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AGAIN: ON "UNITY WITH THE SHACHTMANITES"

By James P. Cannon

(Speech at New York Membership Meeting of the S.W.P.,
Sunday, September 2, 1945)

1. The Letter of the Workers Party

This is the second discussion of the question of our attitude towards the Workers Party, and it coincides with a second stage in the development of our relations toward them. The first stage was marked by the proposal of our minority that we should offer unity proposals to the Shachtmanites, that we should approach them. That was not a unity proposal; we had nothing from the Shachtmanites, no sign at that time of any change in their attitude toward us upon which to base a change in our position.

Now we have something different. It might be called a follow-up letter of the Workers Party on the resolution of our P.C. minority. We must analyze this letter also and see what it really is. Let us understand what it is. First, the letter of the W.P. is not a unity proposal. It would not be intelligent for us to discuss it from that point of view. It is an offer on their part to "discuss" unity with us. Let us examine the letter and see what it says. You have all received copies, and I presume you have read it.

The letter of the Workers Party contains two new points. The first one is contained in the last sentence of paragraph 4 of their letter, in which they say that "the interests of uniting the Fourth Internationalists in the United States on a sound foundation are more important than the regime in the Socialist Workers Party." Now, that is something new and we must recognize it as such. The position of the Shachtmanites that they could not tolerate the regime in the Socialist Workers Party was precisely the point upon which they based the motivation for their split five years ago. They consistently maintained this position for five years. Even as late as May of this year, in the article of Shachtman in the New International summing up the five years' existence of the Workers Party, this was the issue he gave as the obstacle to unity: the regime in the Socialist Workers Party. Now, if this statement in their letter here means what it says, if it is sincerely made, then we must recognize that the Workers Party leaders have renounced the justification for their split of five years' ago and their independent existence as a party for the past five years. That is something new and we must take due note of it.

The second new point of the W.P. letter is contained in paragraph 5, in which they offer for the first time in five years to discuss unity with us. Up to now and in the past they have wanted to "discuss" with us only as implacable enemies, party against party. They now say they are ready to discuss unity with us.

These two new points constitute a change in the situation which we must recognize. We must approach the question on the basis of this new situation, created by a change of position, on their part, at least an ostensible change of position.

2. Our Answer to the Workers Party

We sent a very quick answer to the Workers Party. We didn't take very much time to decide how to answer it either. Our answer to the Workers Party contains six points, and I think I am justified in saying that each point goes right to the point. You will note that the tone of our letter is polite, partly friendly. Why? That is because their letter indicates a change of attitude toward the Socialist Workers Party. We communist politicians are not subjectivists. Our attitude toward political groups and individuals in the general labor movement is determined not by their attitude toward us as individuals personally, but by their attitude toward the Socialist Workers Party. To those who are friendly to the S.W.P., however unfriendly they may be to any of us as individuals, we are friendly. To those who are hostile to our party, we are hostile. In this case we are polite in adjustment to the change of attitude represented by their letter.

There are six points, I said, in our letter. Let us mention them briefly point by point.

First, we say we are in favor of the discussion they propose and will so recommend to our National Committee. Nobody will object to that, I am sure, because I don't recall when our party or its leadership ever refused anybody's offer to discuss unification with us.

The second point, we ask the Shachtmanites, in view of the long conflicts that have prevailed between us, if they don't think they should indicate more precisely and more concretely their view of how the unification should be brought about and what form it should take. They didn't indicate that in their letter. I don't know if they had even thought about it or made up their minds. But if they are going to discuss unity they must soon reach a stage where proposals are concretized. So we helped them out, so to speak, by politely asking them: "What do you want; how are you going to do it?"

The third point is the statement that "we have always proceeded from the point of view that programmatic agreement is the only sound basis for unification; and that where divergences of opinion occur, unity can be maintained only by the scrupulous observance of the democratic principle of the subordination of the minority to the majority, and strict discipline in public activity and action.

The fourth point is our answer to their proposal that we should begin practical cooperation between the parties before we have discussed their programmatic differences. We say, "No, that appears to us to put the cart before the horse. Let us first discuss the program, and if it appears in the course of the discussion that we are approaching a unification and have reasonable grounds to believe that we can unite, then practical cooperation in all fields of work will

follow as a matter of course. Let us begin, however, at the beginning and not at the end."

The fifth point is that we say that unity is a question which must be discussed frankly and seriously. We don't play with unity any more than we play with splits. The only aim of a unity discussion must be to effect a serious and long-lasting and firmly based unity that leads to the strengthening of the party and the building-up of the party. A unity not firmly based, hastily prepared and then followed by a paralyzing faction fight and another split -- that would not help to strengthen and build up the party, and we are not interested in that kind of unity.

The sixth point in our answer to the very careful and somewhat hesitant letter of the Shachtmanites politely formulates the blunt proposal: "If you want to talk business with us, even in an exploratory way, just call Comrade Stein, our organization secretary, on the telephone and we will arrange a meeting in short order. Let's get down to business without beating around the bush."

These are the six points in our answer to the Shachtmanites.

3. Unifications and Splits

I believe the party will recognize our letter as the correct answer. It says everything that should be said at this stage of our new relationship with them. It does not reject them out of hand; offers to discuss any proposals that they may concretize; tells what we consider to be the main aims of unification and the main prerequisites to bring it about; and announces at the very beginning that we are not interested in any maneuverist unity. We want a real unity that will build up the party or none at all.

It was easy for us to write this letter because we are animated by certain general conceptions of unifications and splits. I believe it would be very useful, if nothing else comes out of this discussion, if the younger members of the party will put themselves to school during the course of the discussion and learn these basic principles which have guided us and our teachers in the building of a revolutionary party through a complicated process of unifications and splits.

It may seem strange to some of you that I put unifications and splits on the same level. But that is where they belong. We communists are neither light-minded splitters nor unity sentimentalists. Either method can be a means of developing the revolutionary party in a given situation. The important thing is not to split when unity is on the order of the day and not get bogged down in a false unity when a split is indicated.

Light-minded, subjectively-motivated splits have done great harm to the movement in the past. This was the case in the early days of the Communist movement in the United States. There was not a single one of the splits -- and a number of them took place in the first five years of the American Communist Party -- that was properly based except possibly the split of the extreme ultra-leftists who left

the Communist Party for good -- the Undergroundists. All the other splits which kept the movement in turmoil and division with an unnecessary loss of blood in the first few years were unjustified splits. The splits which took place in the British-Trotskyist movement over a period of years -- which were only finally healed last year -- were devastating in their effects on the movement, because they were not justified in principle.

There are situations in which splits in one direction and unifications in another take place almost simultaneously. Such a situation we had in 1933-34. After the German events, after we had fought five years as an expelled faction of the C.P., we simultaneously proclaimed a definitive split with the Stalinist party and at the same time approached new centrist groupings, moving to the left, for unification. We made the definitive split with the American Communist Party in 1933 and a few months later were discussing and negotiating with the Musteités for unification, which was finally carried out in the Fall of 1934.

Our great teachers were neither splitters nor unity shouters. We can learn much from old Engels. In the Marx-Engels correspondence we have numerous references to the Marxist policy toward unifications and splits and the building of the party in the process -- now using one tactic and now another.

4. Engels on Unity and Splits

Let us take, for example, a quotation from a letter of Engels to Bebel about the split in France:

"Unity", he said in this letter, "is a good thing so long as it is possible, but there are things which stand higher than unity. And when, like Marx and myself, one has fought harder all one's life long against the alleged socialists than against anyone else (for we only regarded the bourgeoisie as a class and hardly ever involved ourselves in conflicts with individual bourgeois), one cannot greatly grieve that the inevitable struggle has broken out."

Another letter of Engels to Bebel said:

"One must not allow oneself to be misled by the cry for 'unity.' Those who have this word most often on their lips are those who sow the most dissension, just as at present the Jura Bakuninists in Switzerland, who have provoked all the splits, scream for nothing so much as for unity. These unity fanatics are either the people of limited intelligence who want to stir everything up together into one nondescript brew, which, the moment it is left to settle, throws up the differences again in much more acute opposition because they are now all together in one pot (you have a fine example of this in Germany with the people

who preach the reconciliation of the workers and the petty bourgeoisie) -- or else they are people who consciously or unconsciously (like Muhlbergër, for instance) want to adulterate the movement. For this reason the greatest sectarians and the biggest brawlers and rogues are at certain moments the loudest shouters for unity. Nobody in our life-time has given us more trouble and been more treacherous than the unity shouters."

Of course, that was back in 1882. We don't take these quotations as applicable in every detail to our present situation. But they are very useful for general guidance. Here is what he said in another letter to Bebel. Bebel was the leader of the German Social-Democratic party, as you know, and Engels was his teacher.:

"For the rest, old Hegel has already said: A party proves itself a victorious party by the fact that it splits and can stand the split. The movement of the proletariat necessarily passes through different stages of development; at every stage one section of people lags behind and does not join in the further advance; and this alone explains why it is that actually the 'solidarity of the proletariat' is everywhere realized in different party groupings which carry on life and death feuds with one another, as the christian sects in the Roman Empire did amidst the worst persecutions."

Profound words. "A party proves itself by the fact that it splits and can stand a split." Our party has proved its right to life precisely by this test.

From these letters we can see -- and one could quote other remarks along the same line -- that Engels was no sentimentalist on the question of unity. Unity shouters never bowled him over or stampeded him. He appreciated the value of unity, but insisted on a principled basis for it.

That was the position taken by Marx in his famous criticism of the Gotha program. He and Engels objected violently to the unity which Bebel and Liebknecht carried out with the Lasallians without having a clearly defined program of Marxism. Marx stated that in the case of such differences they should not have united into one party on a confused program, but should have made a compact to carry out a series of joint actions instead. But these were mass organizations and it was possible for them, had they agreed on a practical program of action, to really carry out mass actions. We are not a mass party yet. We are primarily a propaganda party, and it would be a great error to take this expression of Marx as having literal applicability in the present relationship of our small propagandist party to the still smaller propagandist party of the Shachtmanites.

5. The Method of Lenin

Unity is a good thing, there is no question about that, but the fetish of unity is extremely harmful. The best example of the harmful effect of the fetishism of unity is the Social-Democratic parties of the Second International before the First World War. I believe the greatest mistake of the German Left, headed by Rosa Luxemburg, was their hesitancy to carry the fight against the reformists up to the point of split and the formation of a revolutionary party out of the left-wing. As a result the outbreak of the war found the left-wing imprisoned in the discipline of the opportunist party.

Lenin was the only one, as far as I know, of the great leaders before the First World War who defied the fetishism of unity and did not hesitate to carry through the split with the Mensheviks. In that period Trotsky's greatest error, the error which Trotsky had to recognize and overcome before he could find his way to unity with Lenin, was his insistence that the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks had to unite. Trotsky's conciliationist position, which he repudiated in his later writings, was what separated him from Lenin during those fateful years. Lenin's policy was vindicated in life. Lenin built a party, something that Luxemburg was not able to do with all her great abilities and talents; something that Trotsky was not able to do precisely because of his wrong estimation of the Mensheviks.

Lenin built a party! And let there be no misunderstanding -- either between us here or between us and any other party in the labor movement -- that when it comes to organization we are Leninists. That means, we are for unity when it is possible. But we don't fear splits when they are politically indicated and necessary. Our aim is to build a Leninist party and all of our tactics are subordinated to this aim.

6. The Concrete Problem

In every case we approach the problem concretely. We are guided by general concepts, but we apply them concretely according to the situation as we see it. We strive to ascertain the facts as they really are, not as they are represented but as they are in actuality. It is from this point of view that we approach the letter of the Shachtmanites -- as a concrete case. We have to examine this case and see what it is.

Here is a rough outline of the background. We had a nine-month faction fight inside the SWP in 1939 and 1940. This faction fight led to a split five years ago. When the Shachtmanites were suspended by the Political Committee for their refusal to accept the decisions of the convention, they were given a period of time to consider the question and return to the party. They didn't avail themselves of it. In the Fall of 1940 we held a Plenum-Conference. They presented no appeal, and were formally expelled. Since then we have held two conventions of the party. There was no appeal from the Shachtmanites to either convention. On the contrary, if you study the material you can say that the antagonism of the Shachtmanites toward us rather increased than decreased over the whole period of five years up until last week.

Now, however well disposed we may be towards healing the split; however far we may wish to go within the bounds of principle to help the Shachtmanites find their way back to the party -- it would be very foolish for any of us to think that this five-years' struggle can be resolved in one day at one stroke. That is not the reality of the situation. The party interest -- and that for us is paramount -- demands a very careful and even cautious approach to the latest letter of the Shachtmanites, and any subsequent ones they may send us. We must be careful; we must be cautious; we must not gamble; we must know what we are doing and do it with our eyes open. I am not saying this in definitive rejection of the possibilities of changes for the better. Not at all. But we want to know in each case, at every step, just what our actions are based on.

7. The Amendment of the Minority

Our letter was not completely satisfactory to the minority in the Political Committee. Comrade Morrow introduced an amendment -- I am sorry that it was not mimeographed through an oversight -- but the amendment proposed that we add a paragraph in our letter declaring that the differences between us and the Shachtmanites are compatible with common existence in one party. That is the gist of the amendment. We rejected it. By that we did not mean to say that we insist upon the contrary. No. We said, it is not for us to say whether the Shachtmanites' differences with us are compatible with unity or not. You know in 1940 we offered them the right to remain in the party and retain the views they held at that time on condition of discipline, but they found the differences incompatible. That is the crux of the question.

It is turning the whole question upside down, comrades, to represent matters as though it is up to us to establish what is compatible for the Shachtmanites as a minority. We never expelled anybody from our party for a difference of opinion. I don't recall a single case in 17 years. We didn't expel the Fieldites or the Gehlerites because they differed with the decisions of the party. We said to them: "You can have your opinion. Stay in the party and be loyal, be disciplined." But they found the differences incompatible with membership in the party as a minority and broke discipline. We expelled them for that. Such was the case with the Shachtmanites. They passed judgment on the differences as incompatible. If they have changed, we will see and we will see to what extent they have changed and consider the matter after further examination.

8. Trotsky's Method in Building the Fourth International

Comrade Trotsky gave us many lessons in the long period of developing, first the International Left Opposition and then the Fourth International, from 1929, when he first got his hands free in Turkey, up to his death eleven years later in Mexico. Trotsky, in the formative period of the Left Opposition, refused to unite with anybody who did not accept the whole program of the Left Opposition on Russia, on the Anglo-Russian Committee, on the Chinese Revolution, and the other basic points. He was urged by many to unite with the Brandlerites, who had a false position on the Russian question, on the ground that they stood for party democracy and were very sensible on the trade union question and that we should cooperate with them in practical work. Trotsky said, No. We are building a movement on a principled basis,

and, just as I would not discuss the different tendencies in materialism with a man who makes the sign of a cross when he passes the Catholic Church, so I will not discuss trade union tactics with a man who does not take the right position on the great questions of principle.

This was the harsh, narrow, "intolerant" line that Trotsky followed in those years. He made an attempt, over several years, to find unity with the Bordigists, the left-wing communists of Italy, a very resolute and determined group inspired by the ideas of the great Italian left communist, Bordiga. At the end of the experiment, although there was general agreement with the Bordigists on the most important principled questions of communism, their rejection of Bolshevik tactics, their rejection of democratic demands, constituted in the mind of Trotsky an insuperable barrier between us and them in the formative period of the International Left Opposition. He said, we cannot live in the same party with the Bordigists at the present time. They are too rigid and too narrow in their conception of tactics. In that very same article, where he declared that he couldn't live in the same International faction with the Bordigists, he made a very interesting comment. Paying tribute to the revolutionary devotion of the great majority of the Bordigists, he said, Undoubtedly in a mass party the Bordigists could find a place on the condition of discipline in action, but our movement in its present stage of development as a propagandist faction cannot be paralyzed by this eternal dispute with them.

Reading that article again the other day, I thought very important for us that last remark, to the effect that differences which are incompatible in a small propagandist faction can be tolerated in a mass party. We are at a certain stage of our development in this country. I believe it is safe to say we have gone over from the propagandist circle and have taken a resolute course toward the building of a mass party. But we haven't reached that goal yet. We are neither a propagandist circle nor a mass party, but something in between. The question of what is compatible or incompatible with membership in our party has to be decided by an in between criterion.

Trotsky, it has been said, frequently tried to reunite sections of the Fourth International after splits had taken place. That is true, but one should study each case in its context. Trotsky tried to bring about unity between the Molinierists in France and the official French section. But, as he explained in "In Defense of Marxism" in answer to some question raised by Shachtman, the condition for his attempts at reunifications with the Molinierists was that they did not maintain any principled differences with the Fourth International. He said, "I never made a single concession in principles to Molinier". Their disagreement, they maintained, was over the "regime". They didn't like the regime in the Fourth International -- the Trotsky regime. They accused us of "Bad methods", etc. I personally participated, at Trotsky's direct request, in an unsuccessful attempt to bring about a unification with the Molinierists in 1938. I was the agent of the International Secretariat and the official French section. I never approached Molinier until I had first talked to my own people, my own party, my own comrades in the official French section of the Fourth International, and secured their consent. I reported back everything that transpired in discussions with Molinier and his comrades. But I told Molinier nothing about what had transpired in discussions with my own party in France. That was the rule back in 1938. Shachtman, who took part in the negotiations, also followed the rule.

Similarly, in 1938, Trotsky asked me to go to England to try to bring about the unification of the four different Trotskyist groups in England. The basis of the assignment was that all of them acknowledged the program of the Fourth International, that the differences were over secondary tactical questions. I heartily agreed and made the attempt, with partial success. In the same year, at the time of the founding conference of the Fourth International, the International Secretariat supervised and brought about a unity agreement between two organizations of Greek Trotskyists. But in all these cases there was no question of accommodating ourselves in principle to any group that objected to the program of the Fourth International.

I repeat: The differences which are "compatible" with membership in a common organization vary according to the stages of its development. What is incompatible with membership in a faction, may be compatible in an independent propaganda circle existing as the embryo of a party. What is incompatible in a propaganda circle may be compatible in a party which has broken out of it but which has not yet attained a mass basis. And similarly, in our present stage of development we cannot even dream of accommodating the divergent tendencies which a mass party can tolerate, either to the right or to the left. We cannot do it at the present stage of our development. We are in between, as I said. We hope we have turned away definitively from the propaganda circle. We are recruiting new workers almost daily now, but we have not yet attained a broad mass basis. And when we are approached with the problem of accommodating ourselves to broadly divergent tendencies within our ranks we have to examine the question carefully before we give our answer.

9. The Aims of Our Discussion with the Shachtmanites

We are going to discuss with the W.P. as we readily agreed. What should be the aims of this discussion? Shall we lose our bearings and rush pell-mell into an ill-prepared unity because somebody is getting impatient? I don't think the leaders of the SWP are going to take such a line. We must first set down for ourselves certain aims. We must aim to clarify in the discussion all the important differences which caused the split and prolonged it for five years, to ascertain what changes have taken place, and see if we can agree on a common program. That is the purpose of the discussion in the first place -- to explore the new situation and find out what it is in reality, in all its concreteness, not to enter it with a preconceived decision.

It is quite false for comrades of the minority to think or to say that we are opposed to discussion. You don't understand us. On the contrary, we insist on discussion before we act. We insist on developing the discussion to the very end, until nothing ambiguous remains. That is the necessary pre-condition for unity with the Shachtmanites. We must ask ourselves: Why did they change their attitude toward unity with us? That is a very important question. Why do people who split from the party five years ago, and remained split for five years because they couldn't stand the regime, as they said, -- why do they now say that the regime is less important than unity? If that is a real change, it is a very important one. But they have not given their motivation yet. In our opinion the discussion must bring this out clearly. What is the motivation? We will find it out one way or another.

Lenin was a man of unification and a man of splits too. He took them as they came, as the interests of the movement indicated. I was reading again the other day his writings in the early "Iskra" Period, when they first started the paper and the question of uniting all the socialist circles and groups in one party was on the order of the day. Lenin approached the question with this formula: "Before we unite, and in order to unite, we must first draw sharp and definite lines of demarcation." We have comrades in our party, I am sorry to say, who don't understand that that is the right way to approach the question of unity with people who have differences.

It is very wrong to blur differences, to minimize them, to represent that they don't really exist or that they have no significance. Such a method can only prepare a "unity" which is in turn a preparation for a new factional explosion and a new split. The way to get a firm unity is to probe the differences to the bottom, draw the lines of demarcation clearly and definitely, and then see if we can approach agreement. That is the way we are approaching the discussion with the Shachtmanites and we will continue it that way. That does not pre-suppose at all an irreconcilable refusal of unity. We don't deny the Shachtmanites the right to change, nor do we deny the possibility that we can change in their direction. All things are subject to change. Neither do we exclude in advance the possibility of a working compromise being arrived at without sacrificing principle. We are simply proceeding by the principle that in order to unite, and before we can unite, we must clarify the causes which brought about the split and the long division.

We have not yet reached the stage of negotiations with the Shachtmanites. Not yet. We are in the stage of discussion. And, so far, only an exploratory discussion. At a certain stage we will go over to negotiations if the prerequisite conditions are present. In that case you can be sure we will make it our business to know what we are doing. In negotiations between two political parties or groups the most important things are, first, to know what you want, and second, to know what the relation of forces is. I believe we know those two things.

We know what we want. We want a genuine workers' party with an unambiguous program of Bolshevism. That is what we want. We want a party with a firm discipline in action and public activity.

I believe we know what the relationship of forces between the two parties is; and I can tell you that the relation of forces between the two parties is one of the most important reasons for the turn that the discussion of unity has taken up till now. And the third thing: I believe that you have a right to expect of your party leaders, whom you have elected and trusted with great responsibility, that we represent our own side, always and under all conditions represent our own party and fulfill the trust you have placed in us.

I said that we are going to approach the Shachtmanites cautiously and carefully; I might even say, suspiciously. Trotsky repeated over and over again in connection with united fronts, that the first rule of the united front is to be distrustful of your allies. Now if we have to be distrustful of allies, how much less ground is there for us to have a naive confidence in opponents, those who have

for five years sought to destroy the party? That would not be good political leadership.

When we took this attitude -- which I have always considered axiomatic -- we were given the astounding criticism, both in the Political Committee and in my last debate with Comrade Goldman, that we are taking a "shopkeeper's" attitude. Well, that is a little far-fetched, because a shopkeeper is a petty-bourgeois and we are revolutionary communists. But you might say, by stretching a point, that to a certain extent every representative of every party, elected to represent the interests of his party, is a "shopkeeper." In that sense I believe Goldman also is a shopkeeper. The difference between us seems to be that we are taking care of different shops. That is where the conflict comes in between us. We are vigilant caretakers of the interests of the Socialist Workers Party which we were elected to represent. And you can bank on one thing: whatever comes out of the discussion and possible negotiations with the Shachtmanites and any other party, we are going to represent the interests of our own party through to the end.

10. New Issues in Dispute

The issues between us and the Shachtmanites have been discussed in our previous meeting. I will not repeat them here -- the main lines of difference. I believe we have to add now a new difference: How to fight fascism in the United States. I believe the Los Angeles experience will bring very sharply to the fore in the movement the whole concept of the struggle against fascism. It is very important symptomatically. Our party categorically rejects the idea of putschist "hit and run" methods of fighting the menace of fascism. We base our policy squarely on the mobilization of the labor movement against the fascists. We insist on approaching the Stalinist party and the Stalinist unions in order to stir up the rank and file to push them into action.

Another difference has arisen, I am sorry to say, in the last week. I mentioned in the last debate that we apparently had differences with the Shachtmanites on the labor party question whenever it comes to a matter of practical application, although in general we appear to be in agreement. I read to my astonishment in the current Labor Action that they are opposed to our critical support of Frankenstein in the Detroit elections. It is really astonishing. They are for the labor party, just as we are, but we are never able to find a time or a place when we can support the same candidates in an election. Our Political Committee couldn't find the slightest reason for not accepting the motion of our Detroit committee to support Frankenstein critically in the election. We are prodding our people there not to take too lackadaisical an attitude. We are discussing the idea of their getting deeper into the campaign, of going on the radio and making it known all over Detroit that we are for the labor candidate. Labor Action says, No, that is wrong. "The truth is that labor does not have a candidate in the election."

And they give a very dubious reason. They say: "If the same Frankenstein, however, were a candidate of a Labor Party and thereby subject to its program and control, we would support him." Program is not the basis on which we give our critical support to labor candidate.

What we are supporting in the election is the principle of labor in politics independently. That is the class basis of our labor party policy.

I think we will have to clarify this question in the discussion with the Shachtmanites. It is a tactical question -- that I grant you -- but it may be very important in the next period. Such a question alone could cause a split in the movement if it were persisted in seriously enough by a minority.

In order to examine the possibility of unity with the Shachtmanites with the necessary thoroughness, we have to get some more information about their party. I presume we will. We haven't paid much attention to them in the recent years. We have been busy with other activities which we considered more important. We don't even know what the nuances, tendencies and factions are at the present time. We hear they have one faction against the labor party in principle; another in favor of the "Three Theses"; another in favor of the conception that the Russian state is fascist; another that it is ruled by a new bureaucratic class, and so on.

They know all about us. We ought to get some exact information about them. I wonder how it is that we don't get any reciprocity that people who carry our Internal Bulletins to them don't carry their Internal Bulletins back to us. Shouldn't they conduct a two-way package service? However, we don't really need it. Perhaps, in one of our next letters we will ask the W.P. to send us a full set of their Internal Bulletins, and we will offer to pay for them at the full price. Surely such a reasonable request will not be refused, if unity is seriously contemplated.

Would it be too much if in the course of the discussion we should ask Shachtman where he stands now on his bloc with Burnham in 1940 against us, against Trotsky, against Marxism? That was the beginning of the downfall of Shachtman. Our youth must be taught that blocs with anti-Marxists against Marxists are not permissible. This bloc paved the way for the criminal split.

11. The Analysis of Stalinism

The question of our attitude toward the Stalinist party and the Stalinist unions is, in our opinion, a decisive question. And this leads straight to the Russian question from which, no matter how impatient you may be, you can't get away. If Russia is simply a new class state of exploiters, then the C.P., and the unions controlled by the C.P., are, as the Shachtmanites are more and more describing them, not workers' organizations, but pure and simple instruments of a foreign enemy class. The logic of this is that we have to treat them as we treated the German Bund, as Burnham wanted us to treat the C.P. back in 1939. This tendency would be fatal for us, comrades, because the key to the penetration of the labor movement of America, in many respects, is through the Stalinist unions. Why, the great demonstration that was organized in Los Angeles against Gerald L.K. Smith was made possible primarily by the Stalinist unions -- in large measure through the pressure of our fraction working upon them. The Shachtmanites proposed a united front of the W.P. and the S.W.P., the Socialist Labor Party, the Socialist Party and the I.W.W. to fight fascism

Our comrades said, "No, the ones you left out are precisely those who are the most important." They said, the key to the fight against fascism is to get into the Stalinist unions who control the CIO, and through them to put pressure on the other unions, in order to organize the class united front against fascism.

We have to clarify the analysis of Stalinism, of the Stalinist party and the Stalinist unions. While our minority have been concentrating their whole thought in this period on the Shachtmanites, as though this is the whole key to the development of the revolution in the United States, we have been paying more attention to the C.P. and the unions under their influence and control. As a result, we have established valuable connections with Stalinist workers in two different sections of the country. We consider this work of the greatest importance for the development of the party. It cannot be done if we fail to make a correct analysis of Stalinism and the Stalinist organizations.

Up till now, in our opinion, the real orientation of the Shachtmanites was to the right. Their approach to the YPSL for unification clearly showed it. Their repulsion from the Stalinist workers showed it -- a form of adaptation to the Social Democracy. The general friendliness of rightest elements toward them showed the rightward trend of the W.P. in inverted form. In every case, when there is a difference between us and the Shachtmanites, look at the right-wing elements and see where their sympathy lies -- with them, not us. You might say Shachtman can't be blamed for such people liking him better than they like us. But Lenin didn't have that opinion. In one of the most remarkable books ever written in the history of our movement, Lenin's book called "One Step Forward; Two Steps Backward," which is an account of the struggle in the 1903 Congress and the split -- Lenin attacked Martov for an opportunist tendency because, whenever they had a difference in the Congress, all the right elements in the Congress supported him against Lenin. When Martov protested that he was being misrepresented, Lenin answered: I didn't say you had a formal bloc with them. I would never accuse you of such an abomination. But every time there was a disagreement they supported you against us, and that showed they felt an instinctive affinity with you. Historical developments showed that Lenin's interpretation had a sound basis.

12. The Prospects of Unification

Their trend has been to the right. The discussion will show whether the trend is reversed. I don't deny the possibility. We have always known that the Shachtman organization is a combination of all kinds of tendencies; some of them are antagonistic. The Shachtman organization is, you may say, a perfect representation of the consequences of unprincipled combinationism in politics. From the beginning they were united only on one thing: against the "regime" in the S.W.P.

I don't doubt that there may be appearing in the Workers Party some sentiments for unity in good faith with us. We will see how the trend develops. Certainly, if there is a genuine unity sentiment in their ranks it is a trend toward the left, toward revolutionary Marxism and we certainly should not repulse such a tendency.

But we have plenty of time. We have time; and please don't try to push us, because we are not going to be pushed. If it took the Workers Party five years to discover the necessity of discussing unity with us, we can take a little time to scrutinize the new proposals. That is what we are going to do. We are not going to sabotage the discussion. We are not going to play abstentionist politics with them. We will answer every letter. Maybe later we may change.

You might ask what, in our opinion, is their perspective? Are we going to have unity with the Shachtmanites; or is their approach a maneuver which will be exposed and frustrated? We are not going to give a categorical answer in advance. The prospects of unity depend on how much and how seriously the Shachtmanites mean the change which they have indicated in their first letter, and what guarantees can be established in the course of the discussion for a firmly-based unity that will strengthen the party and build up the party.

I will admit that we had a different opinion at the beginning of the discussion, and I state this frankly so that the minority comrades, when they take the floor, can know what our analysis was. We thought at first that it was more likely that our minority would leave the S.W.P. and join the Shachtmanites than that the Shachtmanites would come to us and join the party. That is the way we appraised their ideological rapprochement with the Shachtmanites, combined with their bitter estrangement from us and their scandalous disloyalty to our party.

Perhaps the minority have thought it over and are shrinking back from such a course, because the Workers Party is a bankrupt organization and they know it. They know, when they have to face the issue point blank, that these people can't build a party, neither by themselves nor with the aid of our minority. They know that the only hope either one of them has to function effectively in the expanding revolutionary movement is on the basis of the Socialist Workers Party, because we do know how to build a party and we are proving it in action every day. We are proving it by the proletarian forces that are coming to us in steadily mounting numbers.

I could read here the statistics of the new members joining our party week to week, month to month; the new successes we are achieving with our press, our trade union fractions, etc. But I don't have time to do that. Maybe I can give you a little of this information in my summary.

I will wind up with this: Our orientation is going to remain what it is and has been: a proletarian orientation. We are going to concentrate first of all on our expansion program for the development of our party as a workers' party. We will discuss with the Shachtmanites, as much as they want to discuss, but not as the main element of our activity; only as a small part of it. And, similarly, we will continue the discussion with the minority as long as they want to discuss; but also not at the expense of the development of the party in the class struggle, and the recruitment of new workers who are the basis of the future revolutionary party in America. That comes first. And that, if you stop to think about it, is the best way to prepare the party for unity with the Shachtmanites -- or any other eventuality.

SUMMARY SPEECH AT THE N.Y. MEMBERSHIP MEETING

By James P. Cannon

1. We Must Put Our Own House in Order

We had two characteristic speeches from Goldman. The first in the fish-wife tone packed with hysteria, insults, denigration and slander. Then we had a summary speech in the patronizing grandfather tone: "Think, children, listen to Grandpa. You are on the wrong road. All your work is no good. The party is in terrible shape. You must do what we say and do it within two weeks. We must bring in the Shachtmanites in order to intellectualize the party." Goldman was even more insulting, even more offensive than usual today. That is saying a great deal.

Goldman does not introduce insults, condescension and unbridled abusiveness into the party discussion because he lacks "manners". On the contrary, he is well schooled in this respect; and in discussions with people whom he considers equals and superiors -- intellectual opponents of the party, free lance litterateurs, prominent renegades, etc. -- he behaves with Chesterfieldian courtesy. What he lacks is not "manners" but respect for the party, for its proletarian cadres, for the intelligence of its members.

It took the minority five years to discover the merits of the Shachtmanites, and they give us two weeks to jump on the bandwagon. Pardon us if we take a little more time. Don't stampede us, please. We don't like to hurry when the interests of the party are at stake. We want to examine every proposition and make sure we are right.

And don't you think it would be a good time, while we are scrutinizing the new proposals of the Shachtmanites, ascertaining whether and to what degree the change they have made toward us is a real change or a maneuver designed to help their friends in our ranks -- don't you think it would be a good time for us to set to work to straighten out affairs in our own party? Haven't we got a chore of our own on hand? Our minority have been doing a lot of discussing, a lot of talking and a lot of writing. Don't you think it would be a good idea now for us to develop this discussion and carry it through to its conclusion in our own ranks? Before we unite with any other party, wouldn't it be a good idea to put our own house in order, stamp out disloyalty in the ranks and restore discipline in the party? Wouldn't that be the most serious and responsible way of preparing for any eventuality with regard to the Workers Party -- whether it is to be a unification or another period of warfare as we have had for the past five years? I believe so.

What good is a party that has no discipline in its ranks? What respect will workers have for such a party? And above all, what respect can workers have for a party that has no discipline for its leaders? We say to the worker who joins the party, that he must be disciplined; that he must obey the decisions of his fraction; that he must operate under the control of the party in his union work and all party activities. Can we do that and then permit leaders to flaunt the discipline of the party, to sneer at the idea of loyalty to the party?

The anarchistic leaders of the minority overestimate the virtues and powers of "direct action." They think that by openly breaking discipline and laughing at party loyalty they have thereby eliminated these concepts from party life. I believe they are going to be disappointed; the party is going to pass judgment on them. The party is going to proceed as it always has in such cases: justly, but firmly. I believe everyone will be given an opportunity to make up his mind which party he wants to belong to. Political free lances may do as they please. But to those who want to belong to the S.W.P., the party will say: "Be loyal and disciplined, if you want to belong to the Socialist Workers Party."

Goldman tries to dispose of party loyalty -- something that every communist worker feels in his bones -- by saying, you can't make people loyal by rules. That is true. Loyal people don't need rules. Rules are made to restrain the disloyal and prevent them from disrupting the party. That is why we have a constitution, that is why we have rules and regulations. I believe the party is going to insist that they be observed; that all members without exception -- especially the leaders -- must subordinate themselves to the discipline of the party. That is far more important for the next stage of our development than any relations with the W.P. Don't forget -- the split took place because a group of intellectual leaders could not reconcile themselves to the discipline of a majority of workers.

That was the whole meaning of the split, wasn't it? The 1940 Convention said to them -- you can remain in the party, with your opinions, but you must be loyal, be disciplined. They answered, in effect: "No, discipline is not for us; discipline is for the workers, discipline is for the sheep -- we can't take it." That is what caused the split. Do we want to take the Shachtmanites back into a party which has renounced the idea of controlling and disciplining leaders? If so, then I say, comrades, you will be just inviting another paralyzing faction fight and another split. I am sure the proletarian majority of our party will never stand for that.

Goldman said in the fish-wife section of his discourse: "You can't scare us." What he meant to say was: "You can't discipline us. You can't prevent us from negotiating behind the backs of the party. You can't prevent us from collaborating with political opponents of the party against our own party's Political Committee." Why, he stood up here today and admitted that they had already been discussing a split from the party, and now he says the split question is eliminated. Why? Because they have decided to be loyal and disciplined? No. Because we are going to have unity in two weeks, consequently they don't have to bother about a split any more. Perhaps, what took the split idea out of their minds temporarily was the realization that it wouldn't be a very big split; that the ranks of our party would be consolidated strongly against them; and that even in their small faction they couldn't take the few workers with them in such a treacherous adventure. Perhaps their new idea is, unity first and then a bigger split.

2. Special Pleaders for the Workers Party

Whom was Goldman speaking for here today? The Socialist Workers Party or the Shachtman party? He, and Williams repeating after him, said, "examine the letters." Pardon me. They examined one letter. They examined the letter of the Political Committee of the Socialist Workers Party line by line to see if there is a "maneuver" in it. The letter from the Workers Party they take for good coin. There is no possible maneuver on the part of the Shachtmanites. The Shachtmanites are entitled to full credit because, after all, all they did was split our party and try to destroy it. But if we show the slightest doubt, the slightest desire to proceed cautiously and carefully, to test them out in action and probe them deeper -- then we are against unity.

I don't think that is the correct way to present the question. Goldman says, that if we don't appoint on our negotiating committee to talk with the Shachtmanites a member of the minority who has already been negotiating with them for weeks day and night behind our backs, then he will not trust the report of the committee. I tell you, I don't give two hoots whether you trust our committee or not. What I am concerned about is whether the rank and file of the party will trust it. We will test that out by taking the issue to the rank and file of the party.

They speak here in our ranks, when we are concerned with relations with an opponent organization, mapping out our strategy in dealing with people who have been our bitterest opponents for five years -- they speak here not as a section of the Socialist Workers Party, trying to propose a better way of protecting the interests of the Socialist Workers Party, but ostensibly as a third party passing judgment on us. Ostensibly as a third party, but, in reality, as special pleaders for the Workers Party. Can that hasten unification? Not at all. When we deal with another organization, we want to move with united ranks. That is why I say we had better put our own house in order and forget about this two-weeks' ultimatum.

The minority pose a question which is supposed to floor us -- this "political" question: "Are the differences compatible with membership in a common organization? -- Yes or No, in two weeks." We said to the Shachtmanites in 1940: "Your differences are compatible. Stay in the party." But life proved they were incompatible, because the Shachtmanites left the party. Now, is it up to us to find out whether they are compatible again in 1945, or is it up to the Shachtmanites to demonstrate it to our satisfaction? Isn't that the way to put the question?

You ask us, "Are the differences compatible?" Suppose I ask you: "Will the Shachtmanites be loyal this time? Will they be disciplined? Have they changed to that extent? Have they changed that seriously?" We don't know. We know that you are not loyal; we know that you are not disciplined. And you are very poor recommenders for other people that we are going to have to put trust in.

I believe these issues, these accusations, and these abominable slanders that have been raised by our minority require a discussion in our ranks. And I mean a real discussion, one that is carried

to a decision by the party. If that entails a delay in any organizational steps toward unity or otherwise with the Shachtmanites, it is not our fault. We have got to fix up our own party first. Does anybody think that we are crazy enough to make unity with the Shachtmanites without establishing absolutely clearly and firmly our own party position on every point? No, we wouldn't even talk about such a thing.

3. The Party Convention Must Decide

And among the positions we have got to establish by convention decision are precisely these points which have been raised by our minority, as well as those which have separated us from the Shachtmanites. The accusations must be answered not merely by us in debate with you, but by the party membership in convention, deciding. That is the way we are going to answer the questions in the last analysis. The falsified issues have to be set straight; and the slanderers have to come before the judgment of the party. And we absolutely must discuss and decide once again the question of questions, which was at the bottom of the split in 1940 and which is at the bottom of our fight with our present minority: the question of What kind of a Party!

You say here tonight: "The party is on the wrong road. The party's organization system is wrong." Very well. Let us take it to the convention and let the party convention decide this question.

As long as the Shachtmanites were maintaining a position of unconditional warfare on our party, as long as that prevailed -- over five years -- I and every other party patriot had no other attitude towards them than that of irreconcilable warfare. Nobody, for a period of five years, ever said a word to the contrary. Every Plenum, every convention of the party, reaffirmed the fight all up and down the line. And if we gained superiority over the Shachtmanites in the five-years' test, our determined, irreconcilable struggle was not the least reason for it. But now, when the Shachtmanites write us a letter and say that they want to discuss unity, and that the very basis upon which they justified their split for five years -- the kind of a party we have, our so-called "regime" -- could be subordinated; then the P.C. could not do otherwise than to say: Very well, we will examine your propositions; we will discuss unity with you.

Are we for unity, Goldman demands, or against unity? We say, we will see. We will see what develops from this sudden change of position of the Shachtmanites after five years. If it is sincere, if it represents a real change toward us and a real serious and honest approach toward reunification on the basis they rejected before, we will re-examine it closely before giving a definite answer. That is the only attitude the party leadership can take at this stage of the developments.

Every reasonable, serious person must know that an attempt to heal a 5-year split will take time and careful deliberation. Any attempt to rush the party into a speculative unity, to "stampede" the party, will be regarded as an act of hostility and will be met by hostility. If anyone wants to sharpen the fight, then let him say he wants to sharpen the fight and dispense with hypocritical sermons about unity. Nobody will believe them.

4. Advantages and Dangers of Unification

There are a great many dangers attached to the unification with the Shachtmanites, even under the best conditions, and there are advantages too. We have to weigh them carefully. We have time. It is not we who are in a crisis and panic. It is you, the minority. Our party is rolling along. Our party morale is away up on the peak. Our party is growing and expanding on all fronts. What have we to be panicky about? It is you who are in a panic and demanding a quick answer, within two weeks! I believe the Shachtmanites are in a rather bad way too. I don't know much about them. We have no agents in their ranks, we didn't have anybody to spare for that kind of a job. We sent all our militants out into the trade union field where we thought they could get better results. That is one of the reasons why we have grown, because we have sent our activists out where the awakening workers could be reached.

There are certain advantages to unification, provided it is securely and firmly based. But there are certain dangers too. One of them that I would like to pose to you is that the admittance of the Shachtmanites into our party now -- and, in view of the relation of forces, that is the only realistic form that unification could take -- would tend to dilute the party, wouldn't it? It isn't a question of differences on one point or two points, but of systematic differences on many points. Grant, in the best case, if they have good will -- which is an absolutely necessary aspect of any serious unification -- that with our increased strength and our expanding movement, we could tolerate that dilution. But that might not be the end of it. Diluting the party to the right -- admission of the Shachtmanites would be diluting it to the right -- would carry with it a certain pressure to dilute it still further to the right, which they might propose and insist upon, with the best will in the world, as corresponding to their ideology.

Since I made my speech at the first discussion, I got the convention proceedings of the Yipsels, to whom a bare few weeks ago the Shachtmanites addressed a fraternal letter, proposing unification. I didn't have the exact context before me at that time, but I got it since. And reading that, I was astounded. These people had a fraction inside the Yipsels of three or four people. And knowing the trend of this organization, they addressed a fraternal letter of unification to them. I believe the letter they sent to the Yipsels was a really sincere letter. It wasn't a maneuver. It was really a proposal for unity. Now, here is the programmatic position of the YPSL. It is the political resolution of their convention, "On the Road to Power." The Yipsels reject reformistic social democracy. That is good, as far as it goes, but every centrist group does that. But that is not all they reject. They also reject bolshevism. That is not good at all.

They say:

"No more than reformist social democracy can bolshevism achieve our goals. This approach was utilized by the Bolshevik Party in Russia in their seizure of power in 1917. It is an approach

which bolsheviks would have us imitate in other countries. The basic fault of such a program is the failure to recognize the relationship of means and ends. The bolshevik revolution of 1917 was a coup d'etat, carried through by a party which had no majority. This same party considered all other socialist parties their "enemies" and proceeded to liquidate each one upon their assumption of power. The result is well known - a brutal dictatorship of one party which has completely regimented and terrorized the Russian people. This result - the Soviet Union today - is not only not a socialist country, but is one of the greatest enemies of socialism throughout the world. We reject the notion that this set of tactics shall be imitated in our attempt to achieve socialism."

If that isn't a perfect and classical formulation of anti-Bolshevism I would like to have one presented. I don't object, mind you, to the YPSL having that opinion, and I don't propose putting them in jail for it. But I strongly object to any suggestion of unity with them in one party. They don't have our communist ideology. And I would like to inquire, in the course of the discussion with the Shachtmanites, what prompted them to propose unification with these Souvarinist Yipsels.

5. What Kind of a Party?

What kind of a party? -- that is the question. That was the question in 1940, and that is the question today. It is vital for ourselves and it is vital for our relationship with the W.P.

We want a party that is dominated by the workers. We want a party that disciplines the leaders. If the Shachtmanites come back to our party eventually, they will come back to that kind of a party if we have our say about it. There can be no compromise on this question. The minority has been repeating more and more, idea for idea, and lately, even word for word, all the concepts of "War and Bureaucratic Conservatism" on the nature and the character of the party. Isn't that correct? Williams made a pitiful protest in the discussion before the last convention against Hansen's statement that the minority supporters whispered around that the petty-bourgeois opposition was right on the organization question in 1940. We don't have to talk about whispering any more. The leaders of the minority, everytime they speak, repeat the essential concepts formulated by Burnham and Shachtman, and the same words in many cases.

We are against that and we demand of you now, since you are presenting so many demands: Formulate your theories of party organization in a resolution! Quit nibbling at little questions. Put down in black and white, in the form of a resolution, what kind of a party you want. Whether we have unity with the Shachtmanites or don't have unity -- if the Shachtmanites join us or if they don't join us, -- what kind of a party do we aim to build? We don't have to write a

resolution. Ours are already written. The documents of the big fight with the Shachtmanites, collected in the book, "The Struggle for a Proletarian Party", contain our program. If you never mention that book, it is not because you don't like its author. It is because you don't like the party resolutions on organization contained in the book and you haven't enough courage yet to formulate counter-resolutions. We don't have to write a resolution, but we are going to write another one any way; and we are going to direct it against you and all the ideas of organization you have developed in the discussion during the past year and submit the dispute to the judgment of the party and later to the international movement.

And speaking of the International, I can only repeat what Comrade Stuart said. You will be defeated there too. You are trying to threaten us with the Fourth International, which allegedly is going to support you and your ideas and give sympathy to the Shachtmanites. You even introduce into the atmosphere of our party the suggestion of a letter or "cable from Moscow" which might change the policy of the leadership. As if our Political Committee is governed by cables and letters of individuals. You are doing a very bad service to the party and to the International to make even such a suggestion as that.

What is the Fourth International? Is it a few isolated individuals in different parts of the world pronouncing edicts for us to carry out? Not at all. We are not formally affiliated to the Fourth International, but we are part of the international movement, and a very important part of it too. The Fourth International is an association of parties, and these parties cannot have formulated their opinions on our fight yet because they haven't had the opportunity to study the essential material.

I know this, that the Fourth International in the past has always supported the proletarian majority of our party every time. On what do you base the assumption that the whole Fourth International will change its basic views after the experiences of five years? I believe that the harsh experiences of the comrades in Europe will condition them harder against the idea of a talking club, a petty bourgeois discussion circle, such as they had too long in France, and in favor of a workers' party with loyalty and discipline in its ranks. We respect the opinions of all comrades of the International, even when we disagree with them. If there are differences of opinion in the Fourth International what will we do? Will we sit around and wait for a cable? By no means. We think for ourselves and fight for our ideas. If necessary, we will fight for our opinions in the International party as we fight in the national party. We haven't any doubt about the outcome; we are sure that we are right, and we are sure that we will get the support of the majority.

On the question of unity with the Shachtmanites, we are going to move a step at a time, carefully, cautiously and firmly, keeping in mind all the time the great achievements that we have gained in the struggle against them, and determined not to sacrifice one of these achievements. No hurry, no hysteria. The party convention will decide the question eventually, just as it will decide our dispute with the minority.

6. The Proletarian Orientation

I want to close the way I think it is right to close -- on the basic line that governed our fight against Burnham and Shachtman 1939-40. The proletarian orientation -- that is our line. Relations with the Workers Party, unity with them or a further split with them -- that is not our main axis as it was in 1939 and 1940. It is a secondary issue. So also is our internal faction fight with Goldman, Merrow and Co. All these concerns are secondary to our basic work of penetrating the awakening movement of militant workers in America and bringing them into our ranks. That is the way we have been proceeding ever since the split with the Shachtmanites. It is the right way, the only way for us.

I read in this magazine which Goldman slanders so maliciously, the Fourth International for August, the reprint of Trotsky's old letter called, "Closer to the Proletarians of the Colored Races". This was based on a letter that had been received from a group of Negro workers in Johannesburg, proclaiming sympathy for the Fourth International, who didn't yet know all the fine points of the program. Trotsky said, their approach to us is very important and very symptomatic, and we must accept them with open arms. He had a different criterion for the acceptance of oppressed workers than for worldly-wise and world-weary intellectuals. He said:

"When ten intellectuals whether in Paris, Berlin or New York, who have already been members of various organizations, address themselves to us with a request to be taken into our midst I would offer the following advice: Put them through a series of tests on all the programmatic questions; wet them in the rain, dry them in the sun, and then after a new and careful examination accept maybe one or two."

That was the Old Man's advice. He continued: "The case is radically altered when ten workers connected with the masses turn to us. The difference in our attitude toward a petty bourgeois group and the proletarian group does not require any explanations." He wanted to take in these workers who had applied, confident that their class instinct and the added pressure of their national oppression would facilitate their assimilation of the basic ideas of the International Left Opposition.

When that letter was written, we had not one single Negro worker in the party. At the time of the split with the petty bourgeois opposition, notwithstanding the fact that we had then a very talented and eloquent Negro comrade at the head of our work in this field, I don't think we had a dozen in the party. Now we have more than a hundred Negro workers in the party! They have been recruited in the struggle of the party in the last five years. And all the reports from Detroit and Los Angeles and other basic industrial centers of the party report an influx of workers of which there is a goodly percentage of militant Negro trade union comrades.

We are recruiting workers into the party; and don't accuse me of switching away from the "political" question when I report it, because that is the essence of the political question -- that we are building a genuine workers' party, a party where the worker feels at home and stays. That is what we are fighting for. The recruitment figures tell the story of a rapidly expanding proletarian party.

That is what is taking place in this party, and that is why we are not in panic about unity with the Workers Party. You know about the sub campaigns of The Militant. The circulation of The Militant is held down to 31,000 now only because the printshop can't handle any more. But as soon as we make the necessary mechanical arrangements, we are going to put on another subscription campaign for 10,000 new readers. We are all confident that by January 1st we will have a Militant circulation of 50,000. By the next convention we expect to reach the goal of 100,000 circulation. That is the way this party, which you so shamelessly denigrate until the party members are sick of listening to you -- that is the way the party is developing into a popular mass party of the workers.

The relation of forces is entirely in our favor with regard to the Workers Party and with regard to the minority in the party, and there is a profound reason for it too. It arises from the nature of the party -- its proletarian composition, and its attractiveness to workers. How do the minority explain the relation of forces in the party? Why does 95% of the party reject your wisdom? What an explanation they give! In effect they say: "The party members are stupid, backward workers. The party members are all fools who take orders from one fool, and this one fool waits for a cable." No wonder you are becoming an object of contempt in the party, and a justly deserved object of contempt.

The opposition of the membership to you is not due to their ignorance and their inability to think, as you represent with despicable snobbery. It is due to their revolutionary merit, their revolutionary spirit, their proletarian composition. Such a spirit, and such a composition of the party will be the strongest safeguard in the future against any repetition of what we had in 1939-40.

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UNITY WITH THE WORKERS PARTY
AND THE ORGANIZATIONAL QUESTION

By Albert Goldman

Note: The following article is based on my two speeches at the New York membership meeting of September 2, 1945. That meeting was called to give Comrade Cannon a chance to discuss and explain the letter which the Political Committee sent to the Workers Party, a letter expressing a willingness on the part of the P.C. to discuss the question of unity. Not everything I said has been included and some things I did not say have been inserted. In his closing speech Cannon shifted the discussion from unity to the organization question. I had no chance to answer then and am answering now.

1. Present Position of Majority

The sudden change of the majority of the Political Committee from unalterable opposition to unity with the Workers Party to a position in favor of discussing unity with that party is, I am certain, unexpected and confusing to the rank-and-file members who follow the majority of the P.C. I shall tell you later why I was not surprised by the sudden change, although I did not expect it to come so soon after hearing Cannon declare that the proposal for unity was not concrete nor realistic. I shall also give you my theory to explain the shift.

First and most important of all it is necessary for every member of the majority faction to determine whether now, after the letter to the WP, he is for or against unity. You were all against unity a few days ago. If you are honest with yourselves you will admit it and not try, like some of the leaders of the majority faction, to deny that simple and correct proposition.

From conversing with some majorityites and from reports that I get, I gather that there are many in the Cannon faction who are still against unity but for the letter proposing to discuss unity. Such comrades must necessarily consider the letter as a dishonest maneuver--dishonest because a letter which apparently sincerely contemplates unity conceals the real attitude of opposition to unity.

If there are comrades who are opposed to unity but accept the letter, thinking that it is a clever maneuver, then it is indeed tragic. From Comrade Joe Hansen's remarks I infer that he is one of those who are opposed to unity and accept the letter as a dishonest maneuver. Since Hansen has vulgarized Trotsky's essay "Our Morals and Theirs" to mean that the end justifies all means, I am not surprised at his attitude.

Such an attitude, I want to emphasize, has nothing in common with Bolshevik or Trotskyist morality. It is a caricature which the petty-bourgeois moralists constantly make of our conception of revolutionary morality. If we of the minority were against unity with any party proposing unity, we would say so and give the reasons. We might

even agree to a discussion but where we know that unity is undesirable or impossible we would not hesitate to state that and defend our position. This is Bolshevik morality. Hensen's attitude, as indicated by his remarks, is monstrous and has nothing to do with Bolshevism. I hope he does not mean what he said.

"We are neither for nor against unity -- we shall discuss and see". This is Comrade Cannon's position. It is not immoral; it is political bankruptcy. There are many questions upon which one is unable to make up his mind and is justified in saying that he will discuss, wait and see. But not on a question which demands a position determined by an analysis of the basic and immediate program of an opponent party, of the activities of that party, of the differences which that party has with our party and whether or not those differences are compatible with membership in one party.

Just a short while ago Cannon knew that the WP was moving in an opposite direction from us and he told us that "we never wasted our time, and I hope, we never will waste our time, in futile 'negotiations' with political groups moving in an opposite direction". (Internal Bulletin, Vol. VIII, No. 7, August 1945). When Cannon, on the basis of his "knowledge" that the WP was moving in an opposite direction, came out against unity we said that his "knowledge" was woefully deficient but his attitude was political. When Cannon now tells us that we must wait and see, his policy is one of political know-nothingism.

I do not say that to be for unity means that we can achieve unity and that there is nothing to discuss. We of the minority have studied the program and activities of the Workers Party and we know that we are for unity. We know what differences there exist between us and that those differences can be maintained in the same party.

What Should We Discuss?

There can of course be no objection whatever to discussing any and all political, theoretical, tactical and organizational questions upon which there appear to be differences of opinion, before unity is consummated. The problem is not of discussion in general but of the specific purpose of the discussion.

Shall we discuss to find out what the differences are? If there are P.C. members who do not as yet know the nature of these differences we can, I presume, discuss them for the purpose of educating such P.C. members. But if these members are unaware of the nature of these differences why were they so violently opposed to unity only a short while ago?

It should be remembered that Comrade Cannon attempted to be humorous at the expense of the minority when we suggested that a discussion be held with the WP for exploring the possibilities for unity. "We don't need to send a committee to meet them in order to find out the answer to these questions, as Goldman has proposed", remarked Cannon condescendingly. And after mentioning all the questions concerning which information might be obtained, Cannon lightly dismissed the subject with the assertion that "it is clearly revealed in their press for anyone who is interested to read". (Pages 18, 19 of the August Bulletin).

Shall we discuss the question of the nature of the Soviet Union? Good! Our new comrades can learn from such a discussion. It surely can not hurt them. It can increase their understanding of this complicated question and they will thus be in a better position to defend our thesis on the subject and convince those who do not agree with us.

This is likewise true of all other questions upon which there is disagreement between us and the Workers Party.

But let not the purpose of the discussion be to convince the WP comrades to agree with our position as a prerequisite for unity. For we must assume that they will retain their viewpoint on the main questions and we must understand that unity is possible even if we disagree on the nature of the Soviet Union, the defense of the S.U., and other questions.

Comrade Cannon has gone out of his way to add two new alleged differences between our party and the WP. I am in favor of discussing those questions simply for the purpose of showing that Cannon is consciously distorting the viewpoint of the WP.

The two new differences are on the question of how to fight fascism and the application of our Labor party line as shown by the fact that we support Frankenstein in his campaign for mayor of Detroit and the WP does not. Cannon claims that the WP wants to fight fascism not by mobilizing the masses but by mobilizing all the small radical parties and groups. This is false. He can find no basis for it in the WP literature. All that he can probably do is to say that Murry Weiss said that he heard some member of the WP say some such thing during the negotiations for a united front to picket the fascist meeting at Los Angeles. It is true that the WP took the initiative in trying to organize a united picket line, to picket the fascist meeting. And that was correct. If the trade unions do not move against the fascists, does that mean that the radical parties should not try to do something to call the attention of the masses to the danger of fascism and to show, by example, how fascism should be fought?

Nor can Cannon's attempt to show that the WP differs with us on the application of the Labor party line meet with any greater success. He read a sentence from an editorial or article in Labor Action to the effect that the WP can not support Frankenstein because he is not a candidate of a Labor Party and is not subject to the discipline and program of such a party. And thereupon Cannon tells you that this shows that the WP demands, as its criterion for supporting a Labor party, agreement with the program of the Labor party. The sentence which he read says nothing of the kind. It says merely that Frankenstein does not subject himself to the discipline and program of a Labor party. And this is absolutely true.

Whether to support or not to support Frankenstein is a borderline case. One must remember that he is a prominent member of the Democratic party; that he was a prominent delegate to the Democratic National Convention where Roosevelt and Truman were nominated. Undoubtedly the Democratic party of Detroit designated him to run as candidate for mayor. At least the capitalist press refers to him as

the "Democratic candidate". It is true that he runs on a non-partisan ticket and no one can tell from the ballot what party he represents. But that is not such a material factor.

I did not get a chance to discuss the question at the meeting where the P.C. decided to give Frankenstein critical support. I would have voted for it with some doubts in my mind. But I would have done so only because there was no other candidate and I believe in stretching a point in order to participate in an election campaign. I would have insisted that the party members be made aware of all the arguments pro and con for taking the action of supporting Frankenstein. In his case it is really necessary to emphasize the critical portion of critical support.

The question of supporting or not supporting Frankenstein is a close one. Comrades can easily differ on it. Even if we consider the WP wrong in its attitude of non-support, it is absurd to raise the question as a bar to unity.

And the question whether the differences between us and the WP are a bar to unity is the crux of the whole question. Cannon made no attempt to tell you specifically whether he will demand that the WP change its position and agree with us on the various questions upon which we differ.

Hensen said flatly that it is impossible to think that we can have the WP join our party while they believe that the Soviet Union is a bureaucratic collectivist state and are against the defense of the Soviet Union.

One need only imagine two fairly large parties existing in France, one accepting our position on the Soviet Union and the other the position of the WP, to understand what a terrible blow to the revolution an attitude like Hansen's would be. What is the main problem confronting the comrades in Europe? Is it to defend the Soviet Union? Against whom? Is the Soviet Union in danger of any immediate attack? The probability is that for some time to come there will be no war against the Soviet Union and many things can happen during that time as far as its degeneration is concerned. Is it not possible that capitalism will be restored?

The main problem for the European comrades is to get the masses to make the socialist revolution against Stalin and to defend it against him. And on this question the WP is with us. We have always stated, and it is truer now than it ever was before, that the continued existence of nationalized property depends upon the European Revolution. Whether the WP intends to defend the Soviet Union is immaterial. In fighting for the European Revolution the WP is actually defending the existence of nationalized property.

I tell you plainly that they who would oppose unity between parties in Europe, were the same problem to confront the European comrades that confronts us, on the ground of differences on the question of the Soviet Union, would be sabotaging the revolution -- unconsciously to be true but nevertheless effectively.

Comrades of the majority, you must think the problem through -- far better than Cannon and his P.C. supporters have done. You must ask yourselves: are you for or against unity? If you are for unity with the WP then upon what basis will you accept unity? Will you demand that the WP agrees with us on all the programmatic questions upon which there is now disagreement or will you take the correct position of the minority that all we should and must demand is that the WP members agree to abide by discipline in action when and if they are in a minority.

The only question that we should put to the members of the WP is: do you agree, in case the party once more deems it necessary to use the slogan of "defense of the Soviet Union" or in case you are in a minority on any other question, to accept discipline in action? If they answer in the affirmative then almost all practical difficulties to unity are eliminated.

It is necessary that the P.C. clarify the letter which it sent to the WP. The letter contains the statement: "If, in the course of the discussion, it appears that we are approaching agreement on the most important political questions . . ." Does that mean that before there is unity there must be agreement on the question of the nature of the Soviet Union or on its defense? Does "approaching agreement" mean one hundred or ninety or eighty percent agreement? Clarity and precision are characteristics of Bolshevism. Vagueness and ambiguity characterize the letter to the WP.

In his debate with me some weeks ago Cannon pompously stated that "for us the program is decisive; and by program we mean the whole program and not 50 percent of it and 50 percent of its opposite". (Internal Bulletin, page 22, August 1945). Is not the nature of the Soviet Union and its defense part of our program? Does that statement mean that we cannot unite without agreement on the question of the Soviet Union? What is Cannon's position on that question?

The position of the minority is clear and precise. We state that the differences between us and the WP are compatible with membership in one party; we want to know whether the members of the WP will accept the principle of democratic centralism and abide by discipline in action if they are in a minority. What is the position of the majority?

2. Conditions of Majority For Unity

Apparently the top leaders of the majority faction have in their own mind decided that there are two conditions which they will insist upon before consenting to unite with the WP. I say "apparently" because they either do not want to commit themselves or have not thought the problem through to the end.

As in the debate a few weeks ago, Cannon intimates that we must know what the WP leading members think of their action in splitting the party in 1940. Some of the secondary leaders of the majority faction do not hesitate to state definitely that there can be no unity unless the WP people admit having made a mistake in 1940.

Comrade M. Stein strongly suggests that we shall not unite unless the members of the WP agree not to organize a faction. He loudly proclaimed that we will never unite on the basis of "Goldman's conditions" of offering the WP the same terms that we offered the minority of 1940 to avoid a split.

It would indeed be extremely satisfying to get an admission from those who split from us in 1940 that they were wrong; There can be no objection to asking them their present opinion on the subject, provided their present opinion is not made into an obstacle to unity.

In a certain sense the very fact that those who split from us are willing to return to the party is an admission on their part that they were wrong. But if they still are of the opinion that they were correct in splitting we must unite nevertheless, if they are willing to accept discipline in action. Lenin did not demand that Trotsky admit his mistake of 1903, when fusion took place between the Bolsheviki and the organization led by Trotsky.

To demand a confession of error before admitting former members of the party comes very close to the practice of Stalinism. Such a practice has no room in a Bolshevik party. If some one raises the question that a failure on the part of the WP leaders to admit that they were wrong in 1940 means that they may split once more in the future, the answer is that no one has as yet found an absolute guarantee against splits.

For the leading elements of the WP to give up their party and unite with us is a conclusive indication of a sincere desire to work harmoniously after unity is achieved. It would certainly be insanity on the part of the WP leaders to give up their party for the purpose of splitting later. There is absolutely nothing they can possibly gain by such a procedure.

On the face of it a condition that the members of the WP refrain from organizing a faction after fusion is an appealing one because it apparently does away with the possibility of factional struggle. But factional struggle is not eliminated by a prohibition of factions or by a promise not to organize factions. If there are valid reasons for the organization of a faction or if comrades want to organize a faction even though we may not think the reasons for it are valid, there is nothing to do about it -- certainly a prohibition of factions is out of the question in a Trotskyist organization. I do not doubt but that Cannon would like to prohibit factions but the Trotskyist tradition against any such prohibition is too strong as yet for him to undertake such a risky venture.

To demand that the WP give up its right to have a faction after fusion is practically to prohibit factions. If the comrades who honestly favor such a procedure reflect a little, they will see that it leads to the absurdity of dividing the members into two categories -- those who have the right to organize a faction and those who do not have that right. If, after unity, the present minority should decide to continue its faction, would it be prohibited from doing so? And if not, doesn't that mean that the WP members coming into the party would be deprived of a right that other members have?

Naturally it would be in the interests of unity and harmony and in the interests of the party if factions could be avoided after fusion. A serious attempt must be made to avoid them, but not by a decree nor by making the non-organization of a faction a condition to unity. After recognizing the right of the WP members to organize a faction if they want to, we must attempt to dissuade them from such a move in the interests of real unity. The right to a faction is almost absolute but at times it is necessary not to exercise that right.

I am certain that in the interests of unity the present minority would be willing to give up its right to have a faction. We shall do all in our power to persuade the members of the WP to do the same. But we shall strenuously oppose any attempt to exact a promise not to organize a faction as a condition for unity.

3. Cooperation as a Test for Unity

The question of a faction after unity and the danger of a factional struggle can be solved, to the extent of ninety percent, through arranging for immediate collaboration between the parties -- such collaboration to last until it is fairly certain that after unity we can work harmoniously.

According to the minority the real problem is not to discuss programmatic questions for the purpose of coming to an agreement on such questions but making certain that unity will not be followed by bitter factional strife. Cannon and his leading followers distort the position of the minority when they assert that what we want is a bigger and better factional fight.

There is only one method available for us to test out the possibility of working together harmoniously in one party. And that is cooperation on various issues before actual unity.

Cannon peddles his nonsense about the necessity for programmatic agreement before cooperation. I have before dealt with the question of "programmatic agreement". Here I simply want to point out the proper relationship between unity and cooperation.

If one is for unity then he is for cooperation to further the interests of unity and to test out the possibility of working together. But if one is against unity he is not necessarily against cooperation with another party. For cooperation on specific questions and even a bloc in a certain field like the trade union work does not depend upon being for unity.

The minority is for cooperation both because cooperation is correct regardless of unity and especially because cooperation will help in the process of unifying the parties.

We should cooperate in election campaigns; we should collaborate on the trade union field; we should work together in anti-fascist campaigns; we should join in helping our comrades abroad. Such cooperation would not only test the possibility of working together harmoniously after fusion but would help eliminate the personal animosities which result from polemical exaggerations inevitably connected with bitter factional strife.

Working together prior to unity prepares the ground for unity without a factional struggle.

In addition we should discuss the various issues upon which we disagree -- not for the purpose of achieving programmatic agreement as a condition to unity (naturally it would be highly desirable to get agreement) but for the purpose of seeing to what extent there is disagreement on some issues that have not been the subject of discussion before the split. The minority proposes joint discussion-bulletins and joint discussion-meetings. It is necessary to make an attempt to create the spirit of an educational discussion and not a knock-down drag-out fight.

The sincerity of those who now want to discuss unity will be proved only by their willingness to begin a period of cooperation on all fields.

4. A Stalinist Change of Line

While some rank-and-file comrades of the majority faction still believe that their line of opposition to unity has not been modified and consider the letter to the WP as a shrewd maneuver, Cannon and most of his leading followers admit a change of line and attribute it to a change in the situation.

The alleged change in the situation consists of the alleged change in the attitude of the WP as indicated by the statement of that party dealing with the minority resolution for unity and affirming a desire to discuss the question of unity. In addition, the statement of the WP states that the differences between the parties are compatible with membership in one party and proposes to test the possibility of living and working harmoniously in one party through collaboration for a period of time. With these two propositions the minority is in complete agreement.

Let us assume for a moment that a change in the situation has resulted as a result in the change of attitude of the WP to the SWP. A valuable lesson in Bolshevik political tactics thereupon presents itself. In the debate with Cannon a few weeks ago I contended that the attitude of the WP is not decisive; that by assuming the initiative the WP would be compelled to act, or its leaders would find themselves threatened by a move for unity from below. Our party, I contended, would gain from a proposal to unite, no matter what the attitude of the WP leaders. This was ridiculed.

What has happened? Shortly after the WP became aware of the unity resolution introduced by the minority it issued the statement in favor of discussing unity and sent a copy of it to our party. Am I justified in claiming a causal relationship between the resolution and the WP statement? I think no intelligent person will deny that the probability is overwhelming that the minority resolution led to the WP statement. It follows therefore that the change in attitude of the WP was directly due to the minority resolution and the change in the situation which led Comrade Cannon to send such a courteous reply to those whom he designated as renegades not so long ago were brought about by the action of the minority.

Revolutionary Marxists understand how to take advantage of a change in the situation but they also understand how to bring about a change in the situation. One of the characteristics of Bolshevism of which we have a right to be proud is its ability to take the initiative at the right time and in the right way. The fact remains that the minority by assuming the initiative has compelled both the WP and the majority of our party to act.

A new theory has been developed over-night. The leaders of the WP were compelled to act by virtue of a leftward movement of the rank and file in favor of unity. No facts have been adduced to substantiate this theory. Let us again assume its correctness. It still remains that the majority did nothing to arouse the rank-and-file revolt. Its politics consisted of opposing the very resolution which created the alleged revolt.

But only inexperienced or gullible people will accept the explanation of Cannon that there has been a change in the situation resulting from the letter of the WP and that therefore it was necessary to change the attitude of the majority leaders from opposition to unity to what can be termed the "wait-and-see" attitude.

Had the hostile attitude of the WP been the only argument of Cannon against the unity resolution, then the claim could be made now that the situation has changed. It would have been an argument completely alien to Bolshevik politics but it would have justified a claim of a change in the situation.

The attitude of the WP, however, was only one of many arguments against unity, and it was not at all the most important. The programmatic differences between us and the WP, the charge that those who split from us were petty-bourgeois and that they haven't changed, the charge that they are revisionists and travelling in an opposite direction from us -- all these were the main arguments against unity. The conclusion logically based upon those arguments was that "we must deepen the split".

Did not Cannon say that "we never will waste our time in futile negotiations for unity with political groups moving in an opposite direction?" (Internal Bulletin, page 22, August 1945). Has there been any sign that the WP has changed its program? Was Cannon serious when he said that because the WP has fundamental differences with us on political questions and because it does not agree with us on our concept of what a revolutionary party should be, there can be no basis for proposing unity with the WP? (See same bulletin page 21).

Cannon knows as well as I do that the WP is not giving up any part of its program at the present time and neither are we. A few weeks ago he was of the positive opinion that to join with the WP on the basis of their retaining their present program would mean bringing in confusion. Will he now join with people who differ with him on all the questions (and other new ones, according to him) that he listed only a few weeks ago?

The proposal for unity is "not a concrete and realistic proposal at the present time"; was Cannon's conclusion, basing himself not only on the hostile attitude of the WP but primarily on the programmatic differences.

The conclusion is inescapable. The line a few days ago was against unity. Now it is for a discussion, wait-and-see policy. The change could not possibly be the result of the letter from the WP. What then is the cause of the change?

You will remember that at the last membership meeting I predicted that Cannon in all probability would change. I cited to you the fact that Cannon changed his attitude on the question of the defense of the Soviet Union suddenly and without explanation. I told you that in August 1944 he wrote a criticism of an editorial in The Militant and in his criticism he proposed that our line should be that the Polish guerrillas subordinate themselves to the Red Army High Command. A few weeks after he wrote that he wrote a letter (for publication this time) agreeing with Comrade N's proposal to stop using, for the time being, the slogan of the defense of the Soviet Union. Cannon changed without the slightest hint of any explanation for the change. He changed because a person in authority presented a different line and, unable to defend his line in a political manner, he switched.

I felt certain that every politically developed comrade in the various sections of the International would agree with the minority proposal for unity. Knowing Cannon, I knew that he would not fight on the basis of his ideas and would shift his ground. The prediction came true. I have just read a letter which tells me that Comrade Grace Carlson informed the branch in Minneapolis that N. was for unity. I am certain that Cannon knew about this some time ago.

The best explanation for Cannon's change is that he felt the pressure of leading comrades in the various sections of the International.

It is disgraceful that such a thing can occur in our movement. If one wants to know what the minority is fighting against in Cannon's regime, I can tell him that it is this contempt for political ideas that we are fighting against; it is this intellectual dishonesty that we are fighting against.

The cry is raised that the minority is accusing the leadership of following the Stalinist practice of waiting for a cable from Moscow. Oh, no! I must admit that Cannon determines the line here. He simply wants to avoid a struggle against leading comrades of the International

It has been charged that I have contempt for the rank and file because I said that the membership would benefit from another discussion on the nature of the Soviet Union and that many new members could not defend our position against members of the WP. That is a simple statement that is absolutely true and has not the slightest touch of contempt for the membership.

What greater contempt can there be for the rank and file when a leader does not honestly admit a mistake? What greater contempt can there be when a leader pushes and pulls the rank and file in different directions without any valid explanations?

Whatever the motive of Cannon's sudden change in line on the question of unity, the minority will support every serious and honest move for unity. The method of changing the line is exceedingly important and we are of course determined to try to eliminate every Stalinist practice from our midst. Failure openly to admit a mistake and attempt to claim a change in situation to justify a sudden shift in line is not a Trotskyist method. We shall continue to struggle against such a method. But meanwhile we shall support every move towards unity.

II.

THE ORGANIZATIONAL QUESTION

Politically routed on the question of unity, Cannon has apparently decided to turn to the "organizational question" where he feels much more secure. As an answer to my political arguments on the question of unity and more specifically on the question of the P.C. letter to the WP, Cannon thundered that he would "first settle the organizational question with the minority before proceeding with unity".

No matter how incorrect are the ideas expressed in the P.C. letter, no matter what may be the cause for the sudden change of line, the minority would consider its fight for unity practically won, if we were certain that the letter expressed an honest turn to unity. The situation in the party would be well on the way of being resolved were it not for the final speech of Cannon in which he shifted from the question of unity to an attack on the minority, the group that initiated the question of unity. As it is we are now faced with the question whether the letter is nothing but a dishonest maneuver for the purpose of fooling the leading comrades of the International, of leading them to believe that Cannon is not opposed to unity.

What does "settling with the minority" mean? As in all questions I believe Cannon has not thought his way through. Just as he has been compelled to retreat on the question of unity so will he be compelled to retreat in his expressed determination to shift to an attack on the minority.

If Cannon goes through with his threat, then it will become clear that he actually wants to prevent unity and that the letter is nothing but a dishonest maneuver. Obviously it would be difficult to get the WP to join with a party that has either expelled or silenced the very group that is responsible for initiating the question of unity. The question of the regime which the WP is willing to subordinate to the question of unity would become the primary question and prevent unity.

What would be better for Cannon if the WP itself would balk at unity on the ground of something that he did within the party? He would then (so he may think) stand out as the champion of unity and place the blame for failure to achieve it on the shoulders of the WP.

But that is not such an easy task. It will be no easier to fool the leading comrades of the various sections of the International on the organizational question than it was to fool them on the political questions. For on the question of organization the minority stands

four-square on the principles of Lenin and Trotsky. It is true that both the Cannon faction and the minority faction subscribe to the same principles of Bolshevik organization but it has become clear through specific acts that Cannon follows not the Leninist principles but Zinovievist principles of organization, principles that constitute a bridge to Stalinist organizational concepts.

All that Cannon can hope to do is to accuse the minority of "disloyalty because of negotiations with the WP leaders for unity behind the back of the party". Cannon is an expert in confusing politically immature people on petty organizational questions. We are certain he will gain nothing by such methods with politically honest and mature people.

Cannon "Accepts Lenin but Not Trotsky"

Cannon has frequently in private, and now for the first time in public, insisted that he is not a Trotskyist but a Leninist on the organizational question and that Trotsky has never built a party. What strange motive compels him to make such a gratuitous statement in a discussion on unity? I shall not speculate. I shall simply state that the strange statement of Cannon is significant because it actually reveals his concept of an organization which is neither Leninist nor Trotskyist.

Everyone who has any acquaintance with the history of our movement knows that Lenin was right as against Trotsky in their early conflict on the organizational question. It is perfectly proper in a lecture on the historical aspects of the organizational question to bring out that point and to show why Lenin was right and not Trotsky. But for Cannon to emphasize this point at the present time and in the way he did indicates much more than a simple historical allusion to a difference between Lenin and Trotsky.

At the present time it is absolutely incorrect to counterpose Lenin's conception of a party to Trotsky's. Because after Trotsky joined the Bolsheviks he had exactly the same conception as Lenin.

In the struggle against Stalin Trotsky had to emphasize certain ideas of organization that were not found in Lenin. The latter did not live long enough to be compelled to struggle against Stalin and to make the same points that were made by Trotsky.

In fighting against the Menshevik concept of organization Lenin had to emphasize the necessity of a fighting and disciplined party. In struggling against Stalin, Trotsky had to emphasize those points about the Leninist concept of the party which make of it a living, thinking organism, where discussion is encouraged, where a new proposal is not met with the accusation that it is intended to split the party, where the youth are encouraged to think critically and independently and not to follow quotations.

The essays written by Trotsky and which are known as "The New Course" (published by the Workers Party and a "MUST" for all revolutionists) constitute a Leninist addition to Lenin's writings on the organizational question.

When we speak or write of the Leninist concept of organization we necessarily include in it the Leninist concept as explained by Trotsky in his writings against Stalin. There is no difference between the Leninist and Trotskyist concept of a party at the present time; he who makes such a difference is a falsifier. Only a Stalinist can speak of such a difference.

In actuality when Cannon with a knowing air states that he is a Leninist and not a Trotskyist on the organization question he means that he rejects everything that Trotsky wrote and taught on the organizational question in the struggle against Stalin.

In a speech before the New York Workers' School of the Communist Party, a speech that was printed in the Workers Monthly of November 1924, Cannon had the following to say about the nature of the party:

"It (a Bolshevik party) must be a centralized party prohibiting factions, tendencies and groups. It must be a monolithic party hewn of one piece.

"What shall we say of our party if we measure it by this standard? From the very beginning, and even up to the present day, our party has been plagued with factions, tendencies and groups. At least one-half of the energy of the party has been expended in factional struggles, one after another. We have even grown into the habit of accepting this state of affairs as a normal condition. We have gone to the extent of putting a premium upon factionalism by giving factional representation in the important committees of the party.

"Of course this condition cannot be eliminated by formal decree. We cannot eliminate factions and factional struggle by declaring them undesirable. No, we shall make the first step toward eliminating factions, tendencies, and groups, toward creating a monolithic party in the sense of the Fifth Congress declaration only if at the beginning we recognize the basic cause of the condition; if we recognize the existence in our party of factions, tendencies and groups runs directly counter to Leninism, to the Leninist conception of what a revolutionary proletarian party should be.

(Underlined by me).

Is it unfair to quote an article written so long ago? Not if the ideas of that article have in actuality never been expelled from one's thinking and acting. No matter how much Cannon covers up his essential ideas of a monolithic party with phrases from Trotsky, he cannot get away from his real ideas and he acts upon them. He has

never really taken to heart the lessons of the struggle of Trotsky against Stalin -- especially those lessons which Trotsky wrote about in "The New Course".

When Cannon says that he is a Leninist and not a Trotskyist on organizational questions, he actually means that he is a Zinovievist (Zinoviev ran the Fifth Congress of the C.I.), and Zinovievism on the organizational question is a bridge to the Stalinist concept of organization.

Crime of Forming a Faction

No wonder Cannon has been shouting loudly that it was a great crime for the minority to "break the truce" and form a faction. One is really embarrassed to discuss the question on such a low level.

We entered into a truce because everyone knew that there was no specific and definite issue dividing the minority from the majority. There were minor specific issues indicating different tendencies, but nothing that one could point to as a major issue. In my opinion tendencies justify the creation of a faction if they are of sufficient importance and especially if they are based on the struggle against a Stalinist concept of organization. We would have been more than justified in organizing a faction since we knew that it was necessary for us to struggle against anti-Bolshevik concepts in an organized manner. To struggle for or against an idea in an organized manner is to form a faction.

We refrained from forming a faction because it was too early to decide definitely that the Stalinist concept of organization had been introduced into the party. We entered into a truce, which does not mean that we agreed under all conditions to refrain from forming a faction. We broke no pledge to refrain from forming a faction. We simply stated that at that time the situation was such as not to justify creating factions.

When, however, the minority introduced the resolution for unity with the WP and Cannon, instead of discussing the resolution on its merits, declared that it was a move to split the party and called me and Morrow stooges for the WP it was obvious to us that a faction was essential. Cannon tries to show that we organized a faction because I was insulted. I shall not discuss this ridiculous assertion except to say that I am not one to be insulted by anybody. It is sufficient to say that Cannon's statement has a political significance; it shows an attitude hostile to the discussion of a question on its merits. While we knew that Cannon shies away from any discussion of a political or theoretical problem, we had a right to expect something more than an accusation of being splitters and stooges for Shachtman. It meant that the membership were not to be presented with arguments but with slanders. And that is what actually happened to a large extent.

Given an important issue such as unity with the WP, a faction would be justified without any other factor. But add to that a difference in organizational concepts and the attitude of Cannon as revealed by his remarks at the time the resolution for unity was introduced, it

was obvious to us that an organized struggle for our views, in other words, a faction, was essential.

Every big and little leader of the majority faction poses what he thinks to be an unanswerable question. Do you not have complete democracy? Why do you insist on organizing a faction? As if the existence even of real democracy obviates the necessity of a faction under all circumstances.

That we have formal democracy cannot be denied. But it is not formal democracy that a party should have. It should also have a certain loyal attitude to discussion. A Chicago comrade gave what to me is an unanswerable reply to this question of democracy. He said: "Good, we have democracy, but what kind of democratic discussion is it when every time someone presents a new proposition he is met not with reasoned argument but with name-calling?" Formal democracy is one thing; a loyal discussion is altogether different.

Yes we have internal bulletins where the minority is given the right to present its point of view; but we also have remarks going all through the party that there is no rule requiring any one to answer the minority or to read the bulletins. Most branches do not discuss the contents of the bulletins, with the proud justification that the comrades are too busy working for the party to discuss the contents of the bulletins (especially of those that contain the articles of the minority).

This counterposing of activity to discussion is another Stalinist idea that has to be rooted out of the party. Cannon never fails to sneer at the minority on the ground that we want a discussion club and not a party and this sneering has penetrated into the rank and file so that it is repeated ad nauseam. The Bayonne branch and one branch in Chicago are under the control of the minority and we challenge any one to show that these two branches are not doing their share of the work of the party, even though in discussion they are far ahead of any other branch in the party.

To give the comrades an idea what their attitude to a faction should be I shall present a lengthy quotation from an article by Trotsky published in the October 1939 issue of the New International.

"The participation of different tendencies within a party unquestionably presupposes trust in the possibility of convincing one another, learning from one another. If differences arise, every tendency confident of its views will seek to win a majority."

"What is a faction? It is a temporary, non-statutory and voluntary grouping of closest co-thinkers within a party whose aim is to convince the party of the correctness of their viewpoint in the shortest period of time. The appearance of factions is unavoidable even in the most mature and harmonious party, owing to the extension of its influence upon new layers, the cropping up of new problems, sharp turns

in the situation, errors of the leadership and so on. From the standpoint of monolithism a factional struggle is an "evil", but it is an unavoidable evil, and is a far lesser evil than prohibition of factions. True enough, attempts at the formation of factions lacking an adequate principled basis in consequence of political immaturity, personal ambition, careerism etc., are frequently observable, especially in young parties. In such cases it is the task of the leadership to expose, without recourse to police measures, the hollowness of these enterprises and in that way to discredit them before the party membership. Only in this way is it possible to create profound attachment for the party so that periodic conflicts, no matter how sharp, do not threaten its unity. The existence of factions in the nature of things, provokes friction and involves an expenditure of energy, but this is the inevitable overhead expense of a democratic regime. A capable and authoritative leadership strives to reduce factional friction to a minimum. This is achieved by a correct policy tested by collective experience; by a loyal attitude toward the opposition; by the gradually increasing authority of the leadership; but never by prohibition of factions, something which cannot fail to invest the struggle with a poisonous and hypocritical character. Whoever prohibits factions thereby liquidates party democracy and thereby takes the first step toward a totalitarian regime.

" . . . The Bolshevik Central Committee never dreamed of demanding that an opponent 'abandon factional methods', if the opponent held that the policy of the Central Committee was false. Patience and loyalty toward the opposition were among the most important traits of Lenin's leadership . . . "

" . . . From the standpoint of Bolshevik ideas on party democracy, I would consider it an outright scandal to accuse an opponent who happened to be in the minority of employing factional methods, instead of engaging in discussion with him over the gist of the question. If the differences are serious ones then factional methods are justified; if the differences are not serious then the adversary will find himself discredited".

No wonder Cannon must take refuge in the statement that he is a Leninist and not a Trotskyist on organizational questions. Between Cannon and Trotsky there is a difference as great as between day and night.

I have said many times before and I repeat: let every new member hesitate a thousand times before accepting the kind of Bolshevism claimed by Cannon and his followers to be authentic Bolshevism. Cannon's Bolshevism is . . . Bolshevism-a-la-Cannon; it is Cannonism.

Even if Cannon covers up his Zinovievism by some phrases and ideas culled from Lenin and Trotsky, his actions prove that he remains true to his concept of Bolshevism as exemplified in his speech before the Workers' School. (See citation above).

Arguments and Distortions by Cannon

We can consider only two of the most startling distortions and most "powerful" arguments.

1. According to Cannon, Goldman, at the Fifteenth Anniversary Plenum (October 1943) "began to express doubts about the Bolshevik system of organization and its alleged tendency to degenerate into Stalinism". (Internal Bulletin, Vol. VII, No.7, p 12). This is made by Cannon as a statement of fact as if I actually made some such statement. It is not even presented as an inference from something that I said.

What I did at that Plenum was to warn the leadership that any further attempt to build up Cannon, as Stalin is built up, would be met by my open opposition. This threat I carried out when I raised the question of the Hansen article which I considered a disgrace to the party. Cannon wrote that anyone who did not appreciate the Hansen article on Cannon did not understand the problem of leadership. By that he meant that a leader who has no qualifications must be built up by his followers.

As a matter of fact most of the secondary leaders of the majority frowned upon the leader-worship article of Hansen but were unwilling to say so openly. This does not belong to the school of Trotskyism.

There is only one way by which I can be made to say that Bolshevism has a tendency to degenerate into Stalinism. If it is granted that Cannonism is the incarnation of Bolshevism then I would have to say that Stalinist germs exist in Cannonism and it could be deduced that Stalinist germs exist in Bolshevism. But since I strenuously deny that Cannonism is Bolshevism, the accusation against me has no basis in logic or in fact.

2. Goldman would exchange 25 WP members for 500 workers. So runs the accusation, if not by Cannon then by M. Stein or other Cannon clique leaders.

In answer to the argument that we are going after raw workers and do not want to have anything to do with the WP people, I said: "There is absolutely no justification to counterpose recruiting workers into the party to unity with the WP. We can do both. Can any one deny that the WP has at least fifty members who have long experience in the revolutionary movement, some of them being trained agitators, propagandists and writers? Can any one deny that the WP has a weekly with a

circulation of over 20,000 and a monthly theoretical organ? Would not the energy and forces used for all this aid us? Why should one counterpose getting raw workers and unity which would bring us another four to five hundred members?

"But I shall proceed to give you an argument which I know you will use for purposes of distortion. If it should ever come to the absolutely impossible situation of being compelled to choose between 500 raw workers and 25 leading members of the WP, I would choose the latter. Because everybody knows or should know how difficult it is to develop raw workers so that they can play a leading role in the revolutionary movement. Five hundred raw workers do not make a revolutionary party but 25 cadre elements can begin building a revolutionary party.

"But again I say, why do you counterpose recruiting raw workers to unity? And again I predict that you will make demagogic use of my statements".

On "Disloyalty"

Descending to an unbelievably low level, Cannon is attempting to confuse the politically immature members by raising once more the question of the permissibility of discussing questions with members of an opponent organization, specifically with members of the WP. After I raised the question of the anti-Bolshevik concept of prohibiting members of our party from discussing with members of an opponent party, the P.C. made an undignified retreat, claiming that it was not their intention to prohibit discussion with opponents.

Still the P.C. majority seemed to stick to the proposition that a member must have permission before talking to an opponent. Since everybody knew that I was friendly with and met Max Shachtman, the P.C. felt compelled to ask about it and I handed in a statement which said that Shachtman is a friend of mine; that I consider him to be a devoted revolutionist and hope to see him in our party. That was about five months ago and the P.C. has said nothing since then. It is embarrassing to talk and write about it.

I can now reveal that a majorityite member of the N.C. came to my house when Shachtman happened to be there. When he left he actually told me that he would say nothing to the P.C. about it because that would only confuse the issues. I had a hearty laugh since this confirmed my charge that leading members considered it a crime against the party to talk to a WP member without permission. I told him it was immaterial to me whether he informed or did not inform the P.C. Once more I apologize for mentioning such an incident but it shows to what a level Bolshevism-a-la-Cannon has reduced the party.

After the resolution for unity was introduced by the minority, Cannon again raised the question of my seeing Shachtman and other leading members of the WP. He knew very well that this was a good way to confuse people who never learned anything about Lenin's Bolshevism except as taught by Cannon.

The relationship of the minority to the WP members is determined fundamentally by the fact that we consider the WP a revolutionary Marxist party. We of course believe in fraternizing with members of all working-class parties but our fraternization with the members of the WP is particularly close because of our estimate of them as devoted revolutionists.

Not unless there is a specific prohibition against fraternizing with the members of the WP will the members of the minority faction cease to do so. And if there is such a specific prohibition it will only furnish more evidence of the Cannonite degeneration of the party.

It is undeniable that I have tried my best to convince the leading members of the WP that they made a serious mistake in splitting from the party in 1940 and that they should favor unity. This, Cannon disloyally designates as disloyal. Instead of discussing the question of unity on its merits, Cannon takes advantage of the political immaturity of the members to confuse them and present them with a grotesque conception of loyalty.

If one knows that Cannon, Shachtman and Burnham secretly negotiated with leading elements of the Socialist Party for the purpose of entering that party in 1936, at a time when the majority of the P.C. was opposed to entry, one can understand Cannon's cynical and hypocritical loyalty. Cannon was perfectly justified in doing what he did at that time. The conduct of the members of the minority differs from his in that we are not negotiating and we do not keep our talks with the leaders of the WP secret.

Bolsheviks start with loyalty to an idea, loyalty to the socialist revolution. The party is an instrument for the realization of the idea; it is not a fetish to be worshipped. Under a proper regime the question of loyalty to the party as Cannon has raised it would never be raised; there would be a discussion on the issues.

Some comrades have been confused by the theory that to convince the WP leaders that they should favor unity constitutes doing opponent's work and hence should be under the control of the party. This is formalism reducing itself to an absurdity.

By opponents' work is generally meant work in another party for the purpose of winning over some members of that party or even, let us admit, for the purpose of creating a movement for unity.

But since the majority of the P.C. was opposed to unity and since it had not the slightest intention of doing any opponents' work in the WP, it is indeed a mystery how people with some intelligence consider the efforts of the minority to convince the leaders of the WP that they should favor unity, as opponents' work. It requires a mind of a scholastic type to consider such work opponents' work.

Nor is the minority guilty of negotiating for unity for the simple reason that, as a small minority, it is impossible for it to negotiate on behalf of the party. It is guilty only of working for unity. If that is disloyalty make the most of it. The majority of

the party can, if it wants to, pass a rule that no member of the party should talk to any member of the WP, but that would not be Bolshevism; it would only be Bolshevism-a-la-Cannon.

Scaring with Talk of Split

When the resolution for unity with the WP was first introduced, Cannon stated that it was a move to split the party. Now he half-heartedly admits that he might have been mistaken. Obviously since leading members of the International favor unity it is difficult to contend that he who is for unity is for splitting the party.

As political people we of the minority had to consider the attitude of Cannon as one that indicated a desire on his part to split the party and get rid of the minority.

As I indicated above the loyalty of a revolutionary Marxist is first of all to the idea of the socialist revolution. If in the course of time the instrument for the realization of the idea becomes blunted and it becomes impossible for revolutionists to function in it, then the time comes to consider the necessity of trying to create a new instrument. Let the demagogues of the majority make anything they please out of this assertion. Real revolutionists accept that as axiomatic.

Naturally the question of split is indeed a serious one and there must be impelling reasons to justify a revolutionist in splitting from the party. The possibility of making a mistake is great. Hence no revolutionist splits a party without the most exhaustive analysis. I consider the split of the minority of 1940 as a grave blunder because the question of the defense of the Soviet Union, although tremendously important, was not an issue justifying a division of the American revolutionary forces. The organizational question was surely not presented in a manner which would explain the necessity of a split.

I am stating all this because Cannon and his main followers have created a mysticism about the party, a mysticism which can only serve the interests of Cannonism and not Bolshevism. The question of unity and split must be dealt with honestly. That is why we do not hesitate to say that Cannon's attitude led us seriously to consider that what he wants is a split in the party. That he scares the party members with the assertion that the minority is intending to split does not in any way do away with the fact that in reality he would be responsible for any split.

Now that the P.C. majority has made a turn in favor of unity the question of the possibility of split should be completely eliminated. That is what the members of the minority thought. But Cannon's summary, where he threatened to "settle with the minority before proceeding with unity" once more raises the question of the possibility of Cannon's actions leading to a split.

There is no doubt whatever that he and his leading followers have created a mood in the more backward rank and file that the sooner the minority is gotten rid of the better it is for the party. This

is a dangerous sign.

The minority would not be worth anything at all if it did not consider all eventualities. But above all, in spite of Cannon, we shall work for unity of the revolutionary forces and if that is achieved there can no longer be any question of split.

In spite of all the provocations, in spite of all the justifiable suspicions, the minority will support every serious step in the direction of unity and in doing so achieve its objective.

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