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THE DEVIL THEORY IN THE SWP PRE-
CONVENTION DISCUSSION

by Bob Fink, Lower Manhattan Branch

In answering the objections raised by the minority tendencies in this pre-convention discussion, the main guns of the majority have failed to recognize the reality of the depth of dissent, alienation and dissatisfaction in the party.

I have been personally, for many years, an unconscious advocate of forms of the devil theory, finding "all wrongness" in the views of those with whom I disagreed most. In treating viewpoints in this pre-convention discussion, much of the majority response — as well as that of the minority tendencies — has been about the "all-wrongness" of the other's views, the "all-rightness" of one's own views. Not a shred of humility, not an inch given by any comrade on their approach, especially by the majority. "Well, naturally, we *believe* our views and we'll defend them to the last," the majority would say. Is it also "natural" that every member of the majority leadership is that homogenous? Are we to believe that such uniformity in the face of criticism is the result of individual thinking (which "accidentally" corresponds to each other to a "T")? I don't believe it, nor has the majority leadership officially and openly organized as a national faction, with its own democratic centralism. Then how is possible for them to find everything wrong with every criticism, and everything right with each of their own views so far? I urge the comrades to find out the cause of this miracle of non-openness. I think they will find the answer lies in several-years-long *atmosphere* of an un-announced faction among the leadership.

Naturally, if such a factional grouping exists, as the minorities also contend, its origins must be politically explained and the causes rooted out. An attempt to explain will be made in this document. But whether I can explain it or not, its *existence* can be proven.

Some of the minorities have in part united against the leadership with a "Barnes-Harry Ring-Etc." devil theory. These leading comrades, they say, are "totally" petty-bourgeoisified, etc.

Adopting such an attitude by comrades as a whole in this pre-convention period can never educate or unite the party, but can serve to further polarize the factions, to instill "loyalty" and "faith" for or against one or another tendency (majority or minority) despite the weaknesses that exist within each tendency. This will set the stage for new, later disunity and paralysis.

The only "principled" position offered is by the "Communist tendency" but unfortunately they are incorrect in their solution, and they, too, tend toward a devil theory. For them the hat is in the ring and the fight for party power is on.

If this factional attitude pervades most of the members, this convention may see a "resounding majority victory," united only in vote, but disintegrated in ultimate essence and effectiveness.

Comrades Barnes and Himmel, each in their own documents, quote the same lengthy passage from Ralph Levitt's remarks. But neither of them really deal with its main point. Levitt relies on class background and composition, but admits: "This is not decisive. We don't judge revolutionaries by their class backgrounds, although this is

a factor of some significance." Next, relating the divorce-from-the-class of "payroll" revolutionaries, Levitt again says it isn't decisive. His point is that the leadership has embraced only the struggles of petty-bourgeois derivation and "are opposed to. . . participating in the struggles of *any* section of the class."

That is the criticism, and *that* is the issue for the party to resolve, however badly presented by the minorities. But Himmel and Barnes attack in detail a straw man: They respond as if Levitt said *class background* was the *only* important item (and of course they successfully demolish the straw man). Nowhere do they admit the point, that while composition and background *is* capable of being overcome, it is nevertheless an important source of *danger* to the party program and that this danger exists *now*. Nowhere do they deal with what to do about this danger.

When they do deal with the important issue, the majority spokespeople claim a proletarian composition within the student masses, within the women's movement, and to a certain degree *only*, this is correct. In the rest of most of the majority's responses, we read a continuing rewrite in a hundred forms of the *assertion* that the minorities are "wrong." For example, Barnes and Sheppard write: "Everything they say about the history of the party before, during and after the Cochran fight is wrong." (Page 5 Bull. #19, Vol. 29)

How can "everything" be wrong?

Barnes is right only in his arguments that our current line and activity is true and practical, based on the concrete and unique reality. There *is* a place in Marxism for a continuing pragmatism, and we have elevated it to its highest level in responding to the student, womens', Black and gay liberation struggles. But no repetition to endless limits of what is correct can compensate for the real existing errors and mistakes. Nor will defeating the errors and points in the minorities' criticisms discredit those issues they raise which are justified and which need a healthy, *genuine give and take* discussion, not a "line-up."

Granting the lack of radicalization (reported by Comrade Himmel) among workers "as workers" on a "political" level, still, there *are* many strikes, many welfare protests, tenants' struggles. Even if on a small scale and badly led, these struggles contain many real aspects of the current radicalization. We used to issue mimeoed (by hand) SWP statements on virtually *everything* political when we were smaller and very much less popular or "legitimate" than we are now — *and* we distributed them by hundreds and thousands to the people involved *as well* as wrote *Militant* articles. We *were* a propaganda organization on *more* questions then. Today we propagandize and *act* on some issues, but really give lip-service (*not* a propaganda campaign) to the classic proletarian struggles like union, welfare, tenant and several other issues. To move into the gay struggle without also moving into the unemployment-welfare-tenant struggle is, I believe, a parody of what objective reality and "our opportunities" are.

The majority *responds* correctly to the cultural, sexual and student revolts, but for all their writing about "unique" reality, they don't understand, still, these revolts. In an earlier contribution, I presented an analysis to explain the

meaning of the present unusual reality. In addition, I want to point out that the *length of time* we have *correctly* involved ourselves in the student, women's (and now) gay, struggles — has altered the *composition* of our party to the level that *begins to be* significant. If it is true that class background and composition isn't *everything*, it isn't *nothing* either!

Our reluctance to enter a number of certain *real* proletarian struggles is now the *second* result of this change in composition.

The first result has been on the internal life of our party and is the subject of the rest of this document.

The remarks submitted by Peter Herreshoff (Page 6, Bull #16, Vol 29) I fully endorse, and his quote from Farrell Dobbs bears repeating:

"Meantime, we had straightened out the youth situation, beginning at an even earlier stage. If memory serves me right, it would have been about '61 — I could be off a year or so — when we first introduced the age criteria. There was nothing abstract about it at all. We had a very good basic motivation. We were after a pair of factional hooligans who had grown old before they reached a stage of maturity on the calendar, and were committing mayhem among the youth, and had to be

stopped. We very carefully first found out how old they were, then we set the age. We carried this through to the point that, as a process, across the period in the mid-sixties, we fully restored and clarified the fundamental Leninist concept of the relations between the party and the youth. The youth are organizationally independent. But a Trotskyist youth movement is based on acceptance of the fundamentals of Trotskyism, and there has to be a basic political homogeneity between the party and the youth. . . ."

I find this shocking, even cynical. The fundamental premise underneath these remarks is purely that *organizational means can substitute for political*. And this premise has been adopted probably nationally, but certainly in cases in Detroit. The whole fabric of democratic centralism has been stained by it and its atmosphere, so that (in Detroit for sure) little but the formalities of democracy remained. The following are concrete examples.

I mentioned transfers of comrades in Detroit in another

bulletin. These transfers were made *for* several comrades, after a series of accusations (and untrue accusations) of "ultraleft" were made in a previous tactical debate there. All the transfers were opposed by the transferees, and that opposition was admitted privately. Why private? Some comrades were *afraid* to oppose it openly because they were afraid they would be "marked" by the NY nat'l office and their political "careers" ruined if they refused. Where does that fear *come* from? That so many comrades on *one side* of a previous tactical fight should be later "moved out" is no miracle of coincidence. To believe that, one makes himself or herself a candidate for believing in a new virgin birth.

There are other events, but more complicated, and ones which I was personal witness to while in Detroit, and would be able to recount in *Detail and documentation*, but I have deleted them because of their very personal character and agree that the possibility of hard feelings is strong if they are brought up.

The justice involved in these events is arbitrary, dishonest, hypocritical, in my opinion. The way in which the events occurred was far more an attack on party traditions and concepts than any attack that all these comrades, taken as a whole, had ever made inadvertently against the party.

If *my* analysis in the bulletins doesn't "explain" the cause of a growing internal degeneration and a poisonous atmosphere, then an analysis needs to be *found*, collectively, but that this atmosphere *exists* cannot be dismissed. That would be a lie, or at least willful and blind ignorance of reality.

The notion of blame is not here proposed, comrades, for blame and hostility to leadership is not advocated if in any way the rational capacities of the majority leadership can be tapped, and the problem brought to light. Whatever the causes, it isn't innate to any "devil-comrade," although it may be reflected by comrades until the errors of their course are openly expressed. After that, if self-reform is not forthcoming, if dissident comrades are treated to an increase in petty disciplines, if collective non-factional means cannot be found to correct ourselves, then perhaps the "errors" are more objective and determined, and we should *openly* and collectively forsake democratic centralism in favor of "homogeneity" or even military discipline in our party. Whatever the solution, it should at least be open and honest and collective, not a dishonest process of attrition and surprise.

July 22, 1971

THIRD WORLD WOMEN AND THE DEBATE OF "FREE ABORTION" VS. "REPEAL OF ALL ABORTION LAWS"

by Patti Iiyama,
Upper West Side Branch,
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The Proletarian Orientation tendency claims that:

We know that until free abortion on demand is won, working class women will have won practically nothing. Until that demand is won, the majority of working class women, especially Black, Latino (sic), and Chicana women, will have to resort to the lower-than-legal-cost back alley butchers for abortion. (Barbara Gregorich, Phil Passen, "On Our Tasks in the Women's Liberation Movement," *SWP Discussion Bulletin*, Vol. 29, No. 15, July, 1971, pp. 21-22)

However, at the Women's National Abortion Conference held in New York City on July 16-18 we got a glimpse of the tremendous potential which exists for involving significant numbers of Third World women (Black, Chicana, Latina, Asian-American and Native American) in the abortion action campaign. Over fifty Third World women participated, including YWCA members, welfare mothers from Detroit and Chicago, Chicanas from Texas and California, Third World Women's Alliances in Detroit, Boston, New York and Chicago and a small number of comrades from the YSA and/or SWP.

It was the first time that Third World women from around the country met to work out a plan of action around feminist demands. All of the sisters were very enthusiastic and serious about building a national campaign of Third World women for repeal of all abortion laws, no forced sterilization and repeal of all contraception laws. We discussed many concrete ways to involve our Third World sisters in the abortion campaign and made plans for Third World women's contingents on the November 20th mass marches.

We also spent some time discussing "free abortion on demand" as opposed to "repeal of all abortion laws" as the major demand around which to organize the campaign. We unanimously agreed that the demand for "repeal of all abortion laws" would mobilize the largest number of Third World women.

The main obstacle which Third World women face in obtaining abortion in the United States is that abortions are illegal, not that they are not free. It is because abortions are forbidden by law, or have so many restrictions placed on them that few can be performed, that Third World women are forced to be butchered on dirty kitchen tables, and at high prices. Third World women cannot afford to travel to other states or other countries, like Japan or Sweden, where abortions are legal. Third World women cannot afford to visit two or three psychiatrists in order to qualify for an abortion with testimony that they will suffer "irreparable mental damage" without an abortion. The impossibility of obtaining legal abortions forces Third World women to turn to illegal and dangerous means.

Third World women will benefit the most from repeal of all abortion laws. We will not have "won practically nothing," as the Proletarian Orientation Tendency asserts. A clear example of this is what happened in New York State. Although the reforms still put certain restrictions on abortion, the new liberalized laws have obviously benefited women,

especially Third World women. Before the reformed law was passed, over 80% of the casualties of botched, illegal abortions in New York were Black and Puerto Rican women. Since abortion became legal a year ago, Third World women have been able to take advantage of the safe abortions offered. About 50% of the women who have obtained abortions in New York City are Black and Puerto Rican women.

Furthermore, 20% of the abortions performed in New York State have been paid for by Medicaid. Although free abortions (and socialized medicine) are goals we will fight to realize, legalized abortions would be a real initial victory for Third World women. Once abortions have become legal, it is not that difficult to obtain some kind of medical coverage for the poorest women who are usually also Third World). Welfare mothers' abortions, for instance, in Chicago were covered by Medicaid during the two weeks when abortion was legal. Native American women in reservations get free medical care from the government, but abortions are still illegal and not yet covered by that medical plan.

Actual experience in talking with and organizing Third World women shows that Third World women see "free abortion" as an ideal demand, but not one that can realistically be won at this time. Black women comrades from Detroit encountered a great deal of difficulty in bringing Black women into the abortion coalition until they changed the slogan from "free" to "repeal." Many Black women did not take the abortion campaign seriously until they saw the demand as one which could be obtained, not as utopian rhetoric. Third World women tend (understandably) to connect "free abortion" with socialized medicine, which they do not see as a realizable goal under this system. At the workshop at the conference, a Black sister from Chicago also pointed out the difficulties she faced in the Black community, where Black women are very wary of anything that is "free" since there are usually strings attached.

These two reasons — that the main problem for Third World women is that abortions are *illegal* and that Third World women think that "free abortion" is unrealistic and therefore not a serious demand around which to struggle at this time — were the reasons that all of the Third World women in the workshop agreed on the demand for "repeal of all abortion laws." This demand is the best one for mobilizing significant numbers of Third World women in this important struggle for our right to choose whether or not to bear children. This campaign will draw many Third World women into the feminist movement as well, by exposing them to the ideas and demands of the women's liberation movement as a whole. Already, we are getting an unprecedented response from Third World women — ranging from Young Lords, to *Ebony* magazine, to Asian-Americans for Action, from high school students to middle-aged housewives and welfare mothers to school-teachers and secretaries.

The Proletarian Orientation tendency has stated that "free abortion on demand" is the "correct demand" and that "repeal of all abortion laws" is "accommodating to the reformists" and "turning away from the demands of

most immediate and daily interest to working class women." (Gregorich, Passen, "On Our Tasks in the Women's Liberation Movement", *SWP Discussion Bulletin*, Vol. 29, No. 15, July, 1971, p. 20)

However, "repeal of all abortion laws" is a concrete, democratic demand, not an unprincipled one which bends to the reformists and gains nothing. It is *how* you fight for this demand not the demand itself which determines whether you are a reformist or a revolutionary (or an ultraleft). Women today are prevented from having even the basic right to control our reproductive organs, to choose when and if we want to become mothers. For a long time, we have been saddled with bearing and raising children at the whim of chance. The fact that today so many women risk mutilation and death to get illegal abortions testifies to the desperate need for repeal of all these laws.

Through the struggle to win this demand, we will be taking a vital first step toward controlling our own bodies and our own lives. For working class women, and especially all Third World women, the repeal of all abortion laws will be immediately relevant for our daily lives. Millions of women will be free for the first time to make a conscious and independent choice about one of the most important decisions that affects our lives: when we wish to bear children. This is hardly a hollow victory, as the Proletarian Orientation states. Would it be a hollow victory if the United States were to withdraw from Vietnam, leaving 3,191 American bases abroad?

Even the ruling class in this country realizes the revolutionary implications of women winning the right to control our own reproductive organs. That is why Nixon, McGovern, and the Catholic Church have so strongly denounced women's right to abortion. They have chosen this issue as the one on which to attack the women's liberation movement as a whole. Why do they choose to attack abortion if it is so irrelevant to the majority of women in the United States? It is precisely because the ruling class understands, though Gregorich and Passen do not, that when women gain the right to control our own bodies, we will have taken the first step toward control over our lives.

Furthermore, if we succeed in winning repeal of *all* the abortion laws, it means repeal of all restrictions on

abortion. This means an end to restrictions on who decides when abortions can be performed (e.g., two psychiatrists, doctor with husband's permission), who can perform abortions (e.g., only doctors) and where they must be performed (e.g., only hospitals). The primary expenses that must be paid in New York, for example, are the services of the doctor and hospital where women must get their legal abortions. Thus, winning the repeal of all these restrictions will probably open the way for abortion clinics with qualified paramedical personnel, which would lower the price of abortions. This lowering of the price of abortions, in addition to the safe and sanitary conditions that would result, will be a concrete victory for all women, especially Third World and poor women.

Victory in the struggle for repeal of all abortion laws will give tremendous impetus to the rest of the women's liberation movement as well. All people in capitalist society have been brainwashed into thinking that we are powerless, that we must leave the decisions that affect our lives to "experts" who have money and political power. Women in this society have suffered especially from being divided by competition for men and being isolated from each other in the nuclear family unit. August 26th last year was an indication of the potential massiveness of the movement of women for our liberation. The fight for repeal of all abortion laws will show that we are a serious movement that can win when we unite.

The women's liberation movement will be built around victories which concretely demonstrate that sisterhood is powerful. Victory on this issue will help to educate many women that we can unite and win through mass actions independent of the "legal channels" in this system. Victory will build self-confidence in our power to affect change in this society and will draw many more women into the other struggles in which the women's liberation movement is involved. Victory will be a mass consciousness-raiser for women all over the world.

Women realize the seriousness of embarking on a struggle for repeal of all abortion laws, but we are confident that we will win. We understand that this issue is important for all women. Black, Chicana, Latina, Asian-American and Native American women will be in the forefront of this struggle, for we have the most to gain by winning (and the most to lose if we don't.)

FACTS ABOUT THE BOLSHEVIK PARTY

By Doug Jenness, Brooklyn Branch, New York Local

In order to back up their argument in favor of the SWP launching an extensive colonization into the trade unions right now, the authors of "For A Proletarian Orientation" dig up quotes from nearly every Marxist authority, rip them out of context, and serve them up to us as holy scripture. This technique, which has nothing in common with Marxist analysis, inevitably leads to both factual and theoretical errors as well as gross oversimplifications.

A case in point is the examples from the experience of the Russian Revolution and the Bolshevik Party cited by the leaders of the Proletarian Orientation Tendency. I would like to discuss two of these examples: (1) the role of trade unions in the Russian Revolution; and (2) the relationship between Lenin's political rearming of the Bolshevik Party in April 1917 and the class composition of the party.

I. The Role of Trade Unions in the Russian Revolution

On the first point, the leaders of the Proletarian Orientation Tendency attempt to refute a statement made by Jack Barnes in his political report to the 1969 SWP convention. Barnes's statement was: "There's no use guessing the exact forms. The Bolsheviks would never have foreseen that their lack of a majority in the unions would not have been decisive; it was their majority in the soviets that turned out to be decisive in the Russian Revolution." (Internal Information Bulletin, no. 8 in 1969, pp. 10-11.)

The statement refers to the fact that the SWP's 1969 political resolution intentionally emphasized the basic political demands for the American workers rather than specifying the organizational forms the struggle will assume.

The leaders of the Proletarian Orientation Tendency declare that, "This statement by Barnes is wrong on three scores." Their first two points are: "First it is wrong because the Bolsheviks *did* have leadership of the trade unions. . . .

"Secondly, the Bolsheviks *could not have won* the leadership of the Soviets if they had not already had the leadership of the trade unions." (SWP Discussion Bulletin, vol. 29, no. 2, p. 18.)

Right off the bat, Gregorich, Massey, et al. make a factual error. The Bolsheviks *did not* hold the leadership of the majority of trade unions at the time of the October Revolution and *in spite of this* they won the leadership of the Soviets.

They cite two references to refute this fact. The first is a quote by me from "Lenin As Campaign Director," (February, 1971 *ISR*) and the second is a quote from Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution*. They quoted me as stating that:

"Badayev [author of *The Bolsheviks in the Czarist Duma, 1929*] estimates that among the class-conscious workers, the Bolsheviks had between three-fourths and nine-tenths of the support; the Mensheviks, the rest. For example, the Bolsheviks held a majority of seats on the boards of fourteen of the eighteen major trade unions in Russia at the time." What Gregorich, Massey, et al. forgot to mention, and it was crystal clear in my article, was the year to which I was referring. It was 1914, not 1917.

Either Gregorich, Massey, et al. conveniently missed the date in their haste or they believe that this favorable status for the Bolsheviks in the Russian labor movement continued, uninterrupted, until October, 1917. Unfortunately this was not the case. World War I intervened, and a campaign of patriotic hysteria and repression was whipped up throughout the country. Leaders of the party were jailed and exiled, underground conditions grew more severe, and the party lost its hegemony in the labor movement. Trotsky wrote in *Stalin* (p. 185):

"Bolshevism had dominated the labor movement prior to the war's outbreak, especially in the capital. In March 1917, the Bolsheviks in the [Petrograd] Soviet were an insignificant minority. How had that happened? The impressive mass that had taken part in the movement of 1911-1914 actually amounted to no more than a small fraction of the working class. Revolution had made millions, not mere hundreds of thousands, spring to their feet. Because of mobilization [for the war] nearly 40 percent of these workers were new. The old-timers were at the front, playing there the part of the revolutionary yeast; their places at the factories were taken by nondescript newcomers fresh from the country, by peasant lads and peasant women. These novices had to go through the same political experiences, however briefly, as the vanguard of the preceding period."

In addition, Trotsky indicated that "Worst of all, the course of events had caught the Bolshevik Party napping. None of its tried and true leaders were in Petrograd." (p. 185.) Thus there was no continuous upward curve of growth and influence by the Bolshevik Party, from 1914 to October 1917.

The second bit of evidence offered by the leaders of the Proletarian Orientation Tendency is a single sentence from Trotsky's three-volume *History of the Russian Revolution* which states: "The instruments of the insurrection might have been the factory committees and trade unions, *already under the leadership of the Bolsheviks*, and at the same time in individual cases certain Soviets that had broken free from the yoke of the Compromisers." (Vol. 2, p. 303, their emphasis.)

Ironically, this sentence is torn out of a section in the *History* where Trotsky discusses the dangers of organizational fetishism. He explains why the Bolsheviks, after the July Days, dropped the demand "All Power to the Soviets," which the party had been promoting since April 1917. The Bolsheviks abandoned this demand because they believed that the tight grip the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries held on the leadership of the Soviets and their policy of tying to the capitalist coalition government would make it impossible to win a majority in the soviets through peaceful means. Thus the Bolsheviks took the position that leadership for the insurrection would have to come from the factory committees and trade unions, where at this point their strength was greatest. However, history took a different course. The rejuvenation of the soviets after General Kornilov's attempt at a right-wing military coup in August enabled the Bolsheviks to raise the slogan "All Power to the Soviets" once again, and it was through the soviets that the insurrection was organized.

This brief sketch of how the Bolsheviks twice changed their view of what organizational forms would lead the insurrection shows the flexibility and open-mindedness of the Bolsheviks and the richness and unexpected turns of the revolutionary process. It was this point that Barnes was making in the couple of sentences that Gregorich, Massey, et al. quote.

From the single sentence of Trotsky quoted by the Proletarian Orientation pundits, it is difficult to know whether he meant that the majority of the factory committees and trade unions were under the leadership of the Bolsheviks or whether the insurrection would be led by those in which the Bolsheviks had majority support. More information is needed for full clarity.

If Gregorich, Massey, et al. had quoted the rest of the paragraph (something they seldom do), we would have learned that, "Lenin, for example, said to Ordzhonikidze: 'We must swing the centre of gravity to the factory and shop committees. The factory and shop committees must become the organs of insurrection.'" Lenin didn't mention trade unions — so our historians exorcised that sentence.

The factory and shop committees arose during the February Revolution and became one of the most important organizational forms for mobilizing the masses of workers at the factory level. They were a broader form than the trade unions, involving many nonunionists in addition to union members. It was the factory committees that took the initiative of implementing workers' control in many factories and workplaces before the Bolsheviks came to power. There are many references to these important mass organizations in Trotsky's *History* and in the 1917 writings of Lenin — in fact, many more references than there are to the Russian trade unions. The Bolsheviks *did* hold the leadership in the majority of the factory and shop committees before they won it in the soviets.

In his *History* Trotsky quotes a statement that he made in August 1917: "'The factory and shop committees,' wrote Trotsky in August, 'are not created out of temporary meetings. The masses elect to these committees those who at home in the everyday life of the factory have demonstrated their firmness, their business-like character and their devotion to the interests of the workers. And these same factory committees . . . in their overwhelming majority consist of Bolsheviks.'" (vol. 2, p. 284.)

The February Revolution also sparked tremendous growth in the trade unions, and throughout 1917 the Bolsheviks' influence in the trade unions grew significantly. At an All-Russian Trade Union Conference held between July 4 and July 11, 1917, seventy-three of the 211 delegates present were Bolsheviks. (Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 25, p. 509.)

However, in a 1931 article on "The Unions in Britain" in *Trotsky on the Trade Unions* (pp. 55-56), Trotsky states that, "Even in Russia, where the trade unions did not have anything like the powerful traditions of the British trade unions, the October Revolution occurred with Mensheviks predominant in the administration of the trade unions. Having lost the masses, these administrations were still capable of sabotaging elections in the apparatus, although already powerless to sabotage the proletarian revolution." Thus the Bolsheviks won the majority of workers in the trade unions but not the leadership of the unions. Gregorich, Massey, et al. are in error.

Does this now mean that Barnes's statement "implies

that *it is not necessary* to enter the trade unions and wage a struggle for the leadership of the working class through the trade unions," as Gregorich, Massey, et al. charge? Their "third point" is the claim that Barnes "assures us that it *didn't matter* that the Bolsheviks didn't have a 'majority' in the trade unions. And if it didn't matter, for them, why should it matter for us?" The most generous interpretation of their accusation is that their was a page missing in their copy of Barnes's report.

Only factional blindness could lead one to draw these conclusions from Barnes's statement or his report as a whole. What Barnes's statement does imply is that we should not be fetishists with respect to the organizational forms that the American working class and oppressed nationalities will use in the making of the coming socialist revolution. It did matter for the Bolsheviks and it will matter for us, as the NC draft political resolution and report explicitly state!

One of the important lessons of the 1917 revolution, which Gregorich, Massey, et al. missed in their relentless pursuit of their one-sided selection of quotes, was the wide variety of organizational forms and the complex and changing relationships between them. The Bolsheviks participated in many organizations including dumas, zemstvos, soviets, the factory and shop committees, trade unions, army committees and land committees. As we have already noted, the importance of some of these forms for the Bolsheviks' strategy shifted several times during 1917.

To recognize this in no way belittles the fact that active participation in the trade unions was both a necessary and important part of the Bolsheviks' strategy. But Gregorich, Massey, et al.'s one-sided approach to how the Russian Revolution was made fails to put the Bolsheviks' rich trade-union experience into perspective.

A central aspect of the Bolsheviks' approach to the trade unions was the transformation of as many unions as possible into active supporters and organizers of the October Revolution. The Mensheviks, who opposed the proletarian revolution, of course opposed this strategy and counterposed to it the concept of political "neutrality" for the unions. The struggle against this concept was an important part of the discussion on trade unions at the Sixth Congress of the Bolshevik Party at the end of July 1917. (Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 25, p. 522.)

In the only major article on trade unions written by Lenin between April and October 1917, he concentrated on urging the All-Russian Trade Union Conference to reach out and organize the most oppressed section of the working class — the agricultural wage laborers. "We hope that at this revolutionary moment," he wrote, ". . . that at this time the trade unions will not confine themselves to narrow craft interests and forget their weaker brethren, the rural workers, but will exert all their energy to help them by founding a union of Russia's rural workers." (Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 25, p. 123.)

The SWP's strategy for the trade-union movement in the United States is basically the same as that of the Bolsheviks, as Barnes reaffirmed in his political report to the March 1971 National Committee plenum. He stated, "We hope the [political] resolution makes it clear that this perspective of struggling to transform the unions is not some sort of optional matter, a question of debating, well, yes, it is wise to struggle to transform the unions. The

struggle to transform the unions is a *necessary* part of our strategy for the socialist revolution. And it's based on both the necessary struggle to defend the unions *and* the struggle to transform as many unions as possible into fighting instruments of the class that go way beyond struggles for simple union demands. Both of these aspects of the struggle will be intimately tied together in the course of the struggle for power. The unions will either be transformed or they will be crushed, or totally tamed, and have no independent value to the working class." (SWP Discussion Bulletin, vol. 29, no. 1, p. 30.)

II. The Class Composition of the Bolshevik Party

In order to prove that the class composition of a revolutionary party is decisive for preventing its program from becoming a "scrap of paper," Gregorich, Massey, et al. make two statements about the history of the Bolshevik Party.

The first is that the predominantly working-class composition of the party was the principal reason why Lenin was able to politically rearm the party on his return to Russia in April 1917.

The second is that the lack of a working-class base in the party after the 1918-1920 civil war led to Stalin's takeover of the party.

In respect to the first example, the leaders of the Proletarian Orientation Tendency write: "In Russia prior to the spring of 1917 the primary leadership of the party had been, for many months and even years, physically separated from the struggle of the workers due to exile and imprisonment. It took the intervention of Lenin to transcend the separation from the working class (imposed by exile) and maintain a revolutionary consciousness. Lenin's April Theses found little support among the Old Bolshevik leaders of the Party. They rejected his 'too left' position. On the other hand Lenin's program did find acceptance among the left Bolsheviks (mainly workers, who, as Trotsky said, although they did not know how to refute the premise about the bourgeois character of the revolution, nevertheless, with the instincts of their class, rejected the idea of support to the Provisional Government and even demanded the expulsion of the party leaders (Kamenev and Stalin) who advocated it. Turning this around, it becomes obvious that without the worker Bolsheviks, Lenin's [April] theses would have found little acceptance in the party." (DB, vol. 29, No. 2, p. 1.)

Let's examine the facts. The February Revolution found the Bolshevik Party considerably weakened by the war-time repression. Nearly all the primary leaders of the party were in exile or in prison, and the party was generally unprepared for the gigantic events. Even more important, for years before the February Revolution, the cadres of the Bolshevik Party had been taught by Lenin that the Russian Revolution would usher in the *democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry*. This theory assumed that the workers and peasants together would lead the bourgeois revolution and establish a democratic capitalist state. Trotsky, since 1905, had predicted that the next Russian Revolution would be led by the working class and would establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. Lenin sharply polemicized against Trotsky's view, and the Bolshevik Party was trained to oppose Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution in favor

of the "democratic dictatorship" formulation.

It is no wonder, then, that the secondary leaders of the party were caught off-guard in February. Although the "democratic dictatorship" Lenin had described never appeared, many of the Bolsheviks supported the capitalist Provisional Government on the grounds that *it* was the democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasants. This was the position the party was taking when Lenin returned in April 1917.

Lenin opposed support to the Provisional Government and called for a Soviet Government — that is, a government of the workers and peasants. At first only a minority held his viewpoint, but by the late April party conference he had won a majority of the party to this perspective.

This brief sketch of the events reveals a basic contradiction in the argument of Gregorich, Massey, et al. Their fetish about the composition of the party does not explain how the Bolshevik Party, overwhelmingly proletarian in its composition in February, could have one political position and, still maintaining its proletarian composition, could adopt an opposing program a few months later. Quite obviously, class composition doesn't tell the entire story — far from it.

Even in their own statement, the leaders of the Proletarian Orientation Tendency admit that "It took the intervention of Lenin to transcend the separation from the working class (imposed by exile) and maintain a revolutionary consciousness."

In other words, the question of politically rearming the party was a leadership question. A less experienced, less authoritative, and politically disoriented leadership was unable to do it *in spite* of the working-class composition of the party.

Gregorich, Massey, et al. failed to mention that April was not the only time in 1917 that Lenin's intervention and firm influence were crucial for the Bolsheviks' ability to take power in November. When a section of the party's top leaders, including the most prominent Bolshevik trade-union leader, Riazanov, vacillated and opposed taking power on the even of the insurrection, Lenin sharply opposed them and led the party to victory.

These sharp conflicts and crises in the Bolshevik Party in 1917 were carefully analyzed by Trotsky in *Lessons of October*, as well as in other writings.

Trotsky explains that, although it is necessary for the revolutionary party to have a mass following in the working class and for there to be a revolutionary situation before the workers can take power, these are not sufficient. Far too often these conditions have existed, but the absence of leadership or a vacillating leadership has led the workers to defeat.

Even though the rank-and-file membership may, in a revolutionary situation, be less susceptible to bourgeois pressure than sections of the leadership, they will not spontaneously be able to carry out a victorious revolution.

The leaders of the Proletarian Orientation Tendency have warned us about the dangers of a revolutionary party not having a proletarian composition, but they haven't dealt with the threat of bourgeois public opinion mobilized against a party that is already predominantly working-class, as the Bolshevik Party was, and as any revolutionary party must be if it expects to take power.

The principal lesson in view of that is the necessity of training a well-rounded political leadership, granite-hard in its resistance to bourgeois pressures and flexible in its tactics. This means, among other things, no organizational fetishism or narrow concern with only one side of the class struggle. It was Lenin's active participation in the life of the Bolshevik Party, his absorption of the lessons of the working-class movement, and his creative application of those lessons that made it possible for him to assume the key leadership role that he did.

In preparing for the American revolution, we cannot wait and are not waiting for a Lenin to straighten us out at each decisive turn and to ward off the vacillators. In order to insure the successful conquest of power in this country, we must have a *team* of cadres, tempered by experience and programmatic understanding. That's what we are in the process of assembling now.

The second point that Gregorich, Massey, et al. use to demonstrate the decisiveness of class composition at key junctures in the Bolshevik Party's history is the origin of Stalinism in the early 1920s.

They state: "Later in the history of the Bolshevik Party, after the Civil War and the death of Lenin, the leadership again became separated from the working class, this time for different reasons and with different effects. The vanguard role that the worker Bolsheviks played in the Civil War had taken a considerable toll. Many of the industrial proletariat who survived the war became demoralized.

"The social stratum which Lenin was able to turn to in 1917 did not, practically speaking, exist for Trotsky. Although there may have been worker Bolsheviks instinctively groping for the correct program, they were outweighed by the vast and growing petty bourgeoisie being admitted to the party. This petty bourgeois layer found just what it wanted and needed in Stalin's program, as Stalin's program found a base in the petty bourgeoisie."

Gregorich, Massey, et al. seem to imply that the admission of masses of petty-bourgeois members to the Bolshevik Party was responsible for the origins of the Stalinist bureaucracy.

But this is circular reasoning. They fail to ask: Why did a revolutionary party, holding state power, with a predominantly working-class membership, start admitting apolitical workers, careerists, petty officials, and middle-class elements? Why is it that a party that was predominantly proletarian in composition in February 1917, October 1917, and also in 1924 could have fundamentally different programs at these different times, and why was

it that Trotsky couldn't rearm the party in the early 1920s, as Lenin had done in 1917?

The leaders of the Proletarian Orientation Tendency don't seem to appreciate the fact that even though the class composition of the party remained proletarian, the experiences, the mood, and the objective situation of the workers changed drastically.

In 1917, the Russian workers were radicalizing and were optimistic about the prospects for victory. In such an environment, Lenin's program of intransigent struggle against the capitalist Provisional Government found many supporters.

In the early 1920s, the working class was demoralized. There were many factors responsible for this, including the number of politically conscious workers that were killed in the civil war. Most significant, however, was the succession of defeat after defeat of the revolutionary situations in Europe and the defeat of the Chinese revolution in 1927. These created a deep feeling of despair among the workers, and it was on the back of a passive, demoralized working class and its organizations that the Stalinist parasites grew.

Trotsky indicated that this demoralization came to exist even among the most advanced workers. "To be sure," he wrote, "tens of thousands of revolutionary fighters gathered around the banner of the Bolshevik-Leninists. The advanced workers were indubitably sympathetic to the Opposition, but that sympathy remained passive. The masses lacked faith that the situation could be seriously changed by a new struggle." (*The Revolution Betrayed*, p. 91.)

Without this change in the attitude of the workers, the Stalinist bureaucracy would not have been able, even with the help of the petty-bourgeois allies with which it flooded the party, to destroy the Bolshevik Party.

It wasn't that the workers were "outweighed" by the petty bourgeoisie in the party, or that there was no "social stratum" for Trotsky to turn to, that made it impossible for Trotsky to do in the early 1920s what Lenin had done in 1917. Rather, it was the changed psychology of the working masses, based upon a real change in the world and the Russian objective situations — which Trotsky believed could only be reversed by a major victory for the socialist revolution in some other country.

Reading Trotsky can yield the correct answer to the question of the interrelations among program, class composition, and leadership for any comrade who reads to find the answer and not to gather quotations to prove a point.

July 30, 1971

REMARKS MADE AT THE HOUSTON BRANCH PRE-
CONVENTION DISCUSSION ON JULY 27 IN SUPPORT
OF THE N. C. DRAFT POLITICAL RESOLUTION

by Debby Leonard, Houston Branch

I want to briefly discuss a movement that is growing, organizing nationally, involves a sector of the population which has been oppressed for years, a movement in which our opponents are active, which is objectively against and attacks the nuclear family and furthermore directly poses the question of society's responsibility for children. This movement is increasing in social weight, does not represent the petty bourgeoisie, much less the bourgeoisie, in any form, organizes mass actions, makes democratic demands and has already won some concessions. This movement is related to the struggles of the unemployed, fights the backward consciousness of the working class especially in terms of racism and sexism. At times this movement has very militant leadership. It is certainly a movement of the oppressed and one whose demands we basically support. We have some comrades who could be assigned to intervene on the basis of their personal situation and others who could easily alter their personal situations to make themselves available for this intervention. And this movement is on the move and radicalizing. I'm talking, of course, about the welfare rights movement.

We do not project an orientation or intervention into welfare rights. Why? Not because all of the things I've mentioned aren't true—they are. But, in class terms, this is basically a lumpenized sector of the population, a de-classed and a relatively powerless sector of the population. This sector of the population cannot effect basic change in this country, cannot end the war in Southeast Asia, cannot withhold labor power effectively, cannot strike in any meaningful or fundamental way. They can and have won concessions, but will never eliminate their oppression or cease to exist under capitalism. They are, and are forced to be, primarily concerned with their own problems of daily existence and personal adjustment—very few can be effective in a large political sense. And also, importantly, our numbers are small and we must carefully prioritize our areas of intervention.

Now, I support, basically, the demands and rights of the welfare rights movement. I have worked with the Welfare Rights Organization in relation to my job; I have been able at times to politically influence their decisions and I have linked their demands at times with those of the union I belonged to. I have arranged for them to speak before the union and I have spoken before their organization.

However, if it were to be proposed that we make a major political intervention into the Welfare Rights Organization and assign our comrades on welfare to work in that area or consider it the crucial sign of the deepening radicalization—although it is definitely a part of the radicalization—I would be opposed to that orientation—for the reasons I enumerated and others. And yet, I do not feel that, if I questioned or even opposed that intervention, comrades would accuse me of being anti-poor or anti-welfare or anti-motherhood or anti-children or pro-population control.

I do not intend to make any analogy between the welfare rights movement and the gay liberation movement.

However, I am concerned that we make a rational, materialist, conscious evaluation of the gay liberation movement in terms of how it relates to the total radicalization, its social weight, historical importance, etc. Because I have stated that the probe was intended to do this and just this and was not intended *per se* to determine *how* we will best make an intervention into this movement, I am accused of being superstitious, anti-homosexual, prejudiced against gays and probably even counterrevolutionary. I am told that the reason this probe was needed was solely because of the backwardness, prejudice, blindness and narrowness, not of society primarily in this case, but of a section of our movement—the Socialist Workers Party—whom it was necessary to mollify and who were unable to appreciate the revolutionary significance and immediate and crucial importance of a direct, full and concerted intervention into the gay liberation movement. If this is true, comrades, then you are saying that the Political Committee of the SWP—the highest body between conventions—is maneuvering with the membership, unable to be honest with us, fearful of giving a Marxist analysis of the importance of this movement, not exercising the leadership we have entrusted it with and willing—for a period of some months at least—to sidetrack the SWP from a crucial and perhaps decisive intervention at the expense of tremendous potential gain for ourselves and that movement, merely because they are worried about a few comrades who haven't seen the light. Because, comrades, if it is true that the gay liberation movement is *the* most decisive new movement in this period and is going to shake this system to its very foundation as was stated in many ways and many times on Sunday, and if the P. C. understands this and is holding back from leading the party into full intervention and participation solely because of comrades' backwardness, then the P. C. is doing a great disservice to our movement indeed.

I would like, once again, to make the record clear. I support our position giving unconditional support to the struggles of homosexuals for civil and human rights against discrimination and oppression they suffer under capitalism. And that, comrades, *is* our position.

I want to make something else clear. Do you think that I would leave the SWP if the P. C. had passed a motion calling for immediate and full intervention into the gay liberation movement? Do you think that other comrades would leave? Do you think that that is why they did not pass such a motion? No, comrades. I support our present position. I am not at all convinced that we should intervene actively in this movement. If, at the Convention as some comrades guarantee, the Convention does decide to implement a full intervention into gay liberation, I will not leave the party and I will abide by that decision. If that decision is made, I will depend on history and further party discussion periods based on fuller experience, to settle the issue and put it in perspective.

The point is, comrades, because you support the civil, sexual, legal, political, economic and social rights of gays—all of which I do and fully—because you evaluate this movement as being progressive, as being another sign

of the deepening radicalization, as being a further indication of the increasing crisis in all areas confronting the ruling class—all of which I do—does not necessarily mean that you see it as a key area into which to send precious cadre or that, because of the explosive nature of the areas involved, which tends to promote highly subjective and volatile reactions, you fail to maintain the perspective and political objectivity and consciousness necessary for our movement to be effective in achieving our central goal—the building of a mass revolutionary party that will lead the working class to victory in the struggle for socialism.

In line with this concern for objectivity, I would like to refer to the picture which was used by a comrade as an example of "queer-baiting" of the early radical movement. I have studied the sketch (a sketch by C. Bunnell entitled "Illinois—the Recent Troubles in Chicago—the Police Capturing Leading Anarchists at One of Their Dens, No. 616 Centre Avenue" from *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, May 22, 1886) and can only get from it that two cops are breaking in at night upon two men asleep on the floor, one of whom is cowering when confronted by them. If there are homosexual overtones in the sketch, they escape me. I do not want to argue the merits of my interpretation as opposed to the other comrades', but I hardly think this sketch can be used to demonstrate the "queer-baiting" of the early radical movement. I will pass it around for anyone who wants to examine it closely. The point is, comrades, I am concerned with objectivity.

One of the characteristics of this discussion—understandably enough—has been to spend a great deal of time discussing the major document of the Proletarian Orientation Tendency and not a whole lot of time discussing the N.C.'s Draft Political Resolution. Based on Sunday's discussion, I think there is some difference in interpretation of the N.C. Political Resolution.

The N.C. Political Resolution for this Convention is the best thought out, biggest thinking and most optimistic resolution I have seen since I've been in the party. Yet it is a very realistic analysis and appraisal of the present conjuncture.

How does it define the present period: "Today's radicalization is bigger, deeper and broader than any previous radicalization A distinction must be made between a radicalization and a revolutionary situation. The current radicalization . . . is not at the point of becoming a pre-revolutionary situation. It is a precondition and preparation for it. The borders of a revolutionary situation can be reached only when the politicalization and radicalization has extended to decisive sectors of the working masses, and when a revolutionary upsurge and mobilization objectively poses the basic question of what class should wield power." (p. 15, N.C. Draft Political Resolution) We must be careful about throwing around the term "revolutionary situation" lightly.

What are some of the characteristics of this radicali-

zation? What new movements have arisen? And in what perspective do we in fact put them? "As the above movements continued to develop amidst ebbs and flows, new struggles caught on. The most massive of these have been the Chicano and women's liberation movements. New issues, such as pollution of our environment, have further fueled the radicalization. The ruling class has been unable to prevent the radicalization from making a deep impact on its armed forces. The gay liberation movement against the oppression of homosexuals, the prison revolts, the welfare struggles, the divisions in the Catholic Church" (p. 14, N.C. Draft Political Resolution)

What does the N.C. Draft Political Resolution say about gay liberation? "As with prisoners, bourgeois society views homosexuals as outcasts. The gay liberation movement has raised a series of demands against the way homosexuals are treated by bourgeois society. These include insistence on equality before the law like other citizens, with full rights in all respects; that their private lives be their own, free from legal or police restraint; against police entrapment practices; for their acceptance as equals in all spheres of social life. The gay liberation movement was strongly influenced by the opposition of the women's liberation movement to the commercial exploitation of sex, the reduction of sex to something other than a free human relation, the reactionary and stifling sexual norms of bourgeois society, and the psychological distortions of sexuality in a class society based on the nuclear family system. The women's movement began to see that the antagonistic attitudes towards homosexuals are simply another facet of a sick social order." (p. 12, N.C. Political Resolution) I support that statement.

On the other hand, why does the N.C. Political Resolution spend so much time dealing with the present situation in the union movement, analyzing the nature of the increasing radicalization of the working class and outlining in detail our program for the union movement? Because, contrary to some remarks made Sunday, it is precisely our job to instill consciousness in the working class, to "educate left-wing forces in the union." (p. 21, N.C. Draft) For the first time in many years, comrades, we are seeing indications of the real possibility of reaching the working class—"the only social force that can wrest power from the hands of the rulers." (p. 20, N.C. Draft) Comrade Lovell, in my opinion, as I have indicated before, presents the best guideline for doing this and the most conscious answer to a number of questions raised by the Proletarian Orientation Tendency in his contribution, "Have We Given Up Our Proletarian Orientation?" We must implement these guidelines and expand on them, within the framework of our total political program and its implementation.

July 27, 1971

CONTRIBUTION TO THE PRE-CONVENTION
DISCUSSION

by Tom Leonard, Houston Branch

At our last pre-convention discussion, we were given, in the space of a few minutes, a guided and perhaps distorted tour of the history and evolution of homosexuality. We went from primitive society through the rise of Greece, the collapse of Rome, swirled through the Judeo-Christian religions, touched briefly down in the United States for a quick look at the Palmer Raids after World War II, and were then glibly informed that the beginnings of the workers' radicalization in this country would be characterized by "queer-baiting." In all deference to the comrade who took us on this guided tour, he did acknowledge that there were a lot of things he didn't know about the question, and I heartily agree with him. There isn't too much that he gave evidence of knowing about the question. What he did make known, however, was that there were several comrades in the branch, including myself, who were prejudiced toward homosexuals. He gave no evidence to substantiate this general charge and left hanging in the air an atmosphere that was not conducive to coming to grips with the question of gay liberation as expressed within the framework of the P.C. Resolution and the probe subsequently projected by the P.C.

I want to make something very clear from the outset and that is that I have had difficulty working with the comrade who made these charges, not because he is gay, but because, frankly, I've had difficulty following him from one assignment to another over the past period. He is a difficult comrade to get to know where to have. I have not experienced this problem in dealing with gay comrades in this country and in Canada, with whom I have worked and for whom I have the highest political regard, not only for what they say, but for what they've done in building the Trotskyist movement in both countries.

I specifically request that this comrade put the charge in writing and cite the instances. I accept no censure from this, or any other comrade, on the basis of heresy, rumor or gossip. I have made clear my views on this in writing and I suggest that every other comrade that feels

strongly should do the same.

But there is something even more distasteful to me about the nature of the last pre-convention discussion. As the discussion unfolded, it centered around a not too veiled attack upon myself and at least one other comrade in such a way that after a while I wasn't sure whether I was at a branch discussion or hauled before the Red Guard in Peking. In the process of this atmosphere, I was treated to a point of view by another comrade relative to the probe on gay liberation. We were told, comrades, that the purpose of the probe was to overcome the ignorance and prejudice against homosexuals that exists in the SWP before we could launch a full-scale intervention into this movement. I was so amazed by this interpretation of the probe, considering the discussion we had had in the branch led by a member of the P.C., combined with the probe in writing as adopted by the P.C., that it occurred to me that we must actually be dealing with two probes: one probe is the one projected by the P.C. for the purpose of evaluating the gay liberation movement; the second probe, if my ears do not deceive me, was directed at those comrades in the party who are not prepared to blindly accept everything being said about this movement. This second interpretation of the probe was followed by a not too veiled threat that this question would be resolved at the Convention and that comrades who did not toe the line on intervention into the gay movement would not be welcome in the party. I hope the comrade who made this statement can clarify it for us. Who are his co-thinkers in this probe? Is he trying to tell us that there are members on the N.C. who are using the probe to smoke out comrades with alleged anti-homosexual prejudice for purposes of expulsion after the Convention? And I must also ask this comrade if this was the way that support for gay liberation has developed in the YSA? This is one of the conclusions that comrades can draw from this comrade's remarks last week. That is not the method of Trotskyists. That's the way the Stalinists and the Social Democrats purge their ranks.

July 27, 1971

WHY THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY MUST REJECT THE POLITICS
OF "THIRD WORLD WORK AND A PROLETARIAN ORIENTATION"

By Tony Thomas, Brooklyn Branch, and Mirta Vidal,
Lower Manhattan Branch, New York Local

Third World Work and a Proletarian Orientation (hereafter referred to as *Third World Work* submitted by Comrades Fernando Guerrero, Hilda Rangel de Guerrero and Froben Lozada is said by its authors to be a counter resolution to the Political Committee resolution on the Chicano struggle. But *Third World Work* does not offer a viable alternative to the party's program and perspectives for the Chicano movement. Instead the authors pre-

sent an inadequate or incorrect view of the nationalist radicalization of Blacks and Chicanos, the problems of party-building, and past experiences of party work in the Chicano and Black liberation struggles.

A close examination of *Third World Work* reveals that its authors do not understand the current radicalization, are repelled by it, and can offer only the sectarian politics of the "proletarian orientation tendency" of which

the authors are supporters.

The resolution puts forward the "proletarian orientation" of "going to the most decisive sectors of American society, the Black and Brown masses and the industrial proletariat as a whole." It falsely claims that the party has an orientation of doing Black and Chicano work exclusively on the university campuses, a "petty-bourgeois orientation." They then present their "proletarian orientation" as a panacea that will solve all problems we face. This orientation serves as a substitute for the difficult work of party building which these comrades denigrate in their resolution.

In attempting to conjure up opportunities for party work outside of the context of our current party perspectives, they demonstrate their ignorance of the very movements and organizations they propose that we intervene in. They distort struggles taking place outside of the student, antiwar and women's liberation movements. They distort and attack our strategy for building the Brown university and the Black university. They also implicitly reject our perspective for doing feminist work among Blacks and Chicanas.

In attempts to find ammunition to attack the current course followed by the party they falsify the real character of groups and leaderships that are opposed to essential aspects of our strategy for Black and Chicano liberation.

In the now familiar style of the proletarian orientation tendency, serious charges are made against the leadership, guilty according to the authors of "almost criminal acts" and "almost a travesty." This is backed by a complete refusal to comment on the programmatic positions of the party in this and other areas of work, and by a similarly complete abstractness in talking about what they think the party should do.

It is clear that *Third World Work* is counterposed, not only to the PC resolution on the Chicano struggle but also to the line put forward in the National Committee draft Political Resolution, to the PC draft resolution *Toward a Mass Feminist Movement* and to all other resolutions adopted by the party in recent years outlining strategy and tactics for the Black, Chicano, feminist, student, antiwar, and labor movements. As such its perspective must be rejected by the party if we are to continue our forward course in the Black and Chicano struggles.

But this counterresolution is counterposed, offered as an alternative, to the PC resolution, *The Struggle for Chicano Liberation*. The authors of *Third World Work* do not even bother to refer to, quote from (especially surprising) or attempt to directly refute the PC resolution. Have you read it, Comrades Lozada, Guerrero and de Guerrero? The authors do not state why they think it should be rejected, they do not deal with any of the ideas presented in it. This course only adds to the abstractness and confusion of their resolution.

If they have read the PC resolution, they surely know that the party does not propose an orientation exclusively to the student sector (university or otherwise) of the Chicano movement, nor do we see this work as exclusively that of Chicano or Latino comrades as they charge.

The PC Resolution states: *Tasks of the SWP*

"In aiding the development of an independent mass Chicano movement, the Socialist Workers Party must help popularize the ideas of and help in other ways to build the Chicano parties, the Chicano antiwar movement, the

high school and college struggles and other important actions, including the farm workers and boycott movements, the struggles of Raza women, the developing movement of Chicano prisoners, and the defense of victims of political frameups. In this work we advance our own program and perspective for Chicano liberation.

"In the coming debates concerning the 1972 elections, we can play an important role in fighting for the maintenance of an independent perspective, arguing against support to the capitalist parties, either direct support to the Democrats or Republicans, or through New Politics-type tickets or parties.

"Such tasks are the responsibility of the entire party and must not fall solely to Chicano and Latino members. Due to our limited forces and our small La Raza membership at the present time, a premium is placed on extensive use of our propaganda vehicles. These include *The Militant* and *ISR*, Pathfinder literature, our election campaigns and our weekly forums."

The *Third World Work* counterresolution begins with a repetition of the now-standard phrases of the "proletarian orientation tendency," claiming that our current party orientation serves to "rationalize our involvement in the petty-bourgeois milieu and to justify our absence from the working class struggles (community, schools, factories, unemployment)." These charges have been well answered in previous discussion articles by many comrades.

They then proceed to brand Black nationalism as having "in many cases developed from petty-bourgeois sectors . . ." and describe how it flowed in from these "sectors" to the working-class "sector" of the Black community. Later they state that, "Unlike the Black struggle, the first major development in the present Chicano movement took place in one of the most oppressed sections of the working-class." This viewpoint is consistent with the listing of the civil rights movement as a "petty-bourgeois" movement in the initial *FAPQ* resolution, as well as with the view of Comrade Cagle, another supporter of this tendency, branding Black nationalism as "bourgeois."

This position is counterposed to the party's position that Black nationalism is rooted in the problems and situations of the most proletarianized sections of the Black population that make up the overwhelming bulk of African-American people. The mass action in the South during the civil rights movement, the ghetto rebellions, the large scale struggles for community control, and the deepening interpenetration of the national and class actions as described in the NC draft Political Resolution prove that the authors of *Third World Work* and other supporters of the "proletarian" views completely wrong.

The counter resolution then attempts to claim that the current party orientation counterposes such activities as the gay probe and the struggle for hegemony in the student movement to intervention in the "concrete struggles for community control."

This charge is false. We have participated in many actions and conferences that are not purely student based. Our comrades intervened in the 1970 Congress of African Peoples conference and the Chicana conference held this year in Houston. We actively supported and participated in the 1969 Harlem Reclamation site occupation. We played a key role in the development of the Northern California Chicano Moratorium Committee of which Comrade Lozada was chairman. We actively participated in all three Denver Chicano Youth conferences. We have

helped to mobilize thousands of Black and Brown people against the Vietnam war. All of these examples and many more demonstrate that we have done much more than "reporting and observing."

The way which the authors drag the gay probe into *Third World Work* raises the question of whether or not they think the party should carry out this probe. Despite the disclaimers they make, this is the impression they give. They state in their resolution that the gay liberation movement has no proven "relevancy." They also claim that "the national leadership has assigned three fulltime comrades nationally to probe the gay liberation movement." This too is false. No comrades have been assigned to work on the probe fulltime by the national SWP or YSA.

Their charge that we counterpose the struggle for hegemony on the campuses to deepening our Chicano and Black work—especially off campus—is false to the core. They make the mistake of thinking that we counterpose campus and high school work to intervention in movements and struggles far beyond the high schools and campuses.

They make many charges against our work in the Chicano and African-American student movements: "The party's approach to the Chicano movement has not been one of orienting itself to an oppressed working class section, but of orienting the Chicano movement to the party's university campus approach. . . . The reality is that many of the Chicano students who go to a four year institution are the most privileged and most bourgeoisified within the communities. These elements are susceptible to the most blatant petty-bourgeois diletantism. From UCLA MECHA in its ultraleftist Maoist ideology to UC Berkeley's FRENTE and its opportunist reformism, these are some of the elements that the party feels will play a vanguard role. Although there is nothing basically wrong in trying to approach and recruit the healthiest and most serious Chicano activists out of this milieu, it is totally incorrect to orient our work chiefly in this direction and ignore or subjugate two year college and high school institutions which have repeatedly shown their militancy."

Thus they charge that 1) the party sees its work in the Chicano and Black struggles as being limited to university campuses as counterposed to high schools and junior colleges; 2) Chicano students at "four-year institutions" are an inherently reactionary and diletantish force in the Chicano struggle (they say nothing about African-American college students); 3) the party sees these campus struggles as operating in a "vacuum" separated and isolated from the non-campus sectors of the Black and Brown communities.

All of these charges are patently false. They represent a distortion of the party's position on the Chicano and Black struggles and of the line of the party's practice in this field. They represent a sectarian viewpoint toward the student movement and a lack of understanding of the nationalist character of the radicalization of Chicano and Black youth and the character of the youth radicalization. As such they and the political line they imply if adopted, would limit the opportunities of the party to intervene in the sectors of the Chicano and African-American struggles off-campus and off-high schools, as well as the high school and campus student movements.

To claim that we do or should counterpose work on four year colleges and universities to work on high school, junior college, community college and other campuses is completely incorrect. Our analysis is that the current

radicalization affects every one of these types of educational institutions and likewise our strategy for Red, Black, Brown and Asian universities can be applied with success in each of these types of institutions. This analysis has been confirmed by the massive struggles demanding community control, ethnic studies, open admissions, an end to the war, that have shaken each kind of educational institution.

Far from rejecting high school, junior and community colleges, and other non-four year institutions, we have done successful Black, Chicano and Puerto Rican work at each type of institution.

Comrades in almost every area where we have Black and Brown comrades have and should orient to the recruitment and intervention of our comrades in high school struggles. Comrades in Chicago were able to make one of the main axes of their Black work their work in the Marshall High School Black Student Union, allowing them to play an added role in antiwar and Cairo defense work. Similarly in Detroit one of the focuses of the Black Moratorium Committee was reaching out to high school students involved in struggle against the budget cuts.

After consultation with the national offices our comrades in Detroit centered their campus work around building the Black Moratorium Committee on Highland Park Junior College—a two year community college. This involved not only comrades who attend the school, but also comrades who were students at a four year university. Similarly New York comrades have made their main orientation in Black and Brown work intervention at Manhattan Community College, another predominately Black and Puerto Rican two year community college.

But at the same time Black or Raza comrades have done important work at such "four year institutions" as the University of California at Riverside, Temple in Philadelphia, the University of Houston, San Diego State, San Jose State, Stanford University, Central Michigan University, the University of Minnesota and others.

The point is not that one particular type of school is preferable to the others. Whether to concentrate on any particular school is a local tactical decision. We must reject the authors' schematic and formal counterpositions of "petty bourgeois" and "proletarian" schools.

The authors' sectarian attacks on the "petty-bourgeois diletantism" of the Chicano student movement have no accord with reality. Even their own resolution contradicts this.

They spend at least one-third of their resolution attacking the party for not intervening in struggles initiated and led by these "petty-bourgeois diletantes." For example they claim that we didn't intervene sufficiently in the National Chicano Moratorium, a movement initiated and led by Chicano student leaders from a four-year institution.

While ultraleftism and reformism do exist in the Chicano student movement, it is also true that support exists for independent Raza political action, Chicano nationalism, feminism, mass action, and revolutionary socialism. This is a fact that the authors of *Third World Work and a Proletarian Orientation* are either unable or unwilling to contest.

The party does not and should not believe that our work in campus struggles or in the Chicano and Black movements must be limited to the campus and high schools. The essence of our strategy for the red university is the concept that the facilities of the universities

and high schools be put at the disposal of the masses of workers, women, and oppressed nationalities to be used in their struggles. This perspective is more than valid for Black and Brown students because of the deep ties that Black and Brown students have with their brothers and sisters in the barrios, ghettos, factories, and armed services.

We want the student movements to use their campus base to reach out beyond the campus, to launch united front actions around the demands raised by the Brown and African-American communities, to bring into action not only campus and high school students but also the proletarian masses of our communities.

The deepening of our influence in the campus and high school antiwar movement has helped to provide the indispensable base (the SMC) for building a broad antiwar coalition (NPAC) that has brought about actions mobilizing hundreds of thousands of non-students. The successful application of our orientation toward the campuses and high school will result in the expansion of the party's roots in the African-American and Chicano movements in the communities and places of work.

In discussion of the farmworkers movement and the welfare rights movement the authors falsify party history and policy. They charge that "during the period of 1964 and 1967 the party did not have any position on the Huelga movement." False, comrades, we supported then as now all struggles of the oppressed and exploited.

The authors make similar errors in regard to the National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO). Under the section dealing with "Third World Women"—which is notable for its lack of any mention of our party taking an orientation to building "Third World" feminist organizations anywhere—they state: "One of the most notable arenas that Black and Brown women have been struggling to date is in the National Welfare Rights Organization—an area that our party has not even minimally probed."

Again, with a lack of knowledge they mention we should intervene in this organization and imply, in fact, that this should be our central focus of Black and Brown women's liberation work.

If we were to adopt the politics of the "proletarian orientation tendency" stressing the cruciality of "independent relations to the means of production" in basic industry, transportation and communications, we would have to downplay an importance for the NWRO. The NWRO welfare recipients—excluded from the process of production in a more permanent fashion than most students—are just as "socially powerless" as students, if not more so, if one is to talk about their objective social power.

The authors' statement about never having "probed" it is false. Through our antiwar and women's liberation work, comrades have entered into working relations with NWRO members. Janet Wringle of Detroit NWRO gave an excellent speech at the women's abortion conference. At the Black workshop at the NPAC convention NWRO members from Detroit helped to take on a male bureaucrat from the national NWRO who helped lead the CP-CPJ fraction there.

An important error made by the authors of *Third World Work* is that they detach from their view of what we should be doing, the concrete stage of party building through which the SWP is passing. The fact that we must concentrate many of our forces in the developing mass student, antiwar, feminist and nationalist movements flows from the concrete unavoidable fact that we are far from being the mass party rooted in the working class and

oppressed nationalities needed to make the American revolution.

Comrade Dick Garza explains this necessity and the error of the "proletarian orientation tendency" in his article *On Party Building*. Comrade Garza states:

"We try to make it clear in the NC draft Political Resolution that the Socialist Workers Party *is not yet a party* . . . We are about ten times bigger than the pioneer Trotskyists that formed the movement in 1928. They had about a hundred; we (the SWP—T.T. & M.V.) don't have a thousand. That is not a party, not to our way of thinking. That's why most of our tasks are still propagandist tasks. We're very careful to weigh the actions we enter into, because we recognize the slimness of our resources and the few members we have. Then, despite that, we pull off real miracles."

Comrade Garza then cites the discussions that Cannon and Weisbord had on this question which parallel our debate with the pseudo-proletarians: "He (Weisbord) was impatient to jump into mass work over the head of the Communist Party. Our tactic at that time was *not* to go directly to the mass movement. There was something else we had to do first. And that was to go to the *radicalized* workers, to the *leadership*, to the *vanguard* of the working class. That was the task we set for ourselves in 1928, because we understood we could not jump over the heads of these advanced workers."

The authors demand that we jump over the heads of the vanguard activists in the developing political movements that have developed into the vague category they term "the working-class as a whole."

For them what is significant, is where the party is—"rooted" in the "working class as a whole"—rather than how it is taking advantage of opportunities for party building.

Perhaps it does not matter that the Socialist Workers Party is not a mass party with forces to send in every direction. All that seems to matter to them is what *potential* social power a particular social layer has. They descend into the system of thought Lenin branded "imperialist economism." (See the *Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up*).

Their resolution attacks the "party leadership" for concentrating on "movements where it could readily assume leadership roles but which had no major social weight." They forget that "*major social weight*" is only abstract potential unless these sectors can be brought into social struggles and unless there is an adequate revolutionary party to lead such a section.

Party strategy in the Black and Chicano movements must flow from a party building perspective. In order to ever take advantage of the mass radicalization among oppressed nationalities we need cadres *now!* We are not in the lucky situation of having a very large Black and Brown cadre.

We have to be where we can recruit: where the people most receptive to our ideas are concentrated, where we can have the greatest impact. Today in the Black and Chicano struggles campus and high school students and activists in the antiwar and women's movements provide the greatest opportunity for this type of party building. It would be absurd for us to downgrade them because they lack the power to overthrow capitalism.

First and foremost we need Black and Brown cadres *rooted in the party*, rather than individuals salted away in some plant or community making the record. Without a large cadres to map out a strategy, educate workers and

community activists to Trotskyism, to expand the party apparatus and propaganda facilities; without a sufficient cadre to intervene where opportunities arise, our party's proletarian orientation to provide a revolutionary leadership for the masses of Blacks, Chicanos and other workers becomes a meaningless platitude, similar to the Workers League's rhetoric about a Labor Party Now! and about the "Fourth International."

During the 1940's the party was able to recruit hundreds of Black workers who had been rooted in the Black communities and the "working class as a whole" for all of their lives. The party was unable to hold virtually any of these cadres after the objective conditions shifted. At the time, the party leaders sighted our lack of a sizable cadre of party-rooted Blacks able to map out a strategy of intervention and to staff party departments, as one of the main reasons we were unable to capitalize on these gains.

Among the reasons for these shortcomings, the Political Committee, at the time listed along with the uncontrollable objective conditions (point 1):

"2. The party still lacks an adequate group of Negro party and mass leaders, educators and organizers, prepared to take leadership of the party's work in this field.

"3. A considerable section of the party lacks a clear and comprehensive grasp of many theoretical and practical aspects of the Negro problem which is necessary for the successful integration and assimilation of our Negro (and white) members.

"4. Our national Negro work has been under the supervision of a subcommittee of the Political Committee, but its members, burdened with other assignments, were unable to devote the necessary time and attention to it, with the result that there has been insufficient coordination of our mass work and the consequent loss of opportunities for growth." (*Report on Negro Work*, by the Political Committee, *Internal Bulletin*, Vol. X, No. 6, June, 1948, page 15).

Our orientation during this radicalization is predicated on this strategy. We need to recruit the type of cadre that can be the nucleus of a party that will have to integrate hundreds and thousands of Black and Chicano militants into its ranks.

Secondly, as we have already stated, we intervene in Black and Chicano high school and campus movements, the antiwar movement, and women's liberation movement as a basic means of linking up with and deepening the struggles of other sectors of the community. We can utilize our strength in these movements to launch and to enter struggles that reach out to and involve the community as a whole.

The authors themselves give the example of how the Chicano Moratorium, though its antiwar actions were student initiated and led, was able to mobilize large sections of the Chicano proletariat. This is the goal that we want to have in our campus and high school Chicano and Black work, around such struggles as the antiwar and abortion repeal struggles. This is the perspective that we must use in struggles for open admissions, Chicano and African-American studies, community control of the schools, and other demands being raised by oppressed nationalities.

Detached from our Leninist strategy of party building, the authors seem lost in the mist of hazy abstraction and inconsistency.

The authors of *Third World Work* denigrate our neces-

sary emphasis on propaganda work which is central to all party work, especially our Black and Chicano work. They attempt to create a strawman by claiming that the party's current course counterposes propaganda work to active intervention.

Rather it is they who counterpose propaganda work to active intervention in the struggle.

They write, "One aspect of our Chicano work that the party has a good record in is in the *Militant* coverage of the current Chicano movement. However, written articles in *The Militant* cannot be substituted for the task of concrete intervention as some people in our movement have the tendency to believe." If there are comrades who believe that only literary work is necessary in this or any struggle, or if the authors know of people who are opposed to using *The Militant* as a recruiting tool, they should name them. This would represent the unearthing of a new tendency in the discussion, one which is opposed to building the Trotskyist movement in any way, shape or form.

On the other hand, *Militant* coverage and sales in the Chicano movement is a very important form of "concrete intervention." Even the authors of *Third World Work* are forced to admit this.

"With the example of Crystal City and our very good propaganda role in publicizing this event (the development of the Crystal RUP), new chapters of La Raza Unida Party (as in Northern California) are springing up. But one thing must be made very clear. Although our press has been playing a good role in these new events, we must understand [i.e. where some comrades do not understand (again we ask, who are these comrades who make up the phantom liquidationist tendency that the authors are so fond of attacking?)] that this coverage will not assure leadership in the mass movement of the Chicano community. Becoming a commentator of a movement is a very poor practice of Leninism."

They themselves point out that by our propaganda alone we have played a significant role in the formation of several Raza Unida parties. Is this not concrete intervention in the struggle for independent Chicano nationalist political action? Is this not helping to lead the Chicano movement? Is the reproduction of *Militant* articles in Chicano newspapers and magazines across the country a sign of "commentary politics?" No. It is a sign that especially in our Chicano coverage, *The Militant* and other propaganda materials of our party are examples of our excellent practice of the Leninist concept of propaganda, aimed at building both mass movements and the revolutionary party.

The fact remains that, despite the important interventions we have made in the mass movements, the Socialist Workers Party remains a propaganda group attempting to draw together a nucleus of the mass revolutionary party that the American revolution requires. Precisely because of the smallness of our forces—especially within the Black and Chicano struggles, extensive propaganda work is key to our success in this field. The pages of *The Militant*, the *ISR* and our pamphlets reach far beyond where individual comrades go. Our election and subscription campaigns provide opportunities for reaching out with our ideas into the arenas of struggle we wish to intervene in. Our 1972 election campaign will do much to build the Black, Chicano and other movements, as well as the revolutionary party.

Another danger involved in the authors' disregard for

the tactics and strategy dictated by the current stage of building the Socialist Workers Party is that they tend to act as if the party with its current strength could substitute itself for the leadership of the Chicano movement. This is quite apparent in their distorted discussion of the party's relationship with the Chicano Moratorium Committee.

This section not only contains a superficial analysis of this development. It reveals a serious lack of understanding of our role in it and is based on a number of factual inaccuracies.

The authors ask themselves "why the party played no leadership role in building the Chicano Moratorium?"

In the first place, this statement ignores the small numbers of comrades that were available at the time to intervene in this development and implies that the party consciously chose not to assign this imaginary huge number of Chicano and Latino comrades to this work. But more importantly, the charge is simply not true.

The Chicano Moratorium action of August 29 was called at the March 1970 Chicano Conference in Denver. Our comrades at that conference participated in those discussions which we viewed as a very important part of the conference. While Chicano Moratorium leaders proposed that actions be held in many different cities that day, we explained that would cut across massive participation in the national action in L. A. We proposed that local actions be held prior to Aug. 29 in order to build it and won them over to this perspective. We publicized the Denver conference decisions in *The Militant*, through the Aztlan tour of Lozada and Camejo and by other means. The antiwar movement supported the Moratorium. Comrades in a number of local areas helped build the actions leading up to August 29.

At the Oberlin Activists conference we pointed out that we had to increase our active building of the action and took the necessary steps. A number of Chicano and Latino comrades participated in the day-to-day building of the action. We helped in the organization of press conferences, mass community meetings and every other aspect of the campaign.

Another mistaken reference, dragged out of the blue, is made about the support action in New York. Referring to the fact that the CMC wanted funds from NPAC and wanted NPAC to sponsor a support action in N. Y. on Aug. 22 they say, "Neither of these suggestions did we seriously consider even though the Chicano Moratorium Committee endorsed the Cleveland conference and the Cleveland conference endorsed the Moratorium."

The idea of a New York action arose out of the Third World workshop held at the Cleveland conference in July 1970 which launched NPAC. Present at that workshop were Muñoz and Bob Elias of the CMC and Jose Irrizary of MPI. At this workshop Muñoz decided that the East Coast should hold a major support action in Washington D. C. which he thought would receive a lot of publicity. We thought this was unrealistic and proposed instead that an action be held in New York in which we hoped to involve the Puerto Rican community. Irrizary verbally committed MPI to work with Third World SMCers on this. Later, although repeatedly contacted, MPI did not participate in either planning nor building this action, nor even in the action itself. Irrizary himself, when approached on this, said MPI was too busy.

When this situation was explained to Muñoz over the phone in early August, his response was the same as

that of the authors of *Third World Work*—that is, to blame us.

Despite the problems we faced, two comrades in N. Y. were given major responsibility for coordinating that action and the energies of the N. Y. Third World fraction during that period were devoted almost exclusively to that task.

After the brutal police attack on the 29th, it was our comrades that thought out and projected what kind of response was necessary to meet this repressive assault on the antiwar and Chicano movements.

We were able to win over the majority of the hundreds of independent Chicano militants that participated in the various community meetings to our strategy on the defense of the Chicano community. We were the people who explained how to answer the vicious red-baiting campaign and what the red-baiting really represented.

The leadership of the CMC backslid in the face of this red-baiting, but despite all this about 10,000 young Chicano militants participated in the Sept. 16th parade to demonstrate their protest of the police attack on the Chicano Moratorium. (This action is dismissed by the authors as follows: "All it showed was the Chicano community trailing behind the gubernatorial candidate of the Democratic Party.") We can say with pride that had it not been for our participation in the Chicano Moratorium and the events following it, there would not have been the kind of outpouring on the 16th that there was.

The authors' comments on Third World women cannot be regarded as a serious approach to this question. These comrades claim that our work in this area has been "solely limited to the campuses on a purely propagandistic level." There is no mention of our participation in the women's workshop at the Denver conference of March 1970, and our very successful and influential role (despite very limited numbers) at the Chicana conference in Houston last May.

But the omission of these key developments in *Third World Work* flows from its general shortcoming on the question of feminism.

It is true that high school Chicanas, for example, will play an important role in the struggles that La Raza will wage. When a comrade gave a talk at Crystal City High School on the radical press, centered around *The Militant*, the discussion quickly turned to the women's liberation movement, reflecting a great deal of enthusiasm and interest on the part of these women who have been influenced by the women's liberation movement and our press. However, the authors call this playing a "commentator role."

One very important aspect of the feminist movement in relation to the nationalist movements is that feminism, in and of itself, will be and is already putting women into motion who had not previously been involved in the nationalist movements. It is accelerating their radicalization. Because of that, recent steps taken by Third World women to organize as women, spearheaded by Chicanas, are some of the most important developments that have taken place in the struggles of oppressed nationalities. Yet there is no mention in *Third World Work* of such things as the Chicana conference, Chicana publications, and all the important issues being discussed within the nationalist movements which result from, and are an integral part of, the feminist movement.

This whole subject is dealt with in more detail in a

discussion article by Comrade Maxine Williams. Suffice it to say here that a serious discussion on the question of Third World women, their relation to both the women's liberation and national liberation struggles and the role of the revolutionary party in this field, cannot be carried out except in the context of these events.

In summary, the party must reject the politics of *Third World Work and a Proletarian Orientation* because it

presents a line for party action that would mean disaster for our work in the struggles for national liberation.

The strategy that will lead our party to leadership among the masses of Black, Chicano, Puerto Rican and other workers is outlined in the NCdraft Political Resolution, the PC draft Chicano and feminist resolutions, and the *Transitional Program for Black Liberation*.

July 30, 1971

SOME THOUGHTS ON THE PALESTINE RESISTANCE

by Tony Thomas, Brooklyn Branch, New York Local

In some of the informal and branch discussions, some questions have been raised by comrades over the role the Palestinian resistance can and will play in the Arab revolution. Especially questioned is our statement that the struggle against Zionism and U.S. imperialism must be the main focus of the Palestinian and general Arab revolutions. Some comrades would like to place at par with these two tasks, the struggle for the overthrow of the Arab bourgeoisie. This is at least implied in the resolution on the Mid East by Comrades Langston, Langston and Rothschild, and in the segment of Comrade Levitt's remarks on the Middle East quoted in Comrade Blackstock's *What is the Basis of the Proletarian Orientation Tendency*. This point of view is also more explicitly projected by sectarian radicals in this country such as the Workers League, PL, etc., as well as radicals in other advanced capitalist countries who claim that the central reason for the defeats suffered by the Palestinian resistance is their failure to give more emphasis to the overthrow of the Arab bourgeoisie.

This point of view overlooks the central tactical and historical questions in the Arab world, the theory of the permanent revolution, and the method of the transitional program.

The central problem of the Arab countries is the incompleteness of the national democratic revolution of the Arab people. Imperialist domination of the economies of these countries, underdevelopment, the lack of industrialization, the land question, and other problems flowing from the lack of completion of the bourgeois-democratic revolution mark the Arab world. The understanding of these problems is central to any realistic approach to the class struggle there.

Perhaps the most outstanding feature of the incompleteness of the Arab revolution is the domination of Palestine by Israel, a settler-colonial state linked with Western imperialism. This has also resulted in the expulsion of the bulk of the Palestinian people from their land. It has given world imperialism a base for political, economic, and military forays — as in the Suez in 1956, and the 1967 war — against the Arab nations.

Throughout the Twentieth Century, the struggle against Zionist occupation of Palestine, and the existence of the state of Israel has been central to the development of the conscious vanguard of the Arab national struggle and the development of anticapitalist, anti-imperialist, and anti-Zionist consciousness amongst the mass of the Arab peo-

ples. This was marked especially by the 1936-38 general strike of the Palestinian people, the longest strike in the history of our class. This is why even the most reactionary leaders of the Arab states must mouth the rhetoric of support for the Palestinian revolution — even Hussein claims that his operations against the resistance are only to clear the way for the real Fedayeen.

The permanent revolution and Lenin's views on the national question (see *Lenin versus Cagle*) do not state that there is no longer any national or democratic revolution. Trotsky was explicit in his articles on the permanent revolution to counterpose his position to those who thought that only or even chiefly socialist tasks were involved in the revolution in the countries that had not completed the bourgeois-democratic revolution. Like Lenin, he felt that the tasks were *combined* and that in the imperialist epoch, if anything, the necessity of democratic demands being central to the struggle not only in underdeveloped, but also in imperialist countries, increased.

The national bourgeoisies are incapable of carrying out not only the socialist tasks, but the national-democratic tasks as well. Thus the main way to fight the national bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie is for the proletarian revolutionary to stand as the best fighter for the completion of the *national revolution*. This does not mean, as the Stalinists state, that the proletariat should separate the national revolution from the seizure of power by itself and the poor peasants. This does not mean that the proletariat supports any and all demands raised by the national bourgeoisie. It simply is the programmatic reflection of the fact that national bourgeoisies cannot solve any of the problems in the underdeveloped countries.

This is one major reason why the raising of national democratic demands is central to the Palestinian revolution and the Arab revolution as a whole.

A second corollary of the theory of the permanent revolution is the extreme weakness of the national bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie as counterposed to the proletariat. They depend highly on imperialism to maintain their strength against the workers, peasants, and other revolutionary forces in their areas. Hussein, the Saudis, and Israel openly depend on U.S. imperialism to finance the existence of the military machine and other elements of their state apparatus. Now threatened with the Palestinian resistance, even Egypt is now openly stressing its ties with U.S. imperialism. Without U.S., British or French aid, without the prospect of imperialist or Zionist mili-

tary intervention in the Arab world, the basis for the maintenance of the Arab capitalist states would be dim.

Thus in a purely material and technical sense the main enemy is American imperialism, and its regional office Zionist Israel. U.S. and British aid completely paid for and trained Hussein's army. In addition Israel also has promised since the mid-fifties to come to Hussein's aid if he was threatened from the left. No one can doubt that every move that Hussein has made was planned out in Washington and Tel Aviv beforehand. There have even been numerous public meetings between Hussein and Israeli leaders — not to speak of secret meetings and coordination by these two forces, including the use of Israeli military supplies, and possible air and artillery operations by Hussein in the 1970 September Civil War in Jordan.

Again from a materialist point of view the central struggle is against U.S. imperialism and Zionism, for the completion of the national revolution.

The crucial issues of class struggle in the Middle East are not purely the economic demands of the Palestinian and other Arab workers, but also the demands raised by the Arab nation for completion of its national revolution and destruction of the Zionist state.

A transitional program for Arab revolutionaries must include this perspective as its central point. This will be formulated in demands such as that each Arab state give complete and unconditional political, material and military aid to the Palestinian struggle, that full freedom for all tendencies supporting the Palestinian revolution be established, no negotiations behind the backs of the Palestinian resistance and the Arab revolutionaries be held, and that all aid from imperialist countries be with no strings attached. These demands added to our traditional demands for land reform, democracy, industrialization and self-determination must stand as part of the core of our program for struggle in the Middle East.

The Palestinian resistance has not met its setbacks only because of equivocal attitudes toward the Arab states amongst all of its major organizations (Fateh, PFLP, PDF) but because of the lack of a revolutionary movement struggling for support of the Palestinian resistance, not so much in Jordan, but in Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, and the U.S. itself, with sufficient power to change the situation.

Because of the central role the resistance has played in the Arab revolution, there is an uneven development of radicalization between the Palestinians and the rest of the Arab nations. No large-scale movement comparable to the Palestinian resistance has arisen in any of the major Arab countries to demand independently of the bourgeois and petty bourgeois leaderships for the completion of the Palestinian revolution. This made it much easier for the Egyptian and Syrian leaders to allow Hussein to decimate the resistance, while mouthing pro-Palestinian statements.

Revolutionaries in the Arab world can best build the mass anticapitalist movement lacking there by raising the above mentioned demands for support to the Palestinian resistance. In this way (1) the inability of the bourgeoisie to support revolutionary struggle for the national-democratic goals will be exposed; (2) concrete aid will be won in the initial stages of the struggle for the Palestinians; (3) the basis for more struggle around purely

economic questions will open up; (4) a revolutionary party can be constructed. This will harness the advanced level of political development of the Palestinians to building a massive revolutionary movement in the other Arab countries and Israel.

It must be remembered the limitations of organizing rights in all of the Arab countries. In fact until the early spring or late winter of this year the Palestinians had more organizing rights and less danger of total victimization than radicals in Egypt or Syria. By centering on the demands against Israeli-occupation of Palestine and against imperialist domination, revolutionists can make it more difficult for repression to strike them, or when it strikes make it less advantageous for the Arab capitalists and their imperialist backers.

This type of strategy, in summary, will make it more possible to add to the already massive nationalist consciousness of the Palestinian and Arab peoples the most important type of class consciousness — consciousness of the fact that the ruling capitalists cannot grant the major demands they raise. This will be the basis of a mass movement of the Arab revolution and a mass revolutionary party.

Secondly, defense of the Palestinian revolution is a real concrete question in both the imperialist countries — especially Britain, France and the U.S. — and in Israel and nearby countries like Turkey and Iran. The ultimate success of the Arab revolution depends to a large extent on how much these outside forces can organize to materially or militarily support both Israel and the Arab capitalists.

As we know, a third corollary of the theory of permanent revolution is that socialism cannot be completed in one country and that the dictatorship of the proletariat cannot be assured of safety from imperialist intervention or bureaucratic degeneration, until revolutions are successful in the capitalist countries. This is again another reason why the main axis of the Palestinian and Arab revolutions must be centered on struggle against imperialism and Zionism. This is why our central task must be mobilizing and educating the people of the U.S. and other advanced capitalist countries to support the Arab revolution and to oppose U.S. support to Israel, including in the form of aid to the Arab states.

Our party's position rejects the two stage revolution theory. It calls for a combined revolution against the local capitalists, and against imperialism and Zionism. It also rejects the sectarian approach that is mirrored in Comrade Levitt's remarks, that forgets the central role of national-democratic demands in the national-democratic revolution. This approach is not the combined theory of the national revolution put forward by Lenin and Trotsky, but something closer to the two-stage revolution theory. Comrade Levitt, assured that the second stage has been reached, feels that demands of the bourgeois-democratic revolution like "For a Democratic Secular Palestine," have been left behind. We now only need "socialist demands." This is not the theory of the permanent revolution nor is it the transitional program. It is a sure-fire way to maintain the domination of the Nasserites, the Baathists, the Stalinists and the other misleaders who have prevented the Arab revolution from being completed.

July 30, 1971

PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO POLITICAL COMMITTEE DRAFT
RESOLUTION TITLED "TOWARDS A MASS FEMINIST
MOVEMENT"

Ruth H. Cheney and Ruthann Miller,
Upper West Side Branch, New York Local

Under the section of the document titled "The Right To Control One's Own Body" should be added a sixth demand which has been raised by feminists since the inception of this second wave of feminism and which has been gaining wide acceptance within the women's movement as an important aspect of our fight to gain control

over our own bodies. That demand is to abolish all laws that punish homosexuality. Women have to fight these laws if we are ever to be free of compulsory relationships with men, as dictated by a thoroughly sexist society.

July 31, 1971

TOWARD A CONCRETE UNDERSTANDING
OF SOCIAL CLASSES AND LAYERS

By David Keil, Twin Cities Branch

One way in which the politics of the grouping which opposes a proletarian orientation of our work, and which opposes the constructive criticisms made by the Proletarian Orientation Tendency, can be ascertained and judged, is by the factionalism of some of this grouping's language. By such epithets as "sectarian," "elitist," and even "racist," which have been used to describe the critics of the party's orientation, it can be seen that some comrades are at a loss when trying to answer us politically. (Other comrades, such as Comrade Frank Lovell, seem to be content with explaining their differences with the critics, without resorting to name-calling.) The contribution which Comrade Mark Friedman makes to this lengthening list of epithets is "rigor mortis of the brain," which, he says, affects our logic.

It is his political argumentation which demands the most attention, however, because it reflects a growing tendency in the party to misunderstand (systematically!) our traditional class analysis of social layers and formations. He seems to believe that the number of workers in our party is of no consequence whatsoever, and that students as such are now part of the proletariat.

This kind of mistaken idea must be corrected before it leads us to serious errors. If important errors are made and not corrected, but instead made part of our theory, then our party could some day become a centrist party. (It is for that reason, in order to correct the present relatively small mistakes, that we must sharply criticize the conception of Comrade David Fender and others that the party is *now* a centrist party.)

Along the way, Comrade Friedman wrongly accuses the authors of "For A Proletarian Orientation" of saying that the growing influx of working-class youth into colleges is of little significance at all. The authors would, of course, agree that this new development is significant for the student movement. But for the class struggle as a whole, in which power is determined not by one's background but by one's relation to the means of production, (which is what the comrades were discussing when they raised the question of our composition), the new devel-

opments on campus are not so significant. They do not change our necessary orientation. That is evidently what the comrades meant when they wrote their criticisms.

In order for us to maintain our working-class program and our strategic proletarian orientation, it will be necessary for us to be deeply rooted in the industrial as well as non-industrial proletariat, to have close ties with the class so that we can feel its pulse and feel its pressure, if necessary, when alien class influences manifest themselves.

It should not be necessary to remind comrades that students, whatever their background, are physically separated from the proletariat and by themselves have no economic power in terms of being able to stop or start the economy. Not even non-productive sectors of the working class have this kind of power. As Comrade George Novack said just two and a half years ago,

Thus one million industrial workers command incomparably more revolutionary power than seven million college students. Although the three million teachers constitute the largest single occupational group in the country, their collective economic power is less than that of the half-million blue-collar workers in the steel mills. (*International Socialist Review*, January-February 1969, p. 57.)

It is also a fact that non-productive workers, of whom our party seems to be largely composed, in addition to having less social power, also have a lower class-consciousness, as reflected in the fact that they even have a considerably lower trade-union consciousness.

If we can use some broad terms, such as "white collar," and consult official statistics, we will see that in 1968, only 8.9 percent of "white collar" workers were in unions, while the work force as a whole was 23 percent unionized. Thirteen years earlier, ten percent of "white collar" workers were in unions. (See pages 225 and 238, *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, 1970). In the private sector, in 1966, 55.4 percent of "blue collar" workers were in unions, while only 13.4 percent of "white collar" workers were unionized. (See page 20, U.S. Depart-

ment of Commerce, *Labor Union Membership in 1966* (1971). From these sources and similar ones, we can also see that productive workers tend more to strike than non-productive workers, and that class struggle and unionization are far more prevalent in manufacturing and basic industry than elsewhere.

We should not have to consult statistics to know these facts and their implications. It is not in any way "elitist" to say that basic industry is a strategic sector. George Novack says so. So do the party's leaders. But certain comrades are not answered, except by critics, when they try to defend the idea that there is no such thing as a strategic sector and that therefore our only concern must be to find easy recruits on campus.

All this does not mean that industrial worker comrades are *more valuable* or *better comrades*. That would be moralistic. Each comrade makes an important contribution to history, and we judge the value of political work by the results of the work itself, not strictly by where it is done. But if we use this as an excuse to ignore the need to build a base in and recruit from the working class, then we shall have lost our proletarian orientation.

We must not confuse the bourgeois *ideology* of the working class, and of all other parts of the population (even students!), with *mentality*. Before the revolution, bourgeois ideology will be dominant in the whole society. But, in the proletariat, we find today a working-class mentality which we do not find in the student and petty-bourgeois milieu. Even Comrade Friedman recognizes this, but he does not see the implications. This proletarian mentality reflects the workers' compactness and discipline as a class and their closer relation to the process of production. That is why they strike more and join trade unions more.

Instead, Comrade Friedman, like many comrades, accuses the proletariat of exerting "petty-bourgeois pressures" and of having racist and sexist prejudices. But if we run away from the workers, so "racist" and "sexist" (as if there were only white male workers to begin with!), even "pro-imperialist" (!), and concentrate all our energy on the students until the workers rise to the high consciousness of the students, then there will never be a revolution! No, we do not demand that workers reform their thinking before we try to lead them, any more than we ask the students to accept a proletarian class consciousness before we will work among them. It is ironic that it is the Proletarian Orientation Tendency that is being called "sectarian" by the leadership.

In Minneapolis, one comrade stated repeatedly that there is no such thing as a strategic sector, yet the leadership, which disagrees, did not answer him. Another comrade said that the "classical" petty-bourgeoisie has virtually disappeared. Yet the petty-bourgeoisie are not only the shopkeepers and independent craftsmen, they also include the university professors from whom our new recruits take classes daily. As Comrade Friedman himself states,

"The general atmosphere on the campuses is undoubtedly petty-bourgeois."

Our party, despite its program and despite its tradition and its leadership, is subject to petty-bourgeois pressures because of its composition. This composition, which is of the industrial proletariat in only a small minority, can be demonstrated through statistics. Unfortunately, the Internal Information Bulletin following the March plenum does not show what the occupations of our members are. But, using the median age of the party as a whole, 26 years, and the fact that 82.6 percent of our membership has had some college education, we can get some indications.

According to the *Statistical Abstract of the United States* (1970, p. 10), the median age of the population in 1969 (that is, of the 144 million people considered), was 27.8 years. If we consider the fact that the majority (62.1 percent) of the party membership is male, and that the male median age was 26.6, and also that the population's median age is tending to decrease, then we can assume that the party is similar to the population as a whole in 1971, age-wise.

But in terms of formal education, we find that while 82.6 percent of the party has been to college, only 19.6 percent of the population as a whole has had one or more years of college. And in terms of those who have had four years or more of college, 42.5 percent of the party members have had this amount of education, while the percentage is only 8.9 for the population as a whole.

If formal education is *any indicator whatsoever* of our social composition, then the evidence is *indisputable* that we have a less proletarian composition than the population as a whole. If we are supplied with statistics on the occupations of our comrades, there will be no doubt left in anyone's mind, it is safe to assume. Yet, our party must seek to represent *above all* the proletariat, not try to be even a cross-section of our society. To do this, we must make a realistic plan for recruiting industrial workers *in addition* to the students and non-productive workers who now make up the bulk of our ranks.

In summary, as the Proletarian Orientation Tendency's documents state, we must change our orientation in order to build ties to the working class and root ourselves in the key industrial sectors of the proletariat, and in order to proletarianize our composition. But we must also begin a study and discussion of some *fundamental* questions for understanding the power and role of different class forces and layers. We must understand the limitations as well as the encouraging aspects of the student movement. We must give some attention to the power of trade unions and of industrial workers and we must analyze the role especially of Third World minorities as well as women in attaining our stated goal of transforming the trade unions. On some of these fundamental questions, as well as on the question of how to handle the critics, there are sharp differences even within the tendency which opposes the ideas of the Proletarian Orientation Tendency.

July 29, 1971

THE POSITION OF THE PROLETARIAN ORIENTATION TENDENCY
ON THE GAY LIBERATION MOVEMENT

by Bob Bresnahan and Bernie Senter, Cleveland Branch

The emergence of the gay liberation movement is a striking confirmation of the current radicalization's depth and scope. A mass movement of gay people marching openly in the streets, declaring pride in being gay, and demanding liberation from their centuries old oppression is truly unprecedented.

The gay liberation movement has strengthened the radicalization as a whole. It adds a new dimension to the struggle against sexual oppression. It gives the previously radicalized forces a new ally and provides an impetus for struggle among sections of the population not yet in motion. The gay movement has broadened the base of the radicalization among the masses making it less vulnerable to ruling class attacks and more resilient to ebbs in the tempo of struggle. With a potential of involving millions, the gay liberation movement has already provided a new route to the radicalization for thousands of gay militants.

The gay liberation movement is an integral part of the current radicalization. Since the rise of the Black struggle, one oppressed sector after another has entered the political arena, demanding freedom from their specific forms of oppression. The gay movement is the most recent development of this process and shares the most important characteristics of the previously radicalized forces. It is independent of capitalist parties, employs tactics of mass action, arose outside of the trade unions, and adheres to democratic norms of functioning. Rather than viewing the gay movement as a diversion from the class struggle, the National Committee Political Resolution, "Perspectives and Lessons of the New Radicalization," welcomes the entry of the gay militants into the radicalization as another proof of our estimation of the current radicalization as the deepest and broadest in American history.

The Proletarian Orientation Tendency takes exception to this evaluation of the gay liberation movement and its relation to the radicalization. In their document "The Meaning of the Proletarian Orientation," Comrades Gregorich, Passen, et. al., relegate the gay movement to a special status—"peripheral" and "extraneous." They contend that neither the party nor the women's liberation movement should become "bogged down" in the gay struggle. Five arguments are presented in support of this position. (#15 pages 12-13) An additional argument was raised by Comrade Passen on July 21 during the discussion of the gay movement in the Cleveland Branch pre-convention discussion.

WE SHOULD NOT ALLOW THE PARTY OR THE WOMEN'S LIBERATION MOVEMENT, AT ITS PRESENT EMBRYONIC STAGE, TO BECOME BOGGED DOWN IN A PERIPHERAL PART OF THAT MOVEMENT AND TO TRANSFORM THAT PERIPHERAL PART INTO A MAJOR PART OR *THE* MAJOR ASPECT OF THE ENTIRE MOVEMENT. WE SEE DANGERS OF THIS OCCURRING WITH THE GAY COMPONENT OF THE (WOMEN'S LIBERATION) MOVEMENT. (their emphasis)

The first argument presented by Comrade Gregorich, et. al., is typical of their method of debate throughout the entire pre-convention discussion. They erect a strawman and then proceed to blow it over with a mighty gust of verbal wind. The party's approach has been to maintain the women's liberation movement on an axis where it will appeal to *all* women on the basis of struggle against their common oppression as women, regardless of their sexual preferences. We have resisted any attempts to "transform" the women's movement into a support group for any of its parts, including gay women.

The real issue here is the attempt by some opponents of women's liberation to discredit and divide the movement by labeling it a haven for lesbians. Our women comrades, our press, and the women's liberation movement itself have refused to grant any concessions to the lesbian-baiters and have consistently defended a policy of non-exclusion. The women's liberation movement has correctly answered these attacks by asserting the sisterhood of all women, lesbians and heterosexuals alike.

There is an important implication in the position taken by the authors, that the gay movement is somehow a threat to the women's liberation movement. The impression is left that gay women counterpose themselves to the movement as a whole. This is simply untrue and can only serve to aid those who wish to undermine the women's liberation movement. Furthermore, it is both unnecessary and unwise to label any component of the movement as "peripheral." In this case it is also factually incorrect. Gay women, both as individuals and as a group, have and will continue to play an important role in the development of women's struggles. Only those unacquainted with the history of the women's liberation movement can deny this.

Another implication is present in this argument. The fact that gay women are only a part—according to the authors, a peripheral part—of the women's liberation movement is intended to buttress the contention that the gay liberation movement as a whole is "peripheral." This assertion will become more explicit as we go on. The comrades remark that they see dangers of the party becoming "bogged down" in the gay liberation movement. Their fear is the extension of their fear that the party has already become "bogged down" in the student, women's and other "petty-bourgeois social movements."

STILL LESS DOES IT RELATE DIRECTLY TO THE NEEDS OF THE VAST MULTITUDE OF WORKING WOMEN. IT IS OUR OPINION THAT MOST WORKING CLASS WOMEN VIEW THE GAY WOMEN'S MOVEMENT AS EXTRANEIOUS AND UNRELATED TO THEM AND THEIR PROBLEMS. WE AGREE.

The gay women's movement is an important facet of the struggle of all women to control their own bodies. It is not "unrelated" or "extraneous" to the needs of women in general or working women in particular. Here again there is a tendency to counterpose gay women and their needs to women as a whole.

What the authors of "For a Proletarian Orientation" don't seem to grasp is the fact that gay women are doubly, sometimes triply and quadruply oppressed; as women, as gays, and often as workers and members of oppressed national minorities. No struggle to gain women the right to control their own bodies will be complete until that right is secured for all women, including gay women.

The authors seem to regard working women and gay women as exclusive categories. In our opinion this idea finds its roots in two features of capitalist society; first, the deeply ingrained prejudice against women and homosexuals, which leads the Proletarian Orientation Tendency to depreciate the significance of the gay liberation movement; second, the empirical and formal methods of thought imposed on the masses through institutions of bourgeois society. This methodology is behind their lack of comprehension of the current radicalization. Marxists vigilantly avoid both these failings. We struggle against any adaptations to common prejudice. Failures in this regard are especially serious when the masses, whom we aspire to lead, are themselves overthrowing the taboos and mysticism of class society. Moreover, we permit no such absolute distinctions to be made between social categories based on relations to the means of production and those based on personal sexual preferences. Marxists strive to uncover the interrelationship between the struggles of all oppressed groupings and to unite them in action against their common oppressor.

Another defect in this argument is its failure to take into account the dynamic character of social change and mass consciousness. The authors agree with "most working class women (who) view the gay liberation movement as extraneous and unrelated to their needs and their problems." This fact—here *we* agree—is by no means a permanent feature of the consciousness of working women. A dynamic, growing gay liberation movement will aid in the process of dispelling current misconceptions in mass consciousness and uncovering the underlying relationship between the struggles of women and gays against sexual oppression perpetuated by capitalist society. This argument is so static and abstract, that it could be applied with equal validity to the women's liberation movement, for that matter, to any of the radical movements, even to the trade union movement. Don't many workers regard the trade unions as "extraneous" and "unrelated" to their needs, and justifiably so? Don't most women regard the women's liberation movement as "extraneous?" For a revolutionary party to proceed on the basis of such reasoning would truly lead it to becoming "bogged down."

It is safe to assume that the authors feel that "most working class men" agree with "most working class women" and regard the gay liberation movement as "peripheral." This is a flimsy reason for people who claim to be Marxists to also agree. What is needed here is not simple assent, but concrete analysis of the direction of the gay liberation movement, its potential impact on mass consciousness, its relation to the radicalization and its potential as a field for party intervention.

THE GAY MOVEMENT IS A RELATIVELY SMALL MOVEMENT WITH MINIMAL SOCIAL FORCE AND, AS A MOVEMENT, TOTALLY RELEGATED TO THE

PETTY BOURGEOIS SECTOR OF SOCIETY.

This argument is remarkable if only for its vagueness and its sweeping character. The authors seem to feel that the gay liberation movement is presently composed exclusively of petty-bourgeois gays and has no potential for recruitment among gay workers. Where is the evidence for such a sweeping generalization? Have the leaders of the Proletarian Orientation Tendency based their assertion on a statistical survey of the class composition of the gay movement? Unlikely. What leads them to believe that only petty-bourgeois gays will be attracted to the gay liberation struggle? No evidence to support such conclusions is available from Comrades Gregorich, Passen, etc.

On the basis of the evidence that is available, however, it would seem safe to assume that the gay liberation movement has attracted gays from every sector of society, including the working class. Kinsey maintains that there is a heavy concentration of America's 10 million gays on the lower rungs of the socio-economic ladder. If there are reasons to believe that this most heavily oppressed sector of the gay population is not suited to struggle against gay oppression, Comrades Gregorich, Passen et al., have failed to bring them forward. This evidence would aid our probe of the gay liberation movement and would lend weight to their assertion that the movement is "wholly relegated to the petty-bourgeois sector of society." Of course, no such evidence is available. One unflinching characteristic of the authors' method is their almost universal success in preventing any such concrete evidence to clutter up their air-tight generalizations.

When the authors state that "the gay liberation movement is a relatively small movement with minimal social force" they are off base. Such a conclusion would be correct if we were to follow their lead and divorce the gay struggle from its political and social context—the deepest radicalization in American history; if we would sever its ties to the rest of the radicalization and dismiss its potential for growth. But we have no intention of doing this.

The comrades fear that the party has equated the gay liberation movement with the other sectors of the radicalization. We have not done so, but neither have we counterposed gay liberation to other movements. The comrades are indignant that the gay movement might be given a higher priority than the trade unions or the GI movement. Even if the gay liberation movement were lowest on the scale of the party's priorities, it would not be dismissed as "extraneous" and "peripheral." The comrades conduct themselves like a lobby which is seeking cadre for the trade unions from the revolutionary party's nucleus rather than money from the bourgeois government.

What the party is attempting to do in relation to the gay liberation movement is precisely what the leaders of the Proletarian Orientation Tendency reject. We are engaged in the exploration of the gay liberation struggle with the goal of gaining a concrete and objective assessment of its political direction, its size and geographical scope, its composition, its potential as a field for party intervention, its relations with the rest of the radicalization, the level and scope of its organization, etc. We are assessing the gay liberation movement as it is in reality, a movement of thousands of men and women struggling against gay oppression, not as an obstacle in the path of a turn "toward the proletariat." There is no value in depreciating a movement which can move tens of thou-

sands of militants into action against the very institutions we wish to replace.

Comrades Gregorich and Passen warn against declaring *a priori* that the gay liberation struggle is "a mass revolutionary movement." The party has not done so. But the dynamic of the gay struggle is clearly anticapitalist; it has already engaged thousands in struggle; and it is a legitimate component of the radicalization.

OUR PARTY HAS BEEN COMPLETELY LAX IN PROVIDING AN ANALYSIS OF THE GAY LIBERATION MOVEMENT. OUR ENTRY INTO IT WAS IN THE MOST CONFUSED MANNER.

The purpose of the gay liberation probe as outlined by the Political Committee is:

That the party conduct a probe of the gay liberation movement for the purpose of gathering information. This information sought includes facts about the size of the gay liberation movement, its geographic spread, the history of its development, the specific nature of the gay liberation groups, the demands which have been raised by the gay liberation organizations, the political positions of the different currents within the gay liberation movement, the positions of our opponents concerning it, and its relation to the developing radicalization. P. C. memo, 5/25/71.

What is confused about that?

The assertion that the party has been lax in providing an analysis of the gay struggle is equally without foundation. The general outline of our assessment of the movement has appeared in *The Militant* and internal documents. One purpose of the gay probe is to fill in that outline. We expect to learn from this movement as we have learned from other movements. One of the gay movement's first tasks will be the exploration of the history of gays. Another, an analysis of the roots of gay oppression. We look forward to the first major installments of this work, but it would be a mistake to require that they be presented in full before we concede to intervene in the gay movement. In order to develop a really complete analysis of the gay liberation movement it will be necessary for us to participate in its struggles, to build it and learn from it.

Comrades Gregorich and Passen are attempting here to justify abstention from the gay liberation movement on the grounds that we haven't analyzed it yet. Nevertheless, they complain that *The Militant* treats it as a major priority. The only possible conclusion is that they do not regard *The Militant* articles as sufficiently analytical to refrain from labelling the party "lax."

WE CANNOT ACT TOWARD INTERVENTION IN THIS MOVEMENT AS IF WE HAD A MASS CADRE AT OUR DISPOSAL.

Who is the Proletarian Orientation Tendency talking to here? Maybe they passed over this statement in the draft revolution:

We see ourselves as a Leninist nucleus concentrating on those essential cadre-building steps without which there will be no basis for the construction of a mass revolutionary workers party. (#1 page 18)

But there are other interesting aspects to the authors' argument. A few quotes from their document will show what we mean:

Concerning the trade unions: ". . . it is our job to enter the working class, to establish ourselves in the class on the basis of our program, to give political direction to the radicalizing currents, and to begin the recruitment of the vanguard of the class to the party." (#2 page 27)

Concerning antiwar work: "What the labor skates fear most, and try to thwart and impede in every way they can is the independent organization of the rank and file around political questions like the war.

"It is precisely that independent organization that the SWP must encourage and aid. While we must utilize the antiwar positions of bureaucrats to reach the rank and file, we must at all times differentiate ourselves from the union bureaucrats and aid in the process of their downfall." (#2 page 30)

Concerning Black and Chicano Liberation: "Our job is to inject political direction into the nationalist movement. We must go to the masses, not wait for them to come to us." (#5 page 10)

Concerning Women's Liberation: "We can aid the struggle for women's liberation by bringing the working class into it. . . ." (#2 page 31).

And finally they conjure up a quote from Lenin: ". . . when the Social-Democrats had 'astonishingly few' forces it was necessary to 'dispose' of them in the right place." (#9 page 13) In the eyes of the authors, it is a simple question of our orientation in disposing of forces that confronts the SWP.

Visualize this, if we dispose of our forces correctly, as outlined by the Proletarian Orientation Tendency, we will have (1) posed the question of working class leadership into the unions, (2) organized the rank and file in the unions against the bureaucrats into independent action against the war, (3) injected political direction into the nationalist movement, and (4) brought working women into the women's liberation movement. All this by disposing our limited cadres. And yet, we will have nobody left over to dispose into the gay liberation movement. (After all, we can't act as if we had a mass cadre at our disposal.) What they miss put on is that it is not a mere question of orienting the disposition of forces, but also a question of the present level of the radicalization, the organizations and actions which the radicalized sectors are utilizing, and the opportunities open to the revolutionary party in the day-to-day struggles of those radicalized sectors. The authors make it appear that only the improper allocation of our limited cadres impedes the further advancement of the radicalization into the working class. This verges on romanticism.

THE GAY MOVEMENT IS NOT A POLITICAL MOVEMENT, BUT A PERSONAL MOVEMENT (statement by Comrade Passen in pre-convention discussion)

One of the elementary requirements of Marxist politics

is the ability to grasp the direction and potential of social and political developments as they emerge. Another is an understanding of the necessity of analysing such phenomenon in the political, historical and social context in which they occur. Another is the recognition that the oppressed masses come to understand the necessity of collective political action through an accumulated experience of failures and deadends in their attempts to arrive at personal solutions to problems which are essentially social and political. The illusion of personal solutions persists even after a movement is firmly launched on the road of mass political struggle.

These lessons of Marxist politics are essential to any assessment of the gay liberation movement. It is here that Comrade Passen fell short of the mark in his statement on gay liberation to the Cleveland branch.

After 15 years of struggle a significant section of the Black liberation movement advocates reforms as the solution to their problems. There are even a few, no doubt, who see the way out of their dilemma in terms of "personal" solutions. The gay liberation movement is in its second year of existence. There is a considerable grouping within the movement which advocates the "personal" road to liberation. This is to be expected. What is essential to grasp is the direction and potential of the gay movement and how it relates to the rest of the radicalization. Neither in Comrade Passen's remarks to the Cleveland branch nor in the documents of the Proletarian Orientation Tendency can one find an answer to these questions. The Tendency misses the most important point when they talk about the gay liberation movement. The movement is new. It is moving in the direction of mass political action. In fact, several mass street demonstrations in the tens of thousands already mark its brief history. The movement is undergoing significant geographical expansion. The development of the movement was stimulated by the previous radicalization and particularly by the emergence of the women's liberation movement. The strength of the radicalization is conducive to its further growth. In short, there is every reason to believe that the gay liberation movement will continue to grow and continue to press its struggle for liberation from sexual oppression. As a consequence, it will become more and more political and less and less "personal."

SOME CONCLUSIONS

The common thread running throughout this section of "The Meaning of the Proletarian Orientation," is the dismissal of the gay liberation movement as "personal," "extraneous," and "peripheral." The authors present two reasons to justify this position, one explicit and the other implicit. They contend that the gay movement is "entirely relegated to the petty-bourgeois sector of society." Moreover, they evidently regard the gay struggle as an obstacle to achieving their primary goal in this discussion, a "reorientation" toward the industrial proletariat.

In their "Declaration of a Proletarian Orientation Tendency," Comrade Gregorich states, ". . . our documents clearly support the positions taken by the SWP on the developing movements."

Our opinion is that the position of the leaders of the Proletarian Orientation Tendency on the gay liberation movement is among the clearest expressions of their rejection of the SWP's analysis of the current radical-

ization. Unlike their fainthearted support and vague criticisms of the party policy in relation to the other radical movements, Gregorich, et. al., have openly dismissed the gay struggle and recommend complete abstention from the movement. In "The Meaning of a Proletarian Orientation" they state, "Our adaptation to this movement and the manner in which it has been done is an *effect*, not a cause, of a problem in our present orientation." (#15 page 13, their emphasis) The implication is a recognition on their part that intervention in the gay movement flows naturally from our orientation to the radicalization and that the gay liberation movement itself is an integral part and the most recent expression of the current radicalization.

Their rejection of the gay liberation movement is really an indirect attack on the radicalization as a whole. Several factors make the gay liberation movement especially suitable for an attempt to use it as a whipping boy for the party's orientation to the radicalization. It is the newest and the weakest of the components of the radicalization. It has "minimal social force" at this conjuncture. Because of the strength of anti-homosexual prejudice in society the gay liberation movement is especially vulnerable to attempts to dismiss its significance. The position of the gay movement in relation to the other sectors of the radicalization is as yet not firmly established. Nor has the gay movement produced an analysis of its origins and direction sufficiently accessible to masses of people. It is even difficult to get gay literature in the radical movement if you are outside the main centers on the East and West Coasts.

CONCLUSIONS

The general approach of the Proletarian Orientation Tendency toward all of the sections of the radicalization is faintheartedness and pessimism. The fact that the radicalization has not yet culminated in an awakening of the working class, that even gays are in motion while the industrial proletariat remains quiescent, has strengthened the doubts of the Proletarian Orientation Tendency into a conviction that the party is somehow responsible for the uneven rate of the radicalization's development. They recommend a reorientation toward colonization of and intervention in the trade unions as a means of overcoming this contradiction. The rationalization for this "turn" is the assertion that the already radicalized sectors, most of all the gay liberation movement are petty-bourgeois in composition. They explain the refusal of the party leadership to heed their warnings as an adaptation to the petty-bourgeois composition of the SWP itself. The party has, in their eyes, abandoned the proletariat. All of this finds expression in their position on the gay liberation movement.

The method through which Gregorich and Passen arrive at their assessment of the gay liberation movement is typical of their method throughout the party discussion. They counterpose the gay liberation movement to other sections of the radicalization by giving it a special status, just as they counterpose the radicalization as a whole to the trade unions. This leads them into a serious error with regard to the attacks on lesbians in the women's liberation movement.

They reject the conception that the further development of all these movements furthers the radicalization of the

working class. They refuse to approach the gay liberation movement within the broad matrix of social relations in which it is developing and neglect to analyze its specific relations to the other sectors of the radicalization. They have abstracted the gay movement to such a degree that to them it appears static, with little potential for involving workers, even gay workers. They fail even to mention the massive demonstrations organized by the gay movement in New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Chicago. Since they are unable to apply the tools of Marxism to the radicalization and the gay movement Gregorich and Passen express their anxiety over the party's course and composition in a series

of unsubstantiated assertions and labels. Add to this a series of distortions of the party's positions, vague innuendoes and implications and you have the sum of their barren methodology. Their starting point is their uncertainty stemming from the retarded development of the working class. From this they produce an internally logical rationalization of their confusions and proceed to tailor reality to their formula. This method entails a lot of hacking, hewing, and clipping.

There is no doubt that the party and the gay liberation movement will stand up under this feeble attack.

July 29, 1971

HAVE WE GIVEN UP OUR PROLETARIAN ORIENTATION? AN ALTERNATE LOOK

by Paul Abbot and Rick Ehrmann, Washington D. C. Branch

During a discussion where deep seated differences are trying to be resolved, a tendency exists for the people of the two opposing sides to automatically look at everything written by their "opponents" from a purely factional viewpoint. Areas of agreement are blurred, personal hostilities grow, both in the mind and on paper, and various epithets, whose purposes are to harden support rather than analyze, are thrown about. In spite of this, it appears that Comrade Lovell has made a fair attempt to present the views of the Proletarian Orientation Tendency in a fair and honest manner, seeking, by the use of historical material and analysis to show how the views of Comrade Gregorich and others are mistaken. His method of presentation stands in sharp contrast to most other hostile views of the minority documents.

It appears that several areas of both agreement and limited agreement exist between what members of the Proletarian Orientation Tendency project for the future course of the party and Comrade Lovell's views on this subject. A presentation of a few of them should help clarify some of the problems existing between members of the minority and those of the majority (who it seems occasionally support the Political Committee's document for reasons diametrically opposed to Comrade Lovell's).

He uses, by way of example, the late 30's and 40's when the proletarian orientation of the party was recognized by all. At that time, he points out, the party still managed to work in other arenas, such as the Black movement as it existed then and the antiwar movement. We agree. Many supporters of the Political Committee's document though, express the opinion that any orientation to the proletariat as such would *automatically* force the party to abandon other areas of work that it is now engaged in. We refer comrades who feel this way to very carefully re-read Comrade Lovell's document and urge them to state their differences with it.

He stated that ". . . we are anxious to get sales of *The Militant* at selected plant gates wherever possible. . . ." and further stated "We think (the unemployment office) is a good place to sell *Militants*. . . ." We of course also recognize the need for a revolutionary group to sell its paper at these places. He however writes of ". . . branches beginning. . ." to sell there rather than branches that *have been* selling, which to a certain extent, is indicative of the state and orientation of the party.

Furthermore, he writes of how the Stalinists are busy in the unions with more money, more members and a program making union life easier for them. Again, another point of agreement exists.

Obviously though, since a dispute is in progress, differences do exist, and some, despite limited agreement, concern these same points. We feel that Comrade Lovell has tended to overlook key points, occasionally misestimated developing internal contradictions, or compared new occurrences to older ones where no meaningful contrast can be made. This paper is not written as a major document, nor is it intended as a specific refutation of every point that Comrade Lovell raised. Rather though, the authors wish to examine some material left unraised by him, as well as re-examine a few of his conclusions.

* * *

One of the first points raised concerned the problem that the party went through during the late 1930's with the Burnham-Shachtman group and YPSL. And later, this carries over into a consideration of the lessons of the fight with the Clarke-Cochran group.

Comrade Lovell tells us that Trotsky urged the party to ". . . get deeper into the union movement. . . concentrate on recruiting workers, and. . . consciously and persistently undertake to change the class composition of

our cadres." What Comrade Lovell unfortunately does not tell us is *why* Trotsky urged this.

The members of the party exist within society, not outside or above it. They are thus subject to the normal pressures of society as well as "extra-normal" ones because of their party membership. Contradictions and crises are reflected in the party itself, although each member doesn't respond to these pressures in the same way. Because of certain preconceptions that members joined the party with, or certain types of ties they still have with the society, the pressures will affect members differently. People who joined the party from a proletarian milieu joined as an *extension* of their class interests, while the people who joined from a petty-bourgeois milieu joined *despite, and in opposition to their* class interests. Because of the class composition of the petty-bourgeoisie (i.e. caught between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie) its members tend to feel the pressures more, and will more easily succumb to them. This is one of the reasons Trotsky "urged" us to adopt a deeper proletarian orientation, and one of the 1940 Convention Resolutions stated: "A party of non-workers is necessarily subject to all the reactionary influences of skepticism, cynicism, soul-sickness and capitulatory despair transmitted to it through its petty-bourgeois environment." The resolution further stated: "The entire party membership must be directed towards rooting itself in the factories, mills, etc., and towards integrating itself in the unions and workers' mass organizations." Nor is the youth exempt from such pressures either. At the same convention the party stated that student and unemployed youth ". . . must be sent into industry and involved in the life and struggles of the workers." Even the leadership of the party is affected by and can succumb to class and social pressures, as Trotsky pointed out more than once. At one time, to guard against this, the party decided that it ". . . must select from its younger members those qualified, talented and promising elements who can be trained for leadership. The road of the student youth to the party leadership must not and cannot be from the high school and college directly to the leading committee. They must first prove themselves. They must be sent without high-sounding titles into working class districts for day-to-day work among the proletariat. The young student must serve an apprenticeship in the workers' movement before he can be considered as candidate for the National Committee."

The Political Committee has stated that the process of capitalist degeneration is increasing and that a crisis of major proportions is approaching. They have attempted to present a short analysis of the effect this crisis will have on the American working class. But the developing crisis will affect all strata of American society, including the petty-bourgeoisie. The attacks launched by the capitalists to protect their margin of profit will be felt within the party itself. Will this be of a minor nature, and, as the crisis deepens and "the time finally comes for the party to turn to the proletariat," will all the party members be able to make this turn? Or will some continue to be oriented toward the petty-bourgeois milieus? One of course can't predict exactly at this time, but *it is no accident* that the major hard line articles against a proletarian orientation have been written by Comrade Novack, Barnes, and Sheppard, all of whose experiences in the workers' movement is well known.

Comrade Lovell also writes of our experience with the youth during the late 1930's, stating: "It may be that the 1939-40 split in the party would have been reduced somewhat if we had been able to direct more of the YPSL youth into the union movement—a main arena of political action at that time. But it was not easy to find a job in industry at 1938. Our new youth section had been exposed to the ideas of Trotskyism but did not have time to assimilate those ideas.

"The fact that they were recruited as a block from the camp of social-democracy was not conducive to their further education. Unlike our present YSA membership which is recruited directly to the program of Trotskyism, the old YPSL had had initial training to overcome."

This must be examined in several areas. First, it appears to contain more than a touch of idealism: ideas and abstract program are emphasized in lieu of class, societal pressures, and the developing contradictions in American society at that time. YPSL members certainly did have "bad initial training to overcome" and perhaps bad ideas that prevented their assimilation. But at one time YPSL members weren't members of YPSL. Before they joined YPSL they hadn't received the training from the social-democrats that imbued them with the bad ideas. Yet instead of joining us, they joined the social-democrats. "Bad initial training" doesn't explain why this happened. And what of Shachtman? Clarke? Cochran? Swabeck? Did all of these people leave our movement because they had "bad initial training to overcome" or did the reasons for their departure deal more with their class and/or the pressures that they faced from society?

In addition, Comrade Lovell seems to imply that what happened to YPSL can never happen to the YSA, because today's YSA members are "recruited directly to the program of Trotskyism." We are not sure exactly what he means by this. Perhaps he means that the present YSA member has entered that organization without having had previous membership in any other leftist organization. Yet looking at the latest party membership figures, we discover that over 150 party members have previous membership in other, usually hostile, organizations before joining the SWP. Due to the nature of the YSA it is reasonable to assume that this percentage is much higher there than in the party. In certain areas (such as Florida) virtually the whole YSA has been recruited from such groups as PL-SDS, RYM II, and so forth. And not too long ago the *Young Socialist* was printing articles about the great number of SDSers joining the YSA.

Perhaps though, by YSA members being "recruited directly to the program of Trotskyism" Comrade Lovell means that our entire program is in the forefront of all our activity, and that new people join with a firm knowledge of such things as the Leninist concept of the combat party and democratic-centralism, the work of the Vietnamese Trotskyists, the concept of the permanent revolution, and the reunification of the world-wide Trotskyist movement.

If this is what Comrade Lovell means then once again we must disagree with him. Many people have joined the YSA because they were against the war, wanted to fight it in the most efficient manner they knew, and saw that we have a certain amount of influence in the anti-war movement. Or, they became active in the women's

liberation movement, and the same thing happened. These people join and only later are expected to assimilate the program of Trotskyism—many fail to and later leave, usually for "personal" reasons. Look at the slogans put forth by the mass movements: Bring the Troops Home Now! End the Draft Now! Repeal All Abortion Laws! Black Control of the Black Community! We attract most people to the YSA by struggles waged around these slogans. Are they part of a uniquely Trotskyist program, or is "the program of Trotskyism" a program that even a right-wing, *laissez faire, laissez aller* civil libertarian could support?

Comrade Lovell seeks to analyze the Clarke-Cochran dispute, and writes that the experience of it ". . . ought not to be overlooked by those who seek quotations to define and describe our proletarian orientation and its consequences." We certainly agree with him when he writes of not overlooking this lesson, but feel that he has perhaps overlooked what Comrade Gregorich and others wrote of the first page of their document (FAPO), that: "Proletarian composition and solid ties with the working class alone do not guarantee success. It should be enough to look at some of the Communist Parties to see that."

One studies the major works of our movement (which might be called searching for quotations) not merely to "define and describe our proletarian orientation and its consequences" but to learn from the concretized experience of our movement.

In the July 30th issue of *The Militant*, Comrade Cannon's speech that he gave at the 25th anniversary celebration of the SWP is reprinted. At that time, speaking of the very foundation of the SWP he stated, "Now I must say the theory of the leaders of the Communist Party, as it was evolved in that long, difficult period of the boom and prosperity, was agreed to by nearly everybody else in the country. There was almost unanimous opinion.

"But we didn't agree. A few of us didn't agree. A few of us had read 'the books.' And from the books we derived a theory and a conviction that what was before our eyes was only temporary and superficial. We held on to the old theory that the contradictions of capitalism would explode and upset it and create the conditions for revolution."

It is possible to read the books or to seek quotations and become merely a Marxist discussion club, not interested in truly changing reality. But it is equally possible to neglect both "the books" and revolutionary struggle.

A cursory examination of the fight with the Clarke-Cochran group usually reveals that a proletarian section of the party caved in under pressure from society, but what such an examination usually misses is what happened to the petty-bourgeois section of the party at the time of the fight. Or is this a mute question, since most of the petty-bourgeoisie recruited after 1940 caved in to hostile pressures before these pressures grew enough to be strongly felt by a proletarian section?

It is true that the pressures of society can become so great that even proletarian members of the party succumb to them. But it is also true that long before this proletarian retreat occurs, most petty-bourgeois members will have left. In summary, a proletarian composition will not guarantee the party's success, but a petty-bourgeois composition will guarantee its future.

* * *

Comrade Lovell, in attempting to show that we have a similar (i.e. proletarian) orientation now as we did in the past, uses several examples. As Marxists we know that the universe we live in is constantly changing, and Comrade Lovell would no doubt be one of the first to point this out. With this in mind, what comes out in his document is the belief that we once approached the same areas that we do now, including the antiwar movement and press sales. Remembering the normal necessity for change, we must still decide if this change in approach from the 1930's and 40's reflects the same strategy that has been *updated* to meet the "new" reality, or if the new strategy instead represents a *serious departure* from what were at one time considered Trotskyist positions. While in a relatively short discussion article it is impossible to examine this question completely, nevertheless, a few points raised by Comrade Lovell in this area can be examined.

He mentions several times that during the 1930's and 40's (when we had an undenied proletarian orientation) we considered one of our main areas of work to be the sale of our press. The conclusion that he seems to reach is that press sales are an integral part of a proletarian orientation as our work during the 30's and 40's show, and since we emphasize press sales today, we must also have a proletarian orientation.

All things in the past being equal, we would not be adverse to accepting a similar argument. What Comrade Lovell didn't present though was the difference between the 40's and today, not over *sales* of the press, but *the press itself*.

The 1940 Convention examined the problem of press content, and reached the following conclusions: "The editorial policy of the popular press must be oriented toward the publication of as much material as possible which reflects the life and the immediate struggles of the workers, drawing the political lessons of these experiences. This of course cannot be carried out at the expense of the proper treatment of the fundamental political issues. The theoretical organ must carry regular articles on the most important trade union problems directed to the more advanced workers." How does *The Militant* of 1971 stand up against these requirements? A host of different "mass movements" are normally granted special column space on a regular basis: the women's liberation movement, the Black liberation movement, and of course, the labor movement.¹ When large strikes are brewing one normally sees increased labor coverage. Unfortunately, when the labor movement appears quiescent, often very little appears. We recall having occasionally seen copies of *The Militant* with the by-line "Published in the interests of the working people" and little else to identify the paper as a proletarian rather than a bourgeois-radical one. Examine the *ISR* to see how many "regular articles on the most important trade union problems directed to the most advanced workers" you find. What we discover is that our press is not simply our press. Rather, the differences between *The Militant* of 1971 and of *The Militant* of the 40's is a great one: the press of the 40's was a press *for the working people*. . . today's is not.

Let us examine another area of work that we engaged in during the past and work in today also: the antiwar

movement.

After World War II, the party correctly decided that American imperialism could not achieve its ends without a Third World War. To fight this, a program and list of slogans were prepared.

"Our party must shoulder the historic task of leading and organizing the antiwar fight of the masses. This struggle *must be waged around the following slogans:* /my emphasis/

"Take the war making powers away from Congress! Let the people vote on the question of war and peace!

"Against capitalist conscription! Abolish the officer caste system! Full democratic rights in the armed forces!

"There is a working class answer to capitalist militarism! Military training for workers, financed by the government, but under the control of the trade unions. . . .

"Withdraw all American troops from foreign soil! Solidarity with the revolutionary struggles of the workers of all lands! For the complete independence of the colonial peoples!"

Compare this program with the program that the SWP accepts during its work in the antiwar movement. "Capitalist conscription" has been transformed into the (classless) draft. "There is a working class answer to capitalist militarism" has become talk of people (with no class listed) who want peace (with no mention of class warfare). At one time our program was designed specifically to organize and *raise the consciousness of workers*. Today, the party accepts a program that is very good for organizing masses of people with a petty-bourgeois consciousness, and virtually useless for raising the workers' consciousness. Using our work in the antiwar movement in the 1940's as an example to show that we still have a proletarian orientation, becomes upon closer examination, an example concretely illustrating how we have abandoned a proletarian orientation.

The majority documents have mentioned the concept of trying to build left-wing caucuses in the unions. Comrade Lovell also states, when discussing similar work: "This means that our idea of a class struggle in the unions is one that identifies with these protest movements and with the nationalist sentiments of Blacks and other minorities." Let us examine the developing mass movement strategy coupled with the (projected) strategy of left-wing caucus building. Would this solve our problems and heal the dispute in the party? Unfortunately not. For the projected strategy of the Political Committee in the proletarian milieu seems to neglect a whole strata of *non-unionized* workers who aren't in the mass movements. What are we to tell a group of women in an almost 100% female factory who are non-unionized and having their wages reduced? "Well, if you were in a union you could join our left-wing caucus. We are holding a march to repeal all abortion laws that you could come to though." What would we tell a Black worker under similar circumstances? "Well, since you're not in a union you can't join our left-wing caucus, but you can join a committee we're in fighting for Black control of the Black community." Their reply — "two short pithy words."

One can work with people in the factories (not necessarily trade unions . . . factories) on many levels and in many different ways. There's no "requirement" preventing us from recruiting female secretaries or factory workers

on the basis of their oppression as women. Similarly, we can recruit people from the factories and other workplaces on the basis of the war in Vietnam. Leaflets for a women's liberation conference for example can be passed out at factory gates, supermarkets, and unemployment offices rather than simply on campuses. We don't have to wait for someone to join a union before working with them. And all of this would be far from either abandoning our work in the mass movements or simply trying (at some time in the indefinite future) to build left-wing caucuses in the unions.

The members of the Proletarian Orientation Tendency want to "selectively [*not haphazardly, not with everybody*] colonize" key factories because the real power in American society is in the factories. But we see the proletarian milieu extending well beyond the key industries and outside the trade unions (especially for women, Blacks, Chicanos, and Puerto Ricans). A proletarian orientation would mean work, not just in the unions, but in all areas where working people could be found, not just around "meat and potatoes" demands, but around all issues where working people are oppressed.

* * *

When one steps back and examines all of what Comrade Lovell wrote to show that we still have a proletarian orientation, several specific points stand out. We sell our press, publish labor news in it, invite proletarians of various sorts to our forums, expand our publications department by ". . . printing more of the basic works by Trotsky and other Marxists. . ." which according to Comrade Lovell ". . . is all a big gain for our proletarian orientation." Does what he wrote concerning our proletarian orientation actually prove that we have one? Hardly! *IF* the specifics mentioned are sufficient to show that the SWP has a proletarian orientation, then the same method can be used to show that the Communist Party is revolutionary. Doesn't the CPUSA publish articles on revolutions in their press, don't they explain to people that socialism is a good thing, don't they follow revolutionary activity in the world today very closely, and don't they publish and distribute material by Lenin, including the 45 volume set of his *Collected Works*? The SWP as a party with a proletarian orientation; the CPUSA as a revolutionary party — *both conclusions can follow from the same logic!*

When discussing the Stalinists, Comrade Lovell writes: "They are not doing too well on their present course. They may be making a few recruits, but not many. If a genuine rank-and-file movement develops in the unions around any big national issue, we will be there. . . . It will be useful for us to pay close attention to what happens with the Stalinists and their 'proletarian orientation,' to check the growth-rate of the YWLL against that of the YSA, to compare the social and class composition of the two organizations. We should be able to see not too long from now which organization has most successfully built itself as a party of the working class."

Had Comrade Lovell presented a deeper analysis of Stalinism including a description of the process it is going through, perhaps his final sentence would have more meaning. Instead, his final sentence appears as *an act of faith*, a statement indicating that with perseverance and the con-

tinuation of our present policies we will, in the end, emerge victorious. Let's compare the growth rates of the YWLL and the YSA today, rather than waiting in the hopes that tomorrow may be brighter. The YWLL has grown from nothing to around 2800² in about two years. Its national composition is considerably advanced over ours, and it appears likely that its class composition is also better. Yet Comrade Lovell writes, "They may be making a few recruits, but not many." But this "not many" is considerably more than the number of recruits the YSA is making. *If Comrade Lovell uses the descriptive term "not many" when referring to the recruitment of 2800 Stalinists in two years, what term must he use to describe the much smaller growth rate of the YSA?*

Comrade Lovell also feels that when the rank-and-file movement develops in the unions (once again no mention of the non-unionized workers) we will be there. But according to the Political Committee's resolution, such a movement will only start when the economic crisis deepens and the capitalists are forced to launch major attacks on the standard of living of the working class in order to maintain their corporate profits. Such attacks will surely contain attempts to weaken the unions' bargaining power by increasing unemployment, and thus increasing competition between the workers for the fewer number of jobs available. At that time it appears unlikely that the unions will increase already swollen membership roles by admitting new members. Thus, when the projected time comes for us to enter the unions, *most unions will be closed to new members.*

* * *

In his plenum report on the Political Committee's "Perspectives and Lessons of the New Radicalization" document, Comrade Barnes stated:

"One of the speakers at Oberlin, to draw attention to the difference between us and the Stalinists, made this remark: 'Just think what would have happened if the Stalinists had been in the leadership of the student move-

ment, if the Stalinists had been in the leadership of the nationalist upsurge, if the Stalinists had been in the leadership of the antiwar movement. . . [etc.]'

"As I thought about it, what immediately came to me is that there could not have been any student movement as we know it. There could not have been any rising women's liberation movement as we know it, nor Black or Chicano movements. All this could not have happened. That is a crucial historical fact. As the radicalization deepens the Stalinist party has neither an automatic hegemony in the mass movement nor a preponderant edge over us as to who is going to develop the cadres that will begin recruiting the decisive section of the politicalized and radicalized workers when this becomes possible."

Perhaps the rapid rate of recruitment of the YWLL provides no preponderant edge, nor the CP national trade union fractions, nor their additional money, nor their many more members working in proletarian milieus. Perhaps this doesn't give them automatic hegemony over us. Perhaps if we launch the party on an orientation to the proletariat we can beat them.

But what will happen if the party continues the current "proletarian orientation" that Comrade Lovell writes of? What will happen when the Stalinists take over the leadership of the mass workers' movement? The answer—there won't be any revolution as we want it.

FOOTNOTES

1 This does not mean that we think that coverage of the various mass movements should suddenly disappear from the pages of *The Militant* or the *Bulletin* and *Challenge*. Nor do we feel that Comrade Waters is directly responsible for any criticisms we have in this area.

2 The authors had some dispute over the size of the YWLL. The figure of 2800 is taken from the YSA Plenum report given to the Washington D. C. local.

July 29, 1971