often oppose a Negro candidate to a white candidate. This Negro organization can always say, 'We want a Negro who knows our problems.' It can have important consequences."

Johnson: This organization has a program. When the Democrats put up a Negro candidate, we say, "Not at all. It must be a candidate with a program we can support."

Trotsky: It is a question of another organization for which we are not responsible, just as they are not responsible for us. If this organization puts up a certain candidate, and we find as a party that we must put up our own candidate in opposition, we have the full right to do so. If we are weak and cannot get the organization to choose a revolutionist, and they choose a Negro Democrat, we might even withdraw our candidate with a concrete [declaration] that we abstain from fighting, not the Democrat, but the Negro. We consider that the Negro's candidacy as opposed to the white's candidacy, even if both are of the same party, is an important factor in the struggle of the Negroes for their equality; and in this case we can critically support them. I believe that it can be done in certain instances.

In the discussion that followed some participants expressed doubts and reservations about the permissibility of our supporting a Negro candidate run by the independent Negro organization whose formation had been projected. One voiced the fear, "Isn't it coming close to Popular Front, to vote for a Negro just because he is a Negro?" Another, answering this question, said, "This organization has a program. When the Democrats put up a Negro candidate, we say, 'Not at all. It must be a candidate with a program we can support.'" Then Trotsky said:

"It is a question of another organization for which we are not responsible, just as they are not responsible for us. If this organization puts up a certain candidate, and we find as a party that we must put up our own candidate in opposition, we have the full right to do so. If we are weak and cannot get the organization to choose a revolutionist, we might even withdraw our candidate with a concrete declaration that we abstain from fighting, not the Democrat, but the Negro. We consider that the Negro's candidacy as opposed to the white's candidacy, even if both are of the same party, is an important factor in the struggle of the Negroes for their equality; and in this case we can critically support them. I believe that it can be done in certain instances."

Let us repeat: the question being discussed was quite concrete -- the running of a Negro candidate by an independent Negro organization (not just any Negro who happened to be a candidate). Trotsky was saying that we had the right to run our own candidate against the Negro candidate of such an independent Negro organization, but that we didn't have to employ this right under all circumstances. He also was saying that inside this independent Negro organization, when it got around to choosing the candidate it wanted to run, we would try to get it to nominate a revolutionist if possible, or a militant. If we failed in this inner nominating contest between ourselves and non-revolutionary tendencies inside the independent Negro organization, and if this organization chose instead a Negro who was a Democrat as its nominee, then we might decide to withdraw or not run a candidate of our own party against him in the general election, explaining that we took this action not because he was a Democrat in his politics but because he was a Negro candidate of an independent Negro organization. All this presupposes that this independent Negro organization's candidate is running against a white Democratic candidate, which is what Trotsky clearly meant when he said "both are of the same party."

The context plainly indicates that Trotsky was talking about critical support to the candidate of an independent Negro organization engaging in politics; to what we can properly call an independent Negro party running its own candidates against the candidates of the capitalist parties. This is exactly the policy that our party has been following for more than a decade. The only difference is that no single independent Negro organization running candidates has appeared in this country. (The largest Negro organization, the NAACP, does not formally run candidates in its own name.) What has happened generally is that a number of local Negro organizations get together and agree on or unite behind a candidate; instead of one independent Negro organization, there is usually a conference of several organizations, often on a temporary rather than a permanent basis. When that happens and

their campaign represents a significant part of the Negro community and they run their own candidate against those of the capitalist party machines, it has been our practice to give him critical support, on the basis of the right of Negroes to representation in office, despite our differences with their program and despite the fact that the candidate may be a Democrat or a Republican in his politics. Our present policy, therefore, is in accord with the proposal made by Trotsky in 1939.

Trotsky was not talking about critical support to any Negro candidate; he was not talking about critical support to a Negro put up as a candidate by the capitalist parties; he was not talking about critical support to a Negro who had entered a capitalist primary election and won a capitalist party nomination with the support of the Negro community against the resistance of the capitalist party machine -- he was talking about critical support to a Negro candidate of an independent Negro organization (or "party") running against capitalist party candidates.

I don't know if Trotsky knew the details about primary elections which are unknown in most of the world, or if he understood that entering primary elections meant entering capitalist parties. The point is that he did not consider this question at all in the 1939 discussion.

It may be argued by some comrades that we should give critical support to a Negro candidate of the Negro community who has won the nomination of a capitalist party in a primary election. But there is no valid reason whatever for claiming that such a position is supported by Trotsky's statements in the 1939 discussion, or in any other discussion or article known to us.

April 1954

FUNDAMENTAL ASPECTS OF THE ATKINSON QUESTION

by Farrell Dobbs

[reprinted from SWP Discussion
Bulletin Vol. 20, No. 7, May 1959]

Last March the Los Angeles branch recommended critical support to Edward Atkinson, a Negro candidate running for the City Council in the local primary elections. In asking the Political Committee's approval of this policy the comrades supplied the following information:

After a year's registration campaign among Negro voters in the Tenth Councilmanic district a Citizens Committee nominated Atkinson against the incumbent, Councilman Navarro, a Mexican-American identified with the Republican Party machine. With the issue of Negro representation in office a key factor, the campaign aroused a strong response in the Negro community.

The elections are formally non-partisan. A Republican heads the Atkinson campaign committee, while the bulk of the committee is made up of Democrats. Atkinson, the candidate, is a Negro small businessman and a Democrat. He has not been prominent in politics and has not previously run for office.

Atkinson has described himself as a member of the Board of Directors of the Democratic Minority Conference, a local setup initiated by the Communist Party. The stated "Purposes and Objectives" of the DMC include: "To work with the organized Democratic Party.... To seek for ethnic and cultural minorities a voice in policy within the Democratic Party...to promote the general welfare of the Democratic Party."

After weighing the above factors in the light of established party policy the PC on March 24 adopted the following motion: "As nearly as can be determined from available information, the Atkinson candidacy is too closely identified with the Democratic Party to warrant critical support."

In the April 7 primary elections Atkinson ran second in a field of five with 7,628 votes. Navarro led the field with 12,961 votes. A total of 29,570 votes were cast and the comrades figure about one third of these were Negro votes. There will be a run-off election between Atkinson and Navarro on May 26.

Comrades Milton Alvin and Lois Saunders asked the PC to reconsider its March 24 decision and approve critical support to Atkinson in the run-off election. In submitting their request they made extensive criticisms of the PC

decision.

Charging the PC with a reversal of past policy, Comrade Saunders argues along these lines: "Up to now we have given critical support to minority candidates where the elections were non-partisan and where there was evidence that the candidate represented a serious community effort.... I know of no instance where the candidate gave any indication that he was breaking with capitalist class parties.... We supported the drive of the Negroes for representation, and this is all we supported. We criticized the programs as inadequate; we criticized the illusions of reliance on capitalist class parties; and we stressed the need for independent political action. But we supported the candidates." (Her emphasis.)

Comrade Saunders thinks the PC has established a new criterion: "...namely that the campaign must be of such a nature as to indicate a break with capitalist parties...something borrowed from our work in the regroupment field. In socialist regroupment, a break with capitalist parties is a minimum requirement. It is incorrect, however, in my opinion, to confuse these two separate aspects of our activity and treat them as if they were one and the same thing where identical criteria apply."

To buttress her argument Comrade Saunders quotes extensively from the transcript of the 1939 Trotsky-Johnson discussion, seeking to clinch her point with the assertion: "Trotsky says that where a Negro Democrat is running we give critical support to the Negro, not the Democrat." Emphasis is hers, not Trotsky's. Let us begin the examination of the question with this aspect of Comrade Saunders' argument.

To grasp the essential meaning of Trotsky's remarks about critical support to Negro candidates, it is necessary to recall that the Trotsky-Johnson discussion centered on the question of helping to form an independent Negro organization. As part of our effort to get the organization to adopt the most far-reaching program (transition measures), we would support the most militant wing. But among the leaders of this organization might be some with a Democratic background and the organization, against our urging, might decide to advance one of them as its candidate.

As members of the organization, what would we do in such a case? It would be possible under certain conditions, Trotsky thought, to offer the candidate

critical support. What the conditions might be is not indicated in the transcript of the discussion (which remained uncorrected by the participants), but we may assume they would include control of the candidate by the Negro organization, plus his opposing Republican and Democratic candidates.

When understood in the full context of the Trotsky-Johnson discussion, the quotations cited by Comrade Saunders do not support her viewpoint. (See "Comments on the Trotsky-Johnson Discussion," by George Breitman.)

Looking further into the general question, one can only agree with Comrade Saunders' estimate that the running of Negro candidates is becoming a main avenue of struggle in the drive for full equality. Demands for a voice in Democratic Party policy, it may be added, also mark a new stage in the political development of the Negro movement. These changing conditions make our tactical programs more complex. But we must not forget that the problems remain two-sided. It is not alone a matter of adjusting our tactics to meet new conditions; we must be careful to maintain our basic principles.

The question of principles becomes increasingly obscured as Comrade Saunders further develops arguments in support of her tactical viewpoint. She contends: "We encourage Negroes in the South to register.... If we follow the PC line as regards Atkinson, we shall have to tell them after obtaining the right to vote, they should refuse to go to the polls and exercise that right, for virtually every candidate who will be running for office, whether Negro or white, will be either a Republican or a Democrat."

In reply let us consider some fundamentals. We support the right to vote no matter who the Negro voter may decide to back. At the same time we do not hesitate to say what political road we think the Negro movement should take and we do not go with them on the wrong road. This approach in no way contradicts the political necessities of the day. On the contrary, it is in accord with our basic task, our fundamental method, our whole reason for being as a revolutionary-socialist tendency.

We support the democratic demands of the Negro people even though they do not transcend the limits of the capitalist order. But we don't put democratic demands above class principles. At all times and under all circumstances we counterpose class struggle policies to class collaborationist illusions.

Merely to put a Negro candidate in office does not necessarily mean to advance the struggle for full equality. The

democratic aspirations of the Negro people cannot be realized on the capitalist political road. The problem is rooted in a class question: what class shall the Negro people align themselves with in their freedom struggle?

Our first basic Negro resolution adopted in 1950 answered: "We must support this mass movement, develop it, and make it a politically conscious and definitely class movement.... The primary and ultimate necessity of the Negro movement is its unification with the revolutionary forces under the leadership of the proletariat." (Fourth International, May-June 1950, page 95.)

In line with this basic concept, we have given critical support to Negro candidacies only insofar as they represented independent political action in opposition to the capitalist parties. Formally non-partisan elections are not exempt from this criterion. They have particular significance only in the sense that they sometimes present a favorable vehicle for independent Negro political action.

Two examples from the past should suffice to illustrate that the question of critical support to Negro candidates has always centered on the issue of independence from the capitalist parties. In the spring of 1954 we gave critical support to the Turner candidacy in Newark, seeing it as a step toward independent Negro political action. A year later we made the opposite decision about the McCree and Robinson candidacies in Detroit. The latter two candidacies at first showed promise of being independent. Then the UAW-CIO brass moved in with the approval of the candidates and linked the campaign to the Democratic Party machinery for factional political purposes. With the Democratic-labor coalition thus acting to derail what had been a potential independent Negro campaign, we decided against critical support to McCree and Robinson.

Our criteria in deciding such tactical questions may be summarized as follows: We support the democratic demand of the Negro people for representation in government. We will give critical support to a Negro candidate -- despite differences over program and despite the past connections of the candidate with the capitalist parties -- provided the campaign represents a significant part of the Negro community and the candidate runs independent of and in opposition to the capitalist party machines.

We have always considered the question of crossing class lines in politics a matter of principle. Our policy has been to maintain unvarying class independence in political tactics. In accord with these conceptions the 1957 Negro resolution calls

for: "...support to Negro candidates for public office so long as they run independently of the Democratic and Republican parties.... A labor-Negro alliance to launch an independent labor party based on the unions." (See The Militant, August 26, 1957, or the pamphlet "Class Struggle Road to Negro Equality.")

This aspect of party policy is recognized by Comrade Alvin in his criticism of the PC decision. He says: "Our attitude towards campaigns of this type (Atkinson) is guided by the idea of furthering independent politics for the labor movement and for the oppressed minorities. The principle that applies is the nature of the campaign itself, that is, is it genuinely independent of the capitalist parties in its dominant aspects."

However Comrade Alvin argues at length that the PC has departed from our traditional position in determining whether a candidacy represents an independent political action. Much of his argument is based on the idea of proof through precedent. He cites the Alfange candidacy for governor of New York on the ALP ticket in 1942 and the CIO-backed Frankenstein candidacy for mayor of Detroit in 1945.

In both cases, Comrade Alvin accurately recalls, we gave critical support to the candidates on the basis of the independent nature of these labor campaigns as against the capitalist parties. His argument also puts major stress on the fact that we called Alfange a "Tammany hack," that Frankenstein had close ties with the Democratic Party and that the Democrats climbed onto the Frankenstein bandwagon toward the end of the campaign.

Comrade Alvin thinks Atkinson is not nearly so closely tied to the Democratic Party as was Frankenstein. On this premise he contends we were wrong in supporting Frankenstein in 1945 if we now refuse critical support to Atkinson on the ground he is too closely tied to the Democratic Party.

Once again let us consider some fundamentals. Tactical decisions do not derive one from another through the rule of precedent. Criteria deemed valid in one specific case do not automatically apply in another case.

Although tactics are generally designed to serve a specific current task or a given branch of the class struggle, in no field can tactical decisions be made without considering party perspectives as a whole. Our tactics must flow from and serve our central strategic aim, the building of a mass revolutionary party. Basic to this aim are our efforts to promote a mass turn from class collaborationist policies onto the class struggle road.

Our tactic of critical support to candidates running independently of the capitalist parties represents a transitional step toward the central strategic aim. For a number of historic reasons, we do not expect the initial mass break from capitalist politics to take place through the medium of the revolutionary socialist party. It is therefore necessary to adapt ourselves tactically to the actual forms through which independent political action develops. In doing so we seek to influence the movement in a revolutionary direction and to build up a revolutionary nucleus within it. The whole tactic is aimed toward building a mass revolutionary party. We must never forget that.

In every instance we must be clear about the basic purpose a particular tactic is intended to serve and we must weigh tactical decisions in terms of the given objective conditions and trends. Let us look again from this standpoint at our decisions to give critical support to Alfange and Frankenstein.

Both had a background of connections with the Democratic Party, a matter not to be taken lightly. What then were the considerations -- in terms of the key facts and objective trends -- that led us to extend critical support to their candidacies?

Alfange joined the ALP upon his nomination in 1942 as the party's candidate for governor. He ran in opposition to candidates of both the Democratic and Republican parties. As was their custom, the ALP backed several Democrats whose names appeared on both the Democratic Party and the ALP ballot lines. We supported none of these candidates on the ALP ballot. We gave critical support only to Alfange who ran as an independent ALP candidate in opposition to both capitalist parties.

Alfange got 400,000 votes, a significant demonstration of worker sentiment for independent class political action. This outcome became an important factor in the SWP's decision in 1943 to shift our advocacy of a labor party from a propaganda slogan to an agitational slogan. In doing so the party proceeded from a basic analysis of objective conditions and trends as appraised in the light of our fundamental aims. (See "Campaign for a Labor Party!" by James P. Cannon.)

In the same year the coal miners fought a series of heroic strike battles to break the war-time wage freeze. The year 1944 saw a general rise in labor unrest and a series of rank and file attempts to break through the official no-strike pledge. As the end of the war neared in 1945 a new, vast wave of working class struggle was building up.

In this objective setting the Frankenstein candidacy developed. It came at a time when unemployed demonstrations were sweeping the country and a half million workers were on strike. The General Motors strike was soon to trigger a general explosion that would see two million workers on the picket line at one time. Frankenstein's candidacy came on the heels of the 1945 victory of the British Labor Party and amid rising expressions of labor party sentiment in UAW-CIO locals, particularly in the Detroit area.

Frankenstein had ties with the Democratic Party, his candidacy had come on his own initiative and the Democrats climbed on the bandwagon at the last minute. That was one side of the picture. But he was also first vice-president of the UAW-CIO and he had been made the candidate of the Detroit CIO in a formally non-partisan election. The capitalist press, raising the alarm that the CIO was about to take over City Hall, stressed that the significance of his candidacy lay not in Frankenstein the individual but in Frankenstein the symbol. That was the other side of the picture.

Weighing both aspects of the question the Political Committee evaluated the Frankenstein candidacy as a borderline case where the decision might go either way. Because of the substantial weight of the trend toward independent class political action manifested in the campaign, a decision was made to give critical support. Present members of the PC who participated in the 1945 decision recall that it was expressly stated at the time that the decision should not be considered a precedent.

To evaluate party tactical decisions in the Alfange and Frankenstein cases the whole picture must be taken into consideration. One or another facet cannot be torn from context and used one-sidedly as an argument for critical support to the Atkinson candidacy today. The Atkinson question, like all tactical questions, must be appraised in the light of our fundamental aims as they apply to present objective conditions and trends.

Unlike the objective setting of the Frankenstein candidacy the present period is not characterized by great class battles giving rise to significant labor party sentiment. The labor-Democratic coalition line still dominates heavily in the unions and finds its echo in the Negro movement. Stalinist propaganda and devious CP maneuvers further disorient the mass politically.

These objective political factors must be considered alongside the democratic aspirations and the essential motion of the Negro movement. We must be

clear not only on the issue of the independence of Negro candidates from capitalist politics. We must also be careful about rushing to characterize as independent a campaign where there is evidence it may in fact represent an attempt to play a greater role within a capitalist party.

In this connection we must examine carefully the role of the Democratic Minority Conference with which Atkinson has identified himself as a member of the Board of Directors. Nothing is explained when Comrade Alvin refers to this setup as a "...noisy but certainly not dominant section of the Democratic Party where the CPers have entrenched themselves."

The question is not one of dominance of this party of Big Business but of factional politics within it. Whether Atkinson is actually a leader of the DMC or is simply letting the CP use him and the Negro representation issue to push their pro-Democratic line, the result appears the same: political action within a capitalist party framework, not independent political action.

If we slur over questions of this kind in cases of Negro political action we can only introduce confusion into questions of independent labor political action. Policy in both spheres becomes intimately linked up through the need for a labor-Negro alliance to launch an independent labor party. Also directly involved are our basic aims and tasks in the 1960 presidential elections where the central issue will be independent political action in opposition to the capitalist political parties. We will be hurt in every field of activity if in any one of them we nibble at crossing class lines in politics.

We cannot subordinate basic considerations to the argument advanced by the comrades that failure to give Atkinson critical support will shut us out of the situation and give the Stalinists a clear field. We can't aspire to lead a movement if it is headed into Democratic Party politics. Our aim is to lead the fight for independent political action. For us two criteria are paramount: the nature of a given movement; and the direction in which it is going. We give critical support to a Negro candidate only where there is a break with capitalist politics and then only because the break implies a tendency toward independent class political action.

In fighting for this policy we have no reason to fear being in a minority or to look upon ourselves as being isolated from any chance to influence the mass movement. Our policy articulates the vital political needs of the Negro people. We have every reason to be aggressive in pushing our political line, to stand by

our principled class position and to defend it vigorously against all opponent tendencies.

In general we must still act as the vanguard of the independent class political movement yet to come into being. But we can be confident mass discontent will grow and frustration will lead toward a break with capitalist politics. In the end we will be the big gainers from our consistent, principled vanguard role.

Our task now is to combine basic propaganda with action designed to help genuine independent political tendencies. In the process we will help to educate the best militants in class principles and to instill in them revolutionary consciousness. Wherever we can act to promote independent political actions the masses will be helped to realize they can build their own class political party apart from and in opposition to the capitalist parties.

In deciding to give critical support to a genuinely independent candidate we do not make programmatic agreement a condition. We support the break with capitalist politics as the first step toward independent class political action. But we do not hesitate to criticize errors and weaknesses in the program of the independent candidate and to advance our own program. Nor do we refrain from criticizing organizational weaknesses in the independent campaign in the sense of pointing the way toward an independent labor party built in alliance with the Negro movement.

Regarding the important role of the Negro movement in this key task, our 1957 Negro resolution said: "There are virtually no capitalists among the Negro people and only a thin layer of middle class elements. As a people they are overwhelmingly working class in composition. Taken nationally, a large section of the Negro workers are already unionized. These unionists are farthest advanced in connecting the fight for their civil rights with the struggle to defend their class interests and in raising political consciousness to a higher level...."

"As yet the Negro movement is ahead of organized labor in gathering mass momentum.... When the workers act their struggles will lend fresh vigor to the Negro movement. This interrelation between the two movements will tend to lead them toward unity of purpose in the sphere of independent political action...."

"Their fusion into a united political force would imply a head-on collision with the capitalist ruling class, breaking up the present two-party swindle and precipitating a class polarization in politics. In the process the civil rights forces could be expected to ally themselves with labor to launch an independent labor party based on the unions."

The passages quoted outline two transitional steps toward our central strategic aim, the building of a mass revolutionary party. These steps are: To help develop a working class political orientation within the Negro movement and promote a political alliance with labor as a class. To work for the creation of an independent labor party within which we would advocate adoption of a revolutionary socialist program.

This perspective clearly requires that we make independence from capitalist politics a criterion in giving critical support to Negro candidates. It also impels us to have the facts and a correct evaluation of the facts in determining whether a given candidacy is genuinely independent in character.

Fulfillment of these requirements, in the opinion of the Political Committee, was not established by Comrades Alvin and Saunders in their request for reconsideration of the decision on the Atkinson question. Consequently the PC on May 5 adopted the following motion: "To reaffirm decision that critical support of Atkinson candidacy is not warranted on basis of available facts."

May 12, 1959

Cleveland Negro Almost Upset Machine

By Eric Reinthaler

CLEVELAND, O. — Carl B. Stokes, independent Negro candidate for mayor of Cleveland, received 85,375 votes in the recent election and was nosed-out in a photo-finish race by incumbent Democrat Ralph Locher who won with 87,833 votes, according to the unofficial count. Stokes has filed action with the Board of Elections to prevent Locher's certification until charges of irregularities are documented and a decision on a recount is made.

On election night over 1,000 Stokes supporters gathered at campaign headquarters, cheering as returns showed the independent candidate getting 90 percent of the vote in the Negro wards.

Papers Warn

Cleveland newspapers, well aware of the upset in the local political relationship of forces, are now cautioning Locher on his future course, pointing out that he must respond to the pressing needs of the Negro community.

Stokes, a Democratic state legislator, bypassed the Democratic primary and filed over 30,000 nominating signatures to run as an independent. He ran with the support of many leaders of the Negro community and with the support of such organizations as CORE, the Freedom Fighters, and ADA.

The Socialist Workers Party gave Stokes critical support based on the character of his campaign, which was independent of and opposed to the Democratic and Republican Parties. The SWP holds that the question of Negro representation in government is of vital concern not only to Negroes but to democratic-minded whites as well.

SWP criticism of the Stokes campaign was on his program, especially the question of a meaningful program for jobs, and Stokes' emphasis on "attracting industry back to Cleveland." Shortcomings on these issues conspired against a full mobilization of his voting potential. However, despite questions of program, the election decisively refutes the notion that a successful campaign can only be mounted within the Democratic Party.

While Stokes' program in and of itself could not solve the ques-

tions of jobs, housing and other problems facing the Negro people and poor whites in this community, his campaign points the way to the kind of independent political action necessary to force more basic solutions to those needs. The impact of the election has been a heightened solidarity and increased confidence of Cleveland Negroes. It has had a traumatic effect on the Democratic Party, the press and the AFL-CIO.

Slimmest Margin

Ralph Locher, the Democratic mayor, who was re-elected by the narrowest margin in the history of Cleveland mayoralty elections, had the support of Cleveland's two daily newspapers, most of the Negro Democratic city councilmen, and the Cleveland AFL-CIO.

In the last weeks of the campaign, the Cleveland AFL-CIO publicly endorsed him as the "safe" candidate and accused Stokes of injecting the "racial issue" into the campaign.

The Republican candidate was Ralph Perk, who polled 41,109 votes. The fourth candidate was Ralph McAllister, member of the Cleveland school board, and president of the school board during last year's school boycott. McAllister had the support of the most prejudiced and backward elements of the white community, and received 22,660 votes. The last weeks of the campaign saw inroads in McAllister support by Locher's backers who were successful in pointing out that unless McAllister supporters switched their votes to Locher, Stokes, a Negro, would be elected mayor.

Will Try Again

Stokes announced that he would run again for mayor two years from now. Meanwhile Locher asked Stokes and the other defeated candidates to join with him to "bring unity and harmony to the city." Stokes, however, analyzed the vote as rejection of "Locherism and all it stands for." He added, "It is fantastic that a man in office three years and backed by both newspapers, the Democratic Party and organized labor could not have polled more than 37 percent of the vote." Stokes charged the Democratic

Party and the Cleveland AFL-CIO with whipping up racial animosities against him. He said, "The racial issue was never an issue, really, until the Democratic and labor leadership made it one."

Stokes' support in the Negro community was demonstrated in Ward 25 where the Negro Democratic councilman endorsed Locher. The vote in that ward was: Stokes, 8,555; Locher, 411; Perk, 263; McAllister, 24. Similar overwhelming majorities for Stokes in the ghetto wards do not reflect, however, more than 70 percent of the voting potential in the Negro community as a whole. Rather than indicating apathy alone, the number not voting reflects inadequate independent organization and a certain lack of confidence in the Negro Democratic politicians who have been elected to office in Cleveland over the past years.

In the campaign Stokes opposed the enactment of a city income tax and opposed increases in home owners' taxes. He proposed a city "value added in manufacture tax." The tax would be on the value manufacturers here add to the products they make from raw materials. For example, if a company took \$3.00 worth of raw materials and manufactured a \$5.00 product, the tax would be on the \$2.00 in added value. This tax, Stokes said, would bring \$12 million annual revenue into the city treasury.

Muny Light

At the same time, Stokes advocated sale of the city's Municipal light plant because of its "inefficiency." The Muny Light Plant, however, affords lower electric rates to thousands of Clevelanders and serves as a brake on the rate schedules of the privately owned Cleveland Electric Illuminating Company. Some Stokes supporters, including the SWP, felt that he should have called for the expansion of the Muny Light Plant and its services.

The Freedom Fighters, a number of individuals, and the SWP regarded a position for a 30 hour week at 40 hours pay for all city employes as a concrete proposal to create several thousand new jobs in Cleveland. If Stokes had

adopted this plank he could have attracted wider ghetto support and evoked a more favorable response from labor's rank and file.

Review Board

CORE, Freedom Fighters, the United Freedom Movement, a number of churches and fraternal groups had also supported the proposal for a citizens police review board. Stokes did not put this into his program arguing that the conduct of the police department is

ultimately the responsibility of the mayor's office and that if he were elected his office would always be open to hear complaints which he promised he would act on.

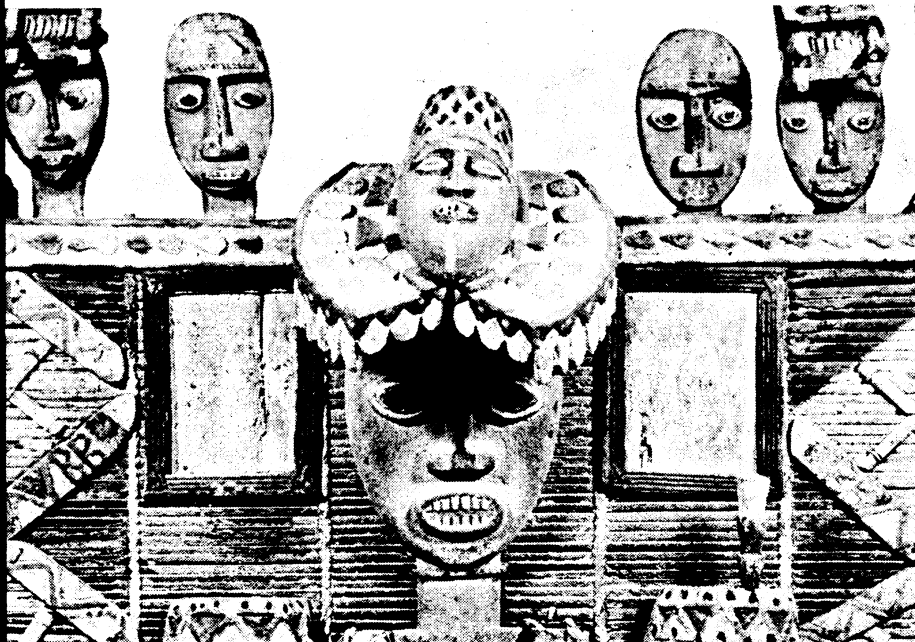
The strength shown by Stokes may force the union movement to question the policy of tying itself to the Democratic Party and to seriously consider the factor of a growing independent constituency in the Negro community which may well be the decisive factor in future elections in major indus-

trial cities like Cleveland.

The action of Cleveland Federation of Labor head Patrick J. O'Malley in doing the racist dirty work for the Democratic Party in this campaign has evoked bitter resentment among Negro unionists. Other local labor leaders are sharply critical of O'Malley's role in the elections and repercussions are expected. The fact that neither President Johnson nor any important administration spokesman intervened in Locher's behalf showed the concern of the Democratic Party nationally with the danger of losing the Negro vote.

November 22, 1965

Black Identity



"Just as a tree without roots is dead, a people without history or cultural roots also becomes a dead people."

Malcolm X

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Why Pres. Johnson Favors Stokes for Cleveland Mayor

By Eric Reinhaler

CLEVELAND — Carl B. Stokes, Negro Democrat who won the nomination for mayor of Cleveland in the Oct. 3 primary, is clearly the preferred candidate of the ruling class. Stokes has the endorsement of the Cuyahoga County Democratic organization. Both Cleveland daily papers endorsed Stokes in the primary, and the *Plain Dealer* just endorsed him over Republican candidate Seth Taft.

In 1965 Stokes ran as an independent for mayor and narrowly missed election. A short time later, Vice President Humphrey came to Cleveland to hold a private meeting with Stokes. Last year Stokes was reelected as a Democrat to the State Legislature.

Vietnam

Stokes' campaign budget was said to be \$160,000. When questioned on the war in Vietnam, he stated, "I stand with my President." This was true in spite of the fact that a large number of the more than 10,000 signers of the petition for an antiwar referendum in Cleveland were from the black community.

Stokes supported Republican Governor Rhodes' Ohio Bond Commission proposal, which was a give-away program to large corporate interests. Stokes favored selling the Cleveland Municipal Light Plant, the publicly owned low-rate company, to the privately owned Cleveland Electric Illuminating Co. Several key figures in the latter, like Ralph Besse and Cyrus Eaton, were avid backers and financiers of the Stokes campaign.

In the *Cleveland Press*, Oct. 7, political editor Richard L. Maher wrote: "Months ago it was disclosed here that President Johnson wants desperately to elect a Negro mayor in Cleveland, and that Stokes was his choice.

"Political observers feel that Johnson has written off Ohio, which he carried by a million votes in 1964, that he wants to get Stokes elected to use this as a campaign argument in other northern areas to hold large blocs of Negroes in line in 1968."

In the election two years ago, Stokes was opposed by the Demo-

cratic incumbent, the Republican candidate and by a rabid white supremacist. That election was a massive expression of the possibility of mounting a successful campaign outside the Democratic and Republican parties. The extension of it would have provided a powerful impetus to black independent political action in other large cities.

The ruling class hopes to head off such a development. They believe that the expected Stokes victory in Cleveland will have a national impact, fostering illusions about the possibility of achieving a degree of "black power" within the framework of the Democratic Party.

The only problem is that the capitalist system, and the Democrats and Republicans who support it, cannot change the oppressive ghetto conditions which gave rise to the struggle for black power. Negro representation in the Democratic machine will not change this. It will only give the ruling parties a longer stranglehold on the ghettos.

November 6, 1967

The Democrats and Black Power

Stokes' Cleveland Victory

By Elizabeth Barnes

For the first time a black man has been nominated on the Democratic Party ticket for mayor of one of the nation's major cities. It happened in Cleveland on Oct. 3 when Carl Stokes defeated the present white mayor in the Democratic primary by a vote of 103,637 to 91,369.

This election reflected, in a negative way, the tremendous potential political power of black people. Seventy-four percent of Cleveland's black voters turned out and 95 percent of those pulled the lever for Stokes. In order to win Stokes had to split off only a small percentage of the white vote, since black people comprise a large section of the voters.

The Stokes victory is only one example of the effect that radicalization in the black community is having on the Democratic Party. In Gary, Ind., a town that is 58 percent black, the Democratic

Party is also running an Afro-American mayoral candidate against a white Republican.

In Washington, D.C., where over half the population is black, President Johnson has appointed an Afro-American as the city's new commissioner and he has named five Afro-Americans to the nine-member District of Columbia City Council.

Democratic politicians are finding that they must at least appear to be responding to the needs of the black community if they are to maintain the support of Afro-American voters. The Democratic Party is dependent on the black vote in order to win, both in the cities and on a national level, and party leaders hope that by making a few superficial changes they can keep black people pulling the lever for their candidates. They are thus looking for more black candidates to run as Democratic

Party window dressing.

After the Stokes election, for example, an article in the *New York Times* commented that Democratic politicians hoped Stokes would be the Democratic Party "equivalent" of the Republican's Senator Brooke.

Ironically, it was Stokes himself who helped alert the Democratic Party to the danger of black voters leaving the party fold when in 1965 he ran as an independent candidate for mayor and was only barely defeated by incumbent Mayor Locher in a photo-finish vote of 85,375 to 87,833.

Although both Stokes and Hatcher (the Democratic candidate for mayor of Gary) have had to fight county Democratic Party chairmen in their areas, they have received enthusiastic support from more sophisticated party leaders and supporters, who realize they need a few black faces to help

cover up their real role as guardians of this racist system. Vice President Humphrey immediately responded to the Stokes victory by stating that Carl Stokes "has the leadership qualities every great city needs."

Democratic Party supporters have pushed the lie that Stokes' election is proof that freedom can be won by working through the existing political setup. Bayard Rustin said it indicated that American society is capable of "accepting Negroes" and Stokes himself stated that the victory "vindicates my faith in American Democracy."

Stokes' political program is fully

in accord with that of the Democratic Party. For example, his response to the black rebellion in Cleveland last year was to criticize the mayor for not calling in the National Guard fast enough. In addition he has successfully sponsored legislation enabling the state governor to send troops into the black community in Cleveland without getting the O.K. of the mayor.

Stokes may feel that "American democracy" has fulfilled his personal dreams, but in his position as window dressing for the Democratic Party he will only help to sow false illusions among the

masses of black people about the nature of this party which is controlled lock, stock and barrel by the enemies of black people.

As SNCC members in Washington, D.C., pointed out after the appointment of the Afro-American as commissioner, it is not the fact that a candidate is black that determines whether he will be relevant to the needs of the black community. If Stokes is elected as mayor of Cleveland he will be able to do no more to solve the problems of black people than have the black Democratic Party politicians that black people have sent to Congress year after year.

October 16, 1967

Stokes-Hatcher Victory: A Real Gain for Blacks?

By Elizabeth Barnes

The electoral victories of Carl Stokes in Cleveland and Richard Hatcher in Gary have important implications for the future of the black liberation movement, but they will not change the conditions of black people in these cities. H. Rap Brown recently summed up the meaning of the Stokes election when he characterized it as "neo-colonialism" and called Stokes a "puppet of the Democratic Party and the U.S. government."

Both candidates received the support of the national Democratic Party. Such top Democrats as Humphrey and Kennedy made special efforts to aid their campaigns. And although Hatcher adapted more to the sentiments of the black community than did Stokes, both are in essential agreement with the ruling class on all important issues.

At the same time, the Stokes and Hatcher victories are important as a reflection of the heightened political and nationalist consciousness in the black community. Stokes and Hatcher were both elected because Afro-Americans in these two cities voted black. Hatcher received 95 percent of the black vote, and Stokes received 94.5 percent. In five black districts in Cleveland, Stokes' white opponent, Seth Taft, didn't get a *single vote*.

Although they are adapting to it by running black candidates, Democratic Party politicians do not like the nationalist or "race" consciousness that was reflected in

the vote. Stokes faithfully kowtowed to their feelings by using the campaign slogan, "Don't vote for a Negro . . . Vote for a man."

Capitalist politicians are afraid that black people will start to feel the very real potential political power which they have if they unite to support, not a Democratic Party candidate, but a party of their own.

A Nov. 12 *New York Times* editorial summed up the feelings of many politicians when it commented, "Last Tuesday's elections in Cleveland, Gary and parts of the South translated 'black power,' that mischievous and opaque slogan, into the only meaningful terms it can have: political success achieved through the democratic process."

Not only do those who run this country hope that the election of black candidates will dampen the struggle in the streets, but they hope it will keep black people loyal to the Democratic Party. Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, columnists for the *New York Post*, described the elections as constituting "a plus for the White House by averting a mass 1968 defection of Negro voters."

The results of the election give important clues as to what strategy is correct for the black struggle. First of all, they show definitively that the masses of black people are still looking to the electoral process and the Democratic Party to change things. The voters came out in record numbers. It was the biggest election turnout in the history

of Gary, and the total Cleveland vote exceeded every year since 1933. In both cities, the percentage of registered Afro-Americans who voted was bigger than that of whites.

When black people voted for Stokes and Hatcher, they voted for men who have already shown clearly that they do not represent the black community on important issues. In a city where 10,000 signers of a recent petition for an antiwar referendum came from the black community, Stokes takes the position of "standing with the President" on Vietnam.

Both candidates have taken a tough attitude toward the black rebellions of this summer, and they can be expected to act not much differently from their white predecessors when new revolts occur. Stokes is opposed to a civilian police review board and has sponsored a bill in the state legislature regulating the sale of firearms.

It is a mistake to think that black people can be independent of the ruling class and remain within the Democratic Party, which the rulers control and finance. An editorial on the Hatcher-Stokes elections that appears in the Nov. 12 *Worker* shows no understanding of this fact. Hailing the "historic victories" of Stokes and Hatcher, the editorial draws the conclusion that "it is possible to challenge the present controllers of the country's political life in the Democratic and Republican parties and beat them on their

home grounds by independent political action." Independent of whom? If Johnson, Humphrey, Kennedy and other such supporters of Hatcher and Stokes are not considered part of "the present controllers of the country's political life," than who is?

The lesson to be drawn from the election is the opposite of that reached by the *Worker*. It shows what potential power black people have if they enter politics outside of the Democratic Party. It shows it is the racist Democratic Party that needs the Afro-American voters, not vice versa.

The victory in Gary was especially illustrative of this, because Hatcher had the active opposition of the county Democratic machine. When Hatcher refused to become the complete tool of local Democratic Party Chairman John Krupa, the latter attacked Hatcher viciously and was reported to have made the statement that Hat-

cher was not the "right kind" of Negro. Krupa boasted that he would "groom" such a Negro candidate after Hatcher was defeated.

The desperation felt by the Democratic Party hacks in Gary was shown when they tried, literally, to steal the election by such crude methods as adding fictitious names to the election rolls and illegally crossing off names of black voters. When they were caught red-handed, a special three-judge panel forced Krupa, who also happens to be Secretary of the Election Board, to replace the names. As it turned out, the election was so close (39,330 to 37,941) that these votes probably made the difference.

A headline in the Oct. 29 Cleveland *Plain Dealer* reads, "Gary's Black Revolt Could Wreck Democrats." Although Hatcher's loyalty to the Democratic Party means that it is only the small potatoes Gary Democratic machine that

could be "wrecked" as a result of this election — the headline reflects the constant fear aroused by the threat of black power. If black people had a political party which could provide a real alternative to the Stokes and Hatchers, it could challenge the Republicans and Democrats for control of many cities. It could split the white vote, even more than did the Stokes and Hatcher elections, if it were organized to fight for demands relevant to many whites — demands which are not being met by the two parties — such as an end to the war in Vietnam.

Stokes and Hatcher have already shown that they are going to disappoint those who voted for them. As a result there is an important opportunity for education on the need for independence from the Democratic Party and the ruling class and the need for an independent black political movement.

November 20, 1967

Leon Trotsky on Literature and Art



edited by Paul N. Siegel

"In our epoch of conclusive reaction, of cultural decline and return to savagery, truly independent creation cannot but be revolutionary by its very nature, for it cannot but seek an outlet from intolerable social suffocation."

Leon Trotsky

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VI

THE TACTIC OF CRITICAL SUPPORT

"INDEPENDENT" CAMPAIGNS AND
THE TACTIC OF CRITICAL SUPPORT

(Reprinted from the Young Socialist Educational Bulletin, 1967)

Introduction

In the 1966 New York elections, the Socialist Workers Party ran a slate of candidates for several state offices, headed by Judy White for governor. The radicalization resulting from the growth of the antiwar movement opened up many opportunities for the campaign, and helped to make it very successful.

In addition to the SWP campaign there were five other campaigns in the New York City area outside of the Democratic and Republican Parties. The candidates in these five campaigns were: Herbert Aptheker, a leading member of the Communist Party, who ran as a "Peace and Freedom" candidate in the 12th Congressional District in Brooklyn; Hal Levin, who ran in opposition to Aptheker in the 12th C.D. on an Independent Party ticket; Leslie Silberman, who ran on an Independent Party ticket in the 7th C.D.; James Weinstein, Independent Socialist Party candidate in the 19th C.D.; and Wendy Nakashima, Progressive Labor Party candidate for alderwoman in Manhattan.

These campaigns were discussed by the New York branch of the SWP which voted to give critical support to the Herbert Aptheker candidacy, but not to extend critical support to the other four candidates. The decision to support Aptheker was approved by the Political Committee.

The following two selections include the branch Executive Committee report and summary on the Aptheker campaign by Barry Sheppard, and the report and summary on the other four campaigns by Jack Barnes. Together these two reports explain how basic class criteria for independent political action are used to determine whether revolutionary Marxists can support a specific campaign in principle, what is meant by critical support, and some of the factors involved in deciding to use this tactic in certain instances and not in others.

The reports were transcribed from tape recordings of the oral presentations and edited only to assure readability and eliminate repetition.

For further reading on the question of applying critical support to candidates of the Communist Party read "Discussions with Trotsky", Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1939-40, pp. 54-66 (Pathfinder Press). These discussions held in 1940 between Trotsky and leaders of the SWP take up, among other points, the question of critical support to Earl Browder, Communist Party candidate for President in the 1940 elections.

THE APTHEKER CAMPAIGN by Barry Sheppard

I'm reporting from the Executive Committee in favor of the motion that we give critical support to Herbert Aptheker in his Brooklyn campaign for U.S. Congress. In discussing questions of giving critical support to candidates, we have to separate the question into two parts and not confuse them. One part is the question of principle and the other is the question of tactics. I will begin by discussing the questions of principle.

If it's unprincipled to support Aptheker or any other candidate, then there's no point in discussing the tactics. Any tactical advantage that could be gained by supporting such a candidate would be far outweighed by the negative results of the damage done to our principles. The basic principle we're guided by is that we don't cross class lines in politics. We never support a bourgeois party, in any shape or form. We're for independent, working-class, anti-capitalist political action against the capitalist parties. The question we have to consider is whether the Aptheker campaign falls into that category.

The program that Aptheker is running on is not the decisive question in determining whether or not we can give him critical support. Program is not the decisive question in determining whether or not we can give critical support to any candidate. If it were, we could only support candidates adhering to the revolutionary Marxist program, i.e. ourselves. We could never support any other candidate, because we alone have the program which is in the long-run historic interests of the working class.

One of the purposes in giving critical support to candidates of other tendencies in the working class, running against the capitalist parties, is to help promote a break with capitalist politics on the part of the working class, and of course to advance our own ideas, our own program, and our own party. It's a unilateral action on our part. We don't negotiate with the party to which we give critical support, and we do it for our own reasons and not for theirs.

In principle, we can support any of the candidates run by tendencies within the working class movement, provided they are running against the parties of the capitalist class. The dividing line determining whether support is principled or not is the class line.

Working Class Tendencies

What are working class tendencies? The Social Democratic parties are an example of a tendency in the international working class movement. The programs of the Social Democratic parties, including the English Labor Party, are reformist capitalist programs. Look at the British Labor Party today. It is responsible for running British imperialism, for the location of British troops in the Near East, Malaysia and elsewhere, and for putting the squeeze on the English workers. The English Labor Party nevertheless remains a tendency of the working class, because it is based on the trade unions.

A second tendency, on a world scale, within the working class movement, is the Stalinist movement. We recognize it as such, and so does the population in general. It is an important factor, inside the political vanguard of the working class, in spite of its class collaborationist program, just as the Social Democratic parties despite their reformist capitalist programs are tendencies inside the working class. The Communist parties of France, Indonesia, the USSR, etc., are all obviously significant factors within the world working class movement despite their program.

Is Aptheker running as a Communist? Can we consider his campaign to be a campaign of the Communist Party? It's true that his ballot designation is not the Communist Party. It's "Peace and Freedom." But the ballot designation is certainly not the decisive question for us. He is running as an admitted member of the Communist Party and is one of the best-known national spokesmen of the Communist Party. It's known among people in the movement that the campaign is a campaign of the Communist Party. The Communist Party made it known publicly at a press conference at their convention that they consider this campaign to be their major national campaign for the coming period. They said they were putting \$25,000.00 into it, and publicly took credit for, and as a matter of act are, the Aptheker campaign. They said that they're going to make this campaign their major national campaign, just like we're going to make our gubernatorial campaign a national campaign. In reality the Aptheker campaign is a Communist Party campaign, regardless of the form of the ballot.

The Communist Party is a tendency in the political vanguard of the working class movement. Aptheker is running against the Democrats and Republicans. For these reasons we can in principle support him. It is permissible to support him because he's running as a representative of a working class tendency against the capitalist parties.

Critical support to Aptheker has an

analogy to our conception of critical support for a labor party. It's not the same thing, but there's an analogy. We believe that a labor party, if it were formed here, might very well begin with a reformist program. But we would support that party against the capitalist parties, at the same time that we were critical of and perhaps even rejecting entirely its program. We would fight to change that program while at the same time we would say vote for that party, against the capitalist parties. That's the same kind of critical support we've given in the past to the Communist Party.

Of course, critical support to the CP is different. It is not a mass party in this country at this time. Consequently what we're talking about is a propaganda tool. The question of whether to give critical support to the Communist Party candidates is not new for our movement. From time to time, when the tactical situation was such that it was advisable to do so, the party has given critical support to the candidates of the Communist Party. Not because of their program; their program was then just as rotten as Aptheker's program is today and sometimes worse. We never support their candidates for their program; in fact we always use the tactic of critical support for the purpose of attacking their program.

The Tactical Advantages

Having established that it is permissible to support Aptheker in principle, let's examine the tactical merits of doing so. Just because it's permissible does not mean that we must give critical support to the campaign. It becomes a tactical question. For example the Socialist Labor Party runs candidates independent of the capitalist parties. However, we don't give them critical support because there are no tactical gains to be made by doing so. We're not interested in having an argument with Eric Haas about his program, and neither is anyone else.

Will it be to our tactical advantage to give Aptheker critical support? The Executive Committee thinks so, because with the tactic of critical support, we'll be able to reach young antiwar militants, especially those in the CP periphery who are going to be attracted to his campaign. It's just a fact that when someone is supporting a campaign and you walk up to them and say, "I'm not going to support your campaign," it's much more difficult to strike up a conversation with them and talk about the issues involved. It is easier to reach the antiwar militants attracted to this campaign through the tactic of critical support.

In no sense do we support Aptheker's program. We support the fact that Aptheker is running independent of the Democratic and Republican parties, but that is where

our programmatic agreement with him ends in this campaign. We agree abstractly that we'd both like to see the war in Vietnam ended, but right away that leads to the clash we've had with the CP in the antiwar movement over how to end the war. Through our critical support we will expose and attack their class collaborationist line in the antiwar movement.

There are some militants who will be attracted to Aptheker's program for good reasons, people who are looking for a militant and a socialist way to fight the war. The CP hopes to draw these people in. We hope to intervene in that process and reach them with our ideas and prevent the CP from latching onto them. We don't want them to get trapped in the CP's class collaborationist politics. These are the people that we are interested in, and we propose the tactic of critical support for gaining their ear.

The Communist Party is our major opponent in the socialist movement. At one time they could just ignore us and slander us, but because of our correct political line, objective events, our interventions over the years, and our conscious political attacks on them, we've made the tactic of just ignoring us and slandering us untenable for them. We've been able to do that, for instance, on the question of civil liberties.

In 1940 they said our leaders should go to jail, under the Smith Act, and that the key should be thrown away. After a long process, they've been forced to admit that we are a political force, with the right to speak and to exist outside of jail. They even made a statement in our defense when we were in danger of being kicked off the ballot last year. They also came to defend us at the Leo Bernard memorial. Those are big victories in overcoming the Stalinist attempt to ignore us and make us the pariahs of the radical movement.

As a working class tendency, with a class collaborationist program they are an obstacle to the building of a revolutionary socialist party that can lead the working class to power. We're in a fierce struggle with them for programmatic and organizational hegemony in the working class. So we propose the tactic of critical support as a way to oppose and help refute their program and as a means to help explain and advance our program. We can use the very fact that they are running against the Democrats and Republicans in this election to expose their line of supporting Democrats in most elections, especially on the state and national level. We can say: "Yes, we agree with you on running independent of the Democratic and Republican parties, you're on the right track with this campaign. Why don't you do it more often? Why don't you support the SWP

candidates? Why do you support the Democratic Party?" We can use the very fact of their campaign and why we support it to explain what's wrong with their whole class collaborationist line of supporting the Democratic Party.

Let's list the tactical advantages for us.

First: to explain more clearly our principled position of independent, working class, anticapitalist political action. That's our basis of support, and we'll say so.

Second: to gain a hearing among the members of the DuBois Club and the CP youth for our criticism of the CP program and to advance our own program.

Third: to reach antiwar activists and militants who will be attracted to the Aptheker campaign.

Fourth: to put the CP right on the spot. We want to say to the CP: "We're giving you critical support: what's your stand on our gubernatorial election? Are you going to support us or not?" And giving them critical support puts them on the spot, not just locally or in the 12th district in Brooklyn, but nationally, over what stand they are going to take on our campaign. If they should support us that would be a major victory internationally. Think of the leverage it would give in countries where there are mass CP's as in France and Italy if Trotskyists there could say that the American Communist Party says that you should vote for the Trotskyist SWP. Think of how we could use such a development against a big Communist party that's attempting through its size to ignore and slander our movement. Such a development is possible, but we shouldn't expect it.

Let's consider the other variant, that they won't support us. Through the critical support tactic, we'll expose them for being sectarians and opposed to the non-exclusion sentiment of the antiwar activists. They will have to explain over and over again why they are not supporting or giving us critical support when we are giving them critical support. We're not asking them to agree with our program. We're just asking them to do what we're doing. To say, "yes, we disagree with you, but we think people should vote for you, against the war-making Democrats and Republicans." They will have to explain it over and over again. To their own people and to antiwar activists. We put the CP in the same position we would be in if we used program as a criterion for not supporting them. They will have to explain why we are not a legitimate section of the antiwar movement, why we're not a legitimate section of the socialist movement, and what's wrong with our program. This will open the

way for a confrontation over our program, on a national level. Critical support is saying, "we support you, but here are our criticisms of your program. Why don't you adopt them?" We'll make it much more difficult for the CP to ignore our criticisms, because some of the antiwar activists are going to agree with us on some of the criticisms, and they're going to raise them too. We're going to convince people on the basis of our criticisms.

Pressure will be built up inside, among those who are supporting Aptheker for him to answer us and to take a stand on our campaign. To answer our criticisms and to explain why they're not supporting us would lead to a confrontation over program and a discussion with these militants, which is just exactly what we want.

Fifth: to counter the slanders of the CP that we are the sectarians.

Sixth: to win support for our campaign from serious antiwar activists in and around the DuBois Clubs. We should be able to get many of the people who support Aptheker's campaign to support ours, with the help of this tactic.

It would be a tactical blunder not to give Aptheker critical support; it would confuse people about our stand on working class political action, because this campaign is going to be viewed as a Communist Party political campaign, and our lack of support would be hard to explain. We wouldn't be able to discuss the issues with their milieu on the same kind of favorable basis that we will if we give critical support. Refusal to give critical support would risk estranging those activists who are attracted to the campaign, and shutting them off from our ideas.

We can be sure that the campaign is going to attract people. Even if they

spend only half the money they say they're going to, it's going to be an attractive campaign. If we don't give them critical support, we'll be giving them more ammunition for the charge that we're splitters. The key thing, however, is that it would take them off the hook on our campaign. Wouldn't they like that! You would be able to hear the sigh of relief coming all the way from their headquarters. They would say, "They're not going to support us and we don't have to pay any attention to them. Let them go off in their corner over there with their own campaign, and we can just get them off our backs."

We propose to give them no such advantage. We want to turn the tables on them, make them take a stand on our campaign, and that's facilitated by the tactic of critical support. We want to say, "You've been hollering in The Worker about the need for a "Peace" candidate for governor. Well, here she is, Judy White. She gives you critical support. Why don't you give her critical support?" We want Judy to be able to go to Aptheker campaign meetings and take the floor and say, "I'm Judy White. I give you critical support. Do you give me critical support?" We want to get that discussion going in their ranks. We want to get their ranks discussing our program and why they should or shouldn't give us critical support.

Critical support will advance our program and our party, and it will hurt the CP and its program. We can wrap Aptheker's class collaborationist program around his neck, if and to the extent that we can force the CP into a polemic with us over program. Critical support is the tactic which will give us that opportunity.

July 28, 1966

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SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSION ON THE APTHEKER CAMPAIGN

By Barry Sheppard

The discussion has indicated that there is confusion over what constitutes a working class tendency. Someone during the discussion said, "Well, perhaps if Aptheker was running on the CP's written out program, which mentions socialism, we could then support him." Absolutely wrong. We would never support the CP because of its program, regardless of how many times they inserted the word socialism. We will support Aptheker in spite of his program and will not give an ounce of support to it even if it was the CP's full program written out. Whether or not

they mention socialism does not determine whether the CP's a working class tendency. It is true that in the long run, we are the only tendency that represents the historical interests of the working class. However, when we are talking about a working class tendency, the criteria are broader. Here we're speaking about tendencies within the political vanguard of the class; that's what makes the CP a working class tendency. It's part of the political vanguard. The political vanguard is just as much part of the class as economic organizations of the class such

as trade unions are. In fact they're on a higher level. The class consciousness of the ordinary worker attracted to the Communist Party is on a higher level than trade union consciousness. Within this political vanguard there are different tendencies, with different programs, vying for leadership of the class, but they're all part of the vanguard of the class. That may be a bit difficult for many young people in this country to understand because of the isolation of the vanguard from the class. You get the feeling, "well, the socialist vanguard including ourselves is really not part of the working class." Just look at another country like France, or Indonesia. Doesn't it become clear that the Communist parties are part of the political vanguard of the working class?

There's one other confusion, I think. The Communist Party has certain reasons for running this campaign, and none of them are good reasons from our point of

view. The Communist Party's not running this campaign because it's in favor of independent working class political action. It's not even for a Wallace-type party. It's for working in the "liberal" wing of the Democratic Party and it intends to continue working inside the Democratic Party. They want to cover their left flank, as well as use the campaign to help build the Communist Party. However, we don't have to accept their reasons for running in order to apply the tactic of critical support to the campaign. We have our own reasons for using the tactic and they have nothing to do with the CP's reasons for running, nor does it imply support for their reasons. There is no need to worry on this point because through the course of our criticisms we'll be explaining what's wrong with their whole general outlook.

August 4, 1966

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THE SILBERMAN, LEVIN, WEINSTEIN AND NAKASHIMA CAMPAIGNS

by Jack Barnes

What I want to present is the Executive Committee's thinking on four of the independent campaigns that are being run in the New York area. Three arise out of the antiwar movement, and the other one, although it's a secondary campaign, is being run by one of our opponents and we should make a decision on how we're going to handle it.

These campaigns are Hal Levin's campaign in the 12th Congressional District in Brooklyn and Leslie Silberman's campaign in the 7th Congressional District in Queens, both of which are being run in the name of the Independent Party; James Weinstein's campaign for Congressman from the 19th Congressional District in Manhattan; and the campaign of Wendy Nakashima of the Progressive Labor Party for an Aldermanic Post in Manhattan. The motion from the Executive Committee is that we do not extend critical support to any of these candidacies.

What I am going to do is go back and review briefly the character of our campaign, and the character of the tool of critical support, especially in its application to the Aptheker campaign, and then the reasons for not applying it to these other campaigns.

There are a lot of concrete informational points about the Silberman campaign especially, which are of tactical interest because we have comrades working in the Queens Committee to End the War in Vietnam, and they will have to

deal with this candidacy in that committee. That's not the subject we're considering tonight. All we're discussing tonight is the question of whether to use, or not to use, the tool of critical support in dealing with these campaigns.

THE SWP CAMPAIGN

Let's begin with our own campaign, because naturally, the final decision on these other campaigns goes back to what we intend to get out of our own campaign. The purpose of our campaign is to present on a statewide scale in New York this year, a revolutionary class struggle opposition to the Vietnam war. What we want to do is take our program, the transitional program of socialism, the real link-up program, as our friends in the "New Left" would say, and present it educationally and propagandistically to as many people as possible who are open to the idea that this is the only program to end the war and to come to socialism. We especially want to take advantage of the layer of young people who are already against the war, many of whom are in full agreement with us about the need to withdraw the troops, and go to them with our revolutionary socialist program. We want to show them that from an opposition to the war in Vietnam, and a desire to withdraw the troops, one must become opposed to the capitalist system, and must accept a program and a party to get rid of it. It's very different from our work within the antiwar movement in which we concentrate on the single

issue of the war and on holding together the broadest coalition possible on the single issue of struggle against the Vietnam war.

Another reason we run this campaign is to emphasize and get across to those who are becoming open to our ideas, the fact that we are an historical tendency in the labor movement. We want to emphasize that we are a party, even though a small party, that intends to become a bigger party. That is why we act like a party. We, like the Communist Party, and the Social Democracy on a world scale, are the three main historical currents in the world labor movement. We take advantage of the electoral arena and the mystique around the electoral arena in the United States to hammer this home.

We also use the party's campaign as an example of a working class campaign, the type of campaign that even a small workers' party or a small Black party could run and the type of program that would be presented within a broader labor party or a broader Black party.

Finally, we use our campaign for the openings it gives us in the press and radio, the opportunity to reach the ears of millions of Americans. We educate and blast away at the illusions woven by the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois politicians. We don't run our campaign to get votes. We recognize and explain that no socialist in this period runs campaigns to get votes or to have a serious chance for victory. We don't run our campaigns in order to gain a constituency in some geographical area. Nor do we run our campaigns for any of the reasons that the Republican and Democratic Parties give. These are both illusions and obstacles, not the truth about any socialist campaign in the United States at this time.

Before moving on to the question of critical support and Aptheker, there are two concepts I'd like to differentiate from each other; one is support and the other is critical support. There is a general concept of support which we've used before in the past and will use in the future, in which we emphasize and throw total, or near total, approval to participation in and publicity for a campaign. For instance, the Freedom Now Party campaign in Detroit in 1964 was one of these. We had differences with Rev. Cleage and other FNP leaders at that time, but our focus was not on criticism; rather it was on support. We supported this campaign as a step toward a break from the Democratic Party by a section of the Black community. And over 90% of the coverage in The Militant was along that line. The more subtle points of disagreement were handled in Detroit by the comrades on the scene. The Independent Socialist Party maneuver in New York in 1958, where we actually became part of a

broader socialist electoral venture, certainly did not have our program.

Another example is the type of support we have given to the Black Panther Party in Lowndes County. There are all elements of criticism in all of these cases. But in none of them did we use our support as a means to attack these groupings; rather we used the genuine concept of support to emphasize the positive side of and to propagandize for these campaigns.

Critical support is a totally different animal. It is an instrument of struggle which the party uses selectively in the electoral arena. It's very important to think of it in this way. It's an instrument of struggle. It's not support. If you read the Militant article on the Aptheker campaign, you can see how critical support is not in any way like the support I talked about earlier.

Sometimes we can't use this instrument. When it's an issue of principle, like the Scheer campaign on the West Coast in early 1966, it's not a question of using a tactical tool; our principles rule out even the possibility of considering it. However, there are many times that we can use it and few times that we do use it. It's a selective tool.

It might be good to compare its use to the united front. The united front on another arena, not necessarily the electoral arena, is a method of struggle that the party uses, within the class struggle, against our opponents. Now, there are many times when it is principled for us to use the united front. All you've got to do is read the paper. Every day some outrage occurs somewhere in the world or somewhere in this country where our party could legitimately call for a united front with the CP, the CP and the SP, with the CP and a section of the civil rights movement, etc. An attack on the working class or a section of it, the struggle for definite goals, like state power in Ceylon, etc., are occasions for which we could call for a united front. Obviously, we don't use it every time one of these occasions comes up. This would be foolish and a waste of time. What we do is, after we see that it would be in principle valid, we then determine whether it will help us to accomplish something or help us in one of our campaigns. That is what was involved in the Aptheker discussion, and our decision to use the tactic of critical support in the Aptheker campaign.

THE APTHEKER CAMPAIGN

We did this for several reasons. The simplest way to put it is that the Communist Party is our central opponent. The Communist Party represents the other tendency in the world labor movement with

which we will be in mortal combat for the hegemony of the working class when a radicalization takes place. This is true, not only in an historical sense, and in a general political sense, but even in a concrete tactical sense today. When the chips are down, and there's a major conference or a major battle in the anti-war movement, our major opponent is not the isolated individuals or even groups of them, but the relatively well organized CP, that we saw at the 1965 NCC convention in Washington.

The Communist Party's pretense about having roots in the Russian Revolution and the fact that it addresses itself in its propaganda to the working class, breeds the gigantic illusion that the Communist Party is a party possibly capable of leading the workers to power. Thus it is our major obstacle. Among the subjective forces on the historical arena the Communist Party is the major single obstacle that we will face until the completion of the revolution. We're very unhappy about that obstacle. We don't have any foolish notion that a large Communist Party in this country is good because it makes the Left bigger, or the opposition to the government bigger. Not at all. We wish the Communist Party was nonexistent as a political force in this country. It would have been better from this point of view if in the Stalinist embryo, the Communist Party would have been aborted and destroyed. However, this is not the case, neither here, nor in most countries of the world, and because of that objective fact we have to find and utilize methods when opportunities arise to expose, attack, and educate those that we can, about the Communist Party.

We chose the tool of critical support in the case of the Aptheker campaign because of the necessity in this country for independent working class political action. The Communist Party's political campaigns and its so-called independent campaigns are all phony campaigns, used most often as a cover for the refusal to run major campaigns of their own or to support or carry out work in movements that represent genuine independent working class political action. Our approach is to add to the tool of literary polemic which we use against the Communist Party, the tool of critical support to Aptheker. Since the Communist Party is much more than a literary circle, we've got to use stronger tools.

It's important to remember that this is a tactical decision. Once we established that critical support to Aptheker is principled it came to the question of making a purely tactical decision. We could have easily decided not to give critical support to the Communist Party. There are all other kinds of tools we could have used. If we had the

apparatus and the strength and had thought the opening was right, we could have run someone against Aptheker in that Congressional District in Brooklyn. In 1968 it's not impossible, although very unlikely that the CP might run a presidential candidate. If you recall, a wing of the CP talked about it at their convention. It would be a phony cover campaign like they ran in 1936 when they were trying to elect Roosevelt. We certainly wouldn't pick the tool of critical support then. We'd pick the tool of an oppositional national slate, with candidates for president and vice-president, and run against them. We might, as in 1940, essentially ignore the campaign, neither giving critical support to it, nor running in opposition to it if we weren't in a position to. These would all be tactical decisions. The Socialist Labor Party runs often. Our tactic to them is always the same -- that is, not giving them critical support and in essence, orienting people away from their campaign. However there is no reason in principle why we could not give them critical support.

THE MINOR "INDEPENDENT" CAMPAIGNS

That brings us to the Levin, Silberman, Weinstein and Nakashima campaigns. As I indicated, I'm not going to deal with the details of these campaigns, nor the other types of tactical problems they give us. What I want to deal with are the Executive Committee's reasons for rejecting critical support to these candidates. I'm going to throw them all together in a bunch, too. Although they have many differences, the characteristics they have in common are more important for our discussion, because therein lie the reasons why we are not going to support them.

The first and most simple reason is that the use of this tool to carry out any sort of educational campaign, or to even make it a literary focus in The Militant at this stage, would be a distraction, not an aid to our own campaign. They are very small campaigns, representing very small groups of people. They are not parties, even though some of them are listed as parties on the ballot.

They are not historical obstacles to our movement, or to the revolutionary movement in struggling for hegemony. What we are concentrating on is the state-wide campaign, in which we're taking advantage of the publicity, and central focus of the electoral tension of the gubernatorial race and the gubernatorial slates in this election. We get a special bonus from the unsavory character of the capitalist candidates -- Rockefeller, Roosevelt, and O'Connor -- to hammer away with our general program. With the exception of Progressive Labor these campaigns do not represent national or

international tendencies in the labor movement, and in that sense are not worthy of our special attention. Although we have to vie with some of the individuals in these campaigns in antiwar work or recruitment, none of the campaigns represent themselves rapidly growing or significant arenas for the focus of our attention. It is particularly constructive to compare our Congressional campaign to theirs. We're running Comrade Hedda in the 17th Congressional District, not because we care about the 17th Congressional District, or think we can get votes there, or think that Hedda's going to build a constituency there. I don't even know if she'll hold a street meeting there. We decided to run this campaign as another way of using our statewide slate to push our program.

MIDDLE CLASS REFORMIST CAMPAIGNS

I have given the basic tactical reasons for not supporting these campaigns because I think they stand on their own merits. However, on the question of the Levin and Silberman campaigns, a matter of principle is also involved, and on the question of the Weinstein campaign too. These are small, middle class groupings that emerged out of antiwar committees and are running antiwar peace candidates. I was trying to think of a way to describe them when I remembered the quote from a comrade in last week's discussion. The comrade asked, "What if a candidate doesn't have any base in the labor movement or the Black community but is independent in the sense that he's not a Democrat and has a very good reform program." Then he said, "Oh, I understand," and sat down. That's the best way to describe Levin and Silberman's program. They're good reform programs. There are very few things in any of their programs that we would disagree with, but they're simply not socialist campaigns. They are simply not predicated upon a movement which is a tendency in the working class nor a movement with a revolutionary program, with a socialist or clearcut working class program.

I want to raise a caution that it is very important to keep in mind. We cannot loosely or indiscriminately apply any formal criteria. Verbal labor partyism, verbal pro-poor or pro-working class politics, and verbal working class socialism all come very cheap in this world. In Ghana, Nkrumah's party has a very firm stand on the need for the working class taking power and establishing socialism. Nasser also has a firm stand on this. I even suspect U Thant is a socialist. I merely cite these examples to show that in addition to Lenin, Trotsky, Cannon, and the Communist and Socialist Workers Parties, the use of the word socialism, or working class, does not necessarily mean anything. In

fact, any middle class movement, in a period like this, groping for some kind of base and appeal to the left of the reform Democrats would have to include something like this in its propaganda. Simply to talk about a party of the wage earners is not enough. Talk is cheap.

In addition to all these things, the Levin and Silberman campaigns have a popular front-type base, as one might expect from the dominant influence of Progressive Labor in their campaigns. They are stuck on the axis of building geographical constituencies, of seeing independence only in terms of formal independence from the Democratic Party and attempting to draw people into their campaign on the basis that they're going to try to make a serious dent on their constituencies. This they substitute for any type of revolutionary socialist policies or program.

THE CIPA VARIATION

The James Weinstein campaign, run by the Committee for Independent Politically. However, instead of a labor party based primarily on wage earners, the plank they throw in calls for an independent socialist party against corporate interests. In their mind there is no real difference. The leading figures in CIPA have similar roots. They have a history of membership in the CP, a break from the CP, a long history of reform Democratic work up to and through, at least, the Mark Lane campaign, and then a literary apprenticeship on the editorial board of Studies on the Left. Studies on the Left holds that the great turn in American socialism occurred with the establishment of the American Communist Party and the acceptance of Leninist principles and politics by the best wing of the Socialist Party.

In saying these things, I'm not denigrating the attention we might have to give to certain ideological or theoretical arguments they raise. It's accurate to consider the actual leadership of CIPA and its periphery, like Aronowitz, Weinstein, etc., as important literary figures in that milieu. Certainly they are among the most consistent in applying an anti-working class and anti-Leninist "new leftism." But the proper tool to use against them is literary polemic and theoretical polemic when it's necessary, not the tool of critical support to their literary circle from a revolutionary socialist party. People who are serious about politics don't waste time on those who are playing at politics.

This decision has nothing to do with what districts these candidates are running in or who they're running against. There is a little confusion about Levin

THE NAKASHIMA CAMPAIGN

on this issue. There's absolutely nothing wrong with Levin running against Aptheker. As I said earlier, if we could, and had the forces to do it, we would have run against Aptheker in that Congressional District in Brooklyn ourselves. What is incorrect is running against Aptheker or anybody, for that matter, on Levin's program.

Silberman, on the other hand, is running against a regular Democrat, is she not? I don't think he would even qualify as a reform Democrat. Weinstein is running against Weiss, the darling of the peace movement, at least the class collaborationist wing, in the 19th Congressional District. This, once again, from our point of view, is not necessarily to his credit or his detriment; what we're interested in is why he's running, his program, and his base.

To summarize, all three of these campaigns represent small middle class literary or propaganda circles, composed of activists who have come from antiwar committees and reform clubs. None of them have the size, the direction of development, the character or program which would be prerequisites for our party to use the tool of critical support or focus any attention on their campaigns. This also means that it is not necessarily required, nor do we intend to use the party's campaign to hammer away at them as opponents, as we will to some degree at Aptheker. If they were dangerous or major obstacles to the working class movement we would be happy to hammer at them that way; but they're not, and I doubt that we'll ever have to worry about it in their case. Leaving the principled question aside, constantly hammering away at them would be as much a tactical error as extending critical support. It would turn the attention and focus away from our campaign. Our decision not to use critical support, however, does not mean that it is necessary for our candidates or members, in conversation to point out the negative sides of these campaigns. We don't condone the action of a person who's against the reform Democrats and doesn't know what to do, so when he steps into a booth he pulls down the Weinstein lever. In many individual cases, people will do this in an attempt to vote for socialism. This was true in many individual cases when people voted for H. Stuart Hughes in Massachusetts in 1962, or voted for Henry Wallace in 1948. What these individuals think when they pull down the lever for these candidates is beside the question. What we're running is a gubernatorial slate of a revolutionary party fighting for members and for the hegemony of our ideas. We're not after votes, and we're not vying with these people for leadership of the working class.

Finally, just an extra word on the Nakashima campaign. There's definitely no principle involved in using our critical support tactic on the Nakashima campaign. She's running as an open candidate of the Progressive Labor Party, and if tactically it merited critical support we could apply it in this case. When they ran a major Black figure, at least from the point of view of the radical movement, Bill Epton, and when they supported and in essence ran the José Fuentes campaign, in the Lower East Side, we did extend critical support in both cases. In this case, it simply is not worth it tactically. It's the campaign of a Progressive Labor Party whose position in the radical movement has slipped and declined for the last year and a half, and as far as we're concerned, it would be a great victory if they were slipping and sliding towards an SLP-type stature. It's a phony campaign of the worst variety, which they're running under the geographical guise of an Aldermanic District to cover themselves. I might point out that PL is not opposed to running in the Democratic Party in principle. PL is not only the architect of the Levin and Silberman method of running and the architect of popular front politics, but the proud supporter of the theory that working within the Democratic Party is simply a tactical question.

Under these conditions, there is no principled reason to refuse them critical support, but there's no tactical gain to be made by giving attention to, or trying to dignify the Nakashima campaign with critical support. The Progressive Labor Party in the last year and a half has gone a further step toward simply being a Maoist popular front sect and there's no point in us doing anything to indicate that this has not been the path.

During the campaign this question can be handled just like we handle our position on the Socialist Labor Party. We have never in recent times critically endorsed the SLP even though they often run the only socialist alternative in a local or statewide election. Our people can handle it in the same way; a vote for Wendy Nakashima in that district will probably be a vote for socialism in the eyes of the people; from that point of view it's fine.

Hal Levin wrote us a letter saying he was happy to hear of our criticisms of Aptheker, and saying between the lines he was sorry to hear of our support of Aptheker. He wondered why we didn't feel that a progressive figure like himself who believed electoral action should take

place outside the Democratic Party merited our support. He wrote, "I call for a third party myself, based primarily on wage earners. I'm disappointed that The Militant did not consider it relevant to mention that in addition to the two major parties, an independent party, representing the most progressive elements in the peace movement, was waging a race in Brooklyn's 12th Congressional District before the Aptheker race began. I respectfully request a published reply as to why The Militant finds a campaign that calls for withdrawal and a workingman's party unworthy of discussion."

So The Militant will take advantage of this letter to the editor to reiterate the Aptheker question, and in proper proportion to deal with the general question that Levin raises about himself.

I will finish with an analogy that someone suggested to me. This has probably appeared in print somewhere before, because when anyone gives you a good analogy the chances are that everyone's

heard of it; but I hadn't. We must handle the tactical tools that are available to us -- such as the united front, or critical support -- like a craftsman, and not like drunken carpenters. The problem with a drunken carpenter is that instead of knowing just what job he's on or what structure he's trying to build at a specific time, he takes his good sharp saw and weaves around the street chopping off limbs, cutting up small fences, and searching in back alleys for pieces of wood. He thinks that every time he sees a piece of wood, he's obliged to use his saw. That's not the way we use the tool of critical support. We don't look for every independent campaign which we could possibly use it on. Rather we pick and choose.

The motion from the Executive Committee is that we not extend critical support to any of these candidates.

September 15, 1966

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SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSION ON THE SILBERMAN,
LEVIN, WEINSTEIN AND NAKASHIMA CAMPAIGNS

Several people raised questions about our position on the Progressive Labor Party campaign. First of all, we have to begin with the facts. The Progressive Labor Party is declining to the point where most of the radical community does not know whether it's still a party or not. I have yet to see any literature or anything that would represent a socialist propaganda effort. They are not even using their campaign to push PL's general politics, or to run a figure that would appear to come from the Black community or the Puerto Rican community. They are simply going through the efforts of tipping their hat in this election campaign. It doesn't merit any attention, or even a nominal mention of critical support. Since there was no question of principle involved, however, we left the door open. If suddenly they shift gears, in the middle of the campaign, and the Nakashima campaign becomes a big vehicle for PL propaganda and polemics, we might throw a couple of articles at them. But as it stands right now, it's a step backward from the other campaigns in which we've used this tool with PL.

There's one other thing that we should be especially careful of, and that is the question of whether PL's program is closer to ours than the CP's, or whether CIPA's is closer to ours than Levin's. I don't think they are a bit closer. Is Mao's version of popular front Stalinism any closer to us than Kosygin,

Breshnev, or Joe Stalin's? Once you start playing this kind of game you get away from politics, and you move towards a deadly form of impressionism.

What's the closest program to us, if you ask someone who isn't a real politician? They'd have to say the Spartacist's. If you just take their verbal positions: Trotskyism, permanent revolution, independent working class political action, a labor party based on the trade unions, a workers and farmers government, a workers' state, degenerated workers state, they're the closest to us. Verbally they are 90% correct, and that is probably even a conservative figure. But it would be ridiculous tactically to even suggest supporting Robertson if he tried to run somebody in the 89th Aldermanic District. We should reject the notion that PL is programmatically closer to us than the CP, or that Wendy Nakashima is closer to us than Herbert Aptheker. It's not politically correct in any meaningful sense at all. Quite the contrary.

It's very important that we do not confuse an established tendency in the working class and socialist movement, or movements rising out of and having genuine bases in the trade unions or the Black community, with the fact that they may have rotten, reformist programs.

For example, the formal program of the Freedom Now Party in Michigan was very

weak and I doubt that it was as good from a formal point of view as the written programs of Levin or Silberman. If we consider carefully what we are and what we're getting at, we can see that formal programmatic positions are not the crucial questions in our electoral policy. If we confuse this question we will be unable to understand why we give strong support to a Freedom Now Party with a lousy program and don't even give critical support to Levin, Silberman, Nakashima or Weinstein all of whom have programs that are better from a formal socialist point of view.

If CIPA was the Social Democratic Party in this country, with some sort of base and following, and presented an obstacle to us in the working class movement, we would probably fight them with the tool of critical support, along with other tools. I hope we never get to the stage where we have to use the tool of critical support. It means the cancer's gotten a little worse, if we have to use a little bigger weapon. CIPA is not a party, nor is it in the working class, in the Black community, or in the 19th Congressional District, whatsoever. It's a small, middle class propaganda group, and not one that's moving in our direction. Those identified or connected with CIPA -- the Weinstein-Aronowitz group -- are hardly moving towards us. They are cold, calculating, experienced anti-revolutionary, anti-Trotskyist, anti-Leninist politicians, most of whom have gone through the schools of Stalinism, reform politics, and academic petty-bourgeois socialism. They are trying to take advantage of the "New Left" at its current stage of radicalization. Furthermore it is not true that a significant number of newly radicalized young people are supporting or giving any significant political commitment to CIPA or the CIPA electoral campaign. We have seen no evidence of that. Even if it were true that they were attracting newly radicalizing youth we would not use the tool of critical support for this purpose. For all the reasons we've discussed, that's not the way we'd go after them.

There are all kinds of ways of reaching people, and there are all sorts of people that we can't reach. I'm not so sure we shouldn't ignore the people around PL. It's purely a tactical question, but I know we don't have the forces or the ability to go after all the young people in New York who are becoming interested in socialism. I can name campuses we can't get to, and fruitful antiwar committees too. This is strictly a tactical question. This is the last argument in the world that we can use to apply critical support to PL.

There are all sorts of other ways that we can reach people. There's already been a CIPA meeting where we took our campaign literature. There will be other

meetings of people discussing something on the "New Left" or some other subject at which we will want to intervene. Frankly, the major way we can discuss the ideas of the people around CIPA is not through the campaign. The question with them is not so much "are you endorsing the Weinstein campaign?" It's usually something about politics, about the pre-World War I Socialist Party, about the kind of party we are building, about the kind of party needed for American conditions, whether it would be acceptable to American workers, and all the other questions they raise in Studies on the Left. These questions are separate and apart from the electoral campaign. If you're going to argue with them on any level, this is usually the argument that you have with them.

My opinion is that it would be stretching principle just as much to endorse critically the CIPA candidacies as to endorse Levin and Silberman. I have a copy of CIPA's program, the program which they present as their main literature on the campaign. It's not a socialist program. It's not a revolutionary program. It's not a class program. There's no more socialism in Weinstein and Aronowitz's socialism than there is labor in Silberman's or Levin's party. No more. There may be no less either. But if one would have trouble swallowing Levin or Silberman in principle, one would have just as much trouble with CIPA.

The word "socialism" does not mean anything when we're dealing with groups like this, any more than when we're dealing with Nkrumah and Nasser. I suspect that some of the generals that just got done murdering the Communist workers in Indonesia would consider themselves socialists. That word comes cheap, especially to a group that has no base, and that stands for nothing in the working class movement or the revolutionary movement. I raise this because you start sloughing over much more important and much more basic things if you just consider the tactical things.

I guess the best way to put it is the way Vernon put it. We don't have to use a cannon on a flea. We should not, if we can accomplish the task, use a tool that would give any credence whatsoever to the idea that the CIPAs or the Levins or the Silbermans are socialist, have meaningful bases in the community, or are building toward the formation of political parties. They aren't political parties. They have no resemblance to political parties and I think it's dubious that they'll ever be political parties. They are propaganda groups with definite middle class backgrounds coming out of definite middle class movements which we can deal with as such. One of the activities they happen to be doing at this time is running Congressional candidates in the New York elections. We're not

dealing with parties or tendencies in
the working class movement, who as part
of their struggle for hegemony with us are

running candidates to try to fool people.

September 22, 1966