

Comrades,

The Mass Strike tendency yesterday presented a program, "Proletarian Press Policy." The position we took in that document derived from a failure to think out the implications of regroupment perspective in every sphere of party activity. We consider our position in that document a critical mistake; it was a wrong policy in this period. We consider it a very good mistake to have made. We have learned a great deal in the last few hours as the result of that mistake. We are glad that we made it when we did, in the way we did. Had we been admitted to the SL before clarifying these questions, the differences would have festered like a sore, possibly leading to a destructive split in the future.

Having understood our mistake, we debated for several hours what course we should take. We considered withdrawing our collective application for membership; applying for candidate memberships; dissolving the tendency and applying as individuals; withdrawing our fusion document and writing another. We decided all these courses were wrong and irresponsible. We consider ourselves good communists, in deep agreement with the principles, program and practice of the SL. We belong in the SL, and our document "Development of the Mass Strike" is a basically adequate and accurate analysis of our past history, the major political misconceptions we had to overcome, and our present understanding of the correct position on these questions. We stand on that document. We might add that we understand what it says and its implications a lot better than when we wrote it.

In the meantime we made a mistake. The very fact that we had the temerity to raise that kind of criticism at the same time that we were proposing to fuse with the SL is an indication of our seriousness. We could hardly be accused of trying to sneak into the party on an unprincipled basis. We're proud of our mistake.

But the SL is now judging us as potential members, as cadre in the nucleus of the revolutionary party. That is a serious decision. You must judge not only our seriousness and honesty -- but our capabilities as revolutionists and our thorough understanding of the program of the SL, that is, the correct revolutionary strategy in this period. To judge that you will want to know above all what we learned from our mistake. It would not help the revolution for you to accept us on the basis of our saying, "You were right. We were wrong." The key is understanding the correct policy.

Now, as a matter of fact, we were wrong. Although we accepted regroupment, it was in a shallow fashion. We did not acknowledge its significance in every area of party activity. A careful examination of the priorities of the SL, however, makes this point quite evident. The importance attached to the CWC fusion; and also ourselves, stands out. The orientation of youth work to PL is another example. The press must reflect the basic tactic of the party in any given period - right now, regroupment. This, along with personal and financial limitations determines selection of articles and political content for each issue. Every article must bear in some way on party work, relating to some development on the left or our trade union concentrations. This clearly rules out the type of paper suggested by Mass Strike -- i.e., one with consistently large amounts of reporting not related to our immediate organizing perspectives.

We consider the SL capable of producing such a mass paper now, and we feel it could be sold with some success, and could help to raise the class consciousness of those who read and understand it. This would be correct to do at some later point. (We made it very clear we were not talking about some a-theoretical, low level "workerist" rag.) But not now. Because in this period the key task is not raising the class consciousness of large numbers of militant workers -- but instead the creation of the nucleus of the vanguard party. That is what we still did not

thoroughly understand. (That is why the difference over the relative importance of the NPAC conference and the wage freeze. The question is not which is the major issue affecting the class right now -- how we say it -- but what events most serve to clarify the political situation, leading immediately to building the revolutionary party.) We sort of say mass work in the trade unions as equal with "regroupment work" among largely petty-bourgeois elements. We didn't really yet understand the total implications of Trotsky's statement that in this period the "historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of revolutionary leadership." There have been periods of heightened class consciousness in the past which did not, however, lead to revolution due to the absence of an authoritative and truly revolutionary leadership. We didn't understand that this meant that regroupment of the advanced members of already radicalized groups is the fundamental task of this period (to be combined with increasing involvement in trade union work as personnel permit.)

For us this is no accidental mistake. It was the last vestige of our same semi-syndicalist mass work orientation which was the basis of the MSOC and from which we have slowly been moving away. We believe we now have an essentially correct understanding of the fundamental SL orientation. And we agree with it because it is correct.

We now understand that if it was ever unclear whether the PB meant the Workers' Vanguard as a "mass press" as we say it, you should not have meant that because such a concept is in direct contradiction with the correct regroupment orientation in this period.

The Mass Strike Organizing  
Committee

6 September 1971