

BRUCE H.
BAY AREA

**SPARTACIST LEAGUE
OF THE U.S.**

DISCUSSION BULLETIN

**FRATERNAL GREETINGS TO THE
PARTICIPANTS OF THE THIRD
ANNUAL NORTH AMERICAN
SUMMER CAMP!**

**SPARTACIST
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New York, N.Y. 10001**



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by Gerald Clark

August 5, 1974
Oakland, Calif.Bay Area Spartacist League
Oakland, Calif.

Dear Comrades,

In the three and one-half month period since I wrote my first "application for membership," I have done a serious study of the SL's history and development combined with a number of intense discussions with the local comrades. In addition to this, I was fortunate enough to have had an opportunity to carry on a very fruitful correspondence with the National Office which allowed me to get a real sense of the calibre of leadership inside the SL. Lastly, regarding the trade-union question, my active participation in the AC Transit strike has enabled me to test "my conceptions" of trade-union work and those of the Spartacist League, and see through comparison what the correct approach to the question was.

As a result, I have concluded that my characterization of the SL's early period as "sectarian" was false. Nothing in what I've read and heard can substantiate such a charge. If by sectarian one means "a desire (only) to maintain and protect the revolutionary principles" without regard to reaching the masses and building a revolutionary party, I must admit that the SL doesn't fit into this category. The evidence available indicates that the SL made a real attempt to intervene in class struggles throughout its short history; otherwise it would be impossible to explain why the SL is growing today and represents the only communist organization in the country which has correctly combined theory and practice along Leninist lines.

Secondly, the charge that the SL "tailed after" PL also cannot be substantiated. As one comrade put it, "we tailed after PL like a hawk with its claws dug deeply into the back of the neck of its prey!" Tailing after another organization to have any meaning must be defined as adapting politically, such as how the SWP tails after the feminists and nationalists. This the SL didn't do, even though I believe some of its formulations regarding PL were imprecise and muddled. But that's neither here nor there. The important thing is that the SL didn't give up its programmatic positions; in fact, contrary to this, it was PL which was forced to give up some of its positions during this period! The reason I had such a problem with PL is because of my position on Stalinism. I refused to allow for centrist split-offs from Stalinism which hadn't broken completely with Stalinist ideology. This position objectively denied the phenomenon of centrism as being something "in motion" from left to right vice versa. It also denied the possibility of large sections of the Stalinist parties breaking away from their reformist leaders in the direction of Trotskyism--without necessarily breaking subjectively from Stalinist ideology (PL apparently fits into this category from 1969-71). What was missing from my criticism of the SL's position on centrism and Stalinism was proof of any programmatic adaptation to Stalinism on the level of say the Pabloites, who have

adapted not only in theory but in practice as well, i.e., guerrill-
laism, "new mass vanguard," entryism sui generis, Cuba, etc.

Thirdly, on trade-union work, my own experience has taught me that any approach to trade-union work other than that of the SL's can only lead to capitulation to economism and "left" reformism. Without raising demands which go beyond simple trade-union consciousness, the proletariat will forever remain tied to this or that bureaucrat and through them the bourgeois state. Only by clearly differentiating ourselves from the "left" bureaucrats and Stalinists on a class-struggle program can we hope to win the leadership of the working class and make a revolution.

Lastly, on the question of organization. The SL has shown itself quite capable of intervening in many arenas at once in a consistent manner. Its organizational capabilities have actually outpaced its growth. In some areas it is still weak, such as recruitment; but that can be corrected with proper leadership and direction. From what I've seen so far, the SL functions internally in a democratic centralist manner. For these reasons I wish to join the Spartacist League at this time and help it become a mass proletarian party of international revolution. Forward to the rebirth of the Fourth International through the organization of the international Spartacist tendency!

Comradely yours,

Gerald Clark

[application endorsed by]

Al Nelson
Tweet Carter

[see "On Membership in the Spartacist League", IDB #23]

by Al Garfield (Buffalo)

August 23, 1974

SL P.B.

Dear Comrades,

Although our National Conference is only in a couple days, I nonetheless felt it was necessary to write this letter after having read and at least begun to digest the articles in IDB No. 23, August 1974.

This letter will be a follow-up on my letter of August 4, 1974, dealing with the Ulster question.

Basically, I want to broaden and deepen somewhat my defense of the slogans I put forward in that letter, and simultaneously add some thoughts which, at the time I wrote the August 4 letter, were either only half-formed or just in bits and pieces.

I had been toying, first of all, with a change from the slogan of a Socialist Ulster to the slogan of a Bi-National Workers State of Ulster, largely due to having been provoked by my own further investigations on the national question, intersecting with another comrade's having put forward that slogan up here. However, after having re-read the Cyprus article which we published in WV No. 51, I rejected this conception, and the slogan accompanying it. Why? Part of the basis of a nation involves a common territory. Within the state of Ulster itself, however, interpenetration of the two peoples, Catholic Irish and Protestant Ulstermen, fundamentally negates, by the very mixed character of that interpenetration, the confused interspersion of peoples, splotches of one group here, splotches of another group there, and so forth, any notion that there could be a common basis in territory for a nation in Ulster of Catholic Irish, or of Protestant Ulstermen. Hence, to call for a Bi-National Workers State is, like any independent federated solution of the Ulster question (or, for that matter, the Cyprus question), to call for forced, mass transfers of populations and, with that, exacerbation of the intercommunal conflicts which have raged in that area for so many years. Clearly, then, that is not what revolutionary socialists desire. Within that context, to speak of a territorially clearly defined area of Protestants or Catholics as a reality is to speak of a blue moon as a reality.

Here, I would have to admit that the Cobet article in the aforementioned IDB, or, more precisely, one specific portion of that article said something which I had, in various ways, been thinking about or verbalizing in the form of making the analogy, but which I had not been quite as explicit about. Namely, page 4 of his letter (page 96 of the IDB) has, under point 6, the following:

"6. the question of 'self-determination for interpenetrated peoples' is analogous to the Black question and points to the fundamental importance of territoriality as a criteria for a nation and, hence, a justification for the application

of the demand for self-determination."

The "analogy" I spoke about was that between black people in America as an oppressed race-color caste on the one hand, and, on the other, Catholic Irish in Ulster as a specially oppressed minority whose oppression has a definite national component.

Before, however, I get into that point at length, I would like to make one digression in order to deal with something else implicit in the Cobet point which is relevant to the point about why a Bi-National Workers State is not a correct programmatic slogan for the Ulster question. The reason for the unworkability of the Bi-National Workers State slogan is the same as the reason for the unworkability of other slogans the particular comrade who put these forward tied onto the Bi-National Workers State slogan. At the moment, as I recall, those slogans included the right of self-determination for the Ulster Protestants and the Ulster Irish Catholics after a socialist revolution. For either of these to be workable and to be implemented would require forced mass population transfers. I've already explained this as regards the Bi-National Workers State slogan, but the same thing is true for any notion of self-determination, or even the right of self-determination for the Catholic Irish in Ulster and the Protestant Ulstermen. What is, in effect, being "granted" in this series of slogans, specifically the last two, is the "right" of the splotches of Protestant Ulstermen living in Catholic Irish areas to move into Protestant areas, and the splotches of Catholic Irish living in Protestant areas to move into Catholic Irish areas. Inferring from this, in order to claim that there is a basis for the "right" of self-determination, the comrade who puts forward this slogan would have to see a basis for a nation--common territory, language, culture and political economy--in each of the many, many splotches existing throughout Ulster. (Ulster is, as one comrade who disagrees with both my position and that against which I am arguing put it, "a mess.")

We do not call for a Bi-National Workers State of Cyprus on the one hand, or, on the other hand, the "right of self-determination" for the Greek Cypriotes and the Turkish Cypriotes after the socialist revolution. We recognize the fact that each of these conflicting groupings is, basically, an extension of a nation (not a nation, certainly, in the full Marxist sense of the term), and that, beyond this, the groups are found throughout the island of Cyprus, as the map in the WV No. 51 showed us. Cyprus, too, is "a mess."

In both Cyprus and Ulster, we have a common political economy and a common territory (that of Cyprus, and that of Ulster), but within each, there are no clear territorial lines separating "the Greek Cypriotes" from "the Turkish Cypriotes," no clear "Ulster Catholic Irish area" from a clear "Ulster Protestant area." We also have within each quite uncommon languages and cultures manifesting themselves in differing psychological make-ups.

The point about emphasizing that each group in each of these two areas is an extension of a nation, and not a nation proper in the Marxist sense of the term, is very important. If the situation

were such that there were two fully-developed nations within the confines of Ulster, both of which were oppressed by Britain, then we'd have a "cut-and-dried" situation, and all the problems we'd have to deal with wouldn't be as "problematic" as those we have to deal with now. Instead, in both Ulster and Cyprus, we have two conflicting extensions of nations, two interpenetrating extensions of nations. In Ulster, the 40 percent of the Catholic Irish constitute the extension of the nation of Eire; and the 60 percent of the Protestant English-speaking Ulstermen constitute the extension of Britain.

Now, for the analogy of the case of the oppression of the Catholics in Ulster with the oppression of American black people. The assimilation of black people into the political economy of the United States verifies negatively the portion of Cobet's statement regarding "the question (my emphasis--AG) of 'self-determination for interpenetrated peoples'." Put another way, territoriality is important in deciding whether or not the right of self-determination applies, or, in other words, whether or not peoples constitute nations. It is clear that, in the U.S., black people do not constitute a nation, due largely to the fact of their assimilation into the political economy of the U.S. as one basic factor, generally their interspersion throughout U.S. society in their "own" ghettos whose economies, in turn, are fundamentally part of and owned lock, stock and barrel by the capitalist economy; as well as, naturally, other factors (their general sharing of the predominant culture of American society, their sharing of the same language as well).

In Ulster, on the other hand, we have the Ulster Catholic Irish, who are also not a nation in the precise Marxist sense, but are an extension of a nation, the nation of Eire, or more precisely, the extension of that "nation" which existed before the 1607-09 Ulster plantation (a plantation which utterly smashed the then-existing political economy and laid the basis for Ulster's political economic development on a much higher commercial and mercantile plane than the rest of the island on which it is located).

Now, I believe that such interpenetrated extensions of nations as exist in Ulster or Cyprus are analogous to the situation of black people, i.e., to the situation of an oppressed race-color caste, in America in the sense that, from different directions, we've got peoples whose problems can only be solved via the struggle for the transitional program linked with demands to deal with the, respectively, national and racial oppression each group faces. The oppressed Catholic minority in Ulster is, by virtue of being an extension of a nation existing, nonetheless, within the framework of a country whose majority is hostile to it, and more fundamentally, a country with one unified political economy and a common territoriality, nationally oppressed--somewhat like, for example, the Puerto Rican people in New York City. But the national oppression is not a "pure" national oppression, because the Catholic Irish in Ulster are not a nation, but rather an extension of a nation. This "half-national" oppression is due to the lack of a common territory within Ulster and the general lack of common culture and language among the two peoples, as well as to the interpenetration of the two

peoples which is what is responsible for the lack of clear, cross-Ulster territorial divisions inside the country. As there is a caste component to the racial oppression of black people in America, there is a strong national component to the oppression of Catholic Irish people in Ulster. Again, the Puerto Rican national minority in New York City comes to mind.

The reason I used the phrase "specially oppressed Catholic minority" for the Ulster Irish Catholics was that it seemed to me that the phrase "special oppression" has generally been used by Marxists, and correctly, too, as a kind of catch-all phrase to designate a whole series of different forms of oppression, and at the time I used that phrase, I had away back in my mind the idea that the Irish Catholics in Ulster might be nationally oppressed, but wasn't then prepared to argue it very strongly. Largely through inferences--my own and those of other comrades who've polemicized against my general overall position of opposition to both unification of Eire with Ulster, and my opposition to the right of self-determination for Ulster--I think my initially-held suspicion has been confirmed much more. Hence, the phrase "specially oppressed Catholic minority," while correct, was deliberately vague. I think oppressed national minority would be a possibility, but I still have doubts, because a "nation" or "extension of a nation" and a "national minority" are not the same thing in Marxist theory, and there are, as I've said, some aspects of nationhood to both Ulster Irish Catholics and Ulster Protestants. Here, I am more than prepared to entertain other possible characterizations from other comrades. (Oppressed extensions of nations??)

In my August 4 letter, and subsequently, in my second addendum of August 5 to that 4 August letter, I dealt with the question of whether or not Ulster's economy was incorporated into that of Britain, and in the addendum, indicated that my view of whether or not to keep the word "independent" before the rest of my slogan for Ulster, "socialist Ulster," was at best uncertain. However, with a reading of the WV Cyprus article, it seems to me that one of two things is possible: 1) either the slogan of Socialist Ulster is correct, and the current slogans we've adopted for Cyprus are also correct; or 2) the slogan of an independent socialist Ulster is correct, and then, we would have to call for an independent and socialist Cyprus as well. If the first is true, the slogan of "British troops out now" has to be an integral part of our slogans for Ulster, as it was for Cyprus in the form of "All outside troops out." I remain uncertain, as I was in my 5 August addendum to the 4 August letter on this matter, but if we wish to be consistent, it would seem to me that in this case, a case of two very similar situations, we should make the appropriate political changes, with appropriate political explanations of them to our readership.

I would keep the other slogans, "For the right of self-determination for Eire," and "a Workers Republic of Eire," and "a Socialist Federation of the British Isles." And as before, I would maintain my opposition to any slogan for the reunification of Eire and Ulster, and any slogan implying some classless right of self-determination for anybody in Ulster, or indeed, for Ulster itself.

Finally, there is one last thorny "little" issue which, again, I've deliberately avoided dealing with here, and that is: the imperialist partition of the 1920's. I do not really like recognizing the imperialist partition as the basis for seeing Ulster as "independent" and the phrase which comes to my head is: "Some independence, that!!!" Again, the Austro-Hungarian empire, as well as the other deliberate carving up of varied nations, or, contrariwise, the artificial, forcible and deliberate gluing together of different nations with resulting exacerbated hatreds among the now fraudulently-glued nations, are both methods used traditionally by the imperialist super-powers to divide and rule. And added to this, in the Ulster situation--which does not exist in Israel--is that Ulster is filled with British imperialism's troops to enforce an imperialist social peace there. This doesn't really seem, then, much of an "independence." The slogan of "All outside troops out; British troops out" seems again especially relevant here. (The other possibility is that which Lenin posed about the difference between what the revolutionary proletarian party of Great Russia might pose, and on the other hand, what the revolutionary proletarian party of Poland, one of the nations oppressed by Great Russia, might pose. The first might pose the right of self-determination for Poland, while the Polish communist vanguard might agitate against Poland's proletariat actually exercising this right which the Great Russian communist movement would be prepared, nonetheless, to grant them. The International Spartacist Tendency in Britain might pose it as the Great Russian Bolsheviks posed it, and the IST in Ulster might pose it as the Polish communists might have posed it.)

But to see the imperialist partition as the basis of independence when 1) the line constituting the territorial basis for "independence" was drawn of, by and for the imperialists in order to preserve their imperialist domination in the area, and 2) the area is crowded with British troops, still seems, I think, shy of the mark. However, my reaction against seeing the partition as the basis of independence is still largely that--a reaction. On this, I would like to argue at length with others who may have a view contrary to mine, because while pretty hard on it, I am not rock hard. I would like to see historical analogies--other than, as I indicated, Israel, which I do not consider a very good analogy.

Again, I wish to apologize for the lateness of this letter, but it was unavoidable as the IDB No. 23 only arrived last weekend, and I've been reading it all this week, and mulling over the Cobet article. Also, my intentions were, as with my last letter, to contribute to the discussion of one of the Marxist movement's most difficult questions. I do not in any sense consider this to be a complete, finished or definitive statement.

Comradely,

A. Garfield

cc: Buffalo local files; personal files

MINUTES OF FOURTH CONFERENCE OF THE SL/US:EXCERPTS ON THE NATIONAL QUESTION

30, 31 August 1974

Excerpt I: Session on the National Question, 30 August 1974

Session convened 8:20 p.m.

Chairman: SinclairRoll Call: Cantor

Present: Chicago: Cramer (full), Mark F. (full), Hank (first alternate, seated in place of Spector, full)
Bay Area: Collins (1-1/5), Lynn M. (full), Carl (first alternate, seated in place of Ann P., full)
Detroit: Diana C. (full), Douglas (full), McAllister (full), Victor G. (full), Barry J. (3/5)
Cleveland: Carl W. (full), Karen W. (3/5)
Buffalo: Bruce A. (full), Shepard (3/5)
Boston: Simons (full), Carling (4/5), Perry (first alternate, seated in place of Atkins, full)
New York: Brule (full), Morris (full), O'Brien (full), Burroughs (full), Lisa (full), Rossi (full), Allen (full), Margie S. (full), Reissner (full), Myles G. (full), Steve R. (4/5), Todd N. (second alternate, seated in place of Ed C., full)
SYL delegation: Keith A. (full), Bob L. (full), Irene G. (full), Rosalind B. (full), Billy B. (full)

Agenda: 1. Presentation
 2. Discussion
 3. Summary
 4. Voting

Motion (procedural): To have one five-minute round of discussion following the presentation.

1. National Question Presentation. Samuels (42 minutes). passed

Motion (procedural): To allow Comrades Holbrouk, Garfield and Cobet, who are non-delegates but have written documents on the national question, to speak.

passed

Motion (procedural): To grant a 3-minute extension of speaking time to Comrades Holbrouk, Carling and Burroughs.

passed

2. Discussion (5 minutes except as noted): Holbrouk (8 minutes), Carling (8 minutes), Burroughs (8 minutes), Garfield, Cobet, Perry,

Motion (procedural): To grant Perry a one minute extension. defeated

Discussion (continued): Clark, Sharpe, Shapiro, Schaefer, Seymour, Cramer, Norden, Arnie.

3. Summary Samuels (14 minutes).

The following motions were introduced during the presentation and the course of the discussion:

Motion (by Holbrouk, introduced by Seymour): That the documents on Ireland in IDB no. 24 be considered as contributions to an on-going discussion.

Motion (Seymour): This National Conference reasserts the statement in WV No. 7 that the existing state tie between Ulster and Britain is by definition oppressive of the Irish Catholic minority. While championing the democratic rights of the Irish Catholics, we do not support "democratic unionism." The struggle of the Irish Catholic nationalists against the British army, although associated with a program which if accomplished would violate the democratic rights of the Protestants, is nonetheless a struggle of an oppressed nationality against an imperialist power. Therefore, we give military support to the Irish Catholic nationalists against the British army.

Motion (Samuels): To accept Seymour's motion (above) as an amendment to Samuels' document, "Interpenetrated Peoples, Self-Determination and Permanent Revolution," IDB whole no. 24.

Motion (Samuels): To amend Samuels' document as follows: on p. 96, omit the final phrase of the document, "...meaning in the present context their right, if they want, to remain part, albeit a reduced part, of England." The final sentence will then read: "In any case we should be clear that we reject the forced unification of the Protestants into a capitalist Ireland, especially Eire."

Motion (Samuels): To amend Samuels' document as follows: on p. 94, first paragraph, delete the sentence which reads, "He is not a white settler in Rhodesia and the IRA are not the Mau Mau." Add the following two sentences in its place: "Historically, he [the Ulster Protestant] is an extension of the English (and Scottish!) nation into Ireland. Today his national character is ambiguous."

Motion (Clark): To amend Samuels' document as follows: on p. 95, second paragraph, change the sentence, "Towards an Arab-Hebrew Workers Republic as part of the socialist federation of the Near East" to read, "Towards an Arab-Hebrew Workers Republic in Palestine as part of the socialist federation of the Near East."

Motion (Brule): To amend Samuels' document as follows: delete the paragraph (entire) on p. 95 which reads:

"At the same time the theory of the Permanent Revolution and especially its application to the problem of mixed populations should not lead us to an ultra-leftist insensitivity to national oppression. The right to self-determination is an immediate burning question of the Palestinian refugees, robbed of their land, in a way in which it is not for the Hebrew workers and farmers who occupy their stolen lands. There is a series of urgent democratic questions which confront the Catholic oppressed national minority in Ulster. For example, in the Near East we must invert the racist and exclusionist slogans of Zionism. "Conquest of land," but for the Palestinians: Israel out of the occupied territories, no annexations. End military law in the occupied territories and the emergency regulations in Israel. For a Constituent Assembly elected by direct universal suffrage on both sides of the Jordan. For "the right of return" only for the Palestinians: repatriation with full democratic rights and/or full compensation to be paid to the fellahin (peasants) and not the effendis (landlords). "Conquest of labor" for the Palestinians, for a bi-national trade union organization with full internal democracy and independent from the Zionist state, no discrimination in hiring, for control of hiring by independent bi-national unions, sliding scale of wages and hours, abolish the Hagannah, for a bi-national workers militia. Towards an Arab-Hebrew Workers Republic as part of the socialist federation of the Near East."

Motion (Samuels): To accept the Samuels document.

Motion (Samuels): To accept the position on immigration put forth in WV No. 31.

Motion (Carling): To continue discussion on the national question.

4. Voting

Suggestion (Cantor): Holbrouk's motion should be voted first since it is counterposed to voting on any of the other motions at this session. If his motion fails, then the other motions can be voted.

Motion (procedural): To have one speaker for and one speaker against Holbrouk's motion.

passed

Speaker for: Sinclair (2 min.)
Speaker against: Seymour (2 min.)

(The Presiding Committee requested a brief interval in the conference proceedings in order to deliberate on the best procedure to follow. During this break, announcements were made.)

Report by Seymour on Presiding Committee recommendations.

Motion (Presiding Committee): To accept the procedure recommended by the Presiding Committee, that is, not to vote the motions presently on the floor, except for Comrade Seymour's motion and the motion on accepting the position on immigration in WV No. 31; to put up for a vote the last paragraph of Comrade Samuels' document, containing programmatic demands for Ulster.

passed unan.

Motion (Presiding Committee): To accept as the programmatic basis for our position on Ulster the last paragraph of Samuels' document, as follows:

"In Ulster we would continue to call for British troops out, an end to internment, disarm the Royal Ulster Constabulary, for a non-sectarian workers militia against orange and green terror, no discrimination in housing, for a sliding scale of wages and hours and no discrimination in hiring, for British Isles-wide trade-union federation, for union control of hiring, etc. We should demand an Irish Workers' Republic, as part of the Socialist Federation of the British Isles, i.e., we should drop the slogan of the right of self-determination for Ulster and for an independent secular Ulster, nor should we call for a united secular Ireland or a united socialist Ireland or a socialist Ulster, the latter being simply utopian. Only the demand for an Irish Workers Republic as part of the Socialist Federation of the British Isles presents the framework in which the problem of mixed populations can be resolved in Ulster. And without a Trotskyist section in Ulster able to intervene and shape events, we can really do no more than champion the democratic rights of the Catholics and present the framework in which a democratic resolution of the sectarian strike in Ulster can be resolved. In any case we should be clear that we reject the forced unification of the Protestants into a capitalist Ireland, especially Eire."

(VOTE: delegates: for: 29

opposed: 0

abst.: 8-4/5

not voting: 0

fraternal: for: 24
opposed: 0
abstaining: 0
not voting: 1)

passed

Motion (re-introduced by Presiding Committee): Seymour's
 motion (see above).

(VOTE: delegates: for: 36-4/5
opposed: 0
abstaining: 1
not voting: 0
fraternal: for: 27
opposed: 0
abstaining: 0
not voting: 0)

passed

Motion (re-introduced by Presiding Committee): To accept
 the position on immigration put forth in WV No. 31.
passed unan.

Motion (Presiding Committee): To continue discussion
 on the national question.
passed unan.

Singing of the Internationale

Session recessed 11: 58 p.m.

Excerpt II: Closed Session, Point 9, 31 August 1974

9. Report on National Question Discussion. [see Excerpt I] Robertson
(10 min.) Samuels (5 min.) disc: Kat

Motion (Presiding Committee): To adopt the thrust of the motion
(below) passed by the Third Plenum of the Third CC held over
16-17 March 1974:

"Motion (by Robertson): To authorize the drafting of a
Resolution to be submitted to the National
Conference in accordance with [the thrust of]
the report here on nationalism, the article
by Y. Rad in WV No. 35 and "The Leninist Policy
Toward Immigration/Emigration" in WV No. 36,
and the draft PB motion of PB No. 22 [see below]
noting the resultant emphasis shift in the
"Orange and Green" article on Ireland in WV
No. 7."

Draft PB motion of PB No. 22 (11 December 1973) reads as
follows:

"Draft Motion for Continuing Discussion (by Robertson):
The correct Trotskyist policy toward the 1948
Palestinian War was one of revolutionary defeat-
ism (and exercise of self-defense by specific
villages and settlements when under attack) because:
1) the democratic issue of self-determination for
each of two nationalities or peoples who geographi-
cally interpenetrate can only conceivably be re-
solved equitably within the framework of the
proletariat in power;
2) concretely in 1948--the Zionist-led Jews pos-
sessed the social/military organization to achieve
and expand their own nation state. The Palestine
Arabs were disorganized, ineffectual and betrayed
on all sides. With the exception of the battle for
Jerusalem, the Trans-Jordan (and British-inspired
and -backed) war aims were to compete with the
Jews for the partitioning of Palestinian Arabs'
lands. The role of other foreign Arab armies was
essentially to posture, seeking to deflect dis-
content within their own states."

Amendment to PC Motion (by Robertson): To add "noting that the re-
cent events in Cyprus constitute a virtually perfect
example and confirmation of the position."

(VOTE: delegates: for: 35-4/5
opposed: 0
abstaining: 1
not voting: 1

fraternal: for: 29
opposed: 0
abstaining: 0
not voting: 3)

passed

(VOTE on PC motion as amended:

delegates: for: 35-4/5
opposed: 0 0
abstaining: 1
not voting: 1

passed as amended

Motion: To rescind the motion by the Presiding Committee adopted last night, which was to adopt the last paragraph of Samuels' Samuels' document, "Interpenetrated Peoples, Self-Determination and Permanent Revolution" printed in IDB no. 24, August 1974, as our position, in favor of a fuller and more clarifying discussion, and to accept the present documents on the national question as part of the basis for continuing discussion.

(VOTE: delegates: for: 36-4/5

opposed: 0
abstaining: 0
not voting: 1

fraternal: for: 30
opposed: 0
abstaining: 0
not voting: 2

passed

by Joseph Seymour

The purpose of this document is to support the central contention of Comrade Samuel's document, "Interpenetrated Peoples..." concerning Ulster--that at the present time it is not possible to project a democratic solution to the national question in Ulster short of a Socialist Federation of the British Isles. We can only present a series of partial, generally negative, democratic and economic demands, but not a positive solution to the national question. Furthermore, the acceptance of even these partial demands by the Catholic and Protestant masses will depend less on social struggles within Ulster than on evident motion toward a socialist revolution throughout the British Isles.

Ulster Protestants: Nation or Nationality?

Historically the Ulster Protestants were a colonial settler population and therefore an extension of the English and Scottish nation into the natural geographic and traditional territory of the Irish people. During the past hundred years the dynamic relationship between British imperialism and Irish Catholic nationalism has presented the Ulster Protestants with the possibility of forced incorporation into a potentially oppressive Irish state. At times (e.g., 1910-16) the policy of the liberal British bourgeoisie has been to pressure, if not force, the Ulster Protestants into union with the South in order to consolidate a stable neo-colonial relation with the Irish Catholic bourgeoisie. This situation has given rise to a distinct political consciousness among Ulstermen. Despite the commitment to union with Britain, the possibility of being forced (either to prevent union with the South or the granting of democratic rights to the Catholic minority) to establish a separate state has been part of the political consciousness of Ulster Protestants for more than sixty years.

Since the rise of the Catholic democratic movement in the 1960's and with the declining strength of British imperialism, the possibility of British collaboration in the unification of Ulster with the South has dominated Protestant political consciousness. The question of whether the Ulster Protestants are a nation or a nationality is now being resolved by history.

Whether the Ulster Protestants are a nation or nationality turns out to have little effect on our program. Self-determination means not only the right of nations to a separate state, but also of nationalities in territories where they are a majority (e.g., Mexicans in the U.S. Southwest, Germans in the Italian Tyrol) to transfer that territory from one state to another, where this is practical. Our general position concerning interpenetrated peoples holds true whether these people are nations (e.g., Hebrews and Palestinian Arabs) or nationalities (e.g., Greek and Turkish Cypriotes).

The Forced Unification of Ireland

Positive support for the forced unification of Ireland can be justified either on the principle that an oppressor people have no

rights against the claims of an oppressed people or some concept of historic national territoriality. Both of these concepts are fundamentally anti-Leninist, being the principles of endless national blood feuds.

Those comrades who would condone the forced unification of Ireland maintain that this is an inevitable, or at least likely, result of the struggle of the Irish people against British imperialism. They present the following projection--a war between the South Irish military forces allied to the Ulster Catholics against the British army allied to Ulster Protestants. This is an impossible projection because it assumes that a colonial nation (Ireland) will behave in a way completely contradictory to colonial status.

The defining difference between colonial and imperialist nations arises from a qualitatively different socio-economic character, which necessarily extends to military relations. Colonial nations, by definition, cannot conquer or annex the territory of imperialist powers. The reason that Leninists give military support to colonial nations in wars against imperialist powers is precisely and centrally that in such wars the terms of oppression are not reversible. The colonial nation can have only a defensive program regardless of the subjective intentions of its rulers. A victory for Haile Selassie's Ethiopia or Chiang Kai-shek's China could not have led to the annexation of even part of Italy or Japan.

Successful irredentism by a colonial against an imperialist power is not possible. If Mexico were capable of reconquering Texas, it would not be a semi-colonial nation, but rather an advanced capitalist country. Impressionism to the contrary, the same holds true for South Ireland and Britain. For South Ireland to attempt the military conquest of Ulster against the British could only be an act of insane adventurism. Furthermore, the South Irish government has long been a firm upholder of their nation's neo-colonial status. The possibility of the Irish government being overthrown by the petty-bourgeois nationalists of the IRA in order to launch a war of reconquest of the North is highly remote.

There are two circumstances which would allow South Ireland the possibility of militarily conquering Ulster. One is if the British pulled out and acquiesced to the incorporation of Ulster into a unified Irish state. Under such circumstances we should be prepared to give military support to the Ulster Protestant forces if they face either expulsion from the island or forced incorporation into an Irish Catholic state.

The other possibility for the South Irish conquest of Ulster would be an alliance with an anti-British power during an imperialist war. In that circumstance, the colonial relationship between South Ireland and Britain would be superseded by the inter-Imperialist conflict and we would adopt a defeatist position on both sides following the same principle as in the Sino-Japanese War after 1941.

Some comrades may wonder why we presently militarily defend the Irish Catholic nationalists against the British army, since we oppose their program for the forced unification of Ireland. The reason is that the IRA, by itself, cannot drive the British out and

force Ulster into a Southern state. Whatever their subjective intentions, the present actions of the IRA (terrorist atrocities notwithstanding) reflect a defensive reaction to the national oppression of an imperialist power. In good part, the IRA's program is nationalist fantasizing. Insofar as it has a rational strategic purpose, it is designed to force the British out and induce military intervention from South Ireland. Should that strategy be realized, we should be prepared to give military support to the Protestants, whose struggle could then only be defensive.

Why Not an "Independent Democratic Ulster"?

The slogan for an "Independent Democratic Ulster" advanced in WV No. 7 was designed as a conceivable democratic solution to the question. It simultaneously recognized that the existing state tie between Ulster and Britain was, by definition, oppressive of the Catholics (a position contested by Benjamin in favor of "democratic unionism"), while upholding the right of the Protestants not to be part of an Irish Catholic dominated state.

The problem with the slogan is that it is idealistic in that it fails to take into account what material interest the Protestants have in independence from Britain. Ulster is a relatively poor region which gets disproportionate benefits from discrimination against the Catholics in jobs, housing, etc. There exists a fundamental conflict between the material interests of the Protestant majority and the democratic rights of the Catholic minority.

Conflicts between the material interests of a dominant population and the democratic rights of a minority are not uncommon. (Much of the black question in the U.S. has that character.) We seek to resolve such conflicts by linking democratic demands to a program of redistributing capitalist wealth, a process ultimately leading to workers power.

The problem of applying this programmatic method to Ulster is that the democratic rights of the Catholics require a break with the British state tie, while an Ulster workers state (even if militarily feasible) is economically unviable. The Protestants would have a higher standard of living in capitalist Britain than could be sustained in an isolated Ulster workers state. In any case, an Ulster workers state is militarily unthinkable. The Ulster Protestants can be won to supporting the democratic rights of the Irish Catholics (including the re-drawing of borders) against British imperialism only on a program for redistributing wealth on the base of the entire British Isles.

Why Not a "United Socialist Ireland"?

The slogan of a "United Socialist Ireland" is too angular in the context of a Socialist Federation of the British Isles, is incorrect outside that context and is misleading in present-day Irish/British politics.

Since we reject the notion that the national territory of the Irish people is the entire island of Ireland, a United Socialist Ireland in a Socialist Federation of the British Isles is only quantitatively preferable to any other possible state-territorial ar-

rangement. Comrade Samuels is absolutely correct to counterpose to a "United Socialist Ireland" the more algebraic formulation of an "Irish Workers Republic" which does not preclude the Ulster Protestants having their own state or being part of an English workers state.

The problem of calling for a United Socialist Ireland outside the context of a Socialist Federation of the British Isles is that one is dealing with two state powers. Barring simultaneous insurrections, a United Socialist Ireland would require the extension of an Ulster workers state south or of a South Ireland workers state north. The former is obviously impossible. While a South Ireland workers state would seek to induce the Ulster Protestants to drive out the British army and create a United Socialist Ireland, it would not force such a unification. It is possible that a South Ireland workers state in defending itself against Britain would be compelled to occupy Ulster against the will of the Protestants, but this is not our program.

Whatever the slogan of a United Socialist Ireland may mean to us, in Ireland and Britain it is associated with the IRA (it is now the Official's slogan) and serves as a left cover for Green nationalism. In Ireland and Britain today, the "United" is seen as separated in time from the "Socialist"--a kind of two-stage revolution. This interpretation is hardly surprising since the principal advocates of a United Socialist Ireland devote themselves to terrorist acts against the British army and Ulster Protestants and not to revolutionary activity against the Irish bourgeois state.

A Program for Ulster

We cannot now formulate a positive democratic solution to the national question in Ulster. We are limited to a series of partial, generally negative, democratic and economic demands. However, even such partial democratic demands (particularly "British Troops Out of Ulster" combined with "For a Non-Sectarian Workers Militia to Combat Orange and Green Terrorism") lead toward workers power in Ulster. Therefore, acceptance of the following program by the Catholic and Protestant masses will decisively depend upon evident motion toward a socialist revolution throughout the British Isles.

British Troops Out of Ulster

End Internment

Disarm the Royal Ulster Constabulary

For a Non-Sectarian Workers Militia to Combat Orange and Green Terror

Full Democratic Rights for the Catholic Minority; No Discrimination in Hiring and Housing

For a British Isles-Wide Trade-Union Federation

A Sliding Scale of Wages and Hours

An Irish Workers Republic Within a Social Federation of the British Isles

6 September 1974

by Jeff B.

9/7/74
Berk., Ca.

To: BASL Organizer

Dear Comrade:

Please accept this letter as my application for readmission to the Spartacist League USA.

Enclosed is a copy of my letter of resignation dated 10/28/72. The text of this letter and the circumstances of my departure raise serious questions regarding my political consciousness and my determination to act as I believe.

First, and above all, the political question. I did not believe then and I still do not think that there were any serious political differences contributing to my decision to resign. In the almost two years since I quit I have read Workers Vanguard regularly and thoroughly. I still find myself in agreement with the theory, program, and strategy of the SL(USA). In my occasional encounters with politically conscious people I have defended the party line and argued against opposing lines of thought and action. Two comrades can verify this from their own experience.

Certainly there have been times when I have wavered politically. The attempt to find some escapist, individualistic lifestyle independent of the forces of history and capitalism severely contradicted my perception of reality from the point of view of a revolutionary. But those few periods of political adaptation represented a search for new conditions of life. They were not a reflection ideologically of any qualitative changes in my social position. Consequently, they never became deeply imbedded in my consciousness nor did they ever displace the world view I had held as a member of the Spartacist League, a view inextricably bound up with all the experiences of my adult life.

I am not highly developed theoretically and my intellectual abilities have definitely suffered from two years of relative isolation and lack of work. However, I feel my understanding of the history, politics, and world view of the SL is still sufficient to enable me to participate as a comrade in the work of the organization.

Now, secondly, the question of my "determination to act." Undeniably the objective conditions of the recent period and the response of the SL and of the working class internationally have all influenced my decision to return. Among the positive changes in the SL and its work I note: 1. the continued correctness of the analysis and program, 2. the impressive extension of the party's influence internationally, 3. the consistent high quality of the press, 4. the deepening of the party's roots in the working class, 5. the significant growth nationally, 6. the valuable work and propaganda of the RCY.

At the same time I think that my commitment is not dependent on the good fortunes and opportunities of the recent period. I feel I would have returned even to that "reversible sub-propaganda group" of yesterday.

Those emotional problems that undermined my determination previously, problems typical of American males of petty-bourgeois background, have been substantially dissolved in two years of introspection and growth. In addition, the deep disappointment and pessimism I felt after our defeat in the Leninist Faction fight have left me as time has absorbed that experience into a much larger perspective. I am no longer the pessimist, dilettante, or skeptic of two years before.

I commit myself now to the struggle to build the International, to construct our national section, and lead the working class to the overthrow of capitalism and the creation of a world communist society.

The party will judge when I can participate as a comrade. In the meantime I will contribute a regular sustainer and will participate as fully as possible in the external work of the party.

Hopefully this letter has adequately answered the questions raised by my resignation. Of course, the only definitive answer will be my actions as a comrade.

for the revolution,
Jeff B.

Add.: I accept and will abide by the discipline of the Spartacist League.

9/10/74

[Comrade Jeff B.'s earlier resignation was printed in the Internal Discussion Bulletin, November 1972, Whole No. 20]

by Ed C. (NYC)

In the recent controversy over the Detroit referendum on enforcement of residency requirements for cops one is struck by the fact that the majority document (the current party position) does not contain any analysis as to the reasons for extending support to the referendum but rather limits itself to asserting its major theses, i.e., that a vote for enforcement would constitute a blow against the autonomy of the police and that the issue is a referendum on racism. The latter point seems evident although of dubious worth--in the U.S. many mayoralty contests are, in fact, referenda on racism. The question, of course, is whether it is a supportable race referendum. The axis of the argument revolves around the merits of the first point, the question of police autonomy.

The nearest thing to an argument that such support would constitute a blow against police autonomy seems to be the following: "This technical piece of information is important because it actually demonstrates concretely how defeat of residency is an actual organizational victory for the cops" (IDB No. 24, p. 37). The "technical piece of information" is evidently contained in the preceding point, i.e., "A residency requirement has been on the books for many years (I believe around 20). Last year, the DPOA took it to court (we don't yet know all the details but it appears that the DFT supported the DPOA's court case, whether or not they were actually part of it). The Michigan Supreme Court ruled that it couldn't be done through legislation, that it had to be a bargaining issue. And it will be a separate bargaining issue for each union, i.e., the DFT will bargain it separately from the cops. The DFT has postponed a struggle around the issue until next year--their negotiations begin in October for a contract that will be up in the summer of '75."

The logic of this argument seems as follows: the police will bargain over residency. If they get their way it will be a victory for their organization, i.e., an organizational victory. Now this is quite straightforward, even bordering on the tautological, but one wonders what this has to do with police autonomy. Is Comrade Adrian willing to argue that all "organizational victories" such as pay raises, vacation time, health benefits & co. increase police autonomy? Probably not. Yet there is not another word as to the connection between the residency referendum and the issue of autonomy. In fact, Comrade Adrian's letter begins with the observation that the residency issue is a "secondary one." Indeed it must be for, if not, Comrade Adrian would be reduced to arguing that the geographic location and, therefore, in this case the skin color of cops was related to their "Bonapartist appetites" and organizational "autonomy"--a profoundly unSpartacist-like position.

There are several reasons why, at first look, we would be prone to take a hands-off position on this issue: first, it has obvious "black cops are better than white cops" implications, an illusion we are wont to challenge; secondly, it has community control overtones although Comrade Adrian is right when she asserts that this is not the overt political thrust behind the referendum; and, finally, the residency issue will probably spill over to other sec-

tors of the public service workforce. Although Comrade Adrian is right that we will propagandistically be able to motivate our position on support on the basis that cops are not workers, she is wrong if she thinks that the relationship of forces is such that the SL's propaganda on this point will make any difference at the present time. The DFT supported the police case for the obvious reason that it realized that civil service requirements tend to be extended across the board. The SL will need powerful arguments for public workers who, I imagine, will be instructed by their unions to vote the referendum down.

Parenthetically the question of residency requirements for jobs has somewhat more weight for Marxists than Comrade Adrian attributes to it. In addition to erecting an area of state control over the trade unions such requirements would be totally unacceptable for the unorganized workers as well as it would bind them to geographic areas thus weakening their ability to resist and fight against their exploitation. Engels's "On the Housing Question" contains the best exposition on the totally reactionary effects of such limitations. Moreover, under capitalism, we would, in all situations I can think of, vote against such residency requirements as an infringement of democratic rights. For example, although we would perhaps support a curriculum specializing in inner-city medical problems we would never support forcing doctors to live in the inner-city even if the issue were a "race referendum." Likewise we would support the rights of black people to move wherever they desire; however, we would never limit the rights of white people to move out of such integrated settings. We might support a policy which would make it unprofitable for people to avoid integration (e.g., see Seymour's article on busing in YSP No. 25). However, to enforce residency per se could only set whites against blacks, the working class against the lumpenproletariat, ditto the petty bourgeoisie, etc. Adrian is right to maintain that these criteria do not necessarily apply to cops. The weight of these undesirable offshoots of enforced residency and support for the referendum is such as to demand that the strongest reasons for support should be necessary--such are not present in the majority document.

To date, it has been the SL position that a cop is a cop no matter where he lives or rather, more precisely, that any short-term benefits which might accrue to black people from having same-colored police are far outweighed by the pejorative and class-collaborationist aspects of effecting an alliance between black people and one section of the class enemy. Although Comrade Adrian claims to hold this position her arguments are replete with allusions (and illusions) to the fact that in this exceptional case black cops are to be preferred to their reactionary white counterparts; e.g., "...the activists in it [the DPOA] are white....The cop [i.e., black] section of the Guardian has demonstrated in support of Young" (Ibid. p. 36). Or "But I would contend that the [white] cops organized refusal to do so [i.e., live in Detroit] does have racial overtones" (Ibid., p. 37). Therefore, one should, evidently, draw the conclusion that non-racist cops live in Detroit or more that the ability of cops to function as the organizational manifestation of racism in bourgeois society will in this instance be affected by where they live!! "The cops [again evidently white] have no qualms about shoot-

ing blacks, but will fight like hell to avoid living in the same neighborhood with them" (Ibid., p. 37). The converse is not only that other, presumably black, cops do not mind living in the city but that they will not shoot black people!

Comrade Adrian continuously and curiously counterposes residency to our "principled" opposition to community control; a counterposition which is completely erroneous. We are opposed, in general, to community control for exactly the same reasons that Marxists would, in general, oppose residency requirements (see discussion on residency above), that is, it is a totally reactionary, utopian, anti-assimilationist "solution" which in reality perpetuates and exacerbates divisions within the class thus weakening its ability to fight exploitation and oppression. Comrade Adrian's arguments for support to residency (whatever they are) would be just as powerful in support of community control. There is no magic principle which separates the two outside of the fact that, in the past, we have developed a position of categorical opposition to community control schemes. If, in fact, community control limited the "Bonapartist appetites" of cops and if the geographic (and thus in these cases racial) divisions drawn between sectors of the working class were either of little consequence or had a supportable aspect (as in the case of the self-determination of nations), we would then support community control all things being equal. The difference between "community" and "residency" requirements seems, at best, a linguistic subtlety since materially they both apply to given geopolitical areas. Community control, in fact, would only, if effected, involve residency requirements plus a civilian review/control board.

The arguments to be made for support to residency requirements are as follows: 1. Residency, i.e., where a cop lives, somehow mitigates the bonapartist appetites and autonomy of police. This argument is at heart, as I believe I have shown, based on the assumption that a cop's personal racism is related to his strivings for "autonomy" or "bonapartism," i.e., on the assumption that a black cop is better than a white cop. 2. That any defeat for a police organization (residency merely being the particular issue at hand) affects its autonomy or bonapartism. Defeats and victories affect esprit de corps. Esprit de corps is not the cause of bonapartism and/or autonomy nor is lowered morale a remedy to such autonomy. Such logic leads to the tactics and stratagems developed in Lysistrata. 3. Young is engaged in a fight against racism and police autonomy. A vote for enforced residency will give Young the upper hand or additional strength and thus lead to the curtailment of racist police autonomy.

This last argument is the most interesting. Comrade Adrian's presentation suggests that Young has waged such a campaign and that a victory on the residency issue would strengthen his hand vis a vis the cops. It is quite possible that a given bourgeois politician in a given situation might oppose "police autonomy." It is likewise both possible and principled to bloc with such a politician in his "struggles" against police autonomy. What is impermissible is to give such politicians votes of confidence for their "progressiveness." It might be quite true that Kerensky would strug-

gle more intractably against Kornilov than Prince Lvov (or vice versa); however, we would militarily support both in such a struggle and refuse political support to either in spite of the fact that one is a more resolute and reliable fighter against reaction. This is because such votes of confidence (or political support) place the working class under bourgeois leadership thus leading to inevitable future defeats; a loss which far outweighs the fact that one sector of the bourgeoisie may be, in fact, more progressive than another sector (e.g., Young as opposed to his police).

In brief we cannot support the referendum on enforcement of residency because such residency has nothing to do with police autonomy or bonapartism and thus such a vote would be, in effect, a vote of confidence in Mayor Young's ability and/or desire to control the police. This is related to the reason why we cannot call on Allende to outlaw fascism. Such a call would represent support for Allende's ability to define political reaction and thus set up the working class for the repression which would ensue when he banished the left along with fascism (as did the Smith Act). However, we can bloc with Allende on specific policies, e.g., bloc with him in demanding the arrest of terrorist members of Patria Y Libertad. Likewise we may vote for the policies of a Mayor Young which would have the effect, however inadequately, of maintaining "civilian" control over the police. For example recently in Cleveland, a drive toward police autonomy took the form of police officers trying to get their positions put under civil service. This meant they would no longer be liable to removal by elected officials (i.e., the Mayor) as is now the case. We could, if the situation warranted it, vote against such civil service status for officers (in this case on the side of the reactionary and racist Ralph Perk) since an officer who cannot be fired is obviously more autonomous than one who can be. However, a cop who lives in Detroit is not less bonapartist or autonomous than one living outside of Detroit unless one makes the assumption that black cops are less bonapartist than white ones or, at least (and even more strangely), that white cops who live in Detroit are less bonapartist than white cops who live in the suburbs. Comrades should ask themselves if they would vote for this referendum if Young suddenly died and was supplanted by a less "liberal" mayor. If not the vote is, in fact, a vote for Young. On the other hand if Allende died we could still support the arrest and trial of members of Patria Y Libertad mentioned, hypothetically, above.

Finally, Comrade Adrian seems somewhat overly responsive to the milieu in openly racist, urban Detroit and tends to exaggerate and distort the realities of the situation. She seems to entertain assumptions about the outcome of a police victory which are parallel to illusions extant in black communities during such situations. An almost exactly similar situation transpired in Cleveland in the late sixties with these similarities and differences: 1. Cleveland was, at the time, even more racially polarized than Detroit. The issue surfaced immediately after the Hough riots and Carl Stoke's election to mayor with a minority of the votes cast (there were 3 candidates). The police force was in open revolt; 2. A referendum on residency rather than enforcement of residency was placed on the ballot. I believe all city workers were included which means, of

course, we could not have supported it. In the context, however, it was, as in Detroit, seen as part and parcel of the struggle between Carl Stokes and the police department which hotly opposed the issue. 3. The referendum passed, i.e., Carl Stokes won.

The outcomes were as follows: 1. As to autonomy of the police, the referendum had no effect whatsoever although police morale plummeted. In fact, the direct result was a step backward for the working class since a unionized Patrolman's Association was able to replace the Fraternal Order of Police because of the latter organization's demonstrated incompetency in fighting Carl Stokes; 2. Soon after this police, headed by a black commissioner (also a fruit of the Stokes victory), poured many hundreds of rounds of ammo into the headquarters of the Black Panther Party, wounding some, arresting all and ending the Panthers' brief organizational presence in Cleveland. Not a peep was heard from the black community. This, of course, is one of the possible "costs" of such a vote--i.e., a renewal of black confidence in the police department giving the department a somewhat freer hand vis-a-vis black militants; 3. The racial composition of the police force did not change one whit because of the referendum. On the other hand the city work force blackened considerably--a step backward in terms of the modest integration of black and white workers which had previously existed. This is not because Stokes did not "desire" to enforce the new law but because police have both the economic (with take, a minimum starting salary of \$20,000 per year) and social weight to "establish" (i.e., "convince" small businessmen, landlords, etc., to lie for them) double residency. City workers do not. Perhaps Comrade Adrian is suggesting that at that point we might wage a campaign for "real and equal" enforcement.

The working class and black people have nothing to gain from support for such a referendum. The SL has wasted a vote. The proliferation of black politicians in racially polarized urban milieus in combination with our growth will place us in situations where we may waste several others.

15 September 1974

[see "Exchange on Detroit Police Residency Issue", IDB #24]

ON SECTARIAN STRIKE: ORANGE CARD OR PROLETARIAN STRIKE? 29.
(The Question of Democracy In Ulster and Detroit)

by David Perry (Boston)

-Introduction-

Submitted below is the transcript of my argument made on the National Question agenda point at the recent conference, written out in final form then and given essentially as written (all new additions are in brackets). It would seem elementary that the mobilization of the Protestant proletariat (i.e., the spring general strike), even if simply and qualitatively reactionary, would demand the utmost attention on the part of Leninists examining the generally complex Ulster question. Instead, comrades have only a myriad of more or less partial impressions of an event that is anything but obvious.

As an example of a framework of championing the widest democracy among interpenetrated peoples, the analogy is made with interpenetrated races in Detroit (much closer than far-off Ulster while at the same time the white-black proletariat is similarly and viciously divided). In retrospect, I accept the criticism of several comrades that this controversial analogy was overly developed--noting that the "is Young partially attacking the cops" debate reflects the SL's real re-entry into black work; the black comrades speaking at the commission meeting were as impressive as the international comrades greeting the conference. Therefore the polemics on the cop question are attenuated while maintaining the example of interpenetrated races.

* * * * *

Within the strategy of Permanent Revolution, Samuels' contribution incisively documents our recent theoretical extension: that the political rights of national self-determination of intermingled peoples are in general in conflict and thus must be subordinated in the interests of advancing the widest bourgeois democracy. In particular the Ulster question is important, not [merely] because it has historically evolved as one of the more bastard mutants of decaying imperialism, but because episodically in Ulster this spring the mainly Protestant proletariat mobilized on a mass basis counterposed to the imperialists and the national bourgeoisie. While at the same time, simply put, the Protestants did not bayonet Catholic babies during the general strike [i.e., for a historical moment the mobilization of the majority of the working class, in defense of what they saw as a government attack on their democratic interests, tended to be counterposed to orange nationalism of the dominant people].

But there's a problem with Ulster, right. It's a distant grey event possibly giving the impression that orange fascists were the only ones who responded to our campaign for a British General Strike. It should be noted that it was a victorious general strike, achieving its central purpose of bringing down the Sunningdale agreement, i.e., an example of a [yet another] general strike not going beyond the bounds of trade unionism. Nevertheless, Samuels' document algebraically and correctly states that the task would be: "to present the framework in which a democratic resolution of the

sectarian strike in Ulster can be resolved." This can have only one meaning: to champion the widest democracy, which tends to divide Protestant proletarians from orange reactionaries and seek as allies the Catholic proletariat and oppressed, [who were momentarily] given a class alternative to the IRA's terrorist "defensive nationalism."

Well the ist is not there yet, but as comrade Foster pointed out, we go through many tests where we must apply in practice our strategy--for example, on the question of interpenetrated races in Detroit, very analogous as Samuels pointed out, on the housing question, i.e., where people are allowed to live in this society. We should want to champion the widest democracy in Detroit; after all our first general strike may occur there as anywhere (at least the alienation [in Detroit] could be compared to France prior to '68). We should be for the right of black city workers to reside outside the Detroit community (blacks don't like to live in Detroit any more than whites). We should "hold our nose" and be in favor of eliminating undemocratic segregationist housing restrictions for black pigs, just as we are in favor of the right of fascist scum to speak at public school board meetings [i.e., active opposition to bourgeois state institutions limiting democratic rights, since such precedents are invariably used against the working class and the left rather than any right-wing threat]. Also we are for the right of white city workers (and in this country white workers are key), in general terrified by their "Death Wish" nightmare of Detroit, to live where they want to. And Young will seek to extend housing restrictions to all city workers.... The democratic demand that comrades are searching for is End All Such Restrictions, joined with Jobs For All, Free Housing, etc.

Comrade Nelson advanced the correct criteria: look at the lineup of class forces. In Detroit [as in Ulster], as much as I can perceive, it is not: which side are you on, the blacks or the cops [nor simply the Catholics v. the militarized orange reactionaries]. But we want blacks and whites against the cops and uncle Toms like Young, and not the black workers and liberals cornered in their communities v. white workers allied with the Detroit "orange order" of cops. Instead of race war, Black And White Unite And Fight in this case means Racially United Workers Militias as the armed expression of Workers Control treating the police bureaucracy like Foster handled that thief [whimpering Norman]....

A Leninist is a champion of the widest possible democracy, equal treatment of all races.*[Only such a democratic framework creates the possibility of interpenetrated class action, isolating and dividing the purveyors of reactionary ideology whether racialist or nationalist, action that can achieve a proletarian democratic framework, the armed proletariat in power. To advocate the right of national self-determination recognizing a potential Ulster political separation from London, would in fact leave Protestants with only a narrow "symbolic democratic" demand which could only be negative, an abandonment of the vanguard struggle for equal bourgeois democratic rights for both Protestant and Catholic. Neither black/green nor white/orange but class v. class.

*Close of bracket not shown by author

LETTER OF RESIGNATION

31.

by Paul Abbot

20 December 1974
Baltimore, Maryland

Central Committee
Spartacist League U.S.A.
New York City

Dear Comrades,

Please accept this as my resignation from the Spartacist League U.S.A./International Spartacist Tendency.

When I, along with other members of the Leninist Faction of the Socialist Workers Party fused with the SL, I had certain differences and reservations about specific positions of the SL. These disagreements though could be quite easily contained within the parameters which define the SL, and were thus not of a principled nature. The fusion between the LF minority and the SL was precisely that--a fusion--and not the huddling together of small grouplets for warmth in a hostile world that so often is justified by the same word.

Much occurred to resolve certain of my disagreements through discussions in the organization as a whole, which resulted in changes in the organization's orientation and/or political line. Examples of such things are the increased orientation toward Black recruitment, attempts (especially on the part of the youth) to broaden the base at which propaganda and agitation are aimed, and the SL's change in position on the national question which cleared up what I then felt to be certain ambiguities in the previous positions over Ireland and the Near East.

While in the SL I developed additional disagreements with positions held by a majority of its members. The most serious of these is my conclusion, reached after much study, of the essential correctness of that position on the national question first developed by that wing of the Social Democracy of the Kingdoms of Poland and Lithuania led by Rosa Luxemburg and Leo Jogiches. This difference though justifies neither a resignation (and I do not use it as such) nor a faction fight in the Cannonite tradition. I reach this conclusion first from the recent change in the SL's position on the national question, and secondly from the continued existence of the Bolsheviks as a revolutionary organization despite their incorrect position as well as the non-factional though oft-times sharply worded disagreements over it by such leading Bolsheviks as Preobrazhensky, Pyatakov, Dzerzhinsky, Bukharin and even Stalin.

I list this specific disagreement because it is my most recent and most serious one. Consequently, other political differences (which any serious member of an organization must have) are of a more minor nature. Additionally, I must add that I have had numerous political discussions of disputed issues with leading members of the SL's Secretariat. The existence of such discussions demonstrates the absurdity of an internationally spread rumor that any mention of dif-

ferences results in the disappearance of the dissident followed by agonized screams from some Byzantine cellar.

* * *

Punitive measures taken by the SWP majority against dissidents, three sets of factional struggles and certain health difficulties led me to seriously question whether I could function as a revolutionary in late 1971. My questions were effectively resolved by the defection of the Cunningham-Benjamin-Treiger-Moore group(s) and the move towards Vanguard Newsletter by the Vukovitch-Stein wing of the Leninist Faction.

Any departure from active politics by myself or other pro-Robertson individuals would have lent support to Cunningham's prediction that the SL's transformation was impossible, aided Treiger's attacks on the earlier SL-Communist Working Collective fusion, and given additional credence to attacks on the pro-SL comrades in the Leninist Faction--attacks presented in Europe by Moore and Harry Turner's very grey "eminence" Henry Platsky. Thus I resolved to work to the best of my ability within the Spartacist League and its youth group.

The defections of the above mentioned individuals placed, one must admit, a strain on the organization. The positions they had occupied required training and developed skills. While the SL's continued forward movement demonstrated the invalidity of Cunningham's views, the organization naturally went through a period of readjustment. As part of this process, comrades in the youth organization who could have used additional training were thrust into major positions of responsibility in the party. Numerous others, myself included, were placed in positions in the youth organization though they lacked certain personal and political traits usually found in the leaders of past revolutionary youth organizations.

Thus, due to the absence (or more accurately the other assignments) of qualified comrades, I was elected to the National Bureau, as editor of the youth paper, and later as National Organizational Secretary.

Under the best possible conditions the tasks faced by youth leaderships are difficult. Under difficult conditions they may prove impossible. Faced not so much by hard political disagreements but differences over tone and functioning I was effectively though not formally a minority on the NB. Consequently, I had the responsibility for overseeing various functions but lacked the real executive authority for carrying them out. But the same of course held for the other members of the NB who were forced to check into editorial and organizational areas that would have been handled by one who held my positions in a collective leadership. The problems inherent in such a situation are most difficult to resolve. Hard political differences can be expressed in documents or resolutions and fought out to some definite conclusion. Differences over tactics are incapable of such resolution. Unfortunately also, such differences (especially in times of stress) exacerbate other frictions and lead to a more unhealthy situation for the organization as a whole and not

simply the immediate individuals concerned.

A second similar source of friction must also be mentioned, though one divorced from the NB. At the Third National Conference of the youth, Comrade Al Nelson correctly pointed out that we must learn to walk the narrow edge of principle. Naturally in learning to walk one falls from time to time. It is, I think, no secret in the SL that I was in the right wing, preferring, when falls took place, to fall into opportunism rather than into sectarianism. While such an orientation as a "right Spartacist" is contained within the boundaries of the SL as a whole, it served I feel to increase the difficulties mentioned above.

For these and related reasons I accepted the suggestion of several NB members to resign my positions in the center, and later took an extended leave of absence. I had hoped during that period to resolve many of the things that had contributed to the problems. After much thought though I have reached the conclusion that my continued membership would benefit neither the SL nor myself. I could of course formally maintain my membership on some minimal basis, selling Workers Vanguard on the street corners. But such an unthinking type of membership, while quite acceptable or even desired by the leaders of many groups, is not the type that either of us desire. Further, the implied automatic support for any position advocated by the leadership would be antithetical to the further development of a revolutionary organization.

While my reasons for resigning do not have the character of specific differences over hard political positions, as a political person I am driven to re-examine other groups on the extreme left to see if such groups have answered any of the difficulties I see. Such an examination reveals nothing that previous examinations did not show, and while I do not wish to write the "opponents section" of some national resolution here, I feel compelled to briefly list my opinions.

One need not look long at the various Maoist groups who, being unable to comprehend the problems of 40 years ago, have no chance to solve today's problems which are rooted in that past.

One can no longer consider the International Socialists in this country to be part of the extreme left. Recent acts by the Revolutionary Socialist League show that organization to be politically dishonest and quite hostile to the concept of workers' democracy. It has more the character of a clique than a developing political organization.

The Vukovitch-Stein wing of the Class Struggle League have shown themselves to be capable of fast and far-reaching political movement and one may hope that they will correct many of their positions in the future. However, their essential bad faith exhibited in the fusion "discussions" with the SL coupled with their fatal weakness to compromise principles places an impenetrable [barrier] between themselves and the revolutionary road. While their basic subjective commitment thus far keeps them moving on a very roughly revolutionary

path, it is a path that can only parallel the revolutionary one.

Everything moves much faster during "the crisis." Consequently, it has taken the Bulletin supporters but 10 years to reach their 20th Party Congress. And, while I do not state that organizations are incapable of positive qualitative advances, Workers League members should recall that the Soviet attack on Hungary followed the "attack" on Stalin.

The National Caucus of Labor Committees represents a unique phenomenon. Its leader, Lyn Marcus, is by far the widest-read and most intelligent confidence man in the U.S. left. Marcus, having reached the conclusion that world capitalism has collapsed now endeavors to build a revolutionary party through a gigantic Ponzi scheme. His methodology can be characterized as the fallacy of construction carried out with a vengeance based on the belief that, e.g., it is easier to get people to fight CIA agents than the "labor lieutenants of capital." Alas there are limits to even his ability as the John Birch Society's American Opinion generally does a better job proving that all are communists than the Campaigner in proving that all are CIA. Hegelian speculation has given way to speculation à la Erich von Däniken with the consequence that NCLC politics are bounded by "Twilight of the Gods" on one side and "Fascism of the Gods" on the other.

The Pabloists such as Workers World/Youth Against War and Fascism and the followers of Mandel and Maitan at least chase real social forces. Mandel has alternated between the Social Democrats and the Stalinists; Maitan between the peasants and Nasser. Recently both have joined WW/YAWF head Sam Marcey in praise of the basic revolutionary character of Chairman Mao and Uncle Ho, who, having first helped kill the working class, were nice enough not to commit suicide when further sacrifices were demanded.

YAWF, the more astute of the groups, has essentially [understood] the fact inherent in such a view that Trotskyism as an independent force no longer has any place and thus rarely styles itself as Trotskyist anymore. (For that matter there is no longer a need for Marx or Lenin--Sun Tzu and Karl von Clausewitz serve as well when proletarian revolution becomes subsumed under the rubric of "military science.") In essence, the day-to-day policies of these groups consists of enthusiasm over two or three past struggles and the preparation of funeral ovals after present ones.

Indeed, if one looks outside the SL for a group which has remained rooted within its principles, abjured shortcuts and sees the working class as the only group capable of a revolutionary restructuring of society one finds only the miniscule ultra-left Revolutionary Workers Group, but that of course is no place for a "right Spartacist."

* * *

Thus I do not leave the SL for another group. In leaving I must admit that I made many errors, but mea culpa and not mea maxima culpa. There were times when I was wrong, but there were times when

others were wrong, times when I went outside Bolshevik functioning but very real times when other comrades consciously departed from it. When leaving an organization there is great temptation to "take others down." As all cadre well know, any member who has been in the leadership of an organization can, through quoting documents, minutes, statements, etc., often make a better case against an organization than that organization's opponents. A faction fight waged for the purpose of doing a "wrecking job" complete with polemics written for external consumption is not difficult to wage. Such is neither my purpose or desire (or the "fight" would already have taken place with the documents written.) Such activity, to be revolutionary, must be "for" as well as against. Since, as I stated above, there is no group besides the SL with politics worth fighting for and no major errors contained within the SL over which a valid fight could be waged, any attempt on my part to produce such polemics could stem only from personal vindictiveness. In leaving, one does not have to "shit on the floor"--one merely leaves.

My immediate perspective is to continue my study of the national question and the differences over it as they have developed within the Marxist movement. It is my hope that this work will culminate in an anthology of works on the question by Luxemburg, the Radek-faction of SDKPiL and the Left Bolsheviks, as well as a second document on other aspects of the question.

While no longer a member of the SL there are areas too numerous to list for continued collaboration and I look forward to rejoining with the great majority of the members of the SLUSA and the International Spartacist Tendency in the coming world struggles.

Comradely,

Paul Abbot

[resignation submitted, 27 January 1975]

by Gerry Clark

January 21, 1975
Oakland, Calif.

Dear Comrade,

Last night for the second time I saw the movie "W.R. Mysteries of the Organism" and it reminded me of the problem facing every communist organization concerning the relationship between "personal" and political questions. The theme of the movie was the apparent contradiction between communism and personal freedom, in this case, sexual freedom. The film-makers were trying to show that when political ideas come into conflict with personal freedom, the former must give way to the latter.

In a different way, this same contradiction is facing you: do I subordinate my personal life, habits, and desires to a political career as a professional revolutionary which entails great sacrifices? Your answer will depend on many factors, the most important being your political consciousness which is what I want to deal with.

You have indicated and shown in practice, if inconsistently, that you agree with the SL program and want to carry it out in your arena. But you refuse to join because you claim you are "tired" and working under a great deal of pressure from both your job and the party, and you feel you cannot keep up with the pace of activities. All of these "excuses" are quite normal and understandable. All of us at one point or another feel the same kind of pressures. In my arena, for example, I am forced to work long hours under a different kind of pressure which drains me physically and affects my mental functioning. Being physically tired does inhibit one's ability to see questions clearly and respond to them quickly in a Marxist fashion. There is no doubt on this score.

But is this a justifiable excuse for rejecting the Marxist party? Barring some real physical disability, every revolutionary worth his or her salt must actively build the vanguard party in a spirit of self-sacrifice. Your desire to accept a second-rate status vis-a-vis the party, i.e., remain a sympathizer, will not lessen the contradictions you feel in your arena but increase them! As a sympathizer you will not have the advantage of putting your work in the context of an overall general political perspective; you will lose your "Weltanschauung." The result will be more confusion leading to greater and greater mistakes. The mistake I made and you are now making is not understanding the two-way relationship between party and class: without "roots" in the class, without you, the party cannot provide leadership to the entire class and possess the insight necessary to make correct decisions. And unless the party's "soldiers" act in a disciplined, revolutionary way, it will not be able to attract the masses to its banners.

Lenin put it well in his pamphlet Left-Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder when he asked the rhetorical question: "How

is the discipline of the revolutionary party of the proletariat maintained? How is it tested? How is it reinforced? First, by the class consciousness of the proletarian vanguard and by its devotion to the revolution, by its perseverance, self-sacrifice and heroism...." (my emphasis). For Lenin these were not idealistic words designed to glorify the vanguard but important lessons to be taught serious revolutionaries arriving at an understanding of the necessity for building such a disciplined party. Trotsky was one of these people, by the way.

Your reliance on my statement in my letter, "On Membership in the Spartacist League," that, "I, unlike you [the SL], see no contradiction in being an active sympathizer of the SL and doing revolutionary work in the unions," cannot be justified from a Leninist point of view. The truth is that sympathizers of the SL cannot carry out consistent revolutionary work in the unions without contradicting the purpose of the vanguard party, which is to create a membership organization, acting in a disciplined fashion, with a leadership, program, and experience capable of leading the workers to the conquest of power. The tendency, like it or not, of every sympathizer who draws away from membership in the party is to adapt to the milieu in which he or she works or lives; since this is true even for party members (remember the Cochranites?), why isn't it even more true for sympathizers? Without having at one's disposal the entire experience and knowledge of an international organization--which must be a constant factor in our work--the danger of degeneration becomes a very real question. Remember Robertson's remarks on this score regarding the SL's national isolation.

You must understand the conditions under which I made that statement. After having spent almost my entire political life in the degenerated SWP and then unceremoniously booted out for my political views, I was in no position to evaluate the SL's work and history objectively. It was during my initial contacting sessions with the SL that I got involved in union work which provided us both with a concrete example to test my conceptions against the SL's. It was at the height of this struggle that I wrote my "application" for membership, not yet having been convinced of the correctness of the SL's approach to trade-union work. Under such conditions of uncertainty, of vacillation, of bending to the pressures of the arena, I could not have realized what the correct Marxist approach to the problem was; my reflex was naturally defensive. "Don't pressure me with your politics now; wait until I make up my mind. In the meantime, give me the benefit of your experience and knowledge and tell me what to do." What a contradiction! If I was willing to accept the correctness of the SL's advice in good faith, how could I continue to defend my own positions? And if I couldn't defend my own positions, what was stopping me from joining? The answer was my own stubbornness and prejudices. Once I was able to separate my subjective feelings from an objective appraisal of the SL's politics and history, my joining was just a matter of time.

The task of the class-conscious vanguard is to resolve the crisis of leadership of the proletariat by leading the socialist revolution throughout the world. We--you and I--are that human

material the party must depend upon to carry out that task. No one else can do it! We are the soldiers of the revolution, living on rations and carrying a heavy load on our backs. Without us--the worker-Bolsheviks--there will be no revolution. That's why we need you, comrade.

Comradely yours,

Gerry

cc: file [4]

WHAT IS THE HISTADRUT?

by L. Schaefer

⌈ Note: This document is meant to be a first discussion draft, not a complete analysis/program. In particular, the "Program" section is only an outline, and more work needs to be done relating to the character of the labor parties, which is only briefly discussed in the "Summary." I have numbered my references and, in the text, have cited this number plus the page number. Bibliography is attached. ⌋

The Histadrut is a two-class (workers and petty bourgeoisie) political/economic/social organization not organically tied to the Israeli state but which plays a very powerful role in Israeli society in all the three spheres mentioned. This document will demonstrate that the petty-bourgeois component is dominant. The Histadrut is not a trade union, nor for that matter a "workers' formation," but it has a non-autonomous trade union section that is in all ways, with the exception of the workers committees, fully subordinated to the overall bureaucratic Histadrut structure.

Membership in the Histadrut is co-extensive with membership in Hevrat Ovdim, the General Cooperative Association in Israel, which is subordinated to the Histadrut Executive. Hevrat Ovdim is the holding company for Histadrut-owned industrial and agricultural cooperatives and the many Histadrut businesses that are partnerships (on a 50-50 basis) with private capital, and plays an influential role in the independent cooperatives whose members belong to the Histadrut. The work of Hevrat Ovdim can be said to be the main work of the Histadrut, as weighed against other Histadrut activities. In 1971, the Histadrut sector, or the "labor economy," accounted for 20 percent of Israel's gross national product. Thus, while trade unions often carry on their own economic activities, owning one or more "producers' cooperatives," the Histadrut might be described as a producers' cooperative that "owns" a trade union, and which has kept its overall membership and structure lashed together by means of extensive social/economic/educational "mutual aid" programs. These programs include, first and foremost, Kupat Holim, the medical service, but also various other social-welfare and educational programs.

The majority of Histadrut membership is composed of wage earners and their families--this group includes industrial workers, civil servants, professionals, foremen, high-level managers and the non-working wives of these wage earners. If wives are excluded, wage earners represent a minority of the Histadrut membership. The rest of the Histadrut membership includes the self-employed, small businessmen not employing more than one salaried worker and members of independent cooperatives. While the industrial working class is neither numerically nor structurally dominant in the Histadrut, the social threat the working class can pose through withholding its labor power gives it power as a pressure group within the Histadrut and repeatedly places the Histadrut bureaucracy in the position of middleman between the state and the workers--in a way not unlike the traditional reformist trade-union bureaucracies.

While Cde. Brule's position [J. Brule, "The Histadrut," Spartacist League Internal Discussion Bulletin Whole No. 24, August 1974] (that the Histadrut's class character is proletarian and that, further, the Histadrut is a trade union) is not correct, several points in his document are correct, most importantly, that the Israeli class struggle will pass through the Histadrut. The key in developing a program for the working class is to call for the dismantling of the Histadrut into its component class parts; this does not preclude, but requires, work within the Histadrut and a struggle for leadership.

1. Definitions

The only source that characterizes the present-day Histadrut as a "trade union" is Cde. Brule. Studies done by Zionists, non-Zionists, bourgeois scholars and left groups give definitions of the Histadrut that range from "a state within a state" to "not a trade union" to "more than a trade union." It is useful to cite a few of these.

"The Histadrut is often regarded abroad as a trade union, but it is doubtful whether one can call it such. It engages in trade union activities, but it is doubtful whether they form its most important aspect. The Histadrut is actually a combination of a union movement, co-operative movement, comprehensive health service, friendly society, social insurance, land pioneering in rural settlements of various kinds, industrial development, workers' educational movement, a machinery of labor exchanges established in co-operation with other workers' organizations, and so on. Such a combination is unknown in any other country."

--22, p. 27

"The Histadrut is more than a trade union organization....It ...conducts extensive economic, mutual aid, and cultural, as well as trade union activities....As set out in its constitution, the Histadrut has four main fields of activity: trade unionism, economic and cooperative activities, mutual aid, and education."

--13, pp. 535-36

"The Histadrut engages in four main fields of activity, in all of which its membership is approximately the same, and in all of which it has created appropriate institutions responsible to the elected organs of the federation in its general aspect. The Histadrut is at the same time, 1) a trade union organization...; 2) an association for mutual aid, represented in the main by the Workers' Sick Fund (Kupat Holim; 3) a social, cultural, and educational organization...; 4) a general cooperative association, represented by Hevrat Ovdim."

--16, p. 12

2. History

Prior to 1948, however, the Histadrut can be defined, together with the Jewish Agency, as the forerunner of the Jewish

state or the state in embryo. With the actual foundation of the state, the Histadrut was divested of key functions and consequently its character was transformed.

The Histadrut was founded in 1920. Several trade unions of a primarily Jewish character had already been established in Palestine: two regional associations of agricultural workers in Galilee and Judea in 1911, a clerical workers union in 1913 and a railroad workers union in 1919. It is noteworthy that the Histadrut did not represent an organic development resulting from the formation of these trade unions and their expansion. Rather, it was set up at the outset as a political organization by the Labor Zionists of the Second Aliya, notably Ben Gurion, who became its first secretary general and was to lead it for many years. The early unions were later incorporated into the Histadrut, rather than the Histadrut representing their growth and coming together (this can be contrasted to the history of the CIO in the U.S.).

Ben Gurion conceived of the Histadrut as an agency for accelerated Jewish immigration to Palestine to create a Jewish nucleus that would serve as the foundation for the establishment of a Jewish state. The early Ben Gurion might be characterized as a right-Borochovist, that is, he held that fundamental to the creation of a Jewish state was the creation of a Jewish working class and a "labor economy" or "worker-owned" (i.e., Histadrut-owned) businesses, but he was a pragmatic class "collaborationist" at the outset, who made consistent efforts to attract capital investment in Palestine. The Histadrut's aim was to organize all Jewish workers and establish the basis for an independent economy and state.

At the founding conference of the Histadrut, there was a debate over its character. The MPS (Mifleget ha-Poalim ha-Sotzialistim, Socialist Workers Party, forerunner of the Palestinian Communist Party and at this time solidly pro-Bolshevik) called for a separation of the functions of the Histadrut, namely, for the independence of the trade unions and for class struggle against capitalism, including Jewish capitalism (2, p. 97; also, early protocols of the Histadrut, in Hebrew). I have not found extensive material on the MPS's position, but the general lines of its opposition to the proposed Histadrut structure is clear, and our position today should be essentially along the same lines (see "Program," below).

This debate continued up to the foundation of the state, with the left-Zionist parties, notably, Hashomer Hatzair (forerunner of Mapam; today the youth group of Mapam), calling for the dismantling of the Histadrut into its component class parts, albeit from a social-democratic point of view. In addition, since 1948, elements in the Histadrut bureaucracy have from time to time called for greater "democratization" and "decentralization" of the Histadrut, including proposals for a more or less limited autonomy for the trade union section.

The Ben Gurion policy--to build the Histadrut as the embryo of Zionist Palestine--won out. By the 1930s the policy was clearly delineated:

"Histadrut is not a class organization. It mainly consists

of Jewish settlers, with no regard to classes who have become farmers, artisans and wage earners, because they believed that Jewish Palestine can be built only by work. The basic motive of the class struggle is purely Zionist."

--12, pp. 18-19 (emphasis in original)

And in Ben Gurion's words:

"In all other countries, industry, the State, and the workers are already present, and the task of the organization [i.e., the trade union] is merely to adjust the working conditions, the laws, and the economic order to the needs and wants of the workers. In Palestine, ...the movement has to create everything anew: not only to organize the worker, but to create, train and bring him into the country; not only to improve the conditions of employment and the country's capacity for absorbing new settlers; not only to introduce order in the existing economic enterprises, but to develop new ones both in agriculture and in industry; not only to associate the worker with the existant cultural and spiritual possessions, but to create a new literature, science, and art; not only to win political and social rights, but to lay the foundations of a new State and to mold a society still in the process of becoming."

--12, p. 5 (my emphasis)

In 1925, Hevrat Ovdim, the Histadrut holding company for Histadrut enterprises, was established and set itself to building the agricultural sector especially, but also founded building and industrial cooperatives. Early on, it entered into partnerships with private capital in its economic enterprises. Kupat Holim and an extensive school system were also founded in the early years of the Histadrut's existence and were continually developed and broadened.

Some of the Histadrut's functions as an agency for immigration were later taken over by the Jewish Agency (founded in 1929) but this remained part of the Histadrut's functions till 1948. In addition, and most importantly, the Haganah was essentially the creature of the Histadrut and the Jewish Agency together, and was directed by and subordinate to these bodies. The policies of "conquest of land" and "conquest of labor" (i.e., driving the Arabs off their lands and out of their jobs) were conceived by Ben Gurion and spearheaded by the Histadrut. Also, in partnership with the Jewish Agency, the Histadrut in the late 1930s developed a public works program through jointly-owned "public" companies.

What happened in 1947-48 and the first years of statehood is key to understanding the Histadrut. In the interim period between the UN's partition resolution of 29 November 1947 and Israel's Declaration of Independence on 14 May 1948, the Jewish Agency set up a National Council of 37 and a National Administration of 13 which, on the Declaration of Independence, became the State of Israel's provisional legislature and government. It is noteworthy that the Jewish Agency and not the Histadrut acted as the "shadow government" in this period. The Jewish Agency had become the primary agency for immigration and also the main funnel for funds from international

Zionism and thus was more central in setting up the state than the Histadrut. With the creation of the state, the Jewish Agency turned over many of its political functions to the government, retaining--to this day--a position (formally autonomous) as the primary agency for immigration. Thus the Jewish Agency can be characterized today as a state, or semistate, institution.

Of primary importance, the Haganah (including its army and police functions) was taken out of the hands of the Histadrut and Jewish Agency and placed under the control of the government. In addition, most of the Histadrut's school system and labor exchanges were taken over by the state. (In 1953, the remainder of the Histadrut-run school system was placed in state hands, while the Histadrut continued to run supplementary educational programs, which it does to this day.)

Another debate on the character of the Histadrut took place in 1948, some favoring the transformation of the Histadrut into a purely trade union body, dealing only with wages and working conditions, others (the majority) holding the position that the Histadrut should continue to combine trade union activities with social services programs, the "building of a labor economy" and "cultural activity." Ben Gurion expressed the majority position:

"During the period of the British Mandate, the Histadrut fulfilled governmental functions in the consciousness of an historic function and in the absence of Jewish governmental organs. On the founding of the state, the continuation of these functions is a superfluous burden on the Histadrut and a serious injury to the state....The Histadrut is not a rival or competitor of the state, but its faithful helper and devoted support. The labor movement, therefore, has a dual additional aim after the rise of the state: (a) to mold the character of the state and make it fit to carry out to the full the mission of national and social redemption, and to strengthen and organize the workers for this purpose; and (b) to initiate pioneering activities in the educational, economic, and social spheres which cannot be carried out by compulsion, law, and the governmental machine."

--13, p. 860

As is pointed out in a number of sources (e.g., 1, 19) the same political coalition (the labor parties) and many of the same people who dominated the "shadow government" and post-independence government also dominated the Histadrut, as continues to be the case today. Thus political continuity was assured from the pre-state period (when the Histadrut was the state in embryo) through the first years of statehood. While the labor Alignment maintains its position of power in both the Histadrut and the government today, its position in the latter has become less certain with the growth of the private sector which in its majority supports the Likud (there has been a steady growth of the private sector relative to the "labor economy" since independence; in 1955, for example, the Histadrut sector accounted for 35 percent of the GNP in contrast to 25 percent in 1966 and 20 percent in 1971). Thus it is entirely possible and, at this point, even a likely historical projection, that the Likud could come

to power in the government while the Alignment would maintain control of the Histadrut. The governmental power is not automatically the power in Histadrut, which is not a state body. Of course the Likud in power would no doubt take steps to dismantle the Histadrut and possibly to break up the workers' organizations as represented in the trade union section, but it would not automatically assume power in the Histadrut. Cde. Brule's projection of a general strike to defend the Histadrut against the Likud in power is an historical possibility.

3. Structure and Related Facts

In 1971 the Histadrut membership represented 57 percent of the adult population and 90 percent of the workforce (wage earners of all categories) (9, pp. 129-30). Membership in the Histadrut is on a direct, individual basis (there is not collective or group membership), including industrial workers who join the Histadrut directly rather than joining a trade union under the Histadrut's direction. In addition, in every plant there are almost always workers who do not join the Histadrut. The workers' committees are approved Histadrut bodies, but have a dual organizational character: election to the workers' committees is through plant-wide elections which include both Histadrut and non-Histadrut members. Any wage earner in the plant, from manual worker to high-level manager is eligible to be elected (e.g., in the publishing company plus printing factory where I work, my supervisor--the chief editor in the department, is a member of the workers committee). In general, in industry, only workers and not management or foremen are elected to the committee.

The Histadrut Executive is elected on a proportional political basis (party slates) by a national convention delegated by the membership as a whole, not on a sectional, e.g., trade union or other, basis. Everything from Mapam to the Likud runs slates in these elections. (The elections to the workers committees are not formally political elections, although often a de facto party slate will run.) This Executive appoints the national trade union director as well as local labor councils and individual national union officials. All trade union activities (including collective bargaining and approval of strikes) and union finances are controlled by the Executive. The officials of Hevrat Ovdim are also appointed by the Executive.

While the Histadrut does sometimes approve strikes, it would appear that this is much less the case than with traditional reformist unions elsewhere. Statistics on this are hard to interpret as they invariably refer to all labor "actions" approved by the Histadrut, which include everything from purchasing boycotts, slowdowns, work stoppages, partial strikes to full strikes (the right to strike is recognized in the Histadrut constitution). According to one source (13, p. 866), in 1969, 40 percent of labor actions were Histadrut-approved and in 1970, 44 percent. Considering that this undoubtedly includes a small percentage of genuine strikes, the figures are quite low as compared to, say, American trade unions. In 1968, the percentage of strikers participating in unauthorized strikes, as compared with authorized strikers, was 69 percent (loc. cit.). The same source states that in the period 1967-71, "the majority of the labor

disputes, claims and stoppages--many of which took the form of slowdowns, working to rule or similar measures--were not officially recognized." On the other hand, occasionally a local Histadrut labor council has been more militant than the corresponding workers committee; this was the case in the recent militant strike of Ashkelon port workers, where the workers seized ships and fought police boats on the seas. The bourgeois press was severely critical of the Histadrut for its behavior in this strike.

The Histadrut was a member of the World Federation of Trade Unions (which included Communist trade unions) until the latter split in 1949, and Histadrut joined the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (which includes the AFL-CIO and social-democratic trade unions), to which it still belongs (19, p. 19).

In 1956 and in the late 1960s, there were debates in the Histadrut wherein a minority faction advocated that the Histadrut turn over certain of its functions to the state, namely the medical service, the labor exchanges and public transport. In an article entitled, "Relationship of Histadrut and State" (11, pp. 20-22), Y. Shaari, Member of the Histadrut Executive, stated that as long as Histadrut continued such functions it would remain a semistate body and that it was not possible for two bodies (the Histadrut and the state) to exercise state functions in so small a country. The Histadrut's extensive social services systems do not qualify it to be called a state or semistate institution but they are one indication of the unusual character of the Histadrut and that it is not a trade union. (The 1956 debate included some characterizations of the Histadrut as the "socialist state en route" and a "kind of workers state" which "almost autonomously supplies all the needs of the working community"!).

The workers committees are a different thing than the "action committees" (which Matzpen-Marxist supports as the nuclei of independent trade unions). The "action committees" have been spontaneous, non-elected bodies, which arose to lead wildcat strikes, notably in the 1971 strike wave. In these cases, they operated outside of the elected workers committees. The latter are the only ongoing shop-floor bodies directly representing the workers.

As boss, the Histadrut employs fully 20 percent of the Israeli workforce, making it the largest single employer in Israel, a statistic which also places it in a qualitatively different position than large trade unions elsewhere who employ numerous workers.

It should be clear from this brief sketch of the Histadrut's structure that there is not an independent trade union movement in Israel.

4. Hevrat Ovdim

As has been stated, Hevrat Ovdim is the holding company for Histadrut enterprises; all members of the Histadrut are automatically members of Hevrat Ovdim and thus, formally, part of the co-ownership of the Histadrut businesses. The Hevrat Ovdim executive is appointed by the Histadrut general Executive; the former then has

the power to appoint managers of various enterprises (in contrast to the trade union section which enjoys no such autonomous delegative powers) and to decide upon general matters in the running of all Histadrut businesses. Thus, the membership of the Histadrut, the "owners" of Hevrat Ovdim, have no policy-making powers whatever.

A good number of the Histadrut enterprises (probably around half, though I have not found precise statistics) are partnerships on a 50-50 basis with private capital and a substantial, though lesser, number are 50-50 partnerships with government-owned businesses. Private capitalists of course invest on the basis of a return of profits. All profits from purely Histadrut businesses and Histadrut-owned shares of businesses are reinvested in Histadrut enterprises. The Hevrat Ovdim constitution states that "no part of the profits of Hevrat Ovdim may be distributed among its members" (21, p. 4). In recent years, profit-sharing plans have been advanced but to date, in the face of the majority of the Histadrut leadership's opposition, have not been put into effect. In addition, and as would be expected, "left" elements in the Histadrut have campaigned for workers-participation-in-management schemes, a number of which have been put into force in individual industries.

The Hevrat Ovdim is financed through the Workers Bank, set up in the early years of the Hevrat Ovdim's existence. The greater part of the assets of the Workers Bank depends upon the activities of Hevrat Ovdim's subsidiary in the U.S., the Ampal Corp., which acts to funnel private American capital into Histadrut enterprises, including and especially partnerships, and into other Israeli enterprises as well. The role of Hevrat Ovdim as a direct builder of Israeli capitalism was expressed by one source as follows:

"The experience of cooperation between Histadrut and private capital / has convinced the Histadrut / ... that the task of economic development gives scope and indeed requires participation of both public and private capital. In many cases we have actually assisted private capital to find its way in Israel. Factories operated jointly by Histadrut and private capital have continued to run smoothly for many years, and we intend to continue this policy of operation The nearer we / i.e., Israel / approach to economic independence, the richer will be the flow of private capital to our country."

--11, p. 60 (emphasis in original)

What is our attitude towards the Histadrut sector (in Israeli parlance, considered part of the "public sector")? The position advanced in different forms by a few comrades that, in regard to the purely Histadrut enterprises, we should call for the ousting of the management and for trade-union control (following a demand for the independence of the trade unions) seems to be incorrect and to spread reformist illusions. First of all, any producers' cooperatives within a capitalist society operate within the capitalist framework, subject to the demands of the "free" market, "free" trade and finance capital. This goes for trade-union cooperatives as well. We wish to spread no illusions about socialist pockets within capitalism or a gradual transition to a socialist economy. It is true

that there are no private owners of such producers cooperatives, but they are none-the-less capitalist enterprises, despite the term "labor economy" given to the Histadrut sector. (Some elements on the Israeli left have gone so far as to state that both the Russian and Israeli economies are of a similar character, namely, bureaucratic collectivist!) Felix Morrow eloquently attacked the POUM for changing its position on this question upon its entry into the government:

"Before entry into the government, the POUM had criticized industrial 'collectivization,' pointing out that the unions, and even the workers in individual factories, were treating them as their own property. 'Syndicalist capitalism' was making of the factories merely a form of producers' cooperatives, in which the workers divided the profits. But industry could be run efficiently only as a national entity, together with all banking facilities and a monopoly of foreign trade. Now the POUM accepted 'collectivization,' which was nothing more than producers cooperatives, though real planning was impossible without banking trade monopolies."

--17, p. 60

Furthermore, it has been shown that all the Histadrut enterprises are dependent upon private finance capital (through the work of Ampal Corp. in the U.S.). In addition, not only the workers are formal owners of Histadrut enterprises, but the entire Histadrut membership, which is of a two-class character. It is not the program of the Trotskyist movement to call for trade-union expropriation of producers cooperatives!

The problem is not solved by linking the demand for trade-union control of Histadrut enterprises to the expropriation of all industry, as has also been raised. This may take care of the question of a purely reformist deviation, but introduces another deviation, that of syndicalism. The Trotskyist Transitional Program does not call for trade-union control of industry but workers control, a general slogan implying a dual-power situation. In a pre-revolutionary situation where the question of power begins to appear on the agenda, the workers control slogan may take a variety of concrete forms: that is, factory committees, trade unions or soviets may be the vehicles for the seizure of the state power. To concretize the general workers control slogan, in this period, into a demand for trade-union control is simply a syndicalist deviation.

We must call for the expropriation of all Israeli industry under workers control; in the case of the purely Histadrut-owned enterprises, we should call for nationalization under workers control. It has been asked: Why should the workers give up what they already own? The answer is: They don't own it and, in any case, we do not politically advocate the creation of workers cooperatives, or trade-union cooperatives, under capitalism. Such a position has reformist implications. We are not in principle against trade unions running businesses or workers running cooperatives, for various reasons of self-help and self-financing, but we are opposed as a principle to this being a programmatic demand of some kind.

Interestingly, the calls in Israel for nationalization of the Histadrut enterprises have come from the right, namely, from the Likud element in the Histadrut. In debates with the Likud, the Histadrut leadership has correctly exposed this "leftism" by showing that Likud calls for nationalization of only Histadrut enterprises, not private businesses. We would add that the Likud does not, of course, call for workers control. The Likud has, along with left elements in the Histadrut, also called for dismantling of the Histadrut into its various parts. This of course is from the perspective of breaking up the political, social and economic power of the Alignment, and furthering the Likud's own position as the political representatives of big capital.

The Histadrut economic sector has also played an "imperialist" role, primarily in African countries, but also elsewhere, in making the major investment and thus controlling various industrial and agricultural enterprises.

It has been noted earlier that the Histadrut sector has declined relative to the private sector, although it has experienced an absolute growth. This exposes further any reformist illusions in the "embryonic workers state" of the Histadrut in its slow and steady march to a socialist economy within a capitalist society.

The enormous scope of the Histadrut's economic activities, which are clearly of a capitalist nature, again and most clearly demonstrate that the Histadrut, as a general organization, is not a trade union.

5. Program

Presently, the workers organizations (unions) in Israel are subordinated to a general organization whose two-class composition and economic activities reveal its overall character as petty bourgeois. The working-class component of the Histadrut is subordinate to the petty-bourgeois component. Marxists must raise a program for the Histadrut whose starting point is the dismantling of the Histadrut and the complete independence of the trade union section. As the workers organizations presently exist within the confines of the Histadrut, it is necessary to wage a struggle for Histadrut leadership (as well as running for elections to the workers committees). It is not so strange as it might seem to fight for the leadership of the Histadrut on a program to liquidate the Histadrut as it is now constituted. As noted earlier, various left-reformist elements (as well as rightist) in the Histadrut have advocated either a limited dismantling of the Histadrut, autonomy for this or that section or the relinquishing of certain Histadrut functions to the state. Thus there is a tradition of debate on this subject within the main political parties inside the Histadrut. Our standpoint, in contradiction to the bourgeois and social-democratic positions, is one of a consistent defense of working-class interests.

The following demands are the outline for a program for the Histadrut:

1. For complete independence of the trade unions from the Histadrut! Oust the petty bureaucrats of the workers committees!

2. Nationalization of Histadrut enterprises under workers control! Expropriation of all Israeli industry under workers control!

3. Nationalization of the medical service! Free quality health care for all!

There has been debate on this last demand as well. The position has been put forward (in some ways methodologically consistent with the position that would call for trade-union control of Histadrut enterprises) that we should call for trade-union control of the medical service (following the demand for independent trade unions). The German trade unions, which run an extensive, national medical service available to trade union and non-trade union members alike, have been held up as an example. However, it seems that a demand for trade-union control of medical services has, again, a reformist or syndicalist implication: that within a capitalist society, the trade unions can (or should!) run a free, quality medical service for all. We should see the demand for nationalization of medicine as, essentially, a democratic demand. Thus, rather than being more left, to call for workers control of the medical services is to spread reformist illusions about what can be achieved within capitalism. (To call for specifically trade-union control is both a syndicalist and reformist deviation; see remarks in "Hevrat Ovdim" section.) When we call for workers control of industry, it is a demand that implies dual power, not this or that reformist scheme for increased industrial "democratization." Workers control of industry (i.e., of the means of production) does imply dual power; workers control of the medical services has a reformist implication.

We want the working class organized into independent trade unions so that they are in a better position to overthrow capitalism, not so that they can provide social services within the capitalist state.

4. Organization of all Arab workers into joint Arab-Jewish industrial trade unions! For union-run programs to upgrade the skills of Arab workers! Immediate retreat from the occupied territories! For the right of the Palestinian refugees to return! For the right of self-determination for the Palestinian nation and for the Hebrew-speaking nation in the Near East! End clericalism! Complete separation of church and state!

The Histadrut, which had previously only organized Jewish workers, began in 1953 to organize Arab workers as well, and in 1959 to accept them as full members of the Histadrut. By 1969, 29 percent of the total Arab population were Histadrut members (13, pp. 868-69). Compare this to the statistic that in 1971 57 percent of the total Israeli population were Histadrut members; thus the percentage of the Jewish population who were members is greater than 57 percent. Less than one-half of the percentage of the Arab population, as compared to the Jewish, are Histadrut members. I

have not found parallel statistics on Arab trade union membership (in 1971, 90 percent of the total Israeli work force were Histadrut members), but the gap is probably wider here as the Arab population is strongly petty-bourgeois in composition, being engaged primarily in agriculture and small shop-keeping, though having a substantial working-class component.

In the majority of cases, Arab workers are organized separately from Jewish workers, often on the basis of place of work rather than on a national-industrial basis. There do exist joint places of work, e.g., the Haifa port, and such places are clearly strategic areas for Marxists to begin work in the class.

5. For a shorter work week with no loss in pay to end unemployment! (35 for 46?) Strike against layoffs! Occupation against the closing of factories!

6. Full equality for women workers! Equal pay for equal work! Free, 24-hour child care paid for by the employer or the state! Free abortion on demand!

7. Towards a bi-national workers and peasants government in Israel/Palestine!

There are a number of sticky programmatic problems stemming from the peculiar nature of the Histadrut. For instance, while it seems that all workers should be called upon to join the Histadrut, it does not seem that, in the absence of independent trade unions, one should advocate the closed shop. The dual organizational character of the workers committees (i.e., that they are official Histadrut bodies, but are elected on a plantwide basis with both Histadrut and non-members voting) is part of their strength and also to the advantage of communists--the open, democratic character of the committee provides a good chance to struggle for leadership. We should oppose the right of foremen and managers to sit on the committee.

When a strike is necessary, upon whom do we call to strike: the Histadrut, the trade unions, the workers committee? It seems that we should call upon the trade union in question to strike; this gives us a good opportunity to propagandize for the general independence of the trade unions. Such a demand is not abstract. The seamen's union, which is part of the Histadrut, already behaves in a semi-autonomous fashion. Likewise, local labor councils or national union leaderships can act, and have sometimes, without or against Histadrut approval. The specific approach we might take is to urge the workers committee to call on the local labor council to approve a strike. This approach is counterposed to the automatic advocacy of wildcats, the method that characterizes Matzpen-Marxist/Workers Alliance. There is a high incidence of non-authorized strikes, led either by a workers committee, action committee or, sometimes, a local Histadrut labor council. When such strikes enjoy sufficient support we of course support them--and in any case defend them once a strike has begun. But we should seek to shape our policy with a view towards achieving the programmatic demand of independent trade unionism.

6. Ostensibly Revolutionary Organizations

There are two traditional positions on the Israeli left vis-a-vis the Histadrut. The Stalinist program is to reform the Histadrut, which it considers to be, in its present form, a trade union: for greater democratization, for increased workers participation in management, for a certain autonomy for the trade unions.

The position developed by Matzpen-Marxist and also adhered to by Workers Alliance is to completely disregard the Histadrut as a vehicle for the class struggle and not to fight within it for the allegiance of the working class. Cde. Rad has pointed out that this position probably derives from the "Arab Revolution" theory and at bottom reflects the fact that neither Matzpen-Marxist nor Workers Alliance sees the potential revolutionary capacity of the Israeli working class.

The Matzpen-Marxist position is particularly ultra-left and sectarian in that it does not see the ongoing workers committees as the vehicles for independent trade unions but rather the action committees that have arisen spontaneously in wildcat strikes (4, pp. 123-33). We must look upon the workers committees as the first place to struggle for our program for the Histadrut. In this context, it may be appropriate to call for the formation of a national workers committee as some type of a pre-caucus formation that could fight for Histadrut leadership. This struggle, however, could conceivably take a different concrete form, e.g., the formation of a national caucus outside of the committees, which are dominated by petty bureaucrats (such a caucus would struggle for leadership in the committees as well as in the Histadrut as a whole). In the committees we must fight to oust these petty bureaucrats, on the basis of our overall program for the Histadrut.

7. Summary

What about Mapai and Mapam? A serious study of these parties has not been done in preparing this document, but on the basis of the analysis of the Histadrut and the research that has been done, it would seem correct to characterize them as right social-democratic parties--in many ways similar to the German social democracy. This characterization is based primarily on the labor parties' history of organizing the working class (even if subordinate to the general Histadrut organization) and the fact that they are widely viewed by the working class as the party which represents it. Unlike the Democratic Party in the U.S., the labor Alignment's rhetoric is consistently to cast itself as the party of labor (not of "the people" or "the little man"). In addition, as the major political force in the Histadrut, it has been, in a very deformed way of course, the only major party acting as the defender of the right to strike and, sometimes, of strikes themselves.

Jerusalem

3 April 1975
(minor changes
6 August 1975)

[see "The Histadrut," by J. Brule, IDB no. 24]

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by Dick Stone

Bay Area
22 April 1975TUC
Comrades,

This is my response to the TUC discussion on the [question of Service Assistants (S.A.s) problem] reported here by Jennings in February. There has always been some division on whether S.A.s should be union members, with most of our friends in favor of keeping them under union control. While [the RU] called for S.A.s to join management,... here are the arguments as I see them for keeping S.A.s organized in the union:

1. The Service Assistants' work is mostly service and related work, plus training, with management-related work, such as monitoring, taking up a small percentage of their work time.
2. Even full-time S.A.s use the operating equipment occasionally in the performance of their job. We don't want to allow management to touch the equipment.
3. If S.A. were a management job, it would allow management to train and maintain a strikebreaking force.
4. S.A.s in management would give management a larger harassment and supervisory force.
5. Organizing this work was a recent union gain which the company would like to reverse. The status quo provides no present advantages to the company over the previous non-union arrangement.
6. S.A.s are promoted from the work force by seniority (although this is abused), not hired in as management, and they are paid hourly, not salaried.

The bulk of considerations show that S.A.s are performing work that should be union work. However, there are contradictory aspects to the job. Monitoring of operators is included in the job duties, as well as making a record of AWTs. (Average Work Time is a computer measured index of productivity which the S.A. records for each employee once a day for management records.) Also, an S.A. is expected to exercise management powers "when substituting for management." This occurs, for example, in one office between 9 and 12 p.m., when management leaves one S.A. "in charge" of the office. (I was unable to find this language in the present contract.... The S.A. who, by seniority, works the late hours in the above example, has no intention of exercising any management powers, a sore point with the company, and the union president backs her up.)

Some S.A.s try to use their position as a stepping-stone to management, and are on the lookout for occasions to fink and prove their loyalty to the company. However, this behavior is not limited to S.A.s, nor do all S.A.s behave this way.

To address this situation, we need to raise positive programmatic points stating the need to keep S.A.s' work organized in the union with enforced union discipline and control of promotions. Negative demands must be included, eliminating contradictory aspects of the job such as monitoring or management powers.

The program discussed by the TUC reflects a correct political analysis of the S.A. position. It attempts to formulate demands which can enforce strict union control over the work, and eliminate any management powers by union members. Because of the contradictory nature of the present S.A. position (and, apparently, local differences in work practice) the formulations seek to avoid stating directly whether the present S.A. position should be union or management, instead raising a series of points describing the situation we are for.

While the political thrust of these formulations is entirely correct, the demands in their particulars, while purposely vague, are unnecessarily unclear. The program I refer to:

Finks and Scabs Out of the Union!
 Closed Shop!
 Abolish the S.A. Position!
 Elected Leadworkers!

These slogans need to be translated into a series of formulations / which are / more direct, specific, and concrete in their particulars, / and / which also underscore the more broad political points to be made, such as:

No Management or Disciplinary Powers for S.A.s!
 S.A.s and All Workers Under Union Discipline--
 Finks and Scabs Out of the Union!
 Union Control of Hiring! Union Control of All Upgrades--
 Including to S.A. by Seniority! Closed Shop!
 No Monitoring! No AWTs!

My point-by-point comments on the TUC's formulations:

1. Finks and Scabs Out of the Unions is certainly something we favor, but TUC members have expressed differing opinions on how we would apply this, for example, to S.A.s who are willing to submit to union discipline but have performed their job duties in the past. The ranks of these workers are bound to be less clear on the meaning of our slogan in the context of this program. The sense we should want to convey is that under the union discipline we call for, anti-union actions will be severely dealt with. Loyal members submitting to this discipline will not be disciplined for having performed their job duties in the past if they have not clearly betrayed their fellow workers. These are minor points. What is

relevant is that Finks and Scabs Out of the Union should be a particular subsumed under the broad formulation of / All Members Under Union Discipline. This makes the meaning more clear and underscores the broader point. Clearly, this can only be achieved in a closed shop.

2. Closed Shop is a necessary demand in this context. It should be a particular of the broader formulation of Union Control of Hiring and Upgrades. It is important to raise this since a closed shop does not necessarily have real union control of hiring, and we must insist on control of hiring and promotion.

3. Abolish the S.A. Position. Since the preponderance of S.A.s' duties are non-management, to demand that the work remain organized and the "position" be "abolished" has little real meaning--amounting to eliminating a minor part of the S.A.s' duties and perhaps a change in job title. Further, this seems to accept management's line of reasoning that there is some necessary connection between the Service Assistants' legitimate duties and the management-related duties which the company wants to foist on them. The Service Assistant title is a more or less necessary and legitimate function which may be separated from that of operator. In addition to training, a small part of the job, the duties include assisting the customer who needs special service because of an unusual problem or complaint. There is no necessary or logical connection between these functions and the management function of work force supervision, although the word "supervisor" is used by the S.A. when greeting a customer (often an "irate" or "obscene") to give the impression that his complaint or request has gone to someone with higher authority.

This slogan could mean that we propose another way of organizing the work as an alternative to the status quo. It is desirable, when possible, to avoid any detailed plan for reorganization of work under bourgeois management short of workers control.

However, I believe the intention of the slogan is merely a strictly negative demand directed against the contradictions in the status quo--stating our opposition to it without proposing any alternative blueprint. While this is a correct approach, I think the slogans No Management Powers! and No Monitoring! cover all the bases, and in the context of the other formulations I suggest, speak to the situation more concretely.

4. For Elected Leadworkers. I prefer the demand Union Control of All Upgrades Including to S.A. by Seniority, because the widest extension of the seniority principle poses clearly the central question of union control.

In some industries, i.e., longshore, construction, shipping, etc., especially where work gangs and foremen are called from a hiring hall, the question of elected leadworkers is probably more applicable. I would leave open the question of whether election is superior to union selection by some other mechanism, such as a promotions committee. (In a structurally bureaucratic union sit-

uation where a promotions committee already exists, we would probably counterpose elections by membership as a demand against bureaucratic control.)

S.A.s do not direct or organize the work of others as a union foreman does on a warehouse or construction job. I can see little difference in demanding that switchmen be elected from the ranks of frameworkers, or splicers be elected by telephone installers.

The real issue in all instances is union control of upgrades and transfers. I believe that in this case the seniority principle serves to underscore this best.

In summary, I believe the differing formulations I suggest are not based on any different political assessment of the situation, but speak more concretely to the situation, adding more particulars as well as underscoring the broader points. My knowledge is based on only three...locals so I would be interested to hear of differences in practice that exist nationally. My letter is written mainly from the point of view of one type of office, so a slogan such as No AWTs!, for example, could translate into No Ticket Counts! in an old fashioned toll office.

Comradely Greetings,
Dick Stone

by Joseph Seymour

London
26 April 1975

National Chairman--SL/US

Dear Jim,

I would like to revise my "Note on Conjunctural Projection" [which follows]. I now believe the projected unemployment rate for 1976 [was] too small. In addition to massive unemployment, there is now a severe shortening of the workweek. Thus, an increased demand for labor in the early stages of an upturn is likely to manifest itself in lengthening of the workweek, moderating the increases in re-employment and new hires. So I think that average official unemployment rate for 1976 is likely to be 9-10 percent rather than 8 percent.

Comradely,

Seymour

Note on Conjunctural Projection

The conjunctural projection in the last conference document is rapidly becoming dated and a new one is necessary. This note is intended to serve that purpose, although its tentative character should be stressed.

There are numerous signs that a weak to moderate recovery in the world economy should occur in the latter half of this year. The present world depression began with oil boycott following the October War, and by mid-year will have lasted almost two years. In the entire history of modern capitalism virtually no contraction has lasted uninterruptedly more than two years. The 1929 depression contracted for four years in the U.S., but not in Europe where a weak upturn occurred in 1931. In the latter part of this year, it is probable that the depression will bottom out in Japan, West Germany and the U.S. to be followed by the weaker economies, France, Britain and Italy (although in the latter two, the recovery may be suppressed by the effect of a high inflation rate on international competitiveness).

The U.S. economy should turn up between August and November. It is likely to be a moderate recovery, with GNP growing in the range of 3-4 in the year following the upturn. This rate of expansion would not significantly reduce unemployment. The Ford administration's estimate that in 1976 unemployment would average 8 percent (by official statistical methods) seems reasonable.

Changes in inflation rates are far more difficult to predict than in production and employment, being more strongly affected by

the class struggle and international factors. With real wages falling, the decline in inflation should continue into the first few months of the recovery. If the economy is then expanding at more than 4 percent, any decline in the inflation rate would be arrested and might well be reversed. On how inflation would be affected by a weak recovery, I don't feel competent to predict.

17 April 1975

[this Note concurred with by Judith Sinclair]

[S.F. Bay Area]
May 13, 1975

George, Chris, Helene:

... There has been considerable discussion in the local on Southeast Asia. Positions ran from Cambodia not a deformed workers state until extensive and fundamental nationalizations are carried out (Clark) to some new SYLer's observation that Portugal is a deformed workers state.

In the process I think one fundamental unclarity emerged; the difference between petty-bourgeois radicalism and the Stalinism of NLF, Khmer Rouge, etc., i.e., Stalinism in an overwhelmingly peasant situation where the Stalinist party not only espouses two-stage revolution and coalition government but has virtually no ties, historical or contemporary, to the proletariat. I do not believe that even in such a situation Stalinism is simply or primarily petty-bourgeois radicalism. I was told that somewhere Seymour takes the position that such Stalinist parties (unlike their European counterparts) are not part of the reformist workers movement. I think I disagree.

Reducing NLF, Khmer Rouge or even Pathet Lao to petty-bourgeois radicalism, among other things, ignores their ideological as well as material ties to Moscow and Peking. It tends to make Indochina simply a repeat of Cuba which it clearly is not. Rather, as WV says, it is analagous to China which had a degenerated party with historic roots in the proletariat (severed) and a clear ideological commitment to Stalinism. Though deeply committed to a two-stage conception revolving around class-collaborationist popular fronts Stalinism ideologically (consistently) forsees a second socialist stage. This differentiates it from petty-bourgeois radicalism of the Algerian variety, Fidel, or Cabral and other contemporary African revolutionists. It directly influences imperialism's view of Stalinist movements and in situations where imperialism has forced these movements to defend themselves, plays a (important??) role in determining the property forms these movements opt for.

I think some discussion of these points would be useful. While the WV articles on Indochina have generally been clear, they have not been particularly detailed nor pedagogical.

I would like more material on what caused the Stalinist forces to seize power beyond the collapse of the native bourgeoisies and that at this time seemingly neither the USSR nor China had anything to gain by holding the process back. What for instance was the pressure on the insurgent parties from the masses who wanted at least the program of land reform, national independence and peace carried out? What contradictions develop in a Stalinist party when the first stage--popular front--clearly cannot be carried through--don't some of the cadre press for the realization of the second?

These are hasty thoughts scribbled at lunch but I'd like some response.

Comradely,
Bob Edwards

LETTER ON BUSING LEAFLET

61.

by Bob Simons

Cambridge, Mass.
May 20, 1975

TUC/SL

Dear Comrades:

Enclosed is the leaflet handed out at last Wednesday's ... meeting. This leaflet essentially does the job of correcting our previous program and I believe that it, cleaned up, can be published as one side of a final campaign flyer (typeset), the other side being the entire program.

There are several typos and awkward phrases in the leaflet, as Ruth did a final rewrite in the process of typing the stencil. One point that she and I disagree on, though, is the characterization of the union president ... as a "racist bureaucrat." I consider that a careless formulation. Our criticism should expose him for not defending Black kids ("neutrality"), for not fighting for the union's ostensible position of "metropolitan integration," and for leading a direct capitulation to the racists in the form of a motion making union policy calling for a one-year delay of phase II.¹ He is a capitulator to racism and to racists inside and outside the union; he is not himself a racist. For example, the racists in the union, and there are many of them, fight against the aides being part of the union; ... fought to organize the transitional aides (aides, mainly Black, hired to monitor schools and buses this year--approximately 600 of them) into the union and won.

...Could you please send the local immediately a copy of the TUC motion on the ... campaign. We discussed it in an exec Sunday night and unanimously voted to concur with Ruth's version which she wrote from memory two days after getting it from you. I voted for it, too, with the intention of adding an appendage to the minutes. This was possible, because my concern had never been for "support"² to transfers and one-to-one hiring, but rather to critically support opposition to motions brought against faculty desegregation in the union which were essentially referendums on racism. Naturally in such contexts we should first counterpose our own position. Later this week you will receive from me 1) a complete report on this question in the union this year and 2) a report on the campaign thus far.

Fraternally,
Bob Simons

cc: Ruth, files

(1) Ruth's position is that these points, particularly the latter, make him a racist, and that my dislike of that characterization is typical of my "adaptationism to the milieu."

(2) This refers to a formulation originally approved by TUC members as follows:

"Support to the Court-Ordered One-to-One Minority Hiring of New Hires and Transfers to Achieve Integrated Faculties for as long as Necessary to Combat Open Discrimination and Eliminate Inequality in Education."

(Footnote added by Simons for clarification, 5 Aug. 1975)

by Bob Simons

May 23, 1975

1. In a July, 1974, ruling, the judge found that the local schools had been deliberately segregated. A chief vehicle for this had been: 1) middle school policy in which black area middle schools were 6-8 percent, and white area ones, 7-9 percent (this, of course, affecting high school feeder patterns); and 2) decisions vis-a-vis new school construction. A minor result of these patterns was that throughout the years the overwhelmingly white teachers transferred toward the white schools, leaving black area schools with transient and less experienced faculty. To remedy this the judge ordered one-to-one minority hiring of new hires and involuntary transfers of teachers in order to experience and race-balance the schools.
2. In September 148 teachers (mostly white) were involuntarily transferred while another 300 were reassigned. The distinction was this: the reassignments were caused by a) changeover of the entire system to uniform middle schools of grades 6-8. Thus grade 6 was eliminated from elementary schools and grade 9 was added to all high schools not having it previously. These teachers were given transfer choices according to seniority, in an arrangement worked out between the union and the school department. Also many of these 300 had been transferred as a result of school closings ordered to consolidate the system and achieve desegregated schools.
3. In phone conversations with the union field rep and with the union vice-president on Monday, May 12 (after the new court order) and Friday, May 23, respectively, I learned the following. The union has the figures and expects no involuntary transfers this fall. The 20-odd schools ordered closed will result in 220 reassignments which will all be done on the basis of choice by seniority. Additionally, those teachers involuntarily transferred last year will be given the choice of returning to their old schools, provided places are open. This is likely in many cases, since there is a regular attrition of 300-400 teachers each year.
4. Of the 5,000-odd members of the union, approximately 4,200 are teachers and 800 are aides. There are approximately 500 black and other minority teachers and approximately 600 black and minority aides (out of 800). The judge has ordered continued one-to-one hiring of new hires until black teachers are 20 percent of the total. However, zero hiring is anticipated for next year.
5. The union challenged the judge's remedy (i.e., not the finding of segregated schools, with which it concurs) in the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, i.e., the remedy for desegregating faculties, on two bases: 1) that it violated seniority rights and 2) that it was not needed as faculties were not really segregated. The union admits that it had no figures at the time of the court case. It was thrown out of court on the basis that federal law supersedes all contracts. The union then voted to appeal to the

supreme court, a move that is considered by the union lawyers and by union officers to be virtually hopeless (the judge's finding was upheld by the supreme court on May 12; the union is contesting his remedy vis-a-vis faculties).

6. The union has also taken a case to court for whites not hired last year due to one-to-one hiring. This, like some of the arguments in the other case, has some of the methodology of the Defunis case, i.e., reverse discrimination.
7. The issue in the life of the union.
 - a. September 3 meeting (1974), first meeting of year. Motion by leadership passed: "That the attorneys of the (PE2) be instructed to take measures to negate involuntary transfers of all teachers resulting from the federal desegregation decision." I was not yet a member and could not attend this meeting, which dealt mainly with going back to work with no contract and rescinding previous union policy of "no contract, no work."
 - b. Special membership meeting of October 23. Leadership motion: "Move that the (union) oppose any involuntary transfers."
 - c. January 16, reconvened membership meeting. Leadership motion to make union policy a call for a one-year delay of phase II. We published leaflet to "vote against delay." Vote was 110 for, 91 against; this was a clear referendum on racism.
 - d. March 12 membership meeting. Leadership reports that court of appeals turned down court case, moves that case be appealed to supreme court. Significant opposition, mainly coming from liberal-radical layer in union formerly around PWP (but no longer) which had been in favor of one-to-one hiring. (They had fought all year, 1973-74, to have the union go on record in favor of one-to-one; at last meeting of June, 1974, union leadership, prior to desegregation order, came out for policy of hiring 100 new minority teachers in fall, which passed). Parenthetically, I have all year long, prior to issuance of our program, argued our correct position with these types. In this meeting, I unsuccessfully fought to get on the floor to present our position and also solidarize against the leadership's position of simply opposing transfers to achieve desegregated faculties without posing a strategy of achieving the same result through union action. I then voted against the leadership motion.
 - e. In the April 9 membership meeting, where I first passed out the program, two more motions of the same type arose. First that these against the leadership motion in the previous meeting had given notice for the April meeting of rescinding union policy against one-to-one hiring (requires 2/3 vote). I had a repeat of the previous meeting (read above). This had debate closed quickly and lost. Later in the meeting a motion was put forward by someone in the leadership to reaffirm union policy on the Master's Plan as presented in the union paper (which includes one-year delay). I put forward a counter-motion: "For the (union) to go on record in favor of the complete integration of the () Schools in September." Although this was not our complete position, in a lengthy and strident motivation, I gave our full position. The blacks and liberal-

radicals voted with me, the overwhelming majority voted against. (Note: about 10 blacks at the meeting of 200-plus).

- f. May membership meeting. As reported in my letter earlier this week, I presented the motion on the leaflet as a special order of business. It was voted down, but I was able to read it fully and slowly and get our position on record. Everybody also had a copy of the leaflet.

June 30, 1975

8. 1975-6 transfers

- a. As reported in point 3, some 200-300 involuntary transfers were carried out at the termination of the school year (circa June 20). The following procedure, based on a union-school department agreement to respect seniority, was followed (see enclosed green sheet, published by union). An excess pool was created of a) teachers excessed because of a decrease in student enrollment in their school (either specific school consolidations or school closings) and b) teachers involuntarily reassigned in September, 1974 (if they so desire). Teachers are excessed solely on the basis of seniority. Teachers involuntarily reassigned last year were allowed to return to their old schools if vacancies existed. All teachers in the excess pool were guaranteed jobs and chose new assignments from a list of vacancies in order of their seniority.

9. Position on one-to-one hiring and transfer issue

- a. What is at issue is not our own program (opposition to transfers in violation of seniority and preferential hiring in general) but instead our tactical orientation to union action in opposition to these measures ordered by the court. As noted in the previous section of this report, such union action has taken the form of resolutions stating opposition and resolutions sponsoring court appeals. Strike action against these measures has never reached the floor of the general membership meetings in the form of a resolution, though it was advocated from the floor early in the year by an irate right-winger.
- b. We are not dealing simply with a case of "seniority rights" or "discrimination in hiring." Overlapping these principles are the rights of Black students, who have received unequal educational instruction. This has occurred systematically over the years as white teachers utilized the seniority system to transfer out of the predominantly black districts. Discrimination in hiring of Blacks and other minorities was additionally exercised through exams, application criteria, and previous unequal educational opportunity. The end result of these processes was that inexperienced faculties were concentrated in Black districts. Thus the rights of Black students to equal education includes the race-balancing and experience-balancing of faculties.

- c. The TUC motion of 8 May, 1975, stating that "court-ordered transfers violating seniority should be unconditionally opposed" can only be interpreted as calling for solidarity with motions of the union leadership against the transfers, such as those of September 3 and October 23 (see point 7, a. and b.). The TUC motion treats teachers as if they are factory workers facing the power of capital and being subject to a union-busting action. It abstracts from the basic petty-bourgeois character of teachers; teachers are both workers (socially necessary but unproductive wage laborers) and functionaries of the superstructure (purveyors of bourgeois education and social norms). Thus exercise of seniority rights did not only protect local teachers from victimization, it also led to discrimination against Black students!
- d. The court intervention was primarily an intervention into the racist school committee and cannot be viewed as a union-busting venture, as was the case of government sponsorship of community control in New York, 1968.

"The way the New York teachers' strike was engineered shows it is only the opening shot of a new series of attacks by the bourgeoisie upon organized labor."

--Spartacist East No. 1, April 1968

The SL has consistently rejected the RU and IWP methodology which views court-ordered busing as a ruling class ploy to divide the "people" or the "working class." The SL has instead stressed defense of the democratic rights of Black schoolchildren. Thus, "Implement the Busing Plan!"

Neither in the history of this union nor of other local unions can one glean the transfers as an attack on the unions. Nor do the transfers specifically weaken the union: they are virtually completed with this year's reorganization of the schools a la phase two, and all of the recent involuntary transfers have been conducted on the basis of seniority.

- e. Last year, prior to the court intervention, PWP and various radicals in the union fought for a union policy of one-to-one minority hiring. This was opposed completely by the union leadership until June, 1974 when (still prior to the court order, which surprised everyone) the union leadership sponsored and passed a resolution calling for the hiring of 100 minority teachers in 1974-75 (at that time the annual hiring was 500-600 teachers). Were we in the union at that time our policy would have been clear--to present our program in opposition to preferential hiring,

"making crystal clear our program for abolishing discrimination and all its vestiges at the expense of the employers rather than the workers."

--SL TU Work, by the TUC,
8 June 1974, p. 15

Since the court order we have been in the union. The thrust

of the union leadership has been to oppose one-to-one hiring and involuntary transfers without putting forward any program to combat discrimination in hiring or to desegregate faculties. The whole thrust of the union leadership is to maintain the racist status quo (see section 7).

"Therefore, we (may well) critically support quotas if necessary to counterpose ourselves to the racist status quo (as long as they don't entail replacement of some workers by others)."

--Ibid.

The point of our intervention is this: we are for the desegregation of faculties and the elimination of discrimination in hiring. We must seize every opportunity to put forward our approach. But we must recognize the activity of the union leadership to oppose these court-ordered measures as efforts to maintain the racist status quo. Thus all motions by the union leadership (see section 7) constituted referendums on racism in which we must vote and actively solidarize against. In some sense, this is critical support to the measures in the absence of union action for desegregation and against discrimination.

- g. While it is true, as Chris stated on the phone in May, that the bourgeoisie (or some sections) is to the left of the unions on the busing issue, the court-ordered measures must be systematically warned against--i.e., not the courts or the government, but the working class must be relied upon in the struggle for democratic rights.
- h. To correct the TUC motion of May 8, 1975 on the transfer question ("unconditionally oppose") and its lack of specificity on quota hiring (it "could be critically supported..."), I offer the following motion to the TUC:

Motion: Opposition by this union leadership to one-to-one hiring and involuntary transfers in violation of seniority (to achieve desegregated faculties) constitute efforts, like the one-year delay motion, to maintain the racist status quo. While using every opportunity to present our program for fighting discrimination in hiring and for desegregation of faculties, we should, once our program as a choice has been eliminated, solidarize against the motions of the union leadership, which "unconditionally oppose" the one-to-one hiring and involuntary transfers.

- i. In the revised program we utilized the formulation:

"For desegregation of faculties, not through court-ordered one-to-one minority hiring and involuntary transfers, but through union control of hiring and transfers, a reduction in class size and teaching load to improve education and provide jobs for all, black and white, and special union programs (open to all) to recruit and train black and other minority teachers."

This of course would have been improved by:

"For desegregation of faculties and elimination of discrimination in hiring, not through..."

But additionally, I maintain we should add the following:

"Oppose the leadership's attempts to maintain the racist status quo by court cases against one-to-one hiring and transfers!"

This fits into section I on the final program (revised). Clearly it all gets confusing when this is inserted in the form of a programmatic demand. It could much easier be explained in text.

MOTIONS ON THE CAMPAIGN PROGRAM,

TUC No. 7, 8 May 1975

Motion: The Boston Campaign Program contains three serious political errors which must be corrected in a revised program with a note that the new version supercedes and corrects the old. The present program: a. supports quota minority hiring, b. supports court-ordered transfers of teachers in violation of seniority, and c. calls for "integrated worker-teacher defense groups: to replace cops in the schools. These points liquidate our principled opposition to quotas, and to government intervention in the unions, and our line on the 1968 New York teachers strike. The quota hiring program could be critically supported in the event of a vote in which all other choices beyond support or opposition had been eliminated (i.e., a referendum on racism), and otherwise should be opposed with explanations and programmatic alternatives; court-ordered transfers violating seniority should be unconditionally opposed; and defense of school children in the schools should be directly linked to worker-student-teacher control of the schools and to labor/black defense of the bused school children.

passed

Motion: Our position on busing and labor/black defense, and the need to link it to a systematic struggle against racism leading to class struggle behind the full sweep of our anti-capitalist program, must be the main theme of the Boston campaign. In particular, a sharp attack must be launched against the union bureaucracy for their open capitulation to racism.

passed

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON FOREMEN/LEADMEN IN VARIOUS BAY 70.
AREA INDUSTRIAL UNIONS: REPORT TO THE TUC

by Dick Stone

Warehouse--ILWU Local 6

When working foremen or union foremen are used, they are taken from the workforce by seniority job bidding and generally get about 25 cents/hour more than the workers under them. They mostly organize the work and work themselves. They are not supposed to have hiring-firing/disciplinary powers.

Longshore--ILWU Local 10

Gangbosses are dispatched off a separate board. A union promotions committee decides what board you can work off of, I think with seniority being a principal factor for consideration. A gangboss has no ambiguous management-like function and little real function in most cases. A gangboss used to go with every gang, with about one gang per hatch for hold work, but especially since the 1971 contract with the further destruction of manning, actual gangs are used less and less with often only a Walking Boss in charge of a whole ship, or several walkers directing groups of workers. A WB is highly paid, may work steady and is dispatched from the Walkers' local, which split from Local 10 some years ago.

Shipsaling--ILWU Local 2

One union foreman and one delegate (steward) dispatched separately off the plug board with each gang. Foremen and delegates are elected for life by the executive board. There are "Foremen and Delegates" meetings regularly to discuss work problems. Foremen do not act as management and the companies always provide management supervision, but only the union foremen can tell a worker what to do. This is a real advance that has been maintained in a situation where wages and conditions have badly eroded. As a result there is absolutely no management harassment and no one works hard. Despite the bureaucratic method of selection, there is no problem with the union foremen and the only real fault with this system is that the delegates don't do their jobs right (often leaving it to the foremen to defend the workers against the company on the job, on conditions, etc.), and are not easily subject to recall or to periodic re-election by the ranks.

Construction

In crafts and laborers unions, union or working foremen may be called from a hall or hired using one of many loopholes available. While not supposed to act as management, in this wild and woolly industry practically anything goes. Still it's often very advantageous to have a union foreman rather than having the boss on your back.

Aerospace--IAM

At Boeing (the only place I've seen the term "leadman" actually used), a leadman's function (in a tooling shop, for example) would be either to make a complete tool (or assembly in "production"), letting less experienced workers do the less critical parts of the job, and then check it before presenting for inspection; or to assign the simpler jobs to less experienced workers and then check their work if necessary or provide help.

June 1, 1975

MOTIONS FROM
T2 COAST-WIDE FRACTION GATHERING

72.

Bay Area, 12-13 July, 1975

A. In General:

Motion: 1) The T2 Fraction must shift priorities in the next period to a) internal political/organizational consolidation of the fraction, and b) contacting, recruiting and the development of a caucus periphery, emphasizing the storage division (Bay Area), transportation (Bay Area), L.A. and Vancouver, in that order of centrality. 2) Despite the forced emergency situations which have been normal in this industry, the fraction cannot physically substitute itself for the union membership in the class struggle, and must, as an immediate goal, makes its literary, financial and manpower output conform more closely to its real personnel and base. Monitored so as not to undermine our past gains, this retrenchment is necessary in order to consolidate our real base, avoid burning out our forces and ensure future growth. 3) Consolidation of our central base in the storage division requires cadre implantation as soon as possible. tabled to TU Conference

B. On Finances:

Motion: Recognizing that all unnecessary drains on RO (the Revolutionary Organization's) resources by T2 drains the entire RO perspective, and that heretofore the fraction politically lacked the understanding of the need to be self-sustaining, the development of systematic fund-raising is an immediate priority in the coming period so that the fraction pays its own way. passed

C. On the South Coast Implantation:

Motion: In South Coast we don't project an emergence of our friends in the next period. passed

Motion (counterposed to above motion): While recognizing that implantation in large houses with established militancy is most desirable, the base local (storage division, Bay Area) strike will provide opportunities to intersect militants which can be realized by having a surfaced member who attends union meetings. Thus if other more desirable hiring opportunities do not arise, we will keep Ponti in his shop to lay the basis for such an intervention consistent with having established himself in the shop. failed

Motion: 1) The attendance of one friend at a union meeting in three or four months should be considered but approached cautiously. 2) That South Coast T2 implement the following priorities: a) implantation of Spanish language capacity as soon as possible; b) implantation of friends in larger houses with Neal as priority for this and the no. 1 house and the no. 1 division as priority locations; also that

Neal leave his situation to seek a better opportunity
full time. passed

Motion: Neal should leave his job at once and Scott should leave
when a priority opening occurs or just before the nation-
al gathering, whichever occurs first. While the most
dangerous substance (PVC) may not be present, the location
is unsatisfactory for anything but the most minimal in-
formation gathering. Thus, there is no reason to ex-
pose our friends to unknown possible dangers in unsatis-
factory working conditions for little return. This will
also enable a more rapid implantation in priority loca-
tions. passed

AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE SPARTACIST LEAGUE/US AND
AN AD HOC GROUP OF COMRADES IN MARYLAND

74.

1. Both groups recognize the general communality of their political and organizational views.
2. Both groups agree to fully exchange relevant information, i.e., to consult in advance on all matters of common interest, seeking to undertake common action without however any mandatory obligation to do so. Failure to be able to act in concert must be evaluated by each party, recognizing that the dynamic of the present relationship is toward common SL/US membership or sharp separation.
3. The SL/US will circulate its internal membership bulletins to the Ad Hoc Group, and will hold open the option for the Ad Hoc Group to write in the bulletin, by particular negotiation by topic. Confidential material exchanged between the two groups shall be kept confidential by the recipients.
4. Political collaboration between members of the SL/US and the Ad Hoc Group is therefore authorized. Given the lack of significant evident programmatic differences by the Ad Hoc Group from the SL/US and the disparity in forces between the two, the formula of an interim "federated" relationship tends in practice to be, barring disruption, that the comrades of the Ad Hoc Group would function as disciplined sympathizers of the SL/US, including paying a regular sustaining pledge to the SL/US, the amount determined by the comrades of the Ad Hoc Group who of course in turn take account of the SL/US sustaining pledge membership schedule. Access to the internal life of the SL/US for the Ad Hoc Group will be roughly proximate to that of SL/US candidate members.
5. The main brunt of concrete collaboration between the Ad Hoc Group and the SL/US should take place from the SL/US side through the nearest SL/US local organization.
6. We jointly recognize that the PB of the SL/US currently notes that it would like to see Comrade Abbot function for a period of time under the immediate direction of an SL local committee prior to his return to membership in the Bolshevist organization.

13 July 1975
New York City

/s/ J.R. for the SL/US

/s/ P.A. for the Ad Hoc Group

copy to Phila. SL, 14 July

ON TRADE UNION WORK
Excerpt from letter to the TUC

75.

by K. Douglas

Detroit
29 July 1975

New York

TUC:

This will hopefully just be a short letter to express some of the things I have been thinking re: the upcoming TU conference and a couple of short points on local TU work.

On the TU conference, there are no doubt many general and specific points to be made that you are already planning on. I want to just concentrate on a few things that should be underlined.

It is good that there will be a session on "emergence" focused on LI and BI. I do not think the BI conference in Chicago was particularly useful in this regard, but it did raise some points that should have been stressed more.

There was an interesting contradiction between the story of the struggle waged by the East Lakes fraction around the apprenticeship question and the written material of both fractions at that conference. East Lakes had somehow found itself in the untenable situation of having this very sophisticated material circulating external to its own location, in fact without having put out anything for its own plant, and then came in with a draft for a leaflet that resembled the Midwest fraction's initial leaflet in that its political profile was way too high for an initial effort, wasn't called for by the situation it was in, and revealed a maximalist and rather sterile conception of literary intervention. This is even more so the case for fractions that have a development projected that is rather slow-paced given the concentration of the fractions in the trades.

This high-level premature literary work revealed a conception of emergence that was most skewed: one does the usual "getting around the shop floor" for a year or so, not doing anything particularly outrageous or controversial, and then...BOOM...you let them have IT (the Transitional Program) or at least a big chunk of it, all at once, and in your very first leaflet to boot.

It is not that a conception of leading a somewhat lower-level category of struggles is conceptually absent here; in fact the East Lakes initiated struggle around the apprentice program/classes seemed pretty excellent. It wasn't a big political issue, but it was important to the workforce involved, it won us some respect and most importantly, lays the basis for a later elaboration of our program, not in a vacuum but on the basis of a demonstrated concern for our co-workers, militancy, ability to lead, etc.

I do not know if the Midwest BI fraction has had occasion to participate in a similar struggle. If not, it is a commentary on

the fraction's ability to involve itself in that tired, dull "shop floor work" and sets their initial leaflet in an even worse relief.

There are several points to be made here. Obvious is the need to combat impatience in the emerging fractions (LI here to wit, and also some of the rather half-cooked notions the East Coast LI fraction has engaged in: clandestine committee, immediate caucus, etc., just to mention a couple that came up when I was there). Also that every leaflet does not have to be 2/3 of the Transitional Program. Also, the need of the fractions to develop the ability to lead those intermediate, limited struggles that can win them authority and respect.

In general, our friends in industry have a lot more experience battling it out with some ORO over "socialism in one country" or, within the TU arena, introducing motions on the Chilean pop front, than they do in actually leading struggles. Outside of T2 and a few other limited situations, we have simply not had that experience, or the opportunity (in many cases). Yet I believe that many of our TU friends have not fully assimilated or been able to translate into practice the very important parts of the Perspectives and Tasks document adopted at the 1974 Conference concerning how to begin to establish "links with the masses" through our TU work. In particular I refer to the sections on pages 38 and 39 including that excellent quote from Trotsky which includes the injunction to the communists to develop the "capacity to put forward at the right moment sharp, specific, fighting slogans that by themselves don't derive from the 'program' but are dictated by the circumstances of the day and lead the masses forward."

This is not, of course, some philistine ISish objection to the programmatic struggles we wage, or have waged, nor to the hard and hopefully thorough schooling our friends get in our program. But I do believe that in both the emerging fractions and pretty generally in many of our existing fractions that have evolved caucus formations, neither [has] the sufficient necessity to intervene in real, ongoing struggles [been] understood, nor has the capacity or knowledge of how to do so been generated. It can partly be acquired through hard experience (the long isolation of the WC LI fraction is a negative lesson), partly through TUC tactical advice (though I believe this is overdone, more on that later) but mostly, at this point, and at this conference through the TUC underscoring the generalization and citing specific examples.

To name just one, and there are many, while I was recently in New York City I sat in on a discussion between Cde. Davidson and Cde. Jennings where it came to light that in a period of generally intense harassment in the II fraction-location there, a union representative had been physically accosted on company property. The fraction had a great issue; to link up the harassment of the workforce with the assault on the union rep (what company audacity!) but missed the opportunity apparently rather completely. Though there was discussion going on as to what to do now, regarding the harassment of the workforce, the point on the attacked union rep was rather late and stale.

So, there is a process going on. We are getting to know the reality our fractions are in better, and as that understanding increases, so does our ability and objective need to intervene to change that reality. Too often these opportunities are missed, and I believe it is largely because the fractions do not know how, and do not understand the useful and important nature or taking up these issues.

This is not some abstract point but vitally affects our ability to develop roots, support, a periphery, recruits to both the caucus and the party. I cannot emphasize enough how much of a development of the NA II work I have seen and sensed since the initiation of the labor/black defense struggle, and that has not been a particularly hot "in-plant" issue. But the fact that we have put forward slogans and a program for a specific problem that really makes sense to people has had an enormous effect on our ability to develop contacts, periphery, and possible caucus and party recruits. There are of course many problems faced here, not the least of which is the fraction's ability to keep up with all the opportunities and contacts we're making; but the point is that we're intersecting some real feeling within the working class and we have a program with which to deal with it. The tribute is not only to the powerful line, but to the ability and drive to follow it through. And many of our fractions are in positions to do likewise, albeit around many different issues, many in fact more proximate to the work location, but are missing out.

TU recruitment, both to the caucuses and to the party should be a heavily underscored priority at this conference. We have been, by and large, unsuccessful in developing caucus recruits and party recruits from the TU work we have done not only in the past year, but beyond. This is a source of concern, and heavily overlaps with the whole point taken up above. For us to actually draw workers around us it is vitally necessary to involve them in actual struggles, and not simply be known as the people with the attractive two-page leaflets once a month.

But the priority of recruitment must be stressed. I would bet that most fractions spend more time planning their monthly union meeting interventions than they do in working contacts. Patient and large amounts of time must be devoted to this work, not only during particular campaigns but also in following them up. A point from the local experience here: the campaign for office the NA II fraction ran really paid off in getting us known and opening the door to whole new layers of people, which we were then in a position to move on fairly immediately in the labor/black defense work. Additionally, I can now work up and down the final line on the other shift and practically everyone knows me as a political operative, waves, calls me over to discuss various problems, etc. All those days and weeks of staying in the plant 12 or 14 hours a day is paying off. Not necessarily in immediate hot contacts, though there are those too, but in deepening our roots and paving the way for future activity, new contacts, etc.

The relationship between running various campaigns, election

and otherwise, and contacting should be gone into also. We can meet and work with forces that may not immediately join the caucus or the party but can be drawn closer to our politics, beginning perhaps from a fairly limited understanding and agreement, who we can develop good relations with and work on over time.

A related point should be made with respect to relations with the bureaucrats. We have learned a lot in this area in the past year, by actually doing it. We can wage principled struggles, which will inevitably, especially when they are serious and sharp, bring us into toe-to-toe confrontations with the bureaucracy. But we can also develop respect and connections that are useful and protective in many ways. A negative example is when the Mid-Atlantic II fraction wanted to do some work around the deportation of illegal immigrants; after having been in the plant and been a caucus for quite a while, they did not have the Local President's home phone number, nor know how to get hold of it nor--as it turned out--had any fraction member ever sat down and talked to this guy about anything. These lessons will not be obvious to the newly emerging fractions in particular, as there is a certain "learn by doing" element to working the bureaucrats. So the lessons and importance of them that we have gained should be generalized and passed on.

Use of the press should be ABC, but I am not so sure if it really is. Especially with the weekly WV we will have the opportunity to have very timely articles that can be of great use in our fraction work. I would be interested to hear reports from the fractions on how much and how well they use the press inside the work location (in individual conversations, not before a session). Also, other materials, pamphlets, etc. We are beginning to use Shachtman's Fight for Socialism as a basic reading for a lot of our contacts. I am curious how the other fractions do in this regard. This also raises from the party and the need (lingering and ever-present) for production of pamphlets, etc., for general party use; but that can also be extremely valuable from the fraction end. I have felt the desperate need for material on the black question here in Detroit. Giving the YSp series to somebody is one thing, but it would be nice to have something similar to the youth pamphlet reproduction of the "Stalin School of Falsification" series on the black question. Or even MB No. 5. I realize that given the strain on party resources and editorial capacity, this stuff may be some time in coming. The fractions need to develop readings along this line or figure out useful substitutes in the interim, in addition to the weekly WV.

The related point to this is obviously the production of fraction/caucus literature itself. I am quite sorry I have never gotten to writing that letter on the Mid West II fraction's written material, for I think that a whole number of useful points could be made, of importance to all the fractions. Avoiding the "passive propagandism" mentioned in the 1974 Perspectives and Tasks document, or what George Crawford refers to as the material that sounds like it was written in Moscow and parachuted down on the plant, is not just a stylistic but mainly political point. Again it raises the above-mentioned point on learning how to use our program, how

to make it live and be meaningful, not a caricature of our opponents' (IS, RSL in particular) criticisms. The T2 material is a useful guide in this area. It has suffered from the immediacy and recurring crisis in the industry which compels a sort of narrow approach to the exclusion of writing stuff on more general social crises and issues, but is a valuable model on how to write for the particular industry one is working on. I believe the next round of II bargaining, for instance, will compel the II fractions to take an approach that is more similar to the T2 material than, for instance, the WV articles produced on the 1973 contract.

The literature produced by our fractions is also related to a necessary point on education in the fractions. Too often a pattern seems to be set that in the implantation period a lot of research/education goes on (when nobody is doing much except going to work) but that this ends and is seriously curtailed when the fractions begin functioning. I know this has been a problem here. It is most glaring in the Midwest BI fraction, where almost no education has taken place on union history, contract or anything else, despite what I believe to be the fairly available wealth of material (though not as rich and interesting as the II union material). It is thus not surprising that the fraction was caught out on its first leaflet/motion in calling for something (reduced dues while on layoff) while in fact the union already had, as I recall, a provision for no dues while on layoff. Not only does this otherwise minor point make us look green and rather stupid, but it hurts the political cutting edge of our intervention to be shown up on such a small, yet what should have been elementary shared knowledge, point. Education in the fractions cannot probably be an on-going thing, given the nature of the work, but there are periods when more rather than less can be done, and it should not end at 18 months in the given industry (or in the case of the Midwest BI fraction, start then!)

I want to make a point regarding TU direction. We have, on the whole, implanted over the last couple of years, a bunch of kids who did not know what they were doing. This has led to a natural tendency to "Call Chris" on virtually everything. From local experience, and comments I have heard regarding the TUC phone bill, I gather that there is a knee-jerk response that has developed in many fractions: "Got a problem? Call New York." Chris's outstanding abilities in this area notwithstanding, it should be, and I gather, increasingly has been warned against, and not just for financial considerations. George C. and I have had discussions on this point and I believe his advice and direction on the subject is most to the point. The TUC cannot deal with all the fractions' problems. The TUC cannot solve every tactical local quandary. The TUC does not know the intimate details of most local situations. The TUC is not Dear Abby via Ma Bell. The TUC (Cde. Jennings' impulses notwithstanding) cannot tell you exactly what to do in X situation.

The political importance for the fractions is that running many fractions straight from New York won't work anyway, and is

a substitute for the development of in-the-field ability to make decisions. The comrades in the fractions must learn to evaluate situations, make decisions and carry them out. This is the only road to viable fractions. There will be many, many situations where one cannot "Call New York," and where on-the-spot decisions will be required. Our comrades must be schooled in this understanding, and by practice, develop the ability to come up with the right answers. They will of course make some mistakes. And this is not an "L. Davidson" argument for fraction autonomy (!) But it does seem to me that overdirection by the TUC has been a problem and that this is recognized more in New York than it is in the field. The point should be made at the conference.

This does not of course solve the problem of the TUC, the need for reinforcement, developing the right configuration on the TUC, etc. That is another worrisome question. But direction from the TUC must take on the character of more generalizing and communicating of experiences to many fractions, and not just intricate tactical advice to many individual fractions. There will be situations where the most careful tactical advice is needed, where in fact, someone from the TUC must come into the local situation to direct the work (Minneapolis and the Bay Area, etc.).

Well, I have some other points to make, but must start wrapping this up so I'll hold till the conference. Some programmatic stuff should go into this thing; maybe on the nationalization question, issues that will be increasingly prominent ones for us-- shorter workweek/sliding scale and labor party, etc. But to move onto a few points on local work....

Fraternally,
Douglas

cc: files

by Bob Simons

Cambridge,
Massachusetts
31 July 1975National Black Consultative Fraction
SL
New York

Dear Comrades,

Would you please place on the agenda on the summer camp commission meeting the question of Boston, in particular, how, given our limited forces and our decided orientation, we can best intervene in the situation.

Numerous incidents of attacks on blacks have happened recently. They have been turf questions, i.e., keep the blacks out of "our" areas. They signal tremendous turmoil in early September. For the racists, unlike last fall, all court appeals and legislative remedies and political action (elections) have now been exhausted. Their last ditch stand is on the agenda.

Our opponents are also on the move. NSCAR has been successful in grabbing the limelight on recent issues and developing a widespread system of contacts among the black middle class. The SWP candidate for mayor, Norman Oliver, is one of four candidates in the September 2 primary. PL's "summer of commitment" has won CAR a small periphery--they are building "welcoming" committees for school opening that seemingly have some connection with their call for "bi-racial defense committees." YAWF has developed through its links in the Tenant-Welfare Movement the "Greater Boston People Against Racism." This group ran the recent defense of black families being attacked by white racists at an East Boston housing project. And lastly, former comrade Ali has ripped off our small black periphery and formed United Black Strategists (UBS). One of their first interventions apparently will be this weekend at a community speak-out organized by NSCAR. Their aim seems to be to kick the white radicals, including us, out of the community.

Our problems are thus organizationally quite severe, including the necessity of physical defense against PL/CAR and UBS (or at least its De Mau Mau wing). This is quite different from last year when we found we could operate in almost any situation and function very effectively against all our opponents.

It is in this context that we must discuss what we can do. I, of course, retain my opinion as put forth in the March PB that our Boston orientation must be strengthened and that this is crucial to our future opponent work vis-a-vis those groups making Boston a priority--SWP, PL, etc.--and towards the black radical movement. However, I do not intend to argue this at the commission meeting--the matter was settled at the March PB--but rather to contribute to a discussion with you comrades as to how to function

in this situation.

I would also like to suggest that a special pamphlet on the struggle for black rights, highlighting the busing struggle and recording the abysmal performance of our opponents, practically and theoretically, would be of the greatest use in the coming year. The packet concept, while adequate to date, tends to be too unwieldy and expensive for widespread circulation. Given the national character of the busing struggle, such a pamphlet could satisfy our needs in many locales.

Comradely,

Bob Simons

cc: files, local

THE POLITICAL DEGENERATION OF COMRADE ALI

by Gerald Smith

In spite of the fact that the political positions and perspective of Comrade Ali are a considerable distance from those of the Spartacist League, many comrades have raised the question of how and why this difference developed. For the last six months Ali's political development has swept us apart and placed us in different camps. Now our political relationship is that of opponents. Ever since comrade Ali officially announced his political differences with the party's political positions, he has done nothing but develop "new" positions that in essence represent down-right capitulations to black nationalism. But there were months when we were bound by close political ties and our personal relationship was tight.

Ali was an extremely talented and uneven comrade. He was a likeable person, very easy to get along with, aggressively political, soft on nationalism, and hadn't assimilated the SL's politics. From the first time I met Ali I saw the rotten nationalist streak that ran through him. Jim often said that Ali was always "half a nationalist." The leadership had decided to deal with Ali's political differences in a systematic way after he had resolved an extremely serious personal problem. But before this problem could be resolved, the pressure of events forced Ali's differences to the fore. At first the differences seemed almost minor (self-determination for black people after the socialist revolution), then impressionistic and soft on nationalism (political vs. sociological class, against splitting "black partisan" organizations). After the debate in New York he resigned.

Why Did He Join?

At the time Ali came around us our local in Boston was the largest in the country, next to New York. He had previously been in certain nationalist organizations, but was at this time working with PL/WAM in a hospital union drive. We intervened at a meeting in which he was speaking and said something about Stalinism. We spoke with him after the meeting and started contacting him. Ali says that he saw our comrades being excluded, pushed down stairs, and slandered. But we "kept coming back." Ali says that it was our serious attitude towards politics and our persistence that initially impressed him and attracted him towards us. It was also explained to him that ours was a democratic centralist organization in which one could politically struggle for one's views. It is important to point out that, at this time, Ali may have had some differences but they did not seem to be far-reaching nor were they raised in a hostile fashion. On the whole he looked good, very good. He broke with us for a period, but came back around.

Distrustful of a predominantly white organization, Ali continued to have reservations and make criticisms, some of which were quite valid. To name a couple: 1) In a Black Fraction meeting in New York when Joe D. put forward the argument that primarily lumpen street gang types were responsible for the violence in the beginning of the Boston busing crisis. Ali immediately contradicted Joe D. and

pointed out that the anti-busing forces contained a large component of white workers and they too had been responsible for rock-throwing, etc. The course of events has totally confirmed this. 2) Ali felt that MB No. 5, with the additions, was limited to polemical documents against nationalist organizations and deviations in the workers movement, but did not include a positive program for black liberation. The leadership is presently working on a new introduction for MB No. 5 that will update it and put forth such a positive affirmation of our line on the black question.

While Ali was capable of making constructive criticisms, many of his criticisms revealed the black nationalist thread that ran through him. On the bus to the SL National Conference in 1974, he argued that the articles in WV on Africa were off because the main "fire" of our polemics were aimed at the petty-bourgeois nationalists (FRELIMO, PAIGC, etc.), while he felt that the fire of our polemics should be aimed at the imperialists! As if we could polarize the imperialists and regroup with the "honest," "progressive" imperialists! In another argument we had he advanced the position that there could be transitional organizations (specifically the All African Peoples Party, Stokely Carmichael's group) without Trotskyists in the leadership. From these two arguments alone it is clear that Ali never understood what it meant to be a fighting propaganda group with a perspective of regrouping with leftward-moving forces that we can intersect with our polemical press. Nor did he really understand the crisis in leadership and, more importantly, how this crisis will be resolved.

The Myth of the "Independent Black Militants"

Ali constantly spoke of the "independent black militants" that he was friendly with, i.e., die-hard nationalists. Ali argued that the SL was failing to intersect these "independent militants." I had the opportunity to meet many of these "independents" when I was in Boston. Here are the facts: these so-called "independent black militants" were in fact hard cultural nationalists who, while militant and sometimes verbally pro-socialist, were in practice anti-communist and extremely anti-white--excuse me--pro-black. So pro-black that their lone contribution to the political struggles in Boston have been the exclusion of whites from political meetings and demos. Needless to say these "militants" did not impress me as being ripe for recruitment into the SL. This is not to say that at some future date die-hard nationalists will not be won over, when we have increased our social weight. There is a difference between race consciousness (an elementary understanding and hatred for the racial oppression black people face daily), and black nationalism (an isolating, defeatist reaction to the failure [of] various movements to destroy that oppression). We can and must construct a bridge from race consciousness to class consciousness for black militants who feel compelled to deal with racial oppression. Black nationalism, on the other hand, is a roadblock to the development of class consciousness, a dead-end. Because Ali wanted to maintain his friendship with these "independent militants," it was impossible (from Ali's perspective) to wage a political struggle against them. The fact that he had not yet fully assimilated the SL's politics and had

a tendency toward "free-lancing" didn't help. By the beginning of December 1974, Ali was saying things like we could win these "independent militants" over provided that we recognize the right of black people to self-determination, provided that we didn't demand that the black movement be "subservient" to the proletarian movement, provided that we ceased to "label" nationalism/Pan Africanism as reactionary, provided that we see that the "will of black people" is against assimilation, provided that we not have the orientation to split and wreck "black partisan organizations," provided that...

Ali is dead wrong in the first place because there are organizations that are willing to and have already made such "theoretical concessions" to black nationalism (SWP, OL, etc.). The only thing they have increased by granting these political "concessions," i.e., capitulations, is their distance from Marxist politics. In terms of black recruitment, they have gained nothing! Most of these organizations are simply revolving doors for black militants and retain only a few die-hard reformists that call themselves "revolutionary nationalists." Ali once argued that most of the militant black organizations included the demand for self-determination in their programs. It was pointed out to Ali that most of these "militant organizations" also believed that socialism could be constructed in a single country. Obviously we will never be the champions of this perverted concept! It is utterly false to the core that the SL "demands" that the black movement be "subservient" to the proletarian movement in general. But unlike the nationalists we see the potentially powerful reciprocal relationship between the two movements, and therefore we struggle inside the black liberation movement for the development of a class axis, and in the trade unions we struggle to mobilize the class-conscious workers to break down the barriers of racial segregation.

Political Class: Subjective Idealism

By the springtime, 1975, Ali had soured considerably, which caused a lot of his subjectivism to come out. The supreme manifestation of this is his position of the "political class." This theory is a rejection of the Marxian understanding of a social class being determined by a person or group's relationship to the means of production. The "political class" theory basically defines any group of people in "progressive" political motion to be the proletariat. Thus at the Kent State intervention Ali wanted to denounce Baraka for not launching an "independent black party." When I objected Ali argued that the SL was for the creation of a third "anti-capitalist" party, after all we call for a labor party. He based this position on the theory of the "political class." We do not advocate the formation of a black party because it would not represent a working class alternative and by that token would not raise the class consciousness of the workers, white or black.

The most conspicuously subjective use of this "political class" theory was put forward by Ali in his opposition to being transferred to New York with the perspective of working with the Tl fraction and possibly heading up the Black Fraction. Ali argued that Boston was the center of the class struggle in the U.S., and therefore he had to stay in Boston. Once again this position was supposedly based on the

theory of the "political class." From what I understand, only CC members are required to move when ordered. If non-CC members have compelling personal reasons for not moving when requested they will not be forced to do [so]. Dedication is the only lever that the party has on this question. But what Ali did was to raise the question of his transfer to a principled political difference. It was dealt with accordingly. The fact is that Ali was in a relatively comfortable situation (new family, friends, political ties outside the SL) that he didn't want to leave behind. Just before the debate in New York Ali was arguing from the basis of the "political class" theory for a "Black General Strike"!

After the debate Ali did a strange thing: he paid Reuben the \$5 for his application fee. I mistakenly saw this as a sign that the brother was straightening up. He resigned the next day.

Ali, like many blacks, didn't get a decent education and therefore had problems reading. Instead of recognizing this as a definite weakness he raised his personal experiences to the level of equal significance to the experience embodied in the Marxist classics; he thus never understood that while it is obviously true that "Lenin didn't have the last word on the national question," attacks upon the basic premises of Leninism must be fully substantiated with objective facts and a scientific, i.e., Marxist analysis. Mere assertions are not sufficient.

Political organizations can be important either because of the political ideas they bring into the movement or the mass of people they embrace. The "independent militants" in Boston that Ali is presently working with have neither. Because of the lack of a material base for the black nationalist movement, most black nationalist movements (with the sole exception of the Garvey movement) have never acquired a mass base. They also generally have an episodic character and tend to decompose rapidly. Easy come, easy go. So while there still exists some black nationalist sentiments among certain layers of the black masses, primarily Ali's and my generation, the organizations are long gone or socially insignificant. It is this sentiment that Ali capitulated to. He wants to be popular in the "community" more than he wants to be a Bolshevik. To abandon socialist revolution in the name of black liberation is weak-minded, to say the least.

Ali has other appetites. These were expressed in his attitude towards the National Black Assembly. The National Black [Assembly] is a body that includes such "independent militants" as Mayor Hatcher from Gary, Indiana, [and] Bill Owens, a senator from Mass. When Ali was attacked for seeking to work for the Democratic Party, he fiercely objected. But the fact remains that if at minimum Ali does not raise the demand inside this Black Assembly that the Assembly should make a clean break with the capitalist parties by calling for the political equivalent of a Freedom Labor Party, that due to the social forces involved, which are more powerful than his subjective militancy, he would become, at best, an unwilling tool of the "white dominated" Democratic Party.

"Independence of the Black Movement" and Communist Discipline

Before Ali resigned it was believed that he had been guilty of double recruiting, a charge that is almost impossible to prove. Recent events suggest the charge was valid. Ali along with Mike H. (an ex-contact), among other people we were interested in, has just joined a group called the United Black Strategists according to a report we just received from Boston by Bob S. This is not a coincidence. Brian and Ruth say that while Ali was still in the SL Mike H. was parroting many of Ali's differences. It was also said that Ali was not responsibly carrying out his share of local work (sales, interventions, etc.). Independence of the black movement is no cover for this kind of functioning. While it [is] true that in the face of a dormant working class the black movement has, as Fraser said, "moved independently but not for independence," this in no way suggests that the party should not have complete control over the activity of its members in this arena. We are for the same type of independence for the black movement that we are for the trade-union movement: independence from the bourgeois state and parties.

The reason Ali wanted to have the debate in N.Y. was, as Bernard said, to get it all off his chest. After telling us to read Harold Cruse for the debate ("This is where I'm coming from"), he failed to defend even one of Cruse's crackpot anti-communist, pro-capitalist views. The strongest argument Ali had against the party he did not (nor could he) use: the malfunctioning of the National Black Fraction. He could not use this argument precisely because this was one of his responsibilities which he was turning his back on.

The danger of the pressure of this racist society deforming black minds always is present. All revolutionaries face social pressure. Black revolutionaries in predominantly white organizations face extra pressure. From this fact flows the necessity to make sure black recruits are fully consolidated around our program before they become members, and not simply [be] in "general agreement." At the same time, as we grow it will become more and more important to develop a sensitive relationship with the most militant sections of the black masses. Because of the intense racism in this society and the shameful betrayals of the black movement by the Stalinists, it is necessary to prove to many active black militants that, contrary to the race-baiting anti-communism of the Harold Cruse stripe, when black militants become black Trotskyists, they do not become "foreigners" or "aliens" (ask Governor Wallace). Ali has maintained friendly relations with me and some other comrades. Observing the course of his political retrogression was sad. If we wanted to show how the pressure of a racist society with the help of nationalist opiate can destroy black revolutionaries, we could give the example of Ali.

2 August 1975

[Some of ex-comrade Ali Lumumba's then evolving views are in Discussion Bulletin no. 25, April 1975]

LENIN'S DEVIATION ON THE NATIONAL QUESTION AND LUXEMBURG'S 88.
CORRECTIONS: AN INITIAL CONTRIBUTION TO AN ONGOING DISCUSSION

by Paul Abbot

In this paper I am faced with the task of compressing some 130 years of discussion and the perhaps 500 pages that I would like to write into 4-5 pages. The least unsuitable way of performing that impossible task is to rely heavily on source material and compress broad topics into single sentences or paragraphs. The discussion within the SL/U.S. and the ist will not be resolved at the summer camp. Consequently, I hope that comrades will endeavor to familiarize themselves with the basic source material, without which neither the pro-¹ or anti-Luxemburgist positions are complete.

A. First Things First--On Lumumba. While the errors of Lenin and Trotsky on the national question do not condemn them to the centrist camp, Luxemburg's position is the whetstone upon which the razor edge of revolutionary anti-nationalism is sharpened. But against the likes of Lumumba, even the Leninist "blunt instruments" are sufficient. Both Comrades Seymour and "Big G" perform a "deformed demolition" of Brother Lumumba's positions. Put another way--Br. Lumumba, are you listening?--when there's fire, you don't need smoke as an indicator!

B. The National Question Has Always Been A Topic of Debate In the Revolutionary Movement. When comrades think of revolutionaries² who differed with Lenin they generally think only of R. Luxemburg. Leaving aside that the Social Democracy of the Kingdoms of Poland and Lithuania (SDKPiL) supported her, numerous leaders of the RSDLP(b) also held positions closer to Luxemburg's than Lenin's.

K. Radek and Y. Pyatakov (both CC RSDLP(b) members at one time) actively polemicized against Lenin during World War I.³ N. Bukharin and E. Preobrazhensky (effective founder of the Left Opposition and top Russian economist) disagreed with Lenin's position in the RSDLP(b)'s theoretical primer entitled The ABC of Communism.⁴ F. Dzerzhinsky (albeit an ex-SDKPiL member) generally maintained Luxemburg's position until 1925.⁵ And even J. Stalin (and we assume the 3rd All Russian Congress of Soviets) added his name to the list.⁶

Naturally, I'm not maintaining that because many revolutionary leaders disagreed with Lenin that they are automatically right while he is automatically wrong. However, there exists a certain myth that the RSDLP(b) leadership was solidly behind Lenin on this issue and it just ain't so. There is Lenin's position, but is there really a hard Leninist position?

C. "Self-Determination" As A Social-Democratic Carryover. Neither Marx nor Engels ever developed a unified theory concerning the national question. What they did was examine its ramifications in specific, concrete, historical circumstances.⁷ The conception of the "right of nations to self-determination" entered the Marxist movement in 1896.⁸ And well it should! The 2nd International laid aside the transitional strategy contained within the Communist Manifesto for the minimum/maximum programmatic conceptions. How easy then for the leaders of the 2nd International (and the pre-revolu-

tionary Lenin⁹) to see "national liberation" as a "minimum" or the "first" of "two stages."

Lenin of course concretely broke with the "Two-stage" theory of revolution in his April Theses. However, Lenin never subjected his past writings to a systematic revue.¹⁰ Trotsky, on the other hand, while a believer in permanent revolution, never expressed any real theoretical interest in the national question, nor did he ever give evidence of a serious study of the issue.¹¹

D. The Question of "Self-Determination" Has Been Largely Done Away With by History. When Lenin and the RSDLP(b) wrote, they lived in a world where "national oppression" as defined within the context of being overcome by "self-determination" was very much in existence.¹² Since, according to Lenin, "self-determination" equals "the right to separate" equals "the right to a separate state" one must examine the world for oppressed countries without their "own" states.

Since Lenin's time, the world bourgeoisie has become "smarter." Rather than using their own armed forces to totally subjugate another country, they prefer to establish a "native" regime which is 1) generally cheaper; and 2) provides a better ideological defense of imperialism. To use Mandel/Germain's "quaint" term, imperialism has been replaced by "neo-colonialism." Even S. Vietnam had its "own" state! As we know, and as Lenin knew (though the International Socialists could not and would not recognize), "self-determination" does not automatically lead to "national" liberation--only proletarian revolution can do that!

Nonetheless, if one looks throughout the world for the classical stateless nation, one finds Quebec, and "percentages" of Angola, Puerto Rico, etc. Consequently, "self-determination" increasingly yields to proletarian revolution, as the SL/U.S. (much to its credit) has begun to recognize with the analysis of "interpenetrated people."

E. Annexations and Anti-Militarism. The various and numerous details of annexations cannot, because of space and time, be gone into here.¹³ Briefly put, however, as Communists we are necessarily anti-militarists, fighting against imperialist annexations, U.S. military bases in Puerto Rico, Turkey, Portugal, etc. But this is a "negative" struggle--we are against allowing something to happen. "Self-determination" though is a "positive" thing--we are in favor of allowing something to take place.¹⁴ Lenin confuses the two different aspects of the struggle when he tries to prove that to be against annexations is to be in favor of "self-determination,"¹⁵ and further that revolutionaries are against them because they "violate the self-determination of nations."¹⁶ Lenin confuses cause and effect, much as did certain Black nationalists who maintained that one couldn't really be against racial oppression without supporting Black nationalism, since the racial oppression was anti-nationalistic! One may fight against annexations or racial oppression without further agreeing with Lenin on the one hand or the nationalists on the other.

W. State or Revolution. A fundamental contradiction exists in Lenin's theories on "self-determination of oppressed nations." As Luxemburg first pointed out (and as later Bolsheviki concluded effectively):

"In a society based on classes, the nation as a uniform social-political whole simply does not exist. Instead there exists within each nation classes with antagonistic interests and "rights." There is literally no social arena--from the strongest material relationship to the most subtle moral one--in which the possessing classes and a self-conscious proletariat could take one and the same position and figure as one undifferentiated whole."

--"The Question of Nationality and Autonomy."¹⁷

Unlike Radek/Pyatakov, Luxemburg and the others recognized the "right" of "self-determination" under socialism, i.e., under the dictatorship of the proletariat.¹⁸ Since one class must ultimately express the "will of the nation," and since Luxemburg and others recognize the "self-determination of the toiling masses," the difference between Luxemburg and Lenin, put concretely, is whether revolutionaries accord the right of a bourgeoisie to establish a bourgeois state to oppress their "own" workers. Lenin, as was shown in the case of Finland, effectively granted the bourgeoisie that right, with the consequence that Finland is still capitalist today.

Those holding Lenin's position often remark that we "must allow self-determination in order to convince the people that we are serious about not oppressing them and only thus can we begin to win them away from nationalism." The experience of the RSDLP was a bit different, in that Lenin seems more to use "self-determination" as a weapon aimed against Great-Russian nationalism than the latent nationalism of the oppressed nations. He stresses that the Poles "must stress the right of such nations to unity." (emphasis in original)¹⁹ Concretely then, you had a RSDLP/SDKPiL paper, printed in Polish, attacking nationalism and self-determination" and a Russian language paper (not read by the Polish masses) which preached "self-determination"! This is hardly the popular view of how "self-determination" was used at times by the Bolsheviki!

Furthermore, if a revolutionary in an "oppressor country" honestly addresses a worker of an oppressed country, the address should go something like: "In order to show you that I am honest and won't oppress you, 'you' have the right to form a separate state. Of course, I don't oppress you now, but the ruling class state of 'my' country oppresses us both. The new state that will be set up won't help you either but will be a state of 'your' native ruling class which will further oppress you and smash your organizations. As an internationalist I will then do everything in my power to help your class brothers who are self-conscious to overthrow the new state which 'I' just allowed to be established, whether you personally like it or not." Such an argument, I dare say, would not have much of a positive effect on a latent nationalist!

G. The National Question in the Epoch of Permanent Revolution.

Unlike Luxemburg, Radek, and Pyatakov, I will not state that purely national wars are totally impossible. However, the entire objective drive in this epoch increasingly makes such national conflicts improbable. This pattern can be seen in the Bengali/Pakistan/India war where Workers Vanguard correctly stated:

"The power rivalry between Pakistan and India has once more broken out in war....Standing behind these tinpot imperialists are the various big imperialist powers and their allies, the bureaucracies of the deformed workers states....Under these conditions to call for support to the Bengali independence movement is to play into the hands of Indira Gandhi and the Bengal national traitors."²⁰

Under today's conditions the various national bourgeoisies are increasingly incapable of establishing even the token forms of national independence and it has been an increasing process of "impotency" since the imperialist epoch started. Marx wrote that the national bourgeoisie needed to clothe itself in the garb of the "people" in order to win mass support.²¹ "Self-determination" today, even in its "socialist" varieties such as Nasser's "Arab Socialist Revolution," represents the ideological prop, not only of the native bourgeoisie of an oppressed country, but, as seen from the case of India "defending" the Bengali's "right to self-determination" or the U.S.A.'s protection of the "territoriality of S. Vietnam," "self-determination" becomes used as a justification for imperialist actions.

While continuing the revolutionary traditions of the Bolsheviks and the Fourth International, the SL/U.S. and the iSt must lay aside the confused anti-nationalism and "self-determination" of Lenin for the razor-sharp revolutionary anti-nationalism of Rosa Luxemburg and the SDKPiL.

[3 August 1975
Baltimore]

FOOTNOTES

1. I only think that I hold her position. Her main work on the question has never been translated from Polish. ("The Question of nationality and autonomy," source P. Nettl, R. Luxemburg, abridged edition, New York, 1969, p. 506).
2. I.e., not Bauer, the Bund, etc. But, at least 2 CC SL/U.S. members have stated that RL was "a centrist opponent of the Bolshevik Party." cf. Trotsky: "Put aside the incidentals which developments have overcome, and we can, with full justification, place our work for the FI under the sign of the "3 L's," that is, not only...Lenin, but also Luxemburg and Liebknecht." (LT, "Luxemburg and the FI," in M.A. Waters, Rosa Luxemburg Speaks, New York, 1970, p. 454). See also V. Lenin on the publication of RL's complete works ("Notes of a Publicist" in Waters, p. 440).
3. See the theses of Radek's rump "Presidium of the Warsaw Committee of the SDKPil" and the articles in Verbote, translated and reprinted in Gankin and Hess's The Bolsheviks in World War, Stanford, 1940.
4. "...when we speak of recognizing the right of nations to self determination, we are referring to the right of the working majority (emphasis mine--PA) in any nation...as far as the bourgeois is concerned...we deprive it also of the right to any voice in the question of national affairs." NB and EP ABC..., Baltimore, 1969, Sec. 59 "Who Expresses the 'Will of the Nation'?", p. 249.
5. "Do robotnikow Dolbysza," Pisma Wybrane, Warsaw, 1952, p. 416 (cited by Nettl, p. 514).
6. (speech at the 3rd All-Russian Congress): "All this leads to the necessity of interpreting the principle of self-determination not as a right for the bourgeoisie but exclusively for the working masses of the nation concerned. The principle of self-determination must be an instrument in the struggle for Socialism and must be subordinated to the principles of Socialism." (J. Stalin, Sochineniya, Vol. IV, pp. 31-32) cited by Nettl, p. 515, and I. Deutscher Stalin (New York, 1960, pp. 184-185.) Nettl prefaces the quote with: "By 1918 Stalin, now the established party expert on the question of nationalities, had redefined Lenin's thesis even more ominously /sic/ --and almost like a caricature /sic/ of Rosa Luxemburg." Quite right, Mr. Nettl, and right on, Uncle Joe!
7. See H. B. Davis Nationalism and Socialism... (New York, 1973,) p. 44; Nettl, p. 501; and E.H. Carr, The Bolshevik Revolution: 1917-1923, Vol. I, (Middlesex, England, 1969), p. 417.
8. See Nettl, p. 64.
9. See B. Vukovitch on the early Lenin and the reply of the supporters of the SL/ U.S. on Lenin as a subjective revolutionary developing into the late Lenin of the post-April Theses period.

10. Ask yourself where one finds a specific endorsement by Lenin of Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution!
11. Lenin wrote perhaps 30-40 articles on the national question. Luxemburg and Stalin wrote numerous ones. Where did Trotsky ("stenographic discussions" aside) write two major articles on this question???
12. See for example, Stalin's writings as the S.U.'s Commisar of Nationalities, up to and before the 10th Party Congress. Marxism and the National-Colonial Question: A Collection of Articles and Speeches, (Proletarian Publishers, San Francisco, 1975).
13. For Lenin's views see "The Discussion of Self-Determination Summed Up," Collected Works, Vol. xxii, pp. 320-360.
14. Which is not to say that Lenin wanted it or like it taking place.
15. See #13.
16. See #13, p. 235.
17. Cited by Nettl, p. 507.
18. See for example "The Junius Pamphlet."
19. Lenin, "On the Right of Nations to Self-Determination," cited by Nettl, p. 513.
20. "Turn the Guns the Other Way! New Masters for Bangla Desh," WV #4, January 1972.
21. See The German Ideology and "Introduction to A Contribution the Critique of Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right'."

4 August 1975

Jim--

Along the lines of not recruiting enough cadre/organizer material (due to a drying up of the New Left and present recruitment of raw rather than seasoned would-be revolutionaries) here is the angle I worry about: the continuity of Spartacism, or lack thereof. I have only the view of the New York Local, but between seeing New York, particularly youth, and hearing Sue's talk of Bay Area life a couple of years ago, I see the following bad situation: raw youth thrust into positions of leadership without the continuity of Spartacism infused into their blood cells. Energy, drive, intelligence can be recruited; Spartacists are made. Organizers must be taught the lessons of the CI and SL rather than having to relearn them on the job. In particular youth organizers must train under a leadership which can teach them not only how to organize a sale and other technical details, but also how to run a meeting, elect delegates, etc., which is not a detail but a question of communist functioning. How to run a local. That's a rather diffuse point but it's a diffuse problem. I've only seen a small slice of the organization so I have a very limited view, but good intentions and energy cannot make up for training the likes of what it sounds like Al Nelson gave the Bay Area. Now, there are not enough RTers to go around and not every C Cer makes a good teacher, nor does every good teacher make a good organizer. So every local needs not only an organizer but also a Grand Spartacist (a less pompous title maybe? Old fogey emeritus?) whose job it is to insure that the continuity of Spartacist/Communist teachings is maintained among all these raw youth.

Perhaps this is being done, or it's idealistic and impossible. I don't know. But sometimes in local meetings I worry about it.

C. Price

ON INTERPENETRATED PEOPLES
AND
THE RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION

95.

by Henry A.

New York
5 August 1975

Comrades:

I think some part of the disagreement reflected in the New York Local discussions over the interpenetrated peoples question stems from what would appear to be inadequate formulations in the CC resolution of 16 March 1974 and the Norden amendment. The key theoretical formulation reads: "The democratic issue of self-determination for each of two nationalities or peoples who geographically interpenetrate can only conceivably be resolved equitably within the framework of the proletariat in power"; and the amendment adds that "the right of self-determination is a democratic right which applies to all nations, including Hebrew- and Arab-speaking people in the Near East. However, whether Leninists advocate separation depends on a number of circumstances. The right of self-determination cannot be implemented by suppressing the right of self-determination for another people."

The categorical assertions that the right of self-determination cannot be implemented by suppressing that right of another people, and that self-determination can only be equitably achieved for interpenetrated peoples under the dictatorship of the proletariat may logically lead to an abstentionist position in some instances of national oppression. Given that the exercise of the right by the black majority of South Africa could well result in the denial of the right for the white minority, and given that interpenetrated peoples cannot achieve an equitable resolution of the national question except under the dictatorship of the proletariat, it would seem to follow that our position would be to see no defensible resolution of the national question for the black majority this side of the dictatorship of the proletariat. An alternative position frequently argued in an effort to side-step the unacceptable implications of this amendment as applied to South Africa asserts that South Africa does not constitute a case of interpenetrated peoples, i.e., the whites are not a "people" and thus do not have a claim to democratic rights. The fact is that neither of these positions is upheld by Trotsky's 1935 article on South Africa or by the WV article on South Africa (though both precede the resolution and amendment).

The thrust of the resolution and the historic position of our movement on South Africa--recognition of the right of self-determination of the black majority, even at the expense of the right of the whites which has manifest itself in the creation of the apartheid state--can be reconciled only if we take into account the fact that contending claims to democratic rights of interpenetrated peoples may not be of equal legitimacy. Democratic rights have a quantitative component. The claim to the democratic right of self-determination of an interpenetrated minority of 15 percent which is upheld only through the suppression of the

contending right of the 85 percent has less validity than would be the case if the converse were true, or if each of the interpenetrated peoples was of approximately equal size. The greater the disparity in relative size, the less, in general, is the legitimacy of the numerically smaller's claim to the "right" which can only be maintained through the denial of a more substantial claim to the right. The class character of the contending elements is, of course, also a factor in determining the legitimacy of contending claims, though it would appear that the question of interpenetrated peoples presents itself precisely at the point class criteria are not in themselves decisive, e.g., we would not be faced with the interpenetrated peoples problem in Palestine if the Hebrew-speaking people's state--their current expression of their right of self-determination--were merely a tool of imperialism, or itself an imperialist power.

I propose the motion itself be changed to read: "Given the equal legitimacy of the claims of interpenetrated peoples to their respective rights to self-determination, such as is the case in Northern Ireland and Palestine, these rights can only be equitably realized under the dictatorship of the proletariat."

The second part of the Norden amendment, which asserts that the right of self-determination cannot be implemented by suppressing the rights of self-determination of another people is neither a historically accurate description nor a morally appropriate proscription. The history of the development of the bourgeois nation state provides numerous cases which prove that a nation's consolidation can and has occurred at the expense of the democratic rights of its weaker neighbors. South Africa makes clear how inappropriate it would be for Bolsheviks to fail to defend the implementation of the right of self-determination for one people (the black Africans) at the expense of another (the whites). Therefore I propose that the last part of the amendment, the last sentence, be deleted.

Finally, while the right in the abstract applies to all nations, its exercise--not simply "whether Leninists advocate separation"--might conflict with other principles or rights which take priority, as was indicated above, and thus the "right" might in a particular historic context become inoperative. Lenin was prepared to subordinate the democratic question of the self-determination of the Ukraine to the preservation of the October Revolution, and we would oppose the bourgeois self-determination of Latvia or Lithuania. Therefore I propose that the amendment be amended to read: "However, whether Leninists advocate separation, or even regard that right as operative, depends on a number of circumstances."

Clearly these observations do not speak to some essential aspects of the question. I offer them not to trivialize the question by reducing historically substantive issues to disputes over linguistic precision, but in the hope that clearing away some secondary ambiguities may help bring the fundamental issue into sharper focus.

Henry A.