

MINUTES OF ENLARGED POLITICAL BUREAU.....26 December 1966

Present: Full: Robertson, Nelson, Turner(late) Staff: Gordis
Alts: Harper, Janacek, Glenn(late)
Other: Mark T.(NYC), Hainline (full CC & Ithaca)(late),
Brosius(Ithaca)(late)
Absent: Full: Henry, Stoute Alt:Gaillard(l.o.a.) Staff: Martin

Meeting convened 7:35 p.m.

Motion: To admit Mark T. with voice on SDS point. Passed

- Agenda:
1. Minutes
 2. Personnel
 3. Organization
 4. SDS
 5. Press
 6. Committee to Aid Latin American Political Prisoners
 7. Seattle
 8. Healy Crime

1. Minutes: Minutes of 5 December not yet ready.

2. Personnel:

a. New Orleans:

Don M., lawyer, 35, has written for The Nation and done legal work for trade unions. Endorsed by New Orleans OC.

Motion: To accept Don M. as a candidate member. Passed

Carolyn M., Negro, 19, ex-Wave, student. Many contacts, and very sharp.

Motion: To accept Carolyn M. as a candidate member. Passed

b. Chicago: Ray C. has not paid dues or attended meetings since the Conference.

Motion: To drop Ray C. Passed

c. Seattle: Application received from Miriam R., FSP member who attended our founding Conference.

Motion: To take this up under point on Seattle. Passed

d. Baltimore: Baltimore OC is requesting Jaime S. and George L. be raised to full membership, and that Paul W. be reduced to sympathizer.

Motion: To table to point on Baltimore under "Organization". Passed

3. Organization:

a. Baltimore: 5 PB members went to Baltimore on 17 Dec. for meeting convened by PB with membership of Baltimore OC. Delegation consisted of Robertson, Turner, Glenn, Gaillard and Nelson. Trip might be termed a limited success as comrades there appear to have been deterred from a split perspective, and it was educational for the newer Baltimore comrades. In no case could Baltimore hold to charges that specific differences were "lies" by PB and the OC agreed (albeit reluctantly) to conform to internal policy.

The PB delegation presented the following 3 points to the Baltimore OC:

- (1) To conform to procedures for internal discussion: specifically, recognizing the authority of the national leadership to

regulate--and recognize that another violation will result in a trial;

(2) To conduct future discussion in a comradely tone; specifically, that continued references to "lies" of national leadership will result in a trial to either prove the charges or suffer the consequences;

(3) To become qualified to handle PB minutes by working out an understanding on their proper circulation so that local receipt of full minutes may be reestablished.

In response to these points of the PB delegation, the Baltimore OC passed the following motion unanimously: "That: We agree to go through channels in the profound hope that the Political Bureau will execute their responsibilities. We will attempt to conduct our criticisms in a more comradely fashion in the hopes that the Political Bureau will do likewise. We reject any implication that we had a split perspective or that we have acted unprincipledly. Although we are not satisfied with most of the replies, or lack of replies, to our criticisms, we have found the discussion valuable and somewhat clarifying."

We learned that Gallatin D., who is not a member, has been treated by Baltimore as a member since his application, and they announced that Gallatin had phoned from Chicago stating he was in "full solidarity" with Baltimore. PB delegation was informed that Gallatin had sent a request for a "transfer" to Chicago to the N.O.--but it was never received. Before G. can become a member it is first necessary to discuss his occupation with him, as per PB minutes of 14 November 1966. We have secured the original outrageous letter Sherwood sent Tom Settle, dated 26 October 1966. It will be appended to these minutes. **Disc: Nelson, Glenn, Turner, Janacek, Gordis, Robertson, Glenn, Turner, Glenn, Nelson

(Procedural Motion: To admit Helene B.

Passed)

Motion: On Baltimore's repeated request for recognition as a full local. To reiterate the earlier PB decision of 10 October 1966 to re-examine the Baltimore OC for political stabilization 90 days after conclusion of election campaign (around 1 Feb.). Passed

Baltimore meeting of 4 December requested N.O. to raise Jaime S. and George L. to full membership and to drop Paul W.
Motion: To accept George L. as a full member of Spartacist upon completion of 3-month period of candidacy. Passed

Motion: As regards Jaime, to continue her temporarily as a candidate member as she has never paid anything (for 6 months) since her initial contribution, and to request Jaime to pay up or be dropped. Passed

Motion: We are aware that at any given time the Baltimore comrades are frequently broke. However, over any given period they have shown that if they want to, they can spend hundreds of dollars for political activities in which they are interested. Since only one comrade regularly sends in his dues we must conclude comrades are insufficiently aware of the needs of the

Motion: To give highest priority to the following:

- (1) To bring out a report on the trip to Baltimore, including proper scope and manner of written and oral discussion. However politically wrong, Baltimore, as long as they function in manner to solve differences, will have no steps taken against them. We characterize them as a clique with bad politics. We want to defeat these bad politics and make Baltimore comrades function more politically. (They are a low-order Menshevik clique--we should call for dissolution of the clique and politically defeat it as a tendency in the organization.)
- (2) To circulate all relevant documents, attaching or appending them to PB minutes as soon as possible.

Passed unanimously

national organization. This is a key element in functioning as a chartered local or any other unit in the Spartacist League.

Passed

Disc: Turner, Janacek, Nelson, Turner, Glenn, Robertson, Nelson, Glenn, Turner

Motion: Regarding request to drop Paul W. (who did not seem to be aware that he was to be dropped and who attended the subsequent internal meeting with the PB): He is the only Negro in the Baltimore OC and a worker, shows fully political and organizational identity with Spartacist, and has simply been tardy and spotty in attendance. Re the great importance of building a black cadre and its especial importance in a semi-Southern city with a black proletarian majority, we urge comrades to make an extraordinary effort to reintegrate Paul W. into the organization and raise his political level, and we would be delighted if he could spend some time in NYC. Passed

- b. Detroit (Settle): Answer received from Settle to PB's letter. He wants to continue as a member without necessarily meeting obligations of membership. He doesn't want to recruit to the organization and doesn't have time to sell the paper--or put it on the stands, apparently. Correspondence from Rader on Settle's visit noted.

Motion: To table question to next meeting.

Passed

- c. Regulation of Discussion: Bay Area has written asking what, concretely, is meant by regulation of discussion by the Central Committee. Our present practice flows from the organization resolution of the Founding Convention of the SWP, "On the Internal Situation and the Character of the Party" (reprinted in Cannon's Struggle for a Proletarian Party). By answering the Bay Area query we are in effect setting important criteria for the future practice of the Spartacist League.

A living internal political life is essential to the SL in order to maintain a Marxist program in a continually changing world and circumstances of our struggle; therefore any particular limitation imposed upon a given discussion must be justified in each specific case in accordance with applicable experience and precedent. This does not mean that the SL is a mere discussion club engaging in endless circular debate. The purpose of internal discussion for us is the twofold and related one of education of the membership as revolutionary Marxists and the arrival of the organization at decisions through the mechanisms of factional democracy. It is the second purpose, often involving factional struggle, that gives great difficulty in coming to a proper balance.

This interpretation of democratic centralism stands in direct opposition to the recent practice of the SWP, which is that internal literary or oral discussion of differences is not permitted to the general membership except under special circumstances, typically limited entirely to the several months immediately preceding a national convention every two years.

The following points should be observed in the implementation of our position.

We do not have the right to organizationally regulate or intervene in discussions or other activities that are entirely within tendencies or factions so long as the responsibilities to the SL are fully discharged by the members involved. Similar rights to privacy apply to discussion between individual members that take place outside the performance of their organizational duties. Our views on this subject were set forth when we were still a minority within the SWP in our document, "For the Right of Organized Tendencies to Exist Within the Party!" (reprinted in Marxist Bulletin #4 Part I). The CC does not interest itself in incidental expressions of differences which might occur in normal and routine channels of internal communication such as minutes exchanged between locals, unless such channels were deliberately used as a device to circumvent CC regulation.

We note that there are distinctions in the usual purposes to which local or national, oral or written, discussion of differences are put. The areas of greatest interest to the CC are of regional or national discussion. (Normally, locals regulate their own affairs.) Oral discussion leaves no permanent record and is usual in coming to an immediate decision and in the sharpest points of struggle or, alternatively, in the preliminary airing of tentative ideas. Written discussion tends to be more sober, leaves a permanent record, and the evolution of an individual or tendency can be traced.

The CC (or its subordinate body, the PB) controls and centralizes discussion in order to assure an equitable opportunity for all viewpoints to be heard and their material distributed uniformly throughout the organization. But this does not exhaust the responsibilities of leading bodies or majorities. They, even more than critics or minorities, have a political responsibility to the SL, where necessary, to initiate and direct discussion. The right to regulate discussion includes the right to bring it to decision at the proper time and manner and to determine whether it should then be suspended for a time, modified in form or continued. To be dealt with brusquely are discussions that prove trivial or become essentially repetitive or that (often relatedly) it becomes clear are a deliberate guerilla harassment intentionally devoid of political content. During pre-National Conference periods the only restrictions center on (i) uncomradely tone, slanderous accusations, etc. or (ii) material which would jeopardize to a significant degree either individual comrades or the organization itself.

While a majority always determines the external activity of all comrades without exception, under temporary conditions of serious and deepgoing differences within the organization, the Majority has a different internal responsibility--to seek to share equally with the Minority in the technical direction of

the discussion so as to remove the possibility for either unfairness or accusations of unfairness which in either case always tend to muddy the political issues and envenom a discussion.

Specifically for the present, and outside pre-Conference discussion periods, discussion material will get much faster distribution by circulation along with the PB minutes, rather than by accumulating material until there is enough to bring out separate internal bulletins. For the material sent with the minutes we can have two categories: (1) those physically attached to the minutes, to be treated as part of the minutes and in the same confidential way; (2) unattached enclosures, perhaps with extra copies, for wider circulation in the membership including retention by other members besides the authorized PB minutes recipients.

At the present time there is not enough ventilation of political views within the SL. The only technical restrictions we currently have on written national discussions flow from the very few skilled comrades available in the National Office to publish comrades' contributions. Therefore currently we suggest an eight-page upper limit on document length except by special arrangement. Additionally, comrades may have to do their own stencilling--following the style and meeting the quality levels of the N.O. Since we are not experiencing a deluge of material, to set limits on frequency would be artificial just now. However when we are overburdened such limits will be set.

The only justifications for separate, private channels of distribution are where a tendency is bureaucratically gagged or is itself preparing a split and finds the need for its own apparatus and growing separate identity to rally supporters around. Frequently the accusations of bureaucratic gagging or split preparation are but different ways of saying the same thing in a specific concrete situation. Marxists must study as living history the inner-party disputes of the past, in order to be oriented in the struggles which surely lie ahead in keeping sharp the political cutting edge of the revolutionary vanguard. Disc: Hainline, Nelson, Robertson, Harper, Turner, Nelson, Harper, Robertson

4. SDS - Doug H.

The PB decided in September to make a national entry into SDS and this has been carried out haphazardly across the country, with no report on the results as yet. In Ithaca there has been minor success. Letters were written to nearby SDS chapters, and one corresponded. A good meeting was set up in Cortland which may lead to the formation of a Spartacist organization there. What do we do in SDS beyond contact work and recruiting? What should our strategic aims be? In Ithaca there is just the beginning of a left caucus in which we play a leading role. There are a number more radical than the existing leadership and we have been able to influence them. In New Left Notes (NLN) many discontented types have articles. We can write them and

comment on their articles.

Disc: Mark T., Nelson, Robertson, Turner, Mark T., Hainline

Motion: To appoint D. Hainline national coordinator of SDS work, with special responsibility for organizing literary intervention into SDS's national press. Passed

Disc: Turner, Gordon, Robertson, Brosius, Nelson

5. Press:

a. Continuation of discussion on "Maoism Run Amok". Turner summarized contents of his memo.

Disc: Robertson, Glenn, Hainline, Nelson, Gordis, Brosius, Harper, Robertson, Glenn, Hainline, Nelson, Gordis, Robertson, Turner (summary)

Motion by Robertson: To attach Turner's memo to the minutes and to reiterate that we have no basis for solidarity with Mao's faction as against other sections of the bureaucracy. On the contrary, as the ruling clique it is the main internal enemy of the workers.

Motion by Turner: To adopt line of the memo.

Disc: Robertson, Turner, Robertson, Turner

Vote on Turner's motion: For: Full: Turner

Opposed: Full: Robertson, Nelson Consult: Hainline; Janacek, Harper, Glenn; Gordis

Abstaining: Brosius

Vote on Robertson's motion: For: Full: Robertson, Nelson, Turner

Consults: Hainline; Janacek, Harper, Glenn; Brosius, Gordis

Opposed: --

(Procedural Motion: To table rest of agenda till next week and proceed to announcements. Passed)

Announcements:

a. Proposed contents of next issue, SPARTACIST #9:

Elections - White (front page)

Berkeley student strike, arrest of C. Kinder, and related - (back page)

Posadas

Healy's Gangsterism

Welfare Crisis

Appears to be a good issue, very compact.

b. General Information:

NYC Anti-SANE demonstration

Negro Commission should meet.

Recent SWP Plenum

New caucus (ACFI-PL bloc) being formed in Welfare; strike may be pending.

Letters from England

Letters from Rose

Larry S. has joined Spartacist in Berkeley.

German material received.

ESPARTACO responded promptly when leading Trotskyist in Mexico disappeared.

We withdrew from Committee to Aid Latin American Political Prisoners.

Meeting adjourned 12:25 a.m.

C O P Y

October 26, 1966

Tom Settle
Detroit, Mich.

Dear Tom,

Enclosed are a few copies of our most recent mass leaflet. We are distributing in the next few days around 5,000 at factories in the Baltimore area. We are writing two more leaflets which we are going to use next week. So far in the campaign (which is 1 month old) we have printed or mimeod 22 pieces of literature, and sent over 1 dozen official letters. Our literature production has been enough to fill the pages of one issue of Spartacist.

When I was commissioned to write the enclosed leaflet we faced the problem of how to introduce a socialist campaign to the slightly above 'average' trade unionist, black and white. I think we did a good job. What is your opinion? Maybe comd. Fox would be interested?

You might be familiar with the slanders appearing in the National minutes concerning the Baltimore comrades. These are pure and simple slanders. Everything is a lie or a serious misrepresentation. We are answering this in full, and are distributing it in mimeod form to all the locals.

You probably know of the point in the national minutes which in effect charge you with disloyalty. This is based upon your letter to Verret in New Orleans. The recent National minutes reprint your letter drawing conclusions which in my opinion have nothing to do with the contents of your letter. We were mentioned in the minutes as having received a similar letter. The comrades in the national office had no knowledge of that letter (which I consider to be a very honest and loyal letter) other than it existed. No one in the National Office ever read it or had any opportunity to know of its contents. Along with the reply to the slanders against the Baltimore comrades we are going to reprint your letter to us in an effort to prove the dishonest character of the charges against you, and to strengthen our case.

We have tried to operate vis a vis the N.O. since the Sept. conference in a loyal and comradely manner. In return Robertson and circle have exuded nothing but hostility towards us. Finally this hostility has transcended petty nastiness and taken on a form which detracts from the basic political soundness of the leadership. All of us in Baltimore, having much more experience with the Robertson grouping than other comrades, knew this at the convention. Now, unfortunately, this all has come out in the open, and Robertson and circle are faced with irrefutable slanders on their part.

In a matter of a couple of days you will be receiving our fully documented reply to the lies of the 'King, ladies-in-waiting, and his courtesans'.

The methods recently exhibited by our National Office places a serious shadow on the future of Revolutionary Marxism in this country.

Comradely,

[R. Sherwood]

8 December 1966

To the members of the
Spartacist League in
the Baltimore Organizing Committee:

Dear Comrades,

The Political Bureau is seriously concerned by the deteriorating relations between members of your O.C. and the rest of the Spartacist League. We have had several lengthy discussions within the P.B. on the problems involved and are now determined to make an extreme effort through discussion with comrades in Baltimore to regularize the situation.

The P.B. notes that comrades Sherwood and Kaufman have resumed their unrestrained factional struggle without, however, having advanced a single political criticism of the national leadership nor any political statement of their own. In fact as during the Founding Conference their entire struggle has been on the plane of secondary administrative complaints.

We have witnessed the attempt in this spirit to unilaterally force open oral discussion with the general membership of the NYC local committees "to answer" the P.B.'s "unfair and malicious charges against us." We have also received one copy of Sherwood's and Kaufman's generally distributed mimeographed circular "To CC members and alternates" of 20 November. On the face of it this circular "censuring the P.B." is a deliberately and willfully provocative challenge to the authority of the Central Committee to regulate internal discussion within the S.L. Sherwood admits this when he wrote comrade Verret: "Referring to our projected reply to the slanders against the Baltimore comrades you ask, 'ARE YOU GOING TO LET THE NATIONAL LEADERSHIP KNOW BEFORE HAND?' NO!!! We are not going to! And why should we? They have just concluded a savage, vicious and dishonest attack upon us and you expect us to observe the niceties of diplomacy and protocol!" What Sherwood dismisses as "diplomacy and protocol" is nothing other than disciplined internal procedure and it is going to be observed.

The P.B. intends to send a strong delegation to Baltimore to meet with the local members in an effort to bring the factional conduct of Sherwood and Kaufman within the democratic-centralist framework through persuasion and to directly familiarize the Baltimore comrades with the national organization, its politics, practices and recent & current activities and struggles. (The latest communication from Baltimore reports a formal motion of the Baltimore O.C. that it is responsible for the SL's "only involvement in mass movements"-- and apparently since at least the beginning of summer! Comrades, this is fantastic. You are being misled and in a totally anti-League fashion about the rest of your organization!)

In a Leninist organization it is entirely the right of higher bodies (such as the P.B.) to convene meetings of lower ones (such as organizing committees), just as members of higher bodies may attend and speak at all meetings of subordinate units. Moreover under the present circumstances and despite other pressing and even urgent obligations it is the P.B.'s duty to convene such a meeting in an effort to deflect members from a course, to speak plainly, of splitting from the Spartacist League.

Consequently, we ask that the Baltimore Organizing Committee schedule a meeting at its customary location for the night of Saturday, 17 December and that in addition comrades hold themselves available for individual discussions during the afternoon of that day.

In preparation for these discussions and for general guidance, we draw the attention of Baltimore comrades to the document, "For the Right of Organized Tendencies to Exist Within the Party!", copies of which are enclosed /to be reprinted in Marrist Bulletin #4/. This statement, adopted by the predecessor to the SL within the SWP, sets forth our position on proper Bolshevik conduct when we were a minority; we find it equally applicable from our present standpoint as the majority.

The P.B. has also authorized its delegation to act on its behalf on other current matters before the P.B. regarding the Baltimore O.C., its membership and work. We are particularly anxious to discuss with the latest applicant his present employment prospects.

Fraternally,

James Robertson, for
the Political Bureau

cc: Lou D. (Phila.),
Western Bureau,
Southern Bureau,
file.

Spartacist League
N.Y.C. District Committee
Box 1377, G.P.O.
New York, N.Y. 10001

10 December 1966

Baltimore Organizing Committee
Box 1345
Baltimore, Md. 21203

Dear Comrades,

The following motion was passed by the NYC District Committee at its meeting of 21 November 1966, in response to your telephone call to Comrade Shelly W., former NY Downtown organizer, on Thursday 17 November, seeking to arrange an "informal meeting" of the memberships of the NY Local and the Baltimore Organizing Committee, in order to discuss what you termed "slanders by the national leadership of the Baltimore O.C." and your local work. After you were informed by Comrade Shelly that your request was in violation of internal democratic procedure, I received a brief note dated November 22, 1966, formally requesting such a meeting, this apparently being intended to be a token compliance, after the fact, with procedure you were aware of before your telephone call.

"We reject the request by the Baltimore Organizing Committee for an 'informal meeting' with the New York Local membership, as a deliberate attempt to bypass the National Organization, while conducting a national campaign of slander against the national leadership, and refer the question to the Political Bureau."

Fraternally,

Albert Nelson
New York District Organizer

cc: Political Bureau

COPY

SPARTACIST
Philadelphia, Pa.
December 16, 1966

Political Bureau of Spartacist League

Dear Comrades,

I am sending this letter by Special Delivery in hope that it reaches you before you leave for Baltimore. Several things have happened which, I think, will be of interest to you. Last week I spent four days in Baltimore; I will touch upon my experiences there towards the end of this letter....

...

As for my recent visit to Baltimore, I will be brief, for there is not really very much to write.

I went to Baltimore with the intention of convincing the rank and file comrades there that K. and S. are wrong. To make the long story short, I failed in my intentions. Instead, they convinced me as to the legitimacy of some of their gripes.

I believe that the present conflict can be settled without going to the extremes and that a split (on the part of either side) is absolutely impermissible. Furthermore, not a single charge of breach of discipline can be thrown at the Baltimore comrades.

Even for those comrades in the Political Bureau who do want a split, this should be out of the question at the present time. The rank and file comrades (Joe C., George L., Jaime S.) are solidly behind K. and S., and they will, I am positive, go with the two leaders, if necessary. Moreover, the Baltimore comrades have a number of excellent contacts in Washington, DC, and elsewhere. These are people who will in the near future join the Spartacist League.

I hope, Comrades, that you will reconsider this entire matter, put all personal impulses aside, and act in the best interests of the Spartacist League as a whole.

For world revolution,

Lou Davis

C O P Y

SPARTACIST
Philadelphia, Pa.
December 16, 1966

Joe V.
New Orleans, La.

Dear Comrade Joe,

Last week I spent several days in Baltimore and had a chance to read your letter of Nov. 25. This is the purpose for the present letter. To be honest, some of the statements you made in your letters to the Baltimore comrades astonished me and are sadly reminiscent of my days in the YSA. I will try to be as brief as possible.

Regarding mimeographed paper put out by the comrades in Balto., you write that they should have informed the national leadership beforehand. There is no stated rule as to this; quite the contrary. I refer you to the Minutes of May 23 - "Ithaca has passed motions in favor of both these last 2 points, which are being sent to locals over the head of the national organization as a pressure move (this is their right but is is poor procedure except with cause)." (emphasis mine.)

So we see that they have a perfect right to do this, although it might be "poor procedure."

You feel that we should not allow "open criticism in the organization," and that the Baltimore papers "may weaken the SL." May I ask you, Comrade, just how open criticism can hurt or weaken a Leninist organization? I think it would do us all a lot of good if we restudied the history of the Bolshevik Party, a party which led the working class to power. At one time, for instance, Lenin resigned from the Central Committee in order to be free to propagandize against the leadership among the lower party ranks. And you believe that open criticism may weaken our organization and speak of something called "constructive criticism" (Stalinist phraseology, Comrade).

The only time that "factionalism" was "banned" in the Bolshevik Party was at the Tenth Congress, when under the extreme pressure of Kronstadt Lenin asked that all differing positions within the Party be expressed directly to the Party (i.e., the leadership). But even then the minority's platform continued to be distributed ($\frac{1}{4}$ million copies!), and a Discussion Sheet was established so that opposing views could continue to be expressed.

You describe the practices of Comrades K. and S. as "pseudo-Menshevik." I don't quite know what you mean by that. A "pseudo-Menshevik" is one who claims to be a Menshevik while in reality being something quite else (Bolshevik?)!

At our Founding Convention Cde. Tom S. presented a paper which was entirely Fox's position. I agree that this is no coincidence. However, while in Baltimore I had the opportunity to read exchanges between the comrades there and Tom S., and I assert that many of your feelings pertaining to Tom S. are unwarranted. What is he doing for the SL in Detroit? You are right, "WE DON'T KNOW!" But why don't we know? Was he told (before Nov. 2) that he should open a P.O. Box for Spartacist? Was he asked (before Nov. 2) to sell 50 copies of our paper? Was he notified (before Nov. 2) that our younger comrades are instructed to enter SDS?

I do not think that the two of us know enough about Tom to be able to reach any ready-made conclusions. He may have "double loyalty;" On the other hand, he might not. I do not see any "Foxite" line in his letter to you. As for sending the Documents on Fox's expulsion from the YSA-SWP, it was we who printed those papers "for the information of those working in the anti-war movement to aid in clarifying the issues involved." I hope that when Jim R. gave me three copies of Fox's documents back in June (when I was still in YSA), he was not trying to "start a Foxite tendency." As for Tom's letter to Baltimore, did you read it, to assert that it was "build around a Foxite position on union work?"

For all we know, Tom S. may just be a young and inexperienced comrade (politically close to Fox--this is not verboten) who needs direction. Certainly the reference to a "socialist state" in his letter to you is a grave error which can be made only by those with very little theoretical background.

I am not trying to defend Cde. Tom S. and the Baltimore comrades. As far as I can see, they are not guilty of any 'crimes' for which they should be punished. I agree entirely with two statements which you made in your letters to Balto.: "I must tell you that many of the organizational disagreements which you have are well rooted." (Nov.11) "I agree with many of your criticisms--so do many other comrades--but...your method is bad." (Nov.25)

I have learned a lot of things during my recent stay in Baltimore, and, among others, that in the present conflict no single side is entirely correct.

There are differences in our organization. I hope that they will be resolved without a serious internal crisis. This will definitely prove that we are, indeed, a Leninist organization, and will only strengthen the Spartacist League and the Revolution.

With Bolshevik greetings,

Lou D.

cc: Politburo,
personal file.

P.B. MINUTES REPLY

Having been attacked again in the P.B. minutes of Dec. 5, 1966, which we received Jan. 12, 1967, we feel obliged once again to set the record straight.

First, re our attempt to share information and understanding with the NYC locals. Some things are better orally discussed than written. The NYC locals by the nature of things are in constant oral discussion with the P.B. This is as it should be. The closer the locals are to the center the better for the entire organization. Recognizing that oral discussion, especially with locals so close to us is superior to written discussion we phoned cmd. Shelly W. who we understood was still downtown organizer with the suggestion that we would like to come up to NYC to discuss mutual problems with the NYC locals over the Thanksgiving weekend. This was not an attempt to go over the head of the P.B. or of the local district committee but an attempt to reach a comrade whose good faith we had no reason to question. As to the charge of being a fully articulated (sic) faction. This is only a case of the majority organizing against us as a "fully articulated faction" (sic) who in addition had not expressed any political differences with Baltimore. All Baltimore did was to defend itself which necessitated internal organizing. If it is incumbent upon anyone to explain the political differences it rests upon the P.B. who started all this, not upon Baltimore who has been acting in a defensive manner. We suspect that whatever basis there may be for the P.B. faction, it lies in its anti-Leninist attitude toward the internal life of the Spartacist League. A genuine Leninist leadership would encourage internal discussion, replies to criticism rather than find some technical infraction, real or imaginary to attack the critic. The P.B. charges, "If oral discussion is not to lead to a decision, then it is a preparation for a split." If the P.B. is pretending with clean hands to castigate us for opening oral discussions it is a darnable (sic) untruth. The P.B. knows darn well than it, many months back "opened oral discussion" on "the problems with the Baltimore local". It is axiomatic that they have had oral discussions with the NYC locals, we are not in a position to prove that similar oral and personal written discussions have not been opened with locals in Chicago, California, Texas and New Orleans, but we do know that Lyndon and Winnie H. visited to confer with Lou D. in Philly. According to Lou D. they did not discuss his work in Philly but "all they seemed interested in was arguing about Baltimore." After the P.B., having seen the results of our oral discussions with Lou, after and before their two oral discussions with him (he had a prior one in NYC) we can well understand their insistence that the Baltimore comrades be muzzled (to the limit of revealing their real fears to other comrades.) To quote an answer to the P.B. "after getting caught trying to organize a regional conference from below..." It is no secret that every member of the P.B. is also a member of one of the NYC locals. In consideration of this fact we wonder by what logic the P.B. assumes that we were trying to do something behind their backs. (Judging from the accusing phrase "After getting caught".) Insofar that this was an attempt to "organize an East Coast factional conference", we hope that Ithaca, Philly and Hartford will register their objections for not being included.

Cmd. Shelly W. upon conferring with persons in NYC informed us that insofar as no conference could be arranged on the Thanksgiving weekend, due to the lateness of time, that to arrange a conference our negotiations should be in a written fashion to the NYC organizer. This we did immediately. These are the events that the P.B. describes as "Baltimore tried to cover selves by sending formal written notes." The fact that we sent only one copy of our circular to NYC was an honest oversight on our part for which we apologized. Had the P.B. called it to our attention immediately we of course would have rushed additional

copies up by the next day. Thus not "necessitating duplication of this material in the center so that the CC can see it." As a matter of fact, when this point was brought to light we made available the stencils of our circulars to the National Office. (Incidentally, (sic) to the best of our knowledge NYC has to this date not circulated any copies made from our original stencils.) We can only assume that they wished to use this opportunity to make themselves martyrs in the eyes of the membership. Again quoting the minutes "The material circulated was inaccurate, dishonest and deliberately provocative." These are serious charges comrades, particularly, the charge of dishonesty. It is incumbent upon the accusers to qualify in detail these charges. This has not been done and is an example of anti-Leninist demagogic (sic) phrasemongering. We demand that the P.B. either seek to prove their accusations or drop them with a suitable apology. The following quote in the P.B. minutes is inaccurate, "Settle...has wired Baltimore and told them to stop using his name and not to split." The only reference in Settles' (sic) telegram reads as follows, "If any thing I wrote is to be reprinted I would rather reprint it myself. I do not think time has arrived for faction fight. Wait, would rather prepare my own defense after I'm informed." Speaking of inaccuracy, dishonesty and being deliberately provocative, in the case of Tom S.'s telegram the reality doesn't square well with the P.B. report. As far as Baltimore "attempting to rip up an orderly discussion process" we can not rip up what does not exist. We would have no reason to if it did exist.

As far as the quote "Willfully denying the existence of a National Leadership" we have always been searching for its "existence" and praying for its "leadership." In either event, as we have explained, repeatedly, in a Bolshevik organization the rank and file does not have to beg permission of the leadership to discuss the untruths which that leadership has propagated against a section, or to discuss the general problem of an apparently by this time many months long thwarting of a serious discussion by that National Leadership of internal problems.

Finally, we wish merely to point out to the comrades that the P.B.'s so called "last effort" to arrive at some understanding before charges are to be instituted, was unfortunately, at this late date also the P.B.'s "first effort."

Baltimore

Robert H. Sherwood
A. Robert Kaufman