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The Unity Proposal of the Workers Party

Report to the Plenum, October 6-7, 1945

By M. STEIN

This special Plenum was called to consider the proposal of the Workers Party for unity with us. For five years the Workers Party has existed as an independent organization. Shachtman and his friends gained their independence after a long and bitter struggle inside the Socialist Workers Party. Since they split from us in 1940 they have continued the fight to maintain that independence. During the entire five years this fight never abated. On the contrary, it grew sharper, more irreconcilable with every passing month. Their declaration now that they would prefer to renounce their independence and to live once more inside the SWP is a sudden departure from their previous course.

Only last April Shachtman in reviewing the five-year history of the Workers Party wrote: "Unity is a precious thing. The kind of party that would result from unity is however, far more important. Our comrades are not disposed for a minute to trade off what they have built up for any regime that smacks of Cannonism." This means that some six months ago, they gave a categorical "no" answer to the question of unity.

This is why, when the conciliationist faction in our party brought forth their proposal for unity with the WP, our answer was a simple one, and I believe it was to the point. We said in effect: Your proposal has no basis in reality; the unity overtures must come from those who split from our party. It must come from the splitters themselves and not through any agents, not through brokers. Then, and only then, would it deserve serious consideration.

When the Workers Party finally made a proposal for unity, we gave it immediate consideration. You have before you the letter the Political Committee sent the Workers Party in reply. We furthermore sent a sub-committee to meet with a sub-committee of the Workers Party to discuss their ideas on unification, to find out whether the possibilities for fusion truly exist, how immediate these possibilities are, how practical. We called this special Plenum to submit our findings, to express our opinions, and to arrive at a democratic decision among the leadership before we commit ourselves any further one way or the other on this question of unification.

You comrades have all had an opportunity to study the Workers Party letter. You also have their latest letter, the one which came late yesterday afternoon. In this letter Shachtman summarizes their point of view on the unification and the conversations we have carried on. In addition to all this material, I now submit to you the report of the PC sub-committee which met with the WP representatives.

The Two Meetings with the Workers Party Representatives

We held two meetings with a committee of the Workers Party consisting of Shachtman, Coolidge and Erber. Let me remark parenthetically: At the first meeting I was struck by the symbolism of the accidental seating arrangement. Shachtman was seated in the middle, flanked on one side by Coolidge who came to the Trotskyist movement in consequence of our fusion with

the American Workers Party in 1934. On the other side he was flanked by Erber, the former chairman of the Yipsel organization, who came to the Trotskyist movement in consequence of our entry into the Socialist Party. This accidental sitting arrangement symbolized to my mind the whole crime committed by Shachtman against our movement. He served to arrest the development of these potentially good revolutionists, to mislead them, confuse them, miseducate them. In their fight against us in 1939-40, Shachtman and Burnham found their major source of support from among the elements not yet fully assimilated that we had won as a result of the fusion with the AWP and the entry into the SP. It was indeed a very symbolic picture to see this meeting of those who stayed true to the program of the Fourth International, and those who broke with it at the outbreak of the war at a moment of great social crisis.

In our two meetings with the WP representatives, we limited ourselves to probing, to finding out what they had in mind, how they envisaged the unity. They had the authorization of their party to seek this unity. We did not have any party authorization. They were the ones seeking the unity and we assumed, therefore, that they had definite ideas, as to the basis for this unity. We asked questions and weighed their answers without committing our party to any definite proposals.

Shachtman opened the first meeting with a recapitulation of his letter. I don't have to go into any details since you have that letter before you. I will confine my remarks to the questions that were not included in this letter.

The Deep-going Character of our Differences

During the course of the discussion several significant points were brought out by Shachtman. One is the fact that the Workers Party, like ourselves, are fully aware of the deep-going and fundamental nature of the differences between the two parties. Unlike Goldman and Morrow, Shachtman recognizes that the differences are very profound and that they are not confined to the Russian question. They are furthermore aware of the fact that this particular unity proposal is without precedent in our movement. Cannon explained this point very thoroughly in one of his debates with Goldman at a New York membership meeting. In our meeting Shachtman confirmed this estimate. Shachtman, you know, is always ready to quote any number of precedents to prove almost anything. But in this case he was at a loss to find a precedent.

I emphasize this because I think it is important for our deliberations. Anybody who says that this problem of unity is something simple, something cut and dried, something that anybody can make up his mind on with a snap of the fingers, is not facing the facts.

The WP Demand for its Own Internal Organ in a United Party

What came as a sort of surprise to us at the first meeting was the demand of the Workers Party for their own internal organ inside the united party. Shachtman's letter gave the impression that they wanted to come in without any such conditions. Shachtman's letter gave the impression that there would be no faction struggle inside the organization once the two parties were united. But this proposal for a separate organ was not in line with the letter. It was in contradiction to it.

We have had to face the problem of faction or tendency organs in the past. The Oehlerites, for example, had their own faction organ for a while before their split from us. But that was not a normal thing in the movement. It was the outgrowth of a heated factional struggle, and was followed by split. The factional struggle led by Burnham, Abern and Shachtman in 1939-40 gave us another instance in which a faction issued its own faction material on its own responsibility. But that, too, was the outgrowth of a bitter faction fight that led to split.

We were taken aback by this proposal for a separate organ. It contradicted what we thought was the spirit of the unity proposal. Issuing a separate organ inside the party requires an apparatus; it requires finances; it requires distributors—in a word, it requires a faction. Such an organ would exist as the rallying point for a faction. Shachtman insisted that their demand for

a separate tendency organ is nothing abnormal. It flows apparently from their concept of a party, a concept we do not share.

We did not argue with them over this question of a separate organ. We merely told them that we would report it to the Plenum. But it was obvious to them that we were not favorably impressed with it. Shachtman, thereupon, asked that we have another meeting a week later. He said that in the meantime they would consider this question further. At the first meeting we were under the distinct impression that Shachtman wanted to reconsider this demand. However, when we met for the second time, Shachtman reiterated the same demand, with greater vigor. He presented it as the unanimous decision of the Workers Party Political Committee. He said that while not everybody in their Political Committee placed the same emphasis on this demand, they nevertheless were all of the same opinion that this would be one of the conditions for unity.

Shachtman's Concept of the Party

At the second meeting Shachtman also gave us in outline form, an exposition of his concept of the party. I will summarize it briefly. His point of departure was the obvious difference in the type of recruit who joined the Communist League of America, and who joins the party today. Anybody joining the CLA was required to have an understanding of the Trotskyist program. The party now recruits workers on a general anti-capitalist program. Most of them do not know much about the program. This is why the party needs a trained cadre within it whose task it is to educate the new recruits towards an understanding of the program and in general to assimilate them. Well, essentially this is what we have in our party today. We have been recruiting worker-militants through our press, our work in the unions, etc. It is the task of our cadre to teach these workers the fundamentals of our program.

But Shachtman went a step further. He said that in the proposed united party we would have tendency cadres. The new worker-recruit would be confronted by two or more tendency cadres who would vie in recruiting him to one tendency or the other. He said he did not favor an all-inclusive party. He wouldn't for example permit a Catholic faction in the party. He would, of course, admit Catholic workers even though they believe in the church, but if they tried to organize a Catholic faction it would be reactionary, and he would not tolerate it. He would permit pacifists or Social-Democrats, but he would not tolerate pacifist or Social-Democratic factions.

Shachtman's exposition of a party composed of several tendency cadres, fighting for supremacy, gave us still another indication of the kind of fusion we could achieve at the present time. Such a party is, according to them, the norm.

We don't think there is an immutable law that governs for all time the relationship of tendencies inside the party, just as there is no law that prohibits at all times and under all circumstances an independent tendency organ inside the party. In the past we have shown great flexibility in adopting organizational forms to the specific political needs of the movement. But we don't believe that a party of conflicting tendencies and autonomous tendency organs is either normal or desirable. It could be tolerated when it is the outgrowth of a conflict of views arising in the course of the normal functioning of the party. But the object of such a conflict must always be to resolve the differences through the democratic channels of the party and then to return once more to normal centralized functioning.

The two meetings with the WP representatives convinced us that the proposed unity for the time being at least would not liquidate the struggle of the past five years, but would merely change the arena of the struggle. The struggle which has been going on as party to party, would, in case of unity, be continued and most likely be even intensified within one party.

The Wide Range of Political Differences between Us

There is additional evidence which leads us to believe that the unity proposal is in reality a proposal on the part of the WP to shift the arena of struggle.

Between the two meetings we held with the WP, the Sep-

tember issue of the *New International* made its appearance. I, for one, eagerly studied this issue of the magazine in the hope of finding further evidence that would help us understand the Workers Party change of mind on the question of independence, that would help us understand their sudden decision to seek unity with us. I submit this editorial in the September issue of the *NI* as part of the evidence on this question. I will read a few pertinent quotations. As I read, please bear in mind that this was written in September, precisely during the time we were discussing unity. Note the range of the political differences between us as outlined by Shachtman and note also the tone—the spirit in which these differences are presented:

“During the war, the Fourth International simply ceased to exist as any kind of real movement. It is amazing, but a fact, that for five or six years the International had nothing to say (or was prevented from saying anything) on a dozen of the most important problems of world politics. There was no international leadership; and that which arrogated this role to itself was far worse than bad: it was arrogantly bureaucratic, theoretically sterile or psittacotic, politically a thousand times wrong or impotent. In a word: the International failed completely during the war, failed in every respect, failed inexcusably. If we do not start by establishing this fact, we will not make the progress that *must* be made.”

Now here is a challenge, appearing in September 1945, to start out by establishing the failure of the International. This challenge comes from the very people who tried to stab the International in the back at the outbreak of the war. We are eager to meet this challenge, but we think it is best to meet it as party to party. This is what the resolution before you provides. We want to meet this challenge, and every other challenge that they throw at us.

They say:

“Why did the International die during the war, and who and what are responsible for this tragedy?”

Yes, let us discuss that!

“How has the International’s official theory about Russia withstood the test of re-examination and of events?”

Yes, we too want to discuss that!

“What is the attitude of the International toward Stalinism, toward what we ourselves regard as the absolutely pernicious slogan of ‘The Communist Party to Power!’ (in whatever form)?”

By all means let us discuss that!

“Was the French section (and the Belgian?) correct in refusing to participate in the national revolutionary underground movement? (We ourselves believe it was disastrously wrong in its position.)

“Was the predominant standpoint on the ‘national question’ correct?”

“What is the position of the International today (and yesterday!) on the struggle for democracy and democratic demands?”

“These,” says Shachtman, “are some of the questions that must be dealt with and resolved internationally—the most important questions.”

There are apparently a whole series of others which are not mentioned here.

And then Shachtman continues:

“The Workers Party insists upon an honest and objective discussion (no matter how vigorous) of the theoretical position put forward by the German section in its ‘Three Theses’ and ‘Capitalist Barbarism or Socialism’ in spite of the fact that our party has not endorsed the German thesis on capitalist retrogression (we have, as is known, a common standpoint with our German comrades on the ‘national question’ and the main political tasks in Europe). Our party must insist no less emphatically on the presentation and dis-

ussion of its theory of Russia as a bureaucratic-collectivist state, on its position on the ‘national question’ in Europe and Asia as embodied in its resolution and corollary documents, on its position toward the Stalinist movement, on its conception of the character and regime of a democratically-centralized Bolshevik Party and International.”

In a word, they want to have a thorough-going discussion of all the issues that have divided us, that led to the split and the struggle of the past five years. I think we should accommodate them. Does anyone have the illusion that their only concern is with an educational discussion? If anyone has that illusion let him read the full text of the editorial. What the Shachtmanites have in mind is a vigorous fight, with the Party and the International as the arena.

Some comrades would like us to believe that the question of the Soviet Union is no bar to unity, that it is of minor importance today, since the slogan of unconditional defense has receded to the background. But we said, even in 1940, that the differences did not necessarily have to lead to split. Well, they *have* led to split and it is only wishful thinking to believe that the issues dividing us now on the Russian question and all the others can be discussed in an exclusively educational polemic. There is nothing in the spirit of the editorial to indicate that this is impossible. Let me read another quotation in which Shachtman, in the manner so typical of him, tries to wipe out by a journalistic stroke of the pen the whole Marxist theory of the state. Please bear with me, the quotation is quite long. Here is what Shachtman says:

“Officially, the Fourth International still stands on the theory that Russia is a ‘degenerated workers’ state’ by virtue of the existence of nationalized property. For our part, we have dumped that monstrosity down the drain of history where it belongs. What has the rest of the International to say now? Is it content to repeat the old formulae as if nothing of importance has happened in the past six years to test this theory, or to require a reconsideration of it? It is encouraging to note, here too, that there have been no efforts made recently to defend the theory with the old intransigence, pugnacity and confidence. That is encouraging, but far from satisfactory for a Marxian movement which takes its theories seriously.

“What we are witnessing, in the International, is the *death of a theory*. It is clear that *nobody* now defends the ‘workers’ state’ theory, certainly not in the old way and with the old arguments; nobody *can* defend it. The theory is dying of lack of nourishment, dying in the vacuum which events have created around it and which prevents it from breathing, dying of lack of visible means of support. Mercy would dictate that it be allowed to die in this quiet, obscure, inanimate way. But theoretical clarity demands that it be deliberately *killed* and properly interred—*en connaissance de cause*, as the French say—with a knowledge as to the reason why—and that it be replaced with a carefully-thought out alternative theory in consonance with the realities of the living process and the principles of Marxian science.

“The basic analysis of the Fourth International, which means in this case of its leader, Trotsky, has proved to be false and untenable in the matter of the class nature of Russia. The predictions based on this analysis have been proved false and untenable. Whoever fails to take this as his point of departure in the now mandatory re-examination lacks either theoretical understanding or theoretical honesty—less than that even politeness prevents us from saying. Whoever fails to adopt the *political* conclusions that follow logically from such a re-examination for a Marxist, is certainly lost.”

Now, is this a proposal for an educational discussion? This is a proposal to overthrow our concepts, our theories, our method, and to substitute for it the concepts, the theories and methods which Comrade Trotsky castigated as petty bourgeois. Can this be achieved by a mere discussion? Can this be achieved without a knock-down and drag-out faction fight? We know

better. And that is why we insist that this discussion take place before further consideration of fusion. The list of differences between us and the WP, as you see from the *NI* editorial, is quite long. Shachtman assures us that this is only a partial list. The differences encompass theoretical questions, questions of tactics, politics and organization methods. The tone of the editorial is one of sharp and intransigent struggle. It is a challenge for a fight and it is best to have such a fight party to party.

Add to this the demand for a separate organ inside the party and you must inescapably draw the conclusion that unity is as yet premature. What is in order now is a discussion of the differences. This discussion will, I believe, be facilitated if it is carried out party to party. They will have their independent press for their polemics. We will have ours. They will have their independent organization to carry on their day-to-day work. We will have ours. We will not be paralyzed by an internal fight which would hamper the growth of the organization. With this method we could take such a discussion in our stride, so to speak. And while we are carrying on this discussion, we are, as we specified in the resolution, prepared to collaborate with the WP on practical matters in a limited way.

Now, comrades, this is, by and large, the viewpoint of the sub-committee in whose name I am reporting.

Why the Unity Proposal?

I will summarize by posing this question: How did this proposal for unification happen to arise at the present time? I think it is important to ask this question and to try to answer it. I indicated earlier that the unity proposal does not flow naturally from the developments of the past five years, but runs counter to the trend which has been one of greater divergence. Does the unity proposal flow from the fact that defense of the Soviet Union receded to the background for the present? No. Read the editorial, in the September *NI*, where you get a picture of the real conflict. The argument that our present policy towards the Soviet Union makes unity practicable has been presented by Goldman, and it is also included in the letter of the Workers Party. But I believe that this approach is too superficial. It certainly is not the real and not even an important reason why the unity proposal is before us now.

Did this proposal follow, as some comrades try to tell us, Goldman's convincing Shachtman he was wrong in the split in 1940? No, comrades, I don't believe it is a case of Goldman's persuasiveness or Shachtman's gullibility that is involved here. It was not Goldman who convinced Shachtman to seek unity. Only people who believe that life begins and ends with discussion, that all problems of the universe are resolved by discussion, can believe that Goldman persuaded Shachtman to seek unity. What convinced Shachtman and the Workers Party to seek this unity with us was not Goldman's pearls of wisdom, but something much more substantial.

I believe there are two major reasons for the unity proposal. One, Shachtman is anxious to come to the assistance of the minority in our party and our minority is anxious to get this assistance. Both Shachtman and Goldman were driven to make this proposal out of narrow factional considerations. I submit Shachtman's own testimony on this point. I quote from

his report to the Active Workers Conference of the WP held recently at Detroit:

"A sharp division is being created in the SWP. It is difficult to say at present just how it will develop. One thing is already clear, however: the minority has developed a most friendly attitude toward our party. It is already speaking in terms of unity between the SWP and the WP, an idea which is received with the greatest hostility by the Cannonite leadership. Naturally, we for our part do not exclude in advance and under all circumstances and conditions the possibility of a unification of the two Trotskyist organizations in this country. At the same time, desirable as unity is in general, we are too deeply devoted to our own principles and program and above all to our conception of a democratically-centralized (as against a bureaucratized) party, to surrender them for the sake of good fellowship. As matters stand now, we cannot, therefore, speak too optimistically about unity. A regrouping, on the other hand, is possible, even if we cannot yet speak with any exactness about the way it may take place. What we can speak about with confidence is that whatever does take place in this field in the next period will not be to the detriment of our party, its ideas and its future."

These words were spoken at the very time when the WP decided on the unity proposal. It can be accepted therefore as a motivation for the proposal. We must understand it clearly: the motivation is not unity, but a *regrouping*—the unity proposal is thus used as a means for achieving not unity with us as a party, but a bloc with our minority inside the party. This is one reason for the unity proposal. The second reason is the growing disproportion in the relationship of forces between our party and the WP. Here is how Shachtman poses this problem:

"Experience shows that in nine times out of ten cases of contacting and recruiting workers, we come into direct conflict with the Cannonites—almost everywhere in the country."

The figures of our *Militant* sub campaigns, of our financial campaigns, of our recruitment—these are some of the arguments that have convinced them that they are not doing so well.

The political supremacy we gained over the splitters in 1939-40 laid the solid foundation for the supremacy which we have achieved since in the arena of the class struggle. With Trotsky's invaluable aid we defeated the petty-bourgeois opposition politically in 1939-40. With our tested cadre, with our program, with our Bolshevik organization methods, we have gained the upperhand organizationally in the five years since the split.

Any unity that would undermine these political and organizational gains would be disastrous. This is why we will not gamble with unity. This is why we propose to probe this question further. We will go for unity when and if we are convinced in our own minds that it will help build the revolutionary party. And no one is going to push us into a premature unity. We know our party. We know its temper. We know its morale better than any of our would-be advisers. We know, furthermore, that the party will appreciate our responsible attitude to this question and will reject all the light-minded clamor for immediate unity.

OTHER PLENUM MATERIAL

The presentation and summary speeches of Felix Morrow for the minority, were not taken down stenographically. He states that he finds it impossible to reconstruct them from his notes. He states, however, that the substance of them constitutes part of his minority report on the Plenum to the New York membership meeting of October 22, which will be published in the next *Internal Bulletin*.

Summary Speech

October 1945 Plenum

By M. STEIN

Comrade Morrow apparently believes that we are addicted to the Machiavellian school of politics. This is why instead of reading the resolution we submitted, which was written plainly, simply, and said just what we meant, he tried to read between the lines and find hidden diabolical tricks. His speech was a product of his own distorted imagination.

He compared the objective of our resolution with our objective in handling Weisbord some 12 or 13 years ago. But there isn't even a superficial resemblance between the two. He told us that we are proposing collaboration with the Workers Party for the purpose of creating friction. No, he is wrong from beginning to end. We are not proposing any collaboration with the Shachtmanites where friction is conceivable. The resolution is very specific on this point. We are for collaboration only in some practical work where the political lines will not be blurred. We are against propaganda united fronts. For example, we may propose collaboration in aiding the Europeans, and in other such fields where it might be possible to work in harmony.

If Morrow gave up his belief that we follow Machiavellian politics, I believe he would be able to read resolutions as they should be read and he would in general be able to interpret party affairs correctly.

Goldman's Concept of the Party Contradicts Trotsky's

Goldman has been driving toward unity with the WP for some time. He told us he has thought about this question for a long time. I don't know whether all his moves have been consciously thought out. In any case, they follow a distinct pattern. From the very beginning, from his first outburst over the censure of the four to the present, the whole chain of disputes started by him can be characterized as a campaign to soften up this party. He wants to soften it up to put it more in line with the Shachtmanite concept of organization. He wants to soften it up so that the petty-bourgeois opposition which split from the party might once more feel comfortable within it.

Now I maintain that this campaign of Goldman's is contrary to the views held by Trotsky on the organization question, and specifically his views on the American party. Comrade Trotsky was the first to call our attention most forcibly to the preponderance of petty-bourgeois elements in the party, long before the petty-bourgeois opposition manifested itself politically. He proposed concrete measures to remedy this situation. Here is what he advised us in May, 1939:

"I continue to be of the opinion that you have too many petty-bourgeois boys and girls who are very good and devoted to the party, but who do not fully realize that their duty is not to discuss among themselves, but to penetrate into the fresh milieu of workers. I repeat my proposition: Every petty-bourgeois member of the party who, during a certain time, let us say three or six months, does not win a worker for the party, should be demoted to the rank of candidate and after another three months expelled from the party. In some cases it might be unjust, but the party as a whole would receive a salutary shock which it needs very much. A very radical change is necessary."

We first began to build the party, as Trotsky conceived of it, after the split. What we had failed to cure by consciously and deliberately carrying out Trotsky's advice on this question was achieved through a costly surgical operation. Trotsky commented on our press in the same letter I have referred to, saying the following:

"As it is, the paper is divided among various writers, each of whom is very good, but collectively they do not permit the workers to penetrate to the pages of the *Appeal*. Each of them speaks for the workers (and speaks very well),

but nobody will hear the workers. In spite of its literary brilliance, to a certain degree the paper becomes a victim of journalistic routine. You do not hear at all how the workers live, fight, clash with the police or drink whiskey. It is very dangerous for the paper as a revolutionary instrument of the party. The task is not to make a paper through the joint forces of a skilled editorial board, but to encourage the workers to speak for themselves."

The Militant has improved greatly since the split. Today it is truly a workers' paper. I don't need to elaborate this point. It is self-evident. Anyone who reads Trotsky's writings conscientiously on the question of the regime in the American party will not fail to see it. Anyone who has lived in this party before the split and after knows that the transformation which took place has been along Trotsky's line. Goldman's proposals for a cure of what he conceives as the ills of the party contradict the letter and the spirit of Trotsky's writings on this question. He sneers at the recruitment of workers. All his attention is centered on one panacea—bring into the party intellectual "thinkers."

Goldman's Courtroom Method of Polemics

I wish to deal for a moment with Comrade Goldman's courtroom methods of polemics. In the censure of the four, Goldman put the question: "Is it right or is it wrong to talk to Shachtmanites? Say yes, or no." This is the method of cross-examining witnesses on the stand. But what was involved in that dispute had nothing to do with the permissibility of talking to Shachtmanites. What was involved in that dispute is what we are still discussing—that is, the question of party loyalty, the question of subordination of the individual to the party in dealing with opponent organizations.

Today Goldman and Morrow have another puzzler, so to speak. They have us on the witness stand once more. "Is it compatible or is it not compatible to be in the same party with the Shachtmanites? Answer, yes or no."

Now we have tried to analyze the whole problem as it really presents itself. It would be interesting to compare the methods of the majority and the minority. It would be instructive to print in parallel columns our pronouncements on the question and their pronouncements, as a study in method. We have tried to show that there is no precedent in the history of the Marxist movement for the proposed unification. What does this mean? It means that from past experiences we know of only one cement that will bind together people who come from different walks of life and make it possible for them to function together in one party. That cement is agreement on program. We know furthermore from the history of the movement which is the embodiment of the experiences of the revolutionary movement, that programmatic divergences, have led not to unifications but to splits.

In addition to historical experience we have empirical proof of this in our relations with the minority in our own party. Goldman tells us that his loyalty is not to the party as an organization but to the idea. That the party is only the instrument of the idea. Now, he vulgarizes the relationship between the idea and the party. We disagree with his concept. One of the ideas to which we are loyal is the concept of the Bolshevik party. Before one decides to violate party loyalty, he must decide whether the idea he has at the moment is of such programmatic importance that it outweighs the concept of the party as the instrument of the revolution. In a word he must decide which is dominant. If the programmatic differences are very profound then the next question is: Are you prepared to build a different party on the basis of your program? This is how a serious revolutionist approaches the question. Everytime an idea pops into your head you don't say, this idea is more important

than the party. No. A serious revolutionist does not act that way.

Goldman's attitude to the party is the hallmark of the intellectual dilettante. A serious revolutionist must first be convinced that the party betrayed his program before he will entertain the idea of split. And even then, he will honor the discipline of the party, until he has exhausted all the possibilities of winning the workers in the party. That is the time to consider split—not before. Goldman is ready now to entertain the idea of split. On the basis of what? On the basis of the idea that unity with the WP is the most important task of the moment. He would break with us despite the fact that he claims to have fundamental agreement with us on program. This idea of unity has become all important to the minority. It now overshadows in their mind the question of program and loyalty to the party. This is what has poisoned the atmosphere in the party to the point where we don't seem to find it possible to collaborate.

The Necessity for Weighing Unity Carefully

Now, our differences with the Shachtmanites are certainly far greater than they are with Goldman—far greater. They have Goldman's ideas plus a number of others. Here is how Shachtman spoke of these differences at the Detroit Conference of his organization to which I referred earlier. He said:

"We did not merely form another Trotskyist organization, just like the SWP with only the difference that we wanted a 'better regime.' No, the differences extended to the question of program. Our party was distinguished from the other Trotskyist party not only in 'organizational' but also in political questions. In the course of the past five years, the number of these political differences between the SWP and the WP has increased and they range all the way from theoretical to tactical—practical questions."

If the up-to-now comparatively minor differences we have had with Goldman and Morrow have made it increasingly difficult for us to collaborate, is there anything wrong in our weighing carefully the proposition of unity with the Shachtmanites, for fear that it wouldn't work out? Is there anything wrong about it? Goldman and Morrow want us to give a yes or no answer to this question when, as I said, historical precedent speaks against a workable unity. The empirical proof of it in our own party in the fight of 1939-40, as well as in our relations with the minority, speaks against it. I am sorry, but we are not yet ready with a yes or no answer.

Goldman interjects, saying that he only wants us to answer whether the political differences are compatible; that nobody knows the answer to the question whether unity is feasible, that is, whether we can live in the same party together. All right, let us follow this out. Goldman says the political differences are compatible but he doesn't know whether unity is feasible. Why? Precisely because of the programmatic divergences. If we had agreement with the WP on program we would unite tomorrow. It is because of the wide range of disagreements that even Goldman questions whether unity is feasible. That is why a yes or no answer to the question of "compatibility" would in any case be purely academic.

We insist that the question of unity be considered in its totality and that it be considered concretely. It is wrong to separate political compatibility from organizational compatibility. The one flows from the other. We take our political views very seriously. So does the WP take its views seriously. What would happen on the morrow after the fusion? We would fight for the supremacy of our program. They would fight for the supremacy of their program. This struggle for supremacy would break out immediately after unification. That is why we propose to carry out the polemic prior to the definitive answer to the unity proposal. After a period of party to party discussion we will have a much clearer picture.

Goldman's loyalty to his "idea," so-called, drives him inexorably into violating the most elementary concepts of party loy-

alty. Now, as I said, Shachtman and his friends have differences with us far more profound than Goldman's. What test can we go by to decide whether they would, be loyal to a party whose program they don't agree with? Just a promise from Shachtman in a letter to us that he would abide by democratic centralism. As against this promise we have the experience of the 1940 split. Shachtman's adherence to democratic centralism did not prevent him from splitting the party five years ago. Can we in the light of that split accept Shachtman's promise on its face value? The two meetings we had with Shachtman, Coolidge and Erber did not convince us that we can. On the contrary, we were convinced that the unity of the two parties would not be practicable for the present. We are in no hurry. We can take our time and probe this matter further. In the meantime we will go through with the political discussion, and following it draw conclusions.

We Are Against "Unity" Maneuvers

In his first speech Comrade Morrow read excerpts from a letter he wrote Goldman in which he reported my remarks at a Political Committee meeting. He told Goldman that I gave Morrow the impression that this Plenum was called to authorize unity negotiations. I don't remember exactly what I said. I don't remember whether I committed myself so specifically. But it is true that we did entertain the hope that in our meetings with the WP we could find a solution to the split. We took their second letter to mean a significant step in the direction of unity. I will state very frankly that I and other comrades with me thought that we could find a way to effect unity. And that if we could it would be a good thing. It would eliminate a rival party with a rival press. It would eliminate this element of confusion and strengthen our party. But we cannot decide our course on the basis of wishful thinking. If we did we would be in for a great disappointment. We approached the question of unity very sincerely. We did not have any maneuvers in mind and we don't have any maneuvers in mind today. We entered those meetings with the WP in the hope of finding a solution for the split. We didn't find it. We were convinced it could not be solved in the immediate future. We would be very irresponsible indeed if we didn't act on the basis of this conviction.

You see, we are not for a monolithic party. This is why we could entertain the idea of unity seriously. Goldman and Morrow are just as wrong on this as they are on other questions. Even now we are not discarding the idea of unity. We want to have a thorough-going discussion to probe all the differences, to demarcate clearly our political line, and then take the question up for decision.

Goldman demands that we say whether the political differences between us and the WP are compatible within one party. He demands that we answer yes or no. His real purpose is not so much to find a correct answer to the question of unity. This becomes evident in his own admission that even after this question has been answered in the affirmative we are not much nearer a solution. Then we must answer the question of what he calls "feasibility." The question as to political compatibility is to him only a means by which he hopes to indict us as people who believe in a monolithic party.

Here is his line of reasoning: If our answer is that the political differences between us and the WP are not compatible in the same party, that only proves that we want a monolithic party. A monolithic party equates with Stalinism, therefore, we are Stalinists. This provides him with a perfect syllogism. But this kind of "logic" doesn't go very well with us. This same argument can be turned the other way. With the same logic we can say to Goldman: You believe that the political differences between us and the WP are compatible within one party. This means you believe in an all-inclusive party, this equates with the old Social-Democratic concept of a party, therefore you are a Social-Democrat. This type of argument reduces questions to an absurdity. It certainly does not advance us a single step towards a solution of the problem before us.

We approached the question of unity with an open mind. We weighed it carefully, taking into consideration all the elements involved. I believe I am justified in saying that we gave this

question of unity the benefit of the doubt. However, the two meetings convinced us otherwise. Shachtman's article in the September *New Internationalist*, which is in essence a declaration of war against our point of view, against our program and concepts, gave us the signal. His demand for a separate tendency organ was symbolic of what they have in mind. In reality they do not want a unification but an "entry" into our party in order to gain for themselves a more favorable arena. Since our concern is first and foremost for the interests of our party, we concluded: No, this is not yet the time. This is the meaning of our resolution.

How come that neither Morrow nor Goldman attempt to meet our arguments on this question? They have not yet said a single word on the significance of the fact that the proposal for unity of organizations with such a wide range of differences is unprecedented. They have not yet uttered a single word on this.

Let me repeat: On the negative side of the proposal for immediate fusion, we have a warning precedent as well as the empirical proof within our own party. On the positive side, we have only a statement by Shachtman that he would submit to democratic centralism, and that too, with reservations. They demand their own organ. Goldman and Morrow have been evading all these questions. Comrade Natalia says that unification is a thousand times more important than the defense of the USSR. But that is not the way to pose it. The correct way to pose it in my opinion is: Will such a unification strengthen the revolutionary party or will it lead to another faction fight and another split? That is how we have posed it, and I believe it is the only correct way. The minority tells us that in 1940 we said the differences were compatible. But a split followed after we said that. Aren't we correct in approaching this question all the more carefully today?

But Goldman is in a mood of reckless haste. He believes that unity with the WP will resolve his personal inner contradiction. I indicated this at the May 1945 Plenum. Goldman is fascinated by the type of party he thinks the WP is. A party of free spirits. At the same time he professes political agreement with us. He believes he can have both through unity of the two organizations.

Goldman's Evolution Since 1943

Comrade Goldman started out at the October 1943 Plenum with a break with the cadre of our party. Comrade Frank described earlier today how Goldman proposed at that Plenum to resign from the National Committee in order to go to the ranks and educate a new cadre. You remember he withdrew his resignation. But he did make the attempt to organize a new cadre in our party. However, he quickly lost patience with this experiment, simply because he found no sympathy for his point of view in the ranks. He is now trying a new experiment. He is still looking for the cadre that will lead the American revolution.

At our Plenum last May he served notice that he is no longer looking for this cadre in our party, but he is looking for it elsewhere—in Shachtman's organization. He told us that he would prefer 25 leading Shachtmanites to 500 workers. I can assure Goldman that he will be sadly disappointed if he continues his course of seeking for a cadre inside the WP. Goldman should study the Internal Bulletins of the WP before it is too late.

At our last convention I spoke about the Chicago branch where all the fast talkers monopolized the floor and a worker didn't get a chance to express himself and didn't understand what the others were talking about. I am glad to say that the Chicago local has since then undergone a complete transformation. From Shachtman's speech at the recent Detroit conference of the WP it would appear as if he plagiarized my remarks on Chicago and directed them against his party as a whole. He is carrying on a fight against the "thinkers" in his party. Goldman is doomed to disappointment if he leaves the SWP for the Workers Party. His pessimism would sink even lower.

Goldman tells us that the death of Comrade Trotsky was a terrible blow. Yes, we feel it as much as he does. But to say that the death of the Old Man was followed by sterility in our party is a monstrous lie. We have tried through the collective efforts of the party leadership to make up for the death of the

Old Man. We know we can't do it fully. But we have done the best we could. The evidence of it is in the building of the party. There is no other. At the October 1943 Plenum I told Goldman that his complaints would have merit and would justify a faction fight only if the party leadership practiced exclusiveness, if it did not permit the thinkers to think and put their thoughts down in writing for the education of the party. If this were the case I would join Goldman in the fight against such a leadership.

But this hasn't been the case. Goldman can contribute his thoughts. If he had a constructive attitude toward the party, he would find a way to collaborate and in his own way try to make up for what he thinks are the deficiencies within the party. This is the only responsible attitude. We don't have the man. But we have a cadre. Goldman's theory—or rather, his moaning—about the death of the Old Man, his wringing of hands was also part of Roland's trouble. Roland's pessimism led him right outside the revolutionary movement. He quit the party, as you know. The solution is for everyone to contribute all he can to party thought. To help shape party opinion.

A faction fight in our party, in a party which permits the free expression of every man's talents, a party that seeks out everyone with ability and puts him to work—an unjustified faction fight in this party is a criminal act. Some have tried to make the demagogic argument that we are against factions in principle, that we are afraid of factions, etc. No, all we say is that you have no justification for a faction because the party permits the freest expression. By shutting yourself off in a faction you are in reality practicing exclusiveness from the party as a whole. You are shutting yourself off from the party, and that is how the party understands it.

Goldman's Prediction that He Will Be Expelled

Goldman said here with a confident air that we are going to expel him. Why? What prompts him to say it? Whom did we ever expel? Did we expel the Oehlerites? They engineered a split. Did we expel Field? Yes, after he flagrantly violated the discipline of the party. We expelled the Shachtmanites, yes—Goldman was with us in that expulsion. But we expelled them only after they broke with the party. What makes Goldman say we will expel him? Is he planning to follow the course of the Shachtmanites? Is he planning to follow the course of the Oehlerites?

We are great believers in tradition. Expelling people for their point of view has never been part of our tradition. Never! Is Goldman planning to embark on a course of violating party decisions and acting disloyally towards the party and its discipline? That is the only conceivable circumstance under which we would expel him.

I don't believe Goldman can find an unjustified expulsion in the whole 17-year history of our movement. I would like him to mention even one. That is why there is only one interpretation we can give to his charge that we are going to expel him. It means that he is now planning to split from the party for the second time. This is the only possible interpretation.

Goldman tried here to vulgarize Trotsky on the question of tradition. Trotsky never disparaged tradition; he spoke of the conservative effects tradition may have at times, but that does not mean you just overthrow tradition altogether. Yes, it is wrong to be a slave to tradition. That is correct and that is what Trotsky spoke against. But I said we are great believers in tradition because tradition to us represents the embodiment of the experiences of the revolutionary movement.

Now Comrade Goldman says that he has lost prestige so many times that it is not of too great consequence. Here again it is only a case of formal thinking and superficial analogies. It depends with whom you lose prestige. It depends on what you mean by prestige. By prestige in our party we mean ability to give leadership to the proletarian revolutionists. Their appreciation of that leadership constitutes prestige. That is what we mean by prestige. When you lose prestige by breaking with the Stalinists, you gain prestige with the revolutionists. When you lose prestige by getting expelled from the Socialist Party, you

maintain your prestige with the revolutionary elements. But when you lose prestige in our party you lose prestige with the revolutionary vanguard.

What course is there left if you don't care about your prestige in this party? To go out and start over again? We have built this party over a course of 17 years. Some leaders of this party were leaders in the Communist Party, with the prestige that came from that. We built this party with the help of the Old Man, on the basis of the writings of the Old Man, with his day-to-day guidance for a period of years! Goldman now declares this party bankrupt. What can he hope to reconstitute? What can he reconstitute without the prestige of the best elements in this party, without Trotsky's contributions? And I might add, against the Old Man, because everything the Old Man had to say, all his ideas, all his thoughts on questions of politics and or-

ganizational methods are embodied in this party. What chance does Goldman have to reconstitute anything? This explains his deep pessimism.

It is hopeless, he says. If it is hopeless in this party, it is hopeless everywhere. Outside of this party there isn't a chance and that is why serious revolutionists don't play with the idea of splits. Far from being pessimistic, our party is imbued with the spirit of revolutionary optimism. It is proud of its composition, of its achievements. Rather than Goldman's prediction that this party will degenerate into a trade union educational league with a political veneer, I predict that we will witness in the next period the accelerated politicalization of the American working class, and in this process the party will grow not only in numbers, but in stature.

Questions, Answers and Arguments at the Plenum

By ALBERT GOLDMAN

Note: After the opening report on behalf of the majority, made by Comrade M. Stein, some comrades asked questions of the minority representatives. I did not answer all of the questions then and am not doing so now. I am replying to the serious ones and consider all others either answered or not deserving a reply. I am also answering some arguments I had no chance to answer at the Plenum.

* * *

Right of Tendency to a Bulletin

Question by Comrade Cannon: In point six of the resolution submitted by the minority, here is a statement that the right of any tendency in the Trotskyist party to have a bulletin of its own is taken for granted. In the PC meeting, two weeks ago, Comrade Goldman expressed himself as opposed to the whole idea of internal bulletins. I would like to ask if, by the right of a tendency to have a bulletin of its own, is meant a bulletin that can be distributed on the outside as well as inside of the party, if the tendency so desires.

Answer: It is not correct to say that I am opposed to the whole idea of internal bulletins. It is correct to say that I consider it wrong to look upon the party as a sort of Masonic Lodge with rituals, rules and secrets.

The party is a party of the working class and its internal life—its discussions and methods of arriving at decisions—should be open to all advanced workers who are interested. Every political discussion, and this includes discussion on important organizational questions, should be made available to all who are sufficiently interested in the party to desire knowledge about them.

It is significant that Lenin, writing some years before World War I, gave as his criterion for the democratic nature of the Social Democratic Party of Germany, the fact that the party had no secrets and that its conventions were open to the public.

Every experienced political person understands that it is impossible to keep important discussions in a large party a secret. Why did the Stalinists recently have a bitter public discussion on the differences between Browder and Foster? They certainly do not believe in public discussion as a matter of principle. They simply took it for granted that they could not keep a discussion involving the ranks of the party a secret. I do not claim that this is the only reason for their public discussion but by itself it would have been a sufficient reason.

It must be taken for granted that in a large party everything that is known to the members is also known to the people who are interested in the life of the party. It follows therefore that practically it is useless to try and keep any discussion a secret by means of an internal bulletin. I insist, however, that our policy with reference to keeping discussions secret, must not be based merely on the practical ground that in a large party it is impossible to keep secrets. It must be based rather on the idea that our party life should be an open book to all advanced work-

ers and others who are not members of the party but close sympathizers and are interested in its life, I repeat: the party is a party of the working masses and not a secret society.

Some of you remember that in the factional struggle of 1939-40 the question came up of permitting the minority to publish articles expressing their viewpoint in the *New International*, at that time our theoretical organ. Comrade Morrow and I voted to have the discussion articles printed in the magazine.

At first Trotsky agreed with us but later changed his mind. It is important to understand however that he considered the question as purely a practical one. If I am not mistaken he expressed the idea, in one of his letters, that publication of minority articles in the *NI* would make it more difficult for the minority to retreat because they would then have committed themselves before the public. I considered that reason totally inadequate. I argued that to refuse publication would furnish the minority with a new issue, intensify the struggle and, in spite of Trotsky, set a precedent. And so it turned out to be. Later on Trotsky also gave as a reason that the minority should not be permitted to appeal to the petty-bourgeois intellectuals outside of the party.

Whatever one may think about these reasons, it is clear that Trotsky did not decide the question as one of principle. From the remarks of Comrades Stein and Cannon one could conclude that it has become a principle to allow minority articles in the theoretical organ *only after the discussion is over*. We must then notify the world that a discussion has taken place and the result of that discussion.

It should be carefully noted that in 1939 I limited my motion, to permit the minority space for discussion, to the theoretical organ. I was then opposed and am now opposed to carrying on a discussion in the agitational organ. Some discussion is of course permissible and necessary even in the agitational press but it should be confined to a point made by some writer with which some reader may disagree.

Am I in favor of publishing all discussion articles in the theoretical organ? By no means. I am in favor of publishing only the best on either side of the controversy. Articles published in our theoretical organ should have a certain tone and, at all times, a high standard of quality. What tone and what quality must necessarily be left to the editorial board.

A discussion in the theoretical organ would itself tend to modify the tone of factional articles. One conscious that he is writing for a magazine read by the wide public, would be careful to avoid all factional dirt.

There should of course be a party discussion bulletin where articles not good enough to be published in our theoretical organ should find a place. But even this discussion bulletin should not be kept a secret from the outside world. There is a difference between an internal party bulletin the giving of which to one outside of the party is considered a crime against the party and a discussion bulletin for the purpose of giving all party

members a chance to write and for articles of inferior tone and quality.

Who will decide which articles should go into the theoretical organ and which into the discussion bulletin? I am perfectly willing to submit the matter to an editorial board—competent or incompetent—provided at least the principle is recognized that it is the quality and tone which should determine whether an article should be published in the theoretical organ or in the discussion bulletin.

* * *

I have stated that every tendency in a Bolshevik party has the right to its own bulletin if it desires to have one. I do not propose that as an immutable principle but I would insist that it be stated as a general rule, recognizing that the rule can be violated only under the most exceptional circumstances. Under Lenin and Trotsky the Bolshevik party, at its Tenth Congress, prohibited factions and factional organs. Whether this was correct or not need not be discussed. It was necessary only to remember that Trotsky has always insisted that this was done under the most exceptional circumstances and that the general rule is that in a Bolshevik party the right to organize factions, groups and tendencies must be taken for granted.

In my article in the last issue of the Internal Bulletin I quoted from an article of Trotsky, published in the October 1939 issue of the *New Internationalist*. In it Trotsky speaks only of factions and groups but it would indeed be a piece of scholasticism to make a distinction between factions and factional organs.

This does not mean that it is correct for comrades to publish their own organ whenever they feel like it. It is to be accepted as a principle that publication of a tendency organ is to be resorted to only under exceptional circumstances. A party discussion bulletin and the theoretical organ of the party should suffice and satisfy all comrades, under normal circumstances.

But if a group of comrades wrongly and foolishly decide to issue their own bulletin there should be no prohibition against it. It is up to the leadership of the party to discredit them for taking a wrong step.

The general rule stated above is also applicable to the comrades of the WP who have indicated their intention to publish a bulletin for their tendency if and when there should be fusion. We must recognize their unconditional right to do so. Should we refuse, then, to be logical, we must also prohibit those now in the party from publishing their own bulletin if they see fit to do so. It would mean in fact the prohibition to publish factional organs, a serious step in the direction of monolithism.

If the present minority should not be prohibited from publishing its own organ and only the comrades of the WP should be forbidden to do so, then two classes of membership are created—one class prohibited from doing what another class is permitted.

In recognizing the right of the WP comrades to publish their own organ when and if unity is achieved the minority does not intend to say that the WP comrades *should* do that. It is obvious that unity will be aided if the WP comrades refrain from exercising the right to publish their own organ. Hence we shall strongly urge them to be satisfied with a discussion bulletin. But we shall insist that they have a right to publish a tendency organ and shall oppose any attempt to make the giving up of that right a pre-condition for unity.

Distribution of Discussion Bulletin

Question by Cannon: If you give them the right to have their own discussion bulletin and, if you were in the majority, would it include the right to distribute it outside the party and a right to have their own editorial board? What possibility and right would the party have to censure or regulate the distribution of the paper?

Answer: The party has a right and a duty to control the bulletin of a tendency, if that bulletin goes beyond the legitimate purpose of convincing the membership of the party to its point of view and begins a campaign to get the workers to act contrary to party policy.

In every instance the action of the party would have to be determined by the question: Is it a tendency bulletin with the

legitimate purpose of convincing party members or is it in reality a public organ agitating against party policy?

If it is a tendency organ then the fact that some copies reach non-members who are interested in the questions treated by the bulletin, is immaterial. It may well be that a tendency bulletin has a large circulation outside the party. That would simply mean that a large party has many sympathizers interested in the discussions of the party.

Naturally every group in the party must abide by the decision of the party with reference to the distribution of discussion bulletins to non-members. If the majority insists that party discussion bulletins should not be made available to non-party members or if the majority insists that there be no discussion in the theoretical organ then the minority must abide by that decision no matter how foolish it may be. So long as the minority is granted the right to publish its own bulletin then the minor question of distribution is one upon which the minority can afford to submit.

It is possible of course to reduce the concept of the right of a tendency to publish its own organ to an absurdity. With the growth in the size of the party we may have a tendency organ for every thousand members—so some wiseacre will argue. But let me point out that under Lenin and Trotsky the right was not questioned and before and after the October Revolution there was no split because the right was recognized.

A correct policy of the leadership is the main factor in preventing a situation where the party is nothing but a group of factions. In a healthy party factions will exist temporarily and will disappear with the disappearance of the issue that brought them into being. A tendency may exist for a long time but only in exceptional cases. I can readily see where a tendency, such as the present minority represents, basing itself on the concept of a Bolshevik party can last for a long period but even in such a case ultimately the differences will disappear or become so sharp as to make it impossible for the different tendencies to live in the same party.

The ideal is not to have factions and factional organs. By this I do not mean that the ideal is to have no differences of opinion but to have such a healthy party that differences are discussed and settled without factions and factional organs. But the point we are discussing is not some abstract ideal but the attitude of the leadership of a party to the formation of factions and the publication of factional organs. *The general rule should be recognized: no prohibition of factions or factional organs.*

Cannon gave us a dissertation on the looseness of the Socialist party in this country prior to the First World War and to the organization of the communist movement. He told us that whoever wanted to and had the resources could and did publish a paper. He did not expressly say so but the conclusion is that we must now not permit the existence of tendencies and tendency organs in the party. For what is the purpose of Cannon's dissertation? Is there anyone proposing that an individual or a group in the party should be given the right to issue public organs? Cannon has that habit of creating a straw man and then valiantly knocking him down.

The problem for us is to avoid the looseness of the socialists and the monolithism of the Stalinists. It is not difficult to get an admission from us that there are dangers inherent in freely permitting the existence of tendencies and tendency bulletins. But these dangers are far outweighed by the dangers of prohibiting factions and factional organs, that is, by the dangers of monolithism.

When we come to the question of unity and the demand of the WP comrades to have a tendency bulletin, it is first of all necessary to realize that this question cannot be settled at present when neither the majority of our party nor the WP is enthusiastic for unity—to put it very mildly. Both sides fear unity because they fear a bitter factional struggle following union. In such an atmosphere of lack of confidence it is impossible to solve the problem of a tendency bulletin.

It is first of all necessary to create the proper sentiment for unity before a calm and objective discussion can be carried on, on the question of a tendency organ. It is first of all necessary

to cooperate and prepare the membership of both parties for unity before taking up the question of a tendency organ. At this time it is only necessary to recognize the right of any group to have its own organ if it so desires.

After a period of sincere cooperation there will either be a real desire for unity in which case the question of a tendency organ can be solved either way without difficulty or the suspicions and fears will still prevail and there will be no unity.

We of the minority would vote against immediate unity if such a proposal were made. For we know that the members of our party have been terribly miseducated on this question. In the history of our movement there has never been such a case of miseducation as has occurred in the discussion on unity. Our members were taught that the political differences between us and the WP are irreconcilable and unity impossible because of them. Not so long ago Cannon sneeringly asked me what there is to discuss with the WP. Now he wants only discussion.

There are members in the majority faction who want unity; others are opposed to unity; still others do not know and are waiting to follow the leadership. Most of the majorityites think that unless the WP gives up its ideas with reference to the Soviet Union we cannot have unity. They are in a condition of confusion worse confounded. And that is only natural because the leaders whom they follow have succeeded in confusing them.

The ranks of the majority are bitterly hostile to the demand of the WP for a tendency organ. Cannon himself is unwilling to state definitely that unity is impossible because of the demand of the WP for a tendency organ. Because he would find himself in an embarrassing position were the WP suddenly to decide to give up the demand and be satisfied with an internal bulletin.

The resolution of the majority says nothing about the question of the tendency organ. It thus permits the secondary leaders of the majority to go around and agitate the ranks against unity because of the demand for a tendency bulletin, while Cannon does not commit himself on the question.

Does a tendency organ mean a bitter factional fight? Not necessarily. The desire to have a tendency organ is not the sole indication of the degree of factionalism. The minority tendency at present has no organ of its own and yet the factional bitterness in the party can hardly be greater. An educational tendency organ is just as possible as a bitter factional fight without a tendency organ.

At this time the only solution for a cessation of the factional atmosphere is unity. The only unity that is worth while is unity without a factional struggle. To achieve that unity it is necessary to re-educate the membership to prepare them to see in unity a strengthening of the party and to realize that the political differences are compatible with membership in a united party.

Loyalty

Question by Andrews: Did you, Comrade Morrow and Comrade Goldman, turn over to the Shachtmanites your resolutions for fusion which they printed even before we had it in our Internal Bulletin? Have you had meetings or discussions with them since the occasions mentioned in the Minutes that all the comrades received? If so what was the attitude of the WP leaders? What did they have to say and what did you have to say in those meetings? Have you made reports on these meetings to the Political Committee and if you didn't, why didn't you? Have you discussed with them just prior to this Plenum or during this Plenum? Tell us all about it.

Question by Wood: Comrade Goldman dismissed the questions that Andrews asked him. He says they are not serious. I want to ask the very same questions. You will admit that the circumstantial evidence is against you. You are going behind the back of the party. Why then do you stand on your dignity and refuse to answer. We want to know. The membership in the field wants to know. Are you loyal to our organization?

Answer: Yes, I said the questions were not serious and I would not take the time of a Plenum ostensibly called to discuss unity with the WP to answer them. But I see that if the questions are not serious to me they are serious to you and

I shall therefore answer them. I shall answer you only, however, on the general proposition of loyalty. It is too difficult for me to answer some of the questions put to me by Comrade Andrews. They are on the lowest possible intellectual level. It is sad and extremely discouraging that all of our controversies have revolved around such questions as the propriety of talking with opponents and whether a letter written by a friendly critic should be published in the *Fourth International*. Since the death of Trotsky the intellectual level of our discussions has fallen close to zero. Even such an important discussion as the one on the problems of the European Revolution has been dragged down by the majority to an inconceivably low level.

What does loyalty to an organization mean? In the last analysis, for a revolutionary Marxist, it means loyalty to ideas which the organization has been created to struggle for.

When one considers the history of the socialist movement in the last thirty years it is clear that simple loyalty to an organization can result in the victory of the counter-revolution. The hundreds of thousands of sincere workers who were loyal to the socialist and Stalinist parties had the same idea of blind loyalty to an organization that is suggested by the questions put to me. It is the conservative but natural loyalty to an organization on the part of sincere workers that makes it so difficult now for our parties in Europe to grow. Did we not expect that the European workers after all the betrayals would rally to a revolutionary party? But they did not. They cling to the parties they created and are loyal to. The revolutionary vanguard needs a different type of loyalty, a loyalty to ideas and not to an organization, which, in the last analysis, means the leadership of an organization.

A comrade old in the movement, in a conversation with Comrade Morrow, told him that it was useless for the minority to fight. He said that the workers like to be told what to think and what to do. This comrade did not understand that he was giving up the very basis of our struggle for socialism, the creation of a critical and independent group of workers who cannot be told what to do and how to think.

Some of you have interpreted my remarks to mean that I blame the failure of the revolution on the workers. What shallowness! When I say that the workers are naturally conservative and follow the leadership of an organization they built, that immediately shows that I consider the problem of leadership the all-important problem of our generation. And the highest duty of a revolutionary leadership is to create a critical and independent spirit, a phrase which always gives a laugh to the philistines.

In this controversy about unity the question of loyalty has been raised in a manner which completely miseducated the membership. Form has been raised above substance. What has been emphasized are mere insignificant formalities as against the real substance of loyalty, the loyalty to the idea of building a revolutionary organization where legitimate differences are expected and discussed on their merits.

The minority starts from the fundamental proposition that the comrades of the WP are devoted revolutionists, that they have proved themselves to be such in the period of the imperialist conflict. We start from the proposition that they belong to the *Fourth International*.

It is inevitable that we should have very friendly relations with the comrades of the WP and that we should discuss the question of unity and urge them to favor unity. Were we to do otherwise we would have been disloyal to the party that we want to build.

At present the minority goes further. When the WP indicated its willingness to unite with our party and to submit to discipline in action whenever they found themselves in a minority, we had to consider them not only as devoted revolutionists who made a mistake by splitting but as a tendency in the *Fourth International*. We now recognize three tendencies in this country—the Cannonite tendency, the WP tendency and ours. I shall not now go into the differences between the tendencies. It is sufficient when I state that they exist as far as we are concerned.

Truth compels me to state that right now the bond that ties

us with the WP tendency is stronger than that which binds us to the Cannonite tendency. The questions of the nature and the defense of the Soviet Union are now remote and the questions of unity and the struggle against the creation of a monolithic party are the important issues. On those issues we see eye to eye with the WP comrades. Another important question is the utilization of democratic demands to mobilize the masses of Europe for the socialist revolution and on that issue the WP is closer to the minority.

It is only because there are formally two parties that the bloc of the minority with the Cannonites exists. It is only because we are so interested in achieving unity of all three tendencies in the Fourth International that we adhere to the formal rules which bind us, by virtue of the fact that there are two parties.

What some of the majorityites consider disloyal we of the minority consider loyal. We consider it our duty to talk to and convince the WP comrades that they should be for unity, without any strings attached and without making any maneuvers. We are certain that we have succeeded and that the WP comrades are sincerely for unity although they fear it because they know the attitude of the Cannonites.

Since our concepts of loyalty clash it is incumbent upon the majority to lay down specific rules of conduct. If the majority thinks that to discuss the question of unity and all its ramifications with the WP comrades is disloyal let them say so specifically and forbid such discussion. The minority will then decide whether to abide by the rule or leave the party. Leaving the party is an alternative because we would consider such a rule as an indication of the party's degeneration.

Comrade Frank contends that no such rule is necessary. Just as we do not pass a rule against crossing a picket line so do we not pass a rule against talking or discussing with the WP. And we expect that no comrade will cross a picket line. As usual Frank's analogies limp. If some comrade contended that to cross a picket line is perfectly justifiable and would demand a rule against it before he would submit, then I for one, hating formal rules as I do, would not hesitate to pass such a rule. The very hesitation of the majority to pass a specific rule prohibiting the minority members from discussing unity with the members of the WP shows on what weak ground the majority stands.

The members of the minority will continue to regard and treat the members of the WP as devoted revolutionists and will discuss with them all aspects of unity. Let the majority take such action as it deems right to prevent it. But it is downright dishonesty to call the minority "disloyal" without taking some action against its "disloyalty." To hide behind the proposition that during a discussion on a political question it is not correct to take action against disloyal people is another dishonest statement.

This is not a question of breaking discipline. It is a question, according to the majority, of disloyalty. Disloyalty should be dealt with under all conditions.

Here I want to repeat the charge I made before, that during the period just prior to the entry of the Trotskyists into the Socialist Party, Cannon, Shachtman and Burnham secretly held conversations with leaders of the SP, at a time when the majority of the Political Committee was against entry. Cannon denies that. I have the statements of three people who were in a position to know from personal knowledge that such is the case. One of the Oehlerites actually accused Cannon of doing that very thing. I raise this point simply to show that Cannon is sometimes capable of subordinating form to substance.

Los Angeles

A question that has nothing to do with unity but which I answer because so much confusion has been created around it, is the one asked by Comrade Adler with reference to my article on the refusal of the Los Angeles leadership of our party to organize a united picket line with the WP at the time of the meeting of the fascists.

What was the main burden of my criticism of the Los Angeles leadership? *That it refused to picket the fascist meeting jointly*

with the Workers Party. That the decision was not to picket "unless the labor movement or the CP should do so." Since it could have been foretold with certainty that the labor movement and the CP would not picket then it was the duty of our party to join the WP on the picket line.

The leadership further stated: "The main line of our campaign should be to get the labor movement to act." This is all to the good but in its context it could mean only that until the "labor movement" acted our party would not act. (See Internal Bulletin No. 6, July 1945).

The article of Murry Weiss as an answer to my criticism could confuse politically immature people but not those with any experience and intelligence. He told us all about the efforts of the Los Angeles leadership to arouse the labor movement after the WP comrades aroused him from his slumbers. Who has any criticism to make of those efforts? No one. Who says that we should not mobilize the masses? No one.

We shall even ignore the trickery which Weiss uses to give inexperienced comrades the impression that our efforts were solely responsible for the calling of the subsequent united front meeting against the fascists. We shall assume that we were responsible. It is clear that it was a meeting which was completely in the tradition of the Stalinist Peoples' Front meetings.

But, does that meeting exclude picketing?

Even if we believe that the WP comrades were insane and said that they are not interested in mobilizing the labor movement, does that mean that we should not join in picketing a fascist meeting with them?

All of the innumerable pages written by Weiss cannot and do not answer these simple questions.

I said in my criticism that we would correct the line of Los Angeles. And we did. And Detroit proves that we did. Did we wait for the labor movement to mobilize the masses in Detroit before we took the initiative to picket the fascist meeting? Unless one is a thorough-going formalist and considers the motion of the Wayne County Council as a mobilization of the labor movement. We correctly took advantage of that motion to try to get more workers on the picket line. We correctly got the executive board of some unions to favor a picket line. But the party would have and should have gone out on the picket line even if those motions had not passed. And in reality that is what happened.

We did not follow Weiss's original prescription—to wait for the labor movement or the CP to take the initiative. And this is correcting his line.

Unprecedented Nonsense

Cannon has been repeating with an air of great profundity that the situation is unprecedented—the situation of unity between two parties that are in disagreement on some important political and theoretical questions. We shall grant for the sake of argument that the situation is unprecedented. Surely this is no obstacle to Bolsheviks.

We speak a great deal about Bolshevik tradition but we forget that the most important tradition of Bolshevism on organizational and tactical questions is that we do not feel ourselves bound by tradition. (Comrades who were present at the Plenum say that I actually said that we have no traditions. I of course spoke nonsense. *We have traditions but we are not bound by them.*)

If the situation is unprecedented then it is up to us to set a precedent. If the situation is unprecedented it is not at all complex.

The members of the WP split from us in 1940. They were wrong. We said then that the differences were compatible with membership in one party. The split was based on the question of the defense of the Soviet Union and the question of the regime. More than five years have passed and those who are now in the WP showed that they have been loyal to the fundamental principles of the proletarian revolution. For political people who are not motivated by fear of differences the question of reuniting the forces that were once together presents itself immediately. Especially since the question of the defense of the Soviet Union is no longer the burning issue that it was.

Two separate questions present themselves. One is whether the political premises for unity exist. That simply means whether we have the same fundamental program and the same program of immediate action and whether the differences that still exist are compatible with membership in one party. The second question is whether the two groups can work harmoniously in one party in spite of the political differences. The first question can be answered by an analysis of the program and activities of the Workers Party plus the differences that divide us. The second question can be answered only by a preliminary period of close cooperation.

As a matter of fact the minority is certain that it can live harmoniously with the WP comrades because it has made an estimate of them as devoted revolutionists and thus has indicated confidence in them and acquired their confidence in us.

With the majority it is an altogether different question. The majority has designated the WP as renegades, betrayers of Marxism, petty-bourgeois adventurers and by other choice names. Naturally this does not result in an atmosphere conducive to unity. We therefore say that a period of cooperation to prepare the membership of both parties for unity is essential.

The majority answers: The question whether or not the political premises for unity exist is an abstract question. We cannot answer it by yes or no. We must probe the differences and see the attitude.

But what will the majority answer after they know that the differences are what they are claimed to be by Cannon and others? They have already listed the differences. No answer is given to that question except the formula: it is an abstract question.

A picture of real political bankruptcy was furnished by Comrade Graham who spoke at the Plenum on behalf of the majority. Since he is the most serious and honest of the majority he presented the picture in all its nakedness. He said that the discussion which the majority resolution provides for is *for the purpose of educating the rank and file*. The leadership knows the differences but we must educate our membership.

Thereupon I interrupted and was permitted to ask the following questions:

"As a leader do you know the differences between us and the WP?"

"Yes".

"In your opinion are they compatible or not compatible with membership in one party?"

"I cannot answer that question. I stand by the resolution . . . blah . . . blah . . . blah."

When the leaders of the party say that the purpose of the discussion is to acquaint the rank and file with the differences and, at the same time, claim that they know the differences and do not want to say whether those differences are compatible with membership in one party, then it constitutes an abdication of leadership.

A leader of a revolutionary party is in duty bound to give his opinion on any important political question before attempting to "educate" the rank and file.

Not so long ago Cannon and his leading followers not only claimed that they knew all about the differences and did not want to discuss them but were ready to tell the rank and file that unity was out of the question.

They did not wait to discuss the differences and educate the rank and file before they made up their mind that unity was undesirable. Why is it that now it is all-important to educate the rank and file without telling them whether they should be for or against unity?

The reason is simple. They did not want unity before and were not afraid to say so before any discussion. They do not want unity now but do not want to say so in so many words after discovering that leading comrades of some sections of the International are definitely for unity.

It is perfectly true that the great majority of the members of our party do not know the nature of the differences between us and the WP and it would be very good to discuss those differences with the WP in order to clarify the minds of the members.

But in the first place it is the duty of the leadership to take a position on the question (whether those differences are compatible with membership in one party. And in the second place it is necessary to discuss them with the WP after taking a position in favor of unity.

A discussion is in order but it should be one that is carried on through joint discussion bulletins and joint membership meetings. What the WP stands for can be found out much better from the WP members themselves in joint discussions. Such discussions will serve not only to educate our members but also to eliminate misunderstandings.

After the Plenum we found out that Cannon contemplates a "discussion" where we write articles for our press and the WP answers in their press. This is in reality not a discussion but one of the old-time "enlightenment campaigns" carried on by the Stalinist leadership to "educate" their followers.

The leadership of the majority claims that the question whether the differences between us and the WP are compatible with membership in one party is an abstract one. Will it become less abstract after we hold the discussion? The majority of the members were taught up to a few weeks ago that our differences on the Soviet Union, on the national question and other questions made unity impossible. The discussion will not abolish the differences; will unity be possible or impossible when we discover that the discussion does not eliminate the differences?

It is a question, say some of the majority leaders, of the attitude of the WP to our party. But how will the discussion on the theoretical and political differences reveal the attitude of the WP? It will simply reveal what every leader already knows: that there are differences and that they cannot be eliminated by the "discussion" contemplated by Cannon.

The attitude of the WP to unity is a very important question. But the WP has already come out in favor of unity on the basis of recognizing the political differences and agreeing to abide by discipline in action. Shall we say that the WP is dishonest? But the very fact that it is willing to give up its own party, its own leadership and its own public press is or should be conclusive proof that they are sincere.

Some comrades naively (and some not so naively) claim that the WP wants to enter our party for a raiding expedition. What foolish people they would be to do that under the present circumstances. And besides, they are demanding the right to publish a tendency organ. And that of course is an almost insuperable obstacle. The WP comrades know that. If they are dishonest would they not agree to anything we want in order to "enter" our party for raiding purposes? The majorityites jump from one argument to another—all equally bad—in order to avoid unity.

By raising the question of attitude Cannon furnishes himself with a pretext to come out openly against unity at any time he sees fit. What will follow is not so difficult to foresee. When the comrades of the WP find out the nature of the "discussion" they will be asked to conduct, they will undoubtedly characterize it as we do: a piece of fakery. This will of course show a hostile attitude. When the comrades of the WP publish an unflattering review of Cannon's "History" this will also show a hostile attitude. Cannon and his followers will then say: see, we told you. The attitude of the WP makes unity impossible.

The truth is and it must be said over and over again: the attitude of the majority leadership makes unity impossible.

Cannon, Unity and Arithmetic

The picture has become clear after the Plenum. Cannon intends to prevent unity by aimless discussions on questions that have almost been relegated to history. The reason for his fear of unity is also clear. It is a question of arithmetic.

We were told by Cannon that if our party had five thousand members and the WP three hundred, unity would be a good risk. We could then take care of an obstreperous minority. But Cannon knows now that the WP has close to five hundred and our party has about twelve hundred. That is not a big enough majority for Cannon. Arithmetic tells Cannon that the WP comrades

together with the present minority would be too large for him to handle easily.

In reality Cannon's attitude means: I cannot meet ideas with ideas; I must depend upon a certain majority. I must get a few thousand more raw workers and train them to follow me and then I can afford to have a minority of four to five hundred, if I have to make unity.

In the resolution which the minority first introduced on behalf of unity it is stated: "The question of unification with the comrades of the WP is thus of enormous symptomatic importance in determining the kind of party that we want to build. The party's decision will be a touchstone indicating the direction in which we shall henceforth move."

The Plenum has answered: in the direction of monolithism.

Resolution on the Unity Proposal of the Workers Party

Adopted by the Plenum, October 6-7, 1945

1. The proposal for unification made by the Workers Party to the Socialist Workers Party comes after more than five years of bitter hostility and struggle between the two organizations.

2. The split in 1940 was preceded by a protracted factional fight which involved not only the position of the Fourth International on the Russian question but the most fundamental questions of our movement: Marxist theory, tradition, political program, methods of party-building, the party regime, etc. The issues in this historic struggle have been explained and amply documented in the two books: *In Defense of Marxism* and *The Struggle for a Proletarian Party*.

3. Our characterization of the petty-bourgeois tendency represented by the faction which later became the WP was not predicated solely upon their view of the nature of the USSR and their attitude toward its defense but upon their rejection of the theory, methods and traditions of Marxism, a rejection which was rooted in their social composition and direction. Trotsky wrote: "We, too, have attempted above to prove that the issue concerns not only the Russian problems but *even more* the opposition's method of thought, which has its social roots. The opposition is under the sway of petty-bourgeois moods and tendencies. This is the essence of the whole matter." (*In Defense of Marxism*, p. 59, our italics).

4. The 1940 split which gave birth to the WP was a heavy blow aimed at the Trotskyist movement in the United States, and throughout the world. The petty-bourgeois faction split our party at a time of grave social tension and crisis preceding the entry of the United States into the war, when every revolutionist had the responsibility of remaining at his post and adhering without compromise to the positions of the Fourth International. This split broke away 40 per cent of the membership from our party and served to disorient and miseducate many potentially excellent revolutionists. During the ensuing five years the WP has pursued the policy of irreconcilable antagonism toward the SWP with the object of discrediting, undermining and overthrowing it as the vanguard of the American working class.

5. Despite this, the SWP has not only recouped the numerical losses suffered in the split, but under the adverse conditions of the war has made considerable gains in numbers, influence and prestige. It has become genuinely proletarian both in membership and in its predominant leadership. It is deeply rooted in the mass labor movement. Its ranks have become ideologically homogeneous and steeled in the fires of the class struggle.

6. As a result of the successes scored and the experiences undergone during the war, the ranks of the SWP face the coming period with unlimited confidence in the prospects of the party and its eventual development into the mass revolutionary party of the American workers. The objective conditions are extremely favorable for the rapid growth of our party. The profound revulsion of the peoples all over the world against the consequences of the war; the resultant radicalization of the masses; the growing militancy of the American workers expressed in the present national strike wave—are bound to accelerate the expansion of our party in all spheres. The response of the workers to *The Militant*, the steadily rising rate of recruitment, the establishment of new branches, and the extension of our influence in the key unions are sure signs of this trend.

7. The Workers Party, by contrast, has shown no ability to grow and attract workers in significant numbers. It has gained no significant influence in the labor movement. The disproportion in the numerical strength of the two parties is growing from month to month.

8. After more than five years of warfare against the SWP in an attempt to supplant it, the Workers Party has come forward with the proposal for uniting the two organizations. This action marks a significant turn in their policy and opens a new stage in the relations between the two tendencies.

9. In view of this change in the situation, the Political Committee of the SWP expressed its willingness to consider and discuss the question of unification in all its aspects. Its reply of August 27, 1945 to the letter of the WP stated that "unity would be a good thing if it is firmly based and leads to the strengthening of the party and the building up of the party. On the other hand, a unification followed by a sharp faction fight and another split would be highly injurious to the party."

10. Unifications like splits are the most serious steps in the life of a revolutionary party. Neither the one nor the other should be undertaken light-mindedly or precipitately, without the most scrupulous survey of all the circumstances and the most careful calculation of the consequences. The advantages and disadvantages of such a move must be carefully appraised in the light of the tasks and perspectives of the party at the given stage of its development. A poorly-prepared and ill-considered unification could easily paralyze the work of the party, provoke a new outburst of factional animosity, and lead toward a new split.

11. The PC pointed out in its letter: "We have always proceeded from the point of view that programmatic agreement on the most important and decisive questions is the only sound basis for unification." That has been the basis of all previous unifications in the Marxist movement. It is clear that such a basis for unification does not exist in the present instance. Both parties acknowledge that the programmatic differences which led to the 1940 split have not been moderated but that, on the contrary, some of them have been deepened and new important points of divergence have developed in the interim.

12. Thus we are confronted by the proposition of uniting into a common organization two tendencies with sharply divergent political points of view on many questions and sharply conflicting theories of party organization. This proposed unity without programmatic agreement, in fact with acknowledged disagreements between the two tendencies, has no precedent, so far as we know, in the history of the international Marxist movement. In preliminary discussions between representative sub-committees of the two organizations, the delegates of the WP emphasized their intention to come into the united party as a separate and distinct tendency. They stated, furthermore, that they would insist on the right to publish their own discussion bulletin under their own control.

13. Can we contemplate, nevertheless, a unification of the two organizations despite the important differences that exist on political and organizational questions? In other words are the differences compatible inside of one Leninist party? We have

taken the position that this question cannot be determined by any abstract rule; it can only be answered *concretely*. Five years ago, the faction which later became the Workers Party decided that the differences were not compatible with remaining inside of the SWP. In the five years that have elapsed, life again proved the differences incompatible, as the WP carried on unremitting warfare against our organization, our principles, our methods, our leadership. Has the WP sufficiently changed to make these differences compatible inside our party today? In other words can a genuine unity be effected with the WP, as distinct from a purely formal unity which would actually mean two parties under one roof with a new split in prospect? *This can only be answered with sufficient concreteness after the most thorough-going discussion and probing of all differences to the bottom.*

14. The extraordinary nature of this unity proposal makes it all the more imperative that all the programmatic questions in dispute be thoroughly clarified and all the differences between the two parties probed to the depth so that not the slightest ambiguity remains. This preliminary work of ideological clarification and demarcation is the indispensable precondition for any definitive disposition of the proposal for unity and a correct set-

tlement of the relations between the SWP and WP.

15. To this end, this Plenum of the National Committee convened for the special purpose of considering this question therefore resolves:

a. To endorse the letter and actions of the Political Committee in response to the letter from the WP;

b. To authorize the Political Committee to prepare and carry through a thorough discussion and clarification of the theoretical, political and organizational issues in dispute, and fix the position of the party precisely on every point in preparation for the consideration and action of the next party convention;

c. To reject any united front for propaganda. The SWP must continue to conduct its propagandistic activities in its own name and under its own banner and utilize these activities to aid direct recruitment of new members into the SWP. At the same time, the Plenum authorizes the Political Committee to invite the WP to collaborate with our party in practical actions in those cases where, in the judgment of the Political Committee, such collaboration would be advantageous in serving practical ends without blurring or compromising political lines.

Plenum Resolution on Unity with the Workers Party

Submitted by the Minority of the Political Committee

1. The Plenum declares that the Socialist Workers Party and the Workers Party are sufficiently in agreement on basic program to require and justify unity. The political differences between the two are compatible with membership in one revolutionary party.

2. The Workers Party resolution and letters on unity constitute a significant change in the policy of that group. Hitherto it had justified its split and continued separation from the SWP on two grounds: (1) Its opposition to the SWP's defense of the Soviet Union, (2) the bureaucratic regime in the SWP. Recently, as the question of defense of the Soviet Union receded into the background, the WP had based its entire justification for separate existence on the regime in the SWP. Now, however, the WP is compelled to admit that it cannot continue to defend this position; it states that "the interests of uniting the Fourth Internationalists in the United States on a sound foundation are more important than the regime in the SWP." When the WP now states that the political and theoretical differences "do not go beyond what is permissible within the ranks of a single revolutionary party," it is at last accepting the position laid down by our party at the time of the split in 1940.

3. In the united party, the present program of the SWP will prevail, by virtue of the fact that we, as the WP admits, constitute the majority. The WP's communications to us explicitly recognize the principle of democratic centralism, thus pledging that as a minority it will be bound by discipline in action.

4. These commitments clear the path of practically all obstacles to unity except one. The remaining obstacle is a fear of unity by many of our members and perhaps also by members of the WP. The factional strife of 1939-40, the split, and the more than five years of separate existence have left deep scars. It is advisable to eradicate this subjective element before formally consummating unity.

5. We believe the necessary spirit of unity can be created by a period of collaboration and cooperation prior to unification. Having declared ourselves for unity, such collaboration and cooperation is conceived by us, not as a united front between parties with a perspective of separate existence, but as concrete preparation for unity. Among the preparations there shall be

joint membership meetings, joint discussion bulletins, joint public meetings, collaboration in trade union work and other fields of activity.

6. The comrades of the WP have asked recognition of their right to publish a bulletin of their own within the united party. Such a right of any tendency in a Trotskyist party is taken for granted by us. But to recognize such a right, and for comrades to exercise it, are two different things. Normally, where the party majority provides adequate opportunity for discussion in bulletins and the theoretical organ, the interests of the party as a whole and of the minority are better served by refraining from publishing a separate bulletin.

7. While we explicitly recognize the right of any group within the party to have its own bulletin if it so desires, we urge the comrades of the WP to refrain from exercising this right under the given circumstances in order to achieve unity on a proper basis. We guarantee them ample opportunity to present their point of view.

8. However, both we and the comrades of the WP will be in a better position to decide this question at the end of the period of cooperation and collaboration. We therefore propose to leave final decision on it until the final steps for consummation of unity, with the understanding that we do not make it a condition of unity that the comrades of the WP refrain from issuing their own bulletin.

9. In view of the above decisions, the Plenum considers that there is a basis for collaboration between the majority and minority in the SWP in effecting the steps toward unity with the WP. The Plenum therefore accepts the offer of the minority to collaborate in this task and instructs the Political Committee to give representation to the minority on the negotiating committee. The Plenum takes note of the statement of the minority that, having formed its faction on the issue of unity, it will dissolve its faction when unity is consummated, leaving the remaining differences for discussion on the plane of tendency articles and lectures in the party organs and branches.

Bennett
Goldman
Morrow
Williams

Statement of Plenum Minority on the Cannon-Stein-Frank Resolution

1. The resolution is designed to prevent unity. Opposition to unity is the privilege of any comrade. What is reprehensible in the Cannon-Stein-Frank resolution is its refusal to answer any of the questions which are central to the unity proposal: its evasion of an answer to the question whether or not the two parties are sufficiently in agreement on basic program to require and justify unity; its evasion of an answer to the question whether or not the political differences between the two parties are compatible with membership in one party; its evasion of an answer to the question whether or not the aim of the discussions with the Workers Party is to ascertain more accurately the political positions of the WP or the aim is to attempt to get the WP to abandon some of its political positions as a precondition for unity; its evasion of an answer to the question whether the WP's proposal for a tendency bulletin in the united party is or is not a right of any tendency in a Trotskyist party.

In their speeches the supporters of the resolution pretend that the difference between them and the minority is that the minority wants to rush speedily into unity whereas the majority wishes to move more slowly. This is completely untrue. As the minority Plenum resolution makes clear, we insist on a considerable period of preparation for unity by means of cooperation between the two parties *after* a decision by our party in favor of unity. This period of preparation is made necessary above all because the majority leaders have prejudiced the membership against unity.

On the other hand the position of the Cannon-Stein-Frank resolution is not one of moving more slowly toward unity, but not to move at all towards unity.

2. In paragraph 11 the resolution repeats the formula of previous majority documents that programmatic agreement is the basis for unification. We of the minority have vainly attempted to get the majority to state unambiguously what it means by this: (1) that the WP must abandon one or more of the political positions on which it differs from us—an absurd demand since it is inconceivable that the WP will abandon its position on the Russian question, the principal disputed issue; or (2) the legitimate proposition that the WP, as an admitted minority, must abide by the discipline of the majority program—which the WP has already agreed to do.

It was bad enough that the majority insisted on using this ambiguous formula in its first letter of August 27 answering the unity proposal—bad since the minority had vainly attempted to amend the letter to state that the political differences are compatible with membership in one party. It was worse still that, in his speech of September 1, Comrade Cannon, despite a direct question from Comrade Goldman, refused to specify what the majority meant by its ambiguous formula. It is nothing less than outrageous that the majority repeats this patently-dishonest ambiguity again now, after the WP negotiating committee has repeatedly asked for clarification.

Comrade N. has reiterated the minority position that: "A thousand times more important (than the question of defense of the USSR) is unification, rather than the existence of two independent groups who in the *fundamentals* march under the one and the same banner. The program of the minority (i.e., WP) is known to the majority from the former's literature; there is no necessity to discuss it."

If the authors of the resolution disagree with that position, let them say so in their resolution; let them say either that they do not know the program of the WP and must now study it, or that they know the program of the WP and it is in agreement with us on *fundamentals* or that it is not; let them say whether they agree or do not agree that unification is more important than the question of the slogan of the defense of the USSR.

Anyone who assumes to play any role as a leader in our party certainly knows what the political differences are between our party and the WP. Are these differences compatible with unity?

Anyone who thinks they are not compatible should have voted against unity discussions with the WP. Conversely, anyone who voted for unity discussions should have been ready to say that the political differences are compatible with unity. We are confronted with a monstrous paradox. In 1940 and thereafter we of the SWP always maintained that the political differences were compatible with party unity. Now the PC majority refuses to affirm our 1940 position. The argument justifying this refusal is absurd: "Five years ago, the faction which became the WP decided that the differences were not compatible with remaining inside the SWP. In the five years that have elapsed, life again proved the differences incompatible . . ." The WP was *wrong* when it considered that the differences were not compatible with remaining in the same party, and we and Trotsky said that they were wrong, and we did not abandon this position simply because "life," i.e., the mistake of the WP, led it to leave the party.

Why does the PC majority cling to its ambiguous formula about programmatic agreement? Is it possible that, after a period, the PC majority is going to confront us with "proof" that the political differences make unity impossible? But such "proof" must already exist, since we all know what the political differences are. In that case, in all honesty the PC majority should have said to begin with that it does not believe that the political premises exist for unity—more accurately, it should have continued to say this after the WP proposal for unity as it had said this previously.

In his September 1 speech "explaining" the PC letter's ambiguity on this question, Comrade Cannon claimed he was answering this question when he stated: "It is up to the WP to demonstrate that the political differences are compatible with unity." Absolutely false: we have to determine this question for ourselves, independently of what the WP does or does not do.

Comrade Cannon went on to identify this question with the question, "Will the WP'ers be loyal this time?", i.e., will they abide by party discipline. *This is a different question.* It is a legitimate question. In view of the attitude of the WP leaders in the split of 1940, it was necessary to put the question to them. An affirmative answer to that question assures unity and the WP has answered it satisfactorily. But, before we asked the WP leaders to answer that question, our party should have answered for itself the question whether the political differences are compatible with membership in one party. Otherwise, it is pointless to ask the WP leaders whether they will abide by party discipline—or indeed to ask them any questions or conduct any discussions.

Until the PC majority adopts the position that the political differences are compatible with party membership, the danger will continue to exist that the PC majority will, on the basis of facts already known to all of us, suddenly "discover" that the political differences bar unity. In that case it would be clear to all that its agreement to discuss with the WP was nothing but a maneuver designed to confuse the party and the International.

We demand an answer to this question. Is there sufficient agreement on the fundamentals of program to make unity possible and desirable? One can honestly answer yes or no; but to refuse to answer the question, after all that has transpired, is clearly a subterfuge.

3. The result of this subterfuge is that we are asked to vote on the absurd proposal of discussions with the WP without any principles laid down as to what shall be the basis for unity. Shall our discussion sub-committee tell the WP negotiators that the latter's position on the Russian question is or is not a bar to unity? No answer in the resolution. Shall our discussers tell the WP negotiators that the aim of the discussions is to ascertain the differences, or that the aim is to get the WP to abandon its positions? No answer in the resolution. Shall our discussers say that the differences, on organizational questions are or are not a bar to unity? No answer. In a word, discussions are to

be carried on without indicating to our discussers the basis on which they are to discuss. What is the difference, then, between the previous meetings of the Cannon-Stein-Frank committee with the WP committee, and those which presumably will follow the Plenum? The previous meetings were characterized by the Cannon-Stein-Frank committee as not negotiations but discussions since, they stated, they had no authority to negotiate and no instructions on what basis to negotiate. Future meetings, on the basis of their resolution, will be no different than the previous ones. In that case, why call a Plenum and adopt a Plenum resolution? Why, indeed, except to go through the motions of pretending to consider the unity proposal seriously.

4. The WP negotiators have asked a series of key questions concerning the basis and purpose of the discussions. They summarize these in their letter of October 4 to the Plenum and request of the Plenum that it answer these questions. They ask that an end be put by the Plenum to the situation wherein the SWP committee is "in a position where it cannot and does not make any proposals of its own on the question of unity, where it cannot express itself definitely on proposals made by us, and where it is even unable to declare that the SWP has decided in favor or in opposition to unity itself." They further ask the Plenum to take a position "on the series of proposals made by us for the basis on which the unification should be achieved. . . ." These requests are not only reasonable but one can hardly imagine how discussions can continue without answering them. Yet the resolution evades them. It will be an evasion of its duty if this Plenum closes without answering these proposals of the WP. One can accept them, one can reject them, but to evade them is politically indefensible.

5. The August 27 letter of our PC, in rejecting the WP proposal for cooperation between the two parties, stated it would agree to cooperation at a later date only "if, in the course of the discussions, it appears that we are approaching agreement on the most important political questions. . . . But to attempt to begin with such practical cooperation, prior to a definite approach to unification, would seem to us to put things upside down and lead to a sharpening of conflict over secondary questions rather than to their moderation."

What, then, is the purpose of the resolution in proposing now "to invite the WP to collaborate with our party in practical actions in those cases where such collaboration would be advantageous in serving practical ends without blurring or compromising political lines." According to the August 27 letter of the PC such cooperation would lead to a sharpening of conflicts unless the fact was first established that we are approaching unification definitely. Now without establishing this fact, the PC proposes cooperation. Here is confusion worse confounded.

We bluntly warn the party and the International: Cooperation after a declaration for unity would prepare the memberships of both parties for unity, but the so-called limited cooperation without a previous declaration for unity can very well serve the aim of preventing unity. Under the given circumstances it is necessary for those who sincerely desire cooperation as preparation for unity to vote *against* the formula of cooperation without a declaration in favor of unity.

6. Anyone who understands the ABC of politics knows that the August 27 letter of the PC agreeing to discuss unity with the WP was a political victory for the PC minority whose initiative had led to this development. Quite apart from the principle of minority representation, those who initiated the unity proposal were entitled to participate in the unity discussions. Yet the very same PC meeting which sent the letter to the WP also barred the minority from the PC sub-committee which met with the WP.

And this was merely the forerunner of a renewed barrage against the minority which had dared to fight for unity.

In his September 1 speech explaining the PC letter on unity, Comrade Cannon accused the minority: "Perhaps their new idea is unity first and then a bigger split." The "perhaps" does not save this from being an outrageous accusation. Outrageous not merely because it is not true, but because if the PC majority were to act on it, unity would be put off to the Greek Kalends. For if one does not accept the propositions of both the minority and the WP that the political differences are compatible with unity; that unity is more important than the regime; that unity can be achieved on a lasting basis—then no political criteria remain for determining the aims of both the minority and the WP. There remains then only the capricious and arbitrary psychologizing of the PC majority concerning what is going on in the minds of the minority and the WP. This approach has nothing in common with Marxist politics.

Superficially more political was Comrade Cannon's further declaration that before unity can take place, the party must first "stamp out disloyalty in the ranks and restore discipline in the party." Certainly this would be true, were there disloyalty and indiscipline. But Comrade Cannon falsely applies these terms to the minority's fraternization and discussion with WP leaders and members. We of the minority declare that no amount of such threats and abuse will swerve us from our politically correct and organizationally loyal policy of continuing to urge the WP to persist in its course toward unity despite all obstacles placed in the way. To put off unity until after "stamping out" the pro-unity minority is scarcely the prelude which would usher in unity! It is clear that the attack on the minority as "disloyal" is in reality an attack on unity.

This attack continues at the Plenum. It is "cleverly" left out of the resolution, which tries to assume a statesmanlike tone, but it is the main burden so far of all the speeches of the majority spokesmen. On this question, too, we demand an end to ambiguity. If the majority really means what it says, then let it adopt an unambiguous rule governing the situation: one which would forbid the minority from discussing with the WP leaders. In that case we would have to submit to the decision or leave the party. Such a ruling would be proof conclusive of the deep-going degeneration of the party leadership. But its verbal assertion to the same effect is also such a proof.

7. It should be obvious to any political person that the absurd basis on which the discussions are left—on no basis except the whims of the SWP discussers to drag out the talks endlessly—may soon prove unacceptable to the WP. With none of their proposals accepted, with no alternative proposals offered, with nothing decided by the Plenum, the WP may very well conclude that there is no point in continuing such formless discussions. The resolution appears aimed to test the patience of the WP negotiators to the breaking point by an endless series of pointless meetings. In a word, it is calculated to throw responsibility for disruption of discussions on the WP, whereas the reality is that the course set by the resolution must inevitably lead to disruption of discussions. We brand this as trickery and declare that if this resolution becomes party policy the responsibility for disruption will be on the shoulders of this Plenum.

Bennett
Goldman
Morrow
Williams

October 7, 1945.