

INTERNAL INFORMATION BULLETIN

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Party Education Plans

[The following is the edited transcript of the opening presentation and excerpts from the discussion at the workshop on Party Education Plans at the Socialist Workers Party convention, August 1976. The workshop was chaired by Fred Feldman, SWP national education director.]

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Fred Feldman, Lower East Side, New York

Before we listen to what the comrades from the different localities have to report and suggest, I'd like to describe briefly what the National Education Department does. There may be people here who haven't participated in organizing that area of party activity before.

The main task of the National Education Department is to provide guidance and assistance to the locals and branches in organizing the educational work of the party. The department acts as a clearinghouse for the lessons of the actual experience of the branches in carrying out this work.

Periodically the department makes proposals on education to the local areas, which the branches can then accept, modify, or experiment with according to their needs.

In addition, we try to gather the experiences of the branches in education, especially the reports and observations and suggestions of branch members, on the pros and cons of different approaches to education. We make these available to the party as a whole.

A second activity of the National Education Department is the preparation of study guides. These are outlines of different subjects or books that are useful topics for educational series. These guides also are useful for comrades who are studying a particular subject on their own. This past summer we put out study guides on the Organizational Character of the SWP, an introductory class series that will be useful for provisional members classes. We also distributed a study guide on Marx's *Wage-Labor and Capital*, as an introduction to Marxist economic concepts, and a more advanced outline on Trotsky's *First Five Years of the Communist International*. We will soon be sending out a study guide on Samuel Yellen's *American Labor Struggles*.

In addition, the department edits and publishes the Education for Socialists series. These are publications that take up different aspects of the politics and history of our movement. These are publicly available. They are of interest to wider circles than the party membership alone and have an increasing sale to nonmembers. The latest of these is *What Is American Fascism?* by James P. Cannon and Joseph Hansen, which analyzes McCarthyism, the Coughlin movement, and the Hague regime in Jersey City, New Jersey.

Because of the increased sales of the Education for Socialists series, we feel we can now afford to offer the branches and bookstores a 10 percent discount on all bulk orders of these publications. We want to encourage

branches to increase their bundle orders and make greater efforts to sell them to our members and contacts and to people who are attracted to our ideas. They are a vital educational tool.

I want to make a few comments on where the party is today in its educational work. At the moment there is a certain amount of flux in all areas of party life due to the turn and the resulting reorganization. In the past year we have recruited several hundred people and have expanded from about twenty-five branches to more than sixty.

The branches today are much smaller than the old branches and have a different composition. This means that the educational work is changing and is going to change more in the future. The old methods have to be rethought and retested and adapted to the new situation.

The character of our recruitment is changing. It's not only different in that we are recruiting more people who are active in the Black struggle, the Chicano movement, the women's liberation movement, and the unions, although this is the most vital shift. We are recruiting people who have had no previous experience with our politics through the Young Socialist Alliance.

We are not recruiting our members today out of some massive movement like the antiwar movement where everybody has some common political experience. We are recruiting working people who are radicalizing to a large extent as individuals under the impact of the developing economic crisis. There is no single focus to the class struggle today, or even two or three focuses. That means the differences that exist between individual recruits in any case are accentuated. They come in at vastly different levels, with different concerns and interests. They have different questions about our movement and our politics.

When we are carrying out the education of the new members in the next year—and that is a top priority task if we want to win them solidly over the long haul—we have to be thinking in terms of the needs of each specific individual. We have to think about where this person is coming from, and how to bring our politics to them. We have to take into consideration their political background and other matters.

A related area that needs to be further developed is the recruitment class. In addition to having basic classes on socialism at the headquarters, branches should be on the alert for opportunities to organize classes around a particular workplace where we have attracted some friends, or a neighborhood where a struggle is going on, or a housing project where we have sold a number of subscriptions.

For these kinds of educational work, the smaller branches are going to be a big advantage. The small branch allows more alertness and attention to the needs and thinking of each individual.

Education thus tends to become less of an administrative task. Organizers and branch activists will be more conscious of what each contact is actually interested in, what each person who is thinking of joining is actually thinking about, what each new member wants to know about the party. It means the branch leadership can be

conscious of what each comrade is reading, what they should be encouraged to read, and so forth.

The new branches allow for smaller classes, and for a less formal structure, which can sometimes be quite useful.

All in all, I think it means that the branch leadership will be able to play a more active role in education on a day-to-day basis. Part of this is just the process of talking to people about politics—not only new members and contacts, by the way, but also comrades who've been in the party for some time.

With that in mind, there are a couple of suggestions we'd like to make about internal branch education in the fall and winter period. As you may know, the party generally attempts to make a major educational effort each summer, known as the summer school. In the past, we have given education top priority during this period, organizing extensive class series. Reading for the class, attending the class, and studying are considered the first item on the agenda for comrades in these periods.

This summer we took a much lower-key approach to the summer schools because of the convention. Most areas had only one short class series. The preconvention discussion and the convention, being the highest decision-making process and body in our party, took priority over everything else. In the future it is possible that conventions may become more frequent, which will mean that large-scale summer schools may not take place in those years.

That means that the educational activities carried out during the rest of the year take on much greater importance, since branches cannot assume they will be able to pick up the slack during the summer.

In the past, we have recommended that branches attempt to hold, when practical, major class series during the winter and spring as well. This can take the form of weekly classes or special weekends devoted to some topic aimed at the comrades, although others can be invited. A high priority should be given to attending these classes, doing the reading, and of course the branch leadership should try to set an example in this regard.

There are several areas that might be taken up in such a series. It is going to become more important to introduce our members and supporters to our views of the Chinese revolution and Maoism. Opportunities are opening up to talk to people influenced by Maoism. The discussion in the *Guardian* over Chinese foreign policy is an example of this. It is important in the Black and Chicano movements where Maoists have some influence.

Another area that might be fruitfully studied is our electoral policy, why we run in elections, the call for a labor party, the Black political party, how we use the tactic of critical support.

There are many other areas that might be important and valuable for a branch to take up. Because of the increased activity of our party in the women's movement, many of our members will want to study our party's basic program and outlook on the oppression of women.

Branches should not hesitate to use local or regional resources in carrying out such projects. There should be no hesitation about sharing teachers, materials, and coordinating educational programs on a local basis if that is desirable. Local-wide educational events can also be very attractive and effective educational tools.

What I'd like to do in this workshop is to find out what people who have been working in the branches and in the new conditions are thinking about on the subject of

education. What experiences have you had? What kinds of help do you need? What suggestions do you have that might be useful for the movement as a whole?

Howard Packer, Southside Chicago

I'll try not to repeat some of the problems outlined by Fred because really we've been thinking along the same lines. I should explain that now in Chicago we have five branches. A little while ago we had two fairly large branches, and before that we had one very large one. And the new situation in which we've been for some months now gives us a little bit of a look at what we're going to come up against.

We've had very little educational work frankly, because there's been so much to do, but we have to grapple with the problem.

In the small branches, obviously, the educational resource base is small. The branches have a great deal of work to do. Of course, we've been through the petitioning campaign, but I don't think we're ever going to have a "normal" leisurely time; there isn't any such thing. The branches by their very nature have to become involved in the life of their community, in new types of work and activity.

How do you do educational work? How are we going to meet these needs? One way is simply to let each branch work on its own resources. Another way is to try to come together in an area, get the five branches together in a local like Chicago, and have one big educational weekend and bring in a knowledgeable speaker.

Another way is to pool the resources of different branches in an area. You can have teachers travel from one branch to another or interchange teachers who can conduct the educational work. And a last one, which begins to get into an experimental area, is to have committees of comrades from different branches of a local organize activities.

Personally I find it almost anathema to have someone come and lecture *at* a group of people on a given topic, where the function of the audience is really only to listen. If we don't get participation, we're only doing half the job.

What we have tried to do is organize small groups in an educational program and have them prepared beforehand. We emphasize reading and preparation and discussion instead of long presentations. These smaller branches lend themselves to this because a small branch of five or ten people *is* a discussion group in one sense.

In Chicago I've compared our experience with some of the comrades' from around the country and there's a lot of similarity. We find some older people hearing about us, learning about us, and deciding that it's time to come in because we're more visible now. We've had that in Chicago and others have had the same experience.

We have branches that are involved in Black community struggles. We have Black recruits in Chicago. A group of feminists who have decided to come in as a group are part of the class now. We have a few trade unionists coming in.

You cannot approach these people with our program as if it were written in stone and say, here it is, we're going to teach this to you. We have to go from their own experiences, their own interests, the reason they came to the party, and on that basis bring them to an understanding of our program.

For example, in a class on the history of the internation-

al, we got into a talk about the guerrillaist orientation in Latin America. We had a couple of new people there. It kind of went over their heads until we brought up the Marquette Park situation in Chicago. There were impulses among some Black groups to organize Blacks to go out fighting the racists now with small groups. This caused an explosion in the class. This they were interested in. Some of them were completely in favor of it. We had to begin a discussion right then and there of why this strategy was wrong, and how we orient to fighting these attacks politically. But we had to go from that specific aspect to the more general aspect of the program.

In the Chicago area the Nazis and the Klan have come to the fore in some of the attacks. Some groups and individuals think the primary question is that we've got to get them banned or focus on physically attacking them. Well, we need to study the nature of fascism. We should study it not by saying this is what happened in 1933 and this is how the Nazis functioned in Germany, but what are they doing here and now, how do we orient to them, and where did we get our ideas on this, how did we arrive at our view of how to deal with the fascists? What is their relative importance now, how does fascism arrive, under what circumstances?

Some of the new Black recruits are very interested in what the Communist Party did back in the 1930s and 1940s in the Black movement and the nature of the CP's betrayal, because they hear things about it and they want to know about it.

We don't start with the history of the Communist International's degeneration, but we begin with the CP's role in the Black movement in the recent period. What have the struggles been? In that light, what makes the Communist Party do what it does?

A pet project of mine for a long time has been the idea that we can and should be teaching more economics. When I was a kid and my father was in the shop, I knew that every worker was their own economist. The union used to put out little booklets, brochures on shop economics. They may or may not have been written by Marxists, but they took up on a very elementary level the nature of wages, piecework, hourly work, the difference between what the boss got and what the worker got. Now I think we're going to have to take this up again because of some of the new people our comrades are dealing with. To them, this is still a question: How to understand the economics of the class struggle; how to understand a union contract.

We have a comrade in a situation in a plant where they give bonuses for increased production. And some of the workers go all out for it, and aren't concerned with increase in hourly rates. But a group of young Black workers on the third shift say, "To hell with that, we don't want to put out the extra work. It doesn't do us any good."

We have to be able to understand what the difference is between the types of compensation, what the economics are. And from that we can go back to the study of *Wage-Labor and Capital*, which will be very useful.

Margaret Scott, San Antonio

We just established a branch in San Antonio in March, and I thought I would talk a little bit about the things we've done and some of the questions I have.

When we got to San Antonio, the bulk of the branch

knew very little about the Southwest. The first thing we felt an immediate need for was educating ourselves about the history of Mexico, the Southwest, the Mexican revolution, and so forth. The first thing we did was organize an education series just for ourselves.

I think we made a slight mistake in projecting building this also as a public class. It seems a little strange for a group to arrive brand new in an area and immediately organize classes on the history of the area. We realized halfway along that we didn't want to publicize this class very much. This was something we really needed to do for ourselves, and the classes were very successful from that point of view. They filled us in on a lot of information we needed to have.

At the same time we organized a fundamentals series to try to recruit people we were bringing around us. These classes were fairly successful, although I felt that the series we had subsequently was more successful. The later series was around *The History of American Trotskyism*.

I'd like to hear people's experiences with these general "What Is Socialism" classes, because my experience in San Antonio was that unless you are especially adept at talking about socialist ideas, it doesn't seem to interest people as much as a class that's based around something specific. The classes we had this summer on *The History of American Trotskyism* drew five or six independents, and there was much more discussion around it, much more excitement, and a much more focused discussion. People felt they learned a lot more about what socialism was and about what the Stalinists are and that sort of thing, than they would have in a general discussion around socialism. It seemed to give more of a basis for discussion to begin.

It was much less frustrating for the teacher. I taught both, so I can tell you it was much less frustrating to be able to have a much clearer focus. A lot of the same questions were answered in a much better way. Some comrades were worried that this would be over the heads of some of the people who were coming around, but there are definitely ways to present it in such a way, based on Cannon's book, so that it doesn't go over the heads of anybody.

Another thing is the question of the branch taking on the responsibility of teaching Spanish. It's a problem we have discussed and discussed, and we really haven't come up with any solution to it, because we are a small branch. We have an incredible amount of responsibilities and very little time. I would like to hear people speak on this who have dealt with this problem.

My feeling on it is that a weekly class with somebody who already knows the language well and doesn't have to prepare very much for it would be the best. But it's become clear to us as we work in the community that we've got to start buckling down and really learning Spanish. We've got to figure out some way that's realistic to do it. It hasn't been realistic in our experience to try to plan to free up comrades to take intensive courses. They don't learn it in a six-week intensive course. It takes more time than that to learn a language. You have somebody who's out of the picture for six weeks and after that doesn't know the language anyway. So, I'd like to hear from comrades who have been able to begin to solve this problem.

Robert Kimes, Uptown/Rogers Park, Chicago

My comments are on a recently concluded contact class

series we just had in our branch. What I want to address my comments most to is readjusting your perspectives. When I was a member of the Southside branch in Chicago, we had a contact class, and seven people came to the class. It was very successful. When we started out the new branch in Uptown, I proposed a contact class series (we had over 108 names to deal with and we had no idea of who these people were for the most part).

George Novack had just recently come through and we had organized a good campaign around his appearance. In view of that, in conjunction with our petitioning, the branch decided to go ahead with the recruitment class. The class generally was on "What Is Socialism?" "Socialism and Women," etc. We ended up with one of our candidates giving the last session of the class.

If at all possible, when you're having a class series with contacts, bring in your campaign. If you've got local candidates, have them give classes. It will add weight to your class series.

We had two people come to the first session, one person to the second session, and I got thoroughly demoralized. But we wound up having three at the third session, four at the fourth, and at the last session two of the people asked to become provisional members, out of a total of seven people who came to this contact series. And it looks as though we have a strong possibility of getting two more provisional members.

I'd like to encourage you not to look just at the younger generation. One of our provisional members is a fifty-three-year-old woman from downstate Illinois. She had considered herself a dyed-in-the-wool liberal, as perhaps many of us did at one time. Don't be afraid to have a contact class series, an educational series for those people around you, not just for members.

Paul Montauk, Berkeley

I want to begin by reemphasizing one major point that Fred made, and that is that we're going through a fantastic period of flux and change. I think that one of the things the party needs to do is reinstitute the Party Builder or in this instance we can characterize it as the Party Educational Builder or something of that sort.

We are going to go through experiences in the next period, learning a great deal from each other through our successes and failures. It is important to find the time to send in reports to the National Education Department, which in turn, if they seem to have valuable points, will be disseminated into the field.

The second point is related to the one that Howard made. Consider that if instead of all of us sitting here, and each of us giving a three-minute presentation, someone gave a two-hour talk. I can assure you that after fifty minutes our attention level would be reduced, and after an hour and a half we would have started looking for the lavatory and so on. The term lecture originated in Charles University in 1200 and they still use it. It has its values and it has its limitations.

By getting people to participate, by giving them assignments, we can attempt to design education in the seminar fashion, with ways and means to get everybody involved.

Now the heterogeneity of the new people coming to the class doesn't seem to be too big a problem. We have recruited quite a few people in Berkeley. Some of them

have done a lot of heavy reading and some of them are just beginning.

One other thing is that we actually began by using our preconvention discussion as a new members class as well as a decision-making discussion in our branch. Anyone who was coming around us in the course of the campaign or the petitioning who we felt was moving toward us was invited. About nine potential members attended our preconvention discussions.

There is a tendency to develop a compartmentalization in branch life, in which education often comes out second best. Education is seen as the responsibility of the education director.

We've got to get away from that. The whole executive committee has to take responsibility for conceptualizing, guiding, and carrying out branch education.

At one point, we found it necessary to print up a glossary of initials. This is something that can really drive people crazy. You hear about the LTF and the IMT, and a whole alphabet soup of numbers and letters. We took action on that by printing up a glossary with a little definition beside each one of the terms.

The tape library is invaluable. We can play Malcolm X, Bea Hansen on the organizational character of the party, and so on. You can use one tape and develop around it six or seven different areas that comrades can be assigned to take up and discuss in a class.

Richie Lesnik, San Diego

Over the last six months, the San Diego branches doubled in size, so we have the problem of integrating between fourteen and sixteen new members. I myself have lost count. That was a major part of our educational activity throughout this last winter and the spring and this summer. Before I go over any aspect of our educational activity, one point has to be understood about all of the California branches. The petition campaign made it very difficult to have a really successful series of educationals. Although the petitioning itself only actually took place for about three and a half weeks, all the preparation and orientation of the branch that was necessary stretched out into most of June. So most of the educational activity that we planned for the late spring and early summer got a little bit lost when we decided to get into the petitioning campaign itself.

On general education of the branch, we are one of the branches that had a successful educational campaign in the winter and the spring. We took the national outline on Stalinism, divided it up into four classes, and left a few things out of it. We had one class every other week for eight weeks either before or after the branch meeting, depending on what the schedule of the comrades was. And we found that it was a very successful class.

Because the organizer and a number of other people on the executive committee were very conscientious about it, almost everybody in the branch actually did the reading. If comrades had any questions beforehand, the leadership saw to it that they discussed it with somebody individually before the class itself took place.

Another factor in the series' success was the way the classes were run. In January and February when the classes began, we started getting a lot of new members. So the classes were attuned to their political level. They were directed at the whole branch, but the way they were

presented was adjusted. Before every class, the person giving the presentation would ask if there were any questions that anybody wanted covered in that specific class, and they would be covered.

It was made possible to question the teacher during the class itself just by raising one's hand to ask a question. So we tried to create a general discussion atmosphere in the class itself.

The question of terminology was very important on two levels. First the terminology in the reading itself. We used *The Revolution Betrayed*, which has some pretty complicated terminology that most of the new members didn't understand. Each person giving a presentation went over the reading, took whatever terms they thought might be misunderstood or not understood by people, and briefly went over them before class began, explaining what Stalinism is, what a bureaucracy is, explaining references to the Shachtman fight in some supplementary reading, and so forth.

In addition, we had a weekend series on economics. A speaker from Los Angeles gave a special two-class presentation based on Mandel's *An Introduction to Marxist Economic Theory*. That was attended by about three-quarters of the branch. It was a very successful class.

Now on the question of new members' education, we had a problem because we had never had to deal with anything like this before. Most of this type of education had been done in the YSA.

The branch organized and conducted an educational series for the YSA, acting in the capacity of the SWP coming to the YSA meeting. It was built around the basics of socialism and we held it in each of the two YSA chapters in San Diego. At the conclusion of the series we recruited five people to the party out of the YSA. The recruitment was not due only to the series, since a number of them joined during the series. But the fact that we did carry out this educational activity with the YSA helped a lot in recruiting new people to the party.

The other layer of new members in the branch in San Diego is composed mostly of people who have just come around the party on their own or people who may have been around the movement a long time ago and dropped away, people who become interested, people who would come to our weekly discussion group, for example, which was kind of unstructured.

This discussion group was something we organized just to have a place and time where people could come and make initial contact with the party and from there move into other areas of activity. It was organized for new members of the party and other people who were in the YSA and thinking of joining the party. This class covered first of all the *Communist Manifesto*, secondly the political resolution, which we've discussed again at this convention, and thirdly, Farrell Dobbs's Education for Socialists publication *Structure and Organizational Principles of the Party*. This was very useful because it doesn't cover only that question. In a sort of indirect way it deals with a lot of party history. That's a very important thing for new members to begin to grapple with.

The series itself was very successful. Most of the new members attended at least one or two of the classes. One of the problems we had was that people kept joining—a new member would come in after a new members class had been going on for three weeks. This person would not know many things that had already been gone over.

The way we dealt with that is to make sure that this person had a more experienced member in the branch, or maybe a new member who had participated in the discussion, go over this material with them. In this way the new members class wouldn't be bogged down by the discussion of something that had already been covered, while the new member would not be put in the position of missing material that was very important to new members' education.

The petition drive, together with this experience, created a whole new approach to new members' education that we've now adopted as the main way we conduct it, since we found the petition drive made discussion groups and classes not possible. The approach is the concept of individual discussion around a particular reading, or just an informal discussion of a number of topics we want new members to cover. We've begun assigning individual party members, most of whom are more experienced, or at least have gone through a number of educational series, to conduct discussions with the new members on a weekly or even more-than-weekly basis, depending on how often the new member wants to take up any question or discuss anything. These discussions range from phone calls to a cup of coffee after a branch meeting, to a several hour meeting over dinner.

We found this has been very useful not only in specific discussion of readings, but has been one of the ways we helped the new members to understand the preconvention discussion in San Diego. We organized discussions either before or after the reports themselves for new members who may have trouble understanding questions of terminology, etc.

Initials were a big problem in San Diego because we have a lot of comrades in San Diego who have been in the party about five years and they would get up during preconvention discussion and every other word would be an initial. And the new members would be just sitting there, having no idea what these people were talking about. At one point somebody got up and the extent of their contribution to the discussion was to define the initials the previous speaker had used.

Trudy Hawkins, West Side Detroit

One of the questions that I think new members really have (I think about myself when I joined the YSA) is, What is the group I am joining? How do they function? The organizer sits down and talks with you and tells you some basic things, but you never really get a good concept of the structure of the party, how decisions are made. I was thinking that educationals should explain to people when they first join how the party functions and what it is.

I think that today we are starting to have much shorter educationals. I used to have to sit through an hour-and-a-half or two-hour presentation and I was asleep before the first half hour was over.

This summer we started off having people reading something like sixty or seventy pages a week plus the preconvention discussion. This was outrageous. People just had to sit down and say, "Something has to be taken out of these readings." People are not going to read this. I can remember, after four years in the movement, not being able to complete a whole reading assignment on a specific class because you have sixty to seventy pages to read. And this stuff wasn't easy reading either.

We're starting to recruit whole layers of Black members. One thing that hasn't happened in the four years I've been in the movement is Black history classes or even discussions of this in the party.

This is one thing to look at. Black people don't automatically know this history. We don't get it in school in terms of our history, Black history. It's not really taught in the universities. The only time you can get a grasp of the history of Black people is for our comrades to educate themselves. I think we should give serious consideration to discussing some of these books on Blacks in America like *Before the Mayflower*. I think that comrades, not just Black comrades but comrades as a whole, need to be educated on Black history.

One comrade in Detroit is going over the whole history of Blacks in the labor movement, which is something we haven't done in the past.

One of the ideas that we toyed with in the past is having mini-educational, like fifteen-minute educational, before the branch meetings. There will probably be different things that come up in different branch meetings that new comrades haven't heard about before and you might want to have an educational on them to prep them on what these things are about.

It would have been good before our petitioning campaigns had gone on (we didn't do it in Detroit but I think it would have been good) to have an educational on our election policy, why we run.

Another idea is taking one particular book and have three or four comrades, not necessarily in the same branch, who want to study a particular book, get together and have a discussion group. Many other groups in Detroit have been doing this. Groups of women, groups of Black folks, are starting to have discussion groups and they've been very effective in educating these people. I think we may want to start to use that ourselves.

One suggestion we've discussed for new members is a revolving class series. This is a series of three independent classes that repeat every three weeks. A person could begin with the second class and catch the first class in another two weeks.

We have to be very careful in selecting our teachers. The problem I had in the past is the fact that some teachers of these classes intimidate people. That stifles discussion, stifles people wanting to ask questions when you think you're going to be vamped on when you ask a question.

I think we want to discourage that type of atmosphere in our educational. I don't think we're going to get educated if we feel intimidated, can't bring up the questions we have, and can't pose questions to the group. The teachers should pose questions themselves, throw them out before the people in the class and let the body discuss them, rather than the teacher being the person who is looked to for all the answers.

The person before me was speaking about the relationship of the party to the YSA in educational work. One thing we've discussed is taking new members into the party. Some of the questions they have are the same as the ones new members of the YSA have. Often it will be possible to have joint educational, where we can start to deal with the questions these new members have.

Often the party and the YSA aren't located in the same area. The YSA is getting more and more activists on the campus, and it's going to be very good for the party to start showing itself in some of those places—going around

to campuses to give educational classes. This helps the YSA carry out educational. It also puts the party in front of these new YSA members so they can start to think about what the party is and start thinking about joining the SWP.

Tom Fisk, Dallas

I want to relate to the comrades the experience we've had in Dallas in organizing classes. We're a small new branch—ten members, of whom about half are new to the socialist movement.

We had a very successful series of classes this summer on the *History of American Trotskyism*, and I think the way we organized it had something to do with its success.

The classes were given by members of the party who were not members of the executive committee, who were not major leaders of the branch, and who were new members of the party. Their educational were guided by and gone over a bit beforehand with the party organizer. The classes were short—twenty minutes long—but they were expected to be seriously prepared; that is, written out in full. After that we had a discussion for about forty minutes or an hour, in which the more experienced members usually helped to keep the discussion going if there was a shortage of questions. The way they would do this is to throw out provocative questions. This made a very open atmosphere so that everybody could contribute in the discussion and ask the questions that were on their mind. I think it also prevented the presentations from being too long.

The one thing we had to be conscious of, and I don't think we were entirely successful in doing this, was to keep in mind who the classes were primarily intended to be for. And that was the new members we had just recruited. Some comrades in the branch tended to think that it was an opportunity for them to get out on the floor of the discussion everything they knew about socialism within a two-minute contribution, without keeping in mind that it was intended to be understood by the new members in the branch.

I think it's part of the turn to educate the comrades, and particularly those who have been around for a few years, to be able to phrase what they know about Trotskyism in terms that our new members will be able to comprehend.

Now that the branches are again holding contact classes and they are not just being done by the YSA, we've learned a few things about holding successful contact classes.

The first thing we have learned is that you have to be ready to go ahead and have a series when you have people around to listen to them. We had a few people who wanted to attend classes two weeks ago, that is, the week we were having our heaviest pre-convention discussion. These were people who might have been collared away by opponents or who might have lost interest in the socialist movement if we didn't have some small gathering that we could invite them to, a vehicle for talking about our ideas. We weren't having forums or anything of that character at that time.

We had a discussion on this and decided that we wanted to begin a series of classes—the first one to be the Wednesday before Oberlin. We wanted to seize the time, seize the opportunity. We went ahead and did that and we were successful. They all showed up and indicated they wanted to come back again the Wednesday after Oberlin.

From now on we are going to have comrades who are prepared to begin a series of classes whenever we have people around us—even one or two. We'll begin a series of classes just for them in order to draw them closer to the party.

Dave Wulp, Pasadena

A couple of things that comrades have touched on, I want to try and tie together a bit. The first is on the use of glossaries for abbreviations and so forth.

That's all right I suppose, but it seems to me that that's attacking the problem the wrong way, and that the emphasis of the comrades should be on eradicating that language from everybody's vocabulary and using normal terms so that normal people can understand what you're talking about. In all ways we're trying to open up the party and make it a place that people feel comfortable coming to without going through some kind of rigorous learning process. Especially in contact classes or any place that new members or contacts are coming to, we should just wipe all that vocabulary out.

I don't think that glossaries should be worked on and sent in to the National Office and then sent out to all the branches so that we all have glossaries we can give people.

We have one responsibility to learn a foreign language. That is Spanish, which for most of us is a foreign language. We don't have to make up a foreign language of exotic initials and terms that everybody has to learn to be part of our movement. There are ways of fighting this habit. Have somebody raise their hand every time a speaker uses such a term or set of initials. Things of that type can be done and people can be broken of these habits of speech.

It is especially important to eliminate such usages from campaign committee meetings. Hopefully these will be open meetings that will attract nonmembers.

I favor the seminar approach to educationals. If you are going to make a mistake in any direction, I would bend the stick toward having no presentation at all rather than having a long presentation. The nonlecture method of teaching ideas has been around for a long time. It's called the Socratic method, because the Greek philosopher Socrates used it. It's just straight questions and answers, guided by a leader.

In branches I've been in, we've used the study guides from the National Education Department and the questions associated with the readings. We have had problems with using these questions. In my opinion too many questions deal with who did what on what day. If you have a series on the Russian revolution, for instance, it is more important to get the basic political concepts than to become an expert on the details of Russian history.

The best kind of questions are thought questions that relate the concepts in the material you are reading to current struggles. It's like the example given by the comrade of how an incident in Marquette Park sparked a discussion of guerrillaism. Those kinds of questions are the kind to have in a discussion class and they can be thought out beforehand and mimeographed and made available to those attending the class.

It takes a great deal of time to prepare a presentation, a long presentation. It does not take so much time for a person to prepare, thoroughly read the item, and be able to lead a discussion group. But it does take preparation.

It's a big mistake for somebody to think that leading this thing is duck soup—that you write out a series of questions and then you go over them. The most important thing, which was also mentioned by somebody as a way of proceeding when there is a short presentation, is to start out by dealing with the questions that anybody in the room has, that were raised in their mind by the reading.

Short reading assignments are very important so that you can make sure that everybody does the reading. That is the key to this method. Not only the preparation of the person who's going to be leading the discussion, but absolutely vitally important is the fact that everybody does the reading. You cannot make this kind of thing work unless everybody does the reading. So you've got to pace it, in terms of how often the classes are held, and in terms of how much reading is assigned so it is well within the capabilities of everybody from the point of view of all the other political responsibilities they have.

That leads me to one last thing I want to talk about and that's placing a priority on educationals. The first thing to get dumped when the crunch comes from outside work is educational work. One of the major responsibilities of the executive committee in dealing with this educational work is to make it much higher on the priority list.

It seems quite clear to me that from the remarks comrades have made, it's a very important part of the activity of all the small branches. I can think of a very well rounded fall series for a branch that would include internal educationals, periodic external forums, the subscription drive, and campaign work. You can fit everything else into this outline. And we would recruit people out of it. Because that's what this is all about. That's what the whole turn is all about—to maximize the recruitment we can get out of this generalized radicalization that is going on.

That means that educationals must happen—regularly, as they are scheduled. I know of innumerable educational series that never got finished. Sometimes it's because Washington bombed Haiphong and you have a series of antiwar demonstrations week after week after week. All right, that's the real world and we have to respond when those things happen.

One way to get around this, however, that has proven to be successful in some branches is to follow the pattern of summer schools. We structure the summer school much more than educationals in other parts of the year.

Well, why not have a winter school or a fall school or a spring school or one in every quarter? You say, "All right, for the next four weeks we are going to find a day during the week when this is going to be educational day. It might be Sunday afternoon, it might be a weeknight, whatever fits the schedules of the comrades. And you say this is our winter educational. It's going to be three classes, or depending on the size of the branch, two different subject classes, each having four sessions. You plan it months in advance. You can go over any number of topics including those that were suggested by Fred. But the key thing is to start.

The other thing that should be done with some regularity is the educationals associated with branch meetings, which are of a slightly different character. I think they should have presentations, rather than a question-and-answer format and should be on topics that the branch is dealing with in its daily work, or as someone suggested, an explanation of something that's going to

come up in the branch meeting that may be new, or that new members might not have a firm grasp of.

But they should also be regular and they should be open to YSA members and also anybody else we can get to come to them. That's why it's good to have them as the first point on the agenda. That serves two purposes. It sets a concrete time when you can invite people to come and also ensures they happen. If you have a long meeting, because you have a discussion you didn't count on when you worked out the agenda, and your educational is the last point on the agenda, the educational gets skipped.

Allan Grady, North St. Louis

If most of the comrades can remember when they first joined the movement, especially if you were a student, you read very voraciously, you really dug into it. I was reminded of this last summer as we recruited some provisional members. They would be looking around in the bookstore and they would ask me what they should read.

I think that any education director should take into consideration that when new members come around, they're going to want to read. I don't care how much time they have. They're usually excited about socialism and they want to dig into it and see what it is. It's important to be able to provide these people with lists of reading materials.

Many of them, if they're as interested as we were when we came around the party, and they will be, are excited about socialism and they're going to want to go faster than some of these classes. And maybe they're going to want to study things other than what some of the classes take up. I've seen some provisional members read three or

four books a week, especially if they are students and they have a lot of extra time. It's important for the education director to remember this.

Summary Remarks by Fred Feldman

First of all, about the tape library. Due to a severe lack of personnel, the National Office tape library is not functioning at present. It is not possible at present to meet any requests from the branches for tapes. Obviously, this is a vital tool for our movement and a priority is going to be put on getting it reorganized and functioning.

Paul Montauk raised a point about communicating with the National Office that I think is important. In the course of the turn and the division of the branches, there has been a loss of communication between the branches and the Education Department and also with other departments. We know you're out there. We can hear rumbling noises and we read the *Militant*.

But there is no substitute for direct reports from the branches. We need them so our ideas and proposals will not just be abstract projections of ideas in our heads, but will actually reflect the experiences and needs of our branches.

We need them also to provide a cross-fertilization of ideas and experiences among all the branches. It isn't necessary for each branch to start from square one if it has available to it the experiences, mistakes, and successes of other branches. We want to resume providing that information in the next period. To do that effectively, we have to hear from you, get your experiences, your suggestions, and proposals. So keep in touch.

Producing Politically Attractive, Regular Forums

[The following is an edited version of the presentation by Melissa Singler to the workshop on Producing Politically Attractive, Regular Forums at the Socialist Workers Party convention, August 1976. Excerpts from the discussion are also included.]

* * *

Melissa Singler, Cincinnati

Why are forums important? It's because there are many people, all the way from people we meet in day-to-day activity to people who might see a poster or one of our leaflets, who are interested in finding out about socialist ideas. The forum provides a place for these people to go, a place where they can get to know us and learn about what we stand for.

Every branch needs a forum series, that is, a series of public meetings where we have speakers or panels on topics of interest. This doesn't necessarily mean that the forum has to be held every week. Some small branches may only be able to hold them every other week. The important thing is that each branch hold forums, and that we hold them on a regular schedule, so that people will come to view the forums as an established, ongoing institution.

We always want to have a leaflet advertising a forum, or some similar activity such as a campaign meeting, which we can give to people we meet. When we are out campaigning or sell someone a subscription to the *Militant*, or when we're at an ERA rally, or a union meeting, or meet someone on the job or at school, it's important to have some kind of meeting coming up soon that we can invite people to. This is essential for bringing new people to our movement.

Bringing people around our movement, and winning new members, is the most important function of the forum. But there are also other functions. I thought of six:

- (1) The forum is a vehicle for getting out our point of view on important issues such as South Africa, the ERA, busing, the death penalty, or a strike or other union issue.
- (2) The forum gives us a place to have discussions with other groups or individuals on these issues.
- (3) Our forums can provide a platform for people involved in various struggles to win support for these struggles. And the forum gives us a chance to learn more about these struggles and to contact those involved.
- (4) Another function of the forum is to give us a place to debate and discuss differences with rival groups on the left and other groups with whom we disagree.
- (5) The forum is also a vehicle for training our members to speak publicly.
- (6) The forums

can be money raisers for the party.

In planning a forum series, it's always good to begin by thinking about the time span you are dealing with. For example, this fall we have approximately a fourteen-week period to deal with. You want to look at that time period and figure out approximately how frequently you think your branch can hold forums. This will depend on the size and resources of your branch. You will want to start thinking of topics so that speakers can begin preparing and so there is time to contact speakers who are not members of our movement. At the same time, you don't want to box yourself in with topics advertised for too many weeks ahead, since you want flexibility to respond to events as they take place.

Each branch has different milieus it is orienting to. Some branches are in the Chicano community, or the Puerto Rican community, or Black community. Some cities have large Arab communities. Some branches focus a lot of work on a particular union. These things should be taken into consideration in planning topics.

There are many different types of forums and topics which can make for successful forums. For example, you might take some of the anniversaries that are coming up to discuss specific topics. For example, the anniversary of the Chinese revolution in October might be a good time to explain what's happening in China. Or on the anniversary of the Russian revolution you might show the film *Ten Days That Shook the World*, which by the way, you can rent from the public library. Leading into the film, a comrade could give a little talk, explaining what we think of the Russian revolution and saying a few words about today's struggles. The anniversary of the Cuban revolution might offer an opportunity to talk about the struggle in Latin America.

It's good to try to be as creative as possible on the forums. You can have talks with a single speaker, giving our view on a specific subject, for example on Ireland. You can also have panels. You can have panels with outside speakers or you can consider a panel with only comrades. In Cleveland we had a panel on the hidden history of the American Revolution, and different comrades took different topics, like ten minutes on women in the American Revolution, another on prisoners in the American Revolution, and so forth. It was a really interesting forum and gave some comrades who had not had previous experience speaking a chance to do this.

You can also have panels with representatives from different organizations, people who have been involved in different struggles. One such panel we had in Cleveland was on "Women in Sports." On the panel we had a couple of comrades who are interested in this, along with a couple of women who were active in the fight to allow girls to play in the Little League.

We also had a forum on police brutality with the parents of two young Black men who had been shot by police, along with a news reporter who originally covered the story, someone from the ACLU, and a person from SCAR.

We were the only group that invited the parents of both these young men to speak and to show solidarity with each other in the fight against police brutality.

Another thing to consider is having a movie. There are a number of catalogs listing available films we might be interested in. Most movies will have one or another thing we might disagree with, but that should not be a problem. At a Militant Forum, different ideas can be presented

without us having to take responsibility for everything. In some instances we might want to combine the film showing with a short speech of introduction or comments afterward.

Some groups offer slides. There is a slide show available on the Palestinian struggle, Dianne Feeley has slides on women's liberation, and I believe the Farm Workers also have a slide show.

You have to watch the cost of films to be sure you don't lose too much money on them. It would be very hard for a small branch, for example, to show a hundred dollar movie. But many movies or slides are cheaper.

You can also do artistic forums. A forum that I've seen done several times is one called "A Night of Bertolt Brecht." You can have people do readings from Brecht. At one of these Brecht meetings we had a professor who knew something about Brecht introduce the forum with a fifteen-minute sketch on Brecht and on what was happening in Germany politically at the time he wrote. The newspaper covered this forum and we found to our surprise that the hall was jammed with people.

Another similar thing might be a night of women's poetry or a night on women's writings. Or maybe a Black poet's night. In New York some time ago there was a forum on the Irish revolution combined with some Irish folk singers who sang songs from that struggle.

Try to think of some different approaches. For example, women's liberation forums are usually well attended. But we don't always have to have them on the most obvious topics like the ERA or socialism and feminism, although these are good topics. One forum we had was on "Marilyn Monroe, the Destruction of a Woman Under Capitalism."

Now, on how to build the forums. It's important to have a forum list of people who might regularly come. Comrades should keep adding names to this list, so you will also have to be constantly pruning it, keeping it an active list. When we are out campaigning and getting subscriptions, we should ask people who show interest if they'd like to receive notices of public forums. This can be done quite easily, just by putting a simple check mark on the back of the subscription blank.

Leaflets on the forums should be available to be posted. Comrades should also take these leaflets with them to the job, to give to people at political meetings, to pass out on campus, and so forth.

Be sure you include an announcement of the forum in the *Militant*, so all the readers of the *Militant* in your area can see it. It's also good for *Militant* readers around the country to see a listing of all the different topics we are taking up at our forums. You might also check to see if there are campus or community papers that will carry stories on the forum, or that will put an announcement in their "What's On" columns.

The most important aspect of building the forum is, of course, the one-on-one work of asking people to come. Someone, for example, on their job telling someone else, "Hey, I'm going to a forum on such and such, would you like to come with me?"

On finances. You should generally charge something for the forum. It costs money to put on forums and people in society expect this to be the case. Most forums charge a dollar. There are also graduated prices for students or unemployed, or free admission for people on strike.

Some branches have report forms where information for evaluating the forum after a couple of months can be

compiled. On it might be a breakdown of attendance. You might also have expenses and income on these sheets. Then at the end of a certain period the Executive Committee or Forum Committee can analyze the report. This helps you to know such things as how many people of different categories, such as women, YSA members, and so on, are coming to forums. It's also good to have a report on literature sales. We've often found it's good to have a special literature table on relevant topics for a particular forum. Sometimes you might want to have a sale of books on the relevant topic.

A forum does not have to be huge to be valuable. We can have and will have some very large forums. A comrade from Minneapolis is going to speak after me about some of the big ones they've had. If they are big, that's wonderful, but you can still have very successful small forums. In some branches, some of the forums might take a form more like a class. It would have a more informal atmosphere, advertised as a "discussion of the alternatives in the '76 elections," or "a discussion on South Africa," or something like that.

But we shouldn't be afraid of spectacular forums, or forums with well-known speakers. Too often we are hesitant to ask someone to speak who is well known. Many times we are surprised at how many of these people say yes. I remember when Betty Friedan first published her book the *Feminine Mystique*. We just called her up and she agreed to speak. I remember when Mark Lane first came out with his analysis of the Kennedy assassination, we asked him to speak and 1,000 people came. People will say yes, and given the things the party is doing now, and how well known we are getting, I think people are going to say yes even more.

We also want to organize greeting people at the forums, selling subscriptions, talking to people, organizing the mailing list, and so on. Sometimes it's best to have the same person organize some of these things from week to week, since if you don't organize it you end up either not doing it or hassling the same people too much.

I want to end by giving you a little description of our first Cincinnati forum. We couldn't believe it because the people who came were like a textbook example of what a new branch can do. This was our first forum and we used our *Militant* subscription list, we contacted all the contacts the YSA had, we handed out leaflets on sales. The people who came were one person who had a *Militant* subscription, one who came from the leafleting, two who came from sales, and two who came from the *Militant* mailing list. From this we recruited the one who came from the leaflet. There were about eighteen people at the forum. This wasn't a big crowd, but for a new branch, it was good and represented an important start for us.

Greg Cornell, Minneapolis

I'm from Minneapolis. We found that the forums can be a very valuable way of winning new members. We've recruited about twenty people since January, and one of the things that has drawn people around was the forums, the regularity of the forums, and some of the things that went on at the forums. Before we divided the branch, we had a series of big forums that averaged about 100 people per forum. Some of the forums had 125 to 175 people. I agree that forums, even if they are smaller, can be

valuable, but I want to talk about the larger ones we were able to organize.

We picked what we thought were popular topics for the forums. And we saw the forums as a way to build struggles. When an issue was hot, we always tried to move fast to get speakers on that subject. For example, on the ERA, we had what was probably the first major meeting in Minneapolis on the ERA. About 150 people came. We had the attitude Melissa mentioned. Think big. Don't be afraid to invite people who are prominent. We had the state coordinator of NOW; the head of the minority women's task force; the head of Twin Cities CLUW; and a comrade who was president of her union local.

At our weekly forum committee meetings we always had several things on the agenda. One thing that's important is what special things can be done to publicize a particular forum. For example on the ERA forum, NOW agreed to include the advertisement for the forum in their newsletter. Another of our forums was a radical critique of the news media. We made sure that the journalism school was posted, and a half dozen people from this school came.

We had a forum on the attack on civil liberties, which was built very broadly. Vernon Bellecourt spoke, a PRDF speaker, and William Kunstler was also slated to speak. Kunstler called several days before the forum and said he was unable to speak. So he made a short tape for us that was played at the forum, and we got someone prominent to replace him. Bill Hampton, brother of Fred Hampton, came in from Chicago. We were able to give Hampton an honorarium by raising money from individuals in the Black community.

Another big forum was a meeting of 1,000 people for Bernadette Devlin. It's clear that our opportunities to do these things continue to grow.

Responding quickly on an important issue is something that just can't be overemphasized. In mid-January in Minneapolis a Black man named Eric Benford was killed by a white suburban cop. The shooting was widely publicized, and there was a lot of reaction against it. We proposed a broad public forum to the father of the man that was killed. He agreed. He spoke, the head of the state NAACP spoke, the head of a community center spoke, Clyde Bellecourt spoke, along with several other people. A comrade gave a fund speech. It was one of the biggest protest meetings on this issue in Minneapolis. About 175 people came, about 50 of them Black. We built the forum as a protest. The top of the leaflet said, "Public Forum." And the big headline said, "Protest Eric Benford's murder."

This year we had more forums out of our hall. We had one at an Indian center. It was a memorial for thirty-eight Indians who were hanged in Makato, Minnesota, in 1862 after a Sioux uprising. We leafleted the Indian community, going door to door. On the anniversary of Malcolm X's death, we had a forum at a church in the St. Paul Black community before we had a branch there. One of the speakers was a member of the Nation of Islam who called up and asked to speak.

The leaflets we made were very important. We had a simple style with the essential information. We did it in such a way that the leaflet could be used as a mini-poster. I think personally that the art aspect of the leaflet is sometimes overdone. The main thing with a forum leaflet is to get out the basic facts. This should be neat and professional looking. To save money our branch bought

only one style press type. That way, you could make sure you wouldn't run out of this or that letter and waste the rest. We also printed our leaflets, as opposed to mimeographing them, to make them more professional.

We also put out a press release to the newspapers and a public service announcement to the radio stations. These announcements were very brief. A fair number of items got picked up.

In addition, we'd make sure the forum was announced through the *Militant*, and we got a lot of people that way. Posting is also important.

You also want a smoothly operating forum. It's good to talk with the chairperson a day before about the format. You also need to be sure to let any guest speakers know what you have in mind for the forum, what the purpose is, and how long they should talk.

The length of the forums was usually about an hour and a half. Longer makes people fidgety, and much shorter makes people feel they didn't get their money's worth. For some of the large, rally-type forums we didn't have question-and-answer periods. We always had coffee and cookies afterward so that people could stay around and talk.

While we normally charge a dollar for forums, and keep this, we usually made an exception for defense-type forums. In these cases a prior agreement was made with speakers on a defense case that they would have everything above expenses. If there was a fund pitch, it was usually short.

Several things can be done to help make sure speakers show up. One is to inform the speaker if there is going to be publicity for the forum. Also to mail the speakers a copy of the leaflet you are using. Also, it's good to call them a day or two before to talk about how the forum is shaping up.

On the forum list. Before crossing someone off the list, we would send a postcard that they could send back to us saying they wanted to stay on the list.

Jerry Myers, Berkeley

I'm from the Berkeley branch. One thing we do is to give our speakers a gift subscription to the *Militant*. Several people who have spoken at our forums have been very pleased with that.

Some of our most successful forums were a debate between Omari Musa and Professor Domhoff on the Democratic Party, a forum on Senate Bill 1, on the ERA, and one on the teachers' strike.

We usually have dip and chips to encourage people to stay around after forums.

Bob Stanton, West Philadelphia

Our branch doesn't have a big enough room in the headquarters for forums. We go outside the hall. I want to get more ideas on locations.

Melissa Singler

One possible place is libraries. You can reserve rooms at libraries, which are generally free.

Pat Mayberry, Western Addition, San Francisco

We held our first forum at a community recreation center. There was no charge. It was a forum on Angola. We were not able to build this forum, unfortunately, because of other commitments, but despite this, fifty people came.

Rashida Abdul-Ahad, West Philadelphia

I want to make some comments about building forums in the Black community. The Malcolm X movie is extremely good. The movie can be used as a basis for informal rap sessions. It's important to remember that a lot of people don't know things like exactly what the "ERA" is. So this can be included on the leaflet.

Report to the Party Finances Workshop

by Ove Aspoy

[The following report was presented at the workshop on Party Finances at the Socialist Workers Party convention, August 1976.]

* * *

The purpose of this report is threefold. First, to assess the campaign to raise the sustainer to the National Office to \$20 per member per month. Second, to examine our financial procedures in light of our new organizational structures. And third, to look at the financial projections we want to set for this fall and after.

We're almost halfway to our goal of raising the average per capita sustainer to the National Office to \$20 per member per month. The national average increased from \$13.82 in March to \$16.31 by July. Where did the progress come from?

At the National Committee Plenum in April, Barry Sheppard outlined the problem that had arisen. In the first

stages of carrying through the organizational steps that proved necessary to implement our political turn, there was a shift toward more of the sustainer pledged by the membership going into local expenses and less to the national party. The plenum projected three ways to correct this imbalance.

First, new branches were asked to make their national financial commitment a top priority. Richmond, Bronx, San Fernando Valley, and St. Paul all set their sustainers at \$20, and Cincinnati only slightly less at \$19.50. The comrades in Louisville, which isn't technically a branch yet but an organizing committee, asked if we couldn't make an exception in their case and let them pledge \$20 for both full and provisional members. Of course we said yes. Also St. Paul has since raised its pledge to \$21. This indicates that \$20 is not the ceiling for new branches.

Second, a rule of thumb was put forward for establishing locals or dividing branches in existing locals: to keep the local overhead roughly the same after division as before,

so as not to have to reduce the per capita pledge to the National Office. In this too we have been successful. In all the divisions since the plenum the average per capita pledge to the National Office, city-wide, did not drop below the predivision level.

The third projection had to do with branches where an imbalance had developed between the sustainer sent to the National Office and the amount kept in the local area. The plenum asked these branches to take the necessary steps to halt any further drop in the national per capita sustainer and then to begin raising toward the \$20 average goal.

Here again we can report significant progress. Increases have been made in all cases in which prior to the plenum a division had resulted in a drop of the per capita sustainer to the National Office. The New York local raised its city-wide average to the National Office by almost \$5.50. The Chicago local raised its city-wide average by more than \$3.00, and the Los Angeles local by more than \$5.50.

We've learned from the recent raises that per capita pledges of \$20 and more are not restricted to the smaller branches in new cities. In New York there are three branches at or above \$20. In Los Angeles there is one above, one at \$20, and one slightly below. In Chicago, one branch is at \$20, and from what the comrades have reported on their plans, watch for some big steps in September.

I hope comrades don't feel slighted if I didn't mention the progress of their branch, but there have been so many raises that it isn't possible in this short time to list them all.

So, the last few months have been a big success. We set up new branches with a \$20 per capita pledge to the National Office. We completed a number of divisions without lowering the average city-wide per capita pledge, and we made significant progress toward correcting the imbalance between local and national needs resulting from our first divisions. And we're almost halfway to the \$20 average. What we project for the rest of the year is more of the same.

I think there is another way of showing that the goal for a \$20 average is not an unrealistic projection. Since 1968 when the sustainer system was first set up, the average percentage of the sustainers collected by the branches that is sent to the National Office has hovered around 46%. That is, until a few months ago, when it dropped to 34%. The national average is now back up to 40%.

When we reach the \$20 average we will be back in the 46% range. A \$20 average should not significantly change what our past experience has been on division of the sustainer between local and national needs.

Of course, doing something on paper is one thing and actually doing it in the branch is another. Some branches are grappling with the problem of overhead and some with the problem of a too low average branch sustainer. This last point is one area that we have to pay special attention to.

In the last year, the average sustainer to the branch dropped by more than 50 cents. Add to this the effects of inflation on the remaining sustainer and the real drop is actually more. Until last year, the national average sustainer on the branch level had kept up with or increased faster than the rate of inflation.

Unlike the campaign to increase the per capita sustainer to the National Office, which is really rolling, the

sustainer levels on a branch level are very uneven. Some branches are making good progress on raising branch sustainers, but more are not. Some have fallen significantly behind.

In the next few months we will take a closer look at this problem and find out what has caused this drop in the average branch sustainer.

In the second part of this report I want to go over our financial norms in light of our new organizational structures. I don't propose to take up the question of the norms for financial commitment of individual comrades in this report. What I want to review is the other side of our basic financial procedures. How we raise, spend, and keep track of the party's money.

At the time we launched the sustainer system, we also launched a campaign to keep all branches current on their payments to national departments. Later, in early 1973, when the branch debts to national departments reached \$50,000, we launched a national debt retirement campaign.

To accomplish these goals, a process of upgrading our financial procedures was started, which continues to this day. A little later in this report I am going to propose some new steps to further upgrade our finances, but first let's look at where we are now.

In the new smaller size branches, the record-keeping side of finances should be simpler. These branches will not raise and spend as much money as the old-type larger branches. Financial directors should be able to stay on top of the branch's finances more easily. You will be able to talk to every comrade about their sustainer. Because each comrade's sustainer will make up a greater part of the branch's needs, comrades will see the necessity of their contributions in more personal terms. In these new situations it should be easier to raise money for the party and to spend it more carefully.

But simpler doesn't mean less professional. In the smaller branches we don't want to get rid of the ledgers and receipt books. We don't want to stop having budgets even if the branch is so small that the monthly income is only a few hundred dollars.

Every cent the party gets helps to further our work, and so every cent must be spent as consciously and carefully as possible. I think the new branches will find setting up and utilizing budgets, in some ways, easier and more usable than in the old, larger branches.

Because some branches will be handling less money, it should be easier to project more accurate budgets. It should in turn be easier to compare the actual performance and projections and to use the budgets as one way of assessing the success of political projections.

The budget is one of the most important financial tools we have. When properly prepared and presented, it gives the necessary information to the comrades so they can make the best decision about how to spend the party's money. It allows the comrades to plan out and control expenses according to the political priorities of the branch.

We want to project not just continuing the use of budgets, but being more consistent in having budgets for all branch departments and projects, like forums, election campaigns, summer schools, divisions, and headquarters relocations, just to mention a few. The goal should be that no party money is spent without it being part of a budget.

Now I want to take a moment to draw on the experience of the last five years and compare our past and present performance on how close the branches came to keeping

current. That is, how close have the branches come to paying all their bills to the various national departments, on time, each month.

In the last year consistently only about 70% of the branches were current on sustainer payments to the National Office. In contrast, for eleven months in a row in 1973 the branches never dropped below 90% current on sustainer. During that same period in 1973, there were never more than two branches late in any one month and most of the time only one branch or another didn't make it.

Only in two months of last year were 90% of the branches current to the *Militant*. Our past record on the *Militant* had been even better than on sustainer. In 23 out of 28 consecutive months, keeping current to the *Militant* never dropped below 90%. And the past record on keeping current with discussion bulletins was much the same.

In keeping current to Pathfinder the branches never got as high as with the sustainer and the *Militant*, but were consistently in the high 70s and 80% range. Now we are down in the 40s and 50s.

Keeping current to the national departments is one norm that we have to reestablish. Our present level of functioning amounts to backsliding on our goal of constantly upgrading and professionalizing our finances.

Not being current should be seen as a signal that something is not working in the budget. It might be a sign that the projections on sales of literature or *Militants*, forums, or some other area are not accurate. It might be a sign that projections on expenses were underestimated or that expenses are not being watched carefully enough. The money may be in the treasury but the bills aren't being paid on time. It could be a number of things, and the way to tackle this problem is the same way we tackle all problems. The branch leaderships have to assess the problem and work out a proposal to solve it. We want to go on a campaign this fall to reestablish the norm that most branches are current to the national departments each month.

Financial directors should try to find the time to consult regularly with the comrades assigned to the branch bookstores. This is the area that will need the most work in the drive to keep current. The debt owed by the branches to national departments includes money owed for dues, sustainers, and bulletins, as well as to the *Militant* and Pathfinder. There is also a large debt local campaign committees owe the national campaign committee, which needs special attention. Legally, campaign finances and branch finances must be kept separate. But politically, the debt to the campaign must be viewed in the same way as a debt on sustainer, *Militants*, or any other debt to the national party.

At the height of our debt retirement campaign in July 1975, the debt to all departments, not including the campaign, was reduced to \$9,000. Along with the effort to keep current this fall we want to project a companion campaign of retiring all debts to national departments. Because the campaign debts are such a large portion of the total, financial directors and executive committees will need to collaborate very closely with campaign committees to work out budgets that include retiring this debt. We want to aim to have it substantially reduced overall before the end of the year.

I said earlier that we had a proposal to further professionalize our financial procedures. This fall we want to begin experimenting with standardizing the party's financial record keeping and reporting. The goal will be for all branches to use the same bookkeeping methods, the same type of monthly projection and performance reports. We want to set up a system that is just as complete but simpler than what most of our branches are using now.

There are two big advantages to be gained from this. First, everybody in the party could learn the same system. Anyone transferring to any branch could immediately know how the branch is functioning financially by just looking at the latest report. Educating new members about party finances would be easier.

Second, the present system is becoming archaic. As the number of branches grows, the financial collaboration and consultation between the branches and locals with the national and regional centers will not become less important but more so. The job of analyzing the financial reports from the branches to get a picture of finances nationally is becoming more time-consuming and difficult. We will begin this experiment this fall by mailing proposed methods out to the branches. When we have gained enough experience to decide on the best procedures and methods, these in turn will be mailed out to the comrades.

Also while we are experimenting with standardizing reporting and record keeping, we want to move further in the direction of changing from monthly to weekly payment and pledging of National Office sustainer. At the present time eleven branches have already shifted over.

The last thing I want to raise today is the collection of the pledges from the Party-Building Rally at this convention. At the August 1975 convention, the party finances workshop outlined steps to be taken nationally to increase the percentages of pledges collected from national rallies to more than 90%. The percentage collected in previous national collections has averaged between 80% and 85%. The length of the collection of pledges was also shortened, and branches were asked to assign a leading comrade to pledge-collection follow-up.

Only 80% of the pledges to the 1975 convention party-building fund were collected nationally. However, branches that organized a follow-up were successful in collecting well over 90% of the pledges. These branches proved that we don't have to lose between 15% and 20% of the pledges through poor organization of follow-up. Branch leaderships should make sure that adequate time and attention in the branch meetings are devoted to reports and collection of the pledges.

To sum up. We project four campaigns this fall.

First, to continue the drive to raise the average per capita pledge to \$20 per member per month and reach it by the end of the year if possible.

Second, for each branch to keep current with all departments each month.

Third, to begin retiring all debts to national departments with special emphasis on retiring most of the national campaign debt by the end of this year.

And fourth, to go on a one-month blitz campaign to collect at least 90% of the pledges made at the Oberlin Party-Building Rally.

Soviet and Eastern Europe Defense Activities

[The following is the edited transcript of the opening presentation by David Frankel to the workshop on Soviet and Eastern Europe Defense Activities at the Socialist Workers Party convention, August 1976.]

* * *

In order to start, I think I ought to give a brief outline of some of the work we have done and some general political considerations that we in the Socialist Workers Party have in carrying out this work.

We see the fight for democratic rights in the Soviet Union as an essential part of the developing political revolution there. Trotsky's view in the *Transitional Program* was that the struggle against privilege and for democratic rights would be the basis—would be the beginning—of the political revolution and would underlie all the struggles against the bureaucracy. We've seen this work out in reality in the struggles in Poland and Hungary in 1956, in Czechoslovakia in 1968, and in the recent events in Poland, just to cite a few examples.

There's been growing world attention focused on this struggle for democratic rights in the Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe along with the growing activity there. There have been victimizations and continuing ferment.

What can we do? To begin with, we defend the victimized individuals and the broader democratic movement they represent. Our defense, the force of international public opinion in the workers movement, can help to create the best conditions for the masses of the workers to enter the antibureaucratic struggle; it helps make it easier for the working masses in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union to get involved in the fight against the bureaucracy. In the course of the defense work, we hope to forge working relations with dissidents both outside and inside the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries and to begin to circulate Trotskyist ideas. That's the reason behind the publication in Russian of Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution*, of the *Bulletin of the Left Opposition*, and the coming publication of Trotsky's *My Life*.

Ultimately, our aim is to win over these dissidents, the best of them, and to help rebuild the Trotskyist movement in the Soviet Union as part of the antibureaucratic struggle there and as a necessary precondition to the overthrow of the bureaucracy and the successful construction of a socialist society.

In addition, our work in this area has a big impact inside the United States. It is one of the ways that we reestablish the real tradition of socialist democracy, what socialists stand for, and expose the character of Stalinism and deal blows to the Communist parties around the world. This is our issue. The Trotskyist movement was formed in the struggle for socialist democracy at a time when the liberals and capitalists were openly rooting for the Stalin faction in the Soviet Union.

In the last year, there have been two big things we've participated in. First is the Plyushch tour in March and April of this year. Many of the events around that have been described in the *Militant* and *Intercontinental Press*

and I don't want to go over it too much in detail except for one aspect. We encountered in this Plyushch tour a general problem, which is really the underlying problem of all the work we do in the United States in this defense—the problem of how to make distinct the difference between the use of this issue, of the dictatorial regime in the Soviet Union, by the right wing and how we try to raise it.

Plyushch had scheduled a meeting in which Henry Jackson was participating. Jackson, a senator, was at that time a leading contender for the Democratic Party presidential nomination. He had just won the Massachusetts primary, and it was a few weeks before the New York presidential primary that this meeting in New York took place. Overall, the meeting was right-wing—it built up to Jackson very much. Edward Koch, a reactionary congressman from Manhattan, spoke; Simas Kudirka, a Lithuanian refugee who was identified with right-wing groups and was working for Jackson, spoke; as did various Zionist representatives and others. It was a very right-wing crowd of over 3,000.

We anticipated this and we tried very hard to convince Plyushch and the organizers against carrying through this type of meeting. We felt it would harm Plyushch's credibility as a defender of human rights and it could be used by Jackson to his advantage as a campaign ploy. That was obviously Jackson's plan. We failed to convince Plyushch and the organizers of the meeting.

In the event, Plyushch used the demand that the U.S. government open up the Rosenberg files (the sons of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, who were electrocuted in the 1950s, are demanding the FBI files on their parents around the frame-up). Plyushch raised this and urged Jackson to support it. He urged Jackson to support victims of political persecution in Chile and elsewhere in Latin America. He sort of put Jackson on the spot in the way he formulated and raised this. So although as a whole this was a right-wing meeting, Plyushch's own participation was of such a character that he took his distance from it and attempted to give it his own stamp. He got hissed by many in the audience for his troubles.

We saw a remarkable example of a controlled press in this country as a result of this meeting. Normally they would give it very big play. But they didn't print a word in the major press on this meeting of more than 3,000 people just before the New York primary, where Jackson and these others leaders of the Democratic Party in New York were participating.

Plyushch luckily got away without damage in this meeting. But it's indicative of the type of ongoing discussion we have to have on the type of defense of the Soviet dissidents that is needed. Because Plyushch got away without damage, he, and the Ukrainians we have worked with in the past who organized the meeting for him, have the illusion that they can do this as a regular thing—that they can organize with the participation of the right-wing groups and can then turn the meeting around to their advantage. The truth of the matter is that if they were to keep this up, it would be inevitable that the participants would be compromised and tarred with the

association with the right wing. There would be no way to avoid it.

Our view on the type of defense that is needed—from the point of view of defending the prisoners—is that it is necessary to mount a defense that is identified with the broad working-class movement. There can be no link with the imperialist government, with its agencies or its representatives. If that's not the case, what happens is that the dissidents themselves are harmed.

In the Soviet Union, the bureaucracy simply says, "Well, these people are in league with imperialism and what's involved here is simply a ploy by the imperialists to smear our Soviet system." And then they can point to all the crimes the imperialists themselves carry out all around the world (and there's no lack of those).

The right wing cannot carry out an effective defense of the Soviet dissidents. It's the type of thing that's been going on for decades in the U.S. You know, these right-wing meetings to call for an invasion to free the "captive nations," and so on. It never made any dent.

What did make a dent, for instance in the case of Plyushch, was the situation where enough public opinion was aroused in the working-class movement to force the Communist parties around the world and the Social Democrats they want to work with—this broad milieu—to begin to put pressure on and demand the release of these people and demand an end to their persecution.

Of course, we make a distinction between liberals who are anti-Soviet in their ideological views (professors, professionals of different types), and the institutions of the imperialist state and the political leaders who in the last analysis represent the U.S. Army and capitalist restoration in the Soviet Union. It's one thing to have individual views that are anti-Soviet and another to have these institutions represented in the defense.

One basic guideline that we try to put down is that there will be no association with professional anticommunists, red-baiters, people who have made their careers on this and political leaders of this type. There's no formal way to accomplish this type of left defense we're talking about. There isn't a formula, no one rule we can put down that will accomplish this in all circumstances. It depends on what the situation is, and comrades just have to use their judgment on it.

It's a question of the general tone, the general thrust of the defense. Some things that help are our own participation—open inclusion and participation of revolutionary socialists; the solicitation of representatives of the oppressed nationalities and the radical movement in general; the enlistment in this cause of well-known fighters for justice.

I think the second big action held around this since the last convention is a good example of how to set a tone, of how to establish in practice this type of left defense. That action was the meeting on June 24 in defense of Mustafa Dzhemilev, the Crimean Tatar fighter who is currently in a Soviet labor camp.

Martin Sostre, who was one of the American political prisoners, a Black Puerto Rican from Buffalo, New York, was one of the speakers. Sostre has perhaps the most moral authority of any of the thousands of political prisoners because of his long years in prison and the type of fight he carried out—not only for his own rights, but for the rights of all prisoners in the United States. He gave a very good speech that I think will be printed soon. Reza

Baraheni, the Iranian poet who has been in the forefront of defense of Iranian political prisoners, spoke. Pat Wright, Socialist Workers Party candidate in Brooklyn, also spoke.

Eqbal Ahmad, who was a member of the Harrisburg Seven, framed up because of his opposition to the war in Vietnam, and currently a member of the Institute for Policy Studies, was also a speaker. He made the point that he was very pleased with the character of the meeting, that it was not an anticommunist meeting, that he had a lot of hesitation about coming. I think there's a lot of sentiment like that in the broader radical movement, people who are in sympathy with democratic rights, who would like to do something, but hesitate to take any action because they're afraid they would be put in the same category with the right wing.

Ralph Schoenman, who was a primary organizer of the Bertrand Russell Tribunal on U.S. War Crimes in Vietnam in 1968, spoke. That tribunal was one of the things that dealt a big blow internationally to the U.S. war effort in Vietnam. Rose Styron from Amnesty International; Pavel Litvinov, prominent Soviet dissident; representatives from the Ukrainian and Tatar communities in New York, not just the communities, but activists in the struggle for democratic rights in the Soviet Union, all spoke. I think there were thirty or forty Tatars from a community in Brooklyn. Also, a representative from the Irish Northern Aid committee spoke.

It was a very successful meeting in that there was a committee formed that got out some literature, and plans to hold another action around October 18, the anniversary of the creation of the Crimean Tatar Republic in the Soviet Union.

In some ways New York is a special case in terms of the length of time we've been working there, in terms of the type of communities there, and so on. But I think every branch can do some things on this work, and I think the most valuable thing, one that would help the branches in terms of the ongoing work, is to pay attention to this in the forum series. For example, in this upsurge in Poland around the food price increases and the subsequent events, there was a perfect opportunity for every branch to have a forum on the struggle for democratic rights in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

Comrades are hesitant to speak on Soviet and Eastern Europe defense activities. They think you have to be some kind of expert. They think you have to know all about the Soviet dissident movement since 1966, and if not speak Russian, at least be on the way. Well, it's not true.

This is part of our basic program. Trotsky had a lot to say about these issues in his writings, in the *Transitional Program*, in *The Revolution Betrayed*. What we're really talking about when we use this type of thing as a peg is simply our basic program.

That's what we want to talk about—about the basic idea that socialism and democracy go together, are totally intertwined; about the rise of Stalinism; what Stalinism is; why it happened and the fight today against Stalinism; why we support the democratic movement in these countries; why we think it is the precursor of broader forces coming in; why we think it's part of the political revolution; and why we think there should be solidarity with it.

And we should nail the Stalinists every time. We should nail the Stalinists on these questions—what their role is

and how they apologize for it, defend it, refuse to speak out.

That's the basic idea that we should have at these forums. The thing we want to do in these forums is not give a big Who's Who in the dissident movement. Comrades don't have to know that. If we can get some professor who's interested in it, if we can get someone who knows about it, that's fine. We can have a panel.

But what we want is the politics of the thing. Every

branch has activists who are capable of giving that type of talk and that's how we should view it—as an opportunity to explain our program and draw people around who are interested in these questions. Of course, there'll be opportunities for teach-ins, picket lines, and so on. And there will be further international days of solidarity with the various individual Soviet dissidents around which branches can plan to have a picket line or forum or some type of activity.

Speakers Bureau Perspectives

[The following is the edited transcript of two presentations to the workshop on Speakers Bureau Perspectives at the Socialist Workers Party convention, August 1976, along with opening remarks by Michael Maggi, who chaired the workshop.]

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This workshop will discuss general speakers bureau work and will not focus on the Viewpoint Speakers Bureau. There's an article in one of the latest discussion bulletins [Vol. 34, No. 9] on speakers bureau work, which comrades might want to look at when you have a chance.

Especially in this period with smaller branches and many new members who have little prior experience in the radical movement, it is important to use speakers bureau work to assist in the main educational and political campaigns of the movement and in the education of new party and Young Socialist Alliance members. There are going to be two presentations in this workshop: by Steve Marshall from Atlanta and by Dave Cahalane from Boston.

Steve Marshall, East Atlanta

I want to talk about some of the experiences we've had in Atlanta with speakers bureau work and some of the gains we've made over the past year.

This past year sixteen engagements were sponsored at Georgia State University by the YSA, other campus organizations, and the student government. The speakers included four through Viewpoint, and a number through the United States Committee for Justice to Latin American Political Prisoners, the Student Coalition Against Racism, and the Socialist Workers Party election campaign. Money was allocated for twelve of those—up to \$1,000 to \$2,000 for a single program. Also, speakers from outside our movement appeared that the YSA helped to sponsor.

The opportunities have been kind of unique at Georgia State because for the past year we've had a comrade on the speakers committee. Some of the biggest political events in the city have been these speaking events. And when you *do* organize some successful speaking events, it's easier to come back again and say, "Look what we did. We want to do it again."

There are two aspects of it that are valuable: financial and political. The financial side is pretty obvious. And in addition to honoraria, you can also organize fund-raising events around the main speaking engagement.

But the main value, of course, is political. As I said, some of the biggest events in Atlanta have been these

speaking engagements at Georgia State. They bring together various activists in the mass movements and also provide news coverage for these movements. And they help build these movements while we are able to get out our strategy on how to build those movements.

There was a debate at GSU on economics with Dick Roberts and a person from a university in Georgia. Dick received a \$1,000 honorarium. Another debate at GSU was on the Mideast. These are the kinds of things that you know are always going to be in the news and so you can plan these a couple of months in advance.

The economics debate was very attractive to the student government. It's an academic type of thing. It's not one-sided. It featured a well-known Marxist economist and a well-known capitalist economist. We were able to use this as part of an educational weekend. After Dick participated in the debate, he gave a forum Friday night and two classes on Saturday. We brought a number of contacts to these classes and also gave comrades a very educational experience on Marxist economics.

The program on the Mideast was a four-way debate. Speaking on one side were a Palestinian professor and Peter Seidman of the *Militant* staff, and on the other side an Israeli professor and an American Zionist. I understand that the Israelis don't often debate Palestinians, so this was important in and of itself.

A week before the debate, an upsurge occurred on the West Bank and in Palestine. I'm sure it doubled the attendance. Planning the debate brought us into contact with a lot of international students who helped to cosponsor the event.

Again, we used it as part of an educational weekend. The Palestinian speaker and Peter gave a forum Friday night and a couple of classes the next day. It was really valuable. I remember particularly in our discussions with Jewish students at Georgia State who were beginning to question Zionism that this program helped them a lot in their understanding of Zionism.

One important thing about these speaking events is that you can use them as an action, as part of the campaigns you're involved in.

For instance, about a year ago at Georgia State we were helping to get a women's liberation group formed on campus. One of the main organizing activities was a women's week, and the natural person to invite to speak was Evelyn Reed.

We took advantage of the opportunity to have an educational weekend. That was very successful. I think it was the biggest activity we ever had at Georgia State; several hundred people came.

Another activity was in the context of the fight for

ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment. After a march for the ERA that took place last January, GSU brought down Phyllis Schlafly to debate Dianne Feeley on the Equal Rights Amendment. This debate was utilized as a way to build the May 16 march in Springfield, Illinois.

The debate got really excellent press coverage. It had a rally atmosphere. In fact, it almost came across as a pro-ERA rally. A number of women signed up to go to the demonstration, and some women joined the coalition formed around the demonstration. The debate helped build the women's movement.

The most successful kinds of events at GSU were those sponsored by SCAR and the student government. One was a debate on busing. A representative from the NSCAR office debated Louise Day Hicks at the time of the building for the April 24 Boston action. The YSA, of course, built it as a prodesegregation activity. That was the tone the YSA and SCAR took in building the GSU debate—come stand up to Hicks's racism. We involved SCAR activists on that basis.

It was successful. About 400 people came, and the major Atlanta media sent reporters. I understand that a Boston TV station even picked it up. It really established SCAR as the organization that's fighting for desegregation. SCAR signed up dozens of people to work in its office.

A few weeks ago GSU held a debate on the death penalty. It came in the context of an anti-death-penalty protest movement in Atlanta. The American Civil Liberties Union and others have initiated a coalition against the death penalty. At the debate William Kunstler and the ACLU southern director spoke against the death penalty. On the other side was the district attorney who argued for the death penalty before the Supreme Court. This debate was discussed at a meeting of the ACLU as a proposal for action—that it should build this debate and try to get as many people as it could to it.

About 500 people attended the debate, and it received very good news coverage. It came across as an anti-death-penalty rally, which is exactly what the YSA wanted it to do. A number of people signed up for SCAR and for the anti-death-penalty coalition. Because it was a successful activity, the debate was able to counter some of the reformist ideas that were circulating like lobbying for Jimmy Carter. We were able to say, "This is what we need more of. This is the way to get our ideas out." It convinced many people who were confused about the death penalty.

Just some general observations: It's really easy to get agreement from student governments if your presentation is well thought out in advance and well presented to them. Seven of these events at GSU were debates, and I think that debates are often more attractive to student governments than just one speaker. They view them as educational rather than political.

Debates are also just very important to us right now as a movement. We want to debate people like Louise Day Hicks and these people who are for the death penalty as often as possible in public.

I think personally that debates tend to have a larger attendance than just having one speaker because they reach out to people who are not sure about the issue. They are attracted to a debate, whereas they might not come to hear just one speaker give a talk in favor of busing, for example.

The other thing, especially in debates, is to think big and ask people to speak who are well known. We had no idea,

for example, that Louise Day Hicks would debate. It was a last resort to call her up because everybody told us that she doesn't debate SCAR. But when she was called directly, she said, sure, for \$1,000 she'd debate, which was fine with GSU.

As I said, you want to build these events as an action, as a rally, and involve the activists in it on that basis. It's also good to try to get as many organizations as you can to cosponsor these kinds of events.

The format is important. It's always good to have a discussion where our mass-action approach for these campaigns can be stressed.

Another thing that is politically valuable about speaking engagements is the kind of events you can organize around them. Sometimes we've been able to organize press conferences with the national speakers and some of the local leaders. Another thing is to try to get interviews on TV and have the speakers meet with local organizations, trade unions, and that sort of thing.

Try organized fund raisers. We've been able to do this only once, but I think we could do it more often. Once SCAR organized a cocktail party where people could come and meet a speaker. And after the event itself, having a big open party where more people can come has also been successful.

And, of course, it's always good to have YSA and SWP members participate in building these events and attend these events.

Some of the plans for the fall include a debate on the 1976 elections with a youth representative of the Democrats, the Republicans, and the socialists, and a panel discussion on civil liberties. You can see that these things fit into the kind of campaigns our movement is involved in now.

Dave Cahalane, Roxbury, Boston

What I was asked to do is go over some of the experiences that the National Student Coalition Against Racism had in its short history in speakers bureau work and bring up some of the examples that can be used in other areas.

NSCAR itself accumulated some experience last spring with speakers bureau work. This, I think, is reflected in the fact that there's now a professional twelve-page speakers bureau brochure listing national speakers. It includes a number of very prominent national additions to the speakers bureau. Also, NSCAR has printed a special booklet to help SCAR chapters organize their speaking events. It explains applying for honoraria, publicizing the event, and getting the most out of speaking events themselves. It's called "How to Organize an NSCAR Speaking Engagement."

What I'd like to go into a little bit is the aspect of outreach work in speakers bureau work. NSCAR has gained experience in trying to reach out and involve campus and community organizations because of the nature of NSCAR itself. It's a small campus organization that has to expand and involve other students and other forces in order to be successful, in order to carry out its educational campaigns, in order to build actions like May 17. NSCAR is learning that this job of outreach is more than a job that takes place around actions. New chapters—and old chapters as well—are finding that they have to do this year-round.

Speaking engagements provide one of the best opportunities for NSCAR chapters to involve other student organizations. I think this applies equally to the YSA on a campus in organizing its speakers bureau work. That is, the YSA wants to find different ways of involving or becoming involved with other student organizations—Black student groups, Palestinian groups, farm workers groups, women's groups, and so on.

NSCAR has learned that because of the caliber of the speakers and because of the issues involved, students and student groups are very interested in coming to, or helping to publicize, or in some way becoming involved in its speaking events.

NSCAR has learned in its speakers bureau work that the traditional organizations or groups that first come to mind—such as Black student groups, Chicano groups, Puerto Rican groups, or left organizations on a campus—are not the only possible ones to approach. And that, in fact, in many cases other organizations involve more students and often these students are as interested in the issues of racism, busing, and so on as are members of Black student organizations. So we have to have a much broader, open approach to other student organizations on a campus and not leave groups out of consideration. For instance, in most YSA and SWP speakers bureau work, not only the vaguely political organizations but cultural organizations, social clubs, undergraduate political associations, as well as political science, history, Black studies, and philosophy groups, might be interested in speakers on one or another topic. NSCAR found that leaders of small social or cultural groups have become activists in SCAR.

For example, at the University of Massachusetts-Boston, SCAR has established an ongoing working relationship with two organizations—the Puerto Rican Student Organization and Imani, which is one of the two Black student organizations on campus. SCAR knows that for a future speaking event, they can be approached to help publicize the event (at least within their own membership) and actually help run it; that is, help staff literature tables, chair the meeting, participate in the discussion, and so on.

This type of broader view of endorsement and outreach

to groups on a campus should be considered whenever the YSA is organizing speaking engagements.

At my campus Robert Allen had a special reception, meeting with a large group of Black students who were organized and invited by Imani on campus. There must have been twenty to forty students, maybe more. It was hard to tell because people were coming in and out.

NSCAR has also tried to use speakers as tools to reach out to community forces. For example, Chicago SCAR arranged for a special interview for an NSCAR speaker, Brenda Franklin, with the *Chicago Defender*, which, as I understand it, is among the largest Black newspapers in Chicago. When Hattie McCutcheon was on tour in Chicago, SCAR arranged a speaking engagement for her before the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists. SCAR also made arrangements for Brenda to speak to a meeting of PUSH [People United to Save Humanity].

In other words, SCAR has utilized speaking engagements in getting its viewpoints before trade unionists or Black organizations like PUSH, in meeting leaders of other Black organizations, on getting interviews in Black newspapers, etc.

Just a closing note. Obtaining the active endorsement or involvement of other groups on a campus around a speaking event has a number of real advantages that NSCAR discovered and I think it should apply to our own speakers bureau work. First of all, when you involve other student groups, you can raise more honoraria. When you have a group of students come in and ask for \$500 or \$1,000 for a speaker, it tells the student government that there's a broad spectrum of students who want to have this speaker on campus.

Also, involving other students increases not only the attendance but also the impact on a campus. It means you have organizations that you can go back to about future activities, and when you go back, their memberships will remember who you are.

In the case of our own speakers bureau work, they'll remember that the YSA organized a successful speaking event and they liked what they heard. This is a common response and also results when, for instance, Peter Camejo comes on a campus to speak.

Correction

Two errors appeared on page 3 of the Minutes of the 28th National Convention of the Socialist Workers Party in Internal Information Bulletin No. 10 in 1976.

Column 1, Lines 2 and 3, which read: "*Proposal from Presiding Committee:* That James Harris chair the first session," should read:

"*Proposal:* That James Harris chair the first session."

Also, the second motion under Organization of Convention, approved by the outgoing National Committee at a

preconvention plenum and by the convention session, was inadvertently omitted. The motion reads:

"*Motion:* That the Presiding Committee be composed of the secretariat of the outgoing Political Committee and convention reporters: Jack Barnes, Catarino Garza, Doug Jenness, Lew Jones, Malik Miah, Olga Rodriguez, Larry Seigle, Barry Sheppard, Betsey Stone, Tony Thomas, Mary-Alice Waters, and the youth reporter.
Moved.

Carried."

**Article and Correspondence
Concerning Proposed 'Bulletin for Auto
Workers'**

[The following items are a contribution by Robin Maisel to the preconvention discussion in the Detroit local (from Internal Discussion Bulletin, Detroit Local, Volume 1, Number 2, September 1976), and a letter to Robin Maisel

by Frank Lovell. After reconsidering the question in light of the points made in Lovell's letter, the Detroit Local Executive Committee decided not to proceed with the proposed "bulletin for auto workers."]

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BULLETIN FOR AUTO WORKERS

Submitted for preconvention discussion to the Detroit Local by Robin Maisel, South West Branch.

In the last six months we have accumulated a small fraction of auto workers. We have the perspective of sending more comrades into auto, not as a colonization (aiming at a single plant or complex with the perspective of building a fraction in a very short time) but as a "semi-colonization" taking advantage of openings for getting comrades into auto but not wrenching whole batches out of their current work situations to send them into auto.

Our perspective is to build a fraction of auto worker comrades who can place the party's perspectives forward in their plants and recruit to the party out of the plants. With such a small fraction and without a concentration of comrades in a single plant (and by concentration I mean more than two or ten), the process of recruitment is the process of putting forward our perspectives for building a class struggle left wing in the auto union which will challenge the current misleaders of the UAW and take power in the union.

We are now at the point of taking our first steps in that direction. We do not have the perspective at this time of trying to construct a caucus formation in the UAW. Such a caucus would be a laughable caricature of a caucus, somewhat akin to such formations as the United National Caucus. We have no intention of prematurely trying to set up a formation to challenge the UAW leadership. To do so now would mean one of two things. Either we would be setting up a "front" organization which would not be much broader than the party membership and numbering just a tiny handful of people (many of whom would be miseducated by the experience into thinking that that was how you go about building a caucus--including our own comrades) or we would be taking responsibility for putting together an unprincipled bloc of reformists and ultra-leftists which although slightly larger would again be a caricature of a class struggle left wing.

No. Our perspective is to begin the job of educating about what a class struggle left wing would do when it comes into being further down the road. We want to aim our attention at a layer, small right now, of auto workers who are trying to figure out that key question of how one would build a class struggle left wing caucus. That is where the concept of a bulletin for auto comes in.

First I would like to describe what such a bulletin would not

be so there is no misunderstanding. It would not be one of the gripe sheets which proliferate around the plants. In case some comrades don't know what such gripe sheets are today I will illustrate.

Spark issues a gripe sheet. It is a combination of complaints about the working conditions together with a moralistic preachy lesson for the day on the back page. It is written at the level of the least conscious workers not the union conscious workers. In fact it orients away from the union and therefore completely cuts out any possibility of speaking to the most conscious workers in terms which are more than just gripes. It has no program for how to build a class struggle left wing.

The Revolutionary Communist Party (the old RU) has a gripe sheet which orients toward sectarians. Its gripes are about the union brass and its orientation isn't just away from the union, it is downright hostility toward the union.

The IS, through the UNC, has a gripe sheet in the form of a magazine which although oriented toward the union consciousness of the workers sidesteps and avoids any opportunity to build class consciousness and caters to the most backward prejudices (or at least what the IS thinks those prejudices are) against feminism, Black power, the student movement, and international events.

The Spartacist League and the Progressive Labor Party also have gripe sheets. By and large they are unintelligible so there is not much point in characterizing them further.

The Communist Labor Party has a gripe sheet from time to time. It reflects their reformism and is so devoid of redeeming class consciousness and orientation as to be simply an extension of their reformism which is currently expressed in their election campaign.

In addition to these gripe sheets listed above, there are also some papers directed at a layer or section of the auto workers which, although not class oriented, play a good role in developing consciousness particularly among Black workers. A good example of this is the bulletin put out by PUSH. It stands head and shoulders above the sorry examples listed above. But it can never have a class perspective with the reformist class collaborationist leadership of the Black struggle that runs it today. Taking them on will be one of the jobs of our work in the Black struggle and, in my opinion, we are proceeding at pace with that.

Having described what a gripe sheet is, we should describe what a class struggle organ in auto would do under ideal conditions. First of all, ideal conditions would mean having a caucus formation which would be very large, well organized, and able to intervene day to day in all aspects of union life and the events in the plants. Its bulletin would be an organizer of the work. It would analyze current political developments to give direction toward independent political action. It would comment upon developments in the union, taking sides on disputes down to the level of how to handle a grievance and the posture a shop steward should take in a given situation. It would educate about the capitalist

system and explain where the interests of the workers as a class come into conflict with the interests of the employers as a class. It would champion the struggles of the oppressed nationalities and national minorities and other oppressed people such as women, the elderly, the young. It would try to recruit workers to the caucus on the basis of the program of the caucus which would be spelled out not just on paper but by the activity of its members out front where they can be seen by the ranks. It would publish weekly at the least.

That is the ideal situation. We don't have that. We have a situation where we don't as yet have a caucus. We will not pretend that we do. But some of the elements of what a bulletin would do can be done now. We would analyze political developments and use the SWP campaigns as our examples of what independent labor political action can and should do. We can comment on the union's activity and most of such commentary would be directed at getting the ranks to become involved in the union, explaining that their non-involvement, no matter how justified in their own minds by the bureaucratism and stupidity of the leadership, is used by the bureaucracy as a club over their heads to beat back suggestions for changing things. It would be able to analyze developments in the union from a class struggle point of view. Its education about capitalism, for reasons of lack of space, would be brief, directing the workers to the sources where they can go to get a full education, currently the three branches and bookstores in the city. The class against class perspective would be part of every article. It would discuss other unions such as Steel, the Bus Drivers, teachers, etc. It would draw out some lessons. Its program is going to have to be the party's program for building a class struggle left wing in the unions. The activity which is held up as exemplary is the work of the SWP.

Such a bulletin must be done in a professional way. It must be printed, not mimeographed. It must be free of typographical errors. It must be neat. It must come out on a regular schedule.

I believe we are now ready to embark on this project. Such a bulletin would be monthly to begin with. It would come out on the second Tuesday of the month, for example. It would require the efforts of a large number of comrades for distribution on that particular day. It could be prepared in the format of an 11x17 inch sheet folded to give four 8½x11 pages. It would be prepared in modest quantities to begin with - 2,500 to 3,000. It would cost a good piece of change but I believe that comrades and periphery would come to the aid of such a bulletin with financial contributions.

Now let us state what results we want. We want to differentiate the SWP as a distinct current in the plants. We want to recruit the most class conscious workers by getting in touch with them through this bulletin and then involving them in all aspects of party life. We want to train our comrades in the techniques and skills necessary for putting out such a bulletin and more than that, leading such a caucus when one comes into existence some time in the future.

14 Charles Lane
New York, New York 10014

Tuesday, Oct. 19, 1976

Robin Maisel
DETROIT

Dear Robin:

Your piece in the Detroit discussion bulletin proposing an SWP "bulletin for auto workers" seems premature to me. It is possible that sometime in the course of our work in the UAW we will find such a bulletin useful, but the circumstances would need to be vastly different from now. (I completely agree with you on what a union bulletin should not be, now and in the future. But I am not sure when such a project as you suggest would be feasible, judging from our past experience.)

If we had a large membership of auto workers and were deeply involved in the leadership of the union, as was once the case, we would most likely explain our proposals for building the union in the pages of official publications, i.e., the national paper, Solidarity, and/or local union papers of which there are many in the Detroit area and other parts of the country.

In the Minneapolis teamsters union we were responsible for the Organizer in the 1934 strikes, and later the Northwest Organizer. These were different publications, serving the union at different stages of its development. Both were official publications. As such, they were very different from what you have proposed.

In the past we have supported, contributed to, and taken the responsibility for publishing opposition papers in big power struggles, in the auto, rubber, railroad, and maritime unions. But these rank and file newsletters and caucus publications were not entirely ours. They represented the position of the broad opposition caucus of which we were a part, never the largest part and usually not the most influential part. In these situations we necessarily subordinated our full program to the needs and limitations of the caucus.

We were able to support these caucuses so long as we did not violate any of our basic principles. We always sought opportunities within them and beyond them to explain who we were, what we stood for, and our method of building a class-struggle movement in collaboration with others around those issues we agree upon (united front concept). Our best tool in all this work at all times has always been the Militant.

The Militant was very effective in the Minneapolis strikes

and the subsequent development of the teamster movement, even though the Organizer and Northwest Organizer both had larger circulation. You have noticed in this respect that Farrell quotes frequently from the Militant as well as the union papers in telling the story of the Minneapolis teamsters. The Militant is able to deal with many issues differently and more effectively than a union publication can. This is a necessary division of labor. But at this stage of our development it doesn't seem to me that we need or are able to support a local union bulletin that would try to substitute for the Militant.

In several branches we now have comrades who edit, contribute to, or produce local union papers and official news bulletins (Atlanta - local union newspaper; Cleveland - local union bulletin; Seattle - local papers and bulletins). In your branch a comrade produces a mimeographed bulletin on union problems. All of these are very well done, and in one case (Cleveland) a discussion article on the campaign supported Camejo for president.

We have encouraged comrades to undertake projects of this kind as a useful way of participating in union affairs, learning about the problems of the union, and preparing to become local contributors to the Militant on the union movement.

There have been times when we published small bulletins of our own for the benefit of ourselves, a few close sympathizers, and to attract some attention among wider circles of union conscious workers. I know of one such effort. We did it briefly in San Francisco sometime in 1937 or 1938 I believe. But this was partly inspired by competition with the Stalinists who put out their little mimeographed green sheets called "Waterfront Worker," published by the waterfront section of the Communist party. (See Cannon's references to this in Notebook of an Agitator.) I don't know how well the green sheets served the Stalinist fraction, but I don't recall that we benefited much from our competitive efforts in bulletin publishing. We acquired some experience and soon gave up the project.

What you have projected for Detroit auto workers seems very ambitious. It would require considerable effort, probably more than is possible with our present forces. The one advantage it may have is to start comrades thinking about the auto union and some of the problems of auto workers. It seems to me that this is something that must begin before you could get out the first issue of your local bulletin, and one of the best ways to start that is with a writing project for the Militant about the auto union.

The strike is a good time to write about the problems of the union and its members because the workers are involved in an action, have a stake in the outcome, and plenty of free time to think about what is happening and what others are saying.

The Ford strike is ending, but the results will be talked

about for a long time after the strikers are back at work--and not only in the Ford plants but GM and Chrysler plants too. So you ought to get reports for the Militant on what auto workers are saying about the settlement, how the union officials managed to sell it, and what the general effect on wages and working conditions and hours of work is and will likely be. Our comrades in auto ought to go through the new contract to find the fishhooks and explain them.

If you begin to send in this material (the same kind of reporting that you propose for your local bulletin for auto workers) the Militant will carry it and you will then have the same incentive to circulate the paper in the large quantities that you project for the bulletin. I think it will be less expensive to do it in the Militant, and you have the advantage of speaking to workers about many other subjects that ought to interest them. Besides, we are anxious to improve the content of the paper and enlarge its circulation.

I realize that our articles on the UAW and the Ford strike are not as sharp and lively as if they were written in Detroit. We have very little direct communication with auto workers, limited to one or two sources, and our reports lack the quality of firsthand accounts. You can help us correct this.

We should be able to expand the size of the paper and we should be able to have a regular column from Detroit on the UAW, perhaps a similar column from Pittsburgh or Chicago on the Steelworkers, and we would like to have a regular feature on public workers and teachers. Such suggestions will take form from contributions of our comrades in these unions. Our comrades in auto can set a good example.

Comradely,
/s/Frank

Discussion on Gay Liberation in LSA/LSO

[For the information of comrades, printed here is the LSA/LSO Political Committee Statement on Gay Liberation, the general line of which was adopted at the July 31-August 2, 1976, Central Committee plenum of the League for Socialist Action/Ligue Socialiste Ouvrière, Canadian section of the Fourth International.

[The statement was originally presented by the Political Committee as part of the membership discussion leading up to the December 27-30, 1975, convention of the

LSA/LSO. The convention decided to defer a vote on the statement. The topic was placed on the agenda of the August 1976 Central Committee plenum and a literary discussion was opened.

[The final articles printed here are the two reports on gay liberation presented to the Central Committee plenum, one presenting the line of the Political Committee Statement on Gay Liberation; the other proposing some amendments to the statement.]

* * *

(From LSA-LSO Discussion Bulletin, Vol. 11, No. 6, December 1975)

Political Committee Statement on Gay Liberation, December 5, 1975

This statement has three aims:

1. to reaffirm the League's rejection of all forms of discrimination and oppression suffered by homosexuals and our unconditional support of the struggles of gays for full civil and human rights;
2. to assess briefly the current stage of the gay liberation movement;
3. to present guidelines for the League's intervention in the gay liberation movement.

The gay liberation movement is a product of the current radicalization. Gays are becoming conscious that their problems are social in origin, a product of specific social institutions, and attitudes flowing from these institutions. They are organizing to fight politically against that oppression.

Since the gay movement began, it has established itself in every major Canadian city. Many campuses for example now have gay liberation organizations which function as recognized campus clubs. While it is still small, the gay movement has had a significant impact on prevailing social attitudes. It has begun to win a greater acceptance of homosexuality. While anti-gay prejudice is widespread and deep-rooted, it is no longer unchallenged. A typical indication of this is the case of Doug Wilson, a University of Saskatchewan lecturer fighting a case of job discrimination. He has received widespread support both on and off campus, including some student demonstrations on his behalf.

The growth of the gay movement shows the depth of the radicalization, which challenges the most basic prejudices, including the "natural inferiority of women" and the "unnatural" character of homosexuality.

Capitalist society represses natural human sexual impulses. The sexual behavior imposed through the family and other capitalist institutions severely damage all sexual relationships. Individuals are incapable of following their sexual inclinations spontaneously, free of guilt, fear and neurosis.

The repression of homosexual behavior is an aspect of this sexual oppression. It reinforces the approved model of heterosexual, monogamous relationships, confined as much as possible to the framework of the nuclear family.

Gay oppression and anti-gay prejudice are deeply em-

bedded in North America and widespread, if not universal, in modern capitalist nations. Anti-gay hysteria is the common coin of right-wing and fascist groups. Gays face discrimination in housing, employment and immigration; they are subject to harassment and physical brutality. Efforts are made to exclude gays from many important areas of employment, and to admit them to others only on condition that they keep secret their sexual orientation. In many cases, homosexual acts are explicitly illegal. In Canada homosexual relations between "consenting adults" were allowed under the 1969 amendments to the Criminal Code, but the age of consent was established at 21 years. For heterosexual acts, the age of consent is eighteen. This means that a significant proportion of homosexuals, those under 21, are criminals for exercising their sexual preference.

Faced with this situation, most gays try to hide their sexuality, living in constant fear that their real sexual preference will be detected.

The gay liberation movement rejects these vicious forms of anti-gay discrimination. In growing numbers, homosexuals reject the fear and self-hatred they have been forced to live with, and affirm their pride in their sexuality. They are beginning to conclude that they are not guilty - society is guilty, for its persecution of gays.

The League welcomes the development of the gay liberation movement, and unconditionally supports its struggle for full civil and human rights for gays. We completely reject all reactionary "theories" that maintain homosexuality to be an "illness" or "perversion." The gay liberation movement is a movement for democratic rights. In every case we support any oppressed group struggling for its basic democratic and human rights. We understand the power of such struggles.

The gay liberation movement challenges fundamental propositions of bourgeois morality, and its struggles are directed against the institutions that uphold that morality: governments, the church, the courts, the educational system. It thus tends to put in question the legitimacy of these institutions and of the social system they represent.

The Canadian bourgeoisie may well make concessions under pressure of the gay liberation movement. But the existence of gay oppression underlines the fundamental character of the system, rotten through with exploitation, oppression, and poverty, defending and justifying these abominations and deepening human misery. Awareness of

gay oppression helps people to draw the conclusion that the capitalist system as a whole must be overthrown, and that a socialist society is necessary.

This understanding raises in turn the question of how a widespread consciousness of the need for socialism can be created, of the role of the working class in this process, and of the need for a revolutionary leadership.

Within this context any movement of the oppressed demanding change has a very great potential. The fight for gay rights will help gay activists come to understand the need for socialist revolution, and throw their lot in with the working class in the struggle against capitalist rule. We can also expect that the working class, which is presently shot through with anti-gay prejudice, can be won over time to support the struggle of gays for equal rights, and will make this goal its own. The demands and aspirations of gays, and the gay movement itself will be a component part of the revolutionary process in this country.

As a revolutionary organization with the goal of leading the working class in the fight for state power, the League takes positions on questions of program, strategy and tactics for the political struggle. It does not adopt positions on questions of culture, science or sexuality.

Consequently, the LSA/LSO does not take any stand on the essential character or value of homosexuality.

What is our position on discrimination and prejudice against gays? What demands should the gay liberation movement put forward? What forms of action should it adopt to achieve its goals? What is its relationship to other social struggles? This is the range of questions on which we, as a movement, should express our opinion.

Even on scientific questions where there is a well-established position of Marxism, as in the debate among anthropologists on the matriarchy as a stage of human evolution – where we have an interest in ensuring that the Marxist view receives a hearing – we do not ask the League membership to vote for this or that position and the League as such does not take a stand.

Similarly our movement rejects quack racist theories of white superiority, but we do not take a stand on this or that scientific view of human heredity or of the nature of physical and racial differentiation in the human race.

Questions of the nature or value of homosexuality, or on sexual orientation and life-style fall into this category.

An additional factor is the absence of an authoritatively established Marxist point of view on questions of the nature of sexuality. The facts on questions of the nature of human sexual orientation are not clearly established, and the discussion of this topic is not far advanced.

We reject the prevailing bourgeois views that homosexuality is "sick" or "perverted" or a form of "deviant behavior." We have nothing but contempt for these so-called theories whose sole function is to rationalize this or that form of social oppression. But we do not counterpose to them our own theory of homosexuality, or of sexuality in general.

We do not have to take a stand on the nature of homosexuality to reject all forms of anti-gay discrimination, and to identify completely with the aims of the gay liberation movement. This is what we have done. We welcome the entry onto the political arena of the gay movement. We express our solidarity with the growth of gay pride. We support all the struggles of gays for equal rights. We view this movement as an important and dynamic new component of the radicalization. We want to be part of it and to put forward our views on how it can best be built.

Current Stage of the Gay Movement

Two kinds of organizations compose the gay liberation movement. A minority of groups conduct public protest actions for civil rights for gays – the most advanced and politically conscious groups. A broader range of groups are socially oriented – homophile associations and gay community centers which provide services for gays, and opportunities for gays to meet one another. There are also gay churches in several Canadian cities.

The gay liberation movement has attained a considerable level of organization and cross-country coordination. This is largely due to the leadership of the action oriented groups, which have launched a number of civil rights and defense campaigns, and have succeeded to some extent, in involving a broader range of gay organizations however reluctantly on their part.

Some of these activities include: actions in opposition to the federal government Green Paper on immigration; the organization of several gay pride marches in different cities; pickets protesting censorship of gay publications and advertisements; campaigns in several provinces demanding protection for homosexuals under provincial human rights acts; and two important campaigns protesting job discrimination, the cases of Doug Wilson in Saskatchewan and John Damien in Ontario.

Three cross-Canada conferences of the organized gay liberation movement have now been held.

The most recent gathering established the National Gay Rights Coalition a cross-country organization representing the overwhelming majority of organized gay groups in the country. It is defined as a civil rights organization with two main objectives: the removal of all federal legislation discriminating against gays, and the implementation of legislation guaranteeing full civil rights for gays.

These are promising developments. Groups favoring political action have carried out a number of excellent campaigns, and laid the basis for a cross-country movement, achieving a good deal of unity around these initiatives. Experience will show whether this direction is maintained and whether the action-oriented leadership that has promoted it continues to develop.

Our Strategy

We have advocated a strategy for gay liberationists which is fundamentally an application of the mass action strategy we have fought for in other arenas including the antiwar movement and the women's liberation movement.

This strategy has several elements:

1. there is an observable and growing consciousness among gays that they are oppressed by this society, and at the same time a growing willingness to struggle against that oppression;

2. gay oppression is concretized in legislated anti-gay discrimination, in the Criminal Code, the Immigration Act, and elsewhere; and in the absence of any protection of gays alongside protective legislation for other oppressed groups, as in the provincial Human Rights Acts;

3. gays who are becoming aware of the need to organize and fight will respond to, and can be mobilized around, concrete campaigns which single out specific aspects of anti-gay discrimination, and put forward demands that meet the needs of gays and around which they can rally;

4. through united campaigns and public, mass-oriented actions, gays can wrest concessions from the ruling class

which can alleviate some of the worst aspects of anti-gay discrimination, and develop the confidence of gays in their ability to struggle and make gains;

5. such campaigns can enable gays to gain the widest support for their demands from labor, women's liberation, civil rights and left organizations and from public opinion in general;

6. the struggle for full civil rights for gays can be a profoundly educational one for gay activists. It can help them to understand the nature of the ruling class and why it fights so hard to maintain the oppression of gays and others. It can bring gays into contact with other struggles for social change and help them link up with these struggles. It can bring gays into contact with revolutionary ideas, and allow them to develop an understanding of the need for a socialist society, as the solution to gay oppression and all forms of oppression.

Recent actions of the gay movement coincide very closely to our view of how it can most effectively build itself. This gives us a considerable advantage. It means we can support the struggles that gays are involved in. We can present ourselves to gay activists not just as opponents of gay oppression, but as partisans and participants in their campaigns. This can give us a greater hearing among gay activists for our socialist views.

We should intervene in the gay movement, promoting this course and presenting our revolutionary socialist views. Our intervention should take place within the general guidelines for our approach to any area of work. Our central task in this period is to carry out revolutionary

propaganda with the aim of building the LSA/LSO as the future mass revolutionary party of the working class. We want to put forward our program, extend the influence of the League and win new recruits. This is our aim in the gay liberation movement as elsewhere.

To carry this out, we should develop the use of our propaganda weapons. Our press should continue to cover the most important events in the gay rights struggle. We should look for opportunities to carry articles of a more educational nature - interviews with gay rights leaders, and features on important struggles as they develop. Some branches have utilized their forum program as a means of developing connections with the gay movement and presenting our views on gay liberation. We want to take part in the conferences and other important actions of the gay movement.

In addition, branches may want to consider intervening in gay organizations in their cities - that is, assigning a comrade or comrades to work within local gay organizations. Branch leaderships should decide this taking into account the other tasks before the branch, the possibilities of recruitment and other gains for the League, and the cadre resources the branch has at its disposal. Where we do assign fractions, our approach is the same as elsewhere; we want to present ourselves as serious builders of the organization, assuming whatever responsibility is necessary to carry out our tasks and to win the confidence of the people we are working with.

Adopted by the Political Committee, December 5, 1975.

THE KEY DIFFERENCES ON GAY LIBERATION -- Political Committee

Report to the Central Committee Plenum, presented by John Riddell,

August 1, 1976

We've had a lively internal discussion on gay liberation, and it's proved to be valuable for the LSA/LSO. Sixteen contributions have been published, twelve of them in the special literary discussion over the last two months. They cover the three topics of the Political Committee Statement: our position on gay liberation; the state of the gay movement; and our intervention in it. They strengthen our understanding of gay liberation in many ways.

A number of contributions criticize the line of the Political Committee Statement on Gay Liberation. The critics have stressed that they consider the Political Committee Statement a step forward, and their contributions reveal quite a wide area of agreement between them and the Political Committee.

In this framework, Comrades Russell, Faubert, McLean, and Bearchell have joined in presenting a "Proposed Revision of the Political Committee Statement on Gay Liberation," which contains a series of proposed amendments.

This report will be limited to answering the points raised by these criticisms and by the "Proposed Revision."

No significant disagreements have yet come to light on our assessment of the gay movement or the strategy we propose for it. But the line of the "Proposed Revision" is clearly in conflict with the line of the Political Committee Statement on the third point--our position on gay liberation. Its standpoint is developed most fully in Comrade Russell's contribution, "The Central Issues in the Gay Liberation Discussion." Comrade Russell summarizes the main issues in the discussion as follows:

"We now come to what I believe are the two main errors made in the Political Committee Statement on Gay Liberation: 1) its failure to reaffirm that homosexuality is a natural component of human sexuality and its refusal to solidarize with the slogan "Gay is Good"; and 2) the fact that nowhere does it reaffirm that socialism is necessary to eliminate gay oppression. In both instances this represents a step backward from the line of the 1971 Plenum Report on Gay Liberation."

The 1971 report, available together with other decisions of that plenum from the LSA/LSO Central Office, was the League's first statement on gay liberation. It contained a valuable initial assessment of the gay movement, together with some conclusions for our work. These conclusions were wrong on several counts, and these errors were corrected in practice before the April 1973 convention.

Let's take the first point, our position on gay sexuality.

Should we take a stand on gay sexuality?

The Political Committee Statement says the following on this point:

"The gay liberation movement rejects these vicious forms of anti-gay discrimination. In growing numbers, homosexuals reject the fear and self-hatred they have been forced to live with, and affirm their pride in their

sexuality. They are beginning to conclude that they are not guilty--society is guilty, for its persecution of gays.

"The League welcomes the development of the gay liberation movement, and unconditionally supports its struggles for full civil and human rights for gays. We completely reject all reactionary 'theories' that maintain homosexuality to be an 'illness' or a 'perversion'."

In other words, we start from the proposition of the fundamental equality of all humanity. When a section of humanity is oppressed, and denied equality, we welcome and support their struggle for equality; we oppose their oppression, and equally oppose all the fraudulent rationalizations put forward to justify this oppression.

Defenders of the oppression of gays put forward many kinds of crackpot "theories" to justify denying equal rights to gays, and many of these "theories" claim to be scientific. In rejecting these rationalizations, however, we do not put forward a counter-theory of gay sexuality. That would be contrary to our tasks as a revolutionary political organization.

The Political Committee Statement explains: "As a revolutionary organization with the goal of leading the working class in the fight for state power, the League takes positions on questions of program, strategy and tactics for the political struggle. It does not adopt positions on questions of culture, science or sexuality.

"Consequently, the LSA/LSO does not take any stand on the essential character or value of sexuality."

We do not take a stand on questions of culture or science such as the nature of sexuality, it continues. But, "We do not have to take a stand on the nature of sexuality to reject all forms of anti-gay discrimination, and to identify completely with the aims of the gay liberation movement. This is what we have done. We welcome the entry onto the political arena of the gay movement. We express our solidarity with the growth of gay pride. We support all the struggles of gays for equal rights."

Perhaps a very limited stand...

As Comrade Russell notes, the 1971 Plenum Statement did go further than this--though not much further. It said:

"The materialist view of homosexuality has been very clear. Homosexuality is not a perversion, not a disease, but a form of human sexuality. Homosexuality has existed in many forms of society and is practiced in this one by large numbers of people..."

As a positive statement of the character of gay sexuality, this is not much. "Homosexuality is a form of sexuality" is a tautology without any content. It doesn't really say anything. The present Political Committee Statement might have tried to improve on this by saying a few words about what kind of form of sexuality it is. Instead, it says nothing. It limits itself to rejecting charges that homosexuals are sick or perverted. And the Political Committee is proposing today that we add nothing to the statement on this point. Why?

Some comrades have wondered if the Political Committee is perhaps being rigid and dogmatic on this point. Comrade Duncan McLean suggests in his contribution, "Problems

with the Political Committee Statement on Gay Liberation" that some kind of affirmative statement is surely possible. "The statement 'gayness is not a sickness' is a sentence with a double negative," he says. "It can be expressed also as 'gayness is healthy.'" He later suggests the phrase "gayness is normal." The amendments suggest we say that homosexuality is "significant" and "legitimate."

Comrade McLean's point is thought-provoking. But there's a distinction to be made here. We defend the rights of gays, and we therefore reject all the false rationalizations offered to justify their oppression. But affirming that a person's sexual orientation is a private matter is not the same thing as expressing an opinion on the inherent worth of their sexual orientation. Rejecting the quack anti-gay "theories" does not require us to propose a substitute theory. Defending the rights of gays does not involve passing judgment on their sexual preference.

We can see the same distinction in the case of Soviet dissidents, who are jailed as "sick" or "insane." Defense actions in Canada reject claims that anyone with their dissenting views must be "sick." But this does not involve passing judgment on the correctness of their point of view.

Comrade McLean suggests that there should be some simple non-controversial statement we can make about homosexuality. What should we say? We could say that it's "frequent." That's indisputable, and it helps show that gays aren't "sick." But child-beating is even more frequent. The word "frequent" doesn't tell us much; it does not indicate whether we approve or disapprove.

Comrade McLean suggests that we say homosexuality is "normal." This is a modest, inoffensive word, and it doesn't sound particularly audacious. But when someone asks you, "What do you mean by the word 'normal'?" - what are we to say? "Normal" means "conforming to the standard." What standard are we talking about?

Homosexuality certainly doesn't conform to the standard of capitalist society. We therefore must be speaking of some other standard. A moral standard? That would be the approach of a religious organization, not a political one. We're not out to pass moral judgment on forms of sexuality. Do we mean standard of human nature? A standard of what humans would do in a free, non-repressive society? In either case, we will have to put forward some kind of theory of the nature of sexuality in order to define what is normal and what is not.

Once we've passed a motion on whether homosexual behavior conforms to some standard of normality, we've set a clear precedent. If the LSA/LSO is going to take a stand on one form of sexuality, it will then logically be prepared to decide whether other sexual preferences are "normal." Many choose sexual abstention as their preference. Some might argue that this is not "normal" at all, but rather a healthy defense mechanism against the deformed sexuality of capitalism. What does the LSA/LSO think of this? Is sadism "normal" - or is it abnormal, a byproduct of sexism? Where does the LSA/LSO stand?

You see, once we begin to pass judgement on sexual behavior, saying what forms we approve of and what forms we don't, we are soon far from the realm of politics. Debates may be intriguing. But it's all in the realm of personal speculation, not politics.

The same problem arises with other adjectives. Is homosexuality "natural"? What then is our concept of human nature? Is it "healthy"? All sexuality under capitalism is deformed; what is our theory of a "healthy"

sexuality? Is it "legitimate"? "Legitimate" in whose eyes, by what standard? In each case, we must back up the adjective with theoretical proof.

If we're adopting a position on sexuality, we should do so clearly and unambiguously - not slip it in under cover of an ambiguous phrase. And if we want to stay clear of taking a position on the worth of gay sexuality, then let's stick to the text of the Political Committee Statement, that carefully avoids ambiguous formulations. The task of the plenum is to take a clear decision on this alternative.

...Or perhaps adopt a stand but not vote on it

Comrade Russell proposes that the League advance and defend the proposition that "homosexuality is not better or worse than heterosexuality." True, he agrees that "no convention has ever taken a vote" on scientific questions like this. But "despite this, there is no pretense in our propaganda of suspending judgment on these points ... to suspend judgment on the slogan 'Gay is Good' would be to place a question mark over the underlying assertion of the gay movement: that homosexuality is just as good as heterosexuality."

He would have us defend a position on gay sexuality, and back it up with a scientific theory.

If we're to have a "judgment" on this question and carry a line on it in our education, it can only be through a democratic vote by a leading body of the League. It is therefore positive that the amendments do indeed put to a vote whether the League should adopt a view on the character of sexuality.

The 'Proposed Revision' on scientific theories

The "Proposed Revision" proposes a series of changes in the Political Committee Statement on this point. These changes should also be considered together with the contributions to the bulletin, particularly that of Comrade Russell, that develop the point of view of the "Proposed Revision" more fully.

One sentence of the Political Committee Statement reads that the League "does not adopt positions on questions of culture, science or sexuality." They substitute the following: "(The League) does not adopt a hard 'line' and invoke centralism on questions of culture, science or sexuality. The League does draw on and utilize bodies of knowledge on these questions to advance the struggle for socialism." This proposal means that the League would indeed have positions on scientific questions, although League members who disagree on these points would be free to advance their own views.

Later, the "Proposed Revision" proposes that we endorse the views of some theorists: "Yet a sufficient body of scientific knowledge has been established to which we can refer, and from which we can draw some basic conclusions." It even names a few authors who provide the foundations of this theory: "...Engels and Trotsky have helped in laying the initial groundwork (along with pioneer sexologists like Wilhelm Reich)..."

Engels and Trotsky carry a lot of weight with us, but before the League declares that they provide the foundations of a correct theory of sexuality, we'd better examine what they said on the subject. This is all the more true for Wilhelm Reich, who was a Marxist for only part of his creative life.

The "Proposed Revision" also repeats some of the phrases

of the Political Committee Statement on this question, phrases that make the "Proposed Revision" a bit self-contradictory. What is significant however is the changes, and they indicate a different line from that of the Political Committee.

Our position on scientific questions

The body of Marxist thought reaches far beyond the program of a revolutionary organization. Our program is based on the method of dialectical materialism; our indispensable tool for a correct political course. But dialectical materialism has been applied to many other fields, and the conclusions reached by Marxists in scientific study are of great value to the work of a revolutionary party. For example, study of primitive matriarchal societies has helped undermine male supremacist theories that justify male domination today. Another striking example is the importance of studying the history of the working class movement in Canada.

The League favors its members undertaking personal study in these fields—outside the framework of their regular party tasks. But for a revolutionary party to control, regulate, or take positions on such questions harms the party—and it also obstructs the progress of scientific study. The views of Marxists on history, anthropology, or sexuality can stand on their own feet. Resolutions of party conventions are not required and will not help establish the authority of Marxist scientific conclusions.

How does it hurt us to take positions on scientific questions? First, except for a small handful of specialists in the field, members of the League have no access to the facts on which a position is based. They cannot form an independent opinion. The best they can do is give a vote of confidence to this or that scientific specialist. Second, our positions are not going to be tested in experience, so there's no way of resolving differences and correcting errors. So it tends to break a political party into rival cliques. Third, taking positions like this does not promote our goal—building a revolutionary combat party. It depoliticizes us, it makes us less able to grow into a mass party, and it tends to transform us into an esoteric cult. After all, you don't want fusion negotiations blocked by a disagreement on the views of Wilhelm Reich on sexuality, or the shape of the primitive matriarchy, or whether the universe originated in a "big bang." If we take positions on such questions, we will not grow.

Everything we do aims to prepare to lead the masses to victory in political combat. That's our purpose, our only purpose: to prepare for combat. Anything that doesn't promote that goal is a dead weight on the party, blocking our progress.

Scientific study and discussion

Comrade McLean has made some important points about the general importance of cultural questions to Marxists. A revolutionary party favors the free development of cultural and scientific discussions, and we favor Marxists undertaking personal work in these fields. Sometimes we find it useful to provide a platform for this kind of discussion, in our forums, or in our press. Sometimes we indirectly provide resources that help an established Marxist view gain a hearing, as we did on the Evelyn Reed tour. But it's not our task as a political organiza-

tion to develop scientific positions or pass judgment on scientific debates.

Comrade McLean's contribution "On the Guinea Pig Speech," LSA/LSO Discussion Bulletin, Vol. 11, No. 11, asks if League members can express their views in public discussions on questions like the nature of homosexuality, provided that they make it clear where the League's position ends and their purely personal views begin. Of course we can. The relevant paragraphs from the Political Committee Statement make the line of distinction absolutely clear, and therefore assist comrades who want to participate in discussions like this.

In all this, a sense of proportion is required.

First, on some questions, like the Marxist theory of the matriarchy, Marxists have long ago reached many conclusions whose authority is well established. We can gain from working to ensure that these views get a hearing. This is not the case on the question of sexuality, as Comrade Russell has agreed. Scientific study is in its infancy; there is no developed Marxist view. It would be dead wrong for the League to become identified with this or that view.

Second, we're a very small movement. We don't get chances to speak for the League in new arenas very often; we need to use them to get the maximum hearing for the League's program. In other words, as members of the League, our political tasks are our prime concern.

Third, our resources are very limited. We aren't leading a workers state, as the Bolsheviks were under Lenin and Trotsky. We don't have an active publishing house like Pathfinder. We don't even have our first weekly paper. We have to center our limited resources on the most immediate tasks.

Problems with Comrade Russell's proposal

The general problems of trying to take a position on sexuality are underscored by the difficulties of the view proposed by Comrade Russell, the view also put forward by the "Proposed Revision." His thesis is that homosexuality is rooted in human instincts, and that it is "just as much a part of basic human sexual behavior as heterosexuality." He points to a range of scientific evidence to prove his case.

Comrade Russell cites evidence of the widespread extent of homosexuality in North American society, of its prevalence in other human societies and the considerable degree of toleration it enjoys in a good proportion of them, and finally, to the existence of homosexuality among the primates: our closest biological relatives in the animal world.

He concludes: "...homosexual behavior is not unique to human society, but is rooted in the evolution of animal to human, and exists in most human societies and among animals. This form of sexuality is as natural as heterosexuality. In short, homosexuality has been a significant aspect of human sexuality ever since the dawn of history, primarily because it is an expression of capacities that are basic in human beings The idea that homosexuality only exists when heterosexuality is denied free development is equally false." But as a scientific view, this theory is not self-evident. It is open to question on several points. Comrade Russell has proposed a theory of what human instincts are in the area of sexual behavior. But among psychologists, theories of human instincts are generally discredited. Specialists have not been able to

determine what is "instinctual" behavior. Data on behavior of animals is also questionable. Most of you have read articles by Evelyn Reed debunking the view that we can draw conclusions about human society today by studying primates.

Marxists pose an additional question. Even if it can be proven that something has existed in every human society that ever was, this does not convince us that it will exist in the future. It does not prove that it's instinctive. We think that socialist revolution will open up an incalculable transformation of society. We think that all human society until now is only "prehistory", with the end of class society the real free and creative history of humankind will only begin.

Comrades must examine Comrade Russell's view carefully. The range of debate will extend from the animal world, through primitive and class society, into the communist world of the future.

But it would be wrong for the LSA/LSO to adopt or defend this view.

We all reject the deformation of sexuality under capitalism. It's natural that we try to imagine what a free sexuality would be like—and we speculate about the society of the future. But we must remember how little we know.

Will future humanity evolve toward developing sexuality and infuse it into every aspect of life? Or will it find that when sexual liberation is achieved, sexual expression begins to decline in importance as a form of human activity? Will future humanity maintain some kind of distinction between males and females in social life, or will this differentiation between the two sexes begin to wither away? Who knows? All we can say is that the speculations of present humanity, deformed as we are by capitalist oppression, carry no weight. We must be careful not to mistake our hopeful speculations for scientific conclusions.

Of course we utilize the evidence of scientific studies in refuting reactionary "theories" about homosexuality. Some of the ways we can do this are indicated in Comrade Russell's speech at a public forum in Winnipeg, reprinted in the Discussion Bulletin, Vol. 11, No. 5. He cites the evidence of the Kinsey report on the extent of homosexuality, evidence of its extent in other societies, and evidence that gay oppression has not existed in every society. Other comrades might make their points in other ways.

But these are all ways of challenging the scientific validity of anti-gay "theories." We show that they are not logical deductions from established fact. We give examples of where their facts are wrong, their logic is wrong, their thinking displays gross irrational prejudice, their "theories" are motivated by crude prejudice, not scientific impartiality.

This is how we handle "theories" that Blacks are inferior. It's not hard to debunk them. It doesn't require you to develop a "socialist" theory of racial differentiation. If we give the impression that you must adopt some other theory of sexuality in order to reject the anti-gay theories, it weakens our case.

We have a simpler, and surely a very convincing case to present. We start from the proposition of the fundamental equality of all humanity. We reject all the rationalization for denying equal rights to gays. We hold that homosexuals are equal in rights, capacities, in human worth, and we combat the oppression that denies them full equality.

'Is socialism necessary?'

Comrade Russell points out the second major problem he sees in the Political Committee Statement as follows: "... nowhere does it reaffirm that socialism is necessary to eliminate gay oppression... this represents a step backward from the line of the 1971 Plenum Report on Gay Liberation."

The 1971 Plenum Report stated: "Sexual repression and the oppression of homosexuals is part and parcel of the system. It will take a socialist revolution to lay the groundwork to eliminate this form of oppression." Since 1971 we have moved toward greater caution and greater precision in statements like this. This is reflected in the 1972-73 discussion of the fight for the right to abortion, and in the evolution of our position on Quebec, as well as gay liberation.

The Political Committee Statement points to the evidence that ending gay oppression requires gays to join in the struggle for socialism. It shows how gay liberation challenges key institutions of capitalism. It points to the fact that decaying capitalism in general tends to reinforce oppression in all spheres, to deepen human misery. This is why the struggle for democratic rights as a whole cannot be won without workers' power. The Statement says that anti-gay hysteria is an important prop of reactionary and fascist ideology. It also mentions that gay oppression is related to sexual oppression in general, which is a general feature of capitalist rule. And it says gay liberation will require quite a fight, and that gays must look to the working class movement as a potential ally in a showdown struggle.

It's an overwhelming case that gay activists should "throw in their lot with the working class in the struggle against capitalist rule."

It is true that the bourgeoisie can be forced to grant concessions. Under certain circumstances it can go very far in granting concessions—at least for a time. We sometimes say that "the only concession it can never grant is to concede power." Could it dismantle the apparatus of discriminatory practices against gays, without giving up the patriarchal family? It has not been proven that this is impossible. Comrade Russell shows how homosexuality has been tolerated in other societies with a patriarchal family structure. Tolerating homosexuality would not force capitalism to free the housewife from compulsory domestic labor or childbearing, or free children from the tyranny of their parents.

The family is certainly a barrier to gay liberation. But this does not exclude the theoretical possibility that discrimination against gays could be ended without destroying the patriarchal family.

Would this mean ending gay oppression? We'll see in a moment that there's a disagreement about what constitutes "gay oppression." Of course, if "gay oppression" includes the general oppression of sexuality that everyone suffers, you can't end it short of socialism. But if you view it as the specific disabilities and discrimination suffered by gays, then you cannot prove conclusively that capitalism is incapable under any conceivable circumstances of ending this problem.

But isn't the whole debate here sterile? It's like Mandel's position that capitalism can hypothetically accept the liberation of Quebec. Rather than discussing what might happen in a hypothetical capitalism, shouldn't we discuss what is

happening in the real capitalist society we live in? That's what the Political Committee Statement does, and it makes a convincing case for gays to support the struggle for socialism.

The aims of gay liberation

The question of the definition of gay liberation bears on the same question. The "Revised Version" changes this definition to encompass goals that clearly can only be achieved after a socialist revolution. Where the Political Committee Statement reads, "The gay liberation movement is a movement for democratic rights," the "Proposed Revision" deletes the sentence. It substitutes this: "The gay liberation movement of today is focused around the concrete struggle for democratic rights." The changes are obvious. It continues by adding, "Full gay liberation will only be realized with the elimination of sexism and all forms of sexual oppression, including the forced imposition of the exclusive heterosexual norm which requires the repression of homosexuality in everybody."

The comrades proposing the amendments are clearly worried that calling the gay movement a struggle for democratic rights will lead us to underestimate its importance. Comrade Bearchell says, "If democratic rights were all that was required for (gay) liberation, none of us would be fighting for socialism." Comrade Russell writes, "...gay liberation has a revolutionary potential—it is not solely a movement for civil rights." On the face of it, these sentences underestimate the revolutionary potential of democratic struggles. But the question before us is the dynamic of the gay movement.

First of all, the gay movement is obviously many things. The Political Committee Statement defines it to include gay churches. There is a lively gay press that encompasses art and poetry. And so on. The phrase of the Political Committee Statement, that it is "a movement for democratic rights," was talking of its political dimension.

The desire to be free of sexual suffering, for sexual liberation if you will, is surely one of the most pervasive feelings of modern capitalism. Among youth, it can lead to demands for freedom in sexual expression that the Young Socialists include in their general program.

But Comrade Russell's summary of the gay movement's program—a list of demands that expresses our general position—touches on sexual repression as such on only one point: the demand to end all "age of consent" laws. It is purely a program of democratic rights, for equal treatment for gays—not a program for sexual liberation.

The comrades proposing the amendments seem to grant much of this, in saying that equal rights is the "present focus" of the movement. But even if this program were granted in full, they tell us, the gay movement would stride forward to do battle against sexual repression in general, "not just civil rights." They advance no evidence to back this up. It seems utter speculation. The same is true of the claim that the gay movement aims to end sexism.

Comrade Russell can explain the meaning of the phrase "ending the exclusive heterosexual norm." If it is just another way of saying "end discrimination against gays," it's already contained in the statement. If it means something more than that, it shouldn't be in the statement.

There's a danger that the definition of "gay liberation" could be arbitrarily expanded to encompass aspects of the gay movement that we should not take a stand on.

For example, many in the gay movement argue the benefits of gays "coming out"—that is making no secret of their sexual preference. Comrade Chris Bearchell says that we should take a stand on this question, that we should explain "the need for gays to 'come out'." We have a rule in the League leadership: the League must not give anyone advice on their private lives—how they should live and who they should live with. If we did, we'd have to take responsibility for the consequences—for how things turned out. We do better when we stick to politics. Comrade Bearchell's position is contrary to our policy. It also shows, I think, the dangerous logic of taking a position on the "legitimacy" of gay sexual preference. It takes us out of the realm of politics.

There's another danger here. A concern not to underestimate the importance of gay liberation could lead us to ascribe to it features, and an importance, that are not really there. If we take the example of the family, the women's liberation movement clearly has a program directed against the heart of the patriarchal family structure. Demands for women to control their bodies, for liberation from compulsory responsibility for child-bearing and for domestic labor, and for equal rights at school, work, and other activities—these demands, if fully won, would dismantle the patriarchal family beyond repair.

This is not true of the gay movement. Gay oppression is closely linked to the family; it can be viewed as an outgrowth of the morality established to buttress the family—like the prohibition on sexual expression among youth. Demands for gay liberation come into conflict with the family, as well as other capitalist institutions. But they are demands for equal rights, democratic demands, that do not necessarily require the destruction of the family, or of repressive sexual morality, as a whole, for their achievements.

It's in that framework that the gay movement has grown, and assumed all the importance that we recognize, and that is noted in the Political Committee Statement.

The amendments contained in the "Proposed Revision of the Political Committee Statement" have been helpful in focusing attention on the key points in this discussion. They also include suggestions by the critics of the Political Committee Statement that are in line with the Statement. Critics of the Statement are correct to point out that the League utilizes the conclusions of science to help convince people of our views—and this is quite obvious in every issue of *Liberation and Labor Challenge*. They are right in pointing out that "Gay is Good" is, among other things, an expression of gay pride. However, as Comrade Russell's contribution indicates, "Gay is Good" means other things as well, and we can best maintain the clarity of the Political Committee Statement by not changing its formulation on gay pride. Finally, the critics are correct in saying that League members participate—as individuals—in scientific or cultural discussions in the gay liberation movement and elsewhere. Where these and other points raised in the literary discussion require changes in the text of the Political Committee Statement, this will be done when the Statement is edited.

The task of this plenum, of course, is not to vote on the wording of the Statement, but on its line. The "Proposed Revision" of the Political Committee Statement presents a line counter to that of the Statement on several essential points. This plenum should vote to reject the revision, and to adopt the general line of the Political Committee Statement and of this report.

(From LSA/LSO Internal Information Bulletin, Vol. 4, No. 3, November 1976)

**THE PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE STATEMENT
ON GAY LIBERATION -- Report to the Central Committee Plenum,
presented by Stuart Russell, August 1, 1976**

INTRODUCTION

This report is being presented by four comrades who are proposing a series of amendments to the Political Committee Statement on Gay Liberation. It is not a counter-report from a tendency or faction, but rather from a number of comrades presently intervening in the gay liberation movement, who in the course of the literary discussion have put forward a number of criticisms relating to the Statement.

Unfortunately one of the immediately apparent weaknesses of the literary discussion, which formally draws to a close at this Plenum, was the total lack of any interchange on the questions in dispute. The exchange that should have appeared in the pages of the bulletin has occurred mostly over the telephone during the past week, as well as during a number of informal discussions. Hopefully this Plenum will enable this crucial exchange of viewpoints to occur—which in our view is the road to political clarity.

However, we are already witnessing the beginnings of a convergence on some important questions in debate before this Plenum. This is a significant development. With further discussion we can be confident of surmounting obstacles in the road of a full convergence. Comrades should see that as the task of this session.

The purpose of this report is: 1) to discuss the areas and specific points of agreement between the comrades proposing the amendments and the Political Committee, 2) to concentrate most of the report on our disagreements and points of unclarity, to see if we can go further toward resolving them, 3) to motivate the vote we're proposing

to the Central Committee, and 4) to make some remarks about the discussion on gay liberation in our movement.

POINTS OF AGREEMENT

In his report on behalf of the Political Committee, John Riddell says that we as the LSA/LSO are in favour of the process of revolutionists doing research into questions of science, culture and sexuality, and that we're in favour of promoting science. In so doing he makes reference to amendment number 5. We welcome this statement as an extremely important step toward political clarity. As I mentioned at the beginning of this report, in our opinion a process of convergence is unfolding in the discussion. The attitude of the PC on this question is an indication of that process.

The PC report also states that our movement utilizes science to refute anti-gay and reactionary theories relating to homosexuality. This again is another positive sign. The League uses the tools of science—we base ourselves on its findings—while at the same time not adopting this or that particular body of evidence or theory. In the same sense no one is proposing a Marxist theory of sexuality, or even of homosexuality, for a vote at this Plenum. Contributing to the elaboration of such a theory, however, should be seen as a long term goal for our movement. At the same time the PC says that amendment number 8—which refers to participating in discussions relating to gay oppression and more general theoretical questions—is ambiguous, but nonetheless we encourage this process.

Insofar as the slogan and concept "Gay is Good" is an expression of gay pride the PC says that it can accept amendment number 3. They say however in the same breath that we cannot include the formulation "Gay is Good" in the Statement because its meaning can be misinterpreted. In our opinion this is an ambiguous and very unclear position.

Nevertheless, the fact that we now agree on some very basic questions that previously were in dispute is very positive. It should be underlined, as John did in his report, that we also agree on what our strategy should be for the gay liberation movement, despite any important tactical differences we might have.

POINTS OF DISAGREEMENT

I now want to get into the section that this report is focused on; namely our points of disagreement relating to the PC statement.

Some comrades have asked if our amendments stand on their own feet. Our answer is that they primarily stand on the most recent written contributions, and more precisely they rest on this report. So while comrades may want to make reference to earlier contributions, like those written before the last convention, it would be best to refer to the most recent ones. In other words, as we see it there has been a certain evolution in the discussion—not a basic change in our position—but a progression toward a more clear and precise elaboration of our viewpoint.

Also it is true to say that the Revised Statement we submitted goes further than the eight amendments only insofar as it reflects an attempt to explain what the amendments would mean if adopted. But the Revised Statement, which is in essence a working proposal, does not diverge on questions of line from the proposed amendments themselves.

Class society and gay oppression

The first point I want to discuss at some length is the question which is at the very heart of a Marxist analysis of the struggle for gay liberation—the relationship between gay oppression, class society and the nuclear family.

The PC believes that our movement should not reaffirm the understanding that capitalism cannot grant gay liberation. In contrast, the Gay Liberation report to the 1971 Plenum said the following: "Sexual repression and the oppression of homosexuals is part and parcel of this system. It will take a socialist revolution to lay the groundwork to eliminate this form of oppression. This was recognized by the Bolsheviks in 1917." In our opinion this is a correct and precise perspective, it may not be entirely cautious, but its conclusion is correct, and that's what counts. We stand firm on this acquisition of the League and the Marxist movement, and ask why the PC is trying to retreat from it?

Our movement has analyzed that while capitalism is capable of granting certain demands of the women's liberation movement, like for example repealing the abortion laws, it is incapable of granting full women's liberation or of eliminating this form of oppression.

Similarly, in our opinion class society is capable of granting certain democratic rights as a result of the mobilization of gay people, but it is incapable of granting full gay liberation or eliminating gay oppression—which would

entail the elimination of sexual oppression and all that that entails.

In the contribution "The Central Issues in the Gay Liberation Discussion" we stated: "While partial concessions can be wrested from the capitalist state by the struggle of large numbers of gays for their rights, so long as society is predicated on the need to suppress homosexual behaviour the full rights of gay people will not be achieved. The oppression of gays is so deeply rooted in the needs and fabric of capitalist society that nothing short of a socialist revolution can win their full liberation."

A correct position on the family is absolutely crucial to this discussion. Previously we thought the PC agreed that the family should be added to the list of institutions that the gay liberation movement challenges—in reference to amendment number 2—but without the implication that it need be dismantled to achieve gay liberation. Now the PC has retrogressed even further to say that they can't adopt this amendment at all. This means the PC isn't sure about the centrality of the family to the maintenance of gay oppression.

The family is where anti-gay prejudices begin, and is a fundamental pillar of sexual and gay oppression. The family serves the function of harnessing the unpaid labor of women, allows society to slough off social responsibility for individuals and especially the young onto a small social unit, acts as a profound conservatizing force, maintains sexual and gay oppression, permits the reproduction of the working class, and so on. It plays the role of a socializing force, enforcing monogamy and perpetuating rigid sex roles which is the key area wherein the family oppresses gays. Such roles are in direct contradiction to the experience of every gay person's sexual and emotional experience. "Men" and "women" are defined in relation to each other. Reich called it, among other things, "the factory of authoritarian ideologies and conservative structures." Perhaps the family could survive if sexual rights for youth were granted, but it could not coexist side-by-side with total sexual liberation, because sexual oppression is woven into the very fabric of the family and the system it upholds.

Thus the fundamental bulwark or central focus of sexual and gay oppression is the monogamous, heterosexual family. In "Problems with the Political Committee Statement on Gay Liberation" it was stated that, "gay liberation does not, in and of itself, challenge the overall doctrines of religion, the system of education, the existence of the courts or the governments in nearly such a fashion as it does the family. One can speak thousands of words about any of these institutions without touching gay oppression directly. But one cannot even think of the concept: nuclear family, let alone write a paragraph describing it, without thinking of or describing an institution directly counterposed to gay liberation. The family... is by its very nature, essence, and to its very core, anti-gay."

This flows from the fact that since homosexual behaviour is nonprocreative, it threatens the proper functioning of the nuclear family. Since this behaviour goes against the maintenance of this central pillar of class society it must be regulated and ruthlessly repressed. We should recall that one of the favourite accusations of anti-gay bigots, is that the gay movement is out to "ruin the family."

It is impossible to dismantle gay oppression without dismantling the family, because it is not possible to eliminate sexual oppression without abolishing the family.

The two are inseparably and dialectically inter-related. The final elimination of the family will only come after a socialist revolution, and therefore, gay and sexual oppression will only be eliminated under a classless society. Thus gay liberation has an objectively anti-capitalist dynamic. As Reich said, "Since the compulsive family, economically and ideologically, is part and parcel of authoritarian society, it would be utterly naive to expect that its effects could possibly be readicated within this society."

Of course the gay movement challenges institutions like the legal system differently from the family or religion. Most of its demands presently revolve around civil rights—which directly come into collision with the laws, the courts and the cops. However, even if civil rights were granted and discrimination was ended gay oppression would still continue to exist. Gay oppression evolved alongside the rise of the patriarchal family and class society as well as rigid anti-homosexual religious codes—they are inextricably bound to the repression of homosexual behavior.

This is why we need to distinguish between the present demands and longterm goals of the gay movement. As Marxists we not only analyze a social movement by studying its present demands, but also by examining its dynamic—what direction it is headed in, and what fundamental changes need to occur to win emancipation. For example, the feminist movement is presently mobilized around issues like abortion repeal, the ERA, childcare centres—all basic democratic rights. But we don't put blinders on and mechanically deduce that therefore the struggle of women for their liberation is only limited to civil rights, because we understand the underlying thrust of this movement—not only to end discrimination and win civil rights, but to dismantle the family, and destroy sexism and sexual oppression.

What is gay and sexual oppression all about? It means irrational sex-stereotyping, male chauvinism, unculcating the norms of an authoritarian society, sexism, psychological oppression, homophobia, self-oppression, the binding of sexuality to procreation and the pervasiveness of the exclusive heterosexual norm. Its function is first and foremost the maintenance of the family, as well as helping to create submissive, docile workers to keep its system churning out profits, and helping the ruling class to divide the oppressed. Does anyone really think that capitalism could survive without it?

Where did gay oppression come from, and why are gays oppressed? To answer these burning questions we need to analyze the roots of gay oppression. A materialist view of gay oppression is based on the understanding that it developed with the rise of class society, and will only be eliminated with the destruction of this form of society.

In her introduction to the pamphlet *Women's Liberation in Canada*, Kate Alderdice wrote: "But women will never win total liberation in the framework of this society. It cannot free them from the burden of labor in the home, or integrate them fully into economic and social life. It has no interest in doing so. The oppression of women is one of the main pillars of capitalist society and will not disappear until capitalism itself does. It will require a major social struggle and complete reorganization of society to free women from servitude.... Only a socialist Canada can, for the first time, create the conditions to eliminate the oppression of women and all forms of exploitation."

And, we might add, including the repression of homosexuality.

A socialist revolution is the fundamental prerequisite for the final elimination of gay oppression as with all forms of oppression. "Our goal cannot be tolerance from straight society as presently constituted," said the Red Butterfly (a radical gay liberation organization) in 1970. "Because of the roles and patterns of this society we could at best be tolerated as inferiors and 'terminal cases' of an affliction. Existing American institutions cannot assimilate homosexuality in a positive way. Liberation will require a resistance to the kind of negative channeling this society imposes on us and finally a radical overthrow of the institutions that oppress us—including the removal and replacement of institutions where necessary."

The key institution of the family as presently constituted can never "incorporate" homosexuality. "Gay families" are inconceivable. What niche are gay people to have in capitalism? Where are we to live? How are we to fit into the social fabric? How are centuries of religious taboos to be wiped out? Since when does tolerance, which is the best and unlikely token a straight, capitalist society can offer, equal liberation?

What are the implications of refusing to clearly affirm that capitalism cannot grant gay liberation? How would we respond to a gay militant who asks us why he or she should struggle for socialism if gay oppression can be eliminated under this society?

While it is true to say that gay rights may be granted under class society—maybe even the elimination of anti-gay discrimination to an extent—it is ludicrous to believe that gay or sexual liberation can be granted. And if you don't understand that you really don't understand what gay liberation is all about! In "Gay Liberation: The Need For a Socialist Perspective" it was noted that: "We must be absolutely clear that Gay people have a role to play as well as a stake in the socialist victory. We must recognize that wresting even an impressive series of legal concessions from capitalism is not the equivalent of winning liberation—socialism is required."

Some comrades have expressed the opinion that the potential of gay liberation is somehow limited because its current demands are primarily democratic. The idea flows from the false concept that democratic demands have a minor role to play in the struggle for socialism. The character of a particular demand, however, flows from its ability to set masses of people in action against the system, not whether it falls into one category or another. The false counterposition of democratic and transitional demands and underestimation of the significance and power of democratic demands is a fundamental revision of the transitional approach. Therefore, we not only need to be able to win gays to the struggle for socialism, but also to consistently defend the present tactical focus by the gay movement on civil rights, which is the best method to mobilize the largest numbers in the fight for gay liberation and build a mass, militant gay movement.

"It is one of the tenets of the theory of the permanent revolution that the demands for democratic rights by large groups of people may be partially conceded but their needs cannot be fundamentally and fully satisfied under imperialist auspices," said George Novack. "The struggle of homosexuals for an end to their victimization is no exception. The removal of certain legal inequalities and disabilities will not suffice to give them the dignity they seek. The changes they aspire to bring about not only affront deeply

lodged prejudices of bourgeois society and the churches, but call into question auxiliary props of the nuclear family and the marriage code.

"The attacks upon such institutional arrangements of the established order imparts an anti-capitalist tendency to the gay struggle, even if many of its participants fail to recognize the underlying social and political implications of their challenge."

Does the Political Committee recognize the important distinction between the concept of discrimination and oppression? From John's report we are led to believe that the terms can be used interchangeably, which is not true. Discrimination is the practice of employing prejudicial judgment against minorities on the basis of their supposed inferiority. But gay oppression is reflected not only in the discrimination and persecution directed against persons who are either known or suspected to be gay, but also in the pervasive efforts of this system to completely suppress homosexuality even before it may arise, and to threaten violators with severe reprisals. The effects of this oppression are felt on a much wider scale than merely among those who admit, whether to themselves or publicly, to being gay.

As Novack pointed out, the tendency in the epoch of imperialist decay is not toward more democratic rights being granted, but a retreat in this process. As John Riddell said in "A New Period in Canadian Politics," printed in Labor Challenge. "In today's conditions of growing crisis, it is more and more difficult to convince big business that it can grant any reforms at all." This is not to underestimate the importance of democratic rights in the revolutionary process, or to say that certain rights won't be won.

As well, what indications are there that capitalism is capable or willing to grant full gay liberation? The entire experience of the gay movement in Canada and Quebec since 1971 has illustrated that capitalism is reluctant to even grant the most minimal concessions—and then only as a result of the persistent mobilization of gays.

Nature of homosexuality

The next point I want to deal with is on the nature of homosexuality. Can the League reaffirm its approach to the nature of homosexuality? The PC says no, and adds that it was wrong for us to take such an approach in the past.

Our view is summed up in a passage under the heading "The Marxist Approach to Homosexuality" in the 1971 Plenum Report: "For Marxists, the question of sexual repression and homosexuality is not new. The materialist view of homosexuality has been very clear. Homosexuality is not a perversion, not a disease but a form of human sexuality." This flows from our rejection of the notions that homosexuality is a "perverted", "sick", "sinful", "unnatural" or "deviant" form of behavior.

However, the PC believes that we must retreat from the 1971 approach in order to say nothing whatsoever. On the contrary not only should this statement be reaffirmed, in the long-term it must be amplified and elaborated upon in order to aid in the development of a Marxist analysis of sexuality. Some may scoff and claim this is not a "political" question. But the repression of homosexual behavior and the movement that has flourished to destroy it are very political questions.

On the one hand, the PC claims to reject the notion that gays are sick, yet on the other hand it states that the move-

ment should take no "stand" on the nature of homosexuality. Yet in our society, homosexuality is branded an illness, and it is one of the main "justifications" for the oppression of homosexually-oriented persons. How can the Statement seriously propose to leave open the question of the nature of homosexuality and in the same breath claim to reject "with contempt" the idea that it is an illness?

What does the Statement have in mind with the concept of the "value" of homosexuality? Does this mean that it wishes to suspend judgment on whether homosexuality can be a positive factor in the lives of gays, rather than something to be ashamed of, denied, and suppressed? Does it mean to suggest that in the face of a gay person's assertion that it is better to openly and proudly accept one's homosexuality than to hide and force oneself into a constricting heterosexual mold, revolutionists should stand by silently, or note that we have no opinion?

This is not a matter of taking a stand on personal tastes. Personal tastes have nothing whatsoever to do with this. What is involved is a recognition of historical and scientific fact, as well as an expression of solidarity with the central thrust of gay liberation, which is to bring about a society in which exclusive heterosexuality is no longer the norm.

The 1971 position means that homosexuality is a component of the human sexual continuum—that homosexuality is not abnormal. It was doing nothing more. In fact, the very essence of gay liberation is predicated on the rejection of the unmaterialist and anti-sexual notion that homosexuality is an illness, and an affirmation that gay is just as good as straight.

In other words, we can say that homosexuality is within the range of normalcy in the human animal and is therefore a legitimate component of human sexual behavior. However, of course, we don't vote on the findings of Kinsey or other sexologists on whom we base our analysis, or impose centralism on their conclusions.

It is also true to say that there are other possibilities for theories relating to homosexuality. There are reactionary theories, conservative theories, liberal theories as well as the beginnings of materialist theories. But for the Political Committee to say that the League should not reaffirm the materialist view of homosexuality is a retreat, and a very serious error.

Exclusive heterosexual norm

The PC is also not sure that one of the long-term goals of the gay movement is the elimination of the exclusive heterosexual norm. This concept is simply the summation of what gay oppression is based on—the forced channeling of people into one exclusive form of sexual behavior, which is codified in law and perpetuated by every major institution. This norm is reinforced by all the institutions of capitalist society, beginning with the family, and continues in the schools and churches. Individuals who refuse to conform to this norm can be threatened with jail, physical extermination or mutilation. Thus no one is permitted free sexual choice under our society. The norm is deeply rooted in the evolution of the Judeo-Christian ethic, but we don't have time to go into that.

The implication of the destruction of the exclusive heterosexual norm is that this forced channeling would cease, that individuals could freely choose their sexual preference without any social restriction. The elimination of such a compulsory norm, which has existed for centuries, would not mean the imposition of an exclusive homosexual norm

or any other irrational norm, but that sexuality could be divorced from procreation. The enormous potential of human sexuality would finally be unleashed.

Nobody should demean this goal on the spurious grounds that it is not "political" in the strict sense of the word. The fact is that the elimination of this norm is an objective precondition for full homosexual liberation. In the same sense we say that one of the objective prerequisites for the construction of socialism is the abolition of private property and capital.

It is difficult to read the Statement, with its repetitive stressing of the fact that the revolutionary party is a political organization, without coming away with the feeling that it intends to suggest that there is something inherently apolitical, cultural, or countercultural about gay liberation. Without ever directly stating so, it manages to imply that the gay liberation struggle, by its very nature, raises issues that the League should avoid, steer clear of, and indeed that these issues pose such a danger for the movement that it must go out of its way to make clear that it avoids and steers clear of them. So serious is this danger that to take a position on them would risk narrowing its appeal and crippling its ability to mobilize the masses. Clearly, there is something about gay liberation that is seen as posing a threat to the movement's ability to carry out its tasks—a threat that the Statement warns against in terms one cannot imagine being invoked in regard to any other struggle of the oppressed.

In what does this threat lie? Apparently in the insistence of the gay liberation movement that the exclusive heterosexual norm of society represents a distortion of human sexuality and that homosexuality is not inferior to heterosexuality. It no doubt also lies in the fact that this insistence of the gay liberation movement is being advanced within the revolutionary movement by comrades such as ourselves, who regard it as a crucial question, the answer to which will determine the nature of the relationship the movement will have toward this struggle. We believe this threat to be imaginary.

We would simply be deluding ourselves and gay militants if we thought that a civil rights perspective was sufficient for the gay struggle. A transitional approach to this struggle is premised on the need to construct a bridge between the struggles to eliminate the most blatant forms of gay oppression and the long-term goals of complete homosexual liberation. A correct perspective on the need to eliminate the heterosexual norm can hasten the process of gay concluding that they need to throw their lot in with the working class in the struggle for socialism.

Saying that the elimination of this norm is a precondition for gay liberation is also not an attempt to predetermine what sexual behavior would be like after a successful socialist revolution. No one knows the answer. We can be sure that it will be free from repressive attitudes and compulsory norms. But sexual liberation will only come if the revolutionary vanguard inscribes it onto its banner before, during, and after a socialist revolution. Otherwise, there will be no sexual revolution.

Gay pride and 'Gay is Good'

We now come to a point which potentially could, and I hope won't, become a lavender herring in the discussion—here I am referring to the question of our attitude to gay pride and the concept "Gay is Good." The Political Committee says that if we solidarize with gay pride we

then solidarize with its manifestations. Yet they equivocate and add the disclaimer that providing we stay "clearly away from" the concept "Gay is Good."

It is true to say that "Gay is Good" equals gay pride, while also meaning other things. In our 1973 Political Resolution we correctly noted that: "'Gay Pride' announces that homosexuality is a significant and legitimate component of human sexuality."

The concept "Gay is Good" or "Gay is Just as Good as Straight" means that homosexuality is not better and not worse than heterosexuality—it is simply a fact. It is a message to the entire world that homosexuality is neither criminal nor abnormal, as society tries so hard to portray it. It is a profound message to closeted gays—imploping them to be proud of their homosexuality, to come out of the closet of centuries of oppression and join the struggle for a sex-positive society. In essence it is a profound expression of gay pride, just as "Black is Beautiful" is an affirmation of the pride of Black people.

The concept of coming out is also an aspect of this discussion. In "Gay Liberation: The Need for a Socialist Perspective" this was explained as the following: "The immeasurable emotional toll taken by constant deception (often accompanied by a painful lack of self-respect) alone is just not worth it. The most obvious advantage of all is that the more people who are open the easier it becomes for those still in the closet to come out. It need not be argued that collective political struggle is more important. Of course it is. But unfortunately or not, for Gay people coming out is often a prerequisite. It is hard to remain in the closet and still march down the street chanting 'Gay Rights Now'."

"Gay is Good" is a statement affirming the positive nature of homosexuality against the predominant bourgeois viewpoint. It demands the acceptance by society of gays as completely equal human beings.

For these reasons we are recommending that the Statement be amended to read that we express our solidarity with the growth of gay pride, and with its contemporary and popular expression embraced in the affirmative slogan "Gay is Good." We want to once again underline and clearly state, however, that this slogan is not up for a vote.

OUR PROPOSAL FOR THE VOTE

This in turn raises the question of what is the nature of our amendments. First of all, they don't represent a hidden or overt counter-statement. In fact, our purpose in drafting the amendments was to aid in the clarification and improvement of a basically very good Statement drafted by the PC. Our recommendation is that the Central Committee vote on the general line of the Proposed Amendments, in the view of strengthening our movement's analysis of and approach to the gay liberation movement, and the general line of this report.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion we want to emphasize that the willingness of the Political Committee to embrace a number of amendments, coupled with the process of convergence represents a step forward for our movement in this arena. At the same time, however, the fact that the PC has argued that the movement must either retreat from, or not reaffirm, some basic acquisitions of our movement's

analysis of gay oppression and liberation represents a step backward.

We should also underscore that the points in dispute are not simply over minor tactical questions—they concern fundamental questions of theory and analysis for our intervention in the gay movement. This is why the very function of our amendments is to improve the Statement's analysis in the interest of a more correct analysis, which can rally gay militants to the Trotskyist movement. In the long-run the ultimate test of experience will show who's analysis is correct and who's is not. That we can be sure of.

But this Plenum is not by any means the end of the discussion on gay liberation. While the bulletin may be closed and the discussion formally terminated, it still proceeds. It goes on because political clarity on many fronts has yet to be achieved. This Plenum is one step further to that task. The many different questions still left unanswered, and the great interest in the gay liberation topic is a further indication of the objective necessity for a more complete gay liberation resolution at our next convention. Such a resolution could, for example, round out the Statement's important, but by and large superficial, analysis of the gay movement and homosexual oppression.

The discussion in our movement over the past five years on this question has made considerable progress, but as I think is evident to all, is far from being conclusive. The

simple fact is that the League still has not gone through a real discussion on gay liberation.

We hope that the discussion here today will help further the crucial process of clarification and convergence. In line with this we think the Political Committee should consider publishing the report from the PC as well as this one in an internal bulletin. In addition, we are suggesting that in the interest of popularizing our movement's position on gay liberation, that extracts of the adopted Statement be made public, either through an article or perhaps a pamphlet.

The contemporary gay liberation movement needs not only our activists and our organizational skills, but most importantly it needs our program—a program for winning full gay liberation in the framework of a strategy for overthrowing this decadent system. The discussion of gay liberation and socialism is not some sterile sectarian “in” debate. Many left organizations are innovatively attempting to grapple with it, as are more and more leading gay militants who can be won to our movement. Gay activists need a materialist scientific analysis to explain their oppression and the road to their liberation. Only the LSA/LSO can provide such a perspective.

The elaboration of a Marxist analysis of the roots and origins of gay oppression is a major challenge before the international Trotskyist movement. This Plenum here today takes us one step further toward that all-important goal.