



# Discussion Bulletin

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## REVISIONISM AND OPPORTUNISM

by Milton Alvin Central-East Branch Los Angeles local

June 25, 1975

In my letter to the Political Committee of April 21, 1975, (see Internal Bulletin Vol. 33 No. 6) discussing which program we should advocate to meet the problem of layoffs I said, "I believe that the two demands under discussion are mutually exclusive." This referred to the demand for preferential layoffs or seniority for women and minorities as against the demand for jobs for all through reduction of hours of work.

Replying to me on behalf of the Political Committee Comrade Linda Jenness wrote on April 29, 1975, "We do not consider the two as 'mutually exclusive.'" And further, "Far from being mutually exclusive, these demands go hand in hand." We now have a chance to see if one hand knows what the other is doing.

It has not taken long to confirm to the hilt that what I wrote hit the nail on the head. But to tell the truth, I did not expect it to be so clearly revealed by our own writers. Rather, I looked to confirmation through what workers' organizations, primarily unions, would do. I expected that no union would raise both demands simultaneously because, as I wrote, they were "mutually exclusive."

In two issues of the *Militant*, dated June 13 and 20, 1975, there appear three articles dealing with these questions. One is a report of a convention of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU) by John Hawkins; another, a two-page spread entitled "Seniority, jobs and affirmative action," by Frank Lovell and the third a report of a meeting of the National Coordinating Committee of the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW) by Linda Jenness.

All three articles deal with some important aspects of the layoff question. In the report of the CBTU convention, Comrade Hawkins devotes the major part of his article to discussing what was done with regard to adopting a program to fight layoffs. In the article by Comrade Linda Jenness the main emphasis is on what CLUW did with regard to the same question. In the article by Comrade Frank Lovell the entire piece deals with this subject, most of it a polemic against the position of AFL-CIO and other union leaders' positions of support for layoffs by seniority only.

*Not one word is contained in any of the three articles defending the party's demand "Jobs for All" through a reduction of hours of work. Perhaps I should say the former demand of the party because Jobs for All has been squeezed out of the picture by the position advocating preferential layoffs. Isn't this a disgrace? Three articles discussing and reporting on the positions of top union leaders, the growing organizations of Black trade unionists and women unionists and not a single hint of the fact that we have in our transitional program the demand that hours of work be reduced so that everyone can be employed!*

But that is not all. At the CLUW meeting the *Militant* article reports that a resolution was introduced by Jean Tussey, and there is a picture of her with the caption "Jean Tussey, of ITU, presented strong resolution in defense of affirmative-action gains." The article describes the resolution, introduced by Tussey in opposition to two others of which one supported the views of the leaders of CLUW while the other showed some confusion.

One of the resolves in the Tussey resolution says, "That the Coalition of Labor Union Women oppose in every way possible any reduction through layoffs in the proportionate number of women and minority workers hired under affirmative action programs, wherever layoffs occur..." This resolve does not even defend the jobs of women and minorities that may have been obtained prior to affirmative action programs. If this is not an oversight, it would leave the CLUW with a program of sorts that applies only to women and minorities hired through preferential quotas but those already working at any particular place would presumably be subject to layoffs like anyone else.

Next comes another resolve that more clearly spells out what the author had in mind. It calls for amending seniority provisions so as not to reduce the percentage of women and minorities gained through affirmative action struggles in any workplace.

The resolution does not call for reducing hours of work so that everyone can remain on the job and for no reduction in pay. It is a pity that our basic position of jobs for all was not even presented to the meeting for consideration.

The article describing this meeting, written by Comrade Linda Jenness, says not one word about jobs for all. This is the same comrade who wrote me only several weeks ago that the two demands, jobs for all and preferential layoffs were not "mutually exclusive," as I had claimed.

If they are not mutually exclusive, if our party is supposed to raise both demands as Comrade Linda Jenness' letter, previously quoted, asserts, why is no mention made in the article of the demand for jobs for all? Why is the queasy resolution introduced by Jean Tussey described as "strong?" Why is this resolution praised in the article as going "... to the heart of the issue, and that offered a clear position in defense of women and Blacks?" Does not the demand for jobs for all by reducing hours of work go right to the heart of the issue? Is it not clear? Does it not protect the jobs of women and minorities?

I draw the conclusion that our program on this question has been superseded by a revisionist and unworkable demand, one that is unlikely to win much, if any, support among the broad working masses. The demand for preferential layoffs is divisive, just as the Meany-Woodcock position of layoffs in line of seniority is divisive.

The three articles in the *Militant* oppose the former

program to the latter but make no mention of a third possibility, one that our party used to defend. If preferential layoffs are agreed to by workers in a particular plant or workplace, those laid off, although with more seniority than those kept at work will express their resentment . . . at whom? At those workers kept on the job who will appear to have taken their places. I hope no one expects such laid off workers to leave the plant shouting huzzas and cheering on those left at work. This is rather unlikely.

The same result can be expected if Meany's program prevails. Those laid off, in this case with the least seniority, will be resentful of those left working who were unwilling to accept the program of preferential layoffs. They too cannot be expected to leave the plant waving flags and shouting hurrahs.

Comrade Fred Halstead in his "Why Can't Everyone Have a Job?" says, "If some of us try to preserve our jobs at the expense of minorities and women, it will only play into the bosses' tactic of 'divide and rule.'" But what if minorities and women succeed in holding their jobs "at the expense of" other workers? Will not this also play into the bosses' hands and result in "divide and rule?" Of course it will!

What is the net result of either of these outcomes? Our writers and representatives in the unions who are proposing preferential layoffs have not thought this problem through. *In either case the anger of those workers laid off is directed against other workers and not against the capitalist system and the capitalists themselves who are responsible for their plight.*

Surely this should be clear enough. Is it our mission to help in misdirecting the rightful anger of the workers who lose their jobs? This must occur if any workers adopt the program of preferential layoffs or the program of layoffs by seniority. Both are divisive, neither has any place in our program. If the party is to stop damaging its standing among workers, it must immediately go back to our program of jobs for all.

I have urged that the party learn from the experience of the CIO in its early and formative days. I would like to comment on this as it throws some light on current problems that are under discussion.

In the massive upsurge that gave birth to the CIO in the 1930s the problem of the attitude of white workers to minorities, mostly Blacks at that time, and to women did not become a divisive issue. That does not mean that there was no problem. There was, even though both women and Blacks were not nearly so numerous in mass production industries where the CIO was organized as they are now and have been since World War II.

The CIO was built on the basis of industrial unionism. That is, all the workers in any particular workplace were organized into a single union no matter what kind of work they did. This contrasted with the old AFL which organized by crafts and in a single plant there could be any number of different unions, each with jurisdiction over its particular craft.

Since the CIO took in all workers no matter what kinds of jobs they had, to isolate and keep anyone out would have gone counter to the fundamental basis of the union. Primarily for this reason Blacks and everyone else were members of the CIO from the start wherever they had jobs in plants organized by this new union.

Among other reasons, including racial prejudice as the

main one, the AFL was able to keep Blacks out of the craft unions that made up their organization. AFL members were largely skilled workers. At the time the CIO came upon the scene, 40 years ago, relatively few Blacks had acquired the kinds of skills that were common among white workers in the AFL. There were, however, Black workers in places where AFL unions represented white workers. But the AFL simply ignored them and made no effort to organize them into existing unions or special unions of their own. I worked for a short period in just such a factory.

The entry of Blacks into the CIO had nothing to do with more privileged workers protecting the jobs of the most oppressed or anything of that kind. Nor was there any ". . . revolutionary unity based on support for the demands of the most oppressed," as the resolution "The Decline of American Capitalism: Prospects for a Socialist Revolution," calls for. Prospects for revolution will be dim indeed if our party is guided by one-sided formulas such as this.

All workers are oppressed under capitalism. For the revolutionary party to concentrate only on the most oppressed can only result in ignoring others who are less oppressed. This is a self-defeating perspective. We must defend and identify with *all* oppressed. That is the only road to unity and eventually to victory.

The Blacks who were already in the plants became CIO members just like anyone else. They were there and could not be kept out even if the whites had wanted to segregate them as this would have gone against the basis of the CIO, that is, one big union, to borrow the expression of the IWW.

However, the organization of the CIO did not solve all the problems that Black workers faced in the plants at one fell swoop. Not by a long shot. As a rule they occupied the lowest paying and hardest jobs and the struggle for equal rights, equal pay and access to better jobs began for Black workers only after the CIO was established and recognized. This fight is still going on, as a matter of fact, in our own time.

Much the same that I have said above also applies to women workers and other minorities. Both these categories came into heavy mass production industries in any considerable numbers after Blacks and faced the same problems there. And also like the Black workers, they still face them.

Is there a useful lesson for us from this experience in the organization of the CIO in the 1930s? I believe that the most important thing is that the unity of Black and white workers was achieved in the 1930s through *a program that benefited both*. That was the building of industrial unions in the mass production industries where unions were previously unknown and where the AFL either could not or would not organize the workers.

If this lesson is to be of use to us now, we should use only the program that *benefits all the workers* in the present situation where layoffs are the main problem. That rejects, by its very nature, advocating any kinds of layoff plans, either by seniority or by preference of anyone over others. Both are divisive. Only the demand for jobs for all through reduction in working hours with no reduction in pay can unify all the workers, and can direct their efforts against the companies and the capitalist system.

It is necessary now to go back to the meeting of CLUW that we discussed above and that was reported in the

*Militant* The article, as I mentioned, praises what was done at this meeting by Jean Tussey. In my opinion, this is completely out of line. If anything, she must be sharply criticized.

Tussey is thoroughly familiar with the demand for jobs for all, as it used to be advocated by our party. *But she left this out of her resolution.* She preferred preferential layoffs. Why? Obviously because this was a meeting of women only and the temptation to introduce a resolution and maybe get it adopted that seemed to bend the issue in favor of women was very great. Was this not a bit opportunistic?

From further information that has become available since the article on the CLUW meeting was carried in the *Militant* it seems that another resolution was called to the attention of some representatives at the meeting. This resolution contained the basically correct slogan of jobs for all by reducing hours of work with no reduction in pay. I believe that Comrade Linda Jenness owes the party an explanation of how and why this resolution came to be rejected and not even introduced at the meeting.

I believe there was a bit of opportunism in the article describing the CBTU convention. Here also, nothing is said of jobs for all but preferential layoffs are described as "Another method of preventing a widening of the gap caused by past discrimination in hiring . . ." Would not jobs for all also prevent a widening of this gap? In fact, it would do a more thorough job, as the example of my other article clearly proved.

The two-page spread in the *Militant* by Frank Lovell is also thoroughly revisionist. Two pages! And not a single word about the demand for jobs for all with no reduction in pay.

It is necessary to call things by their right names. What the party is confronted with is revisionism leading to opportunism. This road is the one taken by the articles in the *Militant* discussed above. The program of the party on the problems raised by layoffs has been revised. There cannot be any doubt about that. This revision has led to opportunism. This is also clear from the evidence. Revisionism leads inexorably to opportunism. We have seen this many times in other parties. It must be rejected by ours! Back to the Trotskyist program!

# Are Things Really That Bad?

by Joseph Hansen

June 26, 1975

In his article "Tradition, Orientation and Program," published in *SWP Discussion Bulletin* Vol. 33, No. 6, Comrade Milton Alvin has come to the conclusion that for "several years a process of abandoning or changing the Trotskyist tradition, program and orientation has been taking place in the central leadership of the party."

The charge is a grave one, requiring drastic action—if it can be substantiated. Let us follow Comrade Alvin's reasoning in the six areas in which he feels that this has occurred.

## 1. Critical support to Communist party candidates.

Comrade Alvin divides Stalinist candidates into two categories: "token" candidates and "serious" candidates "running against capitalist politicians." He is against offering critical support to token Stalinist candidates but would favor offering critical support to serious ones. He recalls cases where we did this in the 1940s.

If we accept the division into "token" and "serious" candidates, and consider first the "serious" ones to whom we offered critical support in the 1940s it is at once clear that much more was at stake in those cases than in the cases of "token" candidates. Or, to put it differently, it was much easier in offering critical support to "serious" candidates to slip into a position of being *soft on Stalinism* than in "token" cases. To have displayed softness on Stalinism would have represented a genuine break with the program of Trotskyism.

It follows that the same tactic used in the case of "token" candidates could at most represent only a tactical mistake; that is, from a tactical point of view the candidacies were not worth bothering about. Thus if we were to take up each instance cited by Comrade Alvin, we would have to consider it within the framework of tactics and not program. In fact we would have to start by agreeing that the program of Trotskyism calls for the use of this tactic in general. We only have to determine in each instance whether it will pay off and, if we think so, to follow through in a timely and vigorous way so that our critical support is "serious" critical support and not merely "token" critical support.

A further word should be said about the meaning of "token" Stalinist candidates and "serious" ones, for it is evident that in the discussion in the Political Committee to which Comrade Alvin refers the shades of meaning did not become clear. Moreover Comrade Alvin's own use of the two terms remains unclear.

In a certain sense—and this is how some of the comrades view it—every candidate run by the Communist party in the United States has been only a "token" candidate since the initiation of the popular front in 1935. The political policy of the CP has been to work within the left wing of the Democratic party, wheeling and dealing

with the labor bureaucrats in particular. (The only exception came during the short period of the Stalin-Hitler pact.) When the CP runs its own candidates it has always been either to gain posts to be used to help strengthen the electoral base of the CP so as to give it more bargaining power with the Democratic machine, to help preserve its "independent" image among its own members, or to help favored Democratic candidates avoid being tarred as supported by "Communists."

To use the word "token" for such candidates can however be misunderstood. They are fielded as part of the class-collaborationist policy of the Communist party and that policy is a very serious matter.

"Token" candidate can also be taken in a much narrower sense to refer to a candidate run by the Stalinists in an election of local interest for obscure reasons such as offsetting a Trotskyist candidate, a "spoiling" move that can be easily exposed without utilizing the heavy artillery of critical support. Whatever the decision in such cases, it would still remain a tactical matter.

It appears absolutely obvious to me that the question of program is not involved in a single instance going back to the 1940s. I take at face value Comrade Alvin's statement that he agrees with the way the tactic was applied in the 1940s, yet his reference to the critical support we gave to Herbert Aptheker in the Twelfth Congressional District in Brooklyn nine years ago could lead one to conclude that he may be rethinking the entire question. Of course, it could be that Comrade Alvin brought up the case because of a formulation he disagrees with in the following two paragraphs of the statement issued by the Political Committee at the time:

"A vote for Aptheker is a vote for an open and avowed Communist, and would be in reality a vote for the Communist Party as against the capitalist parties. As such, it would be a vote for a tendency in the working class and socialist movements. The SWP is giving critical support to the Aptheker campaign as a means of opposing the two capitalist parties and supporting independent working class and socialist political action against them.

"A vote for Aptheker would also be a blow to the witch-hunt of Communists, Socialists and all radicals."

The statement continues with a detailed criticism of Aptheker's platform, including suggested alterations. It urges Aptheker to support the statewide ticket of the Socialist Workers party. In my opinion, the statement was a model one and ought to be read in conjunction with the discussion raised by Comrade Alvin on this point. The statement was published in the September 5, 1966, issue of the *Militant*. (For the convenience of those interested I have submitted it to the bulletin as an appendix.)

Comrade Alvin places heavy stress on what he considers to be the error of listing the American Communist party as "part of the socialist movement." Perhaps it would satisfy him if the CP were listed as the "counterrevolutionary"

part. In all consistency we would then be obliged to apply a similar label to others in the working class movement to whom we might offer critical support in an election; for instance, "counterrevolutionary labor lieutenant of the capitalist class running on a pseudo independent ticket." I think that Comrade Alvin would agree that such announcements would not be the most auspicious opening move for us to make if our aim was to influence followers who considered the candidate to be a socialist or an independent.

The relationship between the need for scientifically exact nomenclature and the need for patient pedagogical development of our assessment of a candidate whom we can support, yet with whom we have deep and even unbridgeable programmatic differences is a subject that could be developed at length. However, let us put it aside. Whether the party made a mistake in formulations, or even in tactics in the cases cited by Comrade Alvin is not the point at issue. Mistakes on that level—even if one were to assume that they occurred—do not in themselves signify departures from the tradition, program and orientation of Trotskyism.

Thus I do not find Comrade Alvin's argument very persuasive. The central leadership of the SWP remains rock hard in its attitude toward Stalinism. So far as I can detect, the entire membership remains equally hard. In view of these prerequisites, flexibility in tactics is not only permissible, it is mandatory. And it should be continued as in the past.

## 2. The energy crisis.

The charge in this instance is that the "leadership's response to the energy crisis was flat and routine."

Comrade Alvin cites a letter he wrote February 5, 1974, making a number of proposals on the course he thought the party ought to follow in the energy crisis. His main proposal was that a "central slogan" should be selected and a campaign launched around it in a "combination of propaganda and agitation." His suggestion for a central slogan was the "demand that the entire energy industry . . . be nationalized and placed under workers' control."

The demand is a good one, and I don't suppose anyone in the party would argue against its correctness in the abstract.

However, Comrade Alvin raises a question that goes beyond this particular matter. "The problem is," he says, "that we are not making the best use and most effective use of our transitional program, and in fact, sometimes using it incorrectly."

From that comment, one could conclude that Comrade Alvin is bringing up the party's handling of the energy crisis as but one example of something deeper—an incorrect grasp of the Transitional Program and how to use it. In any case, this gives sharper edge to his comments on how the party presented the topic. The party misfired, in his opinion, did not use the correct slogans and in general fumbled things. The main fault, as he views it, was absence of the central slogan that he thought was required.

The energy crisis is not over. In my opinion, it has just begun. Its most prominent aspect when it first exploded was the actions of the oil barons. But this took place

against a more significant background—the misuse and squandering of the world's resources. Sudden, unexpected shortages can occur today in various fields. The menace of the development of nuclear energy without adequate safeguards and the threat to the ecology of our planet are likewise involved.

In our approach to these issues, the Transitional Program certainly is of prime importance. We must advance and explain the transitional slogans listed in it. But even more important is to apply the method advanced in the Transitional Program. This is particularly true if "involvement in action" is possible, as Comrade Alvin argues was the case in the energy crisis. It is wrong to merely check the list of slogans in the Transitional Program, pick out what seems to us to be a good one, make it central, and without even changing the wording very much launch a campaign around it. The method indicated by Trotsky in the Transitional Program is different from that.

To make a bridge from our program to the masses, it is imperative to determine the thinking of the masses themselves. This may not correspond exactly with the slogans indicated in the Transitional Program, or may take a different form. For example, the slogan *sliding scale of wages* was raised by sectors of the working class in the United States as a demand for an "escalator clause" in union contracts. This formulation was certainly satisfactory enough to serve as a central slogan in a campaign even though it did not cover unorganized workers or affect minimum wage laws.

If the language chosen by the workers happens to be identical to that of a slogan in the Transitional Program, excellent. For example, one of the ideas advanced in various parts of the country upon the outbreak of the energy crisis was linked up with Exxon's TV commercial, "We'd like you to know." The response was "Open the books." That the reply had real bite was shown by the fact that Exxon hastily dropped its catchy TV message.

Suppose that the slogan "open the books" had developed in popularity. Wouldn't it have been wise to adopt it as the central slogan of a campaign? Yet Comrade Alvin argued in his letter that the slogan "open the books," along with similar slogans, is inferior to "nationalization under workers control." That is not the approach suggested by Trotsky in the Transitional Program.

Perhaps "nationalize them," or "expropriate them," or "take them over," or some variant of that theme will become a central slogan around which the party can campaign with the perspective of "involvement in action"—and not only in relation to the energy industry. However, if a less general slogan seems to be in the air, we should not hesitate to push it as a transitional slogan of more partial nature.

To weigh slogans with care before mobilizing the party in a propagandistic and agitational campaign, particularly if a single slogan is to be selected, certainly does not constitute evidence of a sluggish or routinist attitude. The fact is that the party responded to the furor of the energy crisis and began preparations for active participation in any movement that might develop. This is shown by the articles in the party press that Comrade Alvin mentions in his letter.

It is his right, of course, to regard these articles in a different way—as “sporadic,” or as representing “an exercise as commentators.” But that is a subjective reaction like his feeling that “no attention was paid” to his letter. (Actually it was weighed by all of us in the center as Comrade Alvin’s letters always are. In this instance we did not agree with him.)

### 3. The impeachment of Nixon.

In ending his comments on the handling of the energy crisis, Comrade Alvin says: “This lack of response to a new situation that arose suddenly and with no previous warning has become typical of the reaction of the leadership to some important events.” His criticism of the leadership’s handling of the Watergate crisis is intended to offer a second example of the same kind.

Let us again begin by determining whether a question of principle is involved. Comrade Alvin states that he does not see any difference between demanding the removal of a trigger-happy cop who has shot someone and demanding the removal of a Nixon, who has made the mistake of taping his conspiratorial conversations and instructions. I can agree that there is no difference in principle in our approach to the case of the cop and the case of the president.

On the other hand, I think that Comrade Alvin would agree that there is no principle that requires our party to call for removal or impeachment in every instance in which an agent of the bourgeois state gains special notoriety.

If we consider the question merely within the narrow frame in which Comrade Alvin places it, the differences are only tactical; they do not involve program. (The case of presidential power, of course, can hardly be put on the same level as the case of an unusually brutal cop.)

The differences can be narrowed still further. Everyone in the party will agree with Comrade Alvin’s observation that mass sentiment existed for the impeachment of Nixon, or, in more popular language, of getting rid of the bum. The development of this sentiment was followed very closely in our press.

Within this context of agreement on the questions of principle and of fact, let us now consider Comrade Alvin’s points. With regard to the impeachment sentiment, Comrade Alvin states in his letter of June 15, 1974: “We should not cut ourselves off from such a mass by refusing to make a demand for Nixon’s ouster from office.”

In other words, by voicing the sentiment the party would be able to connect with the masses. By not voicing the sentiment the party missed the boat, or, as Comrade Alvin puts it: “All in all, we missed some good opportunities to make effective propaganda because the political approach to the Nixon-Watergate crisis was not correct.”

Comrade Alvin’s impression that the party was out of line on the impeachment question was evidently not shared by most members of the party. He himself offers proof as to this:

“As things turned out,” he says, “I think a good number of our own members did not realize that the party was opposed to calling for Nixon’s impeachment. At least six or seven comrades in Los Angeles with whom I raised the question thought that we were in favor of demanding the impeachment of Nixon and that we were doing so.”

The Los Angeles comrades were not less alert than the

comrades in other cities. I believe that if Comrade Alvin could have sampled all the branches, he would have met with a similar response.

The fact is that we did not oppose the impeachment of Nixon, as might be concluded from the way Comrade Alvin puts things. We were counted everywhere as an aggressive component of the political opposition to Nixon. Within that opposition we centered our efforts on explaining one point: *Nixon is not unique.*

In the sentiment for the impeachment of Nixon that swept the country when the evidence in the tapes was finally made public, we had to decide as revolutionary socialists what was most important. The fact was that this broad public took Nixon as an exceptional case. By getting rid of *him*, it was thought, everything would be solved. We were not against getting rid of the bum—we favored it. But there was an important difference between this amorphous sentiment and the antiwar movement that Comrade Alvin does not discuss. (He does note that in contrast to the antiwar movement no organized movement existed demanding impeachment, but he dismisses this as unimportant.)

In the antiwar movement the focus was on street mobilizations. In the Nixon case, the focus was on congressional action. If Congress had failed to get rid of Nixon, the movement might well have changed, providing us with a new and dynamic field of action. There were signs that this could occur, but they were only signs. The great majority of the population was watching Congress.

In this concrete situation we calculated that our best tactic for the time being was to emphasize that the Watergate scandal was unique only in its revelations—the practices were common to both parties and characteristic of the two-party system. That approach, we thought, would have the greatest impact on those we could reach (which was not the 52 percent of the population mentioned by Comrade Alvin) and would yield the maximum recruitment. By what reasoning Comrade Alvin comes to the conclusion that this tactical course meant “turning attention elsewhere” than on the “future of the Nixon presidency” is difficult to fathom.

Let us recall our role in the case of Johnson. We did not call for his resignation. We did not demand his impeachment. Were we wrong? Did we thereby miss the boat? No. We concentrated on helping to organize the antiwar sentiment in the form of mobilizations in the streets. The resignation came as a byproduct of that struggle. And our party made its gains connecting with the masses in that struggle around the slogan “Out Now!” Out of Vietnam, that is; not out of the White House.

The fact is that in the Watergate scandal, we did not “cast ourselves adrift from mass sentiment which was clamoring more loudly and insistently by the hour for the removal of Nixon.” Every issue of our publications was jammed with material pointing up the scandal and drawing revolutionary-socialist conclusions from it. We issued two pamphlets and two books that met with a very good response.

We ran the biggest off-year electoral campaign in the history of the party. Our candidates made Watergate one of their main themes, attacking not only Nixon’s supporters but his impeachers, who felt they had no choice but to dump their fellow crook if they were to save the two-party system. The reception our candidates got was excellent.



Let us add one more item that Comrade Alvin has obviously overlooked. This is the \$27 million lawsuit against the government by leaders of the SWP and the YSA. It was a response to some of the facts that came to light in the Watergate scandal. Should this action be included as an example of the "flat and routine" reaction that Comrade Alvin argues has "become typical" of the leadership? I would say it proves just the contrary.

Comrade Cannon thought it represented an unusual and very important action to which he gave his full backing. For a revolutionary party to take the initiative in this way and file a suit against the government—he said he could recall no parallel in the history of the radical movement in this country. The suit represented what was new and unique in the opposition to the Watergate scandal.

Nixon's retirement has not stopped us from repeatedly gaining fresh dividends through the campaign developed around the Political Rights Defense Fund. And the precedent we set has had considerable impact in the American radical movement. I am sure that Comrade Alvin, if he stops to think about it, will agree that this is a correct assessment.

#### 4. The orientation of the party.

Under this heading, Comrade Alvin raises a question that has been repeatedly discussed in the party since the close of the McCarthyite period—the class composition of the party and its leadership. Tendencies have even been formed on platforms averring that the party has lost its proletarian moorings. Comrade Alvin differs from the position taken by such currents in that he thinks a rectification is being made, although he thinks it remains to be seen how thoroughgoing it is.

In weighing Comrade Alvin's position, let us start once again on the programmatic level. Does he believe that the party has deviated from its proletarian program? He does not specify this clearly. "Next to the adoption of a correct program," he says, "The choice of where to expend the party's efforts to realize this program is the most important political question." So are we dealing with program or with something a notch below, such as realistic choices of areas for action?

To clarify matters, let us state that a proletarian orientation is determined by the party's program, whatever the class origin of its leaders and members may be at a given point. That holds true even if the party could demonstrate by a show of birth certificates and union cards that its members are 100 percent proletarian. If this is agreed on, and I am sure Comrade Alvin has no differences on this, then the next question is the *norm* with regard to the class origin of leaders and members. I say "origin" inasmuch as commitment to the program of the party involves adopting a proletarian outlook.

In the long run the class origin of the ranks of the party coincides with the party's proletarian program; and the coincidence becomes closer and closer as the party reaches mass dimensions.

There can hardly be any dispute over these abstract truths; consequently Comrade Alvin's differences must involve the concrete situation that has faced the party.

In the debates over "student vs. proletarian" orientation that have arisen in the past, the question has been posed falsely by the critics in almost every instance. They have

taken the norm and asked, "Does the composition of the party and its leadership conform to this norm?" Finding—without much difficulty—that the reality did not fit the norm, they argued that this was very bad, that it had to be rectified forthwith, and that the failure to do this showed that the leadership was bad and that the party was headed for catastrophe as a result.

What they failed to take into account was the actual development of the class struggle in the United States, how well the leadership kept up with this development, and how well it utilized the real openings to advance the party, particularly in recruiting new members and converting them into cadres.

The fact is, as Comrade Alvin is well aware, that the radicalization following the McCarthyite period did not begin among the workers. It began among the Blacks and among the students.

To respond to these actual developments in a correct way was a life and death question for the party. The leadership recognized this and acted accordingly. The decision to devote major resources to work in these sectors did not meet with universal approval in the party at the time. There were some, including members of the "old guard," who worried about what turning to the campus, for instance, would mean to the party's proletarian orientation. Some comrades even worried about the bad effect the party's successes in this field could have on the class composition of the membership.

It can be granted that there was a grain of truth in their considerations; and their arguments were always listened to with care whenever they raised the question.

From our present vantage point, we can now look back at this course taken by the party and ask, "Was it correct?" In my opinion, it was.

Out of our taking advantage of the openings on the campus we gained the best of a new generation of revolutionists. We gained the makings of a new leadership of a stature able to carry on at the level of previous generations and to do even better by standing on their achievements. These cadres, moreover, gained practical political experience in the antiwar movement of a kind to enable them to enter the coming big battles not as amateurs but as seasoned fighters.

The party is now preparing to focus on the most oppressed layers of the American working class and its allies. It is a key point on the agenda for the convention. That is not because we have finally grasped the importance of bringing the class composition of the membership into closer conformity with our proletarian program and have decided to do something about it. It is because the objective signs, to be seen by all, indicate that the American working class is beginning to move. As during the previous period, our party is trying to judge the real development of the class struggle correctly and to respond accordingly. If we now stand at the threshold of the radicalization of the working class, as everything appears to indicate, then we want to be in position to take full advantage of the enormous openings that will appear for our party.

In face of this, is it really necessary to open a discussion on the importance of a proletarian orientation?

In this section of his contribution, Comrade Alvin makes a point in passing concerning the handling of articles in our press. He says, "We should use this program more



than we do." Again, "I think our writers far too seldom use our program in their articles." It is not clear what Comrade Alvin means. If I have not misunderstood him, he is suggesting that articles should more frequently present the moral of it all; i.e., call attention to such points of program as the need to build a mass party to win victory in the coming socialist revolution.

It appears to me that a more productive approach is to write articles along the *axis* of our program. Every article, without exception, should be imbued with the revolutionary spirit of Trotskyism; but that does not necessarily mean that in each instance the moral of it all must be drawn. To think that this is required can prove to be a formula for cliché-ridden articles that do not have much impact. My impression is that in this respect the general level of our press is quite good.

Another point to be considered is simply the information and news to be found in our press. In many areas, the *Militant*, the *International Socialist Review*, and *Intercontinental Press* are the best sources of accurate political news available to workers.

## 5. The problem of layoffs.

Under this heading, Comrade Alvin discusses what he considers to be a departure from the Transitional Program.

He cites the general principle stated in the Transitional Program: "The Fourth International demands *employment and decent living conditions* for all."

Let us note "for all." That means the working class as a whole. This becomes absolutely clear a few sentences further on in the Transitional Program:

"Under the menace of its own disintegration, the proletariat cannot permit the transformation of an increasing section of the workers into chronically unemployed paupers, living off the slops of a crumbling society. *The right to employment* is the only serious right left to the worker in a society based upon exploitation. This right today is being shorn from him at every step."

On the basis of this right belonging to the working class as a whole, the Transitional Program advances the main slogan dealing with unemployment:

"Against unemployment, 'structural' as well as 'conjunctural,' the time is ripe to advance, along with the slogan of public works, the slogan of a *sliding scale of working hours*. Trade unions and other mass organizations should bind the workers and the unemployed together in the solidarity of mutual responsibility. On this basis all the work on hand would then be divided among all existing workers in accordance with how the extent of the working week is defined. The average wage of every worker remains the same as it was under the old working week. Wages, under a strictly guaranteed *minimum*, would follow the movement of prices. It is impossible to accept any other program for the present catastrophic period."

Let us note again, that the Transitional Program here refers to the entire period of the death agony of capitalism. The problem of unemployment is thus considered from the viewpoint of "all existing workers"—the entire class—for this entire catastrophic period.

Does anyone in the party disagree with this? I think not; and that includes Comrade Alvin and the two comrades he takes to task—Fred Halstead and Linda Jenness—because

of their handling of the questions of seniority and preferential hiring in dealing with the problem of mass layoffs.

In my opinion, both of those articles (in the March 14 and April 18 issues of the *Militant*) were written in complete accordance with the Transitional Program. Why Comrade Alvin refrains from praising Comrade Halstead's article is particularly difficult to understand in view of the excellent way it presents transitional slogans in the light of the current reality, a way of "using" the program that Comrade Alvin stresses in his contribution. Both Comrade Halstead and Comrade Jenness base their positions on the interests of the working class and its allies *as a whole*; both of them argue for *overall* solutions.

The differences brought up by Comrade Alvin concern the relationship between two particular questions, seniority and preferential hiring in the struggle against unemployment. This issue is not dealt with in the Transitional Program. Comrade Alvin's contention that his position represents what is laid down in the Transitional Program and that the positions taken by Comrades Halstead and Jenness (and the Political Committee) represent departures from the Transitional Program does not stand up. This can be checked by rereading the parts of the Transitional Program dealing with unemployment and comparing these with the presentations of the problem offered by Comrades Halstead and Jenness.

Comrade Alvin's mistake lies in identifying the overall slogan for the working class as a whole for the entire period of the death agony of capitalism, with the struggle within a particular plant right now. For instance, he refuses to accept anything less than the whole slogan *jobs for all at no reduction in pay*. Is that an exaggeration? Yes, a little bit. He is ready to concede a reduction in pay—whereby he gives his little finger to the devil, since if it is permissible in principle to deviate from the overall slogan in the matter of pay then there is nothing wrong in principle from deviating from it with respect to jobs for all. What we must note, if we are to retrieve Comrade Alvin's little finger, is that the "deviation" occurs in relation to the application of a general slogan in a given plant.

If it proves possible in a certain garment-making shop, for instance, to win a demand that coincides with the overall slogan of the Transitional Program, we would naturally hail that as a victory that could be presented as an exemplary case. However, we would still have to emphasize that it represented only a small victory, since it applied to a single plant and not to the working class as a whole.

The outcome of struggles in given plants or industries depends on the concrete relationship of forces, as Comrade Alvin well knows. Everyone in the party is familiar with this limitation in the struggle for wages, better working conditions, and so on. Like battles on these issues, the battle against unemployment is an aspect of the struggle for a decent standard of living. To adopt an ultimatic stance on such questions in individual plants would open us up, and correctly so, to the charge of ultraleft sectarianism.

But it is precisely on this level that our comrades in the plants are compelled to deal with the problem of unemployment. While they press the general slogan of jobs for all at

no reduction in pay, they must also make a realistic assessment of the relationship of forces and mobilize accordingly. What stand should they take in relation to specific proposals involving seniority and preferential hiring? Comrade Alvin stands pat on the general slogan: "I expect to be told in reply to the position I have outlined above that the only realistic position is the one advocated in the article. This will not be the first time that concessions are hidden underneath 'realistic' positions. There is nothing unrealistic in the demand for jobs for all. It depends upon how one looks at the Transitional Program." And Comrade Alvin takes the next step in this method of dissolving the concrete: "I believe the program to be a *bridge* between the present consciousness of the workers and the socialist revolution."

In other words, the problem of unemployment facing the workers in a specific food-processing plant is *identical* to the problem of unemployment facing the working class as a whole in the capitalist economy.

Would Comrade Alvin use this reasoning in a battle to gain union recognition? Of course not. He even acknowledges that what our public speakers and union members *demand* is one thing while what is to be done in a specific situation is something else again: "This is, of course, not necessarily what any particular union may have to settle for." But that is precisely the point under discussion. What position do our comrades take in such situations?

Comrade Alvin presents us with a hypothetical plant employing 800 white male workers holding top seniority and 200 women and members of minorities holding least seniority. Management has decided to lay off 200 workers. What to do? The arithmetic is intended to show that the demand of jobs for all, if won, would solve the unemployment problem in the plant. Of course it would. And if it cannot be won because of the relationship of forces in the plant?

The arithmetical exercise is only a more elaborate way of *identifying* a particular case—in this instance a hypothetical one—with the general formula holding for the class as a whole.

In seeking to bolster his position, Comrade Alvin advances an unusual thesis: "When the capitalist economy is expanding and workers are being hired it is correct to advocate preferential hiring of women and minorities to adjust the balance. When a depression leads to decline in the economy and the bosses are looking forward to layoffs, there is a different situation."

The thesis is developed further in the following two paragraphs:

"When preference in hiring is given to women and minorities no one already working in the given plant is hurt in any way. On the other hand, any formula for preferential layoffs or any other kinds of layoffs hurts those who are laid off. Surely this difference between hiring and layoffs should be clear.

"Of course, it can be argued that preferential hiring does hurt those not hired. This is true. But the hurt in this case is not very great compared to the hurt in the case of layoffs. Those not hired are not much worse off by going elsewhere to look for a job. On the other hand, those who are laid off can only go to the unemployment office to register for non-existent jobs and receive compensation drastically lower than their wages had been."

In plainer language, this would read as follows: When "help wanted" signs are up on almost all the plants, unemployment is no problem. You can even be for preferential hiring because it only means convincing a prejudiced white male worker that he shouldn't stand in the way of a Black, a Chicano, or a woman being hired. After all, it doesn't require much self-sacrifice to go down the street to another plant that's adding to its work force. But during a depression there's all kind of sticky problems. In one hypothetical plant, for instance, a boss is laying off 200 women and Blacks with the cooperation of 800 prejudiced white males and the union bureaucracy, who are standing pat on seniority rights. So let us evade going to bat for the 200 women and Blacks because the only correct position "in principle" is jobs for all. We will not argue about who is to be left on the job and who is to go. "It is not our mission in life to make such a concession."

In discussing this question, Comrade Alvin undoubtedly has in mind a related problem, one he mentions in the previous section of his contribution; that is, how to win the white male workers to the revolutionary-socialist cause. One of the main difficulties is that while they constitute the bulk of the working class, in their great majority they remain "prejudiced against Blacks even now." Comrade Alvin, of course, agrees that they also remain prejudiced against women, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, and all those who have a special interest in preferential hiring.

Does defense of preferential hiring in a period of unemployment stand in the way of overcoming the prejudices of white male workers? Comrade Alvin appears inclined to believe that it does; hence his allusions to the "material interests" of the white workers and his efforts to get around the question.

The correct approach, in my opinion, is to view preferential hiring from the viewpoint of the material interests of the class as a whole. On this level it undoubtedly counts as a gain. The importance of the gain, it is true, is not recognized by most white male workers today. They think in personal terms and not class terms. Nonetheless, preferential hiring is in the material interest of the class, including prejudiced white males. When they come to recognize this objective fact, the American revolution will move visibly forward, registering the leap in class consciousness of a hitherto backward sector.

To me it seems a revolutionary duty to stress the matter. If white male workers come to agree that they will accept no layoffs of those who are the most oppressed in the class, they will prove all the more determined to fight against any layoffs whatsoever. This determination will make it much easier to achieve a united struggle by millions of workers for jobs for all at no reduction in pay.

Isn't this way of viewing the issue completely consistent with the logical line of march advanced in the Transitional Program? The two slogans—jobs for all and defense of preferential hiring—are not mutually exclusive, as Comrade Alvin believes, but complementary.

I am not in favor of diplomacy in taking up this question with prejudiced white male workers. It is better to speak frankly: "Look, Archie Bunker, you're a petty-bourgeois scissorbill, even if you do work on a loading platform and belong to a union. Unless you change, and change damn fast, you and your home are headed for incineration. You know all about the nuclear bomb. Besides that you really know what's wrong and what's right. So stop being a scissorbill and a mental deficient. Go to bat for those

women and Blacks the boss wants to lay off first because they're at the bottom of the seniority pole. You figure out how."

From the viewpoint of recruiting the very best revolutionary material now being educated in the facts of life by the capitalist system, it is worth calling attention to two especially important slogans in the Transitional Program: "*Open the road to the youth! Turn to the woman worker!*" And, of course, Comrade Trotsky stressed the absolute necessity in the United States to turn to the Blacks. Where do those slogans have more pertinence at present than in battling for the right of the youth and the women and the Blacks to a job? In the plants isn't that best accomplished by being the foremost defenders of the jobs of those hired because of affirmative action or preferential quotas?

## 6. The National Committee

In his arguments under this point, Comrade Alvin contends that the procedure followed in placing before the forthcoming convention a proposal to eliminate advisory membership status on the National Committee was "certainly not in the Trotskyist tradition as established by the founders of our movement."

I would not agree with that judgment. The proposal was discussed first in the Political Committee and then in the May meeting of the National Committee. It has now been placed on the agenda of the convention where all delegates and members of the outgoing National Committee can say whatever they please about it and the delegates can vote it up or down.

Comrade Alvin says that he was not "consulted." I cannot speak one way or the other about that. The fact is that Comrade Alvin had the full democratic right to argue the question at the plenum. That he could not be present was, of course, no fault of his. But then it was not the fault of the National Committee either. So what should the National Committee have done? To have deferred the question would have meant that Comrade Alvin was exercising more than an advisory status; he would have been wielding veto power.

Comrade Alvin is of the opinion that the question should not "be disposed of so easily and with such haste." That opinion, however, hardly conforms to the reality. In recent years few conventions have gone by without the question being discussed at least informally as to whether the time had not come to terminate this temporary arrangement rather than letting things drift until by inertia "advisory status" became a permanent institution.

That Comrade Alvin is quite concerned about the proposal is evident. In referring to one member holding advisory status who sent a letter indicating his approval of the move, Comrade Alvin says: "In other words, he is saying, I am going to resign so you have my permission to fire the seven others, those who wish to be removed and also any who may not."

Again, in comparing the responsibility of membership on the National Committee with that of the post of branch organizer, he says: "Several of the organizers assigned here were later transferred elsewhere to do other work. It is impossible for me to believe that any of these comrades were abruptly removed from their posts without discussion with them."

It seems to me that Comrade Alvin mixes two questions:

(1) Advisory status on the National Committee as a party institution. (2) The fate of individual members who at present hold that status.

For the future of the party, the first question is obviously paramount. The institution was first proposed by Farrell Dobbs. As he explained it at the time, it was to help us overcome a difficult problem in the transition of leadership. Age was taking its toll, particularly in the capacity of some of the comrades to maintain the pace of activity required of central leaders in a revolutionary-Marxist party. To complicate matters, we had few representatives in the leadership (or in the party) in the age bracket of the "missing generation." We had recruited very promising individuals of the "Cuban revolution" and "civil-rights struggle" generation, but they had not yet been fully educated, still less thoroughly tested, in party leadership. Room had to be made for more of them to be placed on the National Committee. The institution of advisory status was offered as a device to help work out this difficult problem.

In presenting the proposed new status of advisory membership on the National Committee, Comrade Dobbs emphasized that it was only a temporary measure and that we should end it at the earliest possible moment, for it obviously held dangers.

For purposes of clarification in the discussion, it is worth mentioning the most obvious one—that the institution could develop into a kind of upper chamber of "party elders" elected for life. The effect on decision-making could be very bad, slowing it down and even paralyzing it. That danger did not materialize, of course. Perhaps one reason was that the possibility was clearly stated when advisory status was first proposed. Another reason was that the temporary nature of the institution—its function as a transitional measure in solving the problem of continuity in leadership—was continually stressed over the years.

The ending of advisory status is now called for because it has succeeded in its purpose. The party has a new leadership, one that has absorbed the Trotskyist tradition and that is fully capable of upholding the program of Trotskyism. So far as I can tell, the entire older generation of American Trotskyists, with the exception of Comrade Alvin, holds the same judgment on this. That is why the proposal to end advisory status met with no opposition when it came up on the Political Committee and later the National Committee. All those who spoke on it expressed agreement.

As to the fate of the individual members of the National Committee who now hold advisory status, I think Comrade Alvin is correct in saying that this should be considered, too. But in my opinion it is stretching things a bit to start from the premise that they will have been "fired" if the convention decides to abolish advisory status as an institution. On that basis one could consider their plight to be part of the general problem of unemployment. In that case, it might be timely to weigh what slogan to use in light of the special circumstances. "No one to be fired from the National Committee" is a possibility. Another is "A share the work program for the National Committee." Or "Against preferential firing; uphold seniority in the National Committee."

All revolutionists who survive until they reach the older age brackets are faced with the problem of how best to

continue to contribute. Providing advice is not necessarily the most productive function. The trade of "adviser" carries occupational hazards that ought to be borne in mind.

For instance, an adviser may come to imagine that anything that pops into his or her head must be good or it would not have popped there. Actually proffered advice may be superfluous, the leadership having already thought of it and put it into practice.

Advice can also turn out to be rather elementary, something proper for a forum or a class for beginners but hardly needed by the leadership.

Advice can be wrong, too; and then the leadership is faced with the problem of how to handle the old comrade—should he or she be approached diplomatically, argued with, confronted vigorously, or what? Is there likely to be embarrassment, a blowup?

One of the worst hazards facing an older comrade is to fall into a role like that of the "Old Man of the Sea" whom Sinbad had such difficulty shaking off. A leadership has to be free to make its own judgments and to employ its own style.

Active revolutionary leadership is highly demanding both mentally and physically. Revolutionary leaders who have passed the age when they can keep up the pace, or who have health problems that interfere, should be prepared to step aside. The interests of the revolution demand it.

As to how to remain active without advisory status on the National Committee, it appears to me that each comrade must solve that problem in his or her own way. There are plenty of concrete assignments, even for those whose physical capacities are limited.

For comrades who have spent decades as leaders, the problem should not prove insuperable. In view of their long years of service and their many contributions to the party, I do not think their standing will suffer among the ranks. On the contrary, they will gain a new measure of revolutionary respect.

## 7. The crisis in the Fourth International.

On the basis of his six points, Comrade Alvin concludes that the central leadership of the party has "abandoned or altered" the "Trotskyist tradition, orientation and program." As we have seen above, his case hardly supports such a sweeping conclusion.

Seeking to explain the origin of the "well-defined shortcomings" he has uncovered, Comrade Alvin points to the fact that many of the leaders "came out of the student milieu and gained experience in the antiwar and other movements of the 1960s in which young people played the most prominent role" but that they lack experience in the

union movement or firsthand knowledge of it.

This approach is dead wrong. That these leaders have a college education in their background speaks in their favor, not against them. That they participated in the antiwar and other movements of the 1960s also speaks in their favor, not against them. But those items are in reality beside the point. *What they must be judged on is whether they carried out a proletarian line in the antiwar and other movements in which they were active.*

Comrade Alvin does not discuss this question at all. No doubt that is because he has no differences with the line followed by our party in the antiwar, civil-rights, Black, Chicano, and women's liberation movements—at least he has not stated any differences on these questions. Yet this is the decisive criterion that must be used to judge whether the central leadership of the SWP has demonstrated its proletarian nature in recent years. *It has applied a proletarian line and advanced proletarian methods of struggle among the sectors that became radicalized in advance of the main contingents of the working class.*

There is still another criterion that Comrade Alvin leaves out. The most crucial test of all in judging the capacities and class nature of the leadership of a party is its stand and its activities on the international level. On this score the central leaders of our party pass with flying colors.

Not only have they followed international developments closely, developing correct positions on all the major questions, but for the past six years they have played an exemplary role in defending the program of Trotskyism inside the world Trotskyist movement. In the divisions that appeared within the Fourth International, the central leaders of the SWP stated where they stood in a very firm way and have carried on a model struggle against some genuine deviations from the Trotskyist tradition, orientation, and program.

Comrade Alvin knows all this very well. He has been a strong supporter of the role they have played in defending the Trotskyist program of the Fourth International and applying it in the complex situations that have arisen in the past period. It is all the more remarkable that he should fail to refer to the international criterion in reaching a judgment as to the worth of the present leadership of the SWP.

I choose to hope that Comrade Alvin, who has stressed the priority of an international outlook innumerable times, will now consider this question. Whatever reservations he may retain finally on tactical matters, I hope he will agree that on the basis of the international criterion alone the central leaders of our party must be credited with having demonstrated their capacity to uphold the tradition, orientation, and program of Trotskyism.

## WILL GIVE CRITICAL SUPPORT

# SWP Endorses Aptheker

NEW YORK, Aug. 30 — The Socialist Workers Party announced today that it was urging voters in the 12th Congressional District in Brooklyn to vote for Herbert Aptheker for Congress. The SWP statement said:

The New York Socialist Workers Party is urging a big vote for Herbert Aptheker for Congress. A well-known spokesman for the Communist Party, Aptheker is running against both the Democratic and Republican candidates in his district. He is running as an independent, on a "peace and freedom" ballot designation.

A significant vote for Herbert Aptheker, the SWP believes, will be a blow to the capitalist Democratic and Republican parties. It would be a repudiation of the capitalist parties and their warmaking, racist and anti-labor policies.

A vote for Aptheker is a vote for an open and avowed Communist, and would be in reality a vote for the Communist Party as against the capitalist parties. As such, it would be a vote for a tendency in the working class and socialist movements. The SWP is giving critical support to the Aptheker campaign as a means of opposing the two capitalist parties and supporting independent working class and socialist political action against them.

A vote for Aptheker would also be a blow to the witchhunt of Communists, Socialists and all radicals.

The SWP is supporting Aptheker as a Communist running independent of and against the two capitalist parties, despite profound differences the SWP has with the Communist Party and with Aptheker's election platform.

At a press conference during the recently-held national convention of the Communist Party, Aptheker stated that he would not make socialism one of the planks in his election platform. In explaining his stand, he said, "Socialism is not on the agenda in 1966 and certainly not in Brooklyn. It is not what my neighbors are worried about."

### **Socialism Relevant**

While it is certainly true that socialism is not immediately on the agenda, and socialists should

fight on issues immediately affecting the workers, they should also connect those issues with the overall struggle for a revolutionary change in this country, the struggle for socialism. The fact that Aptheker's neighbors are not considering socialist ideas is one of the reasons he *should* discuss socialism. By arguing in behalf of socialism, Aptheker would help educate people to the need for socialism. He would also deal another blow to the witchhunt.

In actuality, however, Aptheker fools no one by this stand. He is a well-known Communist. It is not because of the opinions of his neighbors that he has not included socialism in his platform, but because he hopes to make it clear to liberals that he is running on a liberal, and not a socialist, platform. In this he is successful.

His platform in general reads like something slightly to the left of the Americans for Democratic Action. It is vague and mushy, careful to avoid directly anti-capitalist conclusions which might offend liberals. For example, on the question of the war in Vietnam, he says the war is wrong and immoral, and should be ended. But he does not say how it should be ended. He doesn't demand the immediate withdrawal of American troops.

Within the antiwar movement, the Communist Party has pushed the line of supporting "peace candidates" running for the warmaking Democratic Party. Aptheker himself recently went before the New York state Democratic Party and pleaded with the party bosses to adopt a "peace" stand. The *Worker*, which reflects the views of the CP, has stumped for such "peace" candidates, including Theodore Weiss and Detroit Mayor Cavanaugh, both of whom ran in Democratic Party primaries as liberal critics of Johnson.

In 1964, the CP supported Johnson to "stop Goldwater." At that time Johnson was pictured by the CP as a "peace candidate," and his victory was hailed in the *Worker* as a "people's victory."

In its attempt to cuddle up to dissidents within the Democratic Party on the war issue, the CP has generally played down the demand for the immediate with-

drawal of U.S. troops, a demand which most Democratic Party liberals find repugnant to their role as capitalist party politicians. (Weiss, for example, is opposed to the withdrawal of U.S. troops.)

The CP is formally for both negotiations and withdrawal. For example, Aptheker urged the Democratic Party to come out for both demands. It hardly needs to be pointed out at this stage of the antiwar movement that the demand for negotiations implies that the U.S. has a right to interfere — to negotiate from a position of armed intervention — in the internal affairs of Vietnam. The withdrawal demand, on the other hand, clearly exposes the U.S. as the aggressor and presents the only workable solution to ending the war and guaranteeing the right of Vietnam to self-determination.

### **A Clear Stand**

It would strengthen the Aptheker campaign a great deal, in the opinion of the SWP, for him to take a clear stand against U.S. aggression in Vietnam. The SWP urges him to: 1) Repudiate the Communist Party's support of Johnson in 1964; 2) repudiate any support to phoney "peace" candidates running inside the warmaking Democratic Party; 3) come out clearly and unequivocally for the immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops from Vietnam, without tacking on any request for U.S. imperialism to "negotiate" the future of Vietnam.

On the question of racism and the oppression of the Negro people, again Aptheker's program is a vague generality. All he says on the subject is that "racism is monstrous; that ghettos shamed the Middle Ages and are intolerable for the United States in this day and age." Everyone except open racists could agree.

But, the Communist Party has consistently attacked the militant wing of the Negro movement. In the July 7, 1963, *Worker*, for example, James Jackson wrote a long article on the Negro struggle in which he repeatedly attacked Malcolm X, praising in contrast the NAACP and Martin Luther King. "Malcolm," he said, "in no sense of the word can be considered a leader of the Negro

people. He is an agent of their enemies and consequently an opponent of their progress."

#### **CP on Black Power**

During the primary elections in Alabama last May, when Rev. Martin Luther King was stumping for Negroes to vote for the moderate racist Richmond Flowers in the Democratic Party primary, Negroes in Lowndes County, Ala., were forming their own political party to run against the Democrats. Without mentioning the Lowndes County Freedom Organization ("Black Panther" Party), the *Worker* attacked SNCC for urging Negroes to "boycott the primary." Actually, SNCC workers had helped form the Black Panther Party, and were urging Negroes in Lowndes to form their own party on the primary election day instead of voting in the Democratic primary.

The Communist Party has failed to recognize the progressive nature of black nationalism, or of the demand for black power. Black nationalism represents the tendency of black people to unite as a group into a movement of their own to fight for freedom, justice and equality. It represents a potential break from capitalist society by black people, towards struggle against the capitalist parties and system. Identifying with the anti-colonial struggles of non-whites around the world, it tends in an anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist direction. This can be seen in the development of Malcolm X, the greatest spokesman for the Negro people in our time, and in the development of the Black Panther Party. (At a Communist Party convention press conference, Jackson said that in place of the Black Panther symbol, he would prefer "an American eagle with black and white feathers" -- to symbolize integration).

The Socialist Workers Party urges Aptheker to adopt the following planks in his program: 1) Recognize the progressive nature of black nationalism and the demand for black power; 2) support independent black political action against the Democrats and Republicans, both in the South and in the North.

#### **Coalition Politics**

The thread that ties together Aptheker's stand on the war and the Negro struggle is the CP position on coalition politics.

## **N.Y. SWP Finishes Petition Drive**

**NEW YORK** — In a record-breaking three-week period, the Socialist Workers Party has completed the task of getting the signatures on nominating petitions necessary to win a place on the ballot. The law requires a minimum of 50 signatures from registered voters in 62 of the state's 63 counties, with a minimum of 12,000 for the entire state. The SWP secured well above the required minimum in each county and gathered 19,000 on a state-wide basis to ensure the petition will meet any challenge.

For the past 30 years, the CP has given overt and covert support to candidates of the Democratic Party. This policy has strengthened the coalitionism with the Democratic Party practiced by the labor movement and most "respectable" Negro leaders.

The Democratic Party is a capitalist party. It is run from the top by the big capitalists, and is an instrument to carry out their policy, just like the Republican Party is. That's why it is a war party — the party which brought the U.S. into both World Wars I and II, the Korean War and the war in Vietnam (not to mention such things as the invasion last year of Santo Domingo and the blockade of Cuba, etc.) It preserves racism in the U.S. because racism is useful and profitable to the big capitalists. It initiated the witchhunt. Democrats have written, passed and used anti-labor laws against the unions. Just a few weeks ago, the Democratic President and the Democratic congressmen, including such "friends of labor" as Wayne Morse, attempted to break the airlines strike and are still preparing to pass new anti-labor legislation after the elections.

The big capitalists, although they run the Democratic Party, are a small minority of the population. To carry out their policies, they require the support of much larger layers, including workers and Negroes. Here's where the coalitionist labor and Negro leaders come in — they work to deliver

the vote to the capitalist politicians.

The 30-year record of coalitionism has been a dismal one for the left, for the workers and for the Negroes. The results have been a steady shift to the right in the country. And, the development of mass labor and Negro parties opposed to the interests of the capitalists has been blocked. Breaking with the capitalist parties and building a mass party or parties of their own is an imperative necessity for the labor and Negro movements.

The SWP is urging a big vote for Aptheker precisely because he is running as a Communist against the two capitalist parties. But he is doing so in one congressional district, and against a reactionary Democratic Party candidate. The SWP urges Aptheker to break completely with the Democratic Party, and come out against all capitalist candidates — including liberal capitalist politicians.

Many members and supporters of the Communist Party would like to see the CP actively committed to a policy of independent political action. We hope that those who have this outlook will use the Aptheker campaign as a vehicle for pressing for a complete break with capitalist party politics.

#### **Labor Party Needed**

The SWP urges Aptheker to expose the Democratic Party as a capitalist party, and to call for the formation of a labor party based on the unions. Aptheker should declare himself for independent black political action.

And, most important in this campaign, he should declare himself against both the Democratic and Republican parties in the state-wide election. The test of every tendency calling itself socialist in this campaign will be its attitude toward the two capitalist parties in the most important contest — the election for governor. It is not enough to be running against the capitalist parties in one congressional district — Aptheker's attitude toward the Democrats and Republicans in the race for governor will be a clear demonstration of his real stand on coalition politics.

The SWP urges Aptheker to give his support to the SWP state ticket, headed by Judy White for governor, to strike a real blow to the capitalist parties, their Vietnam war, and their racist and anti-labor policies.



## The Man on the Flying Trapeze

By Tom Kerry

June 26, 1975

The sweeping indictment of the party leadership submitted for publication in the pre-convention discussion bulletin by comrade Milton Alvin, under the title: "Tradition, Orientation and Program," strikes me as a befuddling display of political astronautics.

Comrade Alvin begins with an "introduction" to his six-point indictment in which the opening paragraph comprises a summary conclusion to the evidence presented, to wit: "For several years a process of abandoning or changing the Trotskyist tradition, program and orientation has been taking place in the central leadership of the party." The "introduction," presumably, is devised to explain to the membership why he has been impelled to resort to an appeal to the ranks to call the leadership to order.

To begin with, if comrade Alvin really believes what he says in his opening paragraph, there is no explanation necessary. If I believed that the "central leadership" was engaged in a process of "abandoning or changing the Trotskyist tradition, program and orientation" of the party, and doing it surreptitiously to boot, I would call, not for a "correction," but for their removal.

I say surreptitiously for apparently the party membership has been unaware of what has been going on "for several years" behind their back, so comrade Alvin feels obliged to enlighten them.

What then of the members of the National Committee of which comrade Alvin is an advisory member? For the past several years the national office has been the recipient of a voluminous correspondence from Comrade Alvin, much of it addressed to the Political Committee, not only on the six points but on various and sundry other matters. Copies of each communication were provided every PC member. Every bit of correspondence addressed to the P.C. came before that body for discussion and copies of all such correspondence was sent to every member of the National Committee.

Let us concede for the moment that the ranks were kept in complete ignorance of what was going on. What of the National Committee? "I have decided to submit my views on these questions in my own name" we are informed, "and without trying to get anyone else on the National Committee to endorse any of them." The implication being that the only reason no other member or members of the National Committee have endorsed his views is that they weren't asked.

But then, in a gratuitous insult to members of the N.C., couched in the form of an interrogatory, Comrade Alvin writes: "The question that arises is: Do the NC members read the material that is distributed to them? Do they consider both sides in a dispute as Lenin demanded so forthrightly?"

Has it ever occurred to comrade Alvin that the NC members do read the material they receive from the center and that they do "consider both sides in a dispute," and

after reading and considering, find they do not agree with his views on the disputed questions? Even Lenin conceded that he had been wrong, had made mistakes, was guilty of errors, at some time in his political life. Isn't it just barely possible that even Milt Alvin can be wrong about some questions?

Be that as it may, the disputed questions are now before the membership and will be considered in our pre-convention discussion period. I am sure the convention will act to preserve the Trotskyist tradition, uphold the program and adopt a correct orientation. Not because of, but, despite comrade Alvin's intervention.

Before proceeding to grapple with point one of the Alvin indictment I am constrained to comment on a procedural innovation that is decidedly *not* in the Trotskyist tradition.

In his explanation of why he appeals to the ranks to correct the party leadership Comrade Alvin observes: "First, only the party membership can ultimately correct errors made by party leaders that are not corrected by the leaders themselves." That is a truism and I would go even further and say that errors made should be acknowledged, for only then can the proper lessons be drawn and the possibility of repeating such errors eliminated, or at least considerably reduced. So far, so good!

"Second," comrade Alvin continues, "differences of opinion within the leadership should be made available to the membership as a whole, especially where they have not been resolved within the leadership." And: "Third, knowledge of different views within the leadership and how they are disposed of can be of great educational value to the membership as training for leadership status."

No! Emphatically not! The concepts embodied in comrade Alvin's theses 2 and 3 have more in common with the "participatory democracy" of the New Left than with the democratic centralism of Lenin and Trotsky. On this question Jim Cannon was our tutor.

It was his view and it is ours that there is nothing more calculated to turn the party into a factional jungle than to "make available" to "the membership as a whole" the "differences of opinion" within the leadership. I suspect that this concept is advanced at this time more as a measure of self-justification for having jettisoned our long-standing standards of leadership relations, than as a panacea for training party members "for leadership status."

We have been taught that the leadership at the center functions as a leadership team—or should so function. Where there is agreement on the basic political questions differences of opinion invariably involve tactical matters. I do not intend to denigrate the importance of tactical questions as such. Some can be extremely important and some even of decisive importance at some stages of party development. But by and large differences over tactics are readily resolved, when there is basic political agreement in the leadership.



In our party the circulation in the ranks of the "inside dope" on "differences of opinion" among leaders in the center goes by the name of Abernism, the quintessence of cliquism. To adopt this method as standard party procedure would be to legitimize cliques and cliquism and, in my opinion, would be an abject expression of leadership bankruptcy.

So much for the "introduction." To proceed now to the point in the indictment entitled "Critical Support to Communist Party Candidates."

Here error is piled upon contradiction in such profusion that it is difficult to disentangle the thread of the argument. However, I shall try. Comrade Alvin's thesis is that beginning with the mid-1960's, for the first time since the advent of the Cold War, the Communist Party began to run candidates for public office. But these were candidates of a special breed which he dubs "token" candidates. Bending to our pressure and that of their own ranks, although still committed to "their main political objective, [which] was and still is to corral votes for capitalist candidates," they hit upon a cunning device to mask their deception. "They conceived of the idea of running token candidates for unimportant offices as a cover for supporting capitalist candidates for top posts."

Among the first of this type of campaign, we are informed, "was the 1966 campaign for Congress by Herbert Aptheker, a prominent Stalinist author, who ran on the Peace and Freedom ticket in New York."

"At that time," says Alvin, "our central leaders decided to give Aptheker critical support. . . ." This action by our "central leaders" is pin-pointed as the *original sin* from which all others flowed. For, he affirms: "After this first experience in giving critical support to a token candidate, which only helped the Stalinist leaders, our party began to do this as a fairly regular thing where we were not running for the same posts as the CP."

The Aptheker campaign took place in the year 1966. Why didn't comrade Alvin enter a protest at that time? He informs us that "a number of long letters" were sent by him to the leadership in New York "beginning in February 1973" protesting this policy. If my arithmetic is correct a period of seven years elapsed after "our central leaders" set the ill-starred precedent for the "process of abandoning or changing the Trotskyist tradition, program and orientation."

\* \* \*

Let me pause for a moment to call attention to a bit of sleight-of-hand juggling with historical fact. In his opening introductory paragraph, comrade Alvin affirms that, "for several years" the above mentioned "process" has "been taking place in the central leadership of the party." This is intended to narrow responsibility for the reprehensible "process" to the younger men and women who for the past several years have assumed the major responsibility for central party leadership. I must take vigorous exception.

At the time of the Aptheker affair in 1966, the Political Committee was composed of Dobbs, Kerry, Hansen, Novack, Halstead, DeBerry, Shaw, Sheppard and Barnes. The Administrative Committee elected by the PC was composed of Dobbs, Kerry and Shaw. Dobbs was national secretary. Shaw was organization secretary and Kerry was

editor of the ISR. I for one, and I am sure all of the rest, take full responsibility for the decision to apply the critical support tactic to the Aptheker campaign.

When I requested to be placed in an advisory status on the National Committee, I continued to function on the PC in a consultative capacity with voice but no decisive vote on all matters coming before the committee. I can assure you that my right to voice was exercised quite often and often quite vigorously. I continued to serve on the PC until the May 1975 plenum which, with my agreement, discontinued the category of consultative member of the PC. I shall remain an Advisory member of the National Committee until the convention. With my urging, I trust the convention accepts the recommendation of the plenum that this advisory status be abolished. So, at least until May 1, 1975, I accept responsibility for whatever "process" was initiated and carried through by the central leadership dating from the Aptheker campaign of 1966.

\* \* \*

I previously posed the question: Why did Comrade Alvin wait seven years to register his opposition to our tactic of critical support to Aptheker? In his words, a "token" candidate of the CP. After disclosing that his letters on the subject were sent "beginning in February 1973," he declares: "What aroused my opposition was not the previously quoted report of Comrade Sheppard, which I did not know about at that time, but a proposal in my branch in Los Angeles to give critical support to Bill Taylor, a Stalinist running for controller. The mayoralty was open and we were running for it but the CP ran Taylor as a token candidate to legitimize their support of Tom Bradley, a Black Democrat and former cop who was running for mayor."

Comrade Alvin opposed the proposal in his branch to give critical support to Taylor. The proposal was then submitted to the PC for decision. Comrade Alvin addressed a letter to the PC on the matter setting forth his reasons for opposing the proposal. Also received by the PC was a letter from the assistant organizer of the L.A. Branch, Stu Singer, motivating the critical support proposal. After due consideration, the PC voted to approve the L.A. Branch proposal.

Comrade Milt Alvin's letter to the PC on the Taylor dispute was dated *Feb. 27, 1973*. He listed a number of arguments to support his position against critical support to Taylor. But the "token candidate" objection which looms so large in his six-point indictment was conspicuous by its absence. This was the only letter on this subject that was received in the month of Feb. 1973.

I therefore assume that it is the one previously referred to as marking the "beginning in February 1973" of his protest against critical support to "token" candidates.

The next communication from comrade Alvin on this subject was dated October 31, 1973, objecting to the PC having approved the application of the critical support tactic to CP candidates in Pittsburgh and New York. The PC discussed this communication together with a draft copy of a reply by Doug Jenness. Comrade Jenness, as I recall, made some brief introductory remarks to open the discussion. The comrades later decided to transcribe part of the discussion pertinent to the issues in dispute for the information of the NC members to supplement the

material contained in the exchange of letters between Jenness, writing for the PC, and Alvin.

This practice is rarely employed by the PC. The process of transcription requires a great deal of work, time and effort. To save time the transcription in question was mailed in its *unedited* version. With the possible exception of the reporter on important political questions the comments and remarks of PC members are "off the cuff," so to speak. If I had any suspicion that a member of the NC intended to make factional use of my remarks I would have insisted upon editing the transcript for mailing. I resent very deeply the unwarranted use and abuse of this unedited PC transcript of my comments without either my knowledge or consent.

I have been in favor in the recent period of utilizing tape recorded transcripts of PC discussions, especially of what we call our "thinking out loud" sessions on the important new political developments, to spur greater participation by NC members in such discussions. I considered this feasible because I assumed there was basic programmatic agreement in the committee. It is true that we have had some rather bad experiences with this practice in the past. I remember one period, during the fight with the Cochranites, when we decided to circulate stenographic reports of PC discussions to the entire NC. But due to the sharp divisions in the committee at the time, each PC member was given the right to edit their remarks. The result was sometimes weird. Under the guise of "editing" their remarks some of the Cochranites did a rewriting job that left little or nothing remaining of the original version.

If you examine some of the transcripts now you will find a heated polemic by comrade X directed at some point made by one of the Cochranites, a point that was no longer there—it had been edited out! So the transcript often took on a Kafkaesque character with speeches recorded in opposition to views which had been edited into oblivion. It was like a surgeon operating on a ghost. It became so ludicrous that it had to be discontinued.

And at that time we had no tape recorders. The entire proceedings were taken down in shorthand. We wanted no more of that. We learned the hard way that "edited" transcripts of PC discussions, where sharp divisions exist in the leadership, are to be avoided. I am afraid that the Alvin experience will write finis to any thought of utilizing *unedited* transcripts to involve NC members in the field in the "thinking out loud" process that is so important a part of the preliminary exploration of new political developments.

It is during this stage of the decision making process that "differences" are most often manifested. Such differences are usually resolved in the course of discussion or with the aid of the further development of the events themselves. For this process to be fruitful there is required mutual trust and consideration among the leadership. Otherwise the building of a leadership team becomes impossible.

Comrade Alvin makes a big point of the 40 days that elapsed between the time he received the letter from Doug Jenness and the time he received the condensed transcript of the Nov. 21, 1973, PC discussion. *Very suspicious!* Comrade Alvin leaps to the conclusion that some kind of hanky panky was involved. Then, to make the cheese more binding, "the transcript does not contain the report of Comrade Doug Jenness to the PC." Isn't that damning evidence that a gigantic conspiracy is afoot?

The truth is much more simple. As Comrade Doug Jenness's brief introductory report consisted primarily of excerpts from his draft letter there was no reason to include those remarks in the transcript; as the letter itself was adopted and attached to the minutes of the PC. Further the transcript did not purport to be a full reproduction of the entire discussion but a condensed version.

As a matter of fact, the minutes of the PC meeting of Nov. 21 contain no mention of sending a transcript of the discussion. The motion adopted was as follows: "To send the proposed response and circulate the correspondence to the National Committee." The "proposed response" refers to the Jenness letter upon which he reported to the PC. In the light of what has happened, I hate to admit it, but it was I who proposed sending a condensed version of the PC discussion. The proposal was agreed to informally after the meeting and what with the work involved in typing the tape recording accounts for the "40-days" delay.

Comrade Alvin then pounces upon what he considers the discrepancies between the Jenness letter and the PC transcript. Especially the alleged discrepancy between what Tom Kerry said in the discussion and what "the transcript does not contain" of what Jenness said. It may come as a surprise to Comrade Alvin but I collaborated in the editing of the Jenness letter and it is therefore as much mine as his. So I accept full responsibility for the alleged contradictions between the two and append the text for the information of the membership.

Comrade Alvin quotes approvingly my opening remarks in which I agree with some of the criticisms he advances in his October 31, 1973 letter. But then he adds: "In other remarks Comrade Kerry disagreed with what he thought was my position on the present composition of the Communist Party. But this was a misunderstanding and I believe it possible that he was misled by the reporter's [Jenness] remarks." Poor Kerry! How easy to pull the wool over his eyes. But then, in this instance at least, there were extenuating circumstances. For the wool-puller was none other than Svengali Jenness, more commonly known as old Sven-Jen. And let me tell it to you like it is—when Sven-Jen cocks his hypnotic eye and lets fly with a double whammy, even the most iron-willed, rawhide-tough, strongest of the strong, is reduced to a gelatinous mass of quivering protoplasm.

While Comrade Alvin approvingly quotes the few sentences in which I express agreement with some of his criticism, he neglects to quote, (with the exception noted above about my "misunderstanding,") that part of my remarks in which I disagreed with his views.

His six-point indictment is dated June 4, 1975. One year earlier, the National Office received a letter dated June 14, 1974, which Comrade Alvin requested be read to a forthcoming plenum of the NC, in which he elaborates on my "misunderstanding" of his position on the CP.

Because, he says, "I am unable to be present at the Plenum, I want to call attention to some misrepresentations of my views that were made at the Political Committee meeting last Nov. 21st when the question of critical support was discussed. Because not one of the 15 members of the P.C. present at that meeting corrected the speakers, I must do so in this message.

"One such misrepresentation," he continues, "went as follows: 'Milt's wrong about the CP in a very important aspect. The CP is no longer composed exclusively—or even

primarily, as far as I know—of hardened Stalinists.' I don't know where the speaker who made this point got his information. I do know that he did not get it from anything I wrote or said as I do not hold this view.

"Another statement by the same speaker," he goes on, "was, 'Secondly, he's wrong because the composition of the CP has changed.' This flows from the previous remark about the present composition of the CP. I deny that I have ever stated, hinted or written anything that would justify this misrepresentation of my views. I have advocated more not less attention to the CP as my articles and letters testify."

I don't know why he was so reticent about naming the culprit. "Misrepresentation" is a serious breach of conduct. I have no compunction about naming names. The name of the "speaker" charged with misrepresentation, is Tom Kerry. How explain then, in writing a year later, the charge of "misrepresentation" is reduced to a "misunderstanding" due to being misled by Doug Jenness?

Comrade Alvin neglects to quote that section of my comments contained in the PC transcript upon which he bases his charges. I must correct this oversight by appending the transcript of my remarks at the PC meeting of Nov. 21, 1973. The comrades can see for themselves who is guilty of what.

For our immediate purposes here I shall quote that brief section to which Alvin refers.

"Milt's wrong about the CP," I said, "in a very important aspect. The CP is no longer composed exclusively—or even primarily, as far as I know—of hardened Stalinists. We're not dealing with hardened Stalinists, even though he's right about the reduction of their influence.

"They have very little influence left in the mass movement. I don't know whether they have anything in the trade unions any more—any more than we or other groups have. They have a few old-time Stalinists still around, but I don't think they have any effective trade union fraction that exercises any kind of political influence.

"So, in that sense he's correct. But that doesn't mean that it's a hopeless sect like the SLP. In the first place, so long as it has the franchise from Moscow, it will not be a sect. It will be our main competitor and rival in the radical movement."

Now I submit, comrades, there is nothing in that statement that attributes to Comrade Alvin the statements to which he objects and upon which he bases his charge of "misunderstanding," reduced from the more serious charge of a year ago of "misrepresentation." What I was polemicizing against was the contention by comrade Alvin in his Oct. 31, 1973, letter, that the CP had degenerated into a "sect" and was therefore not worthy of "critical" or any other kind of support.

Let me quote from comrade Alvin's Oct. 31, 1973 letter, which was before the PC for consideration. In the letter, Comrade Alvin essayed a resumé of the development of our critical support position. On page three of his letter, first paragraph, he observes: "In fact, sects were specifically excluded even from any consideration for critical support on the grounds that supporting them would not do anything for the idea of independent politics. Such groups were usually isolated and outside the political mainstream. The Socialist Labor Party is a good example of this. We

have never even considered giving critical support to the SLP even though it would not be a violation of principle to do so." So far, so good. Then . . .

To make his point that to him the decisive fact was numbers, he explains why it was possible for Trotsky to propose critical support to the candidacy of Earl Browder in 1940. "It should be recalled," he affirms, "that in 1940 the C.P. had about 100,000 members in the party and Young Communist League. They had a great deal of influence in unions and other organizations. In Los Angeles they had 10,000 members in the party and youth. It was estimated that Communist Party views were anywhere from persuasive to decisive among two-and-a-half to five million people in the United States. *They were not a sect, in the usual meaning of the term.*" (My emphasis)

Having established that fact beyond peradventure, Comrade Alvin graciously concedes that: "Therefore, it was quite proper for Trotsky to raise the possibility of giving them critical support." That's putting it rather delicately: It was quite proper for Trotsky to "raise the possibility" of giving critical support to Browder. That was not Trotsky's method! Trotsky made a definite proposal and demanded that unless the comrades had an acceptable alternative plan for intervening in the 1940 presidential elections he was obliged to press his proposal. There was no alternative plan.

The proposal came as such a shock that, in my opinion, it was not adequately considered and it is now my opinion that the comrades made an error in rejecting Trotsky's proposal. What Trotsky did do was to say that although he considered his proposal valid in the face of no acceptable alternative, he would refrain from making an issue of it in the ranks. An object lesson in leadership responsibility. But more later about that incident.

Comrade Alvin's excursion into the 1940 discussion between Trotsky and the SWP leaders with all of its statistical data is intended to bolster his crowning conclusion, to wit:

"Today the picture is different. *The C.P. is actually a sect now.* Even though they represent an obstacle to our growth, it is not as formidable as it was 30 to 40 years ago. That," he pontificates, "is the reality." (My emphasis) A rather strange political animal! A "sect" that represents "an obstacle to our growth."

Then, so that there be no misunderstanding his attitude, he expresses his outrage at the very idea of critical support. In the same letter, page 4, last paragraph, we are taken to task:

"No matter how much criticism is contained in critical support," he insists, "we must still ask those who hear or read our press to vote for the C.P. candidates. This seems to me to be a monstrous way to proceed at this time when Gus Hall and other C.P.ers are trying to explain away the defeat in Chile with an outpouring of lies and slander. Ordinary horse-sense, to say nothing of dialectics, should dictate no support of any kind to the C.P. Not at this time!"

Wherein, then, is the "misunderstanding?" Where the "misrepresentation?" In my remarks published in the PC transcript I neither said nor implied it was Alvin who characterized the CP in the exact words I used. I merely drew the ineluctable conclusions from his characterization of the CP as a "sect." Would he have been so outraged if I

had characterized the Socialist Labor Party as composed primarily of hardened De Leonists? He did not use those words but that is what it is.

Is comrade Alvin completely ignorant of our concept of critical support as applied to the Stalinists? It doesn't seem so, for in his Oct. 31 letter to the PC, he gives a definition of the formula upon which we operate when he says: "Critical support, especially of Stalinists, is supposed to be 99 percent criticism and 1 percent support. It is supposed to support the C.P. the way a rope supports a hanging man, as Lenin put it." Correct!

But it is precisely this tactic, as formulated by Lenin, that Comrade Alvin is opposed to. Or as he puts it: "No matter how much criticism is contained in critical support, we must still ask those who hear us or read our press to vote for the C.P. candidates." That is the one percent referred to in the above formula. But, Comrade Alvin concludes, this would be "monstrous" and winds up with the ringing affirmation that: "Ordinary horse-sense, to say nothing of dialectics, should dictate no support of any kind of the C.P. Not at this time."

Make sense of it those who can! As for me, I must confess that I am somewhat baffled by the tortured logic of the argument. If this be "dialectics" then to "say nothing" would be the better part of wisdom. (We will return to the question of what criteria we use in determining under what conditions the tactic of critical support to the CP is applicable, when we get to the discussion of the Trotsky proposal to support Browder in 1940.)

Comrade Alvin concludes his dissertation on critical support to C.P. candidates by appearing to amend his intransigent position of no support whatever "at this time." He does so, he says, "because some progress in correcting the party's position has been made." I am always happy to hear that the party is making "some progress" and it would please me greatly to be able to say the same about Comrade Alvin. But the example he presents to illustrate what he characterizes as a "concession" on his part is no such thing. He takes back with one hand what he proffers with another.

"In the early part of 1974," he informs us, "the San Jose local of the YSA wanted to give critical support to a CP candidate running for tax collector. Despite the fact that this was obviously another token candidate," he observes, "I agreed to go along with asking for votes in this case provided that our propaganda *thoroughly exposed the nature of Stalinist electoral activity.*" (His emphasis)

"In consultation with the PC the YSA NEC voted to go along with the request of the San Jose local. In the leaflet they issued they did expose the Stalinists.

"My position," he affirms, "was a concession but I thought it worth while provided the propaganda was correct and did not credit the Stalinists with being 'part of the socialist movement' or anything like that." A very magnanimous gesture, but then he hurriedly adds:

"However, this does not mean that I thought we should do this in every case. *I think we should drop giving any critical support to all Stalinist candidates who are running token campaigns and pulling the wool over the eyes of their members.*" (My emphasis)

Instead, Comrade Milt declares: "We should expose their treachery vigorously and completely. *That will have a*

*better effect upon their members than anything else.*" (My emphasis)

If Comrade Alvin's conclusion is correct then it follows, as night the day, that our tactic of critical support is a handicap rather than an aid to our aim of opening an avenue of communication to facilitate a dialogue with CP members, especially with their youth. But comrade Alvin would apply the ban on critical support only to the "token" candidates of the C.P. except in those cases in which Comrade Alvin deigns to make a "concession" as in San Jose!

Why? If the head on assault, with no quarter granted and no mercy shown, is most effective for "token" candidates, by what logic should an exception be made of any other variety—if there be such?

To bolster his contention that toe-to-toe frontal attack, with no tactical deviations to detract us, is the superior method of procedure, he asserts:

"It is necessary to call attention to the fact that the Trotskyist movement in the United States is stronger in relation to the Stalinists than our co-thinkers in any other country in the world. This," he boasts, "is not by accident." If not by accident, what then is the design?

"It is due," we are instructed, "to the fact that here we have exposed Stalinist crimes, large and small, more consistently and thoroughly for a longer period of time than others and further, that they never got any credit from us for being 'part of the socialist movement' or anything else of a progressive nature."

It is difficult to characterize such a twisted argument. It is either sheer demagoguery or a deliberate falsification of the record. The implication is that by employing the tactic of critical support to what he calls "token" candidates we are thereby attributing something progressive to Stalinism. Not true!

Throughout his criticism of our tactic Comrade Alvin makes a great deal about giving "credit" to the Stalinists by including them as "part of the socialist movement." Some of our comrades, in reporting in our press the justification for giving critical support to one or another C.P. candidate, cited as one reason that the Stalinists were "part of the socialist movement." It is a dubious formula and, unless qualified, I am opposed to its use as a reason for employing the tactic of critical support. But not for the reason advanced by Comrade Alvin that the formula implies anything "progressive." To the contrary, I know of no formula so devoid of precision, so ambiguous, so vague and general as that one. My objection was precisely the lack of precision and not that I thought there was any implication of a "progressive nature."

Comrade Alvin reminds us, in his letter of Oct. 31, that: "We used to say Stalinism is reactionary 'through and through.'" No, what we "used to say," was that Stalinism was *counter-revolutionary*, through and through—and still is. Our dialectician then adds: "Now the American C.P., which is completely Stalinist, has been promoted to 'a party in the socialist movement.' The truth is they are a party of the anti-socialist movement." Ergo? What conclusion does Comrade Alvin derive from defining the C.P., which is "reactionary" through and through, as "a party of the anti-socialist movement?"

A "movement" is not a motley assembly of individuals but is a heterogeneous collection of organized groups,

tendencies and parties. The "socialist movement" is just such a collection of groups, tendencies and parties, which have incorporated the idea of socialism in their program, their propaganda, their literature, etc., and who direct an anti-capitalist appeal to the working class and lower petty-bourgeoisie (the plebeian masses) for recruitment and support.

"We used to say," and still do, that the three major tendencies in the world socialist movement are Trotskyism (revolutionary socialism), the Social Democracy and Stalinism.

Previously, in the same letter, Comrade Alvin avers that: "The Communist parties are working class organizations . . ." Now what kind of political animal would be a "working class organization" that is a "party of the anti-socialist movement?" To a Marxist an "anti-socialist movement" by its very nature would be committed to defend and promote the private ownership of the means of production and distribution, more commonly designated as the "free enterprise" system or capitalism. The state political forms under which parties "of the anti-socialist movement" govern, range from bourgeois democratic to fascist.

Where the Stalinists participate in regimes based on capitalist property forms and relations as a minority, we designate such as coalition governments or in some instances, People's Front governments, as in Chile. Where they are a dominant majority of a regime in a state based on capitalist property relations they have been dubbed "People's Democracies," bastardized regimes sometimes transitional to a deformed workers state. Where, under Stalinist rule, the basic means of production have been nationalized, we designate the state as a "deformed workers state."

In his classic work on the October revolution and its subsequent degeneration under Stalin, *The Revolution Betrayed*, in his chapter on "Socialism and the State," Trotsky explains that with the overthrow of the bourgeois state and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat: "The state assumes directly and from the beginning a dual character: socialistic, insofar as it defends social property in the means of production; bourgeois, insofar as the distribution of life's goods is carried out with a capitalistic measure of value and all the consequences ensuing therefrom. Such a contradictory characterization may horrify the dogmatists and scholastics; we can only offer them our condolences."

The Soviet regime assumes this dual character so long as it remains based on the property forms and relations established by the October revolution and defends them in its own way against imperialist attack. Inasmuch as the regime plays no independent role in the process of production we characterize it as a parasitic caste and not a "new" ruling class.

In its foreign policy the Kremlin subordinates the interests of the world revolution to its utopian policy of building socialism in one country. This policy of "peaceful coexistence" is designed to maintain the status quo; a policy which is the cornerstone of its counterrevolutionary role in the world labor movement, or, if you prefer, the world socialist movement.

The Communist Parties outside the countries of the

Soviet bloc, function, to a greater or lesser extent, as the agencies of the foreign office of the Kremlin. The CPUSA, operates as a transmission belt for Soviet foreign policy to a greater extent than most because it lacks a mass base and is therefore relatively free of effective pressure from below. But as an agency of the Kremlin, it too must be included as part of the "socialist movement," and derive whatever "credit" is due them for being elevated by the SWP leaders to so exalted a status.

Comrade Alvin contends that he agrees with our estimate that the American Communist Party is our major competitor and rival, and obstacle to the building of the revolutionary party. If, as he insists, the CP is not in the "socialist movement," but is, instead, in the "anti-socialist movement," of what does our "rivalry" and "competition" consist?

In the transcript of the discussion of the proposal to grant critical support to Browder in 1940, Trotsky has the following to say on the subject under discussion:

"Trotsky: Of course the Stalinists are a legitimate part of the workers' movement. That it is abused by its leaders for specific GPU ends is one thing, for Kremlin ends another. It is not at all different from other opposition labor bureaucracies. The powerful interests of Moscow influence the Third International, but it is not different in principle. Of course we consider the terror of the GPU control differently; we fight with all means, even bourgeois police. But the political current of Stalinism is a current in the workers' movement. *If it differs, it differs advantageously.*" (My emphasis) (See: Writings of Leon Trotsky (1939-40), page 282.)

Is Trotsky here endowing the Stalinists with virtues they do not possess by insisting upon including them as a "legitimate part of the workers' movement"? Or is he drawing a fine distinction between the "workers' movement" and the "socialist movement?" Comrade Alvin charges that *we* have "completely forgotten" the "lessons we learned from Trotsky." and then he proceeds to teach us that: "The Communist parties are working class organizations . . ."

If I were to engage in the type of semantic nitpicking to which Comrade Alvin seems addicted, I would say, no! Not in this country they aren't—neither in composition nor program. Trotsky defined Stalinism as a petty bourgeois tendency in the working class. Which it is! But we cannot undertake to write a thesis on Stalinism everytime some comrade writes a report for publication in our press motivating our tactic of critical support to a C.P. candidate in one part of the country or another. Be it in San Jose or Pittsburgh.

But what has all this to do with the accusation that: "For several years a process of abandoning or changing the Trotskyist tradition, program and orientation has been taking place in the central leadership of the party." It is strictly a tactical matter of how best to conduct our struggle against our major competitor in the American socialist movement. The question of program and orientation have nothing whatever to do with the matter. And as for "tradition," it seems that Comrade Alvin does have a weak reed upon which he leans for precedent: the rejection by the SWP leaders in 1940 to the Trotsky proposal to give critical support to Browder. Since he seems to insist upon



making an issue of the matter I feel obliged to defend my view.

\* \* \*

First let me cite Comrade Alvin's challenge. In a letter to the PC under date of Dec. 12, 1973, he asserts:

"Your attempt to bolster your position by using the example of Trotsky's proposal to give critical support to Earl Browder, CP presidential candidate in 1940, omits what I wrote on that point in my letter, while at the same time tossing out more hints that maybe I am trying to smuggle in a change in our position on Stalinism."

(He refers to his letter of October 31, 1973. My remarks are contained in the appended transcript of what I said at the Nov. 21 PC meeting. A recurrent theme of Comrade Alvin's diatribes on various and sundry matters in which the PC had the temerity to disagree with him, is that he is constantly being misunderstood, misrepresented, misquoted, mishandled, mistreated, etc., etc., etc., ad nauseum.)

To continue the quote cited above: "You have forgotten a few things," our mentor scolds. And what "few things" have we forgotten? "First," we are instructed, "the Browder candidacy was not a screen for supporting a capitalist candidate *because the CP disapproved all capitalists in the race*. Second, the CP was a large party and had mass influence at that time. Third, the SWP did not agree with Trotsky on his proposal. I think the Old Man was wrong on this point and I frankly said so in my letter. If you now think he was correct, you should say so." (My emphasis.)

But we did say so! Once is not enough? O.K. I'll say so again: I think that Trotsky was right in his proposal to give critical support to Browder in the 1940 presidential election. If twice proves inadequate I am willing to repeat it a third time and have it notarized to make it legally binding.

Let us recapitulate beginning with: "First, the Browder candidacy was not a screen for supporting a capitalist because the CP disapproved all capitalists in the race."

Really? Was that really what happened in 1940 and is Comrade Alvin expressing the view of the Socialist Workers Party? *Was it Comrade Alvin's view, in 1940?* I don't think so. For in the November 2, 1940 issue of *Socialist Appeal*, forerunner of the *Militant*, there appears a head in large size type, over a four column story, that reads: "Stalinists Supporting Pro-Wilkie Stand of John L. Lewis." It is an unsigned article. I quote the concluding paragraph of the article:

"Toward Wilkie the Stalinists are performing the same function as they did in 1936. Then it was 'Defeat Landon at all costs'—i.e., elect Roosevelt. Now it is 'Uphold Lewis at all costs,' i.e., elect Wilkie.

"What scoundrels!"

If this evidence proves unconvincing, let me quote from the November 9, 1940, issue of *Socialist Appeal*. Again, a prominent head over a four-column story: "Stalinist Henchmen Follow Lewis in Giving Support to Wilkie." This time, I quote the opening paragraph:

"Dirtiest and most cynical of all the political opportunists trailing in John L. Lewis' wake are the Stalinists and their CIO henchmen. Ever since October 25 when Lewis made his historical radio betrayal of American labor, the Kremlin boys have been outdoing themselves in the art of double dealing."

One example among the many cited, is the following:

"Loudest and most obscene of them is Harry Bridges who on November 1st stood up and did his well-known trained seal act before 700 members of the CIO Industrial Union Council in San Francisco. He repeated for Wilkie's benefit the little trick of sell-out he perfected in 1936 when he conducted his labor agitation under the slogan of 'Defeat Landon at all costs' and used his influence to postpone strike action of the Maritime Federation in order not to embarrass Roosevelt, then running for a second term.

"Although 'not endorsing any candidate,' Bridges made it very plain that the most important job before labor was to see that Lewis remained as president of the CIO. Since John L. himself has already declared he will resign from the CIO presidency if Wilkie loses, the conclusion is obvious that Stalinist Harry is asking for votes for the Republican candidate."

The defense rests! But only long enough to catch a breath for there are still a few loose ends that require attention. "My letter," says Comrade Alvin, "pointed to the fact that in principle it was proper for Trotsky to make his proposal. The SWP leaders thought it was not correct tactically. That," he concludes, "is a good deal more than can be said for the policy of giving critical support to CP candidates who are running for the sole purpose of pulling the wool over the eyes of their members and followers."

It is most generous of Alvin to grant that "it was proper" for Trotsky to have made the proposal. I wish I could say as much for Comrade Alvin. For in all of his tortured argument, it is apparent that when it comes to granting the Stalinists any "credit," it is he that is guilty of being taken in by the demagogy of their pseudo-left turns, such as the one they executed in 1940.

This changed nothing essential either in the character or policy of the American Communist Party. The American CP continued to function as an agency of the foreign office of the Kremlin and remained class collaborationist to the core. That is why the Browder of 1940 differed very little from the Browder of 1936 or of Browder the super-patriot who presided over the dissolution of the Communist Party in 1943. The real difference was in the demagogy employed. It was precisely the "left" demagogy of the 1940 Browder campaign that provided the peg upon which Trotsky seized to motivate his critical support tactic.

Some very wise person, whose name eludes me at the moment, once said: Hindsight is better than foresight. From the vantage point of hindsight I, for one, am compelled to conclude that Trotsky was right and the SWP leaders wrong in the 1940 discussion. There, I said it a third time!

I have no other evidence than that which appears in the 1939-40 collection of the Trotsky writings plus the advantage of having lived through the period under discussion. I believe that Trotsky saw further because his view was cast from a loftier eminence than any of the very competent and experienced SWP leaders who participated in the discussion.

Trotsky insisted that the Stalinist pseudo-left demagogy codified in the Browder candidacy provided us with the possibility of opening an avenue of communication with the CP ranks. He foresaw a sharp right zig-zag for the not too distant future, for he had foreseen the Hitler attack upon the Soviet Union at the time of the Hitler-Stalin pact.

And long before he had predicted, not only the outbreak of the war, but that regardless of the alliances at the beginning, the attack upon the Soviet Union would materialize sooner or later.

It was in preparation for the inevitable right swing that Trotsky saw the advantage of establishing a dialogue with the CP ranks by taking the very unpopular position—and in 1940 it would have been extremely unpopular—of applying the critical support maneuver in the presidential campaign.

If they haven't already done so, the comrades should read the transcript of the "Discussions with Trotsky," beginning on page 251 of the 1939-40 collections of his "Writings," published by Pathfinder Press. Those who have read the material should re-read it in the light of the current discussion.

It is impossible, even within the space of this rather lengthy article, to dissect all of the errors of fact and interpretation contained in the Alvin letters on the subject under discussion.

For example, in another polemic on the same question in a letter to the PC, dated Feb. 1, 1974, he has a lengthy section dealing with Comrade Cannon's view of the matter. Here is what he writes, and I must apologize for the length of the quotation, for I want to avoid, if it is possible to do so, any further charges of "misrepresentation," etc., etc.

"Here is what Cannon wrote," he informs us, "in his *Struggle for a Proletarian Party*, published at the end of the faction struggle in the SWP in 1939 and 1940. The original article was published in the internal bulletin near the end of the faction fight which was concluded in April 1940. 'Everyone knows the crisis has dealt heavy blows to the imposing movement of Stalinism. With the signing of the Soviet-Nazi pact the flight of the Stalinist *fellow-travellers* began. They could stomach the Moscow Trials but not the prospect of coming into collision with the democratic government of U.S. imperialism. After the Soviet invasion of Poland and then of Finland, the flight of the *fellow-travellers* became a rout. This wild migration attracted wide attention and comment. We ourselves contributed our observations and witticisms on this ludicrous spectacle.' (emphases added)

"You will note that Cannon says nothing about any flight of CP workers. The fact is that the Stalin-Hitler pact sent some strong tremors through the CP and its periphery but they did not lose much of their membership. And we gained no recruits from them. I know because I was in New York then and recall Stalinists who came up to our headquarters looking for some enlightenment which we tried to furnish. But we were unable to win over any numbers to speak of.

"After the first flurries over these unexpected events, the CP managed to pull itself together and, by and large, lost only what Cannon mentions, that is, some intellectual fellow-travellers. They retained their main ranks and strong positions in the unions and other organizations. Next, about ten months went by, and in June 1940, when the discussions with Trotsky about giving Browder critical support took place, we had still made no dent in the CP but did, as Cannon also pointed out, lose a good number of our own fellow-travellers as well as the whole petty bourgeois opposition in the party.

"I ask those comrades who have changed their minds

and now think we should have given Browder critical support this question: If we could gain nothing from the CP as a result of the Stalin-Hitler pact and the invasion of Poland and Finland in ten months, what reason is there to believe that we could gain anything from them by giving Browder critical support? *I call attention once again to the fact that when the turn came in 1943 in the political situation here and other parts of the world, and our movement began to grow, the recruits came to a large extent from precisely those elements that Trotsky had described as good unionists who voted for Roosevelt on election day.*" [My emphasis]

"Now, we should understand that the SWP leaders were much closer to this situation than Trotsky could possibly be and it turned out that their judgement was better than his on this question. As I implied in a previous letter, Trotsky knew how to give some consideration to associates in the field and when to defer to their position. He did not raise his view on this point formally.

"It is my own opinion that over the long period of years that we have battled the CP, that is, since 1928, except for the first few years when almost all the recruits came from the CP, the Stalinist leaders have pretty well succeeded in poisoning their members against us and when they leave the CP they don't come to us except in very few instances. *Even the Krushchev revelations that dealt such a hard blow to the CP yielded few recruits for us but we did succeed, especially in those branches that seized the opportunity, to deal them some hard blows.*" [My emphasis]

What a masterpiece of evasive twisting! Comrade Alvin merely "neglects" to mention, in the whole of his "analytical" narrative, that Hitler invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941 and the right turn that Trotsky had foreseen, came with a vengeance. The *Militant* of June 28, 1941, devoted the entire front page to publication of a "Manifesto of the Socialist Workers Party," under a banner headline that read: "DEFEND THE SOVIET UNION!"

In addition to calling for a revolutionary "Defense of the Soviet Union," the manifesto declared:

"The Communist Party is not an independent revolutionary party which boldly speaks out in the interests of the international working class. On the contrary, it is merely the supine agent of the Kremlin bureaucrats. Precisely now, when one of the main duties of a genuine revolutionary party is to speak out and warn the workers of England and America to be on guard against the capitalist "allies" of the Soviet Union, the Stalinist parties are beginning to shift their line toward open support of the imperialist war waged by these capitalists.

"The instructions they will receive from the Kremlin will be in the spirit of the 'editing' of Churchill's speech by Moscow broadcasters: to dress up the 'democratic' imperialists as friends of the Soviet Union. The Stalinist parties tomorrow will 'discover' that the imperialist war is no longer imperialist. They will drop their pseudo-militancy in the trade unions. They will sing Roosevelt's praises again as loudly as they did in 1936. They will, in a word, do their utmost to deliver the workers bound hand and foot to Churchill and Roosevelt, as Stalin's cynical payment to the imperialists for an alliance."

And it wasn't long before this prophecy was fulfilled to the letter—and more. The C.P. became the most rabid



super-patriots; the most ardent defenders of the no-strike pledge; strikebreakers and union wreckers; they dissolved their party branches in the South and called upon the Black minority to subordinate their struggle to the "war effort." They were the only current in the American labor movement to support the Roosevelt proposal for a National Service Act permitting the capitalist government to draft workers for compulsory employment in industry in any part of the country. (Even the case-hardened AFL bureaucrats opposed the measure as a union-busting and strike-breaking device.) They became the most hated scabs among militants in the unions.

No, Comrade Alvin, the turn did not come "in 1943" as you say, it came in 1941 after the Hitler invasion of the Soviet Union. And our recruits did not come "to a large extent," from "those elements that Trotsky had described as good unionists who voted for Roosevelt on election day."

Comrade Alvin would do well to read again what Trotsky did say. Trotsky was referring specifically to our "progressive friends" and allies in the unions; those who broke with us on the question of the war and after Pearl Harbor became some of our most bitter enemies. Our recruits, and they were not very many "in 1943," came to us primarily from young worker militants who opposed Roosevelt's phoney "equality of sacrifice" program, the wage-freezing "Little Steel Formula," the "no-strike pledge," and other measures designed to straitjacket the workers while the capitalists were reaping a veritable harvest of profits in "cost-plus" contracts from the government.

It comes with ill-grace from Comrade Alvin to "ask those comrades who have changed their minds and now think we should have given Browder critical support this question: If we could gain nothing from the CP as a result of the Stalin-Hitler pact and the invasion of Poland and Finland in ten months, what reason is there to believe that we could gain anything from them by giving Browder critical support?"

Our critical support tactic, designed to open an avenue of communication to the CP ranks has been derided, defamed, belittled and condemned as a violation of our "tradition, program and orientation." The rejection of the tactic of critical support in the case of Browder in 1940 led, of necessity, to following to the letter Comrade Alvin's view of the most productive tactic to apply, which resulted, he informs us, in a gain of "nothing" from the C.P.

After all of this, he has the cast-iron gall to challenge us to explain, "what reason is there to believe that we could gain anything from them by giving Browder critical support?" We could hardly have gained less than "nothing" had we applied the tactic of critical support, now could we, Comrade Alvin?

Comrade Alvin uses the quote from Cannon to bolster his argument. Why he selects it from an article by Jim Cannon written during the fight against the petty bourgeois opposition in 1939-40—before the discussion with Trotsky on Browder—is a bit strange. For Comrade Cannon had many cogent things to say, specifically about the Browder discussion, the most pertinent of all, I believe, being his speech to the Plenum-Conference held in Chicago, September 27-29, 1940. The text of the speech was published in the *Socialist Appeal*, of October 19, 1940.

(Because of the light it sheds on this discussion I

strongly urge all comrades to read the text of Comrade Cannon's speech, which has been published as an appendix to the volume: *Speeches to the Party*, by James P. Cannon, Pathfinder Press, page 315.)

Just one more point on this Browder business before going on to the next point. In addition to his other talents it seems that Comrade Alvin indulges in the art of concocting conundrums. "I would like Tom and Joe to say," he begins an introductory to his riddle, "if they think we would have given support to Browder in 1936, if we had not then been in the Socialist Party and supporting Norman Thomas. I am very much interested," he concludes, "in how they would reply to this, especially if they reply in the negative."

I hardly think this is the occasion for playing games, but if that is what he wants, and if there is no objection, I see no harm done to humor him. I can only speak for myself, of course, but my answer would decidedly be in the negative. No, I would not have favored giving Browder critical support in 1936 IF Norman Thomas had not then been "our" candidate. (The Lord have mercy!)

It would have made no political sense to have done so in 1936. To begin with, the Browder candidacy in 1936 was probably the classic case of tokenism. To the point of making himself an object of ridicule, with his central campaign slogan: We must defeat Landon at all costs!

Second, the C.P. was in the throes of a right wing zig-zag following the adoption of the People's Front line at the 7th World Congress of the Comintern in 1935.

Third, in 1936 our orientation was toward the growing left wing in the Socialist Party, which we had decided to enter in order to facilitate our fusion with its left wing.

We broke with the policy of functioning as a faction of the Communist International following the victory of Hitler in Germany in 1933. Following the great 1934 strike wave we consummated a fusion with the American Workers Party, the Muste group, in 1935, as part of our declared policy of building the independent revolutionary party.

Through a historical fluke, the Stalin fiasco in Germany which permitted Hitler to march to power without a struggle, impelled a movement of militants into the ranks of the Socialist Parties of the various countries, instead of into the ranks of the Trotskyist parties, as we had hoped would happen. It was under these circumstances that Trotsky evolved the tactic of "entry" which was then dubbed the "French turn."

After a bitter internal struggle, or series of struggles if you begin with the break with our original policy of functioning as a CI faction, the party decided to adopt the entry tactic here and we did enter the Socialist Party in 1936.

Because we were then members of the SP, the pacifist Norman Thomas became "our" presidential candidate. Under the circumstances what pertinence does Comrade Alvin's question have?

By the year 1937 the entire left wing had been expelled from the SP and in 1938 had formed the Socialist Workers Party. In 1939, with the outbreak of war, the smoldering divisions in the party burst into the open. The split with the petty bourgeois opposition took place in May 1940. The discussion with Trotsky in which the Browder question first arose occurred in June 1940.

The party was then relatively politically homogeneous but weakened numerically by the previous splits and defections. The problem then was to probe the various ways and means of building the party and of conducting the struggle against our most powerful adversary in the working class movement, the C.P.

The question of executing a maneuver with the CP through the tactic of critical support to Browder was pertinent in 1940 and not at all relevant in 1936. If Comrade Alvin doesn't see the difference then he had best refrain from pressing his tactical advice upon the "young and inexperienced" central leadership which views party history, party problems and party tactics, quite differently than he does and much more correctly—obviously!

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Just a few words on the question of "sects" and "sectarianism." Comrade Alvin objects that in the P.C. transcript of the Nov. 21, 1973 meeting, "some of the comrades were critical of my reference to the C.P. as a sect. This is either an unfair criticism or a misunderstanding. If you and they will reread what I wrote you will see I was referring to the size of the CP now as compared with their past, the 1930's and 1940's, and not making a political characterization of them. I don't think we have any disagreement on this, if what I wrote is correctly understood."

Well, here we go again! What is the shooting all about? It seems that it's all due, either to a "misunderstanding" or worse, of "unfair" criticism. You see, he was only referring to the difference in "size" of the C.P. then and now, and not making a "political characterization." Trying to grapple with comrade Alvin's writhings is like trying to wrestle a greased eel. We leave aside for the moment the matter of "unfair" criticism—but wherein is the "misunderstanding?" If the C.P. today, not in the 1930s or 1940s, but this very day, is a "sect," as comrade Alvin says it is, then certain political conclusions ineluctably follow. The first being that it is a waste of time and effort, if not an act of political stupidity, to engage in critical support maneuvers with a "sect."

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I should like to conclude this portion of my polemic with the observation that it is already much longer than I wished even though it does not take up all of Comrade Alvin's errors of fact, interpretation and analysis.

It always makes me sad to witness a long-time party comrade and friend engage in the act of committing political suicide. Just consider. Comrade Alvin has dismissed the central party leadership as a coterie of incompetents who among other things, "have developed certain well-defined shortcomings."

He has written off the National Committee as irresponsible who either do not read the material they receive from the center, or, who have lost the capacity to "consider both sides in a dispute as Lenin demanded."

Having discarded all hope of convincing any part of the national party leadership he now appeals to the ranks to "correct" the errant leaders.

He denigrates the younger leaders of the party who, unlike their predecessors, he clucks, "lack experience and first-hand knowledge of the workers' movements, the unions." By the process of extrapolation he demeans the party, as a whole, by asserting: "The entire party must be conscious of the fact that this leadership reflects very precisely the class composition and background of experience of the majority of the party as a whole."

Then to add insult to injury, he admonishes the callow youth in the central leadership of the party, that to compensate for their alleged weaknesses, they should have the "closest relationship with older leaders who do have backgrounds in the unions." In case there is any misunderstanding, that does not refer to Farrell Dobbs, Tom Kerry, Frank Lovell, Al Hansen, Ed Shaw, etc., etc., but to the Great I Am, Milt Alvin!

Having exploded his "bombshell," Comrade Alvin should ask himself: What now? Has it occurred to him that the ranks may decide that maybe, just maybe, it is he that is wrong? In which case his "bombshell" turns out to be nothing but a stinkbomb! What then?

He reminds me of a song that was popular during World War I. The lyrics describe a doting mother relating to a friend her impression of a military parade in which her son Jim was one of the marchers. And do you know, she said, *they were all out of step, but Jim!*

Does Comrade Alvin really think he can command a majority of the ranks against the entire national leadership on the basis of his compilation of horror stories? Let me remind him, if he already does not know, that never in the history of our party has any "leader" no matter how pretentiously infallible, succeeded in coming anywhere near commanding a majority in the ranks without some significant support in the leadership. Comrade Alvin couldn't even carry a majority of his own branch, let alone the entire party.

Lest any member of the party be misled by Comrade Alvin's insinuations of a division in the central leadership between the younger and older generations, let me assure you there is not a scintilla of truth to it.

Differences over various and sundry matters, have occurred in the past and will probably do so in the future. But never along generation lines.

I consider comrade Alvin's venomous slur against the younger comrades an abomination. It is obviously intended to bolster his attack upon the policy and line of the entire leadership. It is a cheap and self-defeating shot at our entire concept of leadership transition. It won't work!

Kerry:

I gather from reading Milt's letter that the burden of his criticism is that the "tactic" of critical support has become a fixed pattern. He feels that it was at one time selective, but now is becoming applied generally throughout the country.

In my opinion, he has a point. I think we have become less selective in the application of this maneuver. It's really a maneuver and not simply a tactic of critical support, intended to advance the idea or to promote the movement for independent working-class action. He's right, of course, in saying that these occasional campaigns the CP runs are in no way intended to promote the movement for independent working-class political action. Because for every candidate they run, they support 50 capitalist candidates.

I agree that this example he cites, the Militant item from Pittsburgh, is not our concept of why we give critical support.

We've got to be clear on what we're doing. On one side, there are the tactical maneuvers that we should engage in with the CP. Doug spent most of his time discussing these various tactical maneuvers, in which we use open letters, maybe the tactic of critical support, and so forth and so on. But we've got to be very clear that the line of our agitation and propaganda follows the line of the maneuver. If the maneuver is directed at the YWLL, then our critical support has got to be indicated in some way that would arouse their interest. Otherwise, critical support means that we support the action, but we criticize the program. We don't do that with the CP because we don't give any credence to their action, their so-called independent action.

For example, when we've applied critical support to a labor union running candidates in an election, we gave support to the action but criticized their program. We do the same with a Black candidate. If they had some base for running, we'd support the action and criticize the program.

Milt's wrong about the CP in a very important aspect. The CP is no longer composed exclusively--or even primarily, as far as I know--of hardened Stalinists. We're not dealing with hardened Stalinists, even though he's right about the reduction of their influence. They have very little influence left in the mass movement. I don't know whether they have anything in the trade unions any more--any more than we or other groups have. They have a few old-time Stalinists still around, but I don't think they have any effective trade-union fraction that exercises any kind of political influence. So, in that sense he's correct. But that doesn't mean that it's a hopeless sect like the SLP. In the first place, so long as it has the franchise from Moscow, it will not be a sect. It will be our main competitor and rival in the radical movement.

Secondly, he's wrong because the composition of the CP has changed. It has a large section of young people who have joined, thinking that it is a revolutionary party, that it is a communist

party, especially since it has the connection with the Kremlin. That justifies our entry into tactical maneuvers with the Communist Party wherever the comrades feel that it's worthwhile in doing such. I don't agree that we will automatically give critical support to any CP candidate that's running where we're not running against him, no matter what. We misapply critical support by giving them the type of publicity which Milt quotes here from The Militant, which is not very much publicity. It's more support than criticism. It's the kind of critical support that we would give a candidate of a trade union or a Black party or a Chicano party running for office.

We cannot accept as genuine these forays on the electoral arena by the CP. The main thrust of their policy is coalition politics. They have not abandoned their politics. They have altered it somewhat to create the impression that now they are going to run independent candidates. They don't call for a labor party, and that should be one of the things that we criticize them for.

In our critical support, we should say, "We're glad to see that, at least in this case, you're running independently instead of supporting capitalist candidates. It would be considered a significant example of your seriousness if you supported a labor party instead of supporting Democratic coalition candidates and supporting the concept of a coalition."

That is what the thrust of our criticism has got to be. They're not seriously breaking with capitalist politics and they're not promoting the idea nor the movement for independent working-class political action. In fact, they've done just the opposite, by supporting the idea of coalition politics. They prevent, inasmuch as they can prevent, the movement and the spread of the idea of independent working-class political action.

I don't understand Milt's point on Chile, because our critical support of the CP doesn't depend on what their program is. The Old Man advocated that we support Browder in 1940, just two years after the Moscow trials, which was the manifestation of the real crimes that had been committed in the "people's front." It was after the "people's front" in Spain. They had gone through that experience, plus the Moscow trials, plus the Hitler-Stalin pact. But after all that, the Old Man thought it was important to go through a maneuver with them. This was during the turn that they made, the so-called left turn, after the Hitler-Stalin pact in 1939. After being the most ardent supporters of Roosevelt, they suddenly emerged as left critics of Roosevelt, and even ran Browder as a candidate. Then they became the "peace party." That is, they were primarily for peace and they put the blame for war on French and British imperialism.

So the Old Man said that's a wonderful situation for us to enter into as a maneuver. And I think the Old Man was right then. Milt says he thought our people were right because some of the trade unionists had been influenced. I don't think it's true. That was the attitude that was expressed because of our association with the trade unions. But looking back on it, the Old Man was correct. We would have gained, precisely because we could not have anticipated how soon this whole business would

change from their become the "peace" party into the pro-war party. And if we had utilized the level of support to Browder, we would have got a hearing from sections of the CP who were discombobulated by the Hitler-Stalin pact.

On the labor party, our position changed. I remember when we were in the Socialist Party we were opposed to the formation of a labor party. We would speak against it. I made some very eloquent speeches against the labor party in 1936. The reason we changed was because of the rise of the CIO. We changed because prior to the development of the CIO, the Old Man's view was that it wasn't excluded that the American working class would develop in a revolutionary direction. Therefore, it was wrong for us to advocate a labor party, because there was no mass organization of the American workers. The AFL had only organized a very thin layer of the aristocrats of labor.

But once the CIO made its appearance, the most likely movement of the American working class into the political arena, he said, will be through their existing organizations, their mass organization, which is the CIO. The probable course of development will be through the labor party and not directly to the revolutionary party. Therefore we changed our position and became advocates of the formation of the labor party. It has nothing to do with what Milt says, that after the labor party is formed, our leaders said that not only could we be critical, but it didn't exclude running against it.

We don't say that given the formation of the labor party, that it's excluded that the revolutionary party will rapidly become the dominant party. But at least at this stage, we support the formation of a labor party because it seems to be the more likely course of development of the next stage of independent working-class political action than the revolutionary organization of the working class outside of the framework of the existing institution, that is, the trade unions.

The SLP is a different matter than the CP. We had a proposal once from the Seattle branch in the Kirk-Kay era that we give critical support to the SLP. We voted it down and said, "No. There's no use in this support whatsoever. We're not interested in entering into any kind of tactical maneuvers with the SLP." We said there's nothing there for us. This is a hide-bound sect.

But with the CP, to say that we shut off any tactics which would make it possible for us to approach or to gain the ear or access to some of these young militants who mistakenly entering, would be a very foolish practice.

December 6, 1973

LOS ANGELES

Milt Alvin

Dear Milt,

At its November 21 meeting the Political Committee discussed your letter of October 31 regarding the party's policy of extending critical support to Communist Party candidates. I want to outline our thinking on the points you raise.

In your letter you said the following: "In an exchange of correspondence between comrade Barry Sheppard and me at the time of the L.A. support question, which I opposed, he wrote, 'If valid, your position would exclude the use of the critical support tactic in relation to the CP on a national scale.' I replied to this that, 'if your reasons are valid, it would make it mandatory for us to give critical support to all CP candidates.'

"I am now of the opinion that the party is moving over to this position, that is, supporting the CP candidates regardless of circumstances, just as long as we are not running anyone for the same office."

Your impression that the party is moving toward establishing a blanket policy of automatically supporting any CP candidate where we are not running is not correct. We oppose such a policy. Our policy continues to be one where the branches discuss each case separately before making a recommendation to the PC and the PC judges each case individually according to its merits. There has been no change in this approach and none is projected.

After many years of not running their candidates, the CP began, in 1966, to field increasing numbers of candidates. Since that year the party has utilized the tactic of critical support in respect to nine CP candidates. The CP has run more candidates than this, many of whom we have opposed with our own candidates. Where possible of course, we prefer to confront CP candidates directly with our candidates. However, we anticipate that there will be more, rather than fewer, opportunities to successfully apply our tactic of critical support to CP candidates. And we will want to take advantage of all these opportunities we can to advance our goals.

You received the impression that we were moving toward a blanket policy because we have employed the tactic in three cities where you feel no "special conditions" justified the critical support tactic. You suggest a review of "what this tactic was supposed to achieve and how it was supposed to be used in the first place."

As part of your review, you cite our support to independent labor candidates and independent candidates of oppressed minorities. We don't see the parallel between our support to such candidates for the purpose of advancing the idea or promoting the movement toward independent working-class political action, and our utilization of the critical support tactic as part of our opponent's work against the CP.

We have supported independent labor, Black, Chicano and Puerto Rican candidates, in spite of any criticism of their programs, because we believe that such support could be used to help encourage a break from capitalist politics. The degree to which we have publicly criticized the programs of these candidates has depended on the particular circumstances.

When we extend critical support to CP candidates our purpose has been different. It is part of a maneuver to utilize the tactic to deal a blow to one of our central opponents. Our aim is to breach the communication barrier to the members and periphery of the CP and their youth group, the Young Workers Liberation League, in order to break a few members away or discourage others from joining. Their members are trained to believe that Trotskyists are CIA agents and counterrevolutionaries. So when we approach them and say that we are voting for some of their candidates it catches them off guard. In situations where we call for a vote to one or more of their candidates but are also running candidates of our own, we get an extra edge by urging them to support our candidates. This helps to make them appear even more sectarian.

Your opposition to carrying out such maneuvers is a result of what you see as the "scanty" results achieved so far and your view of the CP at this time.

First on the results. It's true that the gains so far have been relatively modest. In some cities this can be partly attributed to delaying application of the tactic until late in the election (this, for example, was the case in Los Angeles) and partly to the newness of the maneuver to most of our comrades. Unfortunately we don't have a complete picture of our results as we haven't received reports from all of the branches that were involved. In the future we plan to encourage prompt reports and fuller information from the branches in order to help give the party as a whole a better feel of what we are accomplishing.

Joanna Misnik's article in the November 23 Militant, which appeared since you wrote your letter, offers some additional information about the impact of our critical support tactic in New York City. In New York our maneuver had three aspects. First: Last summer, during Herman Badillo's Democratic Party primary campaign, we issued an Open Letter to the CP criticizing their support to Badillo. We circulated this quite widely to CPers and YWLLers. We know of a few YWLLers who opposed the CP's support to Badillo. Our letter must have registered some impact because the Daily World was forced to carry an attack on it. We then continued the debate in the pages of The Militant.

Second was our defense of the CP's ballot rights after Lyn Marcus's National Caucus of Labor Committees challenged the CP's petitions. Some of our members participated in a picket line with some of their members to protest this undemocratic move. This action did not properly fall within our critical support tactic, but was an integral part of our political offensive.

The third aspect, which we initiated right after the CP candidates were certified on the ballot, was the tactic of critical support. We issued another open letter to the CP indicating our support to three of their candidates and urged the CP to vote for four of our candidates. (This was not a venture into "horse-



trading." But it did help to put them on the defensive.) The letter was distributed at CP campaign meetings, tables, and at several meetings. There were several instances of YWLL or CP members indicating their support to our candidates. This tactic facilitated our getting the ear of some of their members and contacts in order to discuss our political differences.

Our maneuver with the CP and YWLL during the elections was also accompanied with attempts to involve them in united front-type actions against NCLC hooliganism, banning of the Communist League, and repression in Chile.

We have reliable information that there was disagreement within the CP, at least in New York, over the question of how to deal with the SWP and the YSA. One tendency opposes the present policy of refusing to work with us in united front-type actions. So it is within this context that we engaged in our maneuver, which it should be recalled was a secondary aspect of our election campaign.

You mention a statement by former CP leader Dorothy Healy that the CP's response would be to ignore our support to their candidate. This is not surprising. For over 40 years the CP has tried to ignore us. But we don't let them. And insofar as the critical support maneuver helps our members get the ear of a few YWLLers or CPers, it makes it even more difficult for them to dismiss us.

You may have noticed in the Daily World's letter column on October 27 a letter was selected for publication that showed that they could not ignore our maneuver. The letter, allegedly written by a Frank Henderson in Cleveland (but more likely in their editorial office), stated:

"I wondered why the Socialist Workers Party (Trotskyites), sent me their platform for New York City when I vote in Cleveland, until I saw something else enclosed with the platform -- an 'Open Letter to the Communist Party.'

"It's plain enough that the SWP is far more interested in trying to cause dissension in Communist ranks all over the country than in fighting the capitalist politicians of both old parties. As always, the sharp edge of the Trotskyite attack is against the Communists and the Soviet Union. And their 'anti-capitalist' phraseology is just so much window-dressing to fool leftward-moving people.

"The constant turnover in Trotskyite ranks and the endless splintering of their groups shows that their capacity to fool people is transitory. As in the case of much of the CIA funds, whoever is backing the Trotskyites is pouring money down the drain."

You noted that there was insufficient criticism of the CP's line in the application of our critical support tactic. You particularly pointed to the formulation used in the Pittsburgh and New York open letters referring to the CP as a party "in the socialist movement." We agree that this is not a good formulation. A more accurate statement would be that the CP is a tendency in the working-class movement. However, we don't feel that this error inevitably flowed from the tactic of critical support to CP candidates nor that it can't be corrected by sharpening up our application of the tactic.

In your criticism on this point, however, you argue that, "The truth is they are a party of the anti-socialist movement." This isn't exactly clear to us. If you mean that the program and actions of the CP are a counterrevolutionary obstacle to the workers struggle for power and to the development of socialism, we of course agree. However, if you are suggesting that the Stalinists are no longer a petty-bourgeois tendency within the workers movement, then we disagree.

Your analysis of the CP would preclude at this time extending critical support to any of its candidates. You ask, "Should not the events in Chile have had some influence on our attitude towards the American CP? I think they call for an extended and wide attack on the CP and all varieties of Stalinist class collaboration. The best tactic, the most effective in the present circumstances, is a head-on attack on Stalinism and its politics, not critical support."

It's not clear exactly what you are getting at here. We assume that you are not implying that the betrayal in Chile has revealed something new and more reactionary about Stalinism than what we already knew. The Stalinist policy in Chile is consistent with its wretched class-collaborationist politics for the last four decades. There is nothing qualitatively new. But if your point here is that we should not extend critical support at a time when the CP is being discredited because of a monstrous betrayal, we would disagree. In this regard, it is useful to recall that Trotsky's proposal to the SWP was to critically support Earl Browder in the 1940 elections. This came on the heels of the Stalin purge trials, the betrayal in Spain, the Stalin-Hitler pact, and a Stalinist gunfire attack on the Trotsky household.

And it is not true that we have not attacked Stalinism head-on. Particularly during the events following the coup in Chile our comrades were selling The Militant with its attacks on Stalinist policy in Chile. Party speakers, including candidates, spoke out on this at scores of meetings. Nor do we believe it is valid to say that the CP is so discredited and isolated as a result of its betrayals that there is nothing to gain from a critical support maneuver. In your letter you say, "The CP is actually a sect now. Even though they represent an obstacle to our growth, it is not as formidable as it was 30 or 40 years ago. That is the reality."

The CP is not as large or influential as it was a few decades ago and the relationship of forces between the SWP and the CP is more favorable to us than it was. However, this unfortunately does not make the CP simply a sect.

Barry Sheppard discussed this in his March 30 letter to you:

"The consensus of the Political Committee is that it is unfortunately not true that the overwhelming majority of people who have been radicalized or others who are becoming radicalized or will do so in the near future, have rejected the CP because of its conservative role. The CP remains a formidable opponent for us. In the past few years, it has emerged as our most important opponent on the left, competing with us for the allegiance of the radicalizing layers. It has succeeded in building a youth movement, the YWLL, that has somewhere around

1,000 members, and on a national scale is the YSA's most important competitor. Through the Angela Davis campaign, the YWLL has apparently succeeded in attracting a number of Black youth.

"On a more fundamental level, we can expect that as long as the Soviet bureaucracy remains entrenched in the Soviet Union, there will be a basis for the development of the Stalinist movement in this country, which has the franchise. Just as the Stalinists confront us on a world scale, we will have to confront the counterpart of world Stalinism in this country. Thus we can expect to have to contend with the American CP for some time to come."

One additional piece of evidence since Barry's letter was written is the CP's conference on African liberation in Chicago that drew more than 800 Blacks.

We will circulate this exchange of correspondence within the National Committee.

Comradely,  
s/Doug Jenness  
for the Political Committee

### **A Correction**

In *SWP Discussion Bulletin*, Vol. 33, No. 5, June 1975, "The Liberating Influence of the Transitional Program," which contained three talks by George Breitman, a typographical error occurred that partially changed the meaning of the sentence where it occurred.

The error occurred in the fourth paragraph of the section entitled, "The SWP, Then and Now." (Page 20). The

sentence (referring to the average age of Political Committee members in 1938) read: "Their average might be between 35 and 50, while the average of their successors today might be between 30 and 35." The sentence should have read: "Their average might be between 35 and 40, while the average of their successors today might be between 30 and 35."

### **An Embarrassed Explanation**

**By George Breitman, Lower Manhattan  
Branch, New York Local**

**June 19, 1975**

An involuntary mix-up resulted in the printing of my 1974 Oberlin talks on the Transitional Program in the *SWP Discussion Bulletin* (Vol. 33, No. 5, June 1975). What happened was this: On two or three occasions a comrade in the Education Department asked me if I would be willing to have parts of the talks printed in the education bulletin and I said that I might, after I had revised them for publication, but I didn't know when that would be. A couple of months ago a different comrade, Jack Barnes, asked me if I would let them be printed "in the bulletin." Thinking this was the same proposal I gave the same answer, but he responded that revision would not be necessary if I prefaced the talks with an introduction

soliciting criticisms and explaining that I still intended to revise them for later publication. Jack argued they would be useful in the pre-convention period for the comrades thinking about and discussing the method of the transitional program. Persuaded, I wrote the introduction, and the talks were printed, not in the education bulletin but in the discussion bulletin, which was what Jack had meant by "the bulletin." I make this explanation because I fully agree with the general policy followed up until now, which is that the pre-convention discussion bulletin is not the best place to print speeches, potential *ISR* or *Militant* articles, book chapters, etc.