

I N T E R N A L   I N F O R M A T I O N   B U L L E T I N

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## INTRODUCTION

On April 4, 1966, the Seattle-based Kirk-Kaye faction split from the Socialist Workers Party. The split had been preceded by years of factional hardening in the Seattle Branch and the elaboration of political and organizational concepts at variance with those of the SWP.

Under the leadership of Kirk-Kaye, the Seattle Branch virtually isolated itself from the mainstream of party life and tended more and more to function as an autonomous cult which owed political and organizational allegiance solely to the Kirk-Kaye faction.

During the pre-convention period and at the September, 1965, SWP Convention, the Kirk-Kaye Minority Political Resolution was amply discussed and overwhelmingly rejected. At that time there was no overt indication that the faction was approaching the point of split. However, under pressure of the party's increased activity in the growing antiwar movement and given the Seattle faction's frustrating inability to win adherents, the group soon found life inside the party intolerable.

Because the Kirk-Kaye split perspective reached maturity only after the last convention, discussion and information on its accelerated evolution was limited almost entirely to the National Committee. In view of the consummated split of this tendency, the Political Committee is publishing, for the information of party members, the most pertinent documents and letters on the matter since the 1965 convention.

Ed Shaw  
Organization Secretary

June 21, 1966

POLITICAL COMMITTEE STATEMENT ON THE KIRK-KAYE SPLIT

Since its formation a number of years ago, the Kirk-Kaye group has been free to present its views to the ranks of the Socialist Workers Party in accordance with all the democratic rights traditionally granted to minorities under our Leninist organizational principles. As time went by, however, the group became less and less willing to abide by those principles. Then, on April 4, 1966, it made formal its split from the party which, to a large extent, had already been carried out in practice.

Deserters involved in the split include twenty-two former members of the Seattle branch and three former members-at-large in Connecticut. A few of them had been in the party since the Thirties. These latter defections reflect the extreme demoralization experienced by some within our ranks under pressures generated by the prolonged period of objective adversity the party has undergone.

In addition to its special ideas, the Kirk-Kaye group shares the characteristics typical of various minority formations that have appeared within the party in recent times. Each of these groupings tended to come forward with a gimmick guaranteed to work miracles for the party despite adverse objective conditions. In every case these minority viewpoints have been democratically discussed within the party and then rejected by an overwhelming majority of the membership.

Without exception, minorities of the Kirk-Kaye type have reacted to the rejection of their views by predicting disaster for the party. New developments, which contravened rather than confirmed their views, have been seized upon as a pretext for reintroducing their past notions. Old arguments have been repeatedly rehashed and demands for "new" discussion raised on the specious ground that the party is committing "new" errors. Behind all this has lain an obsessive desire to overturn the party's program and principles and a tendency, born of ingrown factional blindness, to look upon the party as a political prison.

As usually happens in such cases, those who nurse basic political differences with the party also tend to develop an urge to throw off the normal restrictions imposed upon them by the party's organizational concepts. Out of their frustration the diverse minorities evolved a common front on one special point: their opposition to the principle of majority rule. This resulted in brazen claims that an organized minority has the unconditional right to determine its own conduct inside the party, along with contentions that the majority has no right to require a minority to carry out official party policy.

Enforcement of the basic democratic principle of majority rule has been portrayed as a violation of minority rights. Refusal to let minorities turn the party into a perpetual talk shop has met with charges that there is not adequate discussion,

that there is no democratic procedure for correcting party policy. When called to order for indiscipline and disloyalty, an outcry has arisen about bureaucratic persecution. The party leadership has been accused of trying to solve political questions by organizational measures. Statements and insinuations have been heard that organized minorities are no longer tolerated in the party and that party democracy is being undermined by a bureaucratic and apolitical leadership.

These slanderous and unfounded charges have been intended to divert attention from the realities of the internal party situation. Behind a smokescreen of double-talk, minorities have actually attempted to set themselves up as a party within the party, with their own program and their own discipline. More accurately, they have tended to degenerate into unprincipled cliques bound together by personal associations. As such, they find the normal restrictions imposed by the party's program and principles increasingly intolerable. They exhibit a strong urge to break loose from all party restraint.

If the party did not stand firm, if it conceded to the demands for special license to organized minorities, it would negate the Leninist concept of a disciplined party composed of loyal members. Organizationally, the party would become converted into an all-inclusive federation of autonomous factions. Politically, it would be rendered impotent by perpetual internal warfare.

The party met this latest challenge to its Leninist concepts by adopting, after a democratic internal discussion, its 1965 convention resolution on "The Organizational Character of the SWP." That resolution reaffirmed our basic concepts of democratic centralism, restating them in face of the current specific challenge.

As the resolution states, our movement aims to train its cadres in the irreconcilable spirit of a combat party. That aim requires firmness in political line, unity in action, disciplined conduct in all internal party affairs and unconditional loyalty to the party. These are indispensable requirements for a party that aspires to lead the workers to victory in a struggle for political power. To go up against the ruling class in the United States, it is imperative that we approach our revolutionary tasks as one party with one program.

Our democratic-centralist norms enable the party to shape such a course in a free and democratic internal atmosphere. All individuals and tendencies have a full chance to contribute to the development of the party and to the shaping of its leading cadres. Minority views may be presented in internal discussion at the proper time and in an appropriate manner as determined by the party. Once a decision has been made on disputed issues a minority may retain its views but must subordinate itself in action to the majority. Between conventions authority becomes

centralized and the party confronts the outside world with a single policy, that of the majority. In that way the party maintains its role as a revolutionary vanguard. Its character as a combat organization is safeguarded. Unity in action is preserved. Firmness of political line is assured and the party is enabled to maintain its principles unadulterated.

As a brief sketch of the Kirk-Kaye group's history will show, it had long been evolving toward its break with these well-established organizational principles which have guided our work for more than three decades. The break resulted from deep-going opposition to party theory, program and practice on a series of questions. As against the party's views, the group put forward its own particular line stemming from an incorrect theory about the Negro struggle which Kirk first began to expound some fifteen years ago.

Kirk maintains it is a fundamental error for the party to advocate self-determination for American Negroes and to recognize progressive features in black nationalism. He calls this a separatist line and an adaptation to the Communist Party's now abandoned black-nation program. Kirk mechanically equates self-determination as a people with separatism, which he excludes as a Negro right, and then extends the fallacy by identifying separatism and black nationalism as one and the same thing. From these false premises he comes to the fallacious conclusion that black nationalism is reactionary. He then indicts the party for alleged capitulation to ultra-black nationalism which, in his terms, means that the party is anti-integrationist. If this strange logic seems hard to grasp, it is no more fantastic than the gyrations through which the would-be theoretician projects his own line for the Negro struggle.

According to Kirk, a battle for revolutionary integration will soon get under way in the South. This impending revolutionary uprising will break out before the rest of the country has reached a comparable stage of radicalization. The Southern movement will undertake to overthrow what Kirk terms the fascist-type state regimes in that region. Johnson, who in some unexplained manner has introduced Bonapartist rule over the country, will seek to crush the impending Southern revolution. Therefore, we are told, the party must call forth a movement outside the South to stay Johnson's hand. It must also launch a campaign to encourage comrades of all ages to go to Mississippi, Alabama and Georgia. (Provided, it would seem, that they are not involved in a national mobilization to support Dick Gregory if he runs for mayor of Chicago, as Kirk demanded at the recent plenum of the National Committee.)

Kirk's line on the Negro question, which would have the party rushing simultaneously in all directions, has long been discussed in our ranks. As far back as the 1957 party convention it was put forward in resolution form, thoroughly discussed and overwhelmingly rejected. During the next six years of

almost continuous internal party discussion of the Negro question, Kirk's contributions were, of course, made fully available to the membership along with those of other participants. At the 1963 party convention, he again came forward with his own resolution on the Negro question. As in 1957, his line was overwhelmingly rejected by the convention. This was repeated at the 1965 party convention when he once more introduced his views within the framework of a general political resolution.

Despite all this, the Kirk-Kaye group now allege that none of their documents on the Negro question were discussed objectively. That, too, is typical Kirkian logic. Rejection of his revelations is considered tantamount to refusal to discuss them objectively and conclusive proof that the party is bankrupt in both theory and practice.

By 1963 the Kirk-Kaye group also began to attack party policy on the Chinese question. Their tactics on this subject had the earmarks of an unprincipled maneuver to build a bloc with the Swabeck-Boulton group. Whatever their motivation, Kirk and company declared untenable the Trotskyist program of political revolution against the Maoist bureaucracy in China. They upbraided the party for defining the Mao regime as a Stalinist-type formation. At the same time they began to echo the Swabeck-Boulton demand that the party seek a fusion with the Maoist group in this country known as the Progressive Labor party.

This latter demand reflects their adamant refusal to accept the 1959 party conclusion that the possibilities of regroupment, which had opened after the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party in 1956, had been exhausted. That was the Congress at which Khrushchev denounced Stalin and precipitated an internal crisis in the Stalinist world movement. We intervened in the deepening crisis of Stalinism and sought to win over receptive ex-Stalinists to our movement. When this phase ended, we turned to other fields.

Rejecting the 1959 convention decision, the Kirk-Kaye group persistently maneuvered to continue the regroupment tactic in the party's Seattle branch which they controlled. As time went by they took an increasingly soft approach to political opponents of the party. In fact, they seemed to become politically friendly toward every other radical grouping to the degree that they developed political hostility toward their own comrades of the party majority.

Then at the 1965 party convention Kirk-Kaye introduced an omnibus resolution containing sweeping differentiations from the party's program and principles. In effect, they called upon the party to dissolve itself and enter upon a quest to form what they called "a new, fused and regrouped revolutionary party." As in all previous cases, their whole line was overwhelmingly rejected by the party convention.

Not long thereafter the group entered the final political phase of their split from the party by centering their attack on party policy in the antiwar movement. They denounced our antiwar program as reformist. Party comrades were accused of acting as right wingers in an alliance with "established peace addicts." Our effective fight against the false policies and unprincipled maneuvers of the Stalinists and other political opponents was branded sectarian disruption of the antiwar united front. Meanwhile the ultraleftist adventurers of Progressive Labor, along with renegades from our party, were praised for allegedly raising the political level of the antiwar movement. Our young comrades, who carry the main burden of the antiwar campaign, were denounced as sectarians, reformists, conservatives and any other harsh thing that Kirk-Kaye happened to think of.

As against present party tactics, Kirk-Kaye advanced an impatient, presently unrealizable, demand that the antiwar and civil-rights movements be combined forthwith in one united struggle. They denigrated and dismissed as pacifist the present stage of the struggle against war, through which increasing numbers of young people are becoming radicalized around the demand to Bring the Troops Home Now. In its place they projected fantasies about creating a "revolutionary" antiwar movement which would call upon the National Liberation Front in Vietnam to drive the GIs into the China Sea. Toward that end they acted in close political-organizational collusion with whatever screwballs were around.

The appalling results of the Kirk-Kaye course in Seattle have been eloquently summarized by loyal comrades present when the group split from the party. Wherever they probed, the loyal comrades found evidence that the whole line of the Kirk-Kaye group leads to abstention from the living struggle at its present stage of development; that the group is characterized by pessimism and defeatism about the prospects for mass radicalization in the United States; that their verbal flights into super-militancy serve to cover a policy of non-participation in the actual processes of mass action. This, it was found, has caused them to fall more and more out of touch with political realities and to degenerate into a small, sectarian formation with many characteristics of a political cult.

Such, in general, are the political features of the Kirk-Kaye group, who have split from the party which they denounce as bankrupt in program and principles, and who have set themselves up in Seattle as the "center of revolutionary-socialism" in the United States.

In their organizational evolution, the ex-comrades of the Kirk-Kaye group have abandoned Leninist principles. While still in the party they sought unconditional autonomy as an organized minority in opposition to the basic democratic principle of majority rule. On one and another pretext, they injected their

political line into the public activity of the Seattle branch. In the 1964 election campaign they even went so far as to create a changed public organizational form, a so-called Freedom Socialist Party. This was done on the pretense that a non-SWP designation was needed in order to mobilize the necessary support to get the candidates on the election ballot. Actually it was a ruse designed to implement the Kirk-Kaye concept of a "new, fused and regrouped revolutionary party."

Contacts were first recruited into the Kirk-Kaye group and then, formally, brought into the party after they had been lined up on the basis of the group's own program and methods. Before they entered the party, the recruits had already been indoctrinated against its program, convention decisions and organizational principles. When the group split, a loyal comrade tried to impress upon one of them the seriousness of leaving the party. She replied that she would never have joined the party if it hadn't been for the Kirk-Kaye tendency. In fact she had joined the tendency and not the party.

During internal party discussions Kirk-Kaye put their line to vote in the Seattle branch at the start of the discussion, aiming to commit the party branch in advance to their views and to close everybody's minds to any contrary opinions. Kirk-Kaye documents were submitted for party discussion in the name of the branch, an undemocratic action that is contrary to party discussion procedure. This was done behind a smokescreen of slanderous charges that the party has become "undemocratic" and "bureaucratic." It was a case of factionalism gone mad.

This was evident in all spheres of party work. Even before the Kirk-Kaye split, the Seattle branch had made only token distribution of our press. There were few individual subscriptions in the area, bundle orders were very small, and payment for what was ordered lagged far behind. The branch did not take out a single subscription to World Outlook. Little general literature was ordered and not all of that was paid for. The small branch pledge to the party's monthly sustaining fund had fallen more than a year in arrears. No dues payments whatever had been sent to the party's national office since last year. These defaults signified that the branch had developed a deadly internal sickness, causing it to degenerate.

Still another violation of loyal organizational conduct was committed by Kirk-Kaye in their attack on party policy in the antiwar movement. Kirk opened the attack last December through a letter to the Political Committee. Copies of the letter were immediately distributed from Seattle to a select list of people inside and outside the party. A member of the group went to a neighboring branch of a co-thinkers' organization where he gave copies of the letter to some individuals. Carried out behind the backs of the officially-elected leadership of that organization, this was a flat violation of party policy concerning fraternal relations with co-thinkers. As far back as



1953 such practices had been specifically denounced by the party, and the reasons for the party's views on the subject were explained at the time in a speech by Comrade Cannon on "Internationalism and the SWP."

The co-thinkers' national leadership sent our party a formal protest, taking the strongest exception to the way in which the Kirk letter had been injected into their organization. Attention was called to the co-thinkers' right to decide for themselves what material is to be circulated in their movement and when it will be circulated. Our party was asked to take appropriate action to see that such a violation of their rights does not happen again.

Kirk was notified by the PC that the whole matter would be placed on the agenda of the February, 1966, plenum of the National Committee. At the plenum he was given full opportunity to explain why he had allowed his letter to be used in the manner described, and after listening to him the National Committee made its decision. Kirk was censured for his violation of party rules and procedures and warned that any repetition would lead to more drastic disciplinary action. If the plenum had done any less, it would have defaulted on its obligations to the party.

Even this mild disciplinary action was too much for the thoroughly disloyal Kirk-Kaye group. It soon became apparent, from evidence that chanced to fall into the hands of loyal comrades, that they had set out to organize the biggest possible split from the party. The decision was made at a Seattle caucus meeting, but the open break was delayed for tactical reasons. Through surreptitious letters and personal visits, in which false claims were made that the party was driving them away, efforts were made to broaden the split beyond the Kirk-Kaye group. While trying to keep loyal party comrades in the dark about their scheme, they made others, including the Progressive Labor Maoists, aware of the split perspective. In fact, Kirk-Kaye acted in collusion with such types in a parallel scheme to split the revolutionary-socialist youth movement and set up a rival youth organization. Finally, their real aims came out into the open when the group formally resigned from what they termed "the stifling, narrow and mechanistic confines of the party."

These splitters, who long ago ceased to be loyal party builders, can no longer be regarded as part of our movement. They are free to apply their program and methods as they choose, but not in the name of the Socialist Workers Party. Kirk and company are now functioning as avowed opponents of our movement and they are to be treated as such by all party members. We will grant them no territorial franchises, in Seattle or elsewhere.

The PC has already assigned loyal reinforcements to rebuild the party's Seattle branch. For the first time in a long while,

political work there will be conducted in accord with the party's program and organizational principles. The way is again open to create a viable revolutionary-socialist movement in the Pacific Northwest. We may be confident that progress toward that end will now be made, just as our movement is making progress elsewhere in the country.

May 12, 1966.

Seattle, Washington  
December 13, 1965

To the Political Committee:

Dear Comrades,

The policy of the PC in the antiwar movement had its final result at the Thanksgiving Conference in Washington. Here the party and youth carried on an unprincipled, disruptive and politically reformist struggle against the entire left wing of the antiwar movement. They disrupted the conference around tertiary organizational demands and ended in isolation and national disgrace. They established an indelible and deserved record for political conservatism and dead-end factionalism. They also emerged as the only tendency present able to ignore and snub the civil rights movement.

This episode constitutes a political catastrophe for the SWP of a magnitude never before experienced by American Trotskyism. If immediate steps are not taken to counteract the effect of this performance, the reaction to it will render the party and youth as contemptible among honest militants as was the CP during its worst days. This can be prevented only by an abrupt change of policy and a public repudiation of the course followed by the party and youth in the antiwar movement during the past three months.

The party and the youth entered the conference armed with two "principles":

1. To imprison the antiwar movement in the U.S. in the single issue of peace in Vietnam.
2. To manufacture a centralized national membership organization of the independent committees on a Peace Only program, to supercede the present united front arrangement.

I contend that such "principles" are alien to revolutionary program and tactically impossible to implement given the actual composition and mood of the living antiwar movement.

#### I The Programmatic Problem

1. Can the Peace Movement Stop the War?

The policy of the PC is based upon an unproved and unfounded assumption that the war can be stopped by mass peace pressure on the government. This is an illusion unworthy of revolutionists.

The Militant has been saturated with this line for many weeks. Comrade Halstead's articles constantly refer to the "millions of lives" which are at stake in the decision of the peace movement on the "single" versus the "multi-issue" question.

The Nov. 29 Militant editorial of "The antiwar Conference" gives the line fairly clearly. "The war in Vietnam cannot be ended solely by the activities of local committees. A powerful national movement will have to be built."

This concept is even more emphatically stated in a fantasy called "A Draft Perspective for the Antiwar Movement." After advocating the single-issue-national-membership-organization policy, the Draft concludes: "We are convinced that an organization can be built in this country on the basis of the program outlined above, that can be the decisive factor in bringing an end to the genocidal war in Vietnam."

Comrade Britton, in a youth communication, describes this Draft as one "passed by the Washington Heights CEWV, an upper Manhattan community-based committee in collaboration with individuals, mainly our comrades, in the other New York committees listed. It has been circulated in the New York antiwar movement to serve primarily an education function in preparation for the Washington convention.... Hopefully, the representatives at the November 18 meeting will approve this statement or a modified version of it...."

The PC having utterly failed to make a general analysis of the politico-economic conjuncture for the SWP convention, has the totally false impression that the capitalist class has no fundamental stake in this war, and would pull out of it in response to a little more pressure.

While it is true that some of the lackey-columnists close to the administration are assigned to give that impression, it is only a ruse. The ruling class is desperately attempting to create large new investment opportunities and views South Vietnam as a key to the exploitation of East Asia and India. Furthermore, it regards Vietnam as essential to its preparations for an eventual war with China.

This war is fundamental to the economic and political interest of U.S. capitalism. No powerful national "Withdraw the Troops" movement alone can stop this war.

## 2. How Can The War Be Ended?

The Militant says "Bring the GIs Home." But this only raises another question -- How? The party and youth line is that an enlarged peace movement can do it by nationally directed pressure and agitation.

In reality, a more tangible and quicker possibility for the withdrawal of U.S. armed forces from Vietnam could be accomplished if the National Liberation Front can drive them into the China Sea. This is the active revolutionary solution to the question. But there is no hint of recognition in our literature that this is the most favorable alternative.

The party and youth leave it to others who are bolder to be partisans of the NLF, others who may lack something in program, theory or experience, but make up for it in the revolutionary spirit of solidarity so dismally absent from the pages of The Militant.

It is doubtful that this war can be ended on domestic initiative by anything else than the proletarian revolution. However, short of such a basic explosion, the only force on U.S. soil capable of pressuring the capitalist government out of Vietnam is the proletariat, in the course of its prosecution of the class struggle. To promise and advocate anything else is to sow an opportunist illusion.

The Negro movement represents that section of the proletariat which is presently in motion and has the initiative. The virile youth movement linking up with the Negro movement would together comprise a formidable force, agitating sections of the proletariat into action.

Out of this process will emerge a new fused and regrouped revolutionary party composed of radicals from the socialist, anti-war, and civil rights vanguard organizations. The appearance and maturing of this development -- the process of a fused vanguard stimulating the working class into struggle at the point of production -- are the only political realities that Johnson & Co. can respect.

No matter how radical the slogans and broad the composition of the peace movement, it will be politically ineffective until it links with the Negro radicals and the working class. To a Trotskyist, under capitalism, "There Is No Peace!"

### 3. Towards Coalition Politics

If a "properly organized" peace movement can stop a war, then we have been erroneously fighting Stalinism and pacifism on this issue for 30 years. And if we were correct then, and are still correct now with the new "tactical" line because times have changed, then the PC is indeed guilty of the old revisionist habit of reversing a principle because of supposed tactical necessity.

This "tactical" excitement is a new shocker in SWP practices. Has the party forgotten that the tenacity with which previous peace movements clung to reformism was rooted in part in the liberal-Stalinist compulsion to isolate war and peace from the other great social problems? And don't they similarly isolate civil rights from the questions of war and peace, poverty, imperialism?

The upshot of this traditional limitation of the antiwar movement to peace only and the civil rights movement to civil rights only has been the incarceration of both movements inside the Democratic party, for only the interrelation of all the great social problems makes it possible to identify capitalism as the

cause of any of them and lay the groundwork for independent anti-capitalist political action.

Now that for the first time in the modern era, militant antiwar youth and militant southern Negroes are seeking to broaden the concept and scope of both the antiwar and civil rights movements by integrating their aims and directing an appeal to the proletariat, the party and youth claim that such youth are sectarian splitters of the united peace front!

The capitalist class is profoundly fearful of the possibility of the Negro movement identifying itself with the colonial revolution and linking up with the antiwar movement around the issue of Vietnam. Every time a Negro leader opens his mouth on Vietnam or colonialism, the entire capitalist press rakes him over the coals with a line quite similar to that of the party and youth: "It's all right for Negroes to build their own movement on their own grievances, but you only injure the cause of civil rights by taking positions on other social problems, because that will alienate your supporters."

What they mean is that a break from the Democratic or Republican parties would be the next logical step and this must be prevented at all costs.

Larry Laughlin, one of the prominent co-chairmen of the militant Berkeley VDC, said in his speech to the Seattle committee three weeks ago: "We are disillusioned with protest. We are going to enter politics. We are going to run radical candidates on the twin issues of war and civil rights. We plan a frontal attack on the Democratic Party which is calculated to break it up. We consider it our duty to shake-up the labor movement to a realization of labor's responsibilities."

It is quite true that this is not the whole story, that there is a lot of confusion about what a "frontal attack on the Democratic Party" means, and that for many it includes running candidates in the Democratic primaries. And, to be sure, danger of coalition politics exists. However, the proposed treatment prescribed by the party and youth does nothing to counteract coalition politics.

The party and youth claim that if we permit issues other than peace to enter into the present movement the Stalinists will utilize the circumstances to take the movement into the Democratic Party. This argument not only stands the thing on its head, but fails to grapple with the reality.

In the first place, the antiwar movement is going into politics whether we like it or not, and its only chance to avoid the trap of peoples frontism is not to avoid politics, but precisely to relate the war question to the other social problems and create and over-all anti-capitalist political philosophy.

The newly radicalized elements, many of them politically naive, are still people moving rapidly leftward who desperately require the intervention of revolutionary socialists on the big political questions to aid their development.

In so far as the youth movement is successful in confining the movement to peace only, it will insure a strong development of peoples frontism, because a movement which is orientated exclusively to the peace issue inevitably wind up supporting "peace" Democrats.

## II. Tactics and Organization Forms

### 1. A Radical Peace Movement and a Conservative Youth Movement

The "single" vs "multi-issue" position of the party and youth is not only wrong politically, but tactically blind, revealing a complete lack of knowledge of the actual political condition of the movement, which is far more sophisticated and advanced than the party and youth comprehend.

The party and youth have now been active in this movement for a few months, and in some cases a few weeks. Yet they presume to dictate to the movement a scheme for stopping the war which has no plausible chance for success and which the antiwar militants had two years ago, but have now discarded, realizing that they must integrate the antiwar movement with the colonial revolution, the Negro struggle, economic problems of the working class -- in short, make a class-struggle internationalist movement of it. The party and youth demand that they return to their political infancy of two years ago and wait for the masses to catch up.

Those who have led the antiwar movement during the past two years in protest marches and demonstrations are now coming to the realization that the White House and Pentagon are impervious to any amount of protest or public opinion, intend to stay in Vietnam until every square foot of soil has been churned by bombs, every leaf of foliage laid to waste and every man, woman and child murdered, if necessary. The ruling class is clearly prepared to go to any lengths of domestic policing and terror to prevent obstruction of the war. The antiwar militants now understand that something more basic than even powerful single-issue routine protest must be organized.

The Washington Conference represented objectively an attempt by newly radicalized youth to begin reaching general anti-capitalist conclusions derived from the past two years of protest. Even the newest CEWVs are ripe for revolutionary conclusions. The rapid leftward development of large sections of this movement clearly opened up the perspective for the creation of a mass revolutionary youth movement in this country.

The main and only responsibility of the revolutionary socialists at this conference was to attempt to broaden and deepen

and generalize the anti-capitalist sentiments -- to raise the political level of the movement.

This task was undertaken by the left wing of SDS, PL, the May 2nd Movement and other non-Trotskyist currents, but especially by the Spartacist and Bulletin forces. Our youth movement resisted and disrupted the attempts to draw general radical, socialistic conclusions, and became in fact the right wing of the conference, in objective programmatic alliance with the established peace addicts on the "Peace Only" issue, and no amount of compensatory righteousness over the "withdrawal" versus "negotiate" issue can obscure this fact.

The party and youth are thoroughly isolated in their irrational resistance to the universal desire among militant sectors of the antiwar movement to reach out to the civil rights movement. A high point of the convention was the powerful and militant plea of the delegation from the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party for a recognition of the unity of purpose between the antiwar movement and the civil rights movement. Ignoring this plea the SWP rejected this alliance for supposed "tactical" considerations, but it is clear that the chief reason is the party position on Black Nationalism, i.e., Negroes should keep their movement separate from whites, and Negro goals are not yet the business of the peace movement.

## 2. The Unity Splitters

The party and youth under the hypocritical slogan of "unity" of the peace movement, raised the demand for a single membership organization as the central vehicle for the struggle against the war in Vietnam. This demand proved to be the vehicle to amaze, appall, demoralize and disrupt the conference.

Irrespective of the merits of the proposal, the experience of the previous week-end at the Bay Area Conference demonstrated conclusively that this demand was a divisive rather than a unifying issue, and that the main militant tendencies in the antiwar movement would not go along with it under any circumstances. To continue to press this issue at the Washington Conference indicated a preconceived plan on the part of the party and youth to divide and splinter the movement while shouting "unity."

This organizational demand cannot find acceptance. It is an organizational gimmick which would tend to freeze part of the movement at the present stage and force other sections back to a previous stage of development. The tactical stupidity of this proposal for a centralized national organization stems from its unreality; it is totally out of tune with the mood of the newly radicalized youth who have a healthy mistrust of centralized organizations and of becoming over-concerned with problems of organizational structure, except to maintain some local autonomy -- until they have found out for sure where they are going politically.



To make matters worse, the proposal itself is entirely without objective political merit because it is maneuveristic and violates the principle of the united front, the cornerstone of our mass work.

### 3. The United Front

As against Stalinist attempts to subject independent organizations to a single minimum issue or program, or all embracing organization, Trotsky enunciated over and over again the principle of the united front of different organizations, which were free to maintain their autonomy and independence. To subordinate independent organizations to a single minimum program and permanent organization is peoples frontism.

A stated motivation of the policy of a new peace-only national membership organization is the aim of cutting off the development of SDS in a socialist direction.

The reality of antiwar politics is that it has pushed the leftwing of the SDS into the forefront of socialist politics. The leftwing of SDS today represents the most important, largest and most militant radical youth movement in the U.S. rapidly moving toward an open socialist program.

Our youth movement, an essentially conservative organization, instead of welcoming this development and encouraging it, views it competitively with alarm and hostility. They fear it and are jealous of it. Feeling that they do not have the ideological or political equipment to compete with it, they want to maneuver it out of existence. Our youth say, in effect, to the SDS, "Socialism is not your business -- you are only rightwing peacenicks. Dissolve yourselves in a single issue peace movement. You can be useful there. But leave socialism to our movement, which is ordained to be the only young socialist organization in the country."

The approach of the youth and party leaders to the SDS and other leftward developing currents has a childish-sectarian nature not seen in the radical movement for decades, but returning now with a vengeance.

At the Washington Conference, the National Coordinating Committee issued proposals which contained the essence of the principle of the united front. As opposed to this, the party and youth exploded a frantic 4-day factional assault around the Stalinistic demand for a national membership organization, on the spurious grounds that they represented the "masses" or the "independents."

The NCC, understandably indignant but anxious to prevent a split, revised its proposals closely in accordance with the specific demands of the youth movement, retaining only the basic unity front structure rather than the totally unacceptable national membership organization for independents.

However, the party and youth forces were arrogantly deaf to the concessions of the NCC and blindly pressed on toward virtual split. A new policy of attack, raid and the hell-with-everyone-else has replaced Trotsky's united front for action.

#### 4. Defeat

The party and youth went into the conference with very little real knowledge of the composition, political character or mood of the antiwar movement. They were steeped in fanciful pre-conception and errors, but they had the opportunity to learn something about the real movement. They rejected the chance. They didn't even attend the conference proper, except when and where their petty organizational proposal could be pushed. The great moments, the political discussions and mood, the discussion in the various workshops, the evidence of leftward trends, all this they missed, as they raced around organizing essentially a counter-conference which in the end turned out to encompass only themselves and a few bewildered followers.

All that the party and youth participants can report about the Washington Conference is what was done and said in their various sectarian caucuses.

When one after another of their previous allies publicly dissociated themselves from our youth movement and denounced it, the party and youth forces were soundly defeated. Refusing to abide by majority decision they convoked a pre-planned dismal rump convention which set a goal of creating the new organization they had been unable to sell at the conference. Like the Stalinists of by-gone days, our troops incurred the wrath of an originally friendly mass movement and managed only to capture themselves. The disgrace is now part of the SWP's public record.

### III. Significance

#### 1. Intervention and the "Holding Operation"

The young activists pledged at the last SWP convention that they would cease their sectarian, do-nothing, abstentionist policy. The various minorities urged them to intervene in the living movement -- to intervene ideologically and politically.

The present disruptive organizational "intervention" is the diametric opposite of the political intervention needed, and merely constitutes another form of the "holding operation" wherein all non-trade-unionistic areas of struggle are regarded as historically unimportant and thereby fair game for contemptuous raids and any old policy.

#### 2. The Political Direction of the Present Current

What is revealed in this episode is a rapid movement towards reformism by the youth leadership. The youth movement is an

essentially petty-bourgeois formation without serious connection with the working class either theoretically through Marxism or directly through contact or organization. It has now broken out of its precarious condition of total isolation and insulation from the mass movements of its time, and come into contact with the essentially middle class antiwar movement. Its conservatism on the draft question, its reluctance to become the champions of the NLF, its refusal to face programmatic questions all demonstrate an affinity with the more conservative layers of the peace movement.

Sensitivity to the conservative elements of a middle class movement has apparently impelled the youth group itself in a rightward direction with great speed, at the very time that the major sectors of the movement are moving rapidly leftward.

Inasmuch as the youth nationally represents the principle base of the party, the velocity of this petty-bourgeois, essentially reformist, current tends to sweep the party along with it.

### 3. What is the Source of Policy?

The policies which led to the Thanksgiving disaster were the subject neither of SWP convention debates nor documents, and discussion cannot be summarily refused because the issues were "decided by the convention." Furthermore, the peace movement policy has not been recorded in any comprehensive form in any PC minutes. The source of policy in this matter is not precisely clear.

On the contrary, during Comrade Dobbs' tour stop in Seattle, we reported our local activity and line in the antiwar movement (which have, incidentally, met with considerable success), in both public and closed branch discussions. We stated that our emphasis has been the broad politicalization of the movement toward revolutionary socialism, connecting it with the civil rights movement, the colonial revolution, and seeking a relationship with the proletariat.

Comrade Dobbs indicated no point of disagreement with this policy whatsoever, and it appeared that our local approach corresponded to the majority decision of the convention: to politicalize and radicalize the antiwar movement. Yet two days after Comrade Dobbs' visit, the youth organizer received a letter from the youth national office that included a criticism of local work for being against the "national policy" of peace only.

What evidently happened in the party was that some branches were actually mobilized as factions in the local peace organizations before the rest of the party -- or Seattle alone! -- was informed of the line.

Who is responsible for our single-issue-national-membership-organization program? The NC as a whole has a right to know.

The present crisis of policy is sufficiently acute to warrant an immediate special plenum of the NC to begin to extricate the party, and if possible the youth from a dangerous drift in both organizations.

I request an immediate poll of the NC on the holding of a special January plenum.

If the PC has any inclination to begin undoing the momentous harm that has been done both to the party and youth and to the antiwar movement, I believe it should adopt the following emergency propositions:

1. To require the national leaders of the youth to disband their National Caucus of Independent Vietnam Committees to set up a New National Organization.

2. To issue directives to all SWP branches to do everything in their power to prevent the youth from carrying out its threat to begin to promote its national organization in the local Vietnam committees, a threat, which if carried out, will plunge these committees into turmoil on subordinate organizational questions and result only in the deeper isolation and disgrace of the youth, the weakening of the committees, and an open door for the DuBois clubs to leadership of the antiwar movement.

3. To instruct all branches contemplating or executing disciplinary measures against comrades as a result of this situation, to hold such actions in abeyance until the whole situation has been reviewed by the party.

I am sending under separate cover, the minutes of an all night meeting of the delegates from the South to the Washington Conference which are essential reading material for all NC members. The occasion for the meeting was as follows: the delegates from the South were bewildered by the political chaos created largely by the party and youth organizational program. Many wanted to leave for home. An all-night meeting was held at which Staughton Lynd was assigned by the NCC to attempt to get them to stay on.

Although some NC members may have had access to this document, I think it should be sent out to all members.

Comradely,

R. Kirk  
Seattle

SECRETARIAT STATEMENT ON KIRK LETTER

Comrade Kirk's letter of December 13, 1965, to the Political Committee represents the opposite of a constructive attempt to grapple meaningfully with the complexities of the antiwar campaign in which our movement is involved. To begin with, the Washington events around which he focuses his letter involved problems of a tactical nature that had to be worked out on the scene by the comrades present. Basically, the occasion marked a clash by our comrades with Communist Party forces who -- with the help of centrist muddleheads -- were maneuvering organizationally to capture the politically unaffiliated militants in attendance and bind them to the CP line of peaceful co-existence and popular frontism. Our comrades deserve credit for shaping a tactical course in the heat of battle that kept the way open for continued effective struggle in the campaign to win antiwar militants to our program in the fight against war. They also deserve something better from any critical comrade than Comrade Kirk's smear attack made from afar with indecent haste and without any semblance of truth to his allegations.

Almost every line of Comrade Kirk's letter contains wrong assumptions as to the facts, or a twisting of party policy out of factional spleen, or outright political slander of party comrades. He opens with dire warnings of "political catastrophe" on the premise that the party is conducting "an unprincipled, disruptive and politically reformist struggle against the entire left wing of the antiwar movement." We are told that the Washington episode "will render the party and youth as contemptible among honest militants as was the CP during its worst days." Such unbridled invective against the party marks a new low in the polemical style that has become characteristic of Comrade Kirk and it is of a piece with the rest of his nine-page diatribe.

His document is a contrived attempt to make rejection of his views tantamount to crass political ignorance. Thus he accuses the PC of having "the totally false impression that the capitalist class has no fundamental stake in this [Vietnam] war" and he purports to reduce party policy down to a simple notion that the imperialists "would pull out of it in response to a little more pressure." He charges that the party and the youth "leave it to others who are bolder to be partisans of the NLF" and, to heap slander upon slander, he accuses the comrades of aping the capitalist press in telling Negroes to stick to civil rights and not take positions on other social problems.

His letter depicts opponents of our movement as paragons of political virtue in contrast to the party and youth. Concerning efforts to help antiwar militants reach anti-capitalist conclusions, he writes: "This task was undertaken by the left wing of SDS, PL, the May 2nd Movement and other non-Trotskyist currents, but especially by the Spartacists and Bulletin forces." Our

comrades, who stand condemned before the Kirk tribunal, are held to have become "in fact the right wing of the [Washington] conference, in objective programmatic alliance with the established peace addicts..." The CP maneuvers, conducted through stooges in the National Coordinating Committee, are given an accolade as "the essence of the principle of the united front." Our comrades, who fought the CP attempt to hamstring the movement politically through organizational maneuvers, are branded "splitters" simply for organizing a caucus within the NCC setup.

The youth, who have carried the biggest load in the whole antiwar campaign, are insolently accused of renegeing on an alleged "pledge" at the last convention to swear off "sectarianism." The old preconvention garbage is raked over about the youth being "conservative," about their "childish-sectarian nature," about their lack of "ideological or political equipment." Then, with typical Kirkian pomp and bombast, their self-appointed ideological and political mentor reveals to them that party and youth policy in the antiwar campaign adds up to -- "peoples frontism!"

What lies behind all this nonsense, these vicious charges against comrades, this factional hysteria? It appears to stem from blind frustration over the party's rejection of the line Comrade Kirk presented to the last convention. He seems to find it increasingly hard to live with a policy other than his concept of a "new fused and regrouped revolutionary party" for which he has unsuccessfully argued in our ranks. His letter calls for "an abrupt change of policy and a public repudiation of the course followed by the party and youth in the antiwar movement during the past three months." -- that is to say, since the last party convention. He requests an immediate poll of the National Committee on the holding of a special January plenum.

Prior to the receipt of Comrade Kirk's letter the Secretariat had decided to recommend that a plenum be scheduled for February 11, 12, and 13, 1966. These dates were proposed for several practical reasons, including the problems of preparing a plenum when the National Office is in the process of moving to new quarters. Therefore, the Secretariat has recommended and the PC has concurred in the recommendation that the plenum be held on February 11, 12, and 13. These dates will allow needed leeway for the preparation of the NC gathering which will have considerably more to take up than Comrade Kirk's factional protests against the carrying out of established party policy.

December 23, 1965

February 9, 1966

Dear Arne:

I recently photocopied 50 copies of Al A's statement to the SWP as assistance to Doug and Rosemary in giving it the broadest possible circulation. D&R have sent me copies of Al's original proposal to the Chinese tendency, your reply and their reply. They did not send me this correspondence until after Al's resignation. Therefore, I assume you will not regard my access to this material as any breach of confidence on the part of D&R. In any event the distinction between the Chinese tendency and that of Fraser-Kaye has been negligible since the convention -- we are all in one boat.

You know that Seattle and their supporters here plan an early exodus. I write to urge you to join the move and in a way to reply to your letter in answer to Al's proposal.

The Political Question:

The SWP leadership has not conducted a serious polemic with an internal opponent since the Pablo dispute in 1953, 13 years ago. Since that time two seriously motivated tendencies have developed and attempted to correct basic errors in line.

Fraser attempted a basic line of inquiry into the Negro question which actually began long before 1953 and has been answered only with abuse. On the surface, a more serious effort was made to answer Swabeck-Liang, but the answer was always doctrine, not inquiry. Each of these two tendencies regarded the party for many years as basically correct on other questions than its own one of special interest, and to this extent, both were short-sighted.

The Chinese question today is what the Russian question was in the '30s, the key international question and the test of all radical parties. On the other hand, the Negro question is the basic and most important domestic question. It is to the American Revolution what the peasant problem was to China. I repeat a thought I wrote to you earlier. A revolution does not proceed in a given country on the basis of the general laws of capitalism, but on concrete and peculiar characteristics. The Negro question is the key peculiarity of US capitalism and will prove its nemesis. A radical party wrong on this question shall not make a revolution here.

It is not correct to say the SWP has degenerated on these two questions; it was never right in the first place and its tendentious wrong views have contributed greatly to its degeneration in other matters where it had a great history and a right to existence.

What are the prospects for the regeneration for which you look?

Very poor, indeed. One ought to set some kind of standard to judge. One cannot demand that the objective situation develop within a certain time span, but one can and ought to demand that a party correct serious errors within a reasonable time, or look twice at the basic character of the organization. The Fraser tendency is over 15 years old. In 1950, would we have been unnecessarily impatient had we said tentatively that some change ought to be expected within 10 to 15 years or else it is hopeless???

The first contact with the outside world that the SWP-YSA has had in years is in the peace movement. The Washington conference was an indication of how they let events act as a corrective. No, they are infected with a Messiah complex always associated with the substitution of immutable doctrine for thinking and sensitivity to events.

Unfortunately, you are probably mistaken that there is no room for the SWP to compete with the SP in the field of safe radicalism. Dried up sects have shown a remarkable capacity for unaccountable longevity. With continued degeneration, they can stay in business for many years to come.

The Organization Question:

My personal view is that the party never observed Bolshevik organizational principles. I always subscribed to Cannon's view of the combat party acting as one and not allowing internal disputes to hamper work, but I think we were wrong in the old days in always regarding any minority view as heresy and dangerous. Of course, the attitude looked better in those days when the party was in fact correct, but the habit of thought tended to make a cult out of the leadership and make it progressively more difficult for the ranks to initiate corrections where necessary.

I believe Cannon did the party a great disservice when he admonished Weiss and others to bury differences in the interest of a unified leadership. That started the demise of the Weiss group. The Dobbs machine was able to use the good faith of Murry and Myra to destroy them when they couldn't find an arena in which to fight. With the Weisses gone, there was no restraining hand in the center to prevent the wholesale suppression of democratic procedure which followed.

By the way, I believe that Murry will "end the comedy" of his lingering membership in the next period.

The Bolsheviks were never as hardnosed as we in matters of internal differences, even in critical days, let alone in the restricted



years of preparation. But even the limited democracy that was our tradition is stone cold dead and is not coming back. There isn't a serious note of protest from the few critics in the majority ranks. It will become more, not less difficult to effect a regeneration.

### The Tactical Question

Let us presume that your perspective of a regeneration is possible. How can we best facilitate a change? By staying in and continuing to write unread documents every two years and talk to deaf ears? Dick is right that the SWP hangs together by using you and him as scapegoats. Left to their own devices, further centrifugal tendencies will occur. More people will either break away, which is good, or may revolt and fight. Frankly, I don't think so, but our staying will in any event not help such a process.

If the past two year wave of expulsions is followed by a wave of resignations, then some people may become aware of the crisis around them. The larger the wave the better. If that doesn't shake them up, would it have done any good to stay in???

Arne, I believe it is not instructive, except negatively, to compare our situation with that of the Left Opposition before 1933. The Communist movement differed from the SWP in three rather important respects. 1. It had lead a successful revolution. 2. It held state power thus demanding that its opponents propose a political revolution if they were to build anew, and 3. It had a mass following. The SWP falls somewhat short of meeting these conditions.

A mass movement can make numerous errors before it loses its following, and before it is correct to abandon it. Our view was always that the small vanguard party could afford to make no mistakes. It must be right on all questions at all times. That is its excuse for existence. It must correct ideologically the errors of the degenerated mass organizations. There is no virtue in being small, but if for a time you can't grow, then being right is sort of a minimum requirement.

What can one say of a vanguard party that is dead wrong on the most important international and national questions, has been so for many years, doesn't have a democratic procedure for corrections, has little contact with the mass movement, and can't learn from the little contact it does have???

### The Personal Question

All movements are made up of human material. It is time to ask, who represents, not just controls the party. Whose party is it? It is Dobb's party. His only serious competition is not from the minority but from the middle class and ambitious youth leadership. It just isn't the party of your tradition, though it has organizational continuity and some of the same people.

Speaking of people, I was surprised at the off-hand and shoddy way you treat Doug and Rosemary after their carefully considered and painful decision to resign. It is especially cruel to condemn your own cothinkers and supporters at a time when they are operating alone in a hostile branch that is forcing them to support a sell-out line. Ought they to have raised no protest in the branch? To do so demanded a price, expulsion or resignation. Those are the facts of life in the NY branch. You might at least have given them the benefit of the doubt of having to make a decision in the heat of battle. I feel they could judge best what had to be done at the time.

You are part of the original generation of revolutionaries which has preserved the continuity of radical thought and action for over 40 years. It is not easy to abandon the organizational form that continuity has taken for many years, but to continue now is to make the same kind of fetish out of the SWP that the majority does.

It is perhaps too much to expect of history to permit a small cadre organization to exist without decline, correcting itself as needed, through a quarter century of adverse times and no growth. The Bolsheviks never faced that particular problem. From 1905 to 1917 were black years, but there were only 12 of them. In the SWP already a second generation is aging.

It is a tribute to Trotsky's genius that the movement was able to live as long as it did without serious mishap, after his death. The present leadership has expended the capital of that tradition and ruthlessly destroyed it. The pages cannot be turned back.

Comradely regards,  
David Dreiser

February 23, 1966  
New York, N.Y.

Dave Dreiser  
Connecticut

Dear Comrade Dreiser,

Under date of Dec. 13, 1965, Comrade Kirk addressed a letter marked "Confidential" to the Political Committee opposing party policy in the anti-war movement. Copies of the letter were mimeographed in Seattle and circulated to various individuals inside and outside the party. The Plenum of the National Committee censured Comrade Kirk for his part in this violation of party discipline and warned him to cease and desist from any further violations. The Plenum also instructed the PC to investigate all the ramifications of the case.

The Plenum was informed that you sent a copy of the Kirk letter to Comrade Larry Trainor in Boston, with a covering note which read: "Dick asked me to make a copy of the enclosed and send it to you. You may have a copy from New York by this time, but didn't want to take a chance you might not see it."

In view of your action, as reported by Comrade Trainor, the PC has instructed me to direct the following questions to you: What explanation do you have for your reported action in sending a copy of the Kirk letter to Comrade Trainor? Did anyone else receive copies of the Kirk letter from you and if so, what were the circumstances?

Please let me have your reply to these questions at an early date.

Comradely,  
S/ Ed Shaw  
Organization Secretary

March 3, 1966

Ed Shaw  
New York

Dear Ed,

Your letter of February 23 has caused me to reflect on the past and the present. Involved in the questions you raise are broader problems of personal morality than appear on the surface.

I don't feel called upon to use this occasion for a long political harangue on questions already discussed many times, but there are complexities which cannot be treated in a paragraph or two. You did not just ask for the facts of the situation which are known to you (there were really no secrets), but for an explanation and therefore you must bear with me a little while.

First let me ask you if you think my sending Dick's letter to Larry was supposed to be clandestine? Or the note I sent with it? I have made some naive judgements, and perhaps I was naive in not anticipating that my action would be regarded as an infraction. But, in my flightiest moment I did not imagine that Larry was in the remotest sense a sympathizer of Kirk, or anything other than a loyal supporter of the majority. I knew anything I sent him would not be private. You have not discovered anything that was supposed to be secret.

I have always been seriously concerned with the internal affairs of the party, partly by inclination and partly due to restriction due to being fired from industry and blacklisted. But, if you want to charge me with being a factionalist it will have to be on the basis of my support of majority causes.

In the Cochran fight I played an active role in the branch and in correspondence. I visited another branch that was sharply divided on the question of the expulsion and spent a week in rounds of visiting and meetings cementing support for the party position. I spoke publically extensively and often used the public platform to elaborate the lessons of that struggle.

I played a similar role in the fight with the Vernites. Again in 1963, in the fight with the Healy supporters, I led the fight which won the branch for support of the majority, although I was at that time a supporter of Kirk who had his own resolution on the Negro question up for consideration.

I supported Kirk's resolution, but I subordinated my support

to what I felt was the more pressing question. The branch organizer was with Wohlforth, a situation which confronted me with a problem which I resolved by conducting the struggle around the need to prevent his taking the branch into Wohlforth's camp.

In all of these situations I felt free to communicate with others either in conversation or by correspondence with absolutely no concern whether it was convention time, pre-convention, between conventions or what not. How else could one develop his own thinking in relation to others or check ones conclusions?

Although I have supported the Kirk tendency for over 15 years, I have always played a minor role in his support. I have spoken on the Negro question publically and internally, but usually on aspects peripheral to the main differences. I spoke to the NY branch during the original debate on the "Troops" slogan, and I spoke to the 1963 convention in support of the Kirk resolution.

In 1965 I attended the convention as a visitor and would have had ample opportunity to spend my time in the corridors button-holing people, but I played a passive role of observation. This was not for lack of faith in Kirk's position, but because I had been inactive for a long time and I felt one ought to keep his "politiking" in line with his activity.

Now, since the 1965 convention I have received exactly one letter from Kirk, namely, a copy of his letter to the PC with a request to forward a copy to Larry. Was this wrong? I believe Kirk has the right to advise his supporters of his thinking on questions as they arise. But, you will say, this was a confidential document. Well, if Kirk had sent a separate letter to his supporters it would have said exactly the same thing. The content of the letter, and the intent of the act would be identical. Our trouble is we are too damn open. It must be apparent, if secrecy had been the intent a better job could have been done!

The party ought to be less concerned about searching out little infractions which don't exist, particularly when concerned with the policy followed recently on the peace question.

The turn on this question came in the middle of the pre-convention discussion and was not embodied in the majority resolution. That is all right. If the need arises the leadership can recommend a shift in line or activity anytime. But, in the past when this happened too late to allow a full pre-convention discussion,

post convention discussion was permitted. Refer to the Negro discussion following the 1948 and 1957 conventions.

Not only was this not done, but the policy actually followed at the Washington conference was developed after the convention. Right or wrong, discussion ought to be encouraged in such circumstances, not stifled.

The Washington policy was so disasterously wrong that I would have felt justified in making some efforts to affect the situation, organize opposition, but I didn't out of deference to my restricted situation.

But, I sent Dick's letter to Larry. Presumably he would have received a copy anyway. I'm sure no one would accuse us of trying to wean Larry away from the majority; he has known us a long time and has never given us the slightest gesture of support. However, it is not impossible that he might find something to think about in what Kirk had to say, or that members of the PC might also. Otherwise, why try to communicate with anyone anytime? You might have more cause for concern if we had circulated a private letter making private accusations. Kirk has been quite candid.

Anyway that is the explanation. There has been no infraction. If I be wrong in this matter, then I have a 23 year record of over-zealous support of majority causes. In answer to your other question, I showed the letter also to Carl locally. He is a supporter of Kirk and my action requires no other explanation.

The fact is it requires no explanation at all. I have answered your questions completely and freely because I want to show I have no reservations to do so. Your investigation is unjustified and I protest it.

The other side of the coin is that you of the majority come to us with unclean hands. I refer to the shocking denial of minority rights at the convention in your total disregard of the right of representation on leading committees. It is your obligation to the party as well as to the minority to insure that such representation is proportional to strength. I refer to your restrictions against both the Kirk and Chinese minorities, and especially to your removal of Clara.

In few of these more serious matters your current censure of Kirk and investigation of his supporters is not only unjustified, it is petty and in poor taste.

Comradely regards,  
s/ David Dreiser

March 9, 1966

Political Committee  
New York

Comrades:

This is my letter of resignation. It will be brief.

I decided to leave some weeks ago but faced a problem of evaluation. My inclination was to resign solely on grounds of inactivity. It is amply apparent that without any differences, I ought after such a long time either find a road to making an active contribution even if limited, or drop out.

However, such action would imply that I remain a sympathizer and would by omission hide the degree of my differences. On the other hand, in my situation it would be pretentious to leave with a big political statement.

First I sat down to formulate my estimation of the party's course for the last 20 years. That is noted elsewhere, but let me make a summary conclusion.

Trotsky and Cannon set out to create a certain kind of party, politically and organizationally. Anyone who joined in the old days was trained in that conception.

But, gradually over the years, without a fight or a revised official estimation, the party no longer aims to play the same role. The party is antagonistic to the conception. Cannon knows it. Of all the old leadership Weiss was the one most devoted to Cannon's conception. He certainly knows it went wrong. Most of all, you know it, and have different aims and conceptions.

I decided that in some form I ought to resign with enough of a statement to let you know where I stand. Then your investigation started with Ed's letter to me of Feb. 23. If I used that occasion to resign, it might imply that I was doing so since I got "caught with the goods" because of a couple of pieces of private correspondence.

I answered without resigning to make it clear that I have not the remotest concern with what you have found out, and with the further intention to follow immediately with this letter.

Comradely,  
s/ David Dreiser

March 8, 1966  
Seattle, Wash.

To: Comrade Ed Shaw and the National Committee, SWP

From: Seattle Branch, SWP and the national Kirk-Kaye Tendency

Dear Comrades:

The censure of Comrade Kirk by the February Plenum of the N.C. for the crime of criticizing party policy in the anti-war movement demonstrates anew the majority's habit of prejudicing every serious internal discussion by an organizational diversion. In this case, the disciplinary smokescreen is based on completely ludicrous grounds and constitutes a cynical frame-up.

Without previously notifying Comrade Kirk of the precise charge against him (and he still does not have it in writing, as required by the SWP Constitution), the P.C. accused him at the Plenum of circulating his criticism of party policy in the anti-war movement outside the party, namely, to some leading co-thinkers. Deliberately ignoring what is the specific and concrete nature of the normal and long-established relationship between Seattle and the co-thinkers, and neglecting to mention that the recipients of the criticism were leading spokesmen for the SWP's majority faction among the co-thinkers, the P.C. pretended that Kirk had done something new, ominous and illegal. The Plenum gave itself no chance to hear a real explanation; instead, within fifteen minutes, it accused, censured and authorized an investigation to be undertaken AFTER the censure.

This hysterical assault against Comrade Kirk, a veteran of 32 years in the movement, was a direct reflex to his attempt, in consultation with his tendency, to bring about a critical consideration of policy in the anti-war movement. We were critical of the strategy and tactics employed at the Thanksgiving NCC conference in Washington, D.C., where the youth and the party, by insisting on a "single-issue" oriented movement, served to arrest the radicalization of the 'new' left, and effectively isolated themselves from the revolutionary wing of the southern Negro struggle. We also opposed their sectarian insistence on forcing all conference activity to focus around a purely organizational struggle to isolate the independents in a new organization, when the burning responsibility for the youth and the party was to conduct a clear political struggle against a SANE-liberal-C.P. conspiracy to disorient the anti-war movement.

It is now clear that the central party regime considers it their right to prevent all objective discussion of policy within



the party. "Sir", they say, "We will not consider what you have to say, but will fight to the death your right to say it." Instead of political investigation into the ramifications of policy in the anti-war movement, the P.C. initiated an organizational investigation into the ramifications of Comrade Kirk's audacity in expressing his views within and to the party. The P.C.'s completely bureaucratic reflex strikes a mortal blow at the right of the rank and file to a democratic and orderly method of correcting wrong policy.

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We accuse the P.C. of behaving illegally on the following grounds:

1. The tortuous and artificial fabrication of grounds for "charges", the breathtaking speed of the swift censure, the investigation after the decision etc., are all unconstitutional, and can be explained only by political panic and disorientation.

2. The P.C.'s charge that normal practice of providing leading northern majority spokesmen with internal SWP material constitutes an "unwarranted interference" in a fraternal body, is absurd. It is the P.C. that is guilty of such interference by virtue of their conspiracy with the co-thinkers to undertake direct organizational interference into the life of the SWP.

Only those utterly ignorant of the extant relationship between Seattle and our neighbors can believe that the charges against Comrade Kirk originated in a sincere and spontaneous protest from northern co-thinkers. There has been an exchange of internal material between our two West Coast Trotskyist branches for over 20 years, developed at the behest of leading co-thinkers and with the full knowledge of New York. Since 1945, the two branches have cooperated in activities, discussions and public meetings, and the N.C. members from Seattle (Roberts, Kaye and Kirk) not only helped draft resolutions for our co-thinkers, but participated directly in internal factional struggles, usually as mediators but often as partisans.

When Comrades Dobbs and a leading co-thinker suddenly discover that traditional activities are now "violations of fraternal autonomy", or whatever, they are guilty of sheer charlatanry.

When they claim, further, that the two recipients of the Kirk letter were young 'rank and file' innocents, they compound the distortion. A.E. is a co-thinker Branch Organizer and openly functions as spokesman for the SWP majority, having represented

it in Seattle in the pre-convention discussion. P.C. is a branch leader of many years standing. Both have always had access to SWP internal documents.

Over the years, we have sought to arrange speaking engagements with the co-thinkers for all touring SWP speakers and representatives of related organizations on national tour. During the past year, this has not been necessary -- since such speakers generally go directly to the co-thinkers first on behalf of the majority faction. As a result of this unrelenting majority pressure, A.E. has introduced a new factional atmosphere in the relationship between the two branches; Seattle speakers, who formerly spoke and taught publically and regularly for the co-thinkers, are now prohibited from this public activity and are invited to speak only at closed meetings to debate internal SWP differences!

In the context of this outrageous and upside-down situation, and paying official respect to it, Comrade Kirk's letter was given to these comrades as a fraternal courtesy to acquaint them with the opposition, since they had projected a joint debate on the issues involved. The letter had been mimeographed locally after the N.O. announced it would not immediately circulate the letter because of a "lack of technical resources."

So now the SWP majority, having poisoned the atmosphere by playing heavy factional politics across the border, accuses us of unwarranted interference as we proceed calmly to carry out a normal political discussion. It is not we, but the majority, that needs to explain its actions to the membership.

3. The "security" obsession revealed by the P.C. in its charges against Comrade Kirk is absolutely ludicrous. It is based on the spurious grounds that Kirk's letter "connected" the party and youth and thereby "endangered" the youth in a defense case (!) This is a patent device to forestall criticism and render self-defense impossible. If the needs of legal defense in the case justify a blanket of automatic intimidation smothering the party's activities and discussions, we have already lost the Case.

In any event, Comrade Kirk is hardly responsible for the extant and publically known relationship between the youth and the party. On the contrary, our tendency has been identified for years with the struggle for an organizationally independent youth. We cannot imagine how references to their joint political activity -- a normal relationship even between opposing organizations -- can jeopardize party "security", when the majority flaunts joint disciplining and joint expulsions, and has clearly interlocking

directorates in both organizations.

The real security danger for the party is the peculiar organizational factionalism of the majority approach. Just as political discussion within the party is distorted and squelched by organizational threats and repercussions, so political discussions with co-thinkers are frowned upon and organizational collusion substituted -- a collusion which does indeed endanger the party. Likewise, political collaboration between youth and the party is replaced by organizational collusion, and organizational autonomy for the youth is transformed into a farce. This is how the majority "guards" security, by endangering everybody and everything. Such is the logic of factionalism gone wild.

4. Individual members of the Kirk-Kaye tendency are now being harassed to "explain" their accessory roles in The Crime. The P.C. has no constitutional or moral right to transform accepted past practices into violations. It has no grounds whatsoever to profer charges, no right to censure a non-crime, and no authority to investigate a nothing.

What should be investigated is the arrogance of a regime which chooses a victim, invents his crime, and promptly demands confessions all around.

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The Seattle Branch and the national supporters of the Kirk-Kaye tendency reject the charges, condemn the censure, and will not cooperate in the current post-censure witch-hunt. We will not be voluntary individual accomplices in the ongoing inquisition, for we cannot accept its validity and refuse to bear responsibility for this unprecedented onslaught against the last vestiges of party democracy.

Furthermore, we are well aware that you can fabricate charges faster than we can answer them, and we are not about to exhaust ourselves further in such a self-defeating and puerile contest. We cannot in good political conscience play this sadistic game of cat and mouse; we just happen to be all tied up these days with a few little matters of Marxist education and Trotskyist politics for the scores of new young people coming to us for guidance and organization.

In your best interests, as well as ours, we demand that this ridiculous campaign of persecution against us be immediately stopped.

Comradely,  
Seattle Branch &  
National Supporters of K-K  
Tendency

REPORT ON THE "NORTHWEST REGIONAL CONFERENCE TO END  
THE WAR IN VIETNAM"

Seattle, Washington, Apr. 2-3, 1966; Meany Hotel

Approximately 120 attended the panel discussions and plenary sessions of the Conference, although less than 80 paid the registration fee. The Conference had not been widely advertised. Also it was very poorly organized. Nonetheless, it was an important first faltering step toward building an anti-war movement in the Northwest.

There were delegates from the Seattle area, Bellingham, a few from Oregon, about 25 from Canada, and a number from the Bay Area. From the Bay Area came Earl Gilman, (Wohlforth), Roger Plumb, (Robertson) Steve Cherkass (PL), Bob Avakian (Sheer Committee), Kipp, myself and others.

Some participants were older radicals (including a 55-year-old PL'er, one Clayton Van Lydagraf, who is a member of "Seattle Youth for Peace in Vietnam.") Most were young white workers and college students. A number of young people were getting involved in politics for the first time.

Unfortunately for the serious young people, the panels were chaired almost exclusively by PL'ers and members of the "Seattle Tendency." (This is what the Kirk-Kaye Tendency calls itself.)

When the Conference opened on Saturday morning we found on the literature tables, along with just-opened bundles of back issues of The Militant, two statements signed by members of the Seattle Tendency.

The first was a call for "A New Revolutionary Socialist Youth Organization" signed by eight Seattle youth and one independent.

We were not surprised, because in conversations with several young people, prior to the opening of the conference, we were told, "After the Conference the YSA is going to dissolve into a new and larger youth group." Even a young high school student wearing a PL button, whom we met at Frank Powers' house, knew about it.

The second statement was signed by Clara Kaye and Larry Shumm. It was called "A Revolutionary Perspective for the Anti-War Movement." This document carried the Kirk-Kaye line, not the SWP line.

When Kipp read the "Call" she immediately confronted Shumm and asked him if he had perhaps resigned from the youth. Under pressure he finally said, yes, he had resigned. In a few minutes Clara Kaye came angrily to Kipp and me, saying that Kipp had forced Shumm to resign. We answered that the "Call" in itself was a letter of resignation. This was a strange scene.

It was up to us to present our point of view to the Conference. We spoke several times in the panels and at the plenary sessions. A number of Northern comrades also spoke. We were able to set the tone in the panels. Kipp, as an "original member of the Berkeley VDC" was able to counter Avakian, who represented the Scheer Committee. In most panels we found ourselves at odds with the Seattle Tendency.

There they were, speaking in the name of the party, but giving their line.

John Severn was particularly outrageous. In one speech he said that "even if ten million people came out into the streets of our major cities tomorrow with the demand 'Bring the Troops Home' this would be meaningless." There were gasps of disbelief, but Severn plunged on, "They'd all go back to work the next day. It wouldn't stop the war in Vietnam." Nothing less than a military rout by the NLF would stop the war, demonstrations are meaningless. Later, in the panel on "Community Organizing," we ridiculed Severn's assertions and put forth our position.

The conflict between our position and that of the Seattle Tendency was becoming apparent to all. There was, naturally, a certain amount of confusion. One panel chairman, an independent, asked Kipp if she were a member of the S.F. DuBois Club! When Kipp replied that she was in the YSA, the chairman expressed surprise, and asked Kipp if she knew that the people she had been arguing with were members of the YSA.

The final plenary session on Sunday afternoon, April 3, was supposed to discuss (according to the publicity flyers) "What Road Ahead for the Anti-War Movement." The day before the Conference this was changed to a panel discussion on "Perspectives for the Peace Movement." Note the difference.

This panel included members of the Seattle Tendency plus PL, DuBois Club, SDS and independents.

With the exception of a Northerner and the SDS'er, all

panelists presented their own multi-issue political programs as the program for the anti-war movement. Steve Cherkoss (PL) and Shumm were exceptionally sectarian, objectionable and wordy. It was obvious that the "perspectives" discussion was leaving the audience behind. They were voting with their feet.

I took the floor at the beginning of the discussion period to publicly disassociate The Militant and party from the Seattle Tendency and to put forth our transitional approach. Shumm had come on strong with "drive the G.I.'s into the sea." I also took a few slaps at Cherkoss' sectarian revolutionism, which briefly, went like this: "As a Marxist-Leninist, I say that war in Vietnam is directly tied in with Black Liberation in the U.S. and the persecution of Puerto Ricans. The U.S. government is our enemy, not the war in Vietnam. Demonstrations won't stop the war. We can't use the machinery of the system to destroy the system so, what's to be done? We must join with the Black Panther Party in Alabama and with Jose Fuentes, a Puerto Rican independent running for office in New York; we have to build a movement that will end perhaps the seventh war from now." A perfect program for the present anti-war movement! according to Steve Cherkoss.

When I sat down, after speaking, a young woman asked for the floor. She solidarized with me and then threw the bombshell, "I want to know why the committee I represent, the Seattle Committee to End the War in Vietnam, the very Committee that organized the big protest last week, why weren't we invited to participate in this conference? This is not a representative conference!"

My speech had shaken them but this speech created consternation -- people running back and forth consulting to beat the band. They tried to answer her and me, but just couldn't. A few minutes later the chairman adjourned the Conference. Several independents came around and we made several more contacts, very friendly.

I should add that Duane Allen, a representative of the NCC spoke at the first plenary session on Sunday. He asked that a regional NCC be set up and that \$10,000 be raised to pay a staff and get the ball rolling. His appeal fell flat. He never spoke again.

In the panel on "Regional Coordination" the Northerners effectively scuttled plans for either an NCC-dominated or

PL-dominated regional coordinating committee. The Seattle Tendency happened to agree with us on this. The organizational motion finally approved by the conference was simple: "That we exchange mailing lists and that we propose the formation of separate coordinating committees in Washington and Oregon. These committees should exchange their newsletters and mailing lists."

Kipp and I picked up a mailing list, too. We turned 17 names over to Tom and Deborah. Deborah added a few on her own.

Comradely,

/S/ A. Harris

## Report on the Situation in Seattle as of April 4, 1966

Kipp D. and I were in Seattle from March 31 to April 5. We attended the Northwest Regional Conference To End The War In Vietnam April 2-3, representing the Newsletter and The Militant, respectively, and conducted a rather extensive and very exhausting investigation into the situation in Seattle. Returning to San Francisco, we agreed that our experiences in Seattle were so strange, so unreal, really, that we doubted anyone would believe our story. It was as I remarked at the next branch meeting, "like a trip into the Never-Never-Land."

We were met at the airport by Frank Powers. On the way into the city Frank began to complain again about the dirty deal that Seattle had gotten on the Tabata Tour - that Los Angeles had sent them a blank tape, etc., the complaints we'd heard before. We answered them all. He wasn't satisfied. Finally I asked him what was his explanation for such alleged vicious and underhanded treatment of Seattle--sabotage, from his point of view? He answered that Tabata wasn't "allowed" to come to Seattle because Tabata agreed with the Seattle Tendency's position on the Negro question and the Colonial Revolution! We dropped the subject.

We told Frank that we were in Seattle for two reasons. One, to attend the Northwest Regional Conference to End the War in Vietnam. Two, to find out whether or not reports we had received that the Seattle Tendency was preparing to leave the SWP were true. He answered that the reports were true, that they'd been talking about it. His answer was casual, as if to say, "Doesn't everybody know this?"

We told Frank that we wanted to talk to Kirk and Kaye and several others, especially young comrades whom we knew. He said of course he'd help us, which he did.

As soon as we arrived at his house he picked up the telephone, dialed Mellina's number (a young Negro comrade) and handed the telephone to Kipp, who set up an appointment for the next day.

While Kipp was talking to Mellina, I talked to Frank. I was arguing that the SWP had taken a correct position on all major political questions, and had made correct tactical turns to intervene in the changing political scene -- regroupment, Fair Play for Cuba, development of Malcolm X position, anti-war movement. Frank gave a little, but counterposed that it was "accidental" that the SWP had made several correct political evaluations and tactical turns.

Kipp began to talk to Mark (Frank's teenage son) and a friend



of his, Bob, who later gave the High School Workshop report at the Regional Anti-War Conference. Bob told her, right off, that the Seattle Youth was dissolving right after the Conference. Kipp told me. I asked Frank. He said it was news to him, although he'd heard some such rumors. Bob is around PL. Later we ran into other non-members who repeated this story. Kipp observed "everyone knows it except us and the Youth N.O."

Thursday evening we spent six and one-half hours talking to Kirk and Kaye -- from 9 p.m. until 3:30 a.m.

I started by saying it had come to our attention that the Seattle branch was planning to disaffiliate: Was this true? And if it were true: Why?

Yes, they answered, it was true. They had been thinking about disaffiliating but they hadn't fully made up their minds.

Then both Kirk and Kaye related a long series of grievances dating from when Kirk first evolved his special position on the Negro Question up to the censure motion against Kirk passed by the February 1966 plenum.

We listened. I discussed such grievances as I knew something about, but they had everything so twisted that it was difficult.

On the censure question, when I pointed out that Kirk had abstained on the vote at the plenum and said he regretted the occurrence (the circulation of his document up north), Kaye hit the ceiling. She said that Kirk had "compromised" and didn't put up a fight. She said he should have demanded a trial, a confrontation with his accusers. Moreover, that Al the northern organizer, had not accused Kirk of anything. He had only sent the facts to his N.O. where charges had been concocted for factional reasons, by his N.O. and New York. It was a "factional frame-up" and the final straw. (Perhaps this was the final straw for Kaye -- but later other Seattle people told us the question of disaffiliation from the SWP was not now being discussed, that the decision to disaffiliation had been decided by a series of discussions which began immediately after Larry S. returned from the Washington Conference. Only the time was left open. On this question a common line of argument was advanced by almost everyone we talked to -- a line buttressed by a list of grievances going back to 1953 when Farrell Dobbs allegedly "organized the Cochranites against us, the majority." It was as if everyone had learned their lessons by rote from the same drill master.)

We then got to the subject of the Washington Conference and the anti-war movement. Fortunately, Kipp was present, a young leader in the anti-war movement who "was there." She took over and presented the facts concerning the Washington and Milwaukee Conferences and reported on subsequent developments which showed our line was correct and was producing results.

Kaye and Kirk rejected Kipp's report except for one point: they agreed that Larry S. had behaved irresponsibly at the Washington Conference. But they added "We take no responsibility for him; we don't have any control over him, and furthermore, he's crazy." I countered that Kirk had based his document submitted to the plenum on the "facts" supplied by this comrade whom they called "crazy" and "irresponsible," plus other "facts" taken from reports by our enemies, namely the C.P., Robertson and Wohlforth supporters, and PL. The answer was that the position of the Seattle Tendency had been arrived at "independently."

We then got a lecture on how the Seattle branch was the "most democratic in the SWP and paid the most attention to theory". And, therefore, developed "independent thinkers." When we asked whether or not the rumor that the Seattle youth was going to dissolve were true, Kaye answered that the Seattle Tendency Youth acted in "complete independence," and most of the time she "didn't know what they were doing." We later concluded that this was to a great extent true, and that, moreover, everyone in the Seattle Tendency pretty much did and said what the spirit move, with small regard to the elected leadership.

On the other hand, although later Kaye denied that she had seen the call for a "new revolutionary socialist youth organization" before it was issued April 2 at the Northwest Regional Conference, she didn't deny she agreed with it.

Kaye became very upset with Kipp and I at the conference when we insisted that the "Call for a New Revolutionary Socialist Youth Organization" amounted to a resignation from the party and/or youth by those who had signed the call. Such contradictory behavior gave us the impression that our presence in Seattle had upset their timetable. It is my opinion that if we had not confronted them politically and publicly disassociated ourselves at the time of the regional Anti-War Conference, they might have continued to discuss the question for another six months. Also, the arrival of Tom and Deborah helped push them along. Several Seattle members told us that they were "in no hurry to leave." They were surprised that Kipp and I -- considered "reasonable comrades" -- took such a hard line and didn't want to stick

around to discuss for another week or so. I, for one, am reasonable only when dealing with reasonable people, but none were to be found in the old Seattle branch.

At first Kaye and Kirk (especially Kaye) attempted to turn all questions into a discussion of the "Dobbs-Kerry regime." When I rejected this as a "demonological approach to politics," they then said no, it wasn't just a question of Dobbs and Kerry, but that indeed, the entire majority was ossified in its politics, bureaucratic and undemocratic in its dealing with intra-party minorities. Now just about every SWP leader, from Cannon to Vernon to Barnes was given his lumps -- nor was Harer forgotten. The conversation degenerated rapidly, to continue was pointless. I decided to try to get back to political questions. I told Clara and Dick, "Okay, so let us say that every one of your complaints could have some basis in fact. Still, is it possible that such a large number of organizational beefs could exist except that there are deep political differences, perhaps irreconcilable from your point of view?"

Then we discussed political questions for a time.

The Negro question: The original sin according to Kirk, was committed by Trotsky when, during discussions with American comrades, he said American Negroes should have the right of self-determination. This was an adaptation to the C.P.'s "black nation" program. And from this all evil flowed. The 1948 resolution had formalized the error and the SWP program presently was "separatist" and a capitulation to the most reactionary black nationalists.

The war in Vietnam: Kirk and Kaye hold the SWP program is reformist, not revolutionary, and that the Seattle Tendency's program as set forth in Kirk's document submitted to the last plenum was correct. I commented that their line carried out organizationally was a regroupment line -- a regroupment with opponents of the SWP. And I asked who are you going to regroup with; the castoffs from the SWP -- the dropouts -- Progressive Labor? They answered, no, to all these questions. In regard to P.L., however, they both said that unfortunately it was too late -- two months too late -- that we should have fused with P.L. before it took its recent opportunist turn (one wing now looks toward coalition politics). Kipp asked, "If we'd have fused with P.L. do you think we could have saved it?" The answer was "yes", and on second thought, "perhaps."

(In my opinion the Seattle Tendency orients more toward Healy than P.L. Besides, P.L. wouldn't have them, and they know it. Incidentally, Mellina told us that at the time of the last SWP

convention she was taken to St. Paul to meet with Hank Schultz and "several people who had left the Party." Schultz met with Healy in Canada last year. At the present time there is only one Healyite in Seattle, a very confused young man. There are perhaps five R.L.'ers.)

Somehow we got back to organizational grievances. I got exasperated finally and demanded, "What do you want? You've exercised your democratic rights and you still can do so. Perhaps majority comrades have sometimes been rude and perhaps worse but it appears to me that this isn't the question. It is politics, not organization, that underlies all this. Perhaps your politics are incompatible with SWP membership; perhaps you can no longer abide democratic centralism."

Kirk answered, "You won't let us live in the SWP with our politics." Kaye seconded him adding that they would discuss the question of disaffiliation at a special meeting Monday, April 4, that we were invited to attend, also Tom and Deborah, if they arrived in time, "to present the majority's point of view." We said we'd think about it.

Sort of in closing I asked them what were they going to do after they left. Were they going to build Trotskyism (their brand) in one city? And did they realize that after they left they would automatically become political opponents of the party and youth? What kind of organization were they going to set up? These questions disturbed them. Finally Kaye answered (in a most friendly manner), "We will continue to uphold the banner of Trotskyism in the city of Seattle." I answered that she should disabuse herself of that idea and added that the SWP would undertake the job. I reminded them that we had faced such situations before, told them that Tom and Deborah were already on their way and others would be sent in to rebuild the party and the youth on the basis of the Party program.

Both were taken aback by the vehemence of my statement. Kirk said, "So now you'll send people into Seattle. Why didn't you send someone in when we asked for help?" I answered, "I was not aware of any such requests, but that all this was now immaterial: You have made up your minds to leave and I doubt if anything would stop you."

It was obvious to me they had not thought the question through as serious politicians. Kaye in particular, seemed to think that everything would go on as before, only without the

restraint of SWP membership. It was "Never-Never Land."

By this time it was past 3 a.m. We talked a bit more. We were invited to stay overnight and make the Kirk-Kaye residence our center while in Seattle, but we declined and Dick drove us back to Frank's.

Next morning we recapitulated the previous evening and discussed our next move. We borrowed a car and went looking for young comrades to talk with. Frank had given us all the addresses asked for. Certainly, the intent was to convince us that the Seattle Tendency was solid, no chinks in the wall. We talked to several younger comrades and I think at least two are salvageable.

We talked to Mellina, John S., Larry S., Lee M., and later to Melba, an old-timer. Kipp talked separately to several youth, including Larry G. and Mellina again, in company with Tom and Deborah. Except in the cases of Mellina and Larry G. we encountered a solid front -- the same grievances repeated as if by rote, the same politics with some strange individual twists and the same soft regroupment approach to opponent organizations.

This story will be illustrative: When I asked Lee M., "What do you intend to do, build your special brand of Trotskyism in one city?" she answered, "We haven't thought it through that far, we just know we want to leave." When I pointed out that after they left we would rebuild the Seattle branch, she seemed surprised but answered politely, "That will be all right. We feel closer to the SWP than to anyone else -- we'll regroup with you."

Melba, faced with the same questions, gave much the same answers, with one addition; that she is very ill and perhaps in the future wouldn't have to go to so many meetings. She was very friendly.

Another comrade responded to these questions with his own: "What do you think will become of the Seattle Tendency?" "You will disappear," I answered. He thought for a while, and then, evidently impressed by the ring of assurance in my voice, asked, "How soon?"

The rank and file of the Seattle Tendency want to be friends with all radicals, in my opinion, and the leaders want to be friendly with everyone except the "bureaucratic" leadership of the SWP. A desire for "a friendlier atmosphere in the

radical community" was expressed by several. Who's opposed to this? But the SWP's hard "single-issue" line in the anti-war movement is "disruptive" and "splits the left and makes enemies."

All of them, when pressured, admit that it is their politics that can't live in the SWP, that they want to get loose so they can apply their political line. The stories about the "Dobbs-Kerry regime" are pretty horrendous -- and probably some of them are true. Right is seldom altogether on one side. But behind the Seattle Tendency's many organizational beefs always was politics -- a "political explanation."

For example: "The Robertsonites were driven out of the party because they agreed with Kirk on the Negro question. Tabata wasn't allowed to come to Seattle because he agreed with Kirk on the Negro Question and the Colonial revolution." (A persecution complex shows itself here. Why? It's too long a story to tell now.)

Although there appeared to be general agreement on things past, there was no such unanimity on the question of what to do now. Indeed, there was almost a complete lack of understanding as to how a political program should be applied and great confusion on the question of a transition program for the anti-war movement. One example: At the Anti-War Conference, Kipp and Mellina took opposite positions on "single-issue" vs. "multi-issue." Afterward, Mellina told Kipp she liked her speech and agreed with her. Obviously she just didn't understand the differences. In general, we found the level of political education in the Seattle Tendency very low. This of course says more about the leadership than the rank and file.

Also, gossip is in the air. The very evening we arrived we were told that one of their leaders was an incurable alcoholic. True or false? Very unimportant. But this gossip atmosphere pervades the organization: gossip seems more important than politics. Actually the group resembles a big symbiotic family -- a cult family. Nobody seems to particularly like anyone else -- but they all stick together.

We were discussing with Frank the question of minimal membership requirements in the San Francisco branch: attendance, level of activity, sustainer, etc. Frank laughed and said Seattle had no such standards. He referred to one member reputed to be a professional gambler, but said they wouldn't drop him because the party is his only contact with reality, that he couldn't make it without the party, he might crack up.

Monday night, April 4, we attended the Seattle branch meeting. Clara Kaye had mobilized the Seattle Tendency. Eighteen were present -- including three youth not in the SWP. One member, Mellina, was working and could not attend. Only three party members present were under 30 years of age.

Kaye opened the meeting by declaring it to be a "tendency meeting," i.e., a caucus, and therefore the transfer of Tom L. and Deborah to the Seattle branch could not be taken up.

Then Kaye asked the meeting, "How many of you saw Asher's 'Academy Prize-winning performance' at the Conference?" Several, including me, held up their hands. Everyone chuckled at Kaye's humorous way of disposing of that disagreeable scene.

(The Seattle Tendency -- working with P.L. -- had staged the Northwest Conference to End the War in Vietnam. Larry S. used the conference as a forum to announce the call for "a new revolutionary socialist youth organization." Both P.L. and the Tendency had advanced their own multi-issue program as the program for the anti-war movement. Larry S., speaking as party and youth member, had again advocated the program of "driving the G.I.'s into the China Sea." We decided to publicly disassociate The Militant, the party and youth from the Seattle "party" and "youth." I took the floor at the final plenary session of the conference, disassociated, and then lambasted both the Seattle Tendency and P.L. for their sectarian nonsense, and explained our transitional approach to building a mass anti-war movement. Well received. Applauded. This was the "performance" that Kaye referred to. See "Report on Conference.")

Kaye then proceeded to read a very long resolution of disaffiliation. The floor was open for discussion. Tom, Kipp and I spoke very briefly. (We had agreed not to say anything that might impede quick passage of the resolution. We had abandoned all hope for the Tendency.) Tom told them they were cutting themselves off from the mainstream of revolutionary politics and demanding the hall and everything in it, as SWP property. Kipp spoke to the youth. I said that we held the leadership, not the ranks, responsible for the degeneration of the Seattle Branch and that later, if some found they'd been taken, their applications for re-entry into the SWP would be considered in a friendly manner.

Kaye answered Tom L. with an offer to negotiate.

Now just about every member spoke -- at length. Each told the story of his political life -- why he joined the SWP and why he was leaving. Tom remarked that it resembled a mass confessional.

Melba said the SWP destroys women leaders, so Seattle had to leave before Clara Kaye was destroyed. She cited the cases of Myra Weiss and Frances James.

Bob Patrick said the slogan "Bring the Troops Home" was reformist and that we had done a bad thing to push this slogan at the Conference. "We don't want the troops brought home," he cried. "If they were brought home now they'd be used to oppress the American Workers! Let them stay in Vietman until the American working class is revolutionized!"

Patrick had certainly carried the line too far. Yet he was listened to respectfully and even received a bit of applause. Both Frank Powers and Kirk spoke after Patrick, but neither contradicted Patrick's outrageous statements. This evidently, was a display of Seattle's "democracy in action" that we'd been told about.

Kirk's speech went as follows: For fifteen years he had been an "activist." He was considered a valuable comrade. Then he "stumbled upon the theoretical ideas that could make the SWP into the party of the American Revolution." (Exact quote) He began to develop into a worker-intellectual. He began to write documents. Soon he found that he was "confronting a party leadership steeped in the ideology that all the fundamental problems in theory had already been solved by Trotsky" and therefore "all that the party had to do was organize the revolution." (Kirk's emphasis) He then went back to Trotsky's original mistake on the Negro question, when Trotsky "accepted separation as a legitimate aim of the Negro revolution in the U.S." (The Seattle people consistently equated nationalism with separatism. For this reason they object to the Malcolm X series in the Militant.)

Kirk then spoke of the SWP's wrong positions on colonial revolution, Vietnam and the anti-war movement. He ended with this interesting point: The SWP had consistently moved away from genuine Trotskyism to the point that the majority had become an ossified cult and Seattle remained as the center of revolutionary socialism in the United States!

Kirk's final point was that the Seattle Tendency was doing the SWP a favor by leaving. "The majority leadership has used



us as a whipping boy for 15 years. In this way it has kept the lid on the party and kept down criticism. Perhaps with us out of the way there will be more democracy and more criticism."

One Don G. (YSA) took the floor. He was unsteady on his feet. He was very emotional. "You must be destitute and hungry and suffer before you can understand the problem of the American workers. I doubt if more than three people in this room have been destitute -- so how can you understand?"

The meeting ended after eleven o'clock. I recalled Jim Cannon's remark that if he ever got to heaven it would be as a reward for all the meetings he'd sat through.

A vote was taken. Seventeen for disaffiliation. One abstention -- Larry G.

S/ A. Harris

Seattle, Washington

Ed Shaw  
National Office, S.W.P.  
New York, N.Y.

Dear Comrade Shaw:

Since we have received no acknowledgement of or response to our letter asking you to call off the investigation, and no answer to my letter to you assuring you the previous letter was real, and since Comrade A.H. took the floor at a public Northwest Antiwar Conference here last weekend to publically and scandalously denounce the Seattle Branch, S.W.P. and our spokesmen at the Conference who explained and defended the National Liberation Front, we met in emergency session on Monday, April 4th to discuss and then proceed to adopt the enclosed statement of resignation from the party.

As you know, present and participating in our discussion, as invited guests, were Tom and Debby L. and A.H. and Kipp D., of the majority faction, all sent here to investigate the situation. Their only response to hearing the enclosed statement was that anybody who voted for it was an ignorant dupe of the local leadership, and that nobody who voted for it, except youth, would ever be allowed back in the party again, and that Tom and Debbie would stay here to represent the SWP and crush us.

After three hours of discussion, in which almost every Seattle Branch member spoke, the resignation was adopted by unanimous vote of all those present who are resident members of the Seattle Branch, as well as by three youth who are not SWPers but are resigning from the youth.

The statement is also signed by three SWP members from Connecticut.

Every signature is individually signed.

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On the question of finances, we consider ourselves responsible to you for all back sustaining fund through March, 1966, for all outstanding literature bills, and for all dues payments through March, 1966.

Please reduce our Militant bundle order to 6 and keep the ISR bundle the same; also, please keep us informed of literature publications. We shall not accept the quota assigned to us on the current national fund drive. We prefer to pay up our back debts instead, and as quickly as possible.

Comradely,  
S/Clara Kaye  
Organizer, Seattle Branch

5012

STATEMENT OF RESIGNATION from the S.W.P.  
April 9, 1966

Seattle, Washington

It is a tribute to the genius of Leon Trotsky that the movement he founded could survive in the U.S. so long after his death, during two long decades of prosperity, world domination and relative quiescence in the working class.

Nevertheless, the once proud SWP, the hallmark of international solidarity and revolutionary intransigence, has become a movement eroded in program and perspective. The events of the past few months, culminating in the February Plenum of the National Committee, constitute a nodal point in a long process of political decline.

The degeneration of the SWP majority is acutely revealed in the utter lack of theory and conjunctural analysis which marks its approach. The method of the majority is eclectic impressionism, and the policies, flowing from this are sterile and contradictory, resulting in false positions on the Negro struggle, the key domestic problem of the era, and on China, the key international problem of the revolutionary movement.

Incapable of any economic evaluation of the current status of U.S. imperialism, the majority's domestic politics consist of a flirtation with reformism on the issue of the Vietnamese war, and a view of the coming upsurge of labor as a "single-issue" type of process, connected to no other social struggles extant or developing -- such as the Negro struggle, women's rights, youth and the poverty-stricken.

The majority's strategic preoccupation with the trade unions as the exclusive medium of social transformation expresses itself in a conservative sectarianism towards the protracted ideological ferment in both old and new radical circles, as well as in a hardened contempt for the efforts of women and youth to emancipate themselves from oppression.

Just as the SLP petrified around the conjunctural evaluations of the 19th century Marxists, so the SWP has ossified around its conjunctural evaluations of 25 years ago. It is today either oblivious or wrong about the main political problems and needs of our epoch.

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We have sought to offset the degeneration by a series of struggles on central political questions.

## I. The Negro Struggle.

For 15 years, our tendency has pressed for theoretical clarity on this central question of the American revolution. We have urged that a deep analysis of a unique phenomenon replace the present policy of super-imposing the doctrine of European nationalism upon the Negro question here.

In a series of documents presented for internal party discussion (particularly three convention Resolutions on the Negro Struggle in 1957 and 1963 by Kirk, and the Kirk-Kaye Political Resolution in 1965), we have emphasized the objectively revolutionary nature of the Negro struggle as it is, and we have labelled its course as "Revolutionary Integration."

A powerful Negro cadre might have been built around this program, for it provided the basis for meaningful intervention into the southern struggle, the civil rights movement in the North the ghetto battles, and the growing ideological controversy raging in the Negro movement today.

But the party majority insured that none of these documents were discussed objectively in the party. When the central leadership condescended to reply at all, it was principally with falsification and caricature of our position, spiced with organizational villifications.

When, in 1957, we criticized the majority's uncritical adaptation to Rev. King and to pacifism, we were accused of over-estimating the independence of the Negro struggle. When, in 1963, we opposed the overadaptation to Mr. Muhammad and the glorification of separatism, we were accused of being white so-called radicals or liberal reformists who under-estimated the independence of the struggle. For our part, we considered the party line opportunist and tail-endist in both instances.

The majority is responsible for a series of unprecedented disasters in its relations with the Negro movement, defeats that have completely isolated the party from the key upsurge of our time and yet have never been explained. Today, with the southern movement in deep programmatic crisis, and the northern ghetto on the verge of explosions which will rock American society to its foundations, the party has less contact with, understanding of, of orientation to this struggle than at any time in the past 25 years.

The self-confidence of the party in its ability to alter its racial composition has accordingly been shattered. THE SWP HAS BECOME CRYSTALLIZED AS AN ESSENTIALLY WHITE PARTY, and it lacks the impetus to alter this condition.

It bequeaths the Negro struggle to the petty bourgeois nationalists and the middle-class tokenists, thereby cutting the party off from the rescussitating effects of the class struggle and deepening its withdrawal from reality.

The SWP now presents the ludicrous spectacle of a lily-white party with a program of ultra-black nationalism. The adulation of the Muslims has opened a Pandora's box of violations of elementary working class principles: SWP spokesmen now justify the nationalists' discrimination against women, their anti-Semitism, and their collaboration with fascists.

Finally, it is the majority which adapts theoretically to the liberals on the Negro question. Perhaps the last act in the tragedy of the SWP and the Negro struggle was Comrade Camejo's pseudo-historical, pseudo-economic YSA Bulletin article where he categorically stated that the bourgeoisie will implant Northern-style democracy in the South.

This proposition has only been implied in party Resolutions since 1957; now it is doctrine, and nothing could be better calculated to promote the absolute alienation of the party from the Negro struggle than this categorical denial of the permanent revolutionary character of the Negro struggle for integration.

This overestimation of the vitality of the bourgeoisie, endowing it with a revolutionary vigor it was unable to summon even during Reconstruction, is the result of the method of economic determinism, and it will lead to further ideological retreats on fundamental questions of American politics.

## II. The Colonial Revolution

We have called for political solidarity with the Chinese Revolution. Despite bureaucratic deformations and Stalinist baggage, it is the key to the colonial revolution and a central axis of revolutionary politics throughout the world. But the SWP has cut itself off from relating to the dynamics of this great revolution.

Just as the majority mechanically transfers European nationalism to the Negro question in the USA, so it exports Stalinist degeneration in the Soviet Union over to revolutionary China, and concludes with the strategy of political revolution in China.

Instead of concrete socio-analysis, inapropos labels like "Stalinist" are pasted over the Chinese regime and the SWP conducts a frantic search for every apparent Stalinist-type devia-

tion in Maoist policy and practice. The dialectic of a living revolution that has evolved into ever-intensifying opposition to the Kremlin is totally ignored, and in place of enthusiasm we are offered scorn.

In Cuba, on the other hand, the superficial evaluation of Castro's attack on Trotskyism, Gilly, China, etc., reveals the tendency of the majority leadership to cling to Castro as to life-preserver, ignoring the obvious basic shift to the right and toward the Soviet bureaucracy. The job of class analysis and solidarity with the Latin American proletariat against Castro's shift is left to the Chinese leadership and to -- Healy.

### III. Vietnam

The current attack upon the Kirk-Kaye tendency results directly from our advocacy of a proletarian anti-war policy that would solidarize the party with the revolution in Vietnam, with the working class Negro youth who are key victims of the draft in the U.S., and with the leftwing of the anti-war movement.

As we stated in our letter rejecting the National Committee's censure of Kirk for having the audacity to attempt a discussion of party anti-war policy, "We sought to bring about a critical consideration of the strategy and tactics employed at the Thanksgiving NCC conference in Washington, D.C., where YSA and SWP, by insisting on a "single-issue" oriented movement, served to arrest the radicalization of the new left and effectively isolated themselves from the revolutionary wing of the southern Negro struggle.

"We also opposed their sectarian insistence on forcing all conference activity to circulate around a purely organizational struggle to isolate the independents in a new organization, when the burning responsibility for YSA and SWP was to conduct a clear political struggle against a SANE - liberal - C.P. conspiracy to disorient the anti-war movement."

SWP policy is divorced from any economic and social analysis of the current crisis of U.S. capitalism. We have maintained that the capitalist class has a fundamental stake in this particular war, and will not quit short of military/political defeat in Vietnam, or virtual civil war at home.

The majority calls for "withdrawal" as against "negotiations" are obviously correct. But under cover of this lurks the essentially pacifist proposition that the anti-war movement can, with its own forces, pressure the U.S. out of Vietnam. And it is a fundamental of Trotskyism that pacifism, translated into political terms, is reformism.

This flight from Marxism takes place when the vanguard elements in the anti-war movement and in the new left are groping for fundamental solutions to social problems, seeking to unite Negro freedom fighters, the poverty-stricken, the opposition to the draft, and the anti-war movement in one broad political movement against the war. The SWP turns the radicalization of the new left over to the C.P. and to the pacifists, and thus to the Democrats, and then lauds its own "realistic" aloofness from the burning problems of the anti-war movement.

It is a typical majority slander that we advise the party to turn its back on the student movement in favor of the Negro movement. We urge the revolutionary youth to struggle for political leadership on the campuses. However, the militant students whom we lead must be encouraged in their groping for alliance with the proletariat, and in their growing feeling that only the workers have the capacity to stop this particular war. Anti-war youth must turn toward the working class -- and specifically toward the Negroes, who are that section of the class already in motion.

The SWP's "single-issue" gimmick is a false answer to a false posing of the movement's problems, and it acts in life as a conservative barrier to the political maturation of young militants.

#### IV. The Regeneration of Socialist Thought

Our tendency quickly grasped the significance of Khrushchev's exposure of Stalin, and Seattle Branch had singular success with its campaign to recruit dissident CPers to Trotskyism.

But the SWP majority was unprepared to discuss two of the burning questions confronting the advanced CP cadres: C.P. policy of Negro self-determination, and the Chinese challenge to the Soviet bureaucracy. The SWP could not, therefore, intervene with full effectiveness in the internecine struggle in the Communist milieu and could not stimulate a national leftwing in the C.P.

As a result, the fruit of regroupment work belongs to other organizations. PL has grabbed off a leftwing of the CP. Spartacist has a leftwing of the S.P. And a whole galaxy of centrist-type youth and adult tendencies has appeared.

We have tried to orient the party toward this general leftward stream emerging under the impulse of world events, but the party pretends that no such large and fluid milieu exists. The SWP is still mired in the Holding Operation, which is a prolonged state of suspension based upon the assumption that nothing significant can really happen until the regeneration of the trade unions and the emergence of the Labor Party.

Chained to the fixed idea that the SWP is automatically ordained as the leadership of the future, the majority is in the grip of a conservative sectarianism which views all new socialist formations and developments with hostility from the very outset. The organizational flexibility of the old Cannonism is junked and a rigid enmity to all new 'competition' ensues.

And yet, without the intervention of Trotskyism, the new currents will stop short of revolutionary Marxism and will petrify in centrism.

#### V. The Woman Question

Ours is the only tendency in the history of American Trotskyism to place the struggle for women's emancipation on the level of a first rate theoretical and programatic question. We have vainly resisted the creeping paralysis of male supremacy which now is a central doctrine and ingrained practice in the party.

The party's capitulation to sex chauvanism has been a long-standing scandal in the SWP periphery, and that it has not been noticed and exposed by our opponents is only a commentary on the general backwardness of socialist thought in this country.

The party is now committed to its point-blank refusal to undertake the special indicated effort that would tap the enormous potential of revolutionary energy among oppressed and doubly-exploited women.

The central party leadership is essentially hostile to women leaders, as well as to anyone who considers Second Sexhood to be a political and organizational issue. Both the letter and spirit of Bolshevism on this question are alien to the SWP leadership.

#### VI. Youth

Indoctrinated in political sectarianism and organizational fetichism, the party youth, largely deprived of any working class background or experience, are further deprived by the party of a solid theoretical training, and they accordingly move ahead even faster than the older cadres on the road toward careerism, maneuverism, organizational manipulations, monolithic structure, and contempt for theory, history and principled politics.

Many of these young middle-class intellectuals could be inspired and educated to become worker-Bolsheviks. Instead, their pragmatism and cautiousness are fanned by the rigidity and conservatism of the central leadership.

As the younger comrades proceed to assume increasing control



of the party apparatus, the SWP will soon become as unrecognizable to others as it is to us today, for the youth are encouraged to exaggerate the very worst features of the party.

The best of the youth, those with a truly revolutionary ardor and understanding, will not be able to survive in the stifling, narrow, and mechanistic confines of the party. The SWP is dooming the best of today's radical youth to disorientation and eventual demoralization.

### VII. The Organization Question

For some fifteen years -- since Comrades Dobbs & Kerry organized the Seattle Cochranites for an unprincipled organizational assault against the local leadership -- we have well realized the pre-eminence the majority attaches to organizational matters.

Nevertheless, we have persistently presented our political ideas to the party, entering into discussions wherever possible, but devoting the overwhelming bulk of our time and thought to year-in, year-out party building and branch activity. We helped organize branches for co-thinkers, kept the SWP on the local and national ballot, made Trotskyism a living reality with an unbroken tradition in the Pacific Northwest, and built what may well be the most consistently active and flourishing proletarian branch in the party over a twenty-year period.

Armed with the traditions of the movement and seeking to preserve them, we made politics central and organizational questions secondary, refusing to be provoked by the constant attempt of the majority to undermine our position by organizational harassment, personal slander and intricate maneuverism. So long as the possibility of free exchange of views existed, we kept the doors open for discussion by minimizing all administrative and secondary assault.

But precisely as the political degeneration of the leadership accelerated, its intolerance of oppositional ideas intensified. (See SWP Discussion Bulletin No. 14, Vol. 25, "Radical Laborism Versus Bolshevik Leadership," by Kirk and Kaye, 1965). Despite all our strenuous efforts, it has been impossible to obtain a climate of principled politics. Every political dispute and discussion is muddled and prejudiced by organizational smoke-screen grievances, threats, frame-ups around "security" claims, blatant falsification of oppositional ideas, and the incessant grinding-out of N.O.-inspired corridor gossip.

Our tendency stood for proletarian democracy in the party, for the right of minority representation on leading bodies, and

for a comradely exchange of ideas. The majority's position is that the majority IS the party and that a minority is inherently anti-party, dangerous, diseased and intolerable, and must be driven out. All opposition is treated factionally, and all factions are reduced to the status of outlaws.

The central leadership has become a peculiar anti-political clique which has consolidated its control of the apparatus by driving out all dissidents, critics, and potential critics within the leadership, engineered parallel purges in the ranks, and is now attaching itself to a predominantly petty-bourgeois student social base.

To answer critics, the majority refuses analytical argument and simply reiterates doctrine, thereby demonstrating that the SWP has become essentially a doctrinaire party without any internal ideological life in the full meaning of the term.

Trotskyism in the SWP image has become transformed into a graven image.

Loyalty to the leadership has assumed the proportions of cultism. The cult has taken form in the majority caucus, which now comprises virtually the entire SWP and is maintained for the sole purpose of preventing open discussion in the party. It merges comrades of many and varying political positions around the central issue of organizational loyalty to the regime. It is thus a totally unprincipled bloc.

The recent Plenum displayed the ultimate absurdity of this clique operation. There was in the entire Plenum only one openly dissenting voice -- Kirk's. Yet the P.C. found it necessary to eliminate one whole Plenum session in order to substitute for it -- a majority caucus! And all basic decisions were made there rather than at the Plenum where Kirk was allowed to be present (so he could be censured!)

Such a ridiculous practice makes frank, open and honest discussion of differences patently impossible. But it flows clearly from the 1965 Organizational Resolution, which climaxed the party descent into shameless anti-Bolshevism on the question of party organization.

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#### Future of the S.W.P.

Is the SWP irretrievably decayed? Is the degenerative process irreversible?

We do not know. We wholeheartedly hope not. The long and honorable record compiled by the party of anti-capitalist principle, plus the tremendous dynamism of the Trotsky heritage and the Cannon interventionism into the living struggle wherever it broke through, created a cadre with essentially working class and revolutionary reflexes. But these reflexes became paralyzed by the fetich of loyalty to the leadership and the concomitant horror of any criticism of the leadership.

In the future, some social force outside the party might jolt the majority enough to jar it out of its sublime complacency. But for now, the party will neither intervene publically with ideology nor discuss objectively the unsolved problems of the American Revolution.

### Our Course

Considering the present insupportable circumstances, we cannot waste any more of our time and resources in trying to avoid the running organizational hunt-and-kill game which the majority imposes upon us as the price of our remaining in the party.

The Plenum decision to censure Kirk for non-existent "crimes" and then to investigate them, and the P.C.'s announcement that the Seattle Branch's protest against and rejection of the censure was "inauthentic," "anonymous," and therefore unreal, telegraphs the determination of the P.C. to destroy the Seattle Branch and rid the party of any general critics of the leadership.

At a time when Seattle Branch was preparing for the International Days of Protest, working in two local CEWVs, anticipating a Northwest Conference of the anti-war movement, involved in a northern trip which we were invited to make by co-thinkers, active in trying to cement a viable local African defense committee, planning a new forum series, etc., etc., etc. -- it has been unceasingly barraged by the Center as the leadership escalates its deliberate sabotage of our daily party-building work.

Still, despite everything, under different conditions we might still try to remain in the party founded by Trotsky and developed by Cannon. But the SWP is no longer the epicenter of revolutionary activity and ideology in the U.S. Its estrangement from the Negro struggle and its refusal to intervene rationally and politically in the anti-war movement, or in the present rebirth of interest in socialist thought, have destroyed its chance, for this period to secure ideological hegemony over the non-Stalinist left -- a necessary first step toward political hegemony over the class.

This opportunity was presented to the party by the 20th Congress and the following period of regroupment, rising colonial revolution, the Sino-Soviet conflict, and the international crisis of capitalism. But the leadership has squandered its capital and clearly announces that it is not interested in creating today the basis of the party of the American Revolution. That is always for manana.

We hope to be able to intervene in the viable political currents all around us today. Outside the SWP, and without programmatic affinity for any other existing party, we may not be able to demonstrably prove the superiority of our policies. Yet we intend to intervene. Freed from the persecutory mania of the SWP we will do what we can to further the principles of Trotskyism in those arenas where the SWP is unwilling or unable to intervene politically. Some Trotskyists must try to publicize and promote our rich heritage of thought, especially when so many doors in the mass movement today are swinging open, all over the country.

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### Summary

We have clear political differences with the regime on the questions of the Negro struggle, the colonial revolution, the Vietnamese war, regroupment, woman's emancipation, and party organizational principles. We have a different appraisal of the import and nature of the present conjuncture, and a different strategic perspective on the unfolding of the American Revolution.

We do not consider these differences fundamentally incompatible with party membership.

The majority, however, so considers them, and will not let us live and function in the party we built.

The majority also exploits our very existence as a minority tendency to pressure everybody else into line. They thus force us to play the objective role of helping to cement the anti-democratic and anti-political leadership clique.

We therefore consider it our responsibility to resign our memberships in the SWP and put an end to the otherwise unending organizational farce played by the Center against its internal opponents, against the principles of the movement, and particularly against the needs and interests of the burgeoning radical movement in the U.S.

We are resigning in protest against the kind of a party the SWP has become. We are resigning because we see no realistic chance of being allowed to even criticize it.

We hope that some day the SWP will find its road cleared for the historic return to the method of Leninism in theory, program, tactics and party life.

\* \* \* \* \*

Seattle Branch SWP:

Fred Berg  
Jim Curcio  
Minota Ginther  
Ron Ginther  
Mellina Jones  
Clara Kaye  
Richard Kirk  
Frank Krasnowsky  
Lee Mayfield  
Darcy Oleson  
Bob Patrick  
Jo Patrick

Tim Patrick  
Gale P.  
Al P.  
John Severn  
Larry Shumm  
A. Stone  
Sally Stone  
Waymon Ware  
Melba Windoffer  
Jack Wright

Connecticut

David Dreiser\*  
Ellen Linden  
Carl Linden  
Seattle Non-SWP  
YSAers who are con-  
currently resigning  
from YSA on the  
basis of this state-  
ment:  
Miriam Rader  
Larry Glickman  
Don Glick

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Though dated April 9, 1966, document was discussed and voted on at meeting of April 4, 1966.

\*Dreiser had resigned from the SWP in letter of March 17, 1966. (See P.C. Minutes No. 7, March 31, 1966.)

Ed Shaw

April 19, 1966  
Seattle, Washington

Dear Ed,

My first contact with Clara was at the conclusion of the final session of the Northwest Anti-War Conference - the only one I attended - at which time I let her know that Debbie and I were formally transferring into the branch. I asked her when the next branch meeting would be so that we could attend and she told me that there was a meeting the next night, Monday April 4, at the party headquarters.

We then met with Asher and Kipp who informed us that they had made an extraordinary effort to consult and discuss with SWP members on matters relating to both the Anti-War Conference, role of the party and youth in the anti-war movement, etc. In the course of these discussions my impression from Asher and Kipp's remarks was that the Kirk-Kaye tendency was definitely planning to split from the party and the youth and that the meeting to which I had been invited would undoubtedly take up this question. Asher had consulted with both Kirk and Kaye for over six hours when he first arrived in town and he and Kipp had managed to talk to most of the branch and youth members during the course of the Conference. Following the conclusion of the Conference on April 3, I together with Asher and Kipp, went to Frank Krasnowsky's where they had been staying. I spent nearly three hours discussing with Frank what the relationship of the Kirk-Kaye tendency was, and would be to the party. In the course of discussion, he told me that the tendency would probably leave the party the following night. I made a special point to spell out for him that in leaving the party they were leaving also the world movement and the revolutionary socialist movement. I also informed him that even if the branch decided to split from the SWP the SWP would remain in Seattle and henceforth we would confront each other as political opponents.

On Monday, April 4, I spent together with Kipp and Debbie, five hours discussing with Mellina Jones the seriousness of leaving the party, as well as the differences she had with us. She finally said that she would never have joined the SWP if it hadn't been for the Kirk-Kaye tendency, that she in fact joined them and not the SWP. She said, however, she would be willing to continue discussion with us and we agreed to leave the door open for such discussion.

In general, the reactions I got from both Frank and Mellina were substantially the same as those Kipp and Asher got in their discussion with other ex-comrades. There was no recourse for us but to discuss among ourselves, as loyal party members, what

our action should be toward the Kirk-Kaye tendency at the meeting that evening. As members of the National Committee, Asher and I agreed that we should do whatever necessary to direct our criticisms and actions at the leadership of the Kirk-Kaye tendency and not place responsibility for their actions on the rank-and-file branch members.

At the branch meeting, as I have reported to you, Clara refused to accept my and Debbie's transfer into the Seattle branch. Following the reading of their resignation resolution of the Kirk-Kaye tendency, I took the floor in the discussion period first and made two central points. The first was to urge the branch membership not to support the resignation statement. I pointed out that we would be willing to discuss with anyone who disagreed with the Kirk-Kaye resignation and gave our address from the speaker's platform. I pointed out the seriousness of leaving the party and that for those of them who considered themselves socialists, they were not only leaving the party but were in all likelihood leaving the revolutionary movement if they followed the Kirk-Kaye lead. I then proposed, briefly, that if the branch split from the party, we should like to take over the headquarters and all the assets of the local which had been accumulated under the name of the Socialist Workers Party. Asher took the floor and explained how he was personally hurt, especially by Kirk's resignation, since it had been Kirk who had recruited him in the past and he felt badly about his leaving, although in questions like this the party came first. He urged the party and youth members present not to resign. He pointed out the party and the youth would both continue in Seattle and they should make every effort to contact Debbie and Tom to continue discussions with them and to work with them. Kipp also spoke, directing her remarks primarily to the youth, along similar lines. This was the extent of the participation in the formal proceedings of the meeting of all party and youth members present, exclusive of the Kirk-Kaye tendency. The next, nearly three hours, were spent in reminiscences by the branch of their years of travail in both the CP and SWP. After listening to them speak, my comradely opening remarks certainly sounded naive, especially since it came out in the discussion that although the document had been drafted by Kirk and Krasnowsky and read by Clara at the meeting it had actually been discussed in the branch for a period of from two to six months depending on who you talked to. In addition, in her opening remarks, Clara reported that local branch activity, including the local Militant Labor Forum, had been suspended because of this discussion.

Subsequent to the resignation, Debbie went out of her way

to talk to youth in an effort to establish communication and restore activity. Her results culminated in the meeting for Doug to which three former youth members showed up, none of whom appear promising in any way. For my part, I had given Frank and Clara my address and phone number, which they never used. I also attended a Militant Labor Forum which was called on the Saturday following the Peace Conference. The purpose of the forum was to evaluate said Conference. Debbie and I had made a previous commitment to meet with two leaders of local anti-war work who turned out to be the only two Marcyites in town and I was unable to attend the forum. I did, however, get there for part of the discussion at about 10:30 pm and stayed until after 3:00 am. I left but the affair kept going. During this time, I discussed with Kirk and asked him what his plans were regarding the groups' relationship to the SWP. He seemed rather vague and said that he thought they would keep the party name for awhile but would "probably" change it later. I really felt sorry for the man because his whole attitude on this question seemed so pathetic. It was at this time that Clara gave me the groups' document resigning from the SWP, and I attempted to find out from her what they plan to do, but could not make any sense out of my conversation with her. She reminded me, for example, that some ten years ago I had come up to her after she had spoken at a meeting in New York and told her that she was the greatest woman leader in the party. I said that I not only could not recall the meeting but also the remarks and that furthermore it was neither in my personal tradition nor the tradition of our party to toss around these kind of accolades even when true. She made a point of implying that my memory was failing for not recalling the alleged praise in the presence of ex-members and contacts.

I also talked with several other ex-members and contacts and made it clear to all that the SWP was continuing in the area despite the resignations of the Kirk-Kaye people. The last two I talked to were Waymon Ware and Mellina J. to whom I defended the party's position on black nationalism and civil rights as opposed to the Kirk-Kaye position. This discussion turned out to be a little forum within the forum and lasted over an hour with most of the people present at one time or another listening in. When I finally left, after 3 am, and was out in front starting the car, both Mellina and Waymon said they wanted to continue the discussion. I invited them to come over to my house then and continue the discussion as long as they wanted to. They refused but left open the question of future discussion.

In addition to our association with former members and some of their contacts, Debbie and I are attending meetings of two separate anti-war groups. In addition, when Doug was in town,



the three of us participated in an anti-war parade in downtown Seattle called to coincide with the national demonstrations on Sat. April 16. The demonstration was on a very low level, as is the entire anti-war movement here. Nonetheless, we managed to sell some 45 pieces of literature, although there were only 60 people participating in the demonstration.

I mention all these experiences only to make clear that contrary to what Clara said in her letter to you we did not threaten to crush anybody, nor did any of us in any way act as political hatchetmen. The reality is that four loyal party comrades came to Seattle and several disloyal and some very confused members left the movement. It was as simple as that.

Debbie is currently attempting to keep abreast of the Kirk-Kaye youth conference called for April 24. There have been no proclamations or further public political activity that we are aware of to build this conference. Instead it appears that it is being organized, if at all, through personal contact work. We will nonetheless plan to be at the scheduled meeting place and intervene with literature, etc.

When the new reinforcements arrive in Seattle, we will resume branch meetings and start sending you copies of the minutes.

Comradely,  
S/ Tom L.

April 26, 1966

Dear Ed:

After reading the enclosed report on the Kirk-Kaye youth conference I am sure you will agree there is nothing there for us. The radical participants all have one thing in common -- pessimism and defeatism regarding any possibility of a radicalization in the USA. One gets the feeling that their alledged support of the NLF is nothing more than the most extreme position they can take which will justify their abstention from American politics. This shows up particularly in their insistence that the antiwar movement is exclusively pacifist and not worth working to build.

There is no question in my mind but that the former party members in Seattle ossified around a regroupment position which we abandoned years ago, and it has colored their views on all questions. This shows up in life in the form of the people they now have around them. One example will suffice. The night before the youth conference several of us went to Freeway Hall to find what we could learn about the next days events. Tending the refreshment counter was an old time character who made it a point to go out of his way to inform Debbie that he wasn't in the SWP but was in the CP.

The regroupment period apparently had a very profound impact in this area. We apparently got the best of the Gatesite types into the party. The more conservative CPers remained around People's World (about 200 current older people according to what we've been able to probe out).

The local Marcyite hasn't recruited a single person to his position in the last ten years. (It's not surprising he's willing to join the new "youth" group.)

The Pler here is in a similar position and only recently has been able to attract a small group around him mainly as a result of the sympathetic treatment he has received at the hands of the bunch. He was apparently leading a class in "Marxism-Leninism" at the time of the conference.

It is clear that the "left" here has been an isolated sectarian small formation whose principle role in the antiwar movement has been at best poisonous. This is the kindest way to put it.

Let me say that I made one more effort to negotiate with Clara last Saturday night about the assets of the former branch with no success. She mentioned that they might take the name "Seattle Freedom Socialist Party" which was the ballot designation in the 1964 elections.

This will be the last negative report you will receive from us. From now on most reports from here should show forward motion.

Comradely,

Tom L.

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ENC.

Seattle, Wash.  
April 28, 1966

Dear Ed:

The enclosed May Day leaflet [\*] by Kirk-Kaye is the first public acknowledgement in writing on their part that they have split from the SWP. As you will note they have yet to take a name, although I could think of several very quickly.

These former members of the party have so besmirched our name and identity in this area that only a great deal of principled activity -- and time -- will serve to correct it. Both the party and youth are looked upon as boozers, screwballs and worse, and this comes not only from radical and liberal currents but from some of the newly radicalized youth around the campus.

One of the latter told us last night that if we want to get anything done, don't mention we are with the SWP or YSA. As nearly as I can make out, the Kirk-Kaye split from us was preceded by repeated splitting activities on their part in all areas of Seattle political activity....

Comradely,

Tom L.

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\* The May Day leaflet contained the following reference by the former members of the Seattle Branch to their separation from the SWP under the title "An Explanation of the Sponsorship and Auspices of This May Day Celebration":

"For over 25 years, we have been known to you as the Seattle Branch, Socialist Workers Party and Militant Labor Forum.

"As of May Day, 1966, we are no longer affiliated with the Socialist Workers Party. We are now an independent revolutionary socialist formation with our precise structure and name yet to be determined. We are proud of our long record of struggle for principled politics and mass action in the Pacific Northwest, and we are maintaining our traditions, our program and our activities -- as well as hoping and planning to do even more and do it even better.

"Your help and encouragement have long sustained us and we request your continued cooperation and support. We urge you to join together with us on this auspicious May Day, 1966."