

International Internal Discussion Bulletin

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Report on "Socialist Revolution and the Struggle for Women's Liberation"

By Mary-Alice Waters

[The general line of the following report was adopted by the Thirtieth National Convention of the Socialist Workers Party on August 7, 1979.]

* * *

The draft resolution, "Socialist Revolution and the Struggle for Women's Liberation," submitted by the United Secretariat of the Fourth International for discussion and vote at its 1979 World Congress, is a historic document. As the introduction to the resolution states, "The basic Marxist positions on women's oppression are part of the programmatic foundations of the Fourth International. However, we are discussing and adopting a full resolution on women's liberation for the first time in the international's history. With that in mind, the purpose of the following resolution is to set down our basic analysis of the character of women's oppression, and the place the struggle against that oppression occupies in our perspective for all three sectors of the world revolution. . . ." [p. 3.]

The only other time the international Marxist movement has had a similar discussion was in 1921 at the third congress of the Communist International. The "Theses for Propaganda Work Among Women," adopted at that congress, represents the most advanced point reached on this question by the revolutionary workers international prior to today.

As with every resolution, the pioneer "Theses" reflected the historic conditions under which they were drafted. Although they still remained a small minority of the work force, large numbers of women had been drawn into the labor market during the industrial expansion at the end of the nineteenth century, and the beginning of the twentieth. This brought about fundamental changes in the economic and social status of women and led to a series of women's struggles and the "first wave" of feminism.

The Comintern resolution took account of the experiences of its predecessor, the Second International, in building mass women's organizations during the years prior to World War I, its role in the fight for suffrage and other demands, and its attitude toward the various procapitalist women's organizations.

Above all, it drew on the experiences of the Russian revolution and stressed the importance of winning women to the side of the revolution during those first desperate years when, under the leadership of the Bolsheviks, the new workers government in the Soviet Union was fighting for its life.

The Comintern resolution based itself on Marx and Engel's historical materialist analysis of the relationship between women's oppression and class society. It integrated the lessons of the experiences of the workers movement up to that time. And it called on every Communist party, "east and west," to embark on a course of action designed "to awaken the initiative of the woman

worker, to eradicate her lack of self-confidence, and in the process of involving her in practical organizational work and struggle, teach her to understand the reality of the fact that every victory of the Communist Party, every action against capitalist exploitation, represents a step forward for women."

A lot has happened since 1921. We had to think through and incorporate the lessons of fifty-eight years of the class struggle in our current draft international resolution on women's liberation.

We have seen not only the results of the victory of the October revolution, with the historic advances it brought for women in such areas as equal rights, child care, abortion, education, and employment, but we have also seen the consolidation of the Stalinist counterrevolution. In the 1930s the Soviet Thermidor drove women back to the status of glorified pack animals. The scientific understanding of women's oppression and the struggle to eradicate it was obliterated, along with the rest of Marxist theory and its revolutionary perspectives.

Stalinism so corrupted Marxism and eclipsed our revolutionary heritage, that in the 1960s, with the new rise of women's struggles and the "second wave" of feminism, even the Fourth International had to begin by reestablishing the materialist foundations that had been laid down by Marx and Engels. We had to catch up to where they had been a hundred years ago, before we could go forward today.

Since 1921, the working class has also gone through the experience of fascism. We have learned the bitter lesson of how this most malignant of all the movements to maintain capitalist rule plays on the fears and insecurities that capitalism generates among women in order to build mass support for reaction.

Since 1921 we have witnessed the upsurge of the colonial revolution, especially sweeping in the post-World War II years, and seen the role of women in the national liberation struggles in countries such as China, Vietnam, Algeria, and Cuba. Most recently we have had the examples of Iran and Nicaragua.

Finally, we have lived through the sweeping economic, social, and cultural changes in the imperialist countries during the Great Depression and in the post-World War II years. We have seen the effects of the incorporation of ever larger numbers of women into the work force as a result of the accelerated expansion of industrial production. These were the changes that gave rise to the massive protests and changes in consciousness accompanying the "second wave" of feminism.

The cadres of the Fourth International today are not only products of, but have also been participants in and leaders of, the past decade of struggles for women's rights. Our experiences and the lessons we have learned went into drafting this document for the World Congress. It is a

product of international collaboration at its best. No single section of the Fourth International could have written anything as comprehensive.

To take just one example, the section on "Women's Liberation in the Colonial and Semicolonial World" was drafted primarily by our Iranian and Mexican comrades, who drew on their experiences, contributions of our comrades in India, Puerto Rico, Colombia, and many other countries, as well as the historical lessons of our movement in China.

Moreover, the line of the resolution was put to a demanding test in the events of the Iranian revolution and the role of our comrades in the demonstrations for women's rights that were part of it. They were much better prepared for the struggles that unfolded in Iran this year, better prepared to understand, participate in, and lead them, as a result of the collective international effort that went into drafting this resolution.

No other current in the workers movement or in the feminist movement could have drafted the kind of comprehensive resolution the Fourth International now has before it. And for us it's not simply an intellectual exercise. It is a guide to revolutionary action by the working class and its vanguard, male and female.

It is also the best possible guide for women who may not yet be part of the revolutionary workers movement but are determined to subordinate to nothing the fight for female equality.

A Rich Discussion

While the draft resolution was adopted unanimously by the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (with one abstention), the discussion in a number of sections indicates there is not unanimity on its general line throughout the international.

Two contributions to the International Internal Discussion Bulletin by comrades of the International Marxist Group, the British section of the Fourth International, point up some of the differences that need to be clarified. "Women's Caucuses Within a Revolutionary Organisation" [IIDB, Vol. XVI, No. 2, May 1979] is a resolution adopted by the last national congress of the IMG. "On the Women's Liberation Resolution," by Harlow [IIDB, Vol. XVI, No. 4, July 1979], "concentrates on reflecting the discussion within the IMG Women's Commission."

I want to take up a number of the points raised in these contributions because they will be helpful in clarifying the line of the document. I hope we can convince the IMG comrades who agree with these contributions to change their minds, because taken as a whole they constitute a different line than that contained in the draft resolution.

There have also been a number of contributions to our preconvention discussion in the SWP, especially on the character of the gay liberation struggle, which relate to the origin and character of women's oppression. I want to discuss some of these contributions as well, because they raise questions that are being discussed throughout the international, and several of them have a line in contradiction to that of the draft resolution.

So this report will concentrate on those points which most need to be clarified in light of the wide-ranging international discussion.

Strategic Importance of the Struggle for Women's Liberation

We should begin with the political heart of the document.

The struggle for women's liberation is a form of the class struggle. It occupies a vital place in the strategic line of march of the proletariat toward the establishment of a workers government. For the first time in recorded history, such governments, on a world scale, will place power in the hands of a class that has no material interest in oppressing women. As the structure of society is overhauled from top to bottom, vast revolutionary changes in all social relations will unfold, including the eradication of all aspects of sex inequality that are institutionalized under class domination.

We do not say that the fight for women's liberation is a form of the class struggle only because, or even primarily because the majority of women are today part of the labor market in a few imperialist countries, like the United States. That is something very recent in historical terms. This trend indicates the direction of capitalist economic development. It creates objective conditions more favorable than ever before for the victory of the working class and for women. But the struggle for women's liberation, however episodic and embryonic, was an aspect of the class struggle for millennia prior to the current epoch of capitalism in its death agony.

It is a form of the class struggle because women's oppression itself is a product of class society. It has been an indispensable cornerstone of class society at every stage of its development.

Today, the integration of women into the labor market and, increasingly, into the industrial work force gives the struggle for women's liberation greater strategic importance for the class struggle than ever before. The interrelationship of the struggles of women and those of the organized labor movement is much closer. Understanding that women are both allies of the working class and an increasingly weighty component of the working class is indispensable to mobilizing the allies of the working class; indispensable to unifying the working class and helping to strengthen it politically; indispensable to preparing the working class for the socialist reconstruction of society tomorrow.

Thus, as the resolution explains, labor's strategic line of march must include support for and building of mass women's organizations, fighting for women's demands. This is intertwined with the transformation of the organized labor movement into an instrument of revolutionary struggle and the development of a class-struggle leadership of women and men.

To identify these goals, we must construct a revolutionary party whose proletarian composition includes the necessary component of women and oppressed nationalities.

This same strategic line is reiterated in each of the four documents that are being presented to the 1979 World Congress of the Fourth International by the United Secretariat Majority Caucus. This fact is important because it helps define the character of the turn we are making on a world scale to build proletarian parties whose big majority are industrial workers. It is not a turn away from the allies of labor with the greatest social weight,

such as women, but a turn toward the radicalizing young working-class forces that will provide leadership for the struggles of *both* women and the labor movement.

The resolution on "Socialist Revolution and the Struggle for Women's Liberation" is not an optional extra. It is an indivisible part of the Fourth International's line today.

The Character of Women's Oppression

The two most fundamental questions dealt with in the resolution are the origins of women's oppression in the rise of class society with its concomitant family, private property, and state; and the character of this family as an indispensable economic institution of class rule. Those two points are part of the bedrock of Marxism, of a historical-materialist approach to women's oppression—and to all of human history.

If the document failed to deal adequately with the origins of women's oppression and the character of the family system, or if it contained an analysis that was wrong on those two points, the entire political line of the resolution would go wrong. It would open the door to divorcing the struggle for women's liberation from the class struggle.

The origin of women's oppression is not something of interest solely to anthropologists. Nor is it a question that only comrades involved in debates in the women's liberation movement need to be knowledgeable about. Nor is it possible to dismiss it as a historical matter on which we need not take a position. What is at issue involves the most fundamental elements of Marxism, the principles of a materialist conception of history.

The resolution says the following on the origins of women's oppression:

"The oppression of women is not determined by their biology, as many contend. Its origins are economic and social in character. Throughout the evolution of pre-class and class society, women's childbearing function has always been the same. But their social status has not always been that of a degraded domestic servant, subject to man's control and command.

"Before the development of class society, during the historical period that Marxists have traditionally referred to as primitive communism (subsistence societies), social production was organized communally and its product shared equally. There was therefore no exploitation or oppression of one group or sex by another because no material basis for such social relations existed. . . .

"The origin of women's oppression is intertwined with the transition from pre-class to class society. . . . The change in women's status developed along with the growing productivity of human labor . . . and the development of the possibility for some humans to prosper from the exploitation of the labor of others." [p. 4.]

To those of us educated in the school of Marx and Engels, that sounds noncontroversial. But there are comrades in the Fourth International who disagree. For example, in the introduction to the contribution by Comrade Harlow, she and Comrade Clynes note that "the debate on the origins of women's oppression is not reflected adequately" in the international resolution.

They are absolutely correct.

In drafting a resolution to guide the work of the Fourth International we did not seek to agnostically "reflect a debate." Our purpose was to take a clear and unequivocal

stand on the essential points in dispute.

Some comrades in the international clearly reject the position that is contained in the document on the ground that it merely reaffirms the fundamental foundations elaborated by Marx and Engels more than a hundred years ago. They argue that Marx and Engels's analysis was based on ignorance due to the paucity of anthropological research available to them. These comrades think the Fourth International today will only be discredited by associating itself with Marx and Engels's views.

In reaffirming that the cause of women's oppression is economic and rooted in the development of class society, we are unambiguously rejecting several alternate explanations for the nature of women's oppression.

Four False Theories of Women's Oppression

First, we are rejecting the position that is upheld by radical feminists, like Shulamith Firestone and others, who deny that changes in women's status are determined by women's role in social production. They argue that women have *always* been oppressed because of their biological role in procreation; that women's "oppression goes back beyond recorded history to the animal kingdom itself"; and that the "materialist view of history [is] based on sex itself." [*Dialectic of Sex*, by Shulamith Firestone.]

We reject each thesis of this biological determinism.

Secondly, we are rejecting the position that women's oppression is defined by sex roles or by the psycho-sexual structure of males and females. In the SWP pre-convention discussion Comrade Kurt Hill argues that in pre-class society, "members of both sexes were born into roles in much the same way one is born into a social class today." ["In Reply to Cde. Zimmermann's Plenum Report on Lesbian/Gay Liberation—Part II," SWP Discussion Bulletin, Vol. 36, No. 22, page 12.]

Membership in a class is not defined by what one does or doesn't do. It is defined by what one owns or doesn't own, by an individual or family's relationship to the means of production. Classes are characterized by institutionalized material inequality, perpetuated from one generation to the next through the family system. That is precisely what did *not* exist during the epoch of primitive communism. The product of all social labor was shared equally. That's why there could be no oppression or exploitation, because no material basis for such social relations existed.

Thirdly, we are rejecting the position that oppression stems from a social division of labor *per se*. Of course, we're in favor of developing the rounded skills and abilities of every individual, of each person learning how to do as many different things as possible. But division of labor *per se* does not give rise to inequality.

If a man knows how to do something that a woman doesn't, does that give him power over her? No. Not unless there is a material advantage, a material inequality, involved, one that is institutionalized and perpetuated through generations by forms of private property. We are not idealists. We do not believe that knowledge equals power equals oppression.

Fourthly, we are rejecting the concept that sex oppression—the oppression of all women as a sex—is equivalent to or even largely defined by *sexual* repression, that is, repression of women's sexuality or of all sexuality. Sexism—that is, all the countless ways in which the economic and social inequality of women in class society is

expressed and codified in social mores—is something totally different from what has been called “heterosexism,” or judgments about any particular form of sexual activity.

The extreme repression of female sexuality and the related warping and distortion of all sexual relations is a *by-product* of women’s economic dependence. In other words, sexual repression is a product of class society.

Its original purpose was not, as is often stated, to enable men to ensure the paternity of their offspring. That is an ideological rationalization that came along much later. The function of sexual repression was, and is, to reinforce the social and economic dependence of women on the patriarchal family. On that basis the entire ideological superstructure of the ruling class developed, with the double standard of monogamy for women and almost unrestricted sexual activity for men. Only “thy neighbor’s wife”—that is, a married woman of your own ruling class—was not to be “coveted” according to biblical commandment.

Other institutions, such as adultery and prostitution, developed historically as necessary concomitants to the family. All of these grew up on the new economic foundation, institutionalized in the family, where every woman was virtually the private property of a man. That is what the marriage contract was—a property arrangement, a bill of sale. A woman had no rights. She belonged to her father or brother, then to her husband. According to custom, and often sanctioned by law, she could even be murdered by the men of her family for violating their “honor.”

Sexual oppression, enforced by such extreme measures, helped keep women in their subordinate place and maintain the stability of the family system. But its efficacy was the *result* of women’s economic dependence. Sexual oppression was not the *source* of her degraded status.

While the resolution rejects any biological or nonmaterialist explanation for female inequality and reaffirms the economic origins of women’s oppression, it does not ask for a vote on other kinds of historical questions, which remain open to debate and discussion. It simply insists on the fundamental premises of historical materialism.

Class society has not always existed. It had a historical beginning and can be replaced by communism. Likewise women’s oppression has not always existed. It had a historical beginning and it too can be replaced by equality of the sexes.

This theoretical foundation underlies our political orientation today and determines our approach to all aspects of the struggle for women’s liberation, including our analysis of the character of the women’s liberation movement, the program of demands we raise, and why we address them to the ruling class and its agents.

The Family System

Closely intertwined with the origins and character of women’s oppression is the question of the family. The resolution reaffirms that the family system is an indispensable pillar of class rule. It is the historical mechanism for institutionalizing the social inequality that accompanies the rise of private property and perpetuating class divisions from one generation to the next. The family is first and foremost an *economic* institution that has evolved a great deal as it has adapted to meet the changing needs of ruling classes throughout all stages of class society.

Because the family system is indispensable to the structuring of social inequality, the economic dependence of women and their oppression within the family system is likewise indispensable to class rule. The domestic labor of women in the home provides the least expensive and most ideologically acceptable system of reproducing labor power. It minimizes the proportion of the social surplus consumed in raising each new generation, and maximizes the proportion available for private accumulation. Thus women’s oppression is not an inessential or optional feature of class society.

On the question of the family—as with the origin of women’s oppression—the resolution firmly rejects a number of false ideas.

Six Errors Concerning the Family

First, we reject the argument that the family system is something that is useful to the ruling class in capitalist society but not necessary. Could capitalism create some other social mechanism to organize the reproduction of labor power and perpetuate class divisions? We say no. It’s not possible. Historical materialism precludes that. The family setup, however modified, is indispensable.

Secondly, we reject the idea that there has been any *fundamental* change in the function of the family system under capitalism. Today’s urban “nuclear family” may look quite different from the extended farm family of the last century, to say nothing of the family under classical slave society. But the fact that the family is less and less a productive unit does not alter its essential function as the transmission belt for dividing society between those who own the major means of production and those who do not, between the exploiters and the exploited.

Under capitalism the state begins to take over general responsibility for some social tasks previously borne almost exclusively by each individual family—such as education (previously the exclusive privilege of the ruling classes), health care, or social security for the elderly. But such social programs are never designed to *replace* the family. They reinforce it. There is never a doubt that each family bears ultimate responsibility for its own. This becomes most obvious in any period of economic crisis, when cuts in social services brutally shift a growing burden of responsibility back onto the shoulders of each individual family of working people.

Thirdly, the resolution reiterates the discovery made by Marx and Engels more than a century ago that the family is an alien class institution historically imposed on the working class. With the rise of industrial capitalism, as women and children were incorporated into the work force in massive numbers, often working 12- and 14-hour days, the family began disintegrating in the working class. The ruling class consciously intervened to reinforce and strengthen the family in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, because its disintegration was posing a threat to capitalist domination.

The social mechanism for reproducing human beings healthy enough and “socialized” enough to sell their labor power and produce surplus value for a few years was falling apart. For society to take general responsibility for raising and minimally educating children was economically precluded. The costs of such social care could only be taken out of surplus value and thus reduce profits. So the family structure had to be reimposed on the working class.

We reject the position that is advanced by many women in the feminist movement, as well as by some comrades of the Fourth International, that it was male workers who benefited from the introduction of protective legislation that kept women out of many industries in the nineteenth century. Likewise, we reject the argument that male workers have a material stake in the oppression of women in the family and thus benefited from reinforcing the family.

For example, one of the amendments to the international women's liberation resolution proposed by comrades on the Gay Commission of the British International Marxist Group expresses this opinion.

They argue that a sentence should be added to the resolution stating that efforts to shore up the family in the middle of the last century were "backed up by strong pressures from male workers' organizations. This was based on fear of job competition from women and children; the desire of the male workers for the social benefits of 'family life.'"

This proposed addition is misleading because it implies that in addition to the ruling class the working class as well—or at least male workers—had a historical interest in maintaining the family system.

Fourthly, the resolution makes it clear that the disintegration of the family system is inevitable as capitalism inexorably draws more and more women into the work force. This is evident in the steadily climbing divorce rates in all of the advanced capitalist countries. The family ceases to be a productive unit in the working class, and then begins to disintegrate as every adult member goes out and sells his or her labor power individually on the capitalist labor market. Despite wage differentials and job discrimination, women thereby gain a qualitatively new degree of economic independence. But there is not and there cannot be any alternative to the family system so long as social relations are based on the existence and maintenance of private property.

The disintegration of the family system under capitalism brings great suffering to the masses of working people. In bourgeois society, the contradiction between the romantic mythology surrounding marriage and the reality of personal relations is so acute that—in addition to all the economic hardship that comes with the disintegration of the family—it wreaks emotional and psychological havoc on millions of human beings every year. Many never recover.

We solidarize with those who face such personal misery. But unlike the Stalinists who tell a double lie—about what capitalism has in store for us and about what can be done—we tell the truth. We say there is no way to "save the family." As all institutions of class rule, it will continue to decay and disintegrate because capitalism has outlived its historically progressive role. The relations of production come more and more into conflict with the forces of production.

But until we eradicate the economic system based on private property and eliminate economic compulsion as the bond that corrodes all social relations and prevents them from having a truly human character, the disintegration of the family with all its attendant misery is just one more catastrophe capitalism has in store for us. It is one more reason to fight to get rid of this rotten system. And one more reason to demand a total social security program that covers every aspect of the economic and social needs

of working people.

We reject the notion that communes or any other "alternative life-style" offer a *social* alternative under capitalism—even if a few individuals find what they imagine is a tolerable personal solution that way. And insofar as the search for "life-style" alternatives under capitalism becomes a *political* orientation, it is a road *away* from the class struggle and a revolutionary working-class perspective of trying to end the system that is the source of misery for millions.

Fifthly, the resolution stresses the role of the family in molding the character structure, the social and sexual behavior of each new generation. Within the family the attitudes and values that are necessary for survival in class society are inculcated in each individual child—respect for hierarchy and authority, sexual repression, and so forth. This kind of "education" can only be done within the family from the earliest age. There is no economic possibility for it to be accomplished elsewhere under capitalism. In this sense the family plays an indispensable ideological—as well as economic—role. But the "socializing" function is not what fundamentally defines and ultimately shapes the family institution.

Sixthly, we reject the idea that the family is basically a sexual relationship, or that any particular kind of sexual behavior represents a threat to the family system. The disintegration of the family is not the *result* of an evolving "sexual revolution." Changes in sexual mores are the product of greater economic independence of women. It is this growing economic independence that brings about the disintegration of the family and the consequent cultural changes.

The monogamous norm has always been for women only. Only in the last century, with the ideological buttressing of the family institution in order to reimpose it on the working class, has the myth been propagated that most sexual relations take place within the family between husband and wife. Throughout recorded history the opposite has been the case. In the ruling class, sexual relations between husband and wife were for procreation, and most sexual activity, especially for men, was outside of the family.

There is no form of sexual activity—whether it is homosexuality, prostitution, adultery, incest, bestiality, necrophilia, foot fetishism, or anything else—that constitutes or ever constituted a threat to the family institution. That is one of the most commonly held misconceptions in the gay rights movement and sometimes in the women's movement too. It was repeatedly asserted in contributions to the SWP pre-convention discussion as though it were an undisputed fact. For example, Comrades Joe Callahan and Sandy Knoll in their contribution, "In Defense of the Gay Liberation Movement," state: "An end to the oppression of gays and lesbians would weaken the stranglehold of the family on the working class and on women." [SWP DB, Vol. 36, No. 26, p. 40.]

Let's leave aside the implied false premise—that gay and lesbian oppression could be ended under capitalism. The problem with the sentence is that it puts the question on the wrong axis. The primary function of the family is not to control the sexual activity of its members. It is an economic institution. To release its stranglehold you have to alter the property forms encasing the economic foundations on which it rests.

The realization that women's oppression is above all an

economic question and that everything else is derivative is the essence of a materialist understanding of that oppression. Without that as your starting point, you will lose your bearings in understanding class society and the class struggle as a whole. Failure to grasp this fact is at the root of the erroneous positions held by many feminists on the question of whose interests are served by women's oppression.

Who Benefits From Women's Oppression?

In his "Reply to Comrade Zimmermann...Part II," Comrade Kurt Hill argues that Brian Weber's suit against the affirmative-action program at the Kaiser Aluminum plant in Gramercy, Louisiana, may not have been in the interest of the working class as a whole, but it certainly was in Weber's *personal* interest. He thinks Weber has his own material stake in maintaining the oppression of women and Blacks.

Similarly, Comrade Harlow of the IMG argues in her contribution to the International Internal Discussion Bulletin that "male workers especially do have a certain material advantage, for the time being, in discrimination against women." [IIDB Vol. XVI, No. 4, p. 7.]

The paragraph containing that sentence says a number of wrong things. It's worth taking the passage apart sentence by sentence in order to get to the core of the question of who benefits from women's oppression—and what implications the answer to that question has for our perspectives and strategy.

The passage from the contribution by Comrade Harlow says the following:

"The document poses the need for an autonomous organisation of women to fight against the bureaucracy of the workers movement. What is not explained, and is in fact glossed over with statements about the objective interests of the working class being in the fight against women's oppression, is how far the working class as a whole has internalised sexist attitudes towards women. For example on page 9, 3b, the document lists the discrimination that still exists against women in the workforce. It mentions 'sexual aggression of foremen or supervisory personnel.' It does not mention the fact that many male workers not only do not fully support women's struggles but do in fact scab on them. In Britain in 1974 women workers in an engineering factory in Lancashire occupied the factory in the course of a struggle for equal pay. The male workers assisted the management in breaking it although the strike was supported by the union.

"The bureaucracy of the labour movement has no long-term interest in fighting for women's liberation, their interest lies in maintaining capitalism, they will support women's struggles only in so far as it is necessary to retain their position or as it helps them to recruit women to their union. But many rank-and-file members of the working class do not perceive that it is in their interests to fight for women's liberation. Male workers especially do have a certain material advantage, for the time being, in discrimination against women. For example laws which discriminate against women in preventing them from doing night shifts, or working in coal mines, could be supported by male workers, as they were fought for by them, to keep women out of better paid jobs. Many class conscious militants expect their wives to play the traditional role at home, so that they can get on with their trade-union work.

Arthur Scargill, one of the best known and most political trade-union leaders in Britain, not only explicitly supports the National Union of Miners paper having a pin-up but his wife is quoted as saying he hardly knows how to make a cup of tea." [IIDB, Vol. XVI, No. 4, pp. 6-7.]

It is correct to say that the bureaucracy of the labor movement has no long-term interest in fighting for women's liberation. But they have no short-term interest, either. Their goal is to maintain the status quo, to accept the divisions and stratifications of the working class fostered by the bosses, and preserve their material privileges by basing themselves on the highest-paid strata of workers. They even weigh organizing more women into the union (with the increased dues income that will bring) against the possible new demands women will make or militancy they might exhibit—that is, a heightened threat to class-collaborationist stability.

Recognizing that the trade-union bureaucracy as a social layer has no interest in—is, in fact, threatened by—the fight for women's liberation, however, doesn't tell you what to do about it. How do we help our fellow workers to see that there is a conflict of interests between them and the bureaucracy which is serving the employers? What is our strategy?

Comrade Harlow argues that the international resolution "poses the need for an autonomous organisation of women to fight against the bureaucracy of the workers movement." That statement, too, is wrong.

Independent women's organizations are needed to mobilize women in struggle against the ruling class, to raise clear and precise demands against the bosses, exposing the class institutions and class interests responsible for maintaining women's oppression. We strive to mobilize the organized labor movement—including the trade-union bureaucracy—in support of such demands. In this process we come into conflict with the bureaucracy which acts as the employers' labor-lieutenants. But the union bureaucracy is not a monolithic bloc. It too is stratified. Some layers are closer to the ranks, more susceptible to their pressure. One of the by-products of the struggle for women's demands, if it is correctly oriented and directed against rulers and their agents, will be further openings for the development of a class-struggle leadership, in the unions and in the women's movement. This will be facilitated by a few more divisions within the labor bureaucracy. That is our orientation—not building a women's movement to fight the bureaucracy.

Comrade Harlow is correct when she states that "many rank-and-file members of the working class do not perceive that it is in their interests to fight for women's liberation." That holds true for quite a few other areas as well, such as combating racial prejudice, or fighting for a workers government.

But why? What is the cause?

We answer that many workers don't automatically see that women's liberation is in their interests because they are not fully *class* conscious. They're influenced by ruling-class ideology, which inculcates a false consciousness. They think in terms of *I*, not *we*; of me and them, not us.

Comrade Harlow gives a different answer. She says the reason many workers don't see that it is in their class interest to fight for women's liberation is because it is *not* in the immediate interest of all workers. "Male workers especially do have a certain material advantage, for the time being, in discrimination against women." And in the

passage already quoted she specifies two areas in which male workers gain special privileges from discrimination against women.

First they are able to keep women out of better paying jobs.

Second, male workers gain a material advantage from the fact that women do the housework.

What is fundamentally wrong with this argument that male workers have a material stake in women's oppression?

Any individual male worker may have a better chance of getting a particular job if women are excluded from competition, or may have a few hours of leisure for himself some evening if his wife feeds the kids and puts them to bed. As long as he thinks in individual terms, as long as he thinks in terms of *me*, and as long as he thinks "the time being" is permanent (and thus capitalism is permanent), he can falsely conclude that he is better off because women are oppressed. But is this objectively true?

We say no. That individual male belongs to a class whose interests, both short-term and long-term, are diametrically opposed to the oppression of women, because women's oppression divides the working class and shifts the relationship of class forces to the advantage of the bosses. This has negative consequences on the wages, working conditions, etc., of all workers—that is, on their immediate interests as well as their long-term ones.

If what one sometimes falsely believes to be in one's immediate personal interests were in the long run more compelling than the historic interests of classes, then Marxism would have no validity whatsoever. If that were true we should have closed up shop a long time ago. What basis would there ever be for united action by the working class? Why should there be industrial rather than craft unions? Why shouldn't everyone try to make foreman? Why should workers of the world unite?

We are the first to recognize that every worker does not correctly identify his or her class interest on every question every day. The contradiction between the objective needs and the subjective understanding of the class and its components is acute. But it can be overcome, especially in periods of sharpening class conflict. Then the overwhelming majority of workers will begin to see where their real interests lie, not primarily because we tell them, but through their own experiences. In the heat of the class struggle they can rapidly become convinced that their personal interests and class interests coincide. It can be pointed out: Aren't you better off if both husband and wife can get jobs as auto workers, steelworkers, or miners? If you both join with other workers to use your organized power to fight for adequate child care and other social services? Isn't that in your immediate personal interests?

This is crucially important. It underlies our proletarian strategy for women's liberation. Our enemy is not male workers—although individuals can wander into the enemy camp ideologically (and in personal practice) for a shorter or longer period of time, and they have to be dealt with accordingly. But it is the boss class and its agents who consciously strive to deepen the antagonisms between male and female workers, between male workers and their wives, because that weakens the solidarity and unity of the class.

Not only is it the bosses who *benefit* from discrimination against, and harassment of, women on the job; it is also the bosses and foremen who hold the real *power* over

women, not male workers. For example, sexual harassment of a woman worker by a foreman is backed up by his control over whether she keeps her job.

That is why our fire is aimed at the foreman and the supervisors. That is how we pressure and divide the trade-union officials and win over fellow workers.

We know that many male workers (and female workers too) have deep sexist prejudices, and often express them in words and deeds. Our attitude is not to let such actions pass without challenge, but we try to counter them in such a way that we educate fellow workers to understand that they are simply doing the boss's job for him if they give women a hard time and do not treat them as equals.

Women will learn from their own experiences how to deal with these problems in the framework of the correct proletarian strategy, tactically applied in light of the real relationship of forces on the job and the needs of the class struggle as a whole.

Comrade Harlow objects to the sentences in the international resolution that mention the problems women often face on the job from sexual harassment by foremen or supervisory personnel. She says: "What is not explained, and is in fact glossed over with many statements about the objective interests of the working class being in the fight against women's oppression, is how far the working class as a whole has internalised sexist attitudes towards women." The document "mentions 'sexual aggression of foremen or supervisory personnel.' It does not mention the fact that many male workers not only do not support women's struggles, but do in fact scab on them."

The resolution rejects that kind of "balanced" approach. It is wrong, because it fails to distinguish who gains from the harassment of women on the job, whose interests are served. It doesn't take as its starting point the fact that women's oppression is a form of class oppression and a condition for exploitation. Thus it does not orient us towards a correct strategy for winning women's liberation. We don't have a dual axis for our demands or our struggle. We don't have one set of demands against the bosses and the ruling class, and another which is directed against men or male workers. That would be suicidal.

Relations between men and women in class society are always unequal. That's simply a fact of life. But we don't propose to equalize them by forcing men today to "give up" their "privileges." Our objective is not to shift the *social* burdens women bear from individual women to individual men. We want *society* to shoulder the responsibilities thrust on each individual family, and above all on women within it.

Any other approach amounts to *substituting* the search for better personal relations today for charting a political course for our class.

On a personal level, we are all for men sharing the burdens of household drudgery. That's what we do in our own lives. We exert great social pressure on male comrades to conduct themselves in accord with our political program and support for women's liberation.

But that cannot be a substitute for a political strategy to change society, to advance the class struggle, to raise the class consciousness of millions.

Moreover, as proletarian revolutionists, we do not base our political judgment of people on their personal relations or sexual habits. We don't care whether Arthur Scargill can make a cup of tea or not. Maybe Lenin didn't know how to cook either. And what about Marx? How many

times have we heard even "socialist-feminists" tell us that Marxism is an insufficient theoretical framework for understanding women's oppression—and argue that Marx's personal relations with women and his own family prove that his analysis must have been politically wrong?

Affirmative Action

What is our political strategy for raising the class consciousness of male and female workers? In addition to the demands we advance for basic democratic rights such as legal equality, abortion, and others, we put forward basically two axes of struggle.

1. We concretize our demands for socializing the domestic labor of women—such as child care.

2. We demand preferential action programs for women in education, employment, job training, in order to break down the barriers that have kept women out of sectors of the economy traditionally restricted to males.

The fight for preferential programs, for affirmative action, plays a decisive role in effecting changes in consciousness on a mass scale. It undercuts the divisions and stratifications that are used to hold down the wages and working conditions of all workers. Male and female workers can be convinced that it is in their class interest to fight for such demands.

Secondly, the fight for affirmative action makes both men and women more conscious of all the ways in which discrimination against women is built into this society. Oppression is not an idea or a state of mind, it is a social relation. It has material consequences in unequal conditions of life and labor, and deliberate measures are needed in all areas to overcome the results of centuries of oppression of women.

Thirdly, affirmative-action victories begin in the most fundamental way to undercut sexist attitudes toward women. As women break down the social barriers of their second-class status, they gain self-confidence. Men begin to see their women co-workers as equal human beings. They learn to respect and judge women more as people and less as female sex-objects. That has a powerful impact on the attitudes and conduct of millions of men and women in their personal lives. Men *do* start sharing the housework.

It is by charting this kind of *political* course of broad mass struggle for affirmative action and other demands that we seek to break through the false consciousness that's engendered by the ruling class. It is along this path that we help the working class to think socially and act politically, and thereby become more *class* conscious.

Mass independent women's organizations have a vital role to play in helping to advance in this direction. Their actions can converge with progress by vanguard workers in transforming the labor movement and forging the kind of working-class leadership that is necessary for women's struggles.

This brings us to the next point we need to take up—the nature of the women's movement today.

The Character of the Women's Liberation Movement

What does the document say about the character of the women's liberation movement? Its main points are the following:

1. "The oppression of women as a sex constitutes the objective basis for the mobilization of women in struggle

through their own organizations."

2. "By the women's movement we mean all the women who organize themselves at one level or another to struggle against the oppression imposed on them by this society." At any one time this takes many and diverse organizational forms—consciousness-raising groups, neighborhood groups, student groups, trade-union committees, action coalitions—whatever. ". . . all these are facets of the turbulent and still largely unstructured reality called the independent or autonomous women's movement."

3. "By independent or autonomous we do not mean independent of the needs of the working class. We mean that the movement is organized and led by women; that it takes the fight for women's rights and needs as its first priority, refusing to subordinate that fight to any other interests; that it is not subordinate to the decisions or policy needs of any political tendency or any other social group; that it is willing to carry through the fight by whatever means and together with whatever forces prove necessary."

4. "The dominant organizational form of the women's liberation movement has been all-female groups. . . . This expresses the determination of women to take the leadership of their own organizations in which they can learn and develop and lead. . . ."

5. "The mass women's liberation movement we strive to build must be basically working-class in composition and leadership." This is not for some abstract moral reason but because of the nature of the class struggle. "Only such a movement will be able to carry the struggle for women's liberation through to the end in an uncompromising way, allying itself with the social forces whose interests parallel and intersect those of women. Only such a movement will be able to play a progressive role under conditions of sharpening class polarization."

6. "In this long-term perspective, struggles by women in the unions and on the job have a special importance, reflecting the interrelationship of the women's movement and the workers movement and their impact on each other."

Here, too, Comrade Harlow and others of the IMG Women's Commission raise some important issues that help clarify the line of the resolution.

They object that the document does not adequately spell out the relationship of the women's liberation movement to the class struggle in the one particular paragraph that defines the political character of the women's movement (point 3 above).

That criticism sounds a hollow chord since the resolution does nothing *but* spell out the interrelationship of the struggle for women's liberation and the class struggle for almost thirty pages.

Comrade Harlow's second objection is to the sentence saying that the women's liberation movement we seek to build must be increasingly working-class in composition and leadership. She says that is a sociological definition of the movement which could imply that we do not support the women's liberation movement *unless* it is working-class in composition and leadership.

This objection, too, can be easily disposed of. Nowhere does the resolution imply such an attitude. Moreover, as far as the SWP is concerned, our record in the women's liberation movement should certainly eliminate any lurking doubts in this regard.

But there is more to the matter. We insist on the *class*

composition of the women's movement that we strive to build, that *must* be built. It is not a question of individuals. We are not saying that only working-class women can be leaders or that we don't want women of petty-bourgeois or bourgeois origins in the movement. They, too, are oppressed as women and we strive to win them to support and fight uncompromisingly for demands that are in the interests of women's liberation.

But, as the resolution states, only a movement that is basically working-class in composition and leadership will be able to take correct stands under the pressures of deepening class conflict and chart a political course to carry the struggle for women's liberation through to the end as part of the forces fighting for a workers government. This guideline can hardly be contested by Marxists.

The third point that Comrade Harlow thinks is unclear is the nature of the *autonomous* or *independent* women's movement. What is the feminist movement, she asks?

The word "independent" can be confusing. It can mean different things to different people. That's why the resolution defines it precisely and clearly as a political concept. Independent does not mean independent of the class struggle or the interests of the working class. Nor does it mean that some particular organizational form is decisive. What defines the independent women's movement is its political goal. It puts forward the fight for women's needs as its specific aim which it subordinates to no other; it is consistent and uncompromising in its struggle; it aims to be a mass movement collaborating with allies who prove themselves worthy.

Comrade Harlow defines "autonomous" differently. She says that the women's movement is "autonomous from men and from political organisations." The international resolution, on the other hand, insists that the independent women's liberation movement is defined not by the gender of its participants but by its political function.

It is important to sort out several different things.

As the resolution says, we support and help build all-female women's liberation groups. We think that women have the right to use the form of women-only organization to advance their struggle. These groups can play an important role in developing women's self-confidence and mobilizing women in struggle. But such organizations are not synonymous with the women's liberation movement.

That movement is much broader. It's not only women in all-female organizations. It does not exclude men who support our demands, build actions, participate in coalitions. For example, should we conclude that the National Organization for Women in the United States is not part of the independent women's movement just because membership in NOW is also open to men?

The real issue is posed clearly in another way. Comrade Harlow seems to imply that trade-union committees on women's rights which, she points out, are often set up by the bureaucracy to "head off" activity by women, are not legitimately part of the autonomous women's movement because they "do not reflect any understanding for the need of the self organisation of women."

She seems dubious about the resolution's assertion that women's rights committees in the unions stand at the intersection of the women's liberation movement and the labor movement, and if properly led can show the way forward for both.

Other comrades in the Fourth International argue explicitly that while we are not opposed to official women's

committees in the unions, they are not part of the women's liberation movement, because they are not independent of male-dominated organizations—the unions! There are often clauses in union statutes which say that all union committees must be open to participation by all members—meaning union brothers could participate in women's rights committees. Thus, these groups are not autonomous from men. Therefore, they are not part of the women's liberation movement.

Such a definition of the women's liberation movement is explicitly rejected in the international resolution.

This helps to clarify one of the questions that has come up in the SWP preconvention discussion. A number of comrades objected to the assertion, made in the April 1979 National Committee plenum report on the gay liberation struggle, that the gay rights movement cannot be defined on the basis of sexuality; it is not composed, we say, only of individuals who sleep with others of the same sex. Some comrades thought we were using a new criterion for the gay liberation movement, different from the way we defined the women's liberation movement or the Black liberation movement.

That is false. We have always defined what the women's liberation movement is by political criteria, not by sex. That does not negate our support for the right of gays, or women, or oppressed nationalities to get together in their own organizations to fight their common oppression. But the totality of such organizations is not synonymous with the gay rights movement, the Black liberation movement, or the women's liberation movement. To adopt any other stance would be hopelessly apolitical and sectarian.

Gender or nationality or religion or sexual orientation are the basis on which individuals are identified as part of social groups that are oppressed in capitalist society. But that tells you nothing about *why* they are oppressed or the character of the struggle that must be waged to end that oppression.

For example, Blacks are not oppressed *because of* the color of their skin, or any other biological characteristic. That is simply how they are identified as a distinct group of human beings. But the *reason* they are oppressed has nothing to do with skin color. Blacks are discriminated against because national oppression plays a crucial economic role under capitalism, dividing the working class and creating a pariah labor pool. You have to understand the origin and character of national oppression if you're going to chart a course of struggle to uproot that oppression.

Likewise, it tells you very little to say that women are oppressed because they are women. The only thing that defines women as distinct from men is a genetic structure which results in a biological role in procreation different from men's. But that is not *why* women are oppressed. Women are discriminated against because their oppression as a sex plays an indispensable economic role in class society.

In the same way, it's false to say, as some comrades have, that gays are oppressed because of their "sexuality" or sexual orientation. That is what defines gays or lesbians as a distinct group, it is not *why* they are oppressed.

Gays are oppressed because the maintenance of *women's* oppression demands the repression of all public sexual behavior (and all private sexual behavior that may become public knowledge) not in conformity with the patriarchal monogamous family system. But, as we saw before, sexual

oppression is a subsidiary aspect of women's oppression.

Thus, it would be false to conclude that, since gays are oppressed because of their sexual orientation, therefore to end their oppression they must organize a movement for sexual freedom. That would entail a total misunderstanding of the interrelationship of gay oppression, women's oppression, and class society.

We say the struggle against gay oppression must be a political struggle, directed against the institutionalized ways in which that oppression is effected, the material sanctions used by state authorities to keep gays in their closets—such as discrimination in housing, employment, child custody, tolerance of police brutality, etc.

'Sexual Freedom' and Class Struggle

A counterorientation—denying that the axis of the gay liberation struggle is a political movement for democratic rights—was clearly outlined in a recent article by David Thorstad, a leader of the North American Man-Boy Love Association, in the newspaper the *Guardian*. In it he argues that "the struggle for sexual freedom is an integral part of the overall struggle to overthrow capitalism." Elsewhere he talks about "capitalism and its heterosexist dictatorship." He seems to think the two categories are of equal nature and importance.

In a like vein Comrades Forgiere and Hill argue in the SWP pre-convention discussion bulletin that the goal of the gay liberation movement is sexual liberation, that its purpose "is to allow all human sexual potential to be released in people."

This is not a new idea, either. Some pre-Marxian Utopian socialists brought forward similar ideas. The anarchist movement at the turn of the century championed free love as an important aspect of the class struggle. The sex-pol movement led by Wilhelm Reich and others in Germany and Austria in the 1930s developed the idea that capitalism could not long survive if the authoritarian character structure of individuals was eroded through modifications in their sexual lives.

The Stalinists assailed Reich as well as Freud for their pioneering contributions to scientific research on sexual repression and human psychology. Reich was expelled from the German Communist Party in 1933. The Trotskyist movement, on the other hand, considered the work of Freud, Reich, and others in the psychoanalytic movement important contributions to science and materialism. But we always rejected the idea that the struggle for sexual freedom is or can ever be an axis of political struggle against capitalism.

It is true that sexual repression is indispensable to class society. But it does not follow that you can undermine capitalism by convincing people to stop repressing their sexual drives or demanding the "right" to freer sexuality.

The liberation of human sexuality from the distortions produced by class society will only come about through the deepest fundamental economic and social changes opened up as a result of the socialist revolution. Along the way, there are certain *political* struggles—such as the right of women and youth to sex education; contraception and abortion; decent, low-cost housing that can offer privacy and a room of one's own; an end to discriminatory laws; affirmative action. The by-product of victorious struggles around such issues can be the elimination of elements of sexual repression and distortion. But a struggle for "sexual

freedom" in the abstract will never affect the economic power and institutions of the capitalist class.

As Trotsky points out in *Problems of Everyday Life*, there's tremendous interest in the working class in questions of sex and family relations. When party propagandists organized meetings in the working-class districts of major cities after the October revolution to discuss questions of sex and family life, thousands of people flocked to them.

Of course. Why would one expect anything else? Given the degree to which every individual suffers from the warping and distortion of all sexual relations in class society, everyone is interested in sex. It's safe to say that there's not a single individual who isn't in favor of a more satisfying sex life.

If the All-African People's Revolutionary Party could get 4,000 people to march through the streets of Washington last year demanding "Scientific Socialism," think about what could be done with the demand, "We Want Better Sex!"

The problem is, to whom do you address that demand?

I don't think Congress can help us much. And the good Baptist in the White House who admits to the lust in his heart won't be able to do any better.

More radical critiques of sexual repression are not necessarily synonymous with a deeper political understanding of how to eradicate the economic and social conditions that give rise to sexual repression. If there are fewer restrictions in sexual activity today than ten years ago, or fifty years ago, it is not because people demanded better sex, but because of the qualitative changes in the economic independence of women. Because women are increasingly able to walk away from family relations that are personally intolerable and survive, there are fewer sexual taboos for men and women.

Overriding concern for "sexual freedom" takes those preoccupied with it away from politics, away from the class struggle. And it opens the door to reactionary ideas as well.

Sexual repression is not a mere internal suppression of a biological urge. It results in deep distortions of that urge in ways that flow from the structure and functioning of the family. These distortions of sexuality exist in all of us in one form and to one degree or another. Usually the most destructive compulsions are kept in check through repression.

We can confidently expect that a socialist society, through the socialization of the functions now performed by the family, will eventually produce new men and women free of such distortions. But to demand total freedom of expression for all human sexual potential today means freedom to express all the present distortions of sexuality, many of which are violent and destructive to other individuals. Society must attempt to control them until they "wither away" among the future generations living in a classless society. Rape, child abuse, and extreme forms of sadistic-masochistic compulsion are obvious examples.

This is also relevant to the current debate about "age of consent laws." The issue involved is not the right of teenagers to engage in sexual activity, but the demand by adults who are afflicted with a compulsion to have sex with children to have the right to do so. This is antisocial because it harms children. It is reactionary because it attempts to inflict upon future generations the sicknesses

of the present. It is a "sexual potential" which society—capitalist or socialist—must block until such distortions are a thing of humanity's past.

The various ideas about fighting to release all human sexual potential that are prevalent in the gay rights movement (and to a lesser degree in the women's movement) are closely related to counterculturalist currents and proponents of liberation-through-life-style. They are the opposite of our orientation, which approaches the solution to these problems as political issues in the class struggle.

As the international resolution explains:

"We are concerned with all aspects of women's oppression. However, as a political party based on a program that represents the historic interests of the working class and all the oppressed, our prime task is to help direct the women's liberation movement toward political action that can effectively lead to the eradication of private property in which that oppression is rooted. Around every facet of women's oppression we strive to develop demands and actions that challenge the social and economic policies of the bourgeoisie and point toward the solutions that would be possible were it not for the fact that all social policies are decided on the basis of maximizing private profits."

The Revolutionary Proletarian Party We Must Build

The final question we need to clarify is the character of the revolutionary workers party, including the role of women within the party and the development of women leaders. In the SWP we have given a lot of thought to this question. It has been discussed extensively at National Committee plenums and conventions of the party. The same issue has been raised in virtually every section and sympathizing organization of the Fourth International.

We all recognize that building revolutionary proletarian parties with a sizable cadre of women and with a significant component of women in the central leadership is not a moral question. It is a matter of practical revolutionary politics. Given the accelerating changes in the economic and social role of women, their increasing integration in the work force, if we fail to build workers parties of that kind, we will not be adequately equipped to lead the proletarian forces who will make the socialist revolution in our countries.

The fact that women are drawn into both the labor market and industry in growing numbers also creates the objective conditions that enhance our ability to forge the kinds of parties we need. But the process is not automatic. We are challenged to overcome within our own ranks the divisions and stratifications that exist in the working class; to weld the most conscious elements of our class into an experienced cadre whose confidence in each other is based on proven commitment to our program and loyalty to the party based on that program; to forge that cadre, in the heat of the class struggle, into a homogeneous, tested, self-confident leadership.

That is our task. But helping women comrades to overcome the special obstacles they face poses additional challenges for us. They must be consciously met by the party. We must lead on this question as on others.

This is the context in which the question of organizing women's caucuses had come up in a number of sections of the Fourth International.

Such caucuses are internal meetings of women comrades from which all male comrades are excluded. They are

always motivated on the premise that women comrades need to get together to discuss the special problems that women in the party face.

Women's liberation work fractions are a totally different kind of formation. Fractions are set up for a political purpose—to build the party through our intervention in the women's liberation movement, the trade unions, action coalitions, etc.

They move outward into arenas of activity. Women's caucuses, on the other hand, are always directed inward—to discuss what some exclusive subgroup of comrades think is wrong with the party.

Within the Socialist Workers Party the question of women's caucuses has not been a big issue. We discussed and settled that problem at the very beginning of our participation in the women's liberation movement. At that time, a number of comrades suggested that we should organize consciousness-raising discussion groups among women in the party. We clarified why such formations are detrimental—why they create greater obstacles rather than aid in building the party.

Nonetheless, a number of comrades in the SWP have asked if women's caucuses might not be beneficial in some sections of the Fourth International where the kinds of norms and traditions we have in the SWP don't exist.

The international women's liberation resolution says no, unequivocally. Closed internal caucuses based on something other than political criteria are in contradiction with the very character of a Leninist organization, a revolutionary proletarian party. They run counter to our democratic norms. They undermine our centralism in action. And over time, they inevitably begin to affect our program and orientation.

A proposed amendment to the international resolution which would have changed the section rejecting caucuses and taken a positive attitude toward them instead was defeated by a substantial majority of the United Secretariat.

What exactly does the resolution say on this question?

First, the document points out that many of our sections were slow to respond in a revolutionary way to the rise of the women's liberation movement. This failure to understand the revolutionary potential of the women's liberation movement, the incomprehension and insensitivity to obstacles that women comrades face, and the sexist attitudes that lay behind many of these political errors by the leadership produced great frustration and anger among many women comrades. This gave rise to demands by women that they should have the right to caucus by themselves. In other words, the leadership, including the international leadership, failed to politically lead the women's liberation work and that's where we assign responsibility for the errors that were made.

Secondly, the resolution explains why we often support women's caucuses in other organizations in the workers movement, like reformist parties in which we may be doing fraction work or sometimes in trade unions. Yet we are against such caucuses within the revolutionary workers party. The resolution explains why this difference is drawn, why it is not a contradiction.

The reason is very straightforward. Only a Leninist party is based on a program that represents the interest of the working class—that is the political basis of its revolutionary centralism—and functions according to the norms of internal democracy. That makes us qualitatively differ-

ent from every other formation within the workers movement.

Within the sections and sympathizing organizations of the Fourth International, whatever our weaknesses, errors, and problems may be, we're not confronted with a materially privileged bureaucracy, defending a program that represents the interests of a class other than the working class. There may be conflicts, tensions, and political mistakes, but there's no inherent contradiction between the program of the Fourth International, democratically-elected and controlled leadership bodies, the ranks of our parties, and the needs of the entire working class.

We all stand on the Marxist program, which expresses the generalized interests of the working class. It expresses our common historic class need to overcome the deep cleavages fostered by the rulers to divide our class.

On the basis of that single common program, we have one class of membership: those who agree with that program, loyally build the party, and collaborate with others in a disciplined way to achieve the program. Every single member has an equal right and an equal responsibility to participate in a democratic way to discuss, decide upon, and implement that program. Concretely, this means that every single internal meeting must be organized democratically. Every internal meeting must be organized according to political criteria—fractions according to political work, tendencies or factions according to political agreement. Every member thus qualified must have the possibility to participate, to make her or his opinions known, and to have equal opportunity to influence decisions. There can be no nonpolitical barriers to equal participation—such as exclusion of some comrades on the basis of race, sex, age, educational level, language, class origin, or whatever. That would stand in contradiction to our program and the organizational norms that flow from our program. It would cut across our ability to accomplish our most basic task, the forging of a politically homogenous combat party of workers, not a federation of caucuses, each with its own nuance of programmatic differences and conflicting campaign priorities.

Any decision reached under pressure from groupings not constituted on such a democratic basis will not be able to command disciplined implementation either. Only on the basis of democratic functioning can decisions carry authority.

For these reasons the international women's liberation resolution states that the organization of inner-party caucuses—Black caucuses, women's caucuses, Chicano, gay, lesbian, or short people caucuses—never advance the construction of a Leninist party.

This assessment has also been borne out in practice in those sections of the Fourth International that have gone through the experience of women's caucuses in recent years. Far from helping to correct the political errors or develop the women comrades as self-confident political leaders, the caucuses have had the opposite effect. They deepened the feelings of isolation, conflict, the helplessness. It could not be otherwise because by the very nature of the caucuses they were divorced from the only real context in which progress could be made—organizing the right kind of political work to educate and build the party through women's liberation work in the mass movement.

Thus the caucuses unfortunately deepened the miseducation of comrades, reinforced political errors, fostered cliquism, rationalized gossip, promoted adaptation to the

petty-bourgeois feminist milieu in which we were functioning, and accelerated the loss of literally hundreds of women comrades. In light of these experiences a number of sections have reconsidered their previous positions and are now in agreement with the line of the international resolution.

The International Marxist Group is one of the sections which still thinks women's caucuses are correct and serve a useful function. The resolution adopted by the IMG national conference a year ago codifies the right of women to caucus on every single level of the organization, from the political committee to the branches and fractions. This resolution submitted to the international discussion bulletin states, "*The struggle against sexism within our own ranks is the counterpart of the struggle against sexism in the working class.*" It projects the need "*to develop the struggle against sexism within the IMG.*" [IIDB, Vol. XVI, No. 2, pp. 5-6. Emphasis in original.]

I think those statements express the heart of the error. They assume a fundamental conflict of interest between male and female comrades. If that were true, it would be impossible ever to arrive at a common program for women's liberation and for the working class as a whole. Each sector of the oppressed and exploited would have to wage a fight against the others while at the same time conducting its own separate fight against the ruling class. There would be no need for a revolutionary proletarian party—and also not much objective possibility for victory over the ruling class.

But even if you thought the conflict between men and women in the party could be modified by educating *men*, the "struggle against sexism" would still have to take a *political* form—not an organizational one (caucuses) or a personal one (accusations of sexist behavior that are not taken through normal disciplinary channels). Politically, we would still have to determine what the organization should be doing differently to advance the fight for women's liberation. What political errors are we making because of sexist attitudes?

This will stand out more clearly in the light of an analogy. Sexism is not the only alien class pressure that comes down on a revolutionary party. We're surrounded by all kinds of bourgeois pressures and petty-bourgeois concepts that constitute as deadly a peril to the party as sexism. But how do we deal with petty-bourgeois pressures? Do we organize a proletarian caucus composed of all comrades working in industry, or of all comrades of working-class origins, to "develop the struggle against petty-bourgeois pressures in the organization"?

If there really is a problem of this kind, it shows up in the *program*, in our political *program*, in our political orientation, in what we are doing as an organization. Then we organize politically—in a tendency or a faction, if necessary, to correct the concrete political errors. Any other approach destroys the very foundation of a Leninist organization.

The international resolution recognizes that the problems which have given rise to demands for women's caucuses are real. Antiwoman prejudices in this society are very deep. Economic changes are bringing about alterations, but attitudes in our parties will not be decades ahead of general social conditions, customs, and habits. The course we chart to resolve the internal problems of building proletarian revolutionary parties is a political course. Not a personal or sexual battle between men and women.

We can begin this task of setting the entire international on the correct political course with the resolution on women's liberation that we are discussing, adopting, and implementing.

We send our cadres into the women's liberation movement and integrate the fight for women's needs and demands into all aspects of our work—in the trade unions, in the Black movement, wherever we are. We organize fractions of the party to carry out this work, which is led by the elected political leadership.

We systematically educate our entire membership to understand women's oppression and be knowledgeable about the history of the struggle against it.

We take conscious leadership measures to encourage women and help them overcome the additional obstacles they face.

And, most importantly, we are consciously proletarianizing our parties, getting our members including our women comrades, into industry, which will heighten the self-confidence of our own ranks.

* * *

All these questions are being debated throughout the Fourth International in preparation for the 1979 World Congress. One thing we can be sure of is that through this discussion the entire international Trotskyist movement will emerge stronger and more capable of meeting the challenges we face. The fact that we are discussing and adopting such a resolution is a source of revolutionary optimism for us.

The new rise of the women's movement on a world scale has already meant a qualitative strengthening of the revolutionary potential of the working class. It has reinforced the cadres of the Marxist movement. For our class, for women, for the Fourth International, the prospects are much greater today because of this development.

The goal of our struggle is to build a combat party capable of leading the workers to expropriate the bourgeoisie and put an end to a social system that's based on inequality, oppression, and exploitation. That will open the door to move toward freeing all human relations from the shackles of economic compulsion and to create a world in which each human being can develop her or his full creative capacities for the good of all.

The rise of the women's liberation movement brings that day closer.

SUMMARY

One central thing we are trying to accomplish in the current discussion is to place our understanding of the oppression of women as a sex, and the interrelated but quite distinct question of sexual repression, on a firm materialist foundation. We have to understand where these problems come from and what their interrelationship is before we can chart a political course of struggle to change them.

Proceeding from materialist foundations, we will be properly equipped to appreciate all the complexities of women's oppression.

For example, on the question of the family and sexual repression, we emphasize the fact that women's oppression

is *economic*, that the family is an *economic* institution of class rule. We state this insistently, precisely because there's so much confusion on this score, and so many feminists and others think that other factors are primary. But once we get ourselves clear, we'll have little trouble in appreciating the value of contributions made by others who are trying to understand the various aspects of bourgeois ideology which reinforce women's oppression. We can then place all the sexual and psychological aspects of oppression in proper perspective.

A materialist understanding of sexuality and sexual repression has, of course, its own importance. For example, I think many of the writings by Wilhelm Reich when he was a Marxist are valuable. His works such as *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* and *The Imposition of Sexual Morality* are serious materialist attempts to deal with significant questions. But if you substitute psychology for political economy as a guide, then you go off base. You'll never be able to chart a class-struggle course toward the establishment of a workers government.

The fact that bourgeois ideology and sex mores have less of a hold on the working class today is extremely important. One comrade made the point in the discussion that gay-baiting and lesbian-baiting are simply not so effective a means of inciting antagonism and division within the working class as before. These changes in consciousness, which are partly due to the role of the gay liberation movement, strengthen the working class. This is significant.

But when it comes down to thinking out a proletarian political strategy, we start from the understanding that ideological shifts on a mass scale *follow* from profound economic and social changes, not vice versa. You can't change the world unless you understand why the world is the way it is.

I want to return to the discussion we've been having on the question of counterculturalism and life-stylism.

The counter political resolution, submitted by the six comrades in Miami, Florida, argues that we should have a positive attitude toward the growth of counterculturalism and life-stylism because it is a sign of deepening radicalization and rejection of bourgeois values.

That is politically wrong.

Such social and cultural phenomena are sometimes signs of a deepening radicalization. We agree. They are also sometimes signs of a downturn in the class struggle, a growing demoralization and loss of perspective.

In neither case do we have *a priori* a positive attitude toward them politically.

Simply rejecting the existing social values and norms doesn't necessarily put you on a revolutionary, class-struggle course. Some who get caught up in counterculturalism and alternative life-styles are taking a first step toward revolutionary politics. But many more are at best on a road out of politics, and at worst moving toward a totally reactionary, anti-working-class orientation. That is why we consider counterculturalism and life-stylism a deadly enemy politically. Only those who can be broken from it will ever be won to a proletarian, Leninist strategy of party building.

On the question of women's caucuses, I'm glad that the comrade spoke and explained the thinking of some of the IMG comrades. The points she made about the general atmosphere and attitudes that exist internally in many sections of the Fourth International are valid. They *are* an

The Woman Question and the Building of the Revolutionary Party

The two individual contributions that follow—the first by Allio, the second by Mary-Alice Waters—are presented by the two comrades as complementary contributions on the woman question and building the party.

August 1979

On Women's Caucuses

By Allio

Everyone agrees that many sections of the International, especially in Europe, were late in responding positively to the new radicalization of women that arose in most of the advanced countries at the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s. It took some time for most of the section leaderships, as well as the leadership of the International, to recognize the importance of the fight for women's liberation and understand the role that revolutionary Marxists had to play to get this movement to adopt class perspectives, to get it to take up the defense first of all of the rights of the most oppressed and exploited women, that is working-class women.

This lag has given rise to major problems, both in our work in the movement and in our internal functioning. It has obstructed the full integration of women in the life of the organization at all levels.

The decision to get involved in the women's movement was made on an individual basis by many comrades, with or without the formal approval of their leaderships. In view of the footdragging by the regular leadership bodies in organizing a collective discussion on the tasks, the development of analyses, and perspectives for work. Moreover, in view of the sexist attitudes that too often went hand in hand with the resistance to undertaking political work in the women's movement, a number of women comrades argued that they had to be able to meet together. These women's caucuses were intended to be a way of overcoming these comrades' isolation, of discussing problems that they faced as women in the organization, and of getting the organization as a whole to discuss these questions. This way of "solving" the problem was approved by majority vote at the congresses of a series of sections of the International, often before there had been any real discussion of the implications of such a decision.

Permitting women's caucuses put in question the principle of democratic centralism itself (since a section of the members of the organization could be excluded in advance from certain discussions). It opened the way for a federalist mode of operation by the party as opposed to the Leninist principles of party functioning. There are many factors that explain why this danger was not immediately perceived by many leaders. One factor was their youth and the lack of political continuity of leadership in the historic sense. Another was the origin of most of the cadres of

these sections, who had come out of the student radicalization of the late 1960s. They were marked by the mode of functioning that prevailed in the student movement (the role of leaders, the importance accorded to intellectual discussions, and so forth). There was also a temptation to seek shortcuts, which fitted in with a more or less catastrophist analysis of the revolutionary process ("history is breathing down our necks"). All these were underlying elements in the lack of full understanding of the problems of longterm party building.

Today, several sections have begun to draw balance sheets. And many of us who previously favored women's caucuses have rethought the question and become convinced that this is not the correct way to surmount the problems that women in particular face in our organizations. This position is rooted in a very pragmatic look at the facts. That is, in most of the sections where they were put into effect, these measures failed to change things. But it rests most of all on more general thinking about how to build the party and the leadership, as well as about how to conduct the fight needed to assure the existence of genuinely democratic relations at all levels of the organization.

Once Again on the Leninist Conception of the Party

"The basis for the work of the party is its program. It is the program that assures the cohesion of its ranks. The program provides a common strategic orientation on which the vanguard can organize. It is in this sense that the sections of the Fourth International represent the nucleus of the revolutionary party that is to be built. The program of the Fourth International constitutes the synthesis of the experiences of the working class on an international scale. The capacity of the sections of the International and the world party to enrich this synthesis in the light of developments in the class struggle is the confirmation of their close ties with the great mobilizations of the working class and the oppressed layers and of the validity of the method of the Transitional Program.

"On the basis of this program, a leadership has to be built that is capable of applying it, of seizing all the opportunities to take steps forward in building the party,

of understanding quickly the changes in the political situation, of carrying forward political and theoretical development. It flows from this that building a leadership can only be accomplished as the result of a conscious long-term effort.

"The formation of such a leadership involves unity on the basis of program and not of a temporary tactical agreement. It must be a collective leadership with the function of increasing the number of leading cadres capable of directing the work of the organization as a whole. Therefore, one of the aspects of the work of a leadership is to pay constant attention to training a broader and broader team of cadres, to regularly bring comrades into responsible national and international assignments, giving priority to the development of women and worker cadres. In order to accomplish this, it is essential that the leadership find a method, based on objective criteria, of working together.

"The establishment of a leadership that can learn and function on this basis is the *sine qua non* for the party leading all the areas of its work, for it to maintain the central political direction necessary for increasing its effectiveness in action and at the same time develop its line through democratic internal discussion. This is the only way of fighting sectoralism, which may lead a section of the organization to lose the overall revolutionary perspective and induce it to develop positions that come into conflict with the program and the general line of the organization."¹

It is on the basis of such an understanding that we must approach the question of the role of women in the party, and not confirm on the organizational level the inequalities that definitely exist.

Because they based themselves systematically on the principles of democratic centralism in arguing against women's caucuses, many comrades find themselves frequently being accused of dogmatism. This position, however, harks back to a series of historical discussions, which were by no means dogmatic, about how to build the revolutionary party.

As is stressed by the previous quotation, the abolition of the capitalist system requires building a revolutionary party capable of leading the proletariat as a class to the seizure of power. The main obstacle to the development of class consciousness on the part of the proletariat is the divisions created within it by capitalism.

In order to overcome such divisions and achieve victory in their struggle, the workers must demonstrate unity in defending the interests of the class as a whole and especially of its most oppressed strata. Likewise, the party that leads this struggle must base itself on a single program expressing the historic interests of the working class as a whole. The need to unite and centralize the activity of the working class is reflected in the need for a politically homogeneous party including comrades from the most oppressed layers in its leadership and capable of striking as a single fist. This is why it is so important for the party to function democratically, giving everyone the opportunity to express their opinion in action. It is also why we must have discipline in action, that is, recognition of the need for political centralization in applying the line adopted and of the need for respect for the decisions made by the majority after a democratic debate in the organization.

In 1903, Lenin assailed the federalist conception of the Bund, which wanted to join the Russian Social Democratic Party and retain its organizational autonomy. It wanted the right to reject the collective discipline of the party on a series of questions. Lenin argued as follows:

"The crux of the issue has not always been presented quite correctly in the debate. The point of the matter is that, in the opinion of many Party members, federation is *harmful* and runs counter to the principles of Social-Democracy as applied to existing Russian conditions. Federation is harmful because it *sanctions* segregation and alienation, elevates them to a principle, to a law. Complete alienation does indeed prevail among us, and we ought not to *sanction* it, or cover it with a figleaf, but combat it and resolutely acknowledge and proclaim the necessity of firmly and unswervingly advancing to the *closest* unity. That is why we reject federation in principle, *in limine*; that is why we reject *all* obligatory partitions that serve to divide us. As it is, there will always be different groupings in the Party, groupings of comrades who do not think quite alike on questions of programme, tactics, or organization: but let there be only *one* division into groups throughout the Party, that is, let all like-minded members join in a single group, instead of groups first being formed in one *section* of the Party, separately from the groups in another section of the Party, and then having a union not of groups holding different views or shades of opinion but of sections of the Party, each containing different groups." (Lenin's speech on the Place of the Bund in the RSDLP, *Complete Works*, Vol. 6)

We see no reason for taking a different approach to the question of women's caucuses. After all, women are not the only ones who have to struggle to overcome certain handicaps arising from their political education and social pressures reflected in the party. Workers in general, immigrants, and workers belonging to oppressed minorities are also victims of social discrimination in education and professional training and have to overcome all these obstacles in order to become political cadres. For different reasons, comrades who have to take care of children or elderly persons also face special difficulties in involving themselves in the work of the party. The homosexual comrades are also faced with the expression of sexist attitudes that should not exist in a revolutionary party.

These are all problems that go back to the question of the exploitation and oppression of the lower classes in general and to the *political* tasks that the party must take up in its day-to-day struggle (the fight against class exploitation and discrimination, against the oppression of women, against chauvinism and racism, against the oppression of homosexuals, for the establishment of quality social services, and so forth). But the party cannot, within itself, eliminate the social inequalities inherent in class society. Only the establishment of a socialist society will make it possible to attack the roots of this oppression and of this alienation in individual relationships.

This, of course, does not mean that it is not necessary here and now to wage a conscious struggle within the organization against every form of discrimination. What remains to be seen is *how* this struggle should be conducted and which measures are best suited to overcoming the tensions that exist in the organization.

In the following section, I will show why women's caucuses are not effective as a means of dealing with the problems that led to their being proposed in the first place

and why they introduce a federalist conception of the party that goes far beyond the question of the role of women in the party and undermines the party's capacity to serve as a revolutionary instrument.

Why Women Only?

In the spring of 1978, at the IMG congress a majority voted in favor of women's caucuses (including national coordination of such meetings as well as the provision that they could be held even when opposed by the leadership if the women concerned felt that it was essential to meet at the given moment). But how could it be justified that the right to meet was denied to the Black comrades (who demanded it), or to the homosexual comrades, who made a similar demand in the Canadian section, or to the workers? What were the criteria used to deny to some what was granted to others? We think that this debate is related more generally to the conception of building the party that we advocate. The revolutionary party, as the vanguard of the proletariat, will be able to fulfill its role and guide the working class in its struggle to overthrow the bourgeois order only if it proves capable of forming an *overall view* expressing the historical lessons of the struggles of the working class, a view based on the pooling of the experience of *all* the members of the organization and which is embodied in a unified program. In order to achieve this, the party needs a centralized leadership democratically controlled by *all* its members. Everyone must have access to the discussions, everyone must be able to inform themselves, to participate in whatever meetings have bearing on their tasks and in the collective decisions made after political discussion. Everyone must have the same *rights* and the same *duties* in order, as Lenin said, to advance unswervingly to the closest unity and to a homogeneity based on common experience and understanding and mutual confidence. This does not mean that such a state of affairs already exists, but it is the aim we set ourselves.

Now, no one can deny that meetings held on the basis of sex, or nationality, or race run counter to this principle. These are not meetings of groups based on political views and open to all, as is the case of tendencies and fractions. They are not groupings to organize political work in our different sectors of intervention. They are, to the contrary, nonpolitical groupings that exclude in advance a whole section of the members of the organization.

Program, Leadership, and Ranks

In her explanation of why she abstained in the vote on the draft resolution "Socialist Revolution and the Struggle for Women's Liberation" at the April 1978 meeting of the United Secretariat, Marline expressed her disagreement with the sentence in which we say, ". . . in a revolutionary Marxist party, whatever its shortcomings and weaknesses may be, there is no inherent contradiction between program, leadership, and ranks." This is the contrary of the situation in the mass organizations dominated by reformists and bureaucrats. We do not deny that there may be tensions and contradictions within a revolutionary party. What we mean by this is the following:

1. The program on which we base ourselves represents the historic interests of the working class as a whole, and

therefore the interests of the masses of women.

2. The leadership of the revolutionary party is democratically elected and there is no material basis for it defending interests contrary to those of the ranks of the organization (unlike in the case of the bureaucratic leaderships which base themselves on a layer of privileged workers and have interests of their own to defend.)

3. The revolutionary party is based on principles of democratic centralism, according to which everyone can and must defend their point of view, and even the right to organize in tendencies or in factions to defend their ideas, if they think this necessary.

It is in this sense that we think that there is no *intrinsic* contradiction between program, leadership, and the ranks. Of course, the only way to effectively resolve whatever tensions and contradictions exist is on the basis of mechanisms that assure the possibility of democratic discussion and of democratic decision making by the party as a whole.

In the mass organizations of the workers movement, we defend the right of women to women's caucuses precisely because contradictions do exist between their interests as women and unionists and those of the reformist leaderships, which have a counterrevolutionary program, have not been elected on genuinely democratic bases and have privileges to defend. We support such caucuses all the more when they serve as a way for working women to break out of their isolation and the marginal role to which they are often consigned in these organizations. We know that in certain cases, such groupings can be a powerful springboard for mounting opposition to the positions of the reformist and bureaucratic leaderships and helping to give a class struggle orientation to the battles of the workers organizations.

But in the revolutionary party, the question is posed in a fundamentally different way. Contrary to what Marline seems to accuse us of, we do not deny the need for taking *concrete* measures to eliminate all obstacles to the political development of comrades, to enable women to become leaders of the organization in their own right. We think, however, that such measures should be designed to *integrate* women in the best way possible in all the regular bodies of the organization, and this cannot be done through meetings or structures that tend rather to reinforce the differences. Experience has shown, moreover, that women's caucuses have not made it possible to eliminate sexist practices or sectarian or wrong positions on the women's liberation struggle. The process initiated has gone exactly in the opposite direction, confirming Lenin's fears about introducing federalist norms into the party. Because these meetings do not constitute an adequate political framework for resolving the problems posed, they have generated nonpolitical centrifugal tendencies that have reinforced the isolation of those participating in them from the other sections of the organization and led to increasing differences and divisions.

From Theory to Reality

If you look closely at the documents concerning women's caucuses adopted at the national congresses of most of the European sections, the Canadian section, and some of those in Latin America, you see that the function of such groups is generally strictly limited. They are not supposed

in any case to become parallel structures short-circuiting the "regular" bodies. They are not supposed to be places for developing line or for discussing work on the woman question, since these tasks belong to the regular bodies and to the organization as a whole. They are supposed to produce written and oral reports making it possible to advance the discussion on the questions concerned in the entire party. But what do we see?

There are no written balance sheets on these meetings in most of the sections. But in talking to comrades, three different sorts of cases emerge as predominant:

a. Women's caucus meetings are never held, despite the importance given to this question in the pre-congress discussions. So, clearly this discussion was more ideological than anything else (this is the case in many cities in France, Switzerland, and Germany).

b. Such meetings are held regularly and they have taken on a character totally different from their initial aim. This goes so far as to creating a parallel structure and theories that call for a total break with our principles of democratic centralism. There was a proposal for the constitution of an all-women's tendency in France for the 1977 congress of the LCR. Swiss comrades demanded that certain documents on the woman question submitted for the pre-congress debate in 1977 be distributed exclusively to the women in the organization and "not fall into the hands of the men." Comrades in Germany proposed holding an all-women's educational camp in the winter of 1978, at which they wanted to discuss both the political orientation to be adopted as well as internal problems in the organization, and so on. In the first two cases, the leadership immediately intervened to explain how such proposals ran counter to the norms of the functioning of a Leninist party. But, nonetheless, the majority of the comrades who supported such positions left the organization. Their departure represents an all the more grave political setback for the party since a number of those who left were cadres who had played a decisive role in building fractions both in the union movement and in the women's movement.

c. The conception of all-women's meetings has sometimes been broadened to the point that comrades think that the bodies responsible for women's work should consist of women only "in view of the inability of the leaderships to take charge of organizing discussion and intervention on the woman question." Thus, in the spring of 1978 at a several-day-long educational conference of the whole Italian section, the fraction that was supposed to debate the draft world resolution on the woman question and discuss the tasks related to the abortion campaign in Italy was declared to be for women only. Only the women members of the Political Bureau were allowed to come in and attend the sessions.

It may be objected that all this does not take into account positive examples where holding occasional women's caucus meetings made it possible to remove roadblocks and get one or another leadership to take the question of intervening in the women's movement seriously. (See the balance sheet made by the comrades from certain French and Belgian cities). But such examples remain isolated. Moreover, these were generally meetings held once or on a few specific occasions that did not lead to anything ongoing. Where women's caucus meetings have been held as a *regular* thing, the balance sheets, partial as they are, that have been made by the participating

comrades are anything but positive, even when these comrades remain favorable in principle to such meetings:

- These caucuses have almost always remained echo chambers, with the debates in them having little repercussion in the organization as a whole. As a result, they have had little effect in raising the consciousness of activists.

- They have often helped to mask the urgency of the need to wage a fight to get the entire organization to take up the struggle against women's oppression. The comrades wasted their energy in discussions within this framework instead of carrying out this discussion in the regular bodies of the party.

- Far from being a congenial framework in which all women would feel free to take up their special problems, in many cases these caucuses to the contrary have tended to serve as blind alleys for a political debate between those comrades who favor them and those who see them as representing a deviation from the standpoint of our political orientation. This has purely and simply taken the place of a debate that should have been conducted in the organization as a whole. Inasmuch as these discussions could not lead to any concrete decision, in view of the "consultative" nature of the women's caucuses, they have often led to a pointless sharpening of differences and personal conflicts. Sometimes they have been transformed into veritable tendency debates where various political points of view existing in the organization clashed over all sorts of questions (this was the case notably on the occasion of the most recent congresses of the French LCR at the beginning of 1977 and the beginning of 1979).

- Finally, these caucuses have often been the source of more than harmful theories about the "feminists" and the "nonfeminists," the latter of course being those comrades who expressed disagreement with the principle of women's caucuses.

A Dynamic of Retreat

In a general way, it is necessary to recognize that these meetings have encouraged the women who participated in them to retreat into themselves, and that they have, more than anything else, promoted demoralization and a cynical attitude toward the organization. The simple fact that according to the way they were conceived they were not supposed to take up either questions of orientation or practical work indicates their bastard and contradictory character from the standpoint of the principles that guide us in our daily activity and in building the party. Rather than advancing our political work, they have most often led the women participating in them into combinations against the leadership, and sometimes against the party itself. The most experienced comrades and those most involved in the leadership were rarely present. Those who did participate in these meetings were generally those comrades who suffered most directly from the lack of direction from the party as regards the women's liberation struggle (that is, those who were working in women's liberation groups, who were often new comrades and were left to their own devices). They were also among those worst equipped to overcome the passivity of the organization in this area, help make up for the time lost, and to get the organization as a whole to take a step forward.

Some comrades may say that these meetings made it possible for them to raise questions that they had not been

able to bring up in the rest of the organization, and that they felt stronger after these discussions. This is certainly true. But in how many cases did this result in the party as a whole taking up the problems raised and trying to respond to them? Instead of giving impetus to discussion and to collective decision making about the problems posed, instead of inspiring a willingness in comrades to revive the heritage, incomplete though it may be, of the revolutionary movement with regard to the women's liberation struggle, instead of educating the male and female comrades as a whole to understand that women are capable of making fantastic collective efforts at decisive moments of the class struggle (as shown in the Russian revolution, the Spanish revolution, the role played by women in China, Vietnam, Algeria, Cuba, Iran, and today in Nicaragua), these meetings often promoted the recounting of individual frustrations.

Far from leading the comrades to base themselves on the most positive examples, those cases where our sections showed their capacity to make the struggle for women's liberation a central axis of their intervention in the class struggle, and far from serving as a lever for opening up discussion and countering resistance demonstrated in one or another section, such meetings often became a place for expressing sourness, skepticism, and feelings of helplessness. They became hot houses for theories about the impossibility of changing the course of things and of correcting the party's line on the woman question.

I am not trying to disparage the comrades who maintained that there was a need for women's caucuses. What I am trying to do is to point up the responsibility of the leaderships. They often used these meetings as a crutch so that they would not have to take up questions that were central for building the party. It is obvious that the pressure from the women comrades for organizing meetings from which men would be excluded resulted from the inability of the leadership to face up to its tasks in the struggle for women's liberation.

This inability was reflected in several ways. There was a lack of understanding of the importance of educating the membership on this question and of proposing specific measures to assure that women comrades would get a general political education. There was a delay in developing a clear orientation for the organization as a whole on women's liberation work. There was a delay in the centralization of this work, leading to the isolation of the women comrades, who had to deal by themselves with the tactical problems they faced. All these factors explain why our comrades also came under strong pressure from the women's groups in which they were working, groups that were distinguished for the most part by their petty-bourgeois social composition, their resistance to adopting a class orientation, and their tendency to turn in on themselves.

In most cases, this pointed to a problem of *political line*. The pressures were felt most strongly in those sections that lagged behind in realizing the depth of the radicalization of working women and the need for focusing on work in the labor movement. The more general discussions on the question of the united front have since made it possible to correct a wrong orientation that tended to lead us to consider the existing women's groups as the vanguard of the movement and to give scant attention to work directed at the masses of women influenced by the reformist

organizations. This reorientation, which introduced a new discussion in many sections about the problems of building the party as a whole, a discussion linked to the turn to the working class, had obvious implications with respect to the question of women's caucuses. In some cases, this was because in the light of the political debate over orientation, certain sections, such as the Swiss LMR, decided to go all the way and to reconsider their position on the basis of a collective balance sheet and a discussion in which the entire organization participated. In others, the actual practice was modified, and these meetings are no longer held, although the position of the section on this question has not changed.

The gap that exists between the "theories" that were used to justify instituting women's caucuses and the actual facts should encourage those comrades who have already shifted their position to go further in their thinking. In fact, some comrades no longer defend the *principle* of women's caucuses, but say: "They should be permitted as long as certain conditions are not met, such as proper education of women and their integration in the leaderships, and so forth. (See, in this respect, the Brewster amendment to the draft resolution for the Eleventh World Congress, which was proposed in the United Secretariat discussion in March 1978, "Discussion Internationale," No. 17, p. 18.) We say that this is a way of *failing to encourage* the leaderships to take up the struggle to overcome the present situation, which moreover differs quite a bit from section to section.

Other comrades say today that they no longer consider such meetings as a solution, but they continue to defend the right of women to meet together, as sort of a lesser evil. We would argue that while this attitude appears liberal on the surface, what lies underneath is a certain paternalism. In fact, certain women leaders have said that they share this position less because they feel directly concerned and intend to participate in women's caucuses, than because they think that they fill a need for many rank-and-file women and therefore have a usefulness.

Other comrades, finally, are asking that such meetings continue to be authorized, not because they think they serve a purpose but so as to prevent certain leaderships from applying sanctions or taking disciplinary measures against the women who participate in them, even though the norms of democratic centralism do not grant this right. Our answer to this is that the draft resolution is clear in this respect. It says explicitly that it is the *leaderships* that bear the responsibility for the delays and the errors committed in a number of sections both in respect to our work in the women's movement and as regards the scant progress made in integrating women into the organization and its leadership bodies. We state that administrative measures (sanctions, etc.) cannot provide a *solution* for the problems that exist, and that the situation can be overcome only by *political* measures.

In our view, the only solution that will enable us to move forward is for the entire organization to become involved in this discussion. It must be conducted through the regular party bodies. And it must result in concrete agreement about our work, with both men and women comrades understanding the political importance of applying the line in action. It is on this basis that we think that sexist behavior and so forth will really be taken on and the problems tied up with internal functioning will begin to be solved.

We Must Take the Most Advanced Experiences as the Model

As good internationalists, we think that it is by basing ourselves on the most advanced experiences of the sections that we will be able to convince those leaders who continue to drag their feet and get them to take these problems seriously. We do not think this can be accomplished by placing safeguards in our documents, which would be only formalities. We think, moreover, that recent advances in women's work in a series of sections of the Fourth International in colonial and semicolonial countries show the correctness of this approach. The beginning we made in pooling our experience internationally and the examples of the work being done that are being reported regularly and in a timely way by the press of the sections—which represents something new and a great step forward—have enabled our comrades in Latin America and Asia to take the lead of the women's liberation movements that are emerging in a series of countries and thus avoid repeating the errors made in all too many sections in Europe. And there is no reason to think that this positive development will not also help in the fight to assure that women can become leaders in their own right, if we make this a central axis of the struggle to build the party.

If the comrades look carefully for the source of the extremely positive changes that we see today in most sections of the Fourth International in regard to women's work, they will realize that it was not the women's caucuses serving as pressure groups that forced the leaderships to take up the discussion and begin to coordinate the work. Instead what started things moving were the experiences of the women and men comrades in the mass movement and the need to provide answers for the problems that arose in the course of the discussions in the various leading bodies of the organization. In this respect, the participation of our sections in mass campaigns such as that on abortion and the initiatives taken by our comrades to get their unions to offer active support to the fight of working women in one or another plant have certainly had a more decisive effect than any women's caucus in getting the comrades to understand the importance of combating the divisions between men and women that weaken the working class and of combating the policy of the bourgeoisie, which seeks to perpetuate these divisions for its own profit.

The best guarantee that conditions in the party will improve, that backward attitudes will not persist, and that the obstacles to women becoming real political cadres will be removed is for our comrades to become thoroughly convinced politically of the need to apply the party's line on the question of women's liberation. It is through having to defend our positions on this question to other workers in their day-to-day activity that our comrades will best be persuaded that you cannot consider yourself a revolutionist and continue to behave in a sexist way.

What will enable our comrades to discuss the problems posed by the women's liberation struggle in the most concrete way and come up with answers to them is for them to participate in the women's liberation fractions of the organization (union fractions and fractions for specific campaigns).

What exactly is the meaning of the "right to choose, the right of women to control their own bodies," and how

should this question be approached within the working class? What attitude should we take toward the forms of violence perpetrated against women in the workplace? How should we respond when we face attacks from fellow workers and not from the boss or foreman? These fractions often consist of a majority of women, in accordance with the kind of work they carry out. But they differ fundamentally from the women-only meetings inasmuch as they bring together comrades on the basis of political *tasks* and not affinities, and their function is to lay out the perspectives for building the party through our work in the mass movements.

We think that the draft resolution "Socialist Revolution and Women's Liberation" that has been submitted for a vote to the Eleventh World Congress, as well as the theses adopted on this subject by the great majority of the sections, demonstrate that we have made decisive progress in enriching our program. We think that these positions provide a basis for moving ahead.

Of course, the conflicts will not disappear at the wave of any magic wand. We are far from having won the battle to convince *all* the comrades in the organization of the importance of the struggle to be waged against women's oppression. And we are far from having reached a situation where such a consciousness would be reflected in the political activity of all comrades, as well as in their behavior. We are well aware that it is only when we have achieved this that all the comrades will be able to develop their abilities to the fullest, inasmuch as people's self-confidence, especially in the case of women, is largely influenced by the attitude of those comrades they work alongside politically, and this is an important factor in being able to assume a leadership role.

However, we do not see any better way of conducting this fight than within the regular bodies of the organization, in connection with the day-to-day work and discussions involved in building the party. Changing the attitude of a certain number of comrades who are still marked by sexist behavior and a lack of understanding of the problems that come up will depend primarily on the capacity of the other comrades—men and women—to force discussion in the cells, general assemblies, and educational conferences of how best to integrate the struggle for women's liberation in our propaganda brochures and leaflets, in our press, and in what we say in our public meetings.

Political Education and Integration in the Leadership

Taking up the question of the place of workers in building the party, Trotsky wrote in a letter to James P. Cannon in 1937:

"I read a moment ago a letter from Harry Milton to Rae [Spiegel]. I have read some of his letters from Spain, and I heard yesterday from Rae that he made a very good speech on Spain before a large meeting and that everybody was astonished at his success, himself more than anybody. Finally, he mentioned that the National Committee had decided to send him on a tour alone and not with Comrade Goldman, as had been scheduled. This fact seems extremely important and symptomatic. I observed another worker from your organization here, Comrade Lankin. In the presence of [Jack] Weber, F., and other comrades, he

remained very silent, but worked all the time. Then he remained for a longer time with us. He revealed a great deal of life and fighting experience, of psychological observation and political considerations of great value. Such comrades are necessary in our party committees, in the central committee as well as in the local committees. I have remarked hundreds of times that the worker who remains unnoticed in the 'normal' conditions of party life reveals remarkable qualities in a change of the situation when general formulas and fluent pens are not sufficient, where acquaintance with the life of workers and practical capacities are necessary. Under such conditions a gifted worker reveals a sureness of himself and reveals also his general political capabilities." (*Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1936-37, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1978.*)

What Trotsky points to here is the handicap that most workers have as a consequence of their lack of experience in writing and public speaking. But at the same time, he notes the special abilities they demonstrate with respect to the tasks of building the organization. Recognizing that "the predominance of intellectuals is inevitable in the first phase," he stresses, on the other hand, how "harmful this is for the political education of the most gifted workers."

Trotsky made specific proposals for starting to solve the problems posed:

"It is absolutely necessary at the next convention to introduce in the local and central committees as many workers as possible. To a worker, activity in the leading party body is at the same time a higher political school. Some of the new worker members of the party committees will show then that they are not sufficiently fit for the post: they can be replaced at the next convention. A selection of the most capable, devoted elements for the leading bodies can proceed only slowly and naturally is never finished. A certain risk in the placing of these new comrades is inevitable. If only a third of the new worker members in the local and central committees reveal themselves as fit, the result is excellent."

This deliberate decision to integrate workers into the leaderships would be incomprehensible except with the context of a firm policy of educating the entire organization, and especially the workers. Trotsky continually comes back to the theme of such a policy. We think that the policy that we must put forward today to enable the women comrades to eliminate the existing obstacles to their becoming political cadres must be based on the same

sort of decision. The way to most concretely and effectively attack the forms of discrimination and the manifestations of sexism that continue to appear within our ranks is by applying measures with respect to political education—and even forms of affirmative action on behalf of women—as well as by means of discussion in the regular party bodies in order to get the comrades to recognize the need for a collective struggle against the specific oppression women suffer. This was the theme of the report by Comrade Mary-Alice Waters, which was approved by the National Committee of the SWP on May 2, 1979. Major extracts of this report are appended to this document.

From what has been said above, it follows clearly that the last point of the resolution (Point 6, under the heading "The Tasks of the Fourth International Today") must remain an integral part of the theses. Some comrades, such as Brewster, have proposed that this part be taken out, and that it be made the subject of a discussion on party "norms" at the Eleventh World Congress. Other comrades propose a separate vote on this point.

In our view, this is a question directly linked to the question of building the revolutionary proletarian party as it is laid out in the draft resolutions on the world situation, Europe, and Latin America. We fully support the move by the majority caucus of the United Secretariat, which has called on the comrades to vote for the general line of the four documents as a whole. It flows from this obviously that the problem of women's caucuses, whose relevance to the central questions involved in the functioning of a Leninist party we have shown, cannot be avoided. This is all the more true since in the section of the draft resolution in question we propose as an alternative to women's caucuses a series of measures that must be taken by the revolutionary party to assure full application of the political orientation proposed by the theses of "The Socialist Revolution and the Struggle for Women's Liberation."

Footnote

1. "The Crisis in Capitalist Europe and the Present Tasks of the Fourth International," Draft Resolution for Fifth World Congress Since Reunification (11th World Congress), submitted by majority of United Secretariat, pp. 44-45. International Internal Discussion Bulletin, Vol. XVI, No. 1, March 1979.

Building the Leadership of a Proletarian Party By Mary-Alice Waters

[Excerpts from a report adopted by the SWP National Committee May 2, 1979.]

* * *

The election of the National Committee at the upcoming convention of the party will be one of the most important items of business before the delegates. The Political Committee thought it would be useful to have a separate report and discussion on the question of leadership development so we can prepare the party to move forward on this level as well.

A second, much briefer, part of this report is on the election of the Political Committee to serve between now and the convention. I will take that up at the end.

The starting point for our discussion of the development and selection of the party's leadership is the report, "Leading the Party Into Industry," adopted at the February 1978 plenum. The last part of that report deals with the leadership question. [See Appendix to this report]

I won't repeat what was outlined in that report on the leadership question. Comrades should reread it. It provides the framework to advance our understanding of the job we face in constructing the leadership of the party.

Our starting point is the character of the coming American revolution and the strategic goals of our class that flow from it. The kind of leadership we must develop is determined by the kind of party it will take to lead that revolution. It will be a proletarian revolution to establish a workers government. Thus the party that leads that revolution must be a proletarian party. It cannot be a "combined party." It cannot be a coalition of sectors. There are not multiple vanguards. Our party must be the vanguard of the working class in program, composition, and collective experience. It must include in its ranks the most conscious vanguard fighters of the proletariat. Its composition must reflect the vanguard role of Black workers and the growing number of women workers, especially those who are fighting their way into sections of industry previously closed to women.

Once we have defined the character of the coming American revolution, and clarified the class character and composition of the party needed to lead that revolution, we must ask ourselves: What stage are we at right now in the construction of that party? What are the challenges and the tasks we face today? How do we go about transforming a cadre party of some 1,500 members—very few of whom are from working-class backgrounds, most of whom were recruited as students around the various social protest actions of the 1960s and early 1970s—into a party of industrial workers? Where are we in relation to our goal of transforming the membership and the leadership? Transforming the milieu in which we live and work? Transforming the axis of our work and making it revolve around our industrial fractions? Beginning to recruit young workers who will develop as leaders of our party?

What Is Leadership?

What is leadership in a Bolshevik party?

Our answer must start not with party leadership but with the party itself. In other words, we start with the leadership of the working class.

What is a *member* of a Bolshevik party? It's hard to come up with a better initial definition than the one Marx and Engels set forth in the *Communist Manifesto*. Communists "have no interests separate and apart from those of the working class as a whole."

That's what members of our party are. Individuals who subordinate everything to centralized collaboration with others who share and are totally committed to our revolutionary goals and perspectives. Individuals who strive in a disciplined way to help the party lead the working class to realize its historic tasks, which are the interests of all humanity.

In the party we're building, each and every member is a leader, a leader of the working class, part of the conscious vanguard of our class. We strive to maximize the political capacities and develop the leadership abilities of every single member. That's what we mean by a cadre party: a party in which all members are trained as leaders and are prepared to train others as leaders of their class. In other words, for us leadership is not an individual question, it is the question of the party itself.

This is a fundamental point. It's worth stopping to think about. It is the opposite of everything we are taught by class society. The party is made up of individuals, of course. But our strength is in our collectivity, not our individuality. Our strength is in our ability to function together as a team, as a machine. John G. Wright called it a thinking machine. It's a thinking machine, it's an acting machine, but it's a machine.

In this sense, too, we are like our class, because the strength of our class also lies in its collective power. Every worker knows that individually he or she has very little power. But together we can change the world. Solidarity, cooperation, and collaboration are the essence of strength.

This is the opposite of the consciousness created by bourgeois and petty-bourgeois conditions of life. For the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie, success *does* depend on individual action. You come out on top only by pitting yourself against and defeating everybody else. Competition, not collective effort, is the precondition for survival. And for the bourgeoisie, the rewards all come from the exploitation of another class.

In the proletarian party, our concern about developing individuals as leaders is not to promote egocentric "self-fulfillment," but to increase our collective strength and advance the party and our class. That is what gives each of us as individuals a great deal of satisfaction.

This is why a Bolshevik party ultimately cannot be forged outside the conditions of life and the day-to-day living struggles of our class. This is why it must be proletarian in composition as well as in program.

Thus we arrive at the first criterion of leadership in a Bolshevik party: the ability to see ourselves in relationship to the party, not the party in relationship to ourselves. We derive our personal satisfaction from helping make the machine run, not from seeing our names up in neon lights.

Our pride is in what the party does well, maximizing the results of that collective effort. Our reward is in advancing the party, not advancing ourselves as individuals competing for greater recognition from others.

We discussed this at our plenum a year ago in reference to the development of strong industrial fractions. Our aim, we said, is not to somehow try to ensure that every party member will become an outstanding individual leader of big working-class battles. That's an impossible goal, and an unnecessary one. Those natural leaders of the class are important, of course, and the SWP is training some of them today and will recruit more.

But that's not what's decisive for the party or for the class. That's not why we're so determined to get the overwhelming majority of party members and leaders into industry.

What is decisive, we've explained, is never what an individual comrade can accomplish on the job, whatever his or her strengths and weaknesses, but what the fraction accomplishes. More than that, it is what the national fraction accomplishes. And every single comrade in those fractions makes a contribution to that joint effort.

The effectiveness of the party depends on what we can do as a team through the branches, locals, fractions, committees, and leadership bodies. That is the kind of party our class needs to take it forward.

The National Committee

The fact that the party is a machine made up of cadres who function as a collective unit is one of the reasons why we stress that leadership of the party is much broader than the members of the National Committee.

The National Committee is the leading *committee* of the party. It is selected by the membership on the basis of both the general political capacities and the proven abilities of the individual members to lead the struggles through which the party is being built at any given stage. But it is put together as a committee, as a team. The core of the committee are the most tested and experienced leaders of the party over an extended period of time, but the team is and must constantly be renewed and changed. It is a living organism that grows and develops as the party and our class change and go through new experiences.

The National Committee is a team that incorporates comrades who are politically experienced in and lead diverse aspects of party activity—comrades carrying administrative responsibility, writers, speakers, organizers, mass workers, and so on. It includes different generations, different layers and experiences of the working class. In putting together the committee, we try to look ahead to where we're going, as well as to take account of where we've come from.

Above all, the National Committee is not a list of individuals. It is a *committee* in which the membership has political confidence as the leadership of the party.

In the course of the discussion here at this plenum, a number of comrades have referred to the new Education for Socialists bulletin entitled "Background to 'The Struggle for a Proletarian Party,'" This valuable bulletin contains, along with other items, a selection of letters Trotsky wrote to American comrades in 1937. Most of the letters dealt with the leadership question. We were starting to make a turn to the industrial working class then, and Trotsky was hammering away at us to speed it up. I'm

sure those of you who have had a chance to read the bulletin have been struck by how timely and relevant it is.

In his letters, as later in *In Defense of Marxism*, Trotsky refers over and over again to the tendency toward "individualism" on the part of the petty-bourgeois members of the American party and of the old Russian Bolshevik Party. He points out that these are often very good comrades, but their attitudes are conditioned by their class experiences. He notes their tendency to criticize for the sake of criticism, to oppose for the sake of opposition, to doubt for the sake of covering their own deep skepticism concerning the revolutionary capacities of the working class. He contrasts these attitudes toward the party, and toward themselves, to the attitudes of working-class members.

Trotsky explained that seeing yourself in relation to the party—not the other way around—is a proletarian attitude.

To Develop New Leaders

Trotsky points to a second aspect of leadership in those letters as well.

Leaders are those who help others become leaders.

The party leadership has the responsibility to carefully prepare and thoroughly explain every decision, every policy, every shift, so that the membership is comfortable not only with what we are doing, but why. We try to work with and develop the self-confidence of every member as a thinking, experienced cadre who understands not just the tactics of the moment, but the fundamental strategic concepts that determine our always-changing tactics.

This concern to develop the capacities of every single member of the party and the leadership's political responsibilities toward the membership is summed up quite well when Trotsky said full-timers "of a revolutionary party should have in the first place a good ear, and only in the second place a good tongue."

Our need to help every single comrade develop her or his understanding and abilities is one of the reasons that we organize our work through committees and fractions. Of course, a committee or fraction functions better than an individual, since we all have our weaknesses. Working collectively, we try to balance each other and compensate for our weaknesses. That's obvious.

But working through fractions and committees is also how to develop comrades. We never put comrades all alone in an assignment and then say, "Well, that was over their head. They just couldn't handle it." Every assignment is a collective responsibility. Ultimately, the decisive test of how well we lead is how well we prepare our replacement, how well we pass on what we know and train somebody else to take over from us.

Affirmative Action

Third, Trotsky explains that both proletarianizing the party and what we would today call affirmative action are indispensable to developing a proletarian leadership. He argues that conscious measures must be taken to increase the proletarian composition of the leading bodies of the party and to advance the self-confidence of young worker cadres as leaders. The key points he makes are along the lines that we've been discussing over the last few years in relationship to the development of leaders of the party who

are Black and Latino and female.

Trotsky explains that if you just let nature take its course, given the composition and arenas of activity of many members, workers who aren't glib, with "general formulas and fluent pens,"—just rich in their "acquaintance with the life of workers and practical capacities"—are likely to be overlooked as part of the leadership. He proposed that a whole layer of such working-class cadres with proven abilities and capacities should be consciously placed on the National Committee and other leading bodies to strengthen the leadership politically and, at the same time, allow these comrades to develop. He points out that participation in the leading committees of the party is important in and of itself at a certain stage of a leader's education. Trotsky urged the party to cut through all the "secondary, factional, and personal conditions [that] play too great a role in the composition of the list of candidates" for the leading bodies of the party, and consciously renew the leadership through these kinds of affirmative-action measures.

Leadership and Party Democracy

Fourth, Trotsky explains that these concepts of leadership are inextricably interconnected with the question of party democracy.

He asks, What is party democracy? And he lists three elements.

1. "The strictest observance of the party statutes by the leading bodies"—regular conventions, full discussion periods, right of minorities to express their opinions, right to form tendencies, and so forth. All the things that are codified in our constitution and organizational principles. But, Trotsky writes, that is only the very beginning.

2. "A patient, friendly, to a certain point pedagogical attitude on the part of the central committee and its members toward the rank and file, including the objectors and the discontented, because it is not a great merit to be satisfied 'with anybody who is satisfied with me.'"

He goes on: "Methods of psychological 'terrorism,' including a haughty or sarcastic manner of answering or treating every objection, criticism, or doubt—it is, namely, this journalistic or 'intellectualistic' manner which is insufferable to workers and condemns them to silence." Eradicating this kind of conduct by "leaders" is also at the heart of party democracy.

But, Trotsky insists, these two elements still aren't enough. It is not sufficient merely to abide by formal rules of party democracy and outlaw terroristic methods or ridicule of comrades who raise questions and new ideas.

3. The leadership must also maintain "permanent, active, and informal contact with the rank and file, especially when a new slogan or a new campaign is in preparation or when it is necessary to verify the results of an accomplished campaign." The leading bodies, Trotsky says, must be "closely connected with the rank and file, organically representative of them."

Trotsky insisted that only that kind of party, with those kinds of conscious leadership attitudes, could make the turn to industrial workers that was necessary in 1937. And this holds for us in 1979.

Finally, we should add what we have stressed before. Leaders are those who willingly shoulder broad general political responsibility—beyond whatever specific assignments they have, regardless of what "posts," if any, they

have. To put it most simply, leadership is not what assignment you take but how you carry out whatever's necessary. Leaders are those who lead.

These are some of the basic concepts about the party and about party leadership that the SWP had learned from Trotsky and from our own experiences by the end of the 1930s. The basic cadre of our party absorbed these attitudes and was able to pass them on without a break in continuity. That has been decisive in enabling us to go as far as we have in assembling—in a qualitatively different way than most of the other parties of the Fourth International—a homogeneous leadership team, composed of comrades of different generations, men and women, and comrades of oppressed nationalities. The success we have had in this is based on these most fundamental proletarian attitudes toward the party and leadership. It has allowed us, among other things, to carry through an unprecedented transition in leadership.

Some Proletarian Attitudes

Many of these lessons—and a few others, too—were touched on by Farrell Dobbs in his tribute to Joe Hansen. We published Farrell's remarks to the San Francisco memorial meeting a few weeks ago in *Intercontinental Press*. [April 16, 1979]

Farrell pointed to Joe's understanding that leadership is not what you do but how you do it. He capsulized this in the story of how Joe took the assignment of *Militant* business manager after the Cochranites bellyached about having a leader of their faction asked to take such a politically unimportant "technical" assignment. Joe carried out that assignment in a serious and professional way. He loved it. And he loved demonstrating to the whole party that every single assignment is important.

Farrell was paying Joe one of his highest tributes when he called him a "disciplined soldier." Someone who knew that everything we do—whether organizing a branch, serving as the SWP observer on the United Secretariat, promoting the circulation of our press, getting a job in steel—is all just working as part of the team. We are all thinking, acting, disciplined pieces in a much bigger thinking and acting machine. As Joe used to say, "It's all labor power." Everything we do is part of building the party. That's what counts.

Secondly, Farrell emphasized Joe's self-control and self-discipline. Especially under pressure, sometimes enormous pressure, whether in Mexico in Trotsky's household, or working to hold the party together throughout the period of McCarthyism in this country. Joe never "lost his cool," Farrell said.

Third, Joe was supremely conscious that leaders have a general responsibility for maintaining the equilibrium of the party. They take the party seriously. If you have an idea or a proposal or something that you think is wrong, you don't just pop off with it, no matter what the time of day. As Farrell put it, you don't "start making a racket like a mule in a tin barn" when you have a difference.

You raise your ideas, criticism, proposals, in a balanced way, at the correct time and place, and with a sense of proportion about the needs of the entire party. The more leadership responsibility you carry, the more your actions and opinions can have an impact on the stability and the equilibrium of the party and its ability to function.

In one of the letters I mentioned earlier, Trotsky recalled

Lenin's view on this matter. When Lenin called for Ordzhonikidze to be expelled from the party in 1923, Trotsky wrote, "he said very correctly that the discontented party member has the right to be turbulent, but not a member of the central committee." Farrell noted that Joe always acted like a leader in this respect and understood that leaders have less right, not greater leeway, to indulge their "individualism," their personal whims and foibles.

Fourth, Farrell stressed that Joe wasn't one of those people who try to show how brilliant they are by trying to make others seem stupid. Joe didn't try to prove he was an "independent thinker" by refusing to learn from Trotsky. The result was that he was able to learn. He learned how to think through whatever problem was before him, to approach questions systematically, to see all the different angles, and to solve those problems.

The leadership qualities Farrell pointed to in Joe are not inherent qualities in anyone. They are things that everyone can learn. They are acquired proletarian attributes of leadership that we all can develop.

Leaders Who Are Black, Latino, and Female

I want to turn now to a specific aspect of the leadership question that we have been discussing since the last convention: the challenge we face in developing Black and Latino and women comrades as rounded leaders of the party.

We should add that in the 1980's, we will face a similar challenge in developing young workers we recruit out of the plants. Many of them will be Black, Latino, and women as well.

The special challenges we face in developing this kind of leadership are real. But 99% of the answers are to be found in the general approach we have to all leadership questions.

We should begin by separating the questions of developing leaders from the oppressed nationalities and developing leaders who are women. Some aspects are similar, but there are differences as well.

Let's start with the challenge facing us in the development of Blacks, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, and other comrades of oppressed national minorities. Beginning with the report and discussion at the February 1978 plenum, we have come to a much clearer understanding of why a party that is genuinely multinational in its ranks and its leadership cannot be built unless it is proletarian in composition and milieu. A proletarian program alone is not sufficient.

We can, of course, assemble a vanguard around our program, as we have done in the last decade and a half. The scope of this recruitment and development of Black and Latino comrades is an accomplishment new in the history of American Trotskyism. As we turn to the new political openings in the industrial working class, this accomplishment will enable us to better recruit and integrate young Black and Latino workers.

But the next step forward in the construction of a multinational leadership can only be taken by a party whose members are part of the industrial working class. Why do we say this?

So long as the party was composed primarily of students and white-collar, semiprofessional workers, and the radicalization took the form of social protest actions in which

the mass organizations of the working class played little role, it was more difficult to overcome the deep suspicions of Blacks and Latinos attracted to us. It was more difficult to recruit comrades of oppressed nationalities than to recruit whites. This was true because in addition to all the other obstacles—which still make the recruitment of every individual exceptional—the class milieu in which we functioned, the petty-bourgeois conditions of life, maximized conflicts of interests.

There is no way around the fact that for white students—especially those from petty-bourgeois backgrounds, but from working-class families as well—there are invariably choices and options not open to Blacks and Latinos. This is true for comrades as well.

Most white comrades have had the experience of working to recruit a Black or Latino contact and being asked—sometimes openly, sometimes implicitly—"You say you stand on this program, but how do I know you mean it? Will you really be around when the going gets tough? What's in it for you?"

The issues around which the radicalization was deepening, and the conditions of struggle, didn't always provide a lot of opportunities to prove that we weren't just idealistic supporters of good causes. So we recruited only those Blacks and Latinos who were able to overcome tremendous objective barriers. They had to be exceptionally clear-sighted and tough.

Those kinds of obstacles are diminished, though, as the party becomes proletarian not only in program but in composition and milieu. The relations between Black and white workers on the picket line in Newport News are different from the relations between Black and white radicals on the campus. The relationship between Black and white comrades on the line in an auto plant are different than in an antiwar coalition.

Solidarity is the precondition of survival in the working class. Your common class interests are obviously great, despite the national oppression that one worker suffers and another doesn't. You have the same material interests as members of the same class. And that is what comes to the fore, especially in periods of struggle.

Moreover, as the class polarization deepens, it becomes clearer that the road forward for both the Black liberation struggle and the labor movement are inseparably intertwined. Both the forces necessary to win Black rights, and the Black leadership whose class understanding and political courage will make possible the next stage of struggle, will be found in the mills, the factories, the ship yards, etc. You don't have to choose between fighting for the needs of Black people or transforming the labor movement. The forging of a class-struggle left wing in the unions and the revitalization of an uncompromising movement for Black rights are intertwined.

Attitudes begin to change in struggle. Mutual confidence is forged among the best fighters, among those who lead. You're not supporting a good program. You're fighting for your own common needs. The answer to "What's in this for you or me?" is obvious. It becomes not a choice, but a necessity.

It's only under these conditions that a broad multinational composition and leadership—not just a thin layer, but a broad-based cadre—can be built. The leaders and members of the SWP must have unshakeable confidence in each other. We have to be prepared to put our lives in each others' hands. And that kind of party can only be forged in

real proletarian class combat. It becomes obvious why the party must be politically homogeneous and steered through common leadership experience in the class struggle.

We should also keep in mind an important objective change that makes our perspective of building this kind of party realistic. The kind of *multinational* party and leadership that must be built today could not have been built several decades ago because the composition of the proletariat itself was not the same. During World War II, and in the postwar years, massive urbanization and proletarianization of the oppressed nationalities took place.

In the 1930s the Black population and the Chicano population were much more rural and engaged in agriculture. They were more an ally of the working class than a layer of the working class. This has changed dramatically over the past forty years.

Of course, you had to have a multinational party in the 1930s, too. You had to have the correct line on Black self-determination. You had to have a correct understanding of the vanguard role that the Black proletariat would play. And we did.

But the degree and the extent to which the forging of a broad multinational cadre is both possible and a life-or-death question to the American revolution is different today than it was fifty years ago. And it becomes more crucial each passing year, as the proletarianization of the oppressed nationalities continues.

That is why it is both more necessary and more possible today to construct a proletarian party that is multinational in composition and leadership. It's important to keep this in mind as we look back and evaluate the history of our own party.

But the fact that it is more possible to build a multinational party today, as well as more vital to the future of humanity, does not mean it will happen automatically.

It doesn't eliminate the extra barriers created by this society—barriers that must be overcome in the development of leaders of the party who are Black, or who are Chicano, or Puerto Rican, or any oppressed national minority. It doesn't mean that we no longer have to take special measures to encourage the development of Black and Latino comrades as party leaders.

That's why we have and will continue to have a policy of affirmative action, that is, of consciously encouraging and giving special attention to the leadership development of comrades of the oppressed nationalities.

But these special steps now take place within the framework of our turn into industry, of our progress towards building a more proletarian party. As Blacks and Latinos gain confidence as leaders of the working class, they will also become more self-confident as leaders of the vanguard party of our class.

Blacks and Latinos will be in the forefront of those workers who push toward a class-struggle left wing in the unions. They will fight to unify the class around a program that champions the demands of all the oppressed and exploited. They will provide the proletarian leadership necessary to revitalize massive social protests for Black and Latino rights.

Through these experiences, and as part of a revolutionary combat party, they will participate in leading the mass proletarian actions that will culminate in the conquest of power and the establishment of a workers government.

This is the perspective that the SWP can and does offer the Black and Latino workers we are talking to and working with as we get into industry. This is the road to the development of a multinational proletarian party.

Party Leaders Who Are Women

What about developing leaders of the party who are women?

Most of what we've said so far applies to women. But we also have to say more.

We face the challenge of building a party and leadership unlike anything that has ever existed before. That's a historical fact. And the explanation is simple. The sex composition of the American working class today is unlike anything that has existed before. The changes on this level are similar to what we were just saying about the race question.

A party with the sex composition of the Bolshevik Party of 1917 could not lead the American revolution today. There was not a single woman in the central political leadership of the Bolshevik Party. Krupskaya may have been one of the strongest women, but she was never a member of the central committee. Kollantai played an important role, but she was not a rounded political leader, never carried any general central leadership responsibility.

I think that if you look back cold-bloodedly on the history of the Marxist movement, you would have to say that there is really only one woman who stands out as that kind of central political leader—Rosa Luxemburg. Perhaps it would be correct to include Eleanor Marx, too.

But if Luxemburg was unique in the history of the Marxist movement, that is not something we need to be defensive or apologetic about. It is no fault of Marxism or Leninism or the leaderships of genuine Marxist and Leninist parties.

Rather, it is a result of two historical factors: first, the stage of development of capitalism itself and the sex composition of the workforce; and second, the depth of women's oppression, institutionalized through the family, and the profound affect this has on the character structure of every female raised in class society.

If we who live in the economically strongest capitalist countries, in the last part of the twentieth century, can be relatively optimistic about our ability to build a party and leadership that is different in leadership composition from anything that has existed so far, it is because of the changes produced by the development of capitalism itself.

The post-World War II economic expansion, with its great acceleration in the 1960s, brought about a qualitative increase in the percentage of women in the labor market: in the United States it is now more than 60% of women between the ages of 18 and 55. It brought about a qualitative increase in the percentage of the labor force who are women: it is now more than 40%. These changes, more than any other *single* factor, underlie the "second wave" of feminist struggle.

Moreover—and most important for us—women have begun over the past decade to bust down the barriers to entering the sectors of industry from which they were previously excluded. This is new. It has happened since the late 1960s. And when the next bad recession hits, the working class will have a real battle to prevent these women from being driven out of industry.

These changes are decisive for the development of women who are leaders of the working class, and the creation of a proletarian party of the kind our tasks require. And our turn gives us a new framework to advance the political self-confidence of women comrades. Many comrades who have gotten industrial jobs in the last months have already experienced this.

When you go from working as a personal secretary and servant for some man in an office, to an auto assembly line, the change affects your own consciousness. It affects your attitudes towards yourself and what you're capable of doing.

Getting out of the isolation and dependency of the home and into the work force is a gigantic step for women that changes consciousness. But taking the next step into sectors of industry previously closed to women is now even more crucial to the development of the kind of leadership we need.

As women bust down the barriers to industry, you also see changes—often rapid changes—in the attitudes of men on the assembly lines or in the steel plants. They see the women they are working with in a different light. Sexist prejudices begin to break down.

A party with a significant component of women in its central leadership cannot be built except as a working class party—in composition as well as program. We can say this definitively. It is not a question of individuals. We're not saying that only women who are workers can overcome the barriers and develop as leaders. But a revolutionary *party* with a broad cadre of leaders who are women can only be forged in the real battles of our class, and this will be totally intertwined with the changing composition of the industrial labor force.

Women have a deep fear of leadership. We are conditioned from the day we're born to fear the consequences of attempting to lead—to lead men, especially. We are taught that such a course will inevitably mean loneliness and personal rejection by men. That no man can tolerate a challenge to his "masculinity" by an independent, self-confident woman who acts as a leader. And few men can.

This is the biggest obstacle to the development of women leaders. It is rooted in the character structure, the psychology, of the oppressed sex. It is something that every woman faces and has to deal with.

This is why the development of women as leaders is even more of a challenge than developing Black and Latino leaders of the party. Of course, for Latinas and Black women, these factors are compounded. The challenge for them is even greater.

The changes in women's consciousness and self-confidence will go hand in hand with changing attitudes among men. Men will lose their fear of being challenged by women as women gain the economic independence and psychological self-confidence to become leaders of men. And that's one of the reasons why the changes in our class, the affirmative-action battles we are winning, are so important. It is a question of the future of humanity—male and female.

The SWP Leadership Today

How is all this reflected in the leadership of the party today? The progress we have made as well as the obstacles we have yet to overcome, are indicated by the composition of the National Committee elected at the last convention.

The membership of the SWP is roughly 42% female, but 33% of the National Committee is women. On the other hand, 6 or 7% of party members are Black but 26% of our National Committee is Black. The Latino members make up about 5% of the party, and about 7% of the National Committee.

As of this plenum, about 39% of the membership, and 30% of the National Committee are industrial workers.

My own opinion is that the composition of our National Committee is not out of harmony with the real leadership of the party. Give or take a few percentage points—and that is not important—those figures fairly accurately register what we have accomplished. In that sense, the National Committee elected at the last convention is good. Because, as we pointed out at the time, our elected leadership and our real leadership had better coincide, or else our leading committees would lose their authority. We would be as phony as a three-dollar bill if our real leadership and our elected leadership got out of mesh.

But I want to talk about something else. What is behind those statistics? What do they tell us about the party? We should take a look at this in relation to the need for the party to take special steps to aid and to challenge women comrades to develop leadership capacities.

This is one of the questions that came up during the discussion on the election of the NC at our August 1977 convention.

But it was posed in the wrong framework. Election to the NC was seen as a solution to leadership questions, rather than as a register of where we are. We all sensed there was something wrong with that discussion. We were uncomfortable with it. But why did it happen?

In part, we in the leadership fostered it. At the convention we called attention to the fact that there was a significant discrepancy between the percentage of the party that is female and the percentage of women on the National Committee. And we indicated that we thought that the new NC would register the continuing progress we had made in the development of leaders who are women. But we didn't say anything more. We didn't discuss, "Why is there a discrepancy of this kind? Where does it come from? Does it mean women aren't getting adequate consideration in nominations for the NC? What step do we need to take?"

As a result, there was a tendency to give the easy answers, to look for the easy solutions. That's natural. But when the problems are hard, easy answers don't get you very far. And they often point in the wrong direction.

One easy answer is to approach the leadership as a sum total of categories and percentages, rather than thinking about the real leadership of the party. That is, to start with trying to make the statistics look the way we'd like them to, not with the election of a committee to politically lead the party. Many comrades hoped the nominating commission would rectify the *percentages*. When there was still a discrepancy (though a smaller one), comrades were disappointed. They felt that a mistake had been made. That was how we got into the situation where, by a closely divided vote, the delegates decided on the spot to enlarge the NC by five. Of course, that's in order and not necessarily a mistake. There are always many comrades qualified to serve on the NC beyond those put forward by the nominating commission to open the nominations.

But the discussion took place within a false framework that assumed the election of the NC is itself a way of

developing leadership. It isn't. It can't be. All it can do is register, as accurately and objectively as the human beings who are the convention delegates are capable of doing, the progress we have made *before* we get to the convention. Of course, the convention can push things a little bit in the right direction—but only a little bit. If it tries to push too far, it can come up with a list of nominations that does not accurately reflect the real leadership of the party.

The task of developing leadership is not the job of the nominating commission, or the delegates to the convention. It is a job that begins on the branch level, in every single party committee and fraction.

Misconceptions about what can be accomplished in the election of the NC are closely related to another easy answer. Does the fact that women are a smaller percentage of the National Committee than of the membership indicate that women are not being given due consideration for the NC? Put more broadly, does the *party* place obstacles or barriers in the way of the development of women as leaders? Does the *party* restrict women comrades to certain kinds of assignments, certain roles? If that were true, then the solution would be simple. Just remove the barriers in the party.

But this is false. The record of the nominating commissions at the last conventions unambiguously indicates that women are given *preferential* consideration for election to the NC. And I think that is generally true at all levels, and for most assignments in the party. I would say, moreover, that in relationship to other organizations of our class, our leadership is excellent on this score. And everyone knows it is *real*.

If, even with preferential consideration given to leaders who are women, the percentage of women on the NC is lower than the percentage of women in the party, this tells us we have a bigger challenge to overcome, a bigger problem to face up to in developing women as rounded political leaders. There is no reason for us to be defensive about this. We are dealing with the way *society* perpetuates the oppression of women. What women are taught and conditioned to believe about themselves from the day they are born. Women don't overcome that just by joining the SWP, or understanding our program.

There are many women who are leaders in our party. We all know that. Moreover, there has been a marked expansion of the leadership responsibilities of women in recent years. The women's liberation movement had a deep impact on all of us, female and male. For example, the number of women who are organizers and candidates, write for our press, and carry out other important assignments is qualitatively greater today than twenty years ago.

But we also know something else. There is a tendency for women to develop as leaders of a certain kind, as organizers who do a good job of organizing the campaigns of the party, working with comrades, pulling things together. But often women tend to reach a plateau at some stage that they can't go beyond because they're not politically equipped. It is not enough to understand tactics, or to be able to explain our position on this or that, or to be good at working with people.

All party leaders—men and women—have to become thorough Marxists. Have to be politically grounded with an understanding of our broad strategic perspectives and learn how to apply them to the diverse situations and

challenges we face today. Have to develop that kind of political self-confidence and learn to think politically in clear class terms.

If there is a tendency for women comrades to develop as leaders of a certain type, it is not because the party fosters it. The problem lies much deeper. All the social pressure and the psychological conditioning of women push us in that direction. The institutions of class society work to produce in us a deeply ingrained lack of self-confidence. After all, society doesn't take us seriously; why should we consider ourselves important?

So we often shy away from the broadest, general leadership responsibilities. Consciously or not we often hide in a narrower, more comfortable niche, where we feel less pressure. We become very good, become real leaders, in some aspect of party functioning. And we derive satisfaction from knowing we are doing something well, that it's important, that we are leading.

But, at the same time, we can't fool ourselves. We know what we're doing.

Feminist Laments

We all know the signs of this that bother us. We feel uncomfortable when few delegates who are women take the floor at conventions whenever the discussion is on broad general, political questions. We often go to each other and say, "Hey, why don't you speak on this?"

We're dissatisfied with the number of women who write for our press. But it's the same challenge as the convention debates. Women comrades more often than men lack the general political self-confidence that comes from the combination of experience and systematically making time to read, to absorb in the light of new events things we may or may not have read before by Marx, and Engels, and Lenin and Trotsky. In order to write clearly, you have to understand clearly, to be able to explain what you understand to others.

And we're unhappy that despite preferential consideration, there are not significantly more women on the National Committee.

But sometimes we hide the central problem, our own tendency to pull back from shouldering general political leadership responsibility, by what I call feminist laments. Why isn't a woman doing this or that? Why aren't we being recognized?

In the Fourth International you sometimes hear it in extreme forms. Some comrades express the idea that Leninism itself is a "male" concept of leadership that inherently oppresses women; that women are by nature leaders of a different kind than men.

We can't allow our feminist consciousness to become an excuse to hide behind, rather than an aid to us in thinking out how to meet the challenge we face. In order to survive in capitalist society, women have learned to act in certain ways. That is, you know you never get a fair shake; that whatever abilities you may have will never be the reason you do or don't "get ahead"; that you have to shoot every angle, fake it, sell yourself; and that if you do it right, you can go a long way. If we act like that toward the party, it can only lead to a self-defeating disaster and a self-perpetuating "women problem."

Each and every one of us was born and raised in capitalist society, and we have all the problems and hang-ups that come with that. But the party is different from

capitalist society in general. Our conscious goal, as we discussed earlier, is to work together collectively to maximize the political development of every comrade. The real pressure on women in the SWP is not that we are held back but that we are constantly pressed to take on greater and greater responsibility.

At the same time, no one in the party can fake it politically, not in the long run. Either we become self-confident and rounded Marxists, or we reach a limit before too long. The party is too serious, and women and men in the SWP are too serious, to tolerate anything that is phony.

A Personal Challenge

The most important question is: "What are we going to do to move forward on this front?"

The first thing is to frankly discuss the real challenge before us and not try to hide behind false explanations and fake solutions. It should give us a great deal of confidence that we *can* squarely confront this and apply the same materialist analysis and class perspective that we apply to every other question before our party and our class. There are no phony solutions. There are no organizational cure-alls.

We are not going to change the character structure of the oppressed sex—or of men either—between now and the revolution. But that is no excuse for not moving decisively to affect the conditions we can. Just the opposite. Being clear about the nature of the obstacles we face is the first step.

Second, there is a personal challenge before every single woman in the party. Whatever the party does collectively to help educate and maximize the political development of every individual, at a certain point there is one and only one thing that makes a difference: our own individual determination to educate ourselves. We all have to begin by recognizing that we have to combine our day-to-day activities and experiences in the class struggle with reading, studying, learning to think every political question through for ourselves. No one else can do it for us.

Education in our movement doesn't come from ivory tower study. We don't decide: Okay, I'm going to learn how to think like a Marxist, so I'll go off somewhere by myself and read the classics for a year or two. We can educate ourselves only in the course of the living experiences we go through in the class struggle, and how we respond to them.

When the revolution in Iran comes along, or the events in Southeast Asia, or the Newport News strike, we get excited. We try to think through, "What does this mean about the class struggle nationally, internationally? What does this change? What are the class forces at work? How should revolutionists respond?" The answers are not always obvious. So we go to our bookshelf and pick up a few books, to read or reread, to think about what is happening. If we don't do that, if we aren't politically inspired by what is happening and what we're doing, if we don't *want* to read and study—then no one else can do it for us. No one else can pick up that book. No one else can force us to *make* time. No one else can read it for us, think about it for us, study it for us.

Is this a *personal* challenge? Yes.

Is it harder for women to do this? Yes, it's harder. That is a historical fact, a fact of life in class society.

Are many problems that we used to think were personal shortcomings, really not our own fault? Yes.

But then, we have to add, *so what?*

Because it is harder for us, do we think it is less necessary? Do we think the standards of leadership for us should be lower than for men? Do we think there can be some definition of leadership for women that is different than for men? Of course not. We know that nothing would be more patronizing, degrading, or insulting to women in the party.

At a certain point, each one of us has to face up to the challenge, and decide to work to overcome it. It is that simple. We can all be very supportive and understanding of each other's problems and difficulties. We can recognize they are largely created by the society in which we live. But that is not going to help lead the American revolution—unless we also challenge each other to overcome the obstacles, to face up to the real needs of our sex and our class, and to see our responsibilities in that light.

A Collective Challenge

Of course this doesn't mean women must meet this challenge only as individuals. The party as a whole has responsibilities, too. We think that one of the most important things we can and must do in the near future is establish the full-time cadre school, the leadership school that we have talked about before—Sandstone University, or whatever we decide to call it. We need to systematically take leaders of the party, in small groups, relieve them of other responsibilities, and give them several months for organized, intensive study.

Second, the party as a whole has the responsibility to continue a policy of affirmative action to encourage women and comrades of the oppressed nationalities to overcome the additional obstacles they face. As with every member, our aim is to stretch comrades' capacities to the fullest, to encourage them to take assignments that challenge them to grow, and then to work collectively to maximize what we accomplish and learn in the process.

Third, we need to continue to do everything we can to maximize the number of women comrades who are in industry. Women in the party must help lead the turn into industry, where we can gain experience as leaders of our class. After getting off to a slow start, we've done well on this in recent months. Last summer, for example, there was only one woman on the National Committee in industry. There are now nine, and one more looking for a job. And I should add that four of these nine comrades are Black women.

We should be absolutely clear that this general approach is the exact opposite of the course toward the establishment of women's caucuses in the party, and toward the "development" of leaders by setting aside quotas on the leading bodies for women, etc. The challenge before us—especially for the women—is not to organize and lead the women in the party, but to lead the whole party, the branches, the fractions, the committees, the men *and* the women. Any other kind of leadership is counterfeit. Exclusive caucuses, based on sex, race, or any similar non-political criteria, are both undemocratic and counterproductive. Far from encouraging women to become leaders of the party, they reinforce the idea that there is a separate kind of leadership role for women comrades.

APPENDIX:

[The following are excerpts from "Leading the Party Into Industry," by Jack Barnes. Report adopted by the SWP National Committee, February 24, 1978.]

* * *

What is the leadership of this kind of party like? We have a new, large (the largest in the history of the party) relatively young National Committee. But it has one of the biggest responsibilities and maybe the biggest opportunity of any national leadership of the history of the party. So we wanted to take a little time on this part of the report to discuss this question of questions—the question of leadership.

We have to begin by looking at what our leadership concepts are derived from. Forms, structure, and norms of leadership are derived basically from three things:

- One, the character of the revolution we are out to lead. Different kinds of leadership are necessary to lead different kinds of revolutions.

- Two, the character of the party we need once we decide the character of the revolution we are determined to lead.

- Three, the concrete stage we are at in building that party.

Our leadership needs and norms will be different at different stages in the development of the party. Let's step back and look at each of these.

The character of the revolution is no mystery to us. Its rich concreteness is; but not its essential character. We have come to agreement on this and have codified it in our resolutions. We believe that the coming American socialist revolution will have a combined character. It will be a revolution to free the working class from exploitation, to free the toiling masses from oppression. The revolution will also be a struggle for the right of self-determination of the oppressed nationalities. The Black struggle, and the struggle of the other oppressed nationalities, have great weight and importance. As Trotsky reminded us, the class-conscious workers of these nationalities will play a role as the vanguard of the proletariat.

The coming American revolution will be a combined revolution in another sense, too. The drive to achieve equality for women, to solve the problems the women's liberation movement is posing, will be one of the central motor forces of the revolution. The revolutionary mobilization of women will be decisive in defeating capitalism. The revolution will have to combine the solutions to this question with all its other tasks.

What does the revolutionary party fight for to bring this combined socialist revolution to fruition? The establishment of a workers government. A workers government must replace the current capitalist government. That workers government must get rid of the capitalist state and establish a workers state. *Not* a combined state, but a workers state. That's the only way that these combined tasks can be accomplished successfully. The bourgeoisie cannot do it. Only the proletariat can do it. Thus the combined revolution must be a workers revolution, if it is to establish a workers government. It is important not to

confuse these two things—the *combined tasks* of the socialist revolution, and the *proletarian character* of the revolution that makes it possible to accomplish these tasks.

Character of the Party

What can we conclude from this about the character of the party? If the party is going to lead a proletarian revolution to establish a workers state, it has to be a proletarian party. It has to be a proletarian party in program, composition, and in its experience. And it must understand and consciously relate to the epoch it is in: its task is not one of reforming capitalism, its realistic perspective is the elimination of capitalist rule.

It has a single program, not a bunch of different programs. It has what we call the transitional program. We reject any concept of sectoralism or polyvanguardism. We are opposed to any idea of a combined state, or a combined party. The way forward is that of a proletarian revolution and the vanguard has to be the organized, conscious vanguard of the proletariat.

The most powerful, centralized ruling class in history has to be displaced. But that doesn't end the matter. There's an additional important problem: the proletariat is not homogeneous. If the proletariat—who are the big majority—were totally homogeneous, if every worker went through the same experiences and came to the same conclusions at the same time, a conscious political homogeneous combat party wouldn't be so needed. You could try to slip by through utilizing the broadest class institutions—the industrial unions, councils, soviets, whatever. These are the institutions that by definition encompass the great active majority of the whole class. But in reality, just when that stage is reached—the stage of the transformation of the gigantic industrial unions into revolutionary instruments of struggle, the establishment of workers councils, the establishment of soviets—it's just at that point that the heterogeneous character of the class, based on historic differences along lines of craft, race, sex, age, and political experience—makes the need for the party so acute.

At that point a party is needed that will speak for the most conscious elements of the proletariat, and lead the fight to oppose and win the least conscious and the most backward elements, those most affected by bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideology. It will lead the most conscious elements to take power for the class. Thus, it is not a matter of indifference whether the party is rooted in, and a significant part of its leadership as well as its membership is composed of sectors of the working class that are doubly oppressed in capitalist society. These are the workers who will be among the best fighters and the most courageous and conscious leaders of the party and of the class.

The rise of the Black struggle and the explosion of nationalist consciousness, and the rise of the women's struggle, have had a great impact, a historical impact

we've often discussed. But they have one meaning above all others for the revolutionary party: the human material, the potential leaders of the proletarian party, have been increased many times. And that may be the most important meaning for us.

If this is true it says something else about the leaders of the party. They *all* lead the party, not a sector of the party or a grouping in the party. Naturally, leaders are looked to in a special way by sections of the party. Leaders who are women are looked to by younger women in the party as examples, as people to learn from. The same with Black comrades. We all go through this experience. When you find someone like yourself, with whom you can identify, it helps you have the confidence to take strides forward.

But what we are after is not Black leaders of the party, or Chicano leaders of the party, or women leaders of the party, or worker leaders of the party. What we are after is leaders of the party—rounded leaders of the party, looked to by the entire party, who are Black, Chicano, Puerto Rican, female, and workers in industry. Not Black leaders of the party, but party leaders who are Black. Not leaders who take responsibility for only one section of the party, or one area of work, but leaders who take overall responsibility, who lead the work of the entire party, and who are looked to by the entire party.

The stage we're at in building the party and the decision we're making at this plenum also has an important bearing on the leadership question. Industry is where the proletarian leadership will develop. Industry will not be the only place, because there are struggles of the oppressed occurring in other arenas also. But industry will be the major place and these struggles of the oppressed will be led by workers. It will be primarily in industry where our leaders will gain experience and confidence and come forward. This is universal, for the party as a whole.

No Different Roads

We do not have different roads to leadership. We cannot have different roads, for white and Black, male and female, more and less experienced cadres. We cannot have different roads or it simply won't work. Our work in industry, and getting into industry, is the central responsibility of the party. It is the central leadership responsibility of all cadres. This is where the next leadership of the proletarian party historically, and the leaders of the next stage of the mass movement, will be found. It is true not only for the future class-struggle left wing in the unions, but for the Black movement, the Chicano movement, the Puerto Rican movement, the women's movement. It's from here and not from the ranks of lawyers, preachers, professors, labor fakers, petty-bourgeois politicians, and ex-government officials that the leaders of the Black movement, the women's movement, will come. They are going to be found among the American working class and that is where we have to go and get them.

There is another side to this, too. In thinking about this report I went back and read the *Struggle for a Proletarian Party*. I was struck by something that I hadn't remembered so much from earlier readings: the stress that Jim put on *attitudes* toward leadership and organization. He listed a lot of the characteristics of proletarian leaders. Seriousness toward the organization of the leadership. Objectivity. Subordinating personal considerations in putting the party first. Having a professional attitude

toward it. Being deadly opposed to gossip, cynicism, bureaucratism, supersensitivity to criticism. Jim stressed that all of these traits, and more, were proletarian attitudes toward the party.

And it wasn't only Cannon's view. Trotsky's praise of *Struggle for a Proletarian Party* and his writings on organization and leadership in *In Defense of Marxism* made the same point, based on the decades of experience of the Bolsheviks. We incorporated this view as part of the fundamental program of the party. [See "The Organizational Character of the Socialist Workers Party, Resolution Adopted by the 21st National Convention of the Socialist Workers Party, September 1965," *Education for Socialists Bulletin*.]

Above all, *objectivity is the key to this*. To lead and set an example on the organization question, on the leadership question, above all we have to be objective and not subjective. The vantage point has to be not "me and mine" but "us and ours." The starting point has to be the needs of the party, the needs of the class.

The Closed Session at the Convention

These general points were reflected in our last convention during the discussions in the final session. The discussion there reflected the fact that the character of the leadership is derivative from our broader political goals and stage we have reached. It also showed the objective character of the leadership/organization decisions that we have to make.

One point was the review of our marijuana policy. [See "The SWP's Security Policy on Illegal Drugs," *Internal Information Bulletin No. 7* in 1977.] The delegates cold-bloodedly and objectively—subordinating any secondary factors or subjective attitudes—made a decision that in the interests of the party it was necessary to maintain this policy. This decision came easy, almost automatically once the facts were presented. And this ease is not unimportant. It showed our capacity to be objective, to put the party first, to subordinate everything to what we are trying to accomplish in the long run. The class enemy is subordinating everything to what they are trying to accomplish in the long run. They are cold-blooded as hell. We can rest assured of that.

The second point we took up was the report by Linda [Jeness] from the outgoing Political Committee, on the conclusions of the Control Commission on violence within the movement, wife-beating, and the limits to "privacy" in the proletarian party. Not only were we able to act unanimously on that, but the degree to which we were able to carry through that discussion objectively was a test of something else. It was a test of the party's determination to apply no double standards. We have no different membership requirements, no different standards, and no different responsibilities, for Black and white, male and female, industrial workers or not. If we slipped into that, we would undermine everything we have been talking about. The report approved by the convention, based on the Control Commission investigation that was conducted, was also a cold-blooded, objective policy guideline that we adopted as party law. [See "Political Committee Report on Control Commission Recommendations," *Internal Information Bulletin No. 7* in 1977.]

Thirdly, we discussed out and adopted the report that Catarino Garza gave, on exclusive social affairs. This was not minor at all. What was really being discussed was not

only the mistakes that were made on what kind of social gatherings were appropriate at conventions. It wasn't too difficult to get agreement on that. But something much deeper was involved—the multinational proletarian character of the party. We had to cut through any kind of subjectivity, sectoralism, any attitude that leaders are leaders of sections of the party rather than the party in its totality. And errors like this that could unintentionally lead to cliquism. That was what was being discussed under that point and what was unanimously settled. [See "Leninist Norms and Nonexclusive Party Social Affairs," Internal Information Bulletin No. 7 in 1977.]

National Committee Election

Finally we had the election of the National Committee. I can only give a personal opinion on this but I think the convention elected a good National Committee. Of course it's hard not to elect a good National Committee. The National Committee is only a small percentage of the leadership of the party, and if we can't elect a good National Committee, we would be in bad shape.

Some of the discussion we had on this point bears on the question of leadership, where we are right now in the turn, and what kind of leadership we are going to have to have. (I leave aside the fault of the outgoing national leadership in not better preparing the discussion for the convention.)

There are two points that came up in the discussion that are worth reviewing today—six months later. One is what I call the "too-many-white-males-in-the-leadership" question. The second is the purpose of the National Committee election itself, what it is supposed to accomplish.

Let's begin with the "white male question." First, we can state the obvious. We cannot lead the proletarian revolution without hundreds of thousands of white males in the party and this will be reflected also in its leadership. It's safe to assume there's agreement on this.

But something else is underneath. What's underneath is not this obvious fact that we can't have too many white males (or any other category) acting like leaders, but the attitude that the party takes on affirmative action in leadership development. Some comrades are uncomfortable with the phrase "affirmative action." I like it very much. And I don't know of any better term to use. I think we should take affirmative action to advance into the leadership of the party, in every possible way, comrades from the oppressed nationalities, female comrades, young workers who come into the party. We must say that explicitly and we must do it if what we say is true about the character of the U.S. working class, the character of the coming revolution, and the character of the party that derives from this.

We all know how the working class is divided along race and sex lines, how society is divided. The revolutionary unity of the class, within the class and with the allies of the class, must be based on championing the needs of the oppressed, not defending the privileges a thin layer gets from the oppressors. This is the only basis on which the working class can be led to victory.

A revolutionary party must reflect this fact not only in its program but in the composition of its leadership. This isn't something that can be left to nature or left to chance. It will not happen "naturally"—that is, without conscious leadership. Why not? Because part of the division of this society is what the oppressed are taught about themselves

from the day they are born. Blacks, Chicanos, females, are taught in a hundred different ways that they are not leaders, they are not self-confident, they are not clear thinkers, cold-blooded decisive Leninist types. That's the idea. The schools, churches, and mass media try to structure society's consciousness that way. A party that won't pay special attention and affirmatively act in such a way that will move forward leaders and potential leaders from the oppressed is simply avoiding its responsibility.

An Objective Necessity

That's why I like the term affirmative action. The party must act affirmatively to advance in every way possible the development of women, Black, Chicano, and Puerto Rican comrades, and comrades recruited out of working-class struggles. We must set a framework in which this responsibility and this opportunity can be advanced. This has nothing to do with guilt or moralism or similar hypocritical mouthings that mark so many "socialist" sects. It is an objective question of whether we will be able to do what we have to do. The coming American revolution cannot be led by a party that has a sexual and racial composition—in its ranks and in its leadership—like other revolutionary parties in the past, including even the Bolsheviks. This need is dictated by the nature of the American working class, and the history of the class struggle. Anything short of the goal we have set ourselves isn't going to be good enough for us in this country in this period.

We cannot confuse affirmative action with quotas. We are for affirmative action but we are ironclad in our rejection of quotas in the construction of the Leninist party. We are the world's experts on quotas. I don't have to explain to this plenum why we say affirmative action is a fake in industry, in education, without quotas. Quotas are the only possible way we can check the rulers, can force them to retreat. It's the only way that we can raise people's consciousness about this.

Quotas are necessary in another arena too. Quotas are needed in the workers movement. For instance, in various situations in the unions today. Why must we have affirmative-action quotas in the unions? Why do we fight for the establishment of women's committees, for the right of all-Black caucuses and all-women's caucuses to function in the unions? We do it because of the program of the union bureaucracy. It is not a program in the interest of the class. And the leadership of the unions is not democratically elected to carry out a program in the interests of the class. One of the ways we can bust this down and change this is by fighting for quotas.

This is not just a question of the unions today. We will be for quotas under a workers government in the United States. We will be for quotas because the workers government will represent all the workers, not just the most conscious workers. It will be a government that will have more than one party. These different parties will represent different strata in the working class. These parties will have different programs. They will contend with each other. The coming to power of a workers government, and the establishment of a workers state, will not totally erase differentiations within the working class. Not at all. The most conscious section of the working class will still need to fight for the unity of the class through support to the

interests of the most oppressed. It will still have to fight to bust through the effects of decades of misleaders of the working class and the legacy of centuries of oppression.

Program and Leninist Norms

But we do not use the same criteria within the Leninist party. We must remember the differences. The party's program is a revolutionary program. The party's leadership is democratically elected. The only way the party can function is to base every decision on *political* criteria. And the only way to keep the real leadership (in the eyes of the party) and the elected leadership the same is to function in this way. The party is the *conscious* vanguard of the class. These are the decisive elements that make the party different from the unions today, from the other mass organizations of the class, from the future soviets. Remember, we don't advocate all our Leninist organizational norms for any other organization.

So we are against quotas, against caucuses in the Leninist party. But we are for affirmative action in leadership development and advancement. We are for finding ways and means on all levels to advance party leadership experience of comrades of oppressed nationalities, women comrades, young workers. We are for maximizing the pace of that experience, and maximizing the formal decisions that reflect and encourage that experience.

But that is *not* the same as saying that we *won't* advance that leadership experience for white males (or Jews or older comrades or any other "category"). It is not the same at all. Even the way we elect leaderships proves this point. And this is important.

When we elect the National Committee, the delegates vote *for* the nominees they would like to see on the NC. They are not asked to choose whom they *don't* want on it. The mathematics of it has an important political meaning. What happens is a group of delegates, all with equal weight, democratically elected, write down on a piece of paper 83 names of people they would like to see on the National Committee. They don't write down the 10 or 50 or 1,600 names of those they don't think should be on it. This is true no matter how many nominations there are. There may be 2,000 nominations or there may be 83 nominations. The delegates write down those names, then their votes are added up, and the 83 highest vote getters are the National Committee of the party for a year or two.

It is not the party's job to pick people *not* to be leaders or *not* to have responsibilities. It's not our job to put obstacles in anyone's way to shouldering more responsibility. To the contrary. It is true that when we elect someone to a certain responsibility we are excluding other people from having that formal responsibility at that time. But that exclusion is never our starting point.

What Is the National Committee?

There is a second aspect of this question. What is the National Committee? The first thing to say is that it is a *committee*. Being an individual "NCer" doesn't really mean much—at least in the way of privileges. The only one I know of is listed in Article V, Section 3, paragraph 4 of the Constitution which says if an NCer is caught being disloyal to the party he or she can only be suspended by a two-thirds vote of the NC, losing all rights and twisting in

the wind until the next convention chucks them out. Some privilege!

The "Organizational Character of the Socialist Workers Party" lists some unambiguous *responsibilities* however: ". . . Membership in the leading staff of the party, the National Committee, must be made contingent on a complete subordination of the life of the candidate to the party. All members of the National Committee must be prepared to devote full-time activities to party work at the demand of the National Committee. . . .

"The leadership of the party must be under the control of the membership, its policies must always be open to criticism, discussion and rectification by the rank and file within properly established forms and limits, and the leading bodies themselves subject to formal recall or alteration. The membership of the party has the right to demand and expect the greatest responsibility from the leaders precisely because of the position they occupy in the movement. The selection of comrades to the positions of leadership means the conferring of an extraordinary responsibility. The warrant for this position must be proved, not once, but continuously by the leadership itself. It is under obligation to set the highest example of responsibility, devotion, sacrifice and complete identification with the party itself and its daily life and action. It must display the ability to defend its policies before the membership of the party, and to defend the line of the party and the party as a whole before the working class in general."

But the National Committee *as a committee* means a great deal. When the committee meets as a committee and makes decisions as a committee, it acts as the national leadership of the party, as if the party is in the room. That's what's important.

Secondly, it's important to remind ourselves that the National Committee is not the totality of the leadership of the party. The leadership of the party is much bigger and broader than the National Committee, the Political Committee, local executive committees, or any other committees. The leadership of the party is those who lead. It's good to keep that in mind.

Leadership Development

What can be accomplished in the actual election to the National Committee? The National Committee election simply reflects something that has *already taken place*. The National Committee *election* is not so important as it sometimes seems. It's not a historic event in the class struggle. The National Committee election is a way of democratically formalizing a rounded committee of eighty-three, or whatever the number is, of comrades who have already taken leadership. To be *elected* to the National Committee doesn't *make* you a national leader. Being elected to the National Committee has nothing to do *per se* with being a leader. Either you are a leader or are not. If the national convention recognizes it, good. If it doesn't, wait until next year.

However, if it doesn't recognize enough of the leadership over time, then we have a real problem. Then a disparity develops between the real leadership and the formal leadership. The purpose of the election of the National Committee is to recognize and formalize the reality of the party leadership.

If it did not do this, we would be in trouble. Everyone

knows who the leadership of the party is. The real leadership of the party is those you go to when you have political problems, those whose opinions you listen to when important decisions are being made. Those you look to for leadership. The National Committee had damn well better be those same people, basically, or it won't have the authority and the respect of the party. That's where we should begin. Thus, there are narrow limits on what the election of the National Committee itself accomplishes in terms of affirmative action. Of course, certain things can be done. If the nominations commission and delegates are conscious of what we are trying to do—as they are—this process can be nudged forward somewhat. But that's about all.

But the heart of the process of leadership development, including affirmative action, does not occur during the election of the National Committee. Broadening and training the leadership of the party must occur in the branches, the locals, the fractions. That's where our affirmative action takes place, where the conscious leadership development takes place. That's where it happens. There we can use some guidelines. We have to be conscious of what we're doing. For one thing, we have to fight against *stereotyping* of assignments.

Another thing that we want to keep in mind is that every responsibility is a collective one. You never stick a comrade in a job and then say that comrade is over his or her head and then criticize them for it. The comrades who have given the assignment or have given the responsibility, the executive committee or the branch, are responsible for the comrade who takes it. Every assignment is collective. Every assignment must be worked on in a collective way.

Next, leadership more than anything else means taking *general* responsibility. Leaders are not those who just exert themselves in their particular assignment. Leaders are those who, in addition to their responsibility within whatever division of labor we have, are always shouldering other responsibility. They are thinking about the party as a whole, the branch as a whole, and helping.

There are obvious things the leadership can do, some affirmative action we can take, to advance the process of leadership development. One, we can explicitly encourage it and we can aid the party to do this, in every structure—from the national field organizers to the branch executive committees.

'Sandstone University'

The second thing we can do is start what Jim Cannon described as The National Full-Time Training School, popularly called the Trotsky School. (We could call it the Cannon School or Sandstone University or some other appropriate name. I like Sandstone University since the idea was developed collectively in discussions by the comrades serving the Smith Act sentences at Sandstone, Minnesota. The original proposal is reprinted in *Letters from Prison*. It's worth rereading. It also serves to remind us that we'll all probably get a chance sometime to do graduate work under similar conditions.) [See *Letters from Prison*, Pathfinder Press, 1968, pp. 70-77.]

We are not ready to make this decision now. For one thing, we've got to find ways to finance it without disrupting other things. Maybe we can start a campaign to raise the money to do it. Maybe some comrades will come forward to help us finance it. But it would be irresponsible

not to begin it soon.

There's a very simple law to the development of leadership, one that we have to watch. Comrades who shoulder all sorts of responsibility, who move forward and take more and more responsibility, will not automatically take the time—if they are active workers and active comrades—to step back, think, read, periodically rearm themselves politically. This is especially true for comrades who develop in the party along certain roads. I think this can be true, for example, among many women comrades. Some comrades become extremely efficient and experienced organizers. They organize branches and fractions and all kinds of things. But along the way they don't have the time, the inclination, the encouragement, or the training to arm themselves politically, thoroughly, and consistently.

We have got to get rid of any implicit idea that this is okay. That it's just going to be that way. That's baloney. We are not a party in which some *do* extremely well and some *think* extremely well and it all works out. That would be a fatal weakness of a party. The Sandstone University relates to our affirmative action. But that's not all it is. It is aimed at advancing all the cadres of the party.

Developing Every Comrade

As important as our special responsibility is to advance women and comrades of the oppressed nationalities, this is subordinate to and must be placed within the framework of our main job. That job is to maximize, in all ways possible, the conditions for the development of *every single member* of this party as cadres of the SWP and leaders of the proletariat, in whatever fields are open to them. That is our overriding responsibility.

There are different ways we can do this. One of the most fundamental is very simple. The leadership has to give every single comrade a fair shot. We must work with each comrade in the same way, have no favoritism, regardless of nationality, sex, age, background, or experiences. Every leader is a leader of the party. They must see themselves as a leader of the whole party. Every member of the party must have confidence in every single leader—that they will get an objective hearing, a fair shot, and working relations with them on the same footing as anyone else. This is our strength.

We don't want any Abernethy-type efficiency. And we don't want any comrades thinking that they lead certain comrades but not others. We don't want a leadership that doesn't have the confidence of the entire membership. The party's elected leadership body is responsible for the work of the party as a whole and the development of all comrades. This is what we seek, and we have made important strides forward in this in the last couple of years.

Within this framework, there are all kinds of organizational norms that help. One is that committees are more important than individuals. We should think of ourselves less as directors of work and more as a fraction head or a committee chair, because this approach is more efficient and you get better ideas. Anyone who sits alone in a room can come up with ideas—often weird ideas. When you just talk to people who think exactly like you, you can get off on a tangent. When you hang around people not all like you, you get more rounded ideas. If you think your closest friends are the people you work together with best as a political team, you are going off the track.

It is useful to review the role of the executive committees and the organizer. The organizer is not the organizer of the branch or the local. The executive committee is the organizer of the branch or the local. The organizer is simply the executive officer of the executive committee. It's more important that the committee itself function well and take more and more responsibility than to have a superficial high-powered organizer. We don't care if we don't accomplish some task perfectly because the most experienced comrade is not assigned to it. We care about the experiences and development of the cadre as a whole.

What a good organizer can accomplish is measured in terms of how well the executive committee develops how many cadres for the next stage of leadership. Of course, this is true not just for organizers, but for work directors and fraction heads. Anyone leading anything at all is always preparing their own future replacement. What you do and what you accomplish in the short run is less important than how the party machine works after you have left for another assignment. Measure what you've accomplished by how many comrades you have made more self-confident and knowledgeable. How many you have taught by example that leaders are those who lead, and that every single comrade who does so is a leader of the party.

The second norm we should keep in mind is that leadership is how, and not what. People lead by *how* they do things, and not by *what* particular thing they do. Think of all our tasks as being accomplished by Bolshevik labor power. It's not *what* concrete form it takes that determines its value to the party. It's *how* well we all work that counts. And that's what we value.

Leaders never accept or reject a responsibility because of a post involved. They never reject responsibility because they are not on a committee. They accept general responsibility, for the success of their assignment and for everyone else's, as much as humanly possible.

Professional Revolutionists

There is another aspect to this: leadership has nothing

to do with being full-time. Leaders have to be ready to take full-time assignments. But all leaders have to consider themselves professional revolutionists, whether they work full-time for the party or not. No one ever got paid in the revolutionary party for leading. It has never happened. You lead, and whether you are full-time or not is irrelevant to *that* fact.

Finally, we should get rid of any mechanical conception of leadership development up a ladder. Our party is not the kind of party where leadership begins by being a member of a branch committee. Then you become head of another committee. Then you become head of the sales committee. Then you become a candidate. Then you become an assistant organizer. Then you become branch organizer. Then you become city organizer. Then you become bishop of the archdiocese. Of course, there is a problem. That's the way the whole world works. But that's not the way this party works.

This is where the conjuncture comes in, where the colonization of industry comes in. There is no ladder like that in developing the leadership of the party. The leadership question is connected directly with making this turn. Leadership right now means, above all, leading this party into industry and shouldering the responsibility this implies on every level. We want the majority of the local and branch executive committees in industry. We want a bunch of our current organizers in industry as soon as we can replace them. We want to continue the process that we began with comrades on the National Committee, the trade-union steering committee, and the Political Committee—releasing leaders to get jobs in industry, to recognize and take advantage of the openings, to go to where the future leaders of the mass movements are, and to go where our cadres are going to come forward nationally, be trained, and be tested. This is where the conjuncture and our immediate tasks come together with the more general character of the party, the character of the revolution, and the development of the leadership.