

S P A R T A C I S T L E A G U E

INTERNAL INFORMATION BULLETIN

Factional Dispute with the Ellens-Turner Group (1968)

I. Through the Ellens Split

- Memorandum on the Negro Struggle by Harry Turner, 5 Sept. 1967.
- Letter to Geoffrey White by Jim Robertson, 16 October 1967.
- What Is a Working-Class Perspective? by Kay Ellens, 22 May 1968
- Whither the Spartacist League? by Harry Turner, 17 July 1968;
Attachment by Jerry E., Kay Ellens, Hugh F., Shirley Stoute,
24 July 1968.
- I. On the Faction Fight in the New York Local by Joseph
Seymour, 31 July 1968.
- II. Super-exploitation and All That by Joseph Seymour, 7 August
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10 August 1968.
- IV. On the Black Question by Joseph Seymour, 14 August 1968.
- Statement to the New York Local by Kay E., and Shirley S.,
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- An Open Letter to our "Harassed" Minority Comrades by Joseph
Seymour, 9 August 1968.
- Letter to Stan by Marion Syrek, 19 August 1968.
- Letter to Dave C. by Bill G., 21 August 1968.
- Minority Resignation from SL by Shirley S., Marion S., Kay
E., Jerry E., 22 August 1968.
- Letter to Jim D. by John S. and Anne S., 30 August 1968.
- Resignation from SL by Helen Janacek, 31 August 1968.
- Letter to Helen J. by Leon D., received 16 September 1968.
- Resignation from SL by Larry S., 8 September 1968.
- Letter to Larry S. by Chris K., 14 September 1968.

MEMORANDUM ON THE NEGRO STRUGGLE

1. The Spartacist League's perspective of winning a predominately black cadre in this period has thus far not been fulfilled. Within the ghetto, black nationalist conceptions could appear as militant, and, perhaps more realistic than a working-class outlook. In this arena, concepts of the "people" or the "poor" receive more ready acceptance than "class" and can be readily translated into support for black bourgeois politicians or black-owned business.
2. The idea that black and white workers can unite in struggle for their class needs, and the special needs of the doubly-oppressed black workers, meets with little response in the ghettos because it seems to contradict the evidence of their senses. In their experience, white workers have been content to allow the segregation of black workers in low-paid jobs to continue, and react to the struggles of the Black people with attitudes ranging from passivity through indifference to outright hostility.
3. A sharp upturn in militant struggles has taken place by the labor movement together with heightened rank and file activity. These struggles have paralleled the rise in militancy in the black ghettos, but have not resulted in increased identification of white and black workers with each other. On the contrary, the growth of black nationalist ideas, and the increase in despairing ghetto outbursts reflect the increased separation felt by black workers.
4. Prospects for achieving the unity of black and white workers against their exploiters are related to the objective necessity of the working class to pass from an economic level of struggle alone to an all-encompassing struggle which includes the political plane. The ruling class is presently planning to outlaw the right to strike in major industries. This poses the immediate need for workers to break with the capitalist parties, and organize an independent party of the working class, i.e., every major strike immediately confronts the state as the open agent of capital, and transforms the economic struggle into a political one. Economic pressures on the workers will increase as US capitalism attempts to counter the falling rate of profit and the downturn in the world capitalist market through further intensification and rationalization of the labor process, and as it attempts to shift the burden of the Vietnam war onto their backs.
5. A transitional organization is needed at the point of production and in the process of labor, where black and white workers come into contact in their class role, to prove in action that unity against the class enemy is possible and necessary, and to make available to the working-class struggle the immense revolutionary potential of the black workers.
6. The concept of the SL that black workers are slated to play an exceptional role in the coming US revolution retains its validity. It can be implemented only as white workers develop the recognition of the identity of the interests of the proletariat. Conversely, insensitivity to the special needs of black workers is but an aspect of the lack of revolutionary consciousness. Concentration on the building of a transitional organization within the working class which would fight for its unity is, therefore, not simply a short-cut into the class, i.e., the recruitment of black-worker cadre, but also the main road to the building of socialist consciousness in the class.

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7. The pioneering attempt to form a Labor Civil Rights Committee in the Summer of 1965 in the ILGWU on the basis of the transitional program is a concrete example of the kind of rank and file caucus needed. The LCRC type of caucus is suited to organization on a shop, union, and interunion, i.e., regional and national basis, and could, therefore, serve to link rank and file struggles throughout the labor movement. Existing rank and file caucuses can adopt this orientation, and immediately begin to work for such a national structure.
8. The LCRC type of caucus would find that the concrete application of the transitional program would vary in specific shops and industries. However, in general, the following programmatic points would be applicable:
 - a. Every overt and covert manifestation of discrimination against black workers by the bosses and the labor bureaucrats would be fought, i.e., work assignments, pay differentials, racial slurs, etc.
 - b. A minimum wage at a decent standard of life. At this time such a minimum would probably be about \$3 per hour. This is an important point particularly to the black workers and other minorities concentrated in the low-paid jobs, and would also serve to expose the so-called progressive labor bureaucrats' basic accommodation to the bosses.
 - c. Upgrading of the black workers and other minorities to the skilled crafts at the employer's expense.
 - d. A sliding scale of wages and hours. This point would enable the caucus to link up three questions.
 - 1) The need to fight for the right of the unemployed to jobs. In the process, ties would be forged with organizations of the unemployed which would also have to be created and which would also be the responsibility of the caucuses. In this connection, the caucuses would also take appropriate steps to reach the unemployed youth, e.g., picketing the state employment services in protest against the \$1.50 minimum wage, e.g., tying in the question of unemployment and discrimination to the struggle against the Vietnam war.
 - 2) The shorter work week would make available skilled jobs for the black workers and help eliminate competition for jobs between black and white workers.
 - 3) The skilled crafts would be more strongly tied to the general struggle of the working class, and the tendency to operate as a distinct aristocracy of labor would be opposed.
 - e. The rank and file caucuses would undertake to organize the unorganized shops in the industry, i.e., those shops which the labor bureaucrats have agreed not to organize (for a consideration), proved unable to organize, or have had no interest in organizing, e.g., small sweatshops where minority workers are most exploited.
 - f. The rank and file caucuses would run candidates in union elections and fight to oust the labor bureaucracy and to achieve rank and file control of the unions.

- g. The caucuses would agitate for an anti-capitalist labor party based on the unions.
9. The labor bureaucrats would find great difficulty in coping with the caucuses, using the traditional cry of dual unionism, and/or by attempts to split the workers on racial and craft lines. However, as soon as the threat to their positions would become manifest, they would use every weapon at their command, including gangsterism. The caucuses would have to be on guard to defend their leaderships and activists against such attacks.
 10. The basis for meaningful political activity in the ghettos would be laid in the labor process. The black workers, imbued with a class and socialist orientation by the rank and file caucuses, would be able to raise in the ghetto, the need for black candidates independent of the capitalist parties, and with the perspective of adherence to the future anti-capitalist labor party (should that perspective still be in the future.) Issues such as education, housing, and self-defense of the ghetto would also be posed on a transitional programmatic basis, and as part of the process of emancipation of the working class as a whole.
 11. The formation of LCRC-type caucuses in the unions would seem to be of the utmost importance in this period, and comparable to the struggles of the TUEL led by communists in the '20's to fight for industrial unionism and the radicalization of the labor movement. The communist movement in that period had thousands of members with many functioning in the existing unions. The SL cannot, of course, hope to function at the level of the TUEL. However, it can begin to agitate for LCRC-type caucuses, and begin to organize them where possible on a non-sectarian and non-exclusionary basis.
 12. In order to implement the above perspective, it is proposed that a trade-union commission be formed. The commission should be national in scope, and should act to determine the most fruitful areas where suitable comrades could be encouraged to concentrate. It would serve to transmit the experiences gained and exchange ideas as to tactics, and the solutions of problems arising in this work.

Turner
5 September 1967

(adopted unanimously by CC Plenum, 31 December 1967)

Attachment, PB Minutes of 24 October 1967

New York City
16 October 1967

Geoffrey White
Berkeley, California

Dear Geoff,

A lot has piled up that I want to talk to you about. So I'm writing on one point now and very much looking forward to discussing with you in person within some five or six weeks during my tour of our locals on the West Coast. In fact, much of what I touch on now is in way of being mainly a preliminary presentation for talking over with you and other comrades when I'm on the road and later in modified form at the plenary meeting of the Central Committee.

Problems centering on our press are raising nagging and sharp organizational problems. By problems I mean mainly, but not exclusively, the frequency of Spartacist. Our opponents have caught this and both the Wohlforthites and SWP'ers, including Paul Boutelle in person in New Orleans, have asserted that the main criticism of the Spartacist League is the infrequency of its central organ! (Such gall was only matched by that true friend of the Left, the N. Y. Times, which back in 1957 cautioned A. J. Muste that the good name of American radicalism was threatened by his projected discussion group in common with the U. S. Stalinists.)

However, there are real questions involved, too. Without a regular, frequent central organ we lose in many ways: in tying the League together, in prestige, and internationally; much impact is lost entirely in drawing people toward us because we then never widely or fully exploit our often very fine, high level activity in struggle and the rather frequent brilliant vindication and striking aptness of our ideas and the reciprocal miserable showing and experiences of all sorts of opponents and competitors.

Actually, compared to opponents of roughly comparable size, e. g., the Draper (110 people?) and Wohlforth (40?) groups, we generate a much larger effective volume of printed material, i. e., defined as: (different materials) x (number of copies) x (specificity of audience). For example, at the Chicago New Politics Conference, we had for general distribution 1000 copies each of Spartacist West, featuring an article on King, the I. S. C. and the C. N. P., together with 1000 copies of Jack Glenn's lengthy document written for West Side C. I. P. A. and with essentially our line. For the NYC teacher's strike, we covered a key mass meeting distributing 4000 copies of a special, full and very good leaflet directed especially to one key issue of the wide-spread minority hostility to the strike. (At that particular rally the Wohlforthites sold perhaps a dozen copies of their paper.) For the coming 21 October,

Washington D. C. demonstration we plan to distribute some 7000 copies of a major, two-color offset leaflet. The volume of material turned out by Espartaco and Der Klassen Kampf (Spartakist) is such that if we wanted to half fake it we could put out a Spartacist exclusively of English translations! Compared to the above, the output of Wohlforth is largely illusory -- empty and intended as a Potemkin Village for internal soothing and Healy's consumption -- and that of the Draper group is virtually nil. So why, then, are we hung-up with our main publication and what can we do about it? I believe the problem is essentially editorial; in particular, in the multitude of roles thrust on me. To be sure, we frequently have sharp financial difficulties, but we also have a responsive membership and friends. To be sure, our volunteer editorial and national staff has effectively just been cut perhaps in half: one back to work, Liz back to school, Lynne out of town, Helen back on longer winter hours at work, Al completely absorbed in his demanding job and SSEU work. To be sure, would-be writers of promised major pieces, as often as not, let us down. (This list is long and embarrassing in the number of full CC members it contains!)

The most concrete reason we have no Spartacist No. 11 at hand is because Nos. 6 - 10 got out (more-or-less on time) in good part through my playing an editorial role which ran me ragged and ran the organization into something of a hole. I'm much more an organizational politician than an editor. While I think I can check material for errors, inconsistencies, and short-sighted departures with the keenness of a 17th Century Calvinist, it is unnatural and clumsy for me to do the re-writing. (Yet I submit that the Spartacist issues to date read very well, even years after publication, so that we find ourselves endlessly reprinting and circulating them. Few others can say the same!)

Moreover, vital needs of our organization have been set aside because of my role in getting the paper out frequently in the past year (five full issues in 11 months): the PB has met too infrequently because of the time needed to be put in by me for its preparation and, subsequently, for working over and mailing minutes; our N.O. exploits and guides, all too inadequately, the many activities, legal cases, etc., we get into or are thrust into; we've made too little, or no, follow-up on correspondence, contacts; too little, or too late, by way of systematic attention and follow-up regarding local situations -- including tours, etc.; our international work slides with brilliant opportunities let slip. It is now only at enormous cost that any kind of internal differences could be thrashed out so that the exercise of the right of factional struggle would mean the absorption of the available time of the National Office with all else at a virtual standstill. We produce very little new non-periodical literature, Marxist Bulletins and pamphlets, though many are projected and fitfully worked on for years. In short, all of the activities which built us and recruited and trained our present cadre are let slide. This must stop.

We vitaly and urgently need two qualified full-time functionaries: a national chairman and an editor. (Actually, we could well use a third and fourth full-time comrade too, i. e., national secretary and NYC organizer, but they are not vital as full-time posts and are utterly beyond our present means.)

I am reminded of what we heard from an informant at the founding conference of the national Draperite organization, the I. S. C.'s of America, that Draper observed that it takes about the same rather substantive national staff to service an organization of a hundred as it does to service a thousand -- and we are 80 with all the same needs and demands. Most recently, Steve S. of Chicago wrote in demanding to know where Spartacist No. 11 was, that press irregularity showed a lack of seriousness in building a revolutionary party, and insisted that if the paper wasn't out in a few weeks then an emergency national conference be convened, presumably to throw the rascals out. More serious than his somewhat fetishistic approach, ignoring the S. L.'s overall output, literary and otherwise, was Steve's lack of a concrete alternative... i. e., replace them with whom?... Wohlforth? (I. e., if you can't get enough good French wine... drink lots of hydrochloric acid?) This Spring comrades were up in arms demanding to know, and properly, where several months of PB minutes were. It took a crash program (i. e., much else sacrificed) to get them almost all out. Situations like this are the concrete embodiment of the phrase "we are not yet even a stable propaganda group." At any moment some vital need is uncovered -- until such time as it becomes a desperate issue, then an other equally vital (but sometimes less glaring or obvious) function is starved for a time. Most lately we've concentrated on getting out Marxist Bulletins, so that all previously published ones are back in print and No. 7 and No. 4 I&II are newly done. I personally have been compelled to spend some time on international correspondence and legal defense. Of particular priority has been our military rights consultation, a growing concern.

We've slowly been overloading the money side as an ad hoc solution for other matters (i. e., we began with an entirely commercially produced paper -- now running \$550 plus \$150 mailing per issue. Then we took on a \$95-a-month office and just now we are laying out \$40 a week for functionary expense) and I propose that we lean harder there until our limits are reached. Examination shows that the possibility of replacing me in my overall role in the National Office is presently much more difficult than that of working editor of the paper. It is this consideration, rather than my parallel personal preferences which leads me to believe that we should seek a full-time editor, hopefully to pay him some trivial weekly sum.

There is no available comrade on the East Coast who possesses the prerequisites at this time for the job. Among the indicated qualities needed are capacity to facilely re-work deficient copy so that it reads both interestingly

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and correctly (this Summer's production of Spartacist No. 11 faltered over just this point): ability to meet schedules by filling in with substitute material, in good part doubtless written by the editor, when alleged authors default; some imagination and initiative in projecting articles and issues; ability to coax and correct the work of prickly or reluctant writers; and a subtle command of our political positions, or at least an awareness of one's own (temporary) deficiencies.

A tall order. But we have a good and willing editorial staff and a politically competent P.B. to assist. On running our membership through my mental IBM machine, the name of Dave C., now in Iowa, comes up as a comrade who might have the makings of a fine revolutionary editor.

On my way to the Coast I hope to stop over in the Midwest, particularly to talk with Comrade C. whom none of us in the National Office have ever met. The particular outcome that I have in mind as an optional one is for our putative editor to obtain support through a few lucrative hours weekly of teaching nights (we have the connections in NYC to secure this), while we do something recommended by one of our union fractions. Taken together, these measures could sharply reduce our personal expense bill, while giving us the necessary two full-timers. The money saved, plus the money coaxed in by the stabilized press and strengthened N.O., could in turn be used to up the frequency of our press.

We shall see. In any case, these are some of the internal concerns uppermost in my mind as the time draws near for my overdue trip to the West Coast.

Comradely,

Jim Robertson

P.S. On looking over the above, it appears of sufficient general interest to warrant mimeographing as an attachment to the PB minutes. -J.

(endorsed unanimously by CC Plenum, 31 December 1967)

WHAT IS A WORKING-CLASS PERSPECTIVE?

The fight in the New York local appeared to be over whether to build caucuses in a particular union or maintain the Militant Labor Civil Rights Committee until such a caucus becomes feasible. This is obviously a tactical question. Can we formulate such tactical solutions now? We do not even have a full member in the union under discussion (and won't have for a few months yet); we do not yet know the internal situation of that union or whether other comrades can get into the union; we do not even know if the comrades who might be able to get into the union will be able to function together given the total separation of locals according to the different industries represented in this union. We might even need a "pan-union" committee in order to function within this one union as we begin there.

The need and desirability of building caucuses is recognized and agreed to by all. The caucus is the militants' fighting organization within a trade union. Through the fight to build such caucuses, the trade union militant learns to fight against reformism, opportunism, and the union bureaucrats in general. He becomes a conscious fighter in the class struggle. Such caucuses aid his development to Marxism; to becoming a cadre in the Leninist organization. This is, in general, the main purpose we have in building caucuses.

This, of course, presupposes that our main goal is the development of worker-cadre in the Leninist organization. We cannot magically come by a working-class base without preparing a ground-work of struggle within the working-class, revolutionary struggle brought into the working class by militants who know how to talk with, fight along side of and recruit workers.

The ability of the SL to recruit workers is another, by far more serious, dispute that came up in the debate in the local. How can it be stated that we cannot recruit workers when a) we have made no systematic effort to do so, and b) we wouldn't, at this point, know how to go about it. One way this process can be learned is by building militant caucuses in trade unions where possible and functioning within the working class in general. It is important for all our comrades to learn to recruit workers and for the organization to concentrate on the development of worker-cadre. This process can be called the proletarianization of the SL. (This, of course, does not mean sending students into the factories, which would probably be more disastrous for the militant worker than it would be for the students.) What it does mean is the systematic gaining of experience by the petty-bourgeois militants in how to explain Marxism to workers, to recruit and develop worker-cadre. With the class composition of the SL being overwhelmingly petty-bourgeois, this second reason takes on grave importance.

We see the importance of this problem in the SWP. As early as 1937, three years after the Minneapolis general strike, the SWP was still predominantly petty-bourgeois. The SWP was then a larger organization by far than we are now. (Our ability to participate in workers' struggles is even more lacking, though this is not only due to our size.) In 1937 Trotsky wrote to Cannon:

"The party has only a minority of genuine factory workers... The non-proletarian elements represent a very necessary yeast, and I believe that we can be proud of the good quality of these elements... But... Our party can be inundated by non-proletarian elements and can even lose its revolutionary character. The task is naturally not to prevent the influx of intellectuals by artificial methods,... but to orientate practically all the organization toward the factories, the strikes, the unions...

"A concrete example: We cannot devote enough or equal forces to all the

factories. Our local organization can choose for its activity in the next period one, two or three factories in its area and concentrate all its forces upon these factories. If we have in one of them two or three workers we can create a special help commission of five non-workers with the purpose of enlarging our influence in these factories.

The same can be done among the trade unions. We cannot introduce non-worker members in workers' unions. But we can with success build up help commissions of oral and literary action in connection with our comrades in the unions. The unbreakable condition should be: not to command the workers but only to help them, to give them suggestions, to arm them with facts, ideas, factory papers, special leaflets, and so on.

"Such collaboration would have a tremendous educational importance from one side for the worker comrades, from the other side for the non-workers who need a solid re-education.

"You have for example an important number of Jewish non-worker elements in your ranks. They can be a valuable yeast if the party succeeds by and by in extracting them from a closed milieu and ties them to the factory workers by daily activity. I believe such an orientation would also assure a more healthy atmosphere inside the party...

"One general rule we can establish immediately: a party member who doesn't win during three or six months a new member for the party is not a good party member.

"If we establish seriously such a general orientation and if we verified every week the practical results, we will avoid a great danger; namely, that the intellectuals and white collar workers might suppress the worker minority condemn it to silence, transform the party into a very intellectual discussion club but absolutely not habitable for workers.

"The same rules should be in corresponding form elaborated for the working and recruiting of the youth organization, otherwise we run the danger of educating good young elements into revolutionary dilettants and not revolutionary fighters." (Italics by L.T.)

Trotsky includes this part of his letter in "From a Scratch--To The Danger Of Gangrene" (In Defense of Marxism, page 108).

(As an aside: Trotsky, thereby, also throws light on the later degeneration of the SWP--even predicts it.)

The question is not, therefore, caucuses verses "pan-unionism," but the proletarianization of the SL. The Militant Labor Civil Rights Committee (MLCRC), this "pan-unionism" creature, could provide our comrades, virtually all our comrades, with the necessary vehicle to reach the workers.

Actually, it is doctrinaire to even pose and attempt to solve this tactical problem before the circumstances confront us and side steps the real problems confronting us.

On Recruiting Black Workers

Another side of this question under dispute, ie., whether or not we can re-

cruit workers, is the question: Can we recruit black workers?

Comrade Robertson contends that only "marginal elements"--the black intellectual with a white wife or the militant black woman who doesn't like the male supremacist attitudes of the black nationalists--can be recruited now. One of the reasons he gives for this is that the black nationalists are "racist, an impotent racism because it is the racism of the oppressed." First this is a fantastic concept given the fact that a majority of blacks are justifiably mistrustful of whites and white radicals. Mistrust, fear and anger produced by the realities of the racism and institutionalised racism in this country do not add up to counter-racism.

Second, generally speaking, that section of the black population which is referred to as nationalists (that is, they refuse to talk to or work in the same organizations with whites) is the petty-bourgeoisified strata of students, writers, etc. We are concerned with winning black workers to Marxism, the same black worker militant who, might in relation to the community organizations express quasi-nationalist ideas. When on the job, in the unions, these same black workers can be approached by revolutionaries as workers, and do not respond as so-called black nationalists.

This attitude of Comrade Robertson also shows a lack of understanding of the struggle of the black militants, many of whom are searching for a way of destroying and changing this whole system. The overwhelming majority of blacks in this country now are workers, an increasing number of whom are trying to get out from under the double oppression imposed upon them. Given the deep racism permeating every phase of American life, we know that the end of this double oppression can only come about through the socialist revolution. Through the MLCRC, the SL is attempting to organize black workers around the struggle to end their double oppression.

Another indication that possibly racism is not understood by our comrades is the remark by Comrade Mark T. concerning the civil rights part of the MLCRC: in effect, that a civil rights committee is not always applicable, for example, in unions which are almost all black. Comrades, we are not merely fighting for the rights of blacks to have representation in white unions, or equal wages for equal work--we are fighting one of the fundamental divisions forced on this working class--we are fighting to bring effective revolutionary politics to black workers, a politically more advanced section of this working class.

Working-Class Cadre

Again, this presupposes that working-class cadre are possible and necessary within our organization. If this is not the case, then we are demanding that the workers should spontaneously become Marxist (maybe even "unconscious Trotskyists" a new category set up by the SWP for Castro.) Are we expecting the workers to have confidence in a white, petty-bourgeois organization quite divorced from the class struggle? Are they to flock to us, thereby creating a mass organization? (It was said that only a mass party can recruit workers.) And ask for our guidance in making a revolution? We seem to be demanding from the working class that they come immediately to Marxism instead of reformism. We refuse to see that the strikes, the union bureaucrats' panic and the interest of the occasional worker-contact we run across are indications of objective circumstances which are ripe enough to recruit workers.

Or are we expecting to capture a mass working-class organization, thereby

transforming it into the vehicle for social change? Even this, should it be feasible, cannot be done without worker-cadre. At what stage in our development do we begin approaching workers, to recruit worker-cadre and build a base?

We must begin the transformation necessary to get from the here-and-now to the workers' revolutionary party. (This party, it should be noted, is not a "Revolutionary Party of the Working Class" -- which means a revolutionary party for the working class-- . The latter, whether "of" or "for", is the position of an observer to the class struggle rather than that of a participant.) A cadre reared in petty-bourgeois radical struggles will not be able to win workers, let alone a mass workers' movement, to the correct political positions necessary to the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Or do we expect that sometime and somehow, someone else will do the job? Of course not, this is an out-and-out Pabloite position. If we do not believe that someone else will pick up on our good program and build a Leninist party, or if we don't believe in the self-sufficiency of mass spontaneity, then we must prepare worker-cadre.

Lenin, in What Is To Be Done, fought against the Economists in 1901 who wanted to limit the Social-Democrats exclusively to trade-union struggles. Lenin, however, argues from the point of view that the previously Social-Democratic factory circle activities (not of the Economists' variety, though exclusively among the working class) had sufficiently prepared the Social-Democrats so that in 1901 they could begin to approach other sections of the population. He certainly assumes that the exclusively working-class concentration had been necessary in "the earlier period" around 1894. "...we had astonishingly few forces, and it was perfectly natural and legitimate then to devote ourselves exclusively to activities among the workers and to condemn severely any deviation from this course. The entire task then was to consolidate our position in the working class." (Vol. 5, Collected Works, page 429)

Of course it is foolish to approach the experience of the early Bolsheviks in a mechanical way. We cannot transpose Russia in the 1890's to the US in the 1960's since it is a radically different situation. But similar fundamental tasks are, nevertheless, on the agenda for Bolsheviks here now. We must build a working-class cadre and work toward an American Leninist party. It is not enough that "we hold Leninist positions!" It is not an excuse to say we can only "work with the human material we have." It is possible and necessary to transform this human material into Bolsheviks by functioning in a Leninist fashion. This is a very serious question. It is, in reality, the fundamental difference in the organization.

A petty-bourgeois can, certainly, become proletarianized in the above sense; can recruit workers and develop a working-class cadre--if it is done in a conscious manner.

In "An Open Letter To Comrade Burnham," written in 1940, Trotsky again states: "The disintegration of capitalism, which engenders sharp dissatisfaction among the petty-bourgeois and drives its bottom layers to the left, opens up broad possibilities but it also contains grave dangers. The Fourth International needs only those emigrants from the petty-bourgeois who have broken completely with their social past and who have come over decisively to the standpoint of the proletariat.

"This theoretical and political transit must be accompanied by an actual

break with the old environment and the establishment of intimate ties with workers, in particular, by participation in the recruitment and education of proletarians for their party. Emigrants from the petty-bourgeois milieu who prove incapable of settling in the proletarian milieu must after a lapse of a certain period of time be transferred from membership in the party to the status of sympathizers.

"Members of the party untested in the class struggle must not be placed in responsible positions. No matter how talented and devoted to socialism an emigrant from the petty-bourgeois milieu may be, before becoming a teacher, he must first go to school in the working class. Young intellectuals must not be placed at the head of the intellectual youth but sent out into the provinces for a few years, into the purely proletarian centers, for hard practical work.

"The class composition of the party must correspond to its class program. The American section of the Fourth International will either become proletarian or it will cease to exist." (In Defense of Marxism, page 94)

If there is to be a workers' revolutionary party in this country, we must heed Trotsky's advice. The petty-bourgeois radical, if he is to become a Marxist--and not very many do--must align himself with the working class, physically, as well as intellectually. He must learn the discipline of systematic revolutionary work, the regularization of experience with and recruitment of workers, the continuity of propaganda and the harvesting of the impact of this propaganda particularly among workers.

Lenin made a big point of showing the Russian Social-Democrats how to politicize the workers. Krupskaya, in her memoirs recounts: "In 1894 Lenin wrote the pamphlet An Explanation of the Laws Concerning Fines Levied On The Workers in the Factories, in which he set a brilliant example of how to approach the average worker of that time, and proceeding from the workers' needs, to lead them step by step to the question of the necessity of political struggle. Many intellectuals thought the pamphlet dull and prolix, but the workers read it avidly, for it was something clear and familiar to them. At that time Vladimir Ilyich had made a thorough study of factory legislation. He believed that explaining these laws to the workers made it much easier to show them the connection that existed between their position and the political regime." (page 19-20)

Lenin was also quite insistent on the regularization of revolutionary functions. In A Letter To A Comrade On Our Organizational Tasks, written in 1904, (Collected Works, Vol. 6, page 240), Lenin again emphasizes this: "...for if we secure regular contact between a special district group of distributors and all the factories in that district, as well as the largest possible number of workers' homes in that district, it will be of enormous value, both for demonstrations and for an uprising... It is too late to start organizing the distribution of literature at a time of unrest, a strike, or turmoil; this work can be built up only gradually, by making distributions obligatory twice or three times a month."

Obviously for Lenin, the need to win the workers to Marxism is the primary task of the revolutionary. He geared himself and his organization to this task until a working-class cadre and base were won. It was only after this that work among the petty-bourgeois could be and was considered.

Are conditions in the US in 1968 so different from Russia in the 1890's that

we must bypass this fundamental aspect of Leninism? If so, we should explain why we cannot function as Leninist now.

Our Functioning

How do we function now, if it isn't in a Leninist way? The most notable difference is that we direct ourselves strictly to the radicalized intelligentsia. If we had occasionally approached the workers, it was at best as a show-piece to the petty-bourgeois radical groups.

We appear to have the attitude that cadre will come only from the petty-bourgeois. First we recruit the Central Committee (petty-bourgeois, of course), then ---. But a Central Committee of a Bolshevik organization must "go to school in the working class" if it is to develop into revolutionary leadership. The kind of leadership that is required develops only through struggle, and struggle within the working class.

Our job is to establish the environment in which high norms of commitment to and functioning with the working class are developed. Until we do this, and until we become intimately involved with working-class struggles, our isolated existence will be irrelevant to history.

Kay Ellens
22 May 1968

(This document was introduced to the PB meeting of 03 June 1968. It is confidential within the SL membership.)

WHITHER THE SPARTACIST LEAGUE?

The dispute which erupted in the New York local, over the seemingly minor question of re-allocation of local forces, has since disclosed political differences of the most serious character.

Robertson and Turner Motions

To comrades unacquainted with the basis of the dispute, a first examination of Cde. Robertson's motion and Cde. Turner's substitute and counter-motions might seem to contain no more than differing organizational solutions to the question of assigning available cadre to the varied arenas in which an aspiring Leninist vanguard movement must function. In reality, the priorities expressed in the motions point to fundamental differences in outlook as to the direction and potential of the SL.

Cde. Robertson's motion, amended by him after three local meetings of debate, and which then carried, is as follows:

"The local recommends that the pan-union Militant Labor Civil Rights Committee transform itself into particular civil rights committees and caucuses in the next period. Paralleling this change is the criteria that intra-union civil rights committees and caucuses be restricted to members involved, and that SL non-members of unions be involved only at the fraction level. In particular, MLCRC should continue its present union leaflets through the period of the next contract, while giving main emphasis toward building the superceding caucus in the new union concentration."

Cde. Turner's substitute motion for the first sentence of Cde. Robertson's motion, and counter-motion to the balance, both of which were defeated, are as follows:

"The local recognizes that the present pan-union MLCRC is an interim formation which is eliminated in the process of building CRC's and caucuses in particular trade unions, and by their linkage in a federation which assumes the responsibility for the building of other CRC's in trade unions in which the masses of super-exploited black and Puerto Rican workers are found. The work of comrades in the MLCRC should be closely supervised by the local executive committee which will also ensure that reports of their activities be made regularly to the local.

"All comrades who are capable of contributing to the work of the MLCRC should be involved in its activities, either as members or supporters, in order to implement, as quickly as possible, the directives of the PB and CC on the building of CRC's and caucuses in the trade unions, which will fight for the unity of the working class on the basis of a struggle against the special oppression of the black and Puerto Rican workers.

"The local recognizes, however, that a Leninist organization cannot limit itself to trade union arenas, but must also be involved in other aspects of the class struggle, e.g., anti-war, student, black ghettos, electoral activities, etc., to whatever extent is necessary and possible. For the SL, as yet a propagandist group whose present function is mainly exemplary, the recruitment of cadre as a result of the upsurge in arenas involving the radicalized student milieu is a vital necessity. This local also has the responsibility for helping to maintain the NO₄ Forces presently involved in MLCRC and other trade union activity will, therefore, have to be utilized in pressing struggles in other arenas, when and as necessary."

Implementing the Tactical Turn

In order to understand the approaches underlying the Turner motions, it is necessary to discuss the Memorandum on the Negro Struggle, unanimously adopted by the PB

and by the last plenum of CC (Attachment, PB minutes of 11 September 1967).

The struggle over MLCRC is in reality a struggle over the major tactical turn envisioned in the Memorandum. This turn had not been previously given sufficient critical attention. Although a discussion on the turn did take place in the NY local, disclosing at that time the existence of an unconcealed petty-bourgeois minority tendency in the SL, the polarization into opposing groups, one for and one against the PB motion, made sober and critical evaluation of the aspects and implications of the tactical turn impossible at that time.

In the higher bodies the turn was accepted passively. Few reservations were expressed in the lukewarm discussion which took place on this question. As a result of the failure to thoroughly explore the implications of the Memorandum both the majority in the NY local around Cde. Robertson, and those in the minority, are able to assert that they are in agreement with the Memorandum. Meanwhile Cde. Robertson, by his motion, has acted to eliminate MLCRC in the name of the same tactical turn which the minority sees as a necessary vehicle for its implementation.

Tactical Application

In essence, the Memorandum projects the development of a transitional organization and program in the trade unions to unite black and white workers in a struggle against the super-exploitation of black workers and other minorities. The turn to the trade unions is predicated on the sharp increase in strikes, and in rank and file activity in the working class, and on the heightened militancy of black workers, as a result of sharpening contradictions of US capitalism, nationally and internationally. The turn envisions the linking up of the revolutionary energy of black workers to that of the class as a whole.

Black workers are today generally in advance of white workers, in that they have fewer illusions about the oppressive nature of the "white power structure" and increasingly recognize that their status as a specially oppressed race-color caste cannot be basically altered within the confines of capitalist society, i.e., the need for a fundamental, revolutionary upheaval. It is on this basis that black workers were seen by the SL as playing an exceptional role in the coming US revolution, and the basis for the winning of a predominantly black cadre to the SL.

The reactionary utopian ideas of black nationalism which, while reflecting the anger of the black people also act to immobilize real struggle, and which are least accepted by black workers, are seen as being jettisoned to the extent that white workers rise to the recognition of the needs of the class as a whole, and struggle against all aspects of the special oppression of black workers. In the process of building Labor-Civil Rights caucuses in the unions the black workers in the forefront of the struggle are seen as being won, not only to class, but also to socialist consciousness and, therefore, as recruitable to the SL.

White workers are also seen as being won to socialist consciousness in the process, but, in all likelihood, as lagging behind the black workers in this respect. Of course, students and other radicals would be attracted to the SL, to the extent that it did more than talk prophetically and abstractly about the role of the working class, and showed itself actually capable of working in and influencing the class.

Militant Labor Civil Rights Committee

The Memorandum on the Negro Struggle also projected the need for a movement similar to "the TUEL led by the Communists in the '20's," to bring the SL's understanding of the necessary tactical direction of the class struggle in the US to as wide an audience as possible. It recognized that while the SL, in and by itself, could not be

that movement, it could "begin to agitate for LCRC-type caucuses, and begin to organize them, where possible, on a non-sectarian and non-exclusionary basis."

The SL was, therefore, faced with two questions in the implementation of its line.

1) The SL, like most ostensibly revolutionary organizations, is, with some notable exceptions, largely isolated from the main class organs of the workers, the trade unions, where the black and Spanish-speaking minorities are to be found. It must therefore find the road to these workers, and to the building of caucuses in these unions, which can serve as an example to the rest of the radical movement.

2) In view of the exceptional importance that the SL approach to the trade unions can have for the class struggle in the US at the present time, it must find the vehicle by which it can act to involve other radicals, black militants and students in the building of such caucuses, not simply depending upon its own limited forces.

The vehicle devised by the SL comrades with primary responsibility for the work in New York City was the Militant Labor Civil Rights Committee. This committee was organized with a view to concentrating in a particular union in which a caucus could be most readily built, utilizing whatever forces were available inside that union, sending in whatever forces seemed necessary to augment these original forces, and involving all those outside interested in taking part in the work. As members learned to function successfully in trade unions, and as the particular caucus became viable and able to function without outside support, the rest of the MLCRC membership could turn its attention to other unions. As the caucus in the first union successfully rooted itself among the most exploited workers, the friends, relatives, and contacts of these workers could be expected to come forth with their grievances, as potential forces around which other caucuses could be built in other unions, in a chain-reaction effect. Similarly, as the work progressed, the MLCRC would be able to draw additional outside support from other radical sources.

Eventually, the ad-hoc super-structure of MLCRC would be displaced by a formal federation of caucuses. This new structure could publish a regular newsletter concretely setting forth the transitional programmatic ideas, and broadening the horizons of caucus members to the issues and struggles involving unionists elsewhere. Eventually, it would have to function as a professional operation, with a full-time editor, chairman, and full-time organizers actively promoting the building of similar caucuses.

Theory and Practice

The strategic line and tactical implementation of the SL on the Negro Question is, therefore, quite unique. It neither adapts to black nationalism as do the SWP, the CP, and assorted Maoist organizations, nor does it make a "left" adaptation to the prevailing white chauvinism in the working class as does the Workers League, with its line that a struggle against super-exploitation is "divisive", or as do the Foxites in their New Rank and Filer, in supporting the "right to form black caucuses" in the unions which can then press for "their special demands."

The line is, in fact, a concrete example of the role of theory in illuminating practice. It results from the conscious application of the Transitional Program to present conditions in the US, utilizing past experiences of the SL members in civil rights organizations and the trade unions, and also incorporating ideas stemming from the pioneering efforts of the early communist movement in the US.

Local Application

In New York City, the two most productive areas for the turn to the unions with the most exploited workers were seen to be hospital work and light industry. Two large,

so-called progressive unions were operating in these areas, both of which had high percentages of black and Puerto Rican workers. SL members either were already at work in these unions or readily available for entry.

The hospital arena was chosen inasmuch as it seemed more immediately productive and because a seemingly responsible comrade had been functioning there for several years. A second comrade was persuaded to enter this field. Other comrades interested and felt to be capable of helping to build the MLCRC, and who could be freed from other responsibilities, began meeting with the MLCRC, aiding in the production of the MLCRC Newsletter, and taking responsibility for regular weekly hospital distributions. All other SL members were asked to distribute at hospitals once every two weeks. Cde. Robertson, who was present at early discussions which projected and launched the MLCRC, voiced no objections at that time to the basic strategy and tactics devised. It was only several months later, after the production of three newsletters, each of which had been distributed at a dozen hospitals, and after the defection of the Neumann-Ross-Smith group, that Cde. Robertson announced his bloc with Cde. Seymour opposing the continuation of the MLCRC, and advanced his motion for its phasing-out.

"Organizational" Differences

The current dispute was presented, at first, in organizational garb. Cde. Robertson indicated a concern for a "balanced" approach to activity in the local, and spoke, humorously at first, of the growing "cancer" of MLCRC. He then developed his objection to MLCRC on the basis that it was a "pan-union" operation. According to Cde. Robertson, four levels of organizational activity by radicals take place in their work in trade unions: from the lowest level, the isolated individual, who tries to recruit directly to the party; through the second level, the pan-union organization, which is limited to outside propagandist activities; the third level, the caucus, which poses an alternative leadership; and the highest level, the party, which acts directly on the union with its propaganda. Cde. Robertson concludes from his abstract, mechanical, lifeless, in a word, undialectical schema, that "pan-union" activity is inferior to caucus building, and should be terminated.

As the dispute in the local developed, Cde. Robertson and his supporters accused those opposing the liquidation of MLCRC of having a split perspective, and as being ready to destroy the SL over their "trivial" organizational differences. "The cancer has acquired consciousness," stated Cde. Robertson.

At the present time, Cde. Robertson and his supporters assert, in essence, that the minority is possessed by an "uncontrollable impatience," of having a "frantic Marcyite quality," of posing activities suitable for a mass party of "five thousand," rather than for a "splinter propagandist group," which threatens to "burn out" the organization in "pan-union" forms of activity such as mass leafleting.

The minority has protested that it is concerned with caucus building, not pan-union activities, and that the pan-union MLCRC is only a means toward this end; that the activity of the SL comrades in the trade unions sets an example to others, not only to be attractive to other radicals as an end in itself, but to working class militants, black and white, and that only to the extent that trade unionists presently outside the SL step forward can the involvement of the SL in the trade unions become one of leading masses; that the comrades in MLCRC are fully aware that a Leninist organization must be actively involved in "anti-war work, student, black ghetto and electoral activities, etc., to whatever extent is necessary and possible," that "recruitment of cadre" from the "radicalized student milieu is a vital necessity"; that the local must maintain its responsibilities to the National Office, and that therefore, some forces will have to be re-allocated from the MLCRC work momentarily "when and as necessary." To no avail! The majority in the NY local is, curiously, unable

to hear or comprehend the entirely unambiguous statements of the minority.

The Basis of the Dispute

What was initially posed on organizational grounds by the bloc of Robertson and Seymour, soon disclosed its political essence, and not only in perspectives on the Negro Question and the turn toward trade union work, but in its essential meaning for the present and future course of the SL.

In the course of the dispute, Cde. Robertson has openly taken the following positions:

1) It is "naive to believe" that black workers could be won to the SL "at this time." Workers will join a transitional organization in the unions, and a mass party, but not a "splinter propagandist group." The SL can, therefore, only expect to recruit the atypical black worker, such as the West Indian who, not having personally experienced life-long racist oppression, does not hate whites, the black worker who is alienated from other black workers instead of whites, and the exceptional black worker who can be won for a "Weltanschauung."

2) The basis for membership in the Trotskyist movement is not primarily activity, but rather agreement as to "what happened in Germany in 1923."

Cde. Robertson, it seems, has abandoned dialectics for a metaphysical mode of thought. He simply eliminates process from his outlook. The black worker he conceives of as ready to join the SL is obviously one who has not gone through the school of struggle in the trade unions, and been reached by a transitional organization and program, but comes to the SL by some other route. The black worker in the trade unions, according to Cde. Robertson, can be convinced of the correctness of the ideas of the SL concerning the struggle against special oppression, can acquire class consciousness, can be convinced of the need for political struggle in a labor party, i.e., can acquire confidence in the program and the people who best fight for that program, but cannot, however, be won for the SL because he does not possess a world view. Cde. Robertson's approach completely ignores concrete development. If the black worker has become a partisan of the SL program in the trade unions, he does possess a world view, as yet incomplete, but clearly present. For that matter, the black workers are in advance of white workers precisely because they are being won, increasingly, for the world view, that they are part of the oppressed of the world because they are black, that whites (who own everything) are their enemies, that a fundamental upheaval will have to take place before they acquire freedom. This "Weltanschauung" is, of course, still rudimentary, and has been utilized by the black nationalists in reactionary and self-defeating activities, but it does exist, and can be developed into a Marxist conception.

Cde. Robertson's remark about the black worker of West Indian origin implies that he will not react to the racism in the US, and to the whites who practice it, in the same manner that other black workers do, a position which is essentially false.

Cde. Robertson should reflect more profoundly on the recruitability of the black worker who is alienated from other black workers. Obviously, the psychological make-up of such an individual must be severely distorted by self-loathing. Is not this the kind of individual most likely to be recruited by the ruling-class, to serve it as a policeman in the ghettos and prisons? Can such a psychologically unhealthy individual with no capacity for struggle help win more black workers to the SL?

Furthermore, Cde. Robertson's understanding of the basis for membership in a Trotskyist organization "today" completely separates theory from practice, and if applied consistently would transform Marxism from a materialist "guide to action" into an

"ideology ." On this basis, certainly, students, who are easily at home in the world of ideas, are more likely candidates for membership in a Trotskyist organization than workers, who have to be convinced, in practice, in activity, that ideas correspond to the reality they face, and that those who espouse them are people worthy of their confidence. The latter is, of course, not easily achieved, but this is exactly what the Memorandum supposedly posed as the task before the SL. Cde. Robertson's thinking in this connection seems to contain more than a hint of intellectual elitism, which, by undervaluing the workers, becomes opportunism.

In the words of Trotsky:

"All shades of opportunism are, in the last analysis, reducible to an incorrect valuation of the revolutionary forces and potential of the proletariat."

Nor is the question one of recruiting workers, and black workers, via the trade unions, en masse. Let the SL begin with two or three, convince them that not only do its ideas have merit, and that they are worthy people, but that they, the workers, have a full place in its ranks, in work and in thought. From this beginning much more will come. This is the process by which the Spartacist League can "develop a black Trotskyist cadre," as its document, Red and Black, a Class Struggle Approach to the Negro Struggle, avers to be its goal, a goal which Cde. Robertson has obviously abandoned at this time. The purpose of trade union activity by SL members seems to be for him largely a question of good, elementary political hygiene, necessary to Trotskyists, as well as a showcase for white radicals, and not at all the main question of attempting to set the most oppressed workers into political motion.

For Cde. Robertson, a dichotomy seems to exist between the "splinter propagandist group" and the mass party. The process by which the SL can develop from one to the other has not been elaborated by him in response to the challenge by the minority that he do so. It would seem that, in reality, he does not now see, and has never foreseen, an internal development of this nature for the SL, and, therefore, completely ignores the question.

He has recently reminded the PB of a difference between Cde. Turner and himself which occurred in 1964, when the Spartacist organization was first initiated. What seemed at that point to be merely a terminological difference, without deeper implications, has now to be seen in a new light.

Cde. Robertson took issue with Cde. Turner's conception that the newly formed Spartacist organization was the embryo of the future Leninist vanguard party. He, instead, took the position that Spartacist could be compared to a sperm or ovum, i.e., the haploid precursor to the viable organism. Cde. Robertson, whose even off-hand remarks are noted for their precision, was making a significant distinction between a life-form with a potential for development into the mature adult, and the germ cell which must await an external complement before it can become a separate, living organism with such potential.

At a recent PB meeting, Cde. Robertson, in summarizing his understanding the positions of the minority for the record, stated that the minority was of the opinion that the SL was the Leninist party already formed, "however embryonic." His statement crudely distorts the minority position, and also indicates, once again, that in this dispute Cde. Robertson prefers mechanical to dialectical thought. Moreover, Cde. Robertson seems to still believe in the conception that prevailed in the seventeenth century, before Leeuwenhoek, that the human embryo begins as a microscopic homunculus with all the organs fully differentiated. He seems to be unaware that the embryo goes through stages of development, from the one-celled, through the blastula, gastrula, and the fetal stages, in all of which quantity is transformed into quality. Another six months of gestation is still needed before the infant is born. At no point can

the developing organism be expected to perform like the adult, but it can realize its potential to become an adult. It can also become deformed or aborted, either because of internal developmental shortcomings, or because of hostile external factors, or by the interaction of both. But what purpose can a germ cell have except that of waiting?

That Cde. Robertson has consistently held and still holds a conception of "external" SL development was also clearly shown by a remark made by him to Cde. Turner at the SL Founding Conference in September 1966, that he could not, at that time, see any other direction for the future expansion of the SL. It would seem, therefore, that Cde. Robertson, as the National Chairman of the SL, has perpetuated an erroneous and limiting self-concept in and for the organization.

Objective and Subjective Factors

It is only in the past year and a half that the serious consequences attendant on this approach have begun to be fully felt by the SL, as a resultant and interaction of positive and negative objective and subjective factors.

The sharp upsurge in labor struggles finds the bulk of the SL membership uninvolved because, as it true for the other ostensibly radical organizations, its cadre is mainly derived from the student milieu.

The equally sharp upsurge in black consciousness and militancy acted to close off the ghettos to white radicals, and, therefore, also to the SL, whose cadre is predominantly white.

The heightening of anti-war activity, under the aegis of the partisans of so-called militant resistance activities to the Vietnam War and the draft, was matched by large, Popular Front-umbrella type demonstrations. The SL, true to its Marxist orientation, refused to adapt to petty-bourgeois radicals attempting either to substitute themselves in Narodnik-like adventurist fashion for the still politically quiescent working class, or seeking to impress the ruling class with numbers at the cost of program and clarity. The SL was therefore able to operate only at the periphery of the anti-war movement, while attempting to direct it toward the working class.

Similarly, within the electoral arena the formation of the Peace and Freedom Party on the West Coast, and its anaemic imitator on the East Coast, by "socialist" opportunists, operating without a socialist or labor party perspective, made it impossible for SL members to enter into it, and, again, found the SL attempting to work on the PFP adherents from the outside.

Under the circumstances, a certain isolation from the currents where struggle is taking place was inevitably thrust on the SL. However, the empiricist, anti-Marxist, "New Leftist," Maoist, and reformist solutions were so manifestly bankrupt, even before the aborted French Revolution, that the basic Marxist program could be expected to enable the SL to surmount this isolation. A revolutionary organization can sustain itself in enforced isolation, i.e., when opportunities for growth and influence are non-existent. It is another matter when opportunities are present which can be and are not grasped. Frustrations, sharp disputes, and concomitant organizational losses are then inevitable.

Suspension of Spartacist

The majority in the NY Local, and Cde. Robertson particularly, seem unaware of the damage done to the SL by the ten month hiatus between the tenth and eleventh issues of Spartacist, coming as it did at a time of increasing frustrations for the organization. Cde. Robertson has waxed indignant over what he feels to have been the tendency

to "panic" on the part of comrades. Cde. Turner, who, at a point when Spartacist No. 10 was already four months old, pressed his proposal for the emergency employment of a member of the PB as a part-time assistant to Cde. Robertson, to ensure that No. 11 was not further delayed, is seen as particularly culpable in this respect. The seemingly incomprehensible "panic" on the one hand, and inexcusable "laxity" on the other, turned out to be neither the one nor the other, but rather differing perspectives.

To Cde. Robertson, a "splinter" propagandist group, "living off its accumulated capital," has to be most concerned, not with the "form" of a regularly published organ -- not with convincing militants that it is a serious movement, possessing the necessary answers to present problems, that it was and is the only programmatic embodiment, in embryonic form, of the future American Leninist vanguard party -- but with the more important questions such as the "maintenance of the NO," and of a "propagandist line internationally." Fortunately, Cde. Robertson was able to find a solution to the problem of the press in the person of its new editor, Cde. Cunningham. But, if Cde. Cunningham should, for some reason, no longer be available, the frequency of the press would, evidently, again fall to one or two issues per year.

Of course, a Leninist organization must maintain its organizational structure and its international outlook and connections. It cannot, for the sake of a regular press, ignore other fundamental organizational and political needs. Of course, a small propagandist group will inevitably be hard pressed to function with any degree of regularity in any and all areas vital for the movement. It becomes necessary for such an organization, with its limited available resources, constantly to operate under emergency conditions, attending to the most pressing emergency first. However, the particularly low priority given the press by Cde. Robertson can now be more readily understood in the light of the present dispute. Even so, Cde. Robertson, who sees the SL as uninhabitable by workers, cannot be more serious about attracting student radicals without a fairly regular press.

A Conservative Tendency

Cde. Robertson, at a PB meeting ending several sessions of discussion concerning the functioning of the NO, and immediately prior to the opening of the present dispute, threatened to form a "conservative tendency" -- in the positive sense of the term, should he find it necessary -- against those whom he considers to be trying to burden the organization with tasks and responsibilities beyond its capacities.

It would seem that Cde. Robertson has, for some time, represented a conservative tendency in its negative sense. In analyzing the phenomena of conservatism in the party, Trotsky, in his Lessons of October, said the following:

"Each party, even the most revolutionary party, must inevitably produce its own organizational conservatism, for otherwise it would be lacking in necessary stability. This is wholly a question of degree. In a revolutionary party, the vitally necessary does of conservatism must be combined with complete freedom from routine, with initiative in orientation and daring in action. These qualities are put to the severest test during turning points in history ... Both conservatism and revolutionary initiative find their most concentrated expression in the leading organs in the party."

In an earlier section of the same pamphlet, Trotsky also said the following:

"Generally speaking, crises arise in the party at every serious turn in the party's course ... every period in the development of the party has special features of its own and calls for specific habits and methods of work. A tactical turn implies a greater or lesser break in these habits and methods ... the danger arises that if the turn is too abrupt or too sudden, and if in the preceding period too many

elements of inertia and conservatism have accumulated in the leading organ of the party, then the party proves itself unable to fulfill its leadership at that supreme and critical moment for which it has prepared itself in the course of years or decades."

It would seem that the difficult objective conditions under which the SL is required to function has brought to the fore the conservatism of Cde. Robertson, so that he is today in the position of the type of leader who inclines, in Trotsky's words:

"to drag the party back at the very moment when it must take a stupendous leap forward ... to see primarily difficulties and obstacles in the way of revolution, and to estimate each situation with a preconceived, though not always conscious, intention of avoiding any action."

The Robertson-Seymour Bloc

Cde. Robertson

Marx, in his letter to Kugelmann, April 17, 1871, in discussing the role of accidents as "part of the general course of development ... compensated by other accidents," also states:

"But acceleration and delay are very much dependent upon such 'accidents,' including the 'accident' of the character of the people who first head the movement."

Cde. Robertson has played a key and vital role in the formation and continued operation of the Spartacist movement. He has, until recently, been the only person in its ranks willing and able to assume the responsibility of being a full-time functionary. He has shown himself to be an articulate, audacious leader, able to deal incisively with many questions arising in the anti-war, student, electoral, and certain trade union arenas in which the non-specializing college graduate predominates. He has played a predominant role in developing the political positions of the SL. In the process, Cde. Robertson has demonstrated the capacity to take into account the many-sided aspects of a situation, and simultaneously deal with several political and organizational questions in depth, and with flexibility in tactical application.

Cde. Robertson's twenty years of political experience, his wide-ranging theoretical and practical knowledge, his acute intelligence, represent valuable assets for the SL. His independent mind, strong character, and dominant personality are qualities which a revolutionist must possess. Cde. Robertson's predominance in the organization is, by no means, accidental.

That a tendency toward uncritical acceptance of his judgement has also developed is understandable, given the lack of any comparable figure in the organization. That Cde. Robertson consciously encourages this tendency is also evident. Cde. Robertson has, as National Chairman, functioned in a manner calculated to preserve a relationship of master and pupil in the leading bodies of the SL, thereby, completely distorting the Leninist conception of a collective leadership. The operation of the National Office so as to entrust responsibility to leading comrades, which would enable them, in the process, to develop confidence in their capabilities and judgement, to gain expert knowledge in specific areas of SL activity, and thereby to expedite the work, is foreign to Cde. Robertson. He builds dependency. While he has been most insistent on strict adherence to the organizational forms of democratic centralism, with minutes methodically kept, the essential content has been the domination of Cde. Robertson. However, as he tends to function erratically, and to the extent that the National Office is a house with one pillar, the periods of Cde. Robertson's ebb coincide with the paralysis in National Office functioning. Cde. Robertson has increasingly tended to obscure the distinction between his own and the collective views of the SL leadership.

The positive quality of a firm will turns into its opposite when it becomes willfulness. Cde. Robertson's arrogance, his conviction of his own brilliance, and, the opposite side of the coin, a visible contempt for the judgements and conclusions of other comrades when they conflict with his own, have played and continue to play an exceedingly negative role in the SL, and have helped to weaken the bonds of comradeship within the organization. Where Cde. Robertson is unable to convince politically, and becomes persuaded that a threat is present to his control over the organization, he resorts to vituperation, and to the tightening of the organizational screws. By so doing, he derogates the political questions at issue into a mere contest of wills and only succeeds in driving intransigent or wavering comrades out of the organization. The portentous consequences of this approach to the SL, now in the throes of a sharp political struggle, in painfully obvious.

It is, however, Cde. Robertson's restricting conception of the SL -- perhaps originating as a reaction to the grandiose posturing of a host of self-proclaimed heirs to the mantle of Trotsky, which now seems to serve him as a means to avoid a recognition of the SL's responsibility to become the party of Marxism in the US -- which is most pernicious to the organization.

Cde. Seymour

Cde. Seymour, since becoming a member of Spartacist, has demonstrated a willingness to accept increasing responsibility in its ranks. Since assuming the post of local organizer, he has been able to discharge his duties with increasing efficiency, despite his own inclination for, and greater facility in, propagandist activities. Cde. Seymour, who teaches economics at the college level, has also lead classes in Marxist economics. He has evidently set himself the goal of becoming a serious Marxist leader of the organization. His hard work for the SL has been amply demonstrated in this period, as well as his potential for leadership.

Cde. Seymour, an alert and intelligent comrade, seems to suffer from a pronounced inability to appreciate the dialectical method. Of the leading comrades in the local, Cde. Seymour's thought processes best seem to match the description by Engels, in his Socialism, Utopian and Scientific, of the metaphysician:

"To the metaphysician, things and their mental reflexes, ideas, are isolated, are to be considered one after the other, and apart from each other, are objects of investigation fixed, rigid, given once and for all. He thinks in absolutely irreconcilable antitheses. His communication is 'Yea, Yea; Nay, Nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.'"

An example of Cde. Seymour's mechanical mode of thought is his continuing conviction that MLCRC is and was an exercise in mass leafleting, divorced from caucus building. Cde. Seymour, whose focus of interest seems to be mainly in campus, anti-war, and electoral areas, has gazed upon MLCRC with a jaundiced eye from the beginning. He has been skeptical about the underlying conceptions of the Memorandum on the Negro Struggle, although some recent indications exist that he has shifted his position from one of skepticism to one of uncertainty.

Cde. Seymour originally took the position that the super-exploitation of black workers "is not a civil rights issue as such" for the trade unions, that there are unions whose membership is predominately black, and who are "poorly paid, but that this is not discrimination, per se (because) no better jobs are available." He also indicated that while the TUEL (Trade Union Educational League) had a "live issue" -- industrial unionism -- around which the early American communists could launch a struggle, a similar situation did not exist on the issue of super-exploitation. It is therefore not necessary, in Cde. Seymour's opinion, "to have a set of demands against discrimination" in the unions, and a "broader" approach to trade union activity should

be posed.

In voicing his disagreements forthrightly, Cde. Seymour takes a welcome departure from those who passively accepted the line heretofore. Open disagreement, at least, produces the possibility of discussion from which all participants can benefit.

The root error in Cde. Seymour's thinking seems to lie in his interpretation of the following statements by Marx, in Volume I of Capital, pages 44 and 170-171, respectively, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1967:

"Simple average labor, it is true, varies in character in different countries and at different times, but in a particular society it is given. Skilled labor counts only as simple labor intensified, or rather as multiplied simple labor."

"The value of labor-power is determined as in the case of every other commodity, by the labor-time necessary for the production, and consequently the reproduction, of this special article ... The value of labour-power is the value of the labourer ... in his normal state as a labouring individual. His natural wants, such as food, clothing, fuel, and housing vary according to the climatic and other physical conditions of his country. On the other hand, the number and extent of his so-called necessary wants, as also the modes of satisfying them, are themselves the product of historical development ... on the degree of civilization of a country ... on the conditions ... habits and degree of comfort in which the class of free labourers has been formed. In contradistinction, therefore, to the case of other commodities, there enters into the determination of the value of labour-power, a historical and moral element. Nevertheless, in a given country, in a given period, the average quantity of the means of subsistence necessary for the labourer is practically known."

Therefore, evidently concludes Cde. Seymour, inasmuch as Marx also states that commodities tend to exchange at their values, one rate of exploitation prevails within individual capitalist countries. His abstract and academic approach to this question not only ignores the concrete reality in capitalist society, but also misconstrues Marx, who, together with Engels, was well aware of the phenomenon of super-exploitation in industrially developed as well as in colonial and semi-colonial countries. For example, on pages 599-600 of Volume I, Marx says the following:

"In the chapters on the production of surplus-value it was constantly presupposed that wages are at least equal to the value of labour-power. Forcible reduction of wages below this value plays, however, in practice too important a part, for us not to pause upon it for a moment. It in fact, transforms, within certain limits, the labourer's necessary consumption-fund into a fund for the accumulation of capital. ... But if the labourers could live on air they could not be bought at any price. The zero of their cost is, therefore, a limit in a mathematical sense, always beyond their reach ... the constant tendency of capital is to force the cost of labour back towards this zero."

In his letter to Schlüter of March 30, 1892, Engels says the following about conditions in the US:

"Now a working-class has developed and has also to a great extent organized itself on trade-union lines. But it still takes up an aristocratic attitude ... leaves the ordinary badly paid occupations to the immigrants, of whom only a small section enter the aristocratic trades. ... And your bourgeoisie knows much better even than the Austrian government how to play off one nationality against the others, Jews, Italians, Bohemians, etc., against Germans and Irish; and each one against the other, so that differences in the standard of life of different workers exist, I believe, in New York to an extent unheard of elsewhere ... and to cap it all, John

Chinaman stands in the background who far surpasses them all in his ability to live on next to nothing."

To a Marxist, therefore, discrimination today not only consists in preventing black and Spanish-speaking workers from entering the "aristocratic trades," but, as well, in the playing-off of the white workers against the black, "so that differences in the standard of life of different workers exist." That is, as a result of the "historical and moral element," a situation exists where more than one "average quantity of the means of subsistence necessary for the labourer" is accepted and more than one "normal state of the labouring individual" exists; and, where part of the "consumption-fund" of the black and Spanish-speaking workers is transformed "into a fund for the accumulation of capital," i.e., super-exploitation. The trade unions, which take an "aristocratic attitude" to the black and Spanish-speaking workers, fail to organize the "ordinary badly paid occupations" or, the labor bureaucrats who do organize them usually sign "sweetheart" contracts with their bosses, which reinforce the "historical and moral element" of racial discrimination.

Cde. Seymour should realize that the idea that the "ordinary badly paid occupations are inherently so is an aristocratic and fetishistic attitude, not qualitatively differing from that of the common, garden-variety capitalist apologist, who sees the solution to the poverty of the "lower classes" in education. The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King once declaimed to a black audience, "Learn, baby, learn, so that you can earn, baby, earn." The same sentiment, when directed toward black workers by a white, inevitably takes on, not merely an aristocratic, but also a chauvinistic flavor. Cde. Seymour desires to function as a revolutionary communist, and is certainly no chauvinist. He has reached his erroneous position because of a scholastic approach to Marxist economics, and his own isolation from working class struggles.

Other ORO's and the Trade Unions

Some ORO's are beginning to move toward making the fight against discrimination a key question, despite Cde. Seymour's belief that this issue is too narrow for trade union caucuses to center on.

The Independent Socialists recently published an article by Cleophus Pierce, entitled "Memphis, Murder and Meanysm," in which he concludes:

"An attack on racism in the unions could pave the way for a widespread translation of black militancy into trade union forms, a major advance for the struggle for black liberation as well as for the labor movement."

A pamphlet by Victor Perlo, the Communist Party's chief economist, published in May 1968, entitled American Labor Today, has the following paragraph:

"A high degree of Negro-white unity was achieved in the struggles of the 1930's. What is necessary, in advance of the situation prevailing then, is that in the next major upsurge of labor struggles the achievement of real equality for Negroes be a key demand, with insistence on all the special measures necessary to realize that equality."

Of course, these organizations, to the extent that they can implement this policy, will try to adapt the Negro Question to their particular brands of opportunism. To the extent that they become the pioneers on this question, and win workers to their politics, they will tend to reap the harvest, which, as innovators, the SL -- with its transitional line -- could have gotten, commensurate with its size and influence.

It should be noted that Cde. Robertson, who disagrees with Cde. Seymour on the question of super-exploitation, has failed to voice this disagreement at any of the meet-

ings held to date. The bloc of Robertson and Seymour, which, it would seem, does not feel free to openly disagree on relevant aspects of this dispute, insists on amalgamating the positions of the minority which has openly discussed its differences on subordinate points, and which, because it is not organized as a faction, feels perfectly free to do so.

Variations on a Theme?

Cde. Robertson has recently proposed that the "pan-union" functions of MLCRC be adopted by the labor committee of a somewhat moribund white radical community organization, which, as a result of an infusion of SL comrades, and with SL comrades providing the leadership, continues to function.

This organization is seen as providing the electoral outlet which the SL vitally needs. It can operate on the basis of a broad transitional program, attractive to socialists, while not requiring the commitment and discipline of a Leninist organization. It can concretely oppose the opportunist politics of the PFP on the electoral arena via a congressional candidate, and, hopefully, attract some of the radical youth to principled socialist politics, and some, eventually, to the SL.

The labor committee, now non-existent, is to be resurrected, and is to assume "pan-union" leafleting at selected work places, utilizing the radicals in the community organization instead of the SL cadre. Present indications are that the SL perspectives which promise to reach black and Puerto Rican trade unionists are of great interest to those few original members of the community organization who still remain. The original proposal by the local majority of a rigid dichotomy between the caucuses in the trade unions, and the leafleting by the labor committee, has since been modified. SL members in caucuses will now be allowed to function in the labor committee. Leafleting, to the extent that it strikes a response in the work-place, can be followed-up by the labor committee's attempts to organize a caucus.

Some questions remain unanswered, however. The MLCRC was devised to reach the most oppressed workers. Student and other radicals were to be enlisted for this purpose. Who is the labor committee of the community organization devised to reach? Has the majority merely taken from the minority position in eclectic fashion its "rational kernel" -- the potential attractiveness of its trade union line to radicals? And is the agreement on caucus building by the labor committee only a sop to the minority?

If the labor committee is to be involved in both "pan-union" activities and building caucuses, then why break up the MLCRC in the first place? The rejoinder to this question until now has been that MLCRC was purely an SL instrument, whereas the community organization is broader. This reply is completely erroneous, in that it inverts the entire situation. While the MLCRC, following the desertion of two key SL members in the hospital field and the dispute in the SL, was pared down to SL members it was never its purpose to function on this basis. Prior to the defection, MLCRC had had at its meetings other hospital workers, an ex-CORE member, and unattached radicals. On the other hand, the community organization may begin to speak with the voice of Jacob, but the hands of Esau will soon become visible, if only because the enemies of the SL will see to it. Will it not then have difficulty attracting other radicals?

Isn't the form of an organizationally unattached body of trade unionists, who are in agreement on a transitional program, better than that of a community organization composed of middle-class type radicals operating under a socialist banner? In either case the drawing power or lack thereof does not depend so much on the form of the initiation but on its content. Which again brings to the fore the first question, in its broadest aspect, of the need for a TUEL-type organizational campaign in the trade unions against the super-exploitation of black and Spanish-speaking workers. MLCRC was, in essence, a small-scale TUEL. Is the community organization seen in such a role?

After distribution of six MLCRC newsletters to hospital workers, after clear indications of developing sympathy for the MLCRC program by these workers, after having finally developed a number of regular contacts, Cde. Robertson insists that further hospital work be abandoned, unless an immediate breakthrough occurs, inasmuch as no SL members are presently employed in this field. He insists, instead, that the SL cadre be placed exclusively in light industry, and into a situation which may not rip for a year or two. Cde. Robertson reasons that the workers in light industry are "more like us," and therefore, that SL members would more readily enter and remain in this field than in hospital work. No consideration will, therefore, be given to sending other SL members into this vital field. This approach clearly reveals that Cde. Robertson and the majority in the NY local are not in the least serious about reaching the most exploited black and Spanish-speaking workers.

Class Basis of the Dispute

In analyzing the struggle in the SWP in 1939-40, Trotsky, in "A Petty-Bourgeois Opposition in the SWP," said the following:

"Any serious fight in the party is always in the final analysis a reflection of the class struggle."

This concept is elaborated in Lessons of October:

"A revolutionary party is subjected to the pressure of other political forces. ... During a tactical turn and the resulting internal regroupments and frictions, the party's power of resistance becomes weakened. From this the possibility always arises that the internal groupings in the party, which originate from the necessity of a turn in tactics, may develop far beyond the original controversial points of departure and serve as a support of various class tendencies. To put the case more plainly: the party which does not keep step with the historical tasks of its own class becomes, or runs the risk of becoming, the indirect tool of other classes.

"If what we have said above is true of every serious turn in tactics, it is all the more true of great turns in strategy. By tactics, in politics, we understand, using the analogy of military science, the art of conducting isolated operations. By strategy, we understand the art of conquest, i.e., the seizure of power."

The class basis of the present dispute in the SL is clearly evident. If the characteristics of the Robertson-Seymour bloc previously delineated are listed, one finds that it is distinguished by an abstract, mechanical, metaphysical mode of thought, by an intellectual arrogance, by an elitist tendency to undervalue the working class, by an eclectic joining of bits and pieces of those aspects of the Memorandum on the Negro Struggle which Cde. Robertson feels can be adapted to petty-bourgeois arenas, by a tendency to restrict the SL to those activities largely involving the petty-bourgeoisie by the domineering posture of Cde. Robertson which acts to reinforce dependency and tutelary relationships in the leading bodies of the SL, and the entire modus operandi in which he carries out the responsibilities of the National Chairmanship. Cde. Robertson, as the authority figure of the SL, does not attempt to help Cde. Seymour overcome his scholastic tendencies. On the contrary, he fortifies them in an unprincipled bloc, in which absolute disagreement exists on the fundamental question of super-exploitation. The Robertson-Seymour bloc is obviously a petty-bourgeois tendency in the SL. Moreover, the physiognomy of left-centrism, which can reach academically correct conclusions about the nature of events and the role of the working class, but in practical activity nullifies its findings, can also be clearly discerned.

Tactics and strategy relate to each other as the part to the whole, i.e., a dialectical unity of opposites, in which the one is continually interacting, interpenetrating and being transformed into the other. What was initially described as a tactical turn in the SL has now become a struggle over strategic direction, over whether the SL will

orientate toward the petty-bourgeoisie or the working class.

The Marxism of the SL

Marx begins The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte by stating:

"Hegel remarks somewhere that all facts and personages of great importance in world history occur, as it were, twice. He forgot to add: the first time as tragedy, the second as farce."

Marx, in developing this observation, indicates that the combatants engaged in a current struggle seize upon history and its figures in order to justify themselves and buttress their cause, but in disregard of the factors operating in a different historical period.

Cde. Robertson, in the course of increasing the organizational pressures within the SL, charges that the minority has a "split perspective." Cde. Kay Ellens, at one of the PB meetings discussing NO functioning, asked whether the leadership of the SL saw itself engaged in a "holding action." Both remarks are not only pertinent to the present dispute, but seem also to be echoes of the struggle within the SWP between the predecessor to the SL, the Revolutionary Tendency, and the then SWP majority.

Cde. Robertson's charge has the character of a self-fulfilling prophecy, to the extent that he insists on creating an invidious, malicious, uncomradely atmosphere within the organization, and substitutes organizational muscle for political discussion. In this respect, he apes the leaders of the SWP.

Cde. Ellens, who raised the question of a "holding action," touched upon the essence of the NO's present perspectives, which has no conception for the SL of development in a Leninist party.

At the same time, it is necessary to recognize that the situations in the SWP and SL, while containing certain similarities, also possess essential differences, and were created under historically different conditions. The situations are analogous to the extent that the majority in the NY local retains the conception of the need to build a working class vanguard party only in theory, while in practice ignoring the role of the SL in this respect. However, the SWP, abandoning its perspective toward the working class, sought substitutes in the petty-bourgeois radical elements, and adjusted its program in order to adapt to these forces. It has constantly tried to accommodate its politics in order to maintain the Popular Front-Umbrella relationship with the CP and pacifists. While it can occasionally be reminded of its past by, for example, the recent class struggles in France, and can even discuss the need for a Leninist vanguard party, it fills this form with a different content, in which the emphasis is on the "vanguard role" of the students and youth.

The SL, on the other hand, has proven, in the four and one half years of its existence, that it is the only organization in the US able to develop thoroughly Marxist positions on all the issues before it, and that it is able to withstand the pressures to make opportunist adaptations, as its positions on the American Question (Negro, anti-war, electoral), the Russian Question (China, Cuba, etc.), and other international questions, such as the Arab-Israeli war, demonstrate.

The thrust of its program tends to push the SL beyond the narrow limits devised for it by the present leadership, limits which also reflect the hostile environment in tendencies to inertia and routine. For example, the SL, by having accepted the need for civil rights caucuses in the trade unions, will have to go beyond token involvement in one union. An active civil rights caucus in one union will, inevitably, face revolutionists with the need to extend it to other unions. As the comrades work in the

unions and win adherents for the transitional program, they will find that candidates for the SL do emerge. They will, in other words, constantly be under the compulsion of transforming the SL, so that it can become an organization able to attract and keep workers, or, failing this, to remain a small, isolated sect.

Crisis of Leadership

The SL membership should consider the early history of the American Trotskyists. From the time in 1928 when Cannon and other followers of Trotsky were expelled from the CP, until 1933, they numbered approximately one hundred nationally, a quantity not appreciably differing from that of the SL today. This small movement was able to develop into a party which, in spite of its own shortcomings, played a major role in the development of the world Trotskyist movement.

The fundamental need of the SL at this time is for an alternative leadership which will accept its historic responsibility to build such a vanguard party in the US, and which does not quail before the contradiction between the small size of the SL and the large magnitude of its responsibility.

Harry Turner, 17 July 1968

Attachment to "Whither the SL"

24 July 1968

The undersigned are in agreement with the basic thrust and general conclusions of the document, "Whither the SL," and wish to be associated with it.

To the extent that any differences exist in emphasis or on subordinate points, supplemental papers will be presented by the individual concerned.

Jerry E.

Kay Ellens

Hugh F.

Shirley Stoute

I. ON THE FACTION FIGHT IN THE NEW YORK LOCAL

by Joseph Seymour

It is understandable that many comrades outside New York will not understand the issues in the dispute or comprehend the deep factional heat. In fact, to many New York comrades, including myself, the intense factional hostility appeared sudden and unjustified by the operational differences between the comrades involved.

For this reason comrade Turner's document, the first fully accepted by the minority as a statement of their position, is most welcome, as it formalizes the differences and provides a framework for discussion. Unfortunately, comrade Turner's document has a number of weaknesses, apart from its main substantive positions. It fails to present the positions of majority comrades accurately, it begs many of the important tactical issues in the dispute (such as the relationship between the existing radical movement and the working class) and it fails to deal systematically with theoretical issues involved (such as the relationship between black and white workers and proletarianization as a categorical imperative of the Trotskyist movement). The most serious weakness of comrade Turner's document is that it presents the New York majority as wanting to liquidate trade union work, when, in fact, one of the main reasons for dissolving MLCRC was to facilitate creating left oppositions in key unions. Comrade Turner may strongly disagree with this as a tactic, but he has no right to deny the motivation for it. Because of the inadequacies of the Turner document, a full understanding of the factional situation and political implications thereof requires a consideration not only of the official minority document, but the Turner memorandum, the Ellen's working class perspective document, the actions and statements of minority comrades, as well as issues not directly touched upon in the dispute.

THE ORIGINS OF THE DISPUTE

Although some subterranean frictions had existed in the P.B. for some time, the present dispute erupted over the question of the allocation of local forces, as comrade Turner has indicated. The local organizer believed that the existing personnel assignments did not reflect our political priorities. In particular, we did not have the forces to wage any kind of struggle for our position in the anti-war movement. Therefore, he attempted to get some comrades to switch their main area of work from MLCRC to the anti-war movement and related radical organizations.

Comrade Turner does not deny our failure to fight inside the anti-war movement, describing our relationship to it as "peripheral," which in practice largely meant handing our literature at demonstrations. Since we (including the minority comrades) had spent a great deal of time, as well as our literary resources, in evaluating the anti-war movement and developing a tactical perspective for it, the "peripheral" relationship of the New York local represented a failure to carry out our line toward the anti-war movement, as well as a serious imbalance between our deliberations about the anti-war movement and our attempts to change it.

At this point comrade Turner and I, first cross political swords. While comrade Turner attributes our supposed failure to carry out our line toward black trade unionists to organizational decisions, motivated by political considerations he views our failure to carry out our line toward the anti-war movement as caused by the character of the anti-war movement itself. Referring to the men-of-good-will resistance polarization of the anti-war movement, Comrade Turner states, "therefore, able to operate only at the periphery of the anti-war movement," implying that the political character of the anti-war movement made it unprincipled for us to enter it in any way. However, the anti-war movement was neither so

ideologically homogeneous nor organizationally monolithic that entry would have been impossible. Moreover, during the past six months, while the MLCRC dispute has raged, the old anti-war movement has undergone a process of political disintegration caused by the upcoming elections and peace maneuvers. That the anti-war movement was capable of developing new directions is indicated by the development of radical third parties out of it and a generally more favorable attitude toward working within the army, as against resistance, as well as increased radical activity within the army, itself. The erroneousness of comrade Turner's views are obvious when one considers that outside New York, our comrades have fought very well within the anti-war movement. In many parts of the country we've been active in S.D.S., a key anti-war organization. Our West Coast comrades were oppositionists in trade union SAME, and in and around the Peace and Freedom Party, and our New Orleans group has functioned in the mainstream of the anti-war movement.

Any number of personnel-organizational mechanisms were available to establish strong sections of the New York local in the anti-war movement. Comrade Turner could have been active in his trade union anti-war committee. Comrades Turner, Hugh F., Jerry, E., or Sandra N. could have signed up for a night college course, giving them an entrée into the student anti-war movement. Sandra Newman, rather than becoming a hospital worker, could have taken over most of Liz' N.O. functions freeing Liz to work at Columbia. Comrades Mark S., Turner or, later, Ellens could have become local organizer, freeing me to become active in New School S.D.S. whose leadership is quite receptive to Trotskyist ideas. Related to this whole line of reasoning is the fact that we had two comrades at C.C.N.Y. for the whole year, and they weren't even able to organize a single public talk. Moreover, whatever campus work was done, was done primarily by Donna H., although comrade Stoute had more time and is far more politically competent. Since its inception, Comrade Stoute has regarded MLCRC as her main area of functioning. The point is that our failure to carry out our line toward the anti-war movement was caused by collective and personal organizational decisions, motivated by political attitudes. Since its inception, MLCRC has been at the heart of these organizational-political considerations.

To fully understand the local situation, when the New York organizer and national chairman decided that the allocation of forces did not correspond to our priorities, a detailed description of the New York personnel situation is required. Let us consider the local at the beginning of April, prior to the Henes-Newman split and the influx of summer comrades. Of the 18 functioning members of the New York local, 11 had trade union work as their main area of external activity, 4 in the Social Service Employees Union, 7 in MLCRC. Moreover, MLCRC had within it two very close sympathizers gained through other work. Of the seven other comrades in the local, three were more or less full-time national office functionaries, although comrade Turner, who has expressed such indignation over the infrequency of the press, actually proposed that our new editor take a part-time job as a hospital worker and participate in MLCRC! A fourth comrade was the local organizer, who was the only person in the local doing sustained work in another radical organization. A fifth and sixth comrades were Bob Ross, an inactive, professional malcontent, who was obviously on his way out, and Donna Ross, who had a full time job and was going to night school, as well as having serious criticisms of the organization. The seventh comrade, comrade Turner unsuccessfully attempted to get to take a union job and participate in MLCRC. While Comrade Turner insists, even vehemently, that he is in favor of a balanced approach and work in the petit-bourgeois radical movement, in practice he has favored personal assignments that would reduce our involvement in the radical movement to an essentially literary one.

My first desire was simply to get a few of the non-trade union members of MLCRC to pull out and devote themselves full time to other arenas. The opposition of MLCRC's leading comrades to this, the arbitrariness of deciding which non-union comrades should stay in MLCRC and which should not, and growing political criticisms of MLCRC's functioning led me to take the stronger position that, with the exception of comrade Turner, only those comrades active in, or about to be active in trade unions should be in MLCRC. It was only the defection of the two comrades in the hospital workers union, and the routinist reaction of the leading MLCRC comrades to this, that led comrade Robertson to conclude that the MLCRC should be dissolved into a fraction in another, omnibus union, where we had a good possibility of locating four comrades. But before we discuss the Robertson proposal to dissolve MLCRC as it then existed, a word on the Ross-Newman split is in order:

Unfortunately, comrade Turner did not discuss the Ross-Newman split, since it sheds light on the alleged deep hostility of the New York majority to trade union work and MLCRC. For some time Bob Ross had expressed sympathy for the hippy-Maoist, Greenwich Village anti-war groups, whose main activity was getting beat up by cops. He told the local he wanted to work with them, ostensibly to recruit to Spartacist, and the local reluctantly agreed to authorize him. We were all surprised when Sandra Newman and Sam Smith, our two hospital worker activists, said they also wanted to work with Bob R. in the Village radical movement. All the leading comrades in New York, including the national chairman and local organizer, tried to discourage Smith and Newman from doing this, and to impress upon them that the organization attached great importance to building an oppositional caucus in the hospital workers' union. The particular incident which led to their split was the local Exec's voting unanimously that Smith and Newman should participate with the hospital workers' contingent at the spring peace demonstration, rather than with the Village radicals, as they desired.

With the Newman and Smith defection, the majority, and initially, comrade Turner concluded that our chances of building anything in the hospital workers' union was nil, since not only didn't we have any comrades there, but the two people we attempted to build around were now enemies. Comrade Ellens dissented, maintaining that if we continue our previous work, we could still build an opposition around contacts, and comrade Turner has since come to the same conclusion. Since the hospital workers' union had been the sole public arena for MLCRC, it seemed logical that MLCRC should gradually transform itself into a fraction in another fertile union, where we had comrades and likely to get more in. As a secondary after-thought, it was decided that the more general propagandistic activities of MLCRC could be usefully combined with our other activities in the radical movement by using it as a base for a labor-civil rights committee of a New Left socialist organization the Spartacist League had fallen heir to. A detailed discussion of the dissolution of MLCRC, its aftermath, and the disputes caused will appear further in this document, but first a number of important theoretical and political questions involved in this dispute should be taken up.

We have seen so far that the MLCRC's reflex of grabbing personnel for the hospital work has, in fact, threatened a balanced division of forces in the NYC local between this work and other important aspects of our functioning. We have also sought to show by some examination of the detailed history of the NYC local disputes that Comrade Turner cannot truthfully claim that the majority has wanted to liquidate trade union work. The majority held that, after the political demise of Ross and Newman -- i.e. the liquidation of a Spartacist fraction in the hospital workers' union -- we had only a toenail-hold left there and should, while continuing with our propaganda toward the hospitals through the period of their

contract negotiations, shift MLCRC over to an energetic pursuit of an SL fraction in another union which had a high concentration of black and Puerto Rican workers and was accessible to our comrades, one comrade being already an applicant to that union and at least two others employed in job categories which are covered by that union. It has also been mainly the majority comrades (e.g. Nelson, Robertson, Henry) who, faced with the virtual abdication of Turner as chairman of the SL's national Trade Union Commission, have in their writing and travels encouraged comrades nationally to seek to implement the "Memorandum on the Negro Struggle" in their local areas and have done whatever supervision of such work has been done at all. The majority has participated as members of the NYC local in the distribution of the MLCRC leaflets to hospitals all over the city. The minority's only claim to being the trade union wing of the SL has consisted in its stubborn insistence that it maintain an oversized force of people and work indefinitely from the outside, regardless of the need for party fractions inside unions, in its one pet union -- hospital workers.

31 July 1968

II. SUPER-EXPLOITATION AND ALL THAT

by Joseph Seymour

No member of the majority and, as far as one can tell, no member of the minority, except comrade Turner both orally and in writing in "Whither the Spartacist League", regards the super-exploitation of black workers as a major issue in the dispute. The contention that my positions on MLCRC derive from differences over the concept of super-exploitation is factually incorrect. As previously indicated, my initial positions on this question stemmed from my judgement, in the capacity as local organizer, that the local allocation of forces did not correspond to our political priorities, and that is all. The question of super-exploitation was not raised in the local debate over MLCRC's future, and only came up in inconclusive and disorganized conversations between comrade Turner and myself after the key vote had been taken. The views on this subject, comrade Turner ascribes to me are quite inaccurate, as will become evident.

To the extent that comrade Turner regards the majority faction as unprincipled because (it is alleged) I oppose MLCRC out of differences over the super-exploitation of black workers and comrade Robertson out of organizational conservatism (the views of the other majority comrades, including two full and three alternate central committee members are apparently unimportant), his position is erroneous. All majority comrades are united in the belief that the principal way in which the Spartacist League will grow into an effective, fighting propaganda group on the road to a mass revolutionary party is to recruit radicals, including radical workers, by fighting for program within the radical movement, in this period, rather than devoting our major forces to work within the trade unions.

Despite the fact that the theoretical issue of super-exploitation of black workers has no operational bearing on the factional situation, it is worth discussing because it has educational value and indicates certain characteristics of the minority's thinking. But before discussing it, it is necessary to make a few points indicating what major political issues turn on "the fundamental question of super-exploitation".

All majority comrades believe a) that black workers are the most economically exploited and radical section of the American working class and b) that opposition to de facto and formal racial discrimination and emphasis on raising the wages of the poorest paid (in many areas, largely black) workers will be an important part of our trade union work. Comrade Turner is free to argue that these political conclusions depend on accepting that the rate of exploitation of black workers is greater than that of whites, but I'm not sure he really wants to argue this.

A Look at Political Economy

Despite comrade Turner's lengthy quotations from Das Kapital, I believe many comrades may not understand what this dispute is all about.

The essence of the Marxian theory of exploitation is that, with the prevailing technology and stock of productive equipment, workers can produce more than their normal standard of living, in a physically tolerable working day. Marx called the number of hours needed to produce the normal standard of consumer goods of the average laborer, the "value of labor power". Marx held that capitalists hired workers at the money equivalent of their value

II. SUPER-EXPLOITATION AND ALL THAT

by Joseph Seymour

No member of the majority and, as far as one can tell, no member of the minority, except comrade Turner both orally and in writing in "Whither the Spartacist League", regards the super-exploitation of black workers as a major issue in the dispute. The contention that my positions on MLCRC derive from differences over the concept of super-exploitation is factually incorrect. As previously indicated, my initial positions on this question stemmed from my judgement, in the capacity as local organizer, that the local allocation of forces did not correspond to our political priorities, and that is all. The question of super-exploitation was not raised in the local debate over MLCRC's future, and only came up in inconclusive and disorganized conversions between comrade Turner and myself after the key vote had been taken. The views on this subject, comrade Turner ascribes to me are quite inaccurate, as will become evident.

To the extent that comrade Turner regards the majority faction as unprincipled because (it is alleged) I oppose MLCRC out of differences over the super-exploitation of black workers and comrade Robertson out of organizational conservatism (the views of the other majority comrades, including two full and three alternate central committee members are apparently unimportant), his position is erroneous. All majority comrades are united in the belief that the principal way in which the Spartacist League will grow into an effective, fighting propaganda group on the road to a mass revolutionary party is to recruit radicals, including radical workers, by fighting for program within the radical movement, in this period, rather than devoting our major forces to work within the trade unions.

Despite the fact that the theoretical issue of super-exploitation of black workers has no operational bearing on the factional situation, it is worth discussing because it has educational value and indicates certain characteristic of the minority's thinking. But before discussing it, it is necessary to make a few points indicating what major political issues turn on "the fundamental question of super-exploitation".

All majority comrades believe a) that black workers are the most economically exploited and radical section of the American working class and b) that opposition to de facto and formal racial discrimination and emphasis on raising the wages of the poorest paid (in many areas, largely black) workers will be an important part of our trade union work. Comrade Turner is free to argue that these political conclusions depend on accepting that the rate of exploitation of black workers is greater than that of whites, but I'm not sure he really wants to argue this.

A Look at Political Economy

Despite comrade Turner's lengthy quotations from Das Kapital, I believe many comrades may not understand what this dispute is all about.

The essence of the Marxian theory of exploitation is that, with the prevailing technology and stock of productive equipment, workers can produce more than their normal standard of living, in a physically tolerable working day. Marx called the number of hours needed to produce the normal standard of consumer goods of the average laborer, the "value of labor power". Marx held that capitalists hired workers at the money equivalent of their value

of labor power, but made them work longer hours than was necessary to produce an equivalent of standard of living. The value of the commodities (measured by labor time required to produce it) produced over and above the equivalent of the worker's wages, Marx called "surplus value". Thus, if a worker worked 8 hours, and required 6 hours to produce an equivalent to his consumption, the surplus value he produced was 2 hours.

Marx called the ratio of surplus value (very roughly profits per worker) to the value of labor power (wages) the "rate of surplus value" or "rate of exploitation". In the example in the above paragraph, the rate of exploitation is 2 over 6, or $1/3$. As the quotation from Marx comrade Turner cites indicates, Marx believed that, although different types of workers received different wages, the rate of exploitation of all workers tended to be the same. Some comrades might find this difficult to conceive, and an illustration might help. Consider a piece rate system, where a worker receives \$1 for producing a hat, which sells for \$1.50. An average worker produces six hats a day, receiving \$6 in wages, while his employer receives a profit of \$3 on the hats he produces. The worker's rate of exploitation is \$3 over \$6, or $1/2$. A superior worker produces nine hats a day. His wage was \$9, but the profit of his work was \$4.50. The rate of exploitation of the superior worker was \$4.50 over \$9, or $1/2$, also. Marx believed that rates of exploitation between different occupations were similar to rates of exploitation between different quality workers in a piece rate system.

The key question is why did Marx believe this, or, more precisely, what is the mechanism which tends to make all occupational rates of exploitation equal. In brief, the mechanism is that a differential rate of exploitation means a differential rate of profit between industries, and, therefore, capitalists in the relatively low profit industry will switch to the relatively high profit industry. Thus, let us say a high wage industry pays its workers \$100 a week and the average product per worker sells for \$120, while in a low wage industry, wages are \$50 a week and the product per worker sells for \$65. This means that capitalists in the high wage industry only receive \$20 in profit for every \$100 they pay in wages, while capitalists in the low wage industry receive \$30. Naturally, capitalists will seek to leave the high wage industry and invest in the low wage one. As they do this, the rate of exploitation will be equalized by one or a combination of four mechanisms: as employers move out of the high wage industry, this results in unemployment, and workers in that industry are forced to accept a pay cut. Two, the increased demand for labor in the low wage industry causes wages to rise. Three, employers in the low wage industry are forced to hire less efficient workers, reducing the rate of surplus value. And four, the expansion of commodities for sale in the low wage industry will drive down their price, since the demand for these products is not unlimited.

Despite Marx's clear statement that the rate of exploitation tends toward uniformity and the strong logic behind this position, comrade Turner insists that "super-exploitation" (i.e., different rates of exploitation for different groups of workers) are not only possible, but are an accepted part of Marx's theoretical model, and he quotes two passages to prove this. However, these quotations prove nothing of the kind. The first, from Das Kapital, relates to the fact that during a severe depression, with widespread and prolonged un-employment, wages may fall below their traditional norms. This is completely irrelevant, since it concerns the rate of exploitation for the labor force as a whole, whereas super-exploitation refers to differential rates of exploitation between sections of the labor force. The second quotation, from Engels, does refer to different wages and standards of living between workers of different

nationalities, attributing this to discrimination keeping certain nationalities out of the better paying occupations. He does not state, however, that the rate of exploitation between low and high wage occupations are different.

Comrade Turner's error is that he believes a uniform rate of exploitation depends on all workers in the economy being accustomed to the same "quantity of the means of subsistence" (which is really quite implausible), rather than it being a result of competition in the labor, capital, and commodities market. Marx defined the value of labor power as "the value of necessaries habitually required by the average laborer". The use of the term "average", in itself, indicates a) that more than one habitual standard of living exists and that b) each individual does not receive a wage equal to his particular habitual standard of living. Considering differences between occupations, the key question is what is the "average laborer" an average of. It certainly isn't uniform for the entire labor force, for, in that case, all workers would receive the same wages. It is the average of that number of competent, but lowest wage, workers that a particular industry can employ profitably. Thus, if the glove industry requires 10,000 workers to produce as many gloves as can be sold at a normal profit, the 10,000 efficient glove workers, who are willing to work for the least wages, will be the base from which the industry wage is determined. This means that a large influx of cheap efficient labor will lower the value of labor power in the relevant industries, and if, sufficiently extensive, will drive it down to their own level, regardless of the prevailing wages in the industry. And there are many instances in the history of capitalism when cheap immigrant labor or cheap foreign labor, embodied in imports, has driven the wages of native labor below its historical norms.

The effect of an influx of cheap labor on rates of exploitation can be seen more clearly with an example. There is an influx of immigrants from a poor country, who are quite efficient in many industries requiring un- and semi-skilled labor. If the trade unions can't prevent it, the cheap foreign born competition will drive down wages in the industries where they are efficient. The wages of all native laborers, who can't get out of the immigrant labor industries, will fall to the same level as the immigrants, regardless of their previous standard of living. However, the story does not end here. The fall in wages means that the rate of profit of the immigrant labor industries are higher than other industries. Capitalists will rapidly expand investment in the immigrant labor industries. As the output of these industries expands, the market is glutted and the exchange value of the output declines (i.e., the price falls). This process continues until rates of profit are uniform throughout the economy. Thus, the old rate of exploitation is restored in in these industries, despite lower wages and no decline in the physical efficiency of labor.

Do these remarks mean that a higher rate of exploitation on black workers in this country is impossible - by no means, although it doesn't follow automatically from the fact that black and white workers have different accustomed standards of living. The uniformity of the rate of exploitation is based on the workings of a profit-motivated competitive market. To the extent that racial discrimination interferes with competitive behavior, racially differentiated rates of exploitation become possible. In South Africa, for example, the rate of exploitation of black workers is unquestionably higher than whites, since whites are paid higher than their competitive wage for political reasons and the practice of blacks receiving less wages for doing the same work as whites is common. Whether the type and extent of discrimination in the U.S.

is such as to create the same situation is an empirical question, about which nothing conclusive can be said a priori. The burden of proof falls on comrade Turner to demonstrate that the rate of exploitation for black workers is higher, rather than simply asserting it. There are two a priori reasons why I believe such "super-exploitation" to be unlikely. First, no occupation is exclusively white or black, so that a differential rate of exploitation between black and white workers would also mean a differential rate of exploitation between low wage and high wage occupations. Secondly, the difference between low wage and high wage occupations tends to be similar throughout the country, regardless of the concentration of the black population.

This provides us with a simple, but fair, test of the Turner hypothesis. If the phenomenon of super-exploitation is present, one should expect the difference between low and high wage jobs to be greater where there is a large minority population than where there is not. I, therefore, compared occupational wage differences in New York City (where super-exploitation should exist) and in Washington state (where it is unlikely to). The results were inconclusive, but did not support the Turner hypothesis. Comparing the ratio of heavy manufacturing wages to apparel wages in the areas, the ratio is far greater in Washington, contrary to the Turner hypothesis. Comparing the ratio of heavy to light manufacturing wages, it was slightly greater in New York City (1.12 to 1.09), which is consistent with the "super-exploitation" theory, but statistically insignificant.

A propos of nothing in particular, comrade Turner asserts, there are no "inherently badly paid occupations". If by "inherently", comrade Turner means occupational wages that can't be changed by trade union and political action, then I agree with comrade Turner. This is why one can accept the program of MLCRC, without adhering to comrade Turner's views on "super-exploitation". However, such political and union action clearly limits profit-maximizing, free market behavior. After all, one of the principal functions of union is to prevent the capitalist from hiring individual workers who will work for less than the going wage. The Marxian economic model, as presented in Das Kapital, abstracts from legal and institutional restrictions on profit maximizing behavior, and it is wholly illegitimate to criticize Marxian categories and conclusions by introducing limitations on free market behavior. Moreover, if black and white workers do, in fact, have the same rate of exploitation, actions which increased the relative wages of poorly paid black workers would result in the rate of exploitation of highly paid white workers being greater than that of blacks.

While not super-exploited in the technical sense, the particular oppression of the black masses does make them potentially the most radical section of the working class. However, this is not merely because they are poorly paid. In fact, the particular form of that oppression creates a much higher degree of permanent unemployment for the black workers - a condition of life that is worse, particularly in terms of self-respect, than working for low wages. The reason black workers tend to be more radical than white is less economic than social. The pervasiveness of racial oppression makes them see through the sham of "democratic" ideology, while the failure to integrate the black population throughout the social spectrum makes it difficult for the black masses to identify with the American ruling class.

Pridefulness and False Conclusions

Considering the relatively late age at which he began serious study, his

heavy political and familial responsibilities, and his lack of academic training in the area, comrade Turner's mastery of Marxian economic theory is both admirable and remarkable, and the above comments are not meant to discredit him, in any sense. One can only hope, however, he acquires two of Marx's important virtues as a thinker. One is simply a willingness to submit his theories to factual tests. The second is a resistance to coloring reality in order to strengthen his political arguments. The conditions of life of black people in this country, both economic and social, are wretched enough to warrant our indignation and hatred for this system, without also having to prove that the ratio of profit per worker to wages, is greater for blacks than for whites.

As previously indicated, I believe the issue of "super-exploitation" is a combination of factional red herring and intellectual pridefulness on comrade Turner's part, believing he has made a major contribution to our understanding of the Negro question. Any majority comrade or un-decided comrade can accept that black workers are exploited at a greater rate than white workers (it is possibly true) without this affecting his position on any significant aspect of the factional dispute. While the majority comrades don't believe any important political conclusions turn on this question, comrade Turner obviously does and it is worth asking ourselves what these are.

The first conclusion, stated in the second paragraph on page 12 of "Whither the Spartacist League", is simply appalling. It is appalling because it attributes to me positions which, if I held them, should make me a member of the Conservative Party, if not the John Birch Society, rather than the Spartacist League. It is even more appalling because it implies that equal rates of exploitation, justify the existing wide occupational wage differences. According to comrade Turner, if a workers is sufficiently fortunate to find himself a job where he is producing commodities worth twice as much as some other workers, he somehow deserves twice as much pay. The doctrine that wages should correspond to productivity has always been an anathema, not only to socialists, but to most workers, which is why the trade union movement, universally, has opposed the piece rate system in favor of the more egalitarian time rate system. It really shouldn't be necessary to remind comrades, that Marxists have never regarded the income distribution generated by the capitalist market as, in any sense, legitimate, whether or not the market is characterized by racial discrimination.

The second conclusion implied by comrade Turner is less shocking, but goes right to the heart of the differences between the majority and minority. The minority's assessment of the political attitude of various groups tends to be based on socio-economic and, in a certain sense, moral considerations. For the minority, the blacks are the most revolutionary section of the working class because they're super-exploited (although almost all American workers, black or white, have never heard of the rate of exploitation) and to call into question their super-exploitation is to call into question the revolutionary character of the black masses.

Consciousness is Not Automatic

Of course, there is a relationship between the fact that blacks are the most exploited section of the working class and the most radical, but they are not the same thing. There are millions of white workers who are economically as bad off as most blacks, and a good section of them are likely to be politically reactionary. The present revolutionary character of the black masses is not an automatic reflection of their social conditions (which haven't changed that much in the last 35 years), but is determined by the total development

of the black people, of which the political experiences of the past decade are a decisive factor. There are millions of agricultural laborers, who are unquestionably the most exploited and oppressed section of the American labor force (and more likely to be super-exploited, in the narrow sense, than the black population as a whole), but nobody in the Spartacist League contends that our major task is to reach this most oppressed section of the working class.

The majority recognizes the (fairly complex) effect economic exploitation and political oppression have on revolutionary consciousness, but regards political consciousness, as reflected in organized activity, as the decisive criteria in determining our fields of action. The minority is more likely to regard objective socio-economic conditions as decisive, down-grading the importance of political consciousness, as manifest in organized activities.

These differences can be illustrated by looking at a hypothetical situation. We have decided to put a few, able comrades into a union. We're debating which of two unions. The first is composed over-whelmingly of black and Puerto Rican women. Wages are atrocious and the union leadership is thoroughly corrupt, and in no sense represents the workers. While there are indications of general discontent, the union has neither a history of radicalism nor organized opposition to the leadership. The second union is an omnibus union with a wide wage range. It is only 15% black. It is Stalinist led, and has a radical past. It has been a fairly effective business union and wages are higher than average for the various skill levels. Currently, the leading Stalinist cadre is undergoing a deep split as a result of the Sino-Soviet dispute and general crisis of world Stalinism, although it also manifests itself in differences over trade union policy. The logic of the minority's position would lead it to select the first, while the majority would opt for the Stalinist union, because that's where Trotskyist cadre are more likely to be found.

To summarize - the minority sees a fairly direct relationship between objective socio-economic conditions and revolutionary political consciousness. The majority regards the relationship between socio-economic conditions and socialist consciousness as highly complex, maintains that socialist consciousness is strongly influenced by many other factors, of which two of the most important, cultural level and specific political tradition, may be negatively related to economic exploitation. This is, after all, why we don't see the revolutionary forces in the "wretched of the earth!", the permanently unemployed and the rural masses in the poor countries.

7 August 1968

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III. CRITICISMS OF MLCRC'S FUNCTIONING

by Joseph Seymour

Comrade Turner is absolutely right in noting that the seemingly small question of MLCRC gave rise to major, numerous, and complex political issues. The discussion legitimately ranges from trivial, but operationally significant, questions as to who did what, when, to some of the most fundamental questions of Marxist theory. A second complication arises from disentangling comrade Turner's particular views, notably on the black question, from the actions, program, and potential of MLCRC and MLCRC-type activities. Therefore I propose to break a discussion of MLCRC into three parts; first, some general political criticisms of MLCRC, second, a discussion of Turner's views on the black question, and third, a description of the still unsettled disputes about MLCRC's disposition that have raged since the passage of the Robertson motion.

Union Work Must Be Concrete

Before discussing political criticisms of MLCRC's functioning, it should be recalled that the most important criticism is that it absorbed too damn many people. Comrade Turner states that I viewed MLCRC with a "jaundiced eye" from the first. This is untrue. I did believe that the Turner "Memorandum on the Negro Struggle" was too general to provide an effective guide to oppositional work within trade unions. I held that the success of MLCRC would depend upon the ability of its members to translate the goals of the Turner Memorandum into a series of demands and strategies around which potentially successful opposition groupings could be built. I emphasized that these would have to be realizable within the context of a single union under existing economic conditions. In general, I believed and believe that a successful union caucus must have approximately as detailed and comprehensive an approach to the union as has our social service workers' caucus - a view which considered not only the general industry and union situation, but took into account the internal political situation (e.g., other opposition groups) as well as such important things as the timing of demands. In emphasizing the need for concreteness, I was guarding against the danger that MLCRC would degenerate into something like Trade Unionists for a Labor Party, in which the slogan, "Fight against the super-exploitation of black workers" like the slogan "We need a labor party now", was used as an excuse for not dealing with the specific conflicts that existed in particular unions.

Due to the fact that Sam Smith had been in the union a long time, the MLCRC comrades were able to develop a pretty good knowledge of what was going on in the hospital workers' union. However, I believe that comrade Turner and the other minority comrades never appreciated the need to develop a very detailed programmatic approach, comrade Turner believing that the general line of MLCRC was so powerful that it could attract workers and the question of implementation would work itself out naturally. There is an indication of this type of thinking in Whither the Spartacist League?

Discussing how MLCRC will be built and expand into new unions, comrade Turner states "the friends, relatives, and contacts of these workers could be expected to come forth with their grievances and as potential forces around which other caucuses can be built in other unions". In a certain sense, the tactical implementation of MLCRC's line is expected to come from random contacts. Of course, we must give serious consideration to the grievances of union contacts, and these grievances may play a very important role in develop-

ing a caucus program (though this is in no sense necessary). However, before approaching workers in a union situation, it is up to us to develop a program that is both consistent with our general goals and realizable given the particular political situation in the union. When an MLCRC cadre visits a contact, he should aspire to know more about the union than the contact and be able to suggest certain priority actions an oppositionist might take. In other words, he should be able to provide some leadership. If the contact has strong objections to the program (and this is unlikely), we should be able to successfully defend our prospective program or modify it in light of criticisms. The notion that radicals should throw out certain general demands, pull in whoever responds, and then work the specific implementary program and approach, either "through struggle" or by some "democratic" inter-action is a New Left notion which is singularly ineffective.

MLCRC's functioning had an adverse effect on the development of specific oppositional programs for two reasons. First, as a pan-union organization, comrades developed a tendency to generalize about the New York labor scene rather than particularize. Secondly, the major area of concentration was a union in which, after the Ross-Newman defection, we had no members and depended for our intelligence on a few, politically inexperienced, contacts. It was felt that by concentrating a number of able comrades in one union, we would be more likely to develop that kind of specific, concrete program necessary for building an oppositional caucus.

A second criticism I had of MLCRC was a secondary one about its form, which wouldn't be worth discussing hadn't comrade Turner presented a garbled version of it. I was not sure if MLCRC was meant to be a civil rights type pressure group, a kind of extended employment committee of New York CORE, where comrade Turner developed many of his ideas on union work, or a transitional pan-union organization, similar to our West Coast Committee for a Labor Party, the Worker's League's TULP, and P.L.'s Workers' Action. (I now believe it was closer to the latter). It turned out to be an academic distinction. However, the significance is this. A group operating an oppositional caucus in a union would have to take positions on many issues not obviously related to the oppression of minority workers (e.g., the Vietnam War, the elections, affiliation with other unions). Had significant numbers of people from different backgrounds been won to MLCRC, basically to fight discrimination in the labor movement, they may have opposed our positions on these other issues, or objected to taking positions on them at all. However, since MLCRC remained overwhelmingly Spartacist, the question never came up.

The third and most important criticism of MLCRC is that it inhibited caucus building in the one proletarian union we had members in. After the Ross-Newman split, it was obvious to most comrades that building an oppositional caucus in the hospital workers' union was highly problematical, and we should concentrate where we had people. In principle, there was no contradiction between building a light industry union fraction and continuing MLCRC. In practice, the maintenance of a separate organization was time and resource consuming, and some of MLCRC's most active people would be the core of the new union caucus. But importantly, the MLCRC people considered their hospital work exceedingly important and showed no drive to establish the new caucus. It was and is true (I believe no minority member would deny it) that the majority comrades see a far greater importance and urgency in building the new union caucus than the minority comrades. Thus the continued existence of MLCRC, as before, would have acted as a physical and psychological drain on the energies of the only definite forces we have to work in a union, largely consisting of poorly paid black and Puerto Rican workers.

10 August 1968

IV. ON THE BLACK QUESTION

by Joseph Seymour

To my mind, the most worthwhile aspect of this dispute is that it forces us to re-consider the black question in a more critical and operational way. With comrade Turner, I regret that the Turner Memorandum did not receive more critical attention. Part of the explanation is that it seemed very plausible and non-controversial, and also it stayed on a fairly high level of generality. In discussing comrade Turner's views on this subject it is useful to separate a discussion of the strategy of recruiting black workers from a discussion of the relationship between the fight against the "special oppression of black workers" and the white working class.

On Recruiting Black Workers

To make this discussion meaningful, it is necessary to make a distinction between a program and the central propaganda axis on which this program is justified. (The failure to make this distinction is one of the reasons the Turner Memorandum did not receive very critical attention.) Thus, if one decides that our central trade union demand is raising the wages of the poorest paid workers, this can be justified a) as the most effective means of keeping up wages as a whole, b) in terms of general egalitarian principles, or c) as a means of combating racial discrimination, since, in many areas, the poorest paid workers will be black. Comrade Turner advocates making the central propaganda axis of our trade union work the fight against the oppression of minority workers, even though many specific policies advocated could be justified in other ways.

The basic theory behind this approach is similar to that held by the Communist Party during its anti-white chauvanism campaign in the early '50's. It is that blacks in this society have been so oppressed by race hatred that they distrust all whites, even white revolutionists. Therefore, the main task of a revolutionary organization is to overcome this distrust by making the fight against discrimination the main political issue of party work and taking extra special pains to combat white chauvanism in all aspects of party functioning.

My qualms with this position (and they are no more than that) have the following character. An important contributing factor to the rise of nationalism in the civil rights movement was that the whites in the movement presented their participation as one of gratuitously helping the oppressed and, even, atoning for the sins of their white brethren. Most people do not like charity and resent the moral superiority of someone who is making sacrifices out of an abstract sense of justice. As socialists, our answer to this is that we are fighting for the rights of blacks, not to help people more unfortunate than ourselves, but as a means of creating a society in which everyone, including ourselves, will be a lot better off. However, the liberal rationale for white participation in the black liberation movement remained the general accepted one.

Now it is possible that the reaction of black workers to a group of largely white workers establishing a trade union opposition group to fight the "special oppression" of black workers may be "I'm a big boy, I can take care of myself." On the other hand, they may welcome being accepted as ordinary fellow workers fighting a common enemy, rather than as some poor put-upon creatures who require everyone's special solicitude. I may be wrong. Black workers may respond to a civil rights type program for the trade unions, regardless of who

advocates it, and may react passively to a more general militant trade union policy. Frankly, I don't know and neither does comrade Turner. We don't have enough experience in trying to recruit black workers around different propaganda orientations to judge. Did the anti-white chauvanism campaign of the C.P. enable them to recruit and maintain significant numbers of blacks? The important point is that comrade Turner's approach is not the only one consistent with trying to recruit black workers, and its correctness must be proven.

Black Liberation And The White Working Class

However, it is not whether a civil rights approach in the unions is the best way to recruit black workers that is the most important difference we have on this issue. It is whether the fight against the "special oppression" of blacks is capable of radicalizing the working class as a whole.

It is very difficult to come to grips with Turner's position on the black question, because of a number of contradictions in comrade Turner's writings. A cardinal issue is whether significant numbers of white workers can be won to a fight against the oppression of black workers. In the Turner Memo, we are told, "white workers have been content to allow the segregation of black workers in low paid jobs to continue, and react to the struggles of the black people with attitudes ranging from passivity through indifference to outright hostility". However, in the Turner factional document, the aim of MLCRC is described, "to unite black and white workers in a struggle against the super-exploitation of black workers and other minorities." - an aim which is, presumably, realizable at the present time. Thus, we are told that white workers who are indifferent to and hostile to the struggle of the black masses are to become civil rights activists within the trade union movement. How or why this fairly miraculous transformation is to come about is not indicated. Why MLCRC type activity should draw in significant numbers of white workers, when the old civil rights movement, which, comrade Turner must admit, had more organizational power and influence, prestige, and respectability than the Spartacist League, did not, is not divulged. I jump on this point because it is typical of the minority's tendency toward wishful thinking. Comrade Turner feels very strongly that white workers should help their black brothers, just as all the minorityites feel very strongly that the Spartacist League should have a meaningful working class base. Therefore, if one affirms it strongly enough, it will happen.

Probably the best jumping off place to discuss Turner's views on the black question is point 6 on the Turner Memorandum:

The concept of the SL that black workers are slated to play an exceptional role in the coming US revolution retains its validity. It can be implemented only as white workers develop the recognition of the identity of the interests of the proletariat. Conversely, insensitivity to the special needs of black workers is but an aspect of the lack of revolutionary consciousness. Concentration on the building of a transitional organization within the working class which would fight for its unity is, therefore, not simply a short-cut into the class, i.e., the recruitment of black-worker cadre, but also the main road to the building of socialist consciousness in the class.

This passage is all wrong. The extra-ordinary role of the black working class in the American revolution does not depend on the development of class consciousness of the white workers, but stems precisely from the fact that

black workers will be a decisive agency in developing that class consciousness. The radicalization of the white working class will diminish the particular weight of black workers in the revolutionary movement.

Comrade Turner states that the failure of the white working class to support the black struggle is an aspect of a general lack of revolutionary consciousness, and then reverses the argument to say that the struggle to get white workers to support black demands is a means of developing class consciousness. But this reversal is completely illegitimate. In a certain sense, the willingness of workers to struggle against the oppression of national minorities, like the willingness of workers to support colonial revolutions against their own country, is the highest form of class consciousness, since it indicates an ability to recognize class unity in the face of powerful traditional differences and the willingness to make sacrifices for the sake of a more oppressed section of the class. To expect significant sections of the white working class to actively support the black struggle at this time, is not different from expecting them to actively support the Vietcong. After all, the failure of the American working class to support the struggles of the Vietnamese masses is also an aspect of a lack of general revolutionary consciousness. Classes, like humans, usually go through a period of crawling before they sprint.

In describing the attitude of white workers to the black liberation movement, Comrade Turner feels that it could be and should be different. Indeed, he intends to march the Spartacist League into the trade unions to change all that. Now, denouncing the racism of the white working class has become something of a past-time from Muslim mosques to the faculty cafeteria at Berkeley. As Marxists, we have to look at this more critically.

Comrade Turner states that the failure of the white working class to support the civil rights movements reflects their general lack of revolutionary class consciousness. I believe comrade Turner will admit that the Czarist Russian working classes were pretty revolutionary, yet they never mobilized to end the oppression of the Jews, and the Black Hundreds were a political force until 1914. The Victorian British working class was fairly class conscious, yet Engels deplored their failure to oppose British imperialism. Today, nobody would question the revolutionary combativeness of the French workers. However, the failure of the French working class to effectively oppose the Algerian War or, even, the persecution of Algerian workers in France was an important factor in leading Franz Fanon and others to write off the working class as a revolutionary force. At no time in history has the mass of the working class engaged in a systematic struggle against oppression of national minorities, except as part of an opposition to an unsuccessful colonial war.

To attribute the failure of the working class to engage in the struggles of the black masses to positive racist sentiment reflects a liberal concept of society. Each individual has his own rounded political philosophy and acts accordingly. If someone doesn't oppose racism, it's because he's a racist. As Leninists, we know better. Except on issues that immediately concern them, the mass of workers tend to be politically passive. The actions and attitudes of the working class are largely determined by tradition, authority, and, decisively, the leadership of working class organizations.

As Marxists, and not liberals or Christians, we have no right to expect, and, therefore, to project, that the class as a whole will fight national oppression, inside the country or out, independently of a more general revolu-

tionary struggle. What we do have the right to expect is that individual radical workers will join in the struggle against racial oppression, and the more radical the class as a whole, the greater the number of such radical workers. Most importantly, it is necessary to fight within working class organizations (trade unions and parties) to get them to oppose national oppression. Sometimes, such organizations can mobilize the entire class in the struggle against national oppression. However, mass working class organizations can not be built around the struggle against national oppression. How successful would the Bolsheviks have been if they had made their main agitational issue equality for Jews or the nascent British Labor Party if they had made theirs Irish independence.

The most serious consequence of the liberal belief that failure to be active in the civil rights movement is an indication of racism is that it has led to propaganda which, with noxious moral superiority, is continuously decrying the sin of race hatred in the white lower classes. The line of left-liberal civil rights propaganda, as embodied in the Kerner Report (which was praised by Carmichael and Rap Brown because of its hard line on white racism), has made a positive contribution to the development of reactionary sentiment within the white working class. It has done so because it asserts a) Negroes are a uniquely oppressed group in American society, and the principal conflict in American society is between races and not classes, b) that the plight of the black people is the result of the racism of the white population as a whole, making no distinction between workers and the ruling class, and c) that improvement in the conditions of the Negroes will require sacrifices on the part of the entire white population, including the working class. White workers, who have real economic problems and whose life is not exactly la dolce vita, resent being told they're moral lepers by college professors and wealthy television commentators, because they don't give half a week's salary to the Urban Coalition and spend their weekends demonstrating for civil rights bills. Although liberal bourgeois politicians have made no real concessions to the black masses, they have made verbal concessions by presenting the plight of Negroes as the overwhelming moral issue of our time. Much of the drift to the right, as indicated by the success of the Wallace campaign, reflects, not positive racism, but a feeling on the part of white workers (particularly of other ethnic minorities) that they have been abandoned by the liberal Democrats, who are now exclusively concerned with the Negroes. A common complaint among white workers is "everyone talks about the black's troubles, what about my troubles?".

Comrade Turner is not asking white workers to make economic sacrifices for the black masses. On the contrary, the programs he advocates would benefit white workers through their indirect effect on the labor market. However, he is asking the white working classes to make a different kind of sacrifice by devoting most of their trade union energies and resources to bettering the condition of black workers. Now, underlying the belief of liberals, black rationalists, and most New Lefters that white workers should make sacrifices for the black masses is the notion that the white working class is so affluent and bourgeoisified that an unwillingness to make such sacrifices can only be attributed to racism and petty selfishness. Does comrade Turner believe that the mass of white workers are so content and well off that it is unjustifiable for them to believe that the principal aim of their unions and political organizations is to struggle for their immediate economic betterment?

Comrade Turner fails to realize how much white middle-class support for and participation in the civil rights movement was motivated by class and race guilt. (Read an account of the national conference of the Committee for New

Politics.) Students, academics, and other white collar professionals are privileged sections of America and, some S.D.S. theoreticians to the contrary, they realize it, and feel a need to soothe their consciences by helping the less fortunate. Whatever statistical differences may exist between white and black workers, white workers do not think of themselves as a privileged section of American society, and were not drawn to a movement which presented white support as a form of moral charity. In a certain sense, the failure of large numbers of white workers to join the civil rights movement is a reflection of their class consciousness, in that they did not see black workers as on a vastly lower social level than themselves.

Comrade Turner has evidently not grasped the essence of the Spartacist solution to the black question. We have often spoken of the black population as the potential vanguard of the American working class, and I don't believe the minority comrades would object to this term. This term indicates we believe that black workers should act in a way analogous to a vanguard party. A vanguard party achieves leadership of the working class by systematically and consciously intervening in the struggles of the class to carry those struggles forward. If the black workers are going to play a vanguard role in the class, they also must systematically and consciously intervene in the struggles of the working class as a whole. If significant sections of the black masses were to break with the Democratic Party, founding a largely black, but not exclusionist, radical party fighting for a working class program, on a parliamentary level, in the unions and other organizations, this would act as a pole around which militant white workers would be drawn. If the black masses were organized to intervene in all labor struggles, the balance of class power in this country would be qualitatively changed and significant reforms accomplished.

The principal agency in overcoming the racism of the white workers must be the organized black masses, who can only do that by proving to the white working class that the black population is their most effective ally in the fighting of all economic and social battles. Racism sentiment serves a deep emotional need for many workers and will not be transformed into pure tolerance based on class identity. White workers will either hate and fear the black masses or admire and respect them as the best fighters in the interests of the class as a whole. The only viable attitude a class conscious white worker can have toward the black population is one similar to that white radicals have now (without the element of class and race guilt) - a sense of positive solidarity with that section of the population that is the most solid element in the labor movement, because it provides most of the human and material resources in all militant organizations and struggles, because it contributes the best leadership cadre, steeled in numerous conflicts with the ruling class, because its representatives in government and mass organizations are the most militant and best representatives of the interests of the class as a whole.

The black working class can and should play a role similar to that of the Jewish working class in Czarist Russia and Irish workers in nineteenth century England - an oppressed minority, who, because of that oppression was the most radical section of the working class, and consciously led the class. However, black workers do not have this role automatically. It must be consciously embodied in mass, black organizations. Black workers can only win the leadership of white workers if they have a program and political doctrine that is obviously and directly in the interest of all workers. Black workers can not lead the working class, with a program primarily geared to the particular oppression of black workers, and a rhetoric that underplays the oppression of the

working class as a whole in emphasizing the special oppression of the black people.

Is the Spartacist position on how the black masses can gain the leadership of the entire working class and simultaneously overcome white racism based on purely abstract reasoning or does it have some basis in the history of the labor and black liberation movements? During SNCC's healthiest period, they supported the striking miners in Hazard, Kentucky, both financially and by sending in some of their organizers, mostly, but not exclusively, white. The effect on the attitudes of these white, Southern, Baptist workers was obvious. All of them took pains to emphasize their sympathy for the black cause, and, on their own initiative, they organized a demonstration at the Kentucky state house supporting some anti-discrimination bill, an event probably unique in the history of the civil rights movement.

Tragically, this type of project (I don't believe it was part of a conscious strategy) was abandoned when the nationalist leadership came to power in SNCC. Against actively supporting the struggles of white workers, the "black power"ists raised two powerful arguments. One was that since most blacks were worse off than most white workers,

why should they waste their precious resources on white workers. And the other was why should they help white workers, many of whom have racist sentiments. To these arguments, we have the following answers. Without the active support of the white working class the black masses can not significantly alleviate either their political oppression or economic degradation. And the only way, at this time, that the black masses can gain the support of white workers against their special oppression is to convince white workers that they are their best allies against the capitalist class. Secondly, since the black people are overwhelmingly working class, the black population generally benefits from any gains the class as a whole makes. About 15 per cent of the coal miners in eastern Kentucky are black.

While Comrade Turner adheres to the Spartacist trade union program, he advocates a propaganda orientation which undermines the central purpose of that program. Within the context of the Turner Memorandum, it is quite correct to emphasize that a shorter work week will particularly benefit unemployed black workers. However, I believe Comrade Turner thinks this should be our main agitational point in advocating this policy generally. The reason that the call for a shorter work week is our central economic demand, is that although it will particularly benefit black ghetto dwellers, it is in the interest of all workers, and therefore is an issue around which the class can unite. Everyone will be better off with a shorter work week, including racist and reactionary workers. And we want racist and reactionary workers to fight for a shorter work week, because the only way they are going to become radicalized is by meeting vicious opposition from the ruling class to demands they believe are just and desirable. To agitate for a shorter work week as a means of fighting the oppression of the black masses is roughly equivalent to agitating for higher wages, as a means of hurting American imperialism, by making U.S. exports less competitive on the world market. It is true and important, but likely to severely limit support for the policy advocated. It is legitimate and desirable in certain union situations to present our program primarily in terms of fighting against the oppression of black workers. However, our general trade union propaganda must emphasize our program as one in the immediate interest of all workers.

Comrade Turner's positions lead him to take a fairly soft attitude toward "black power" radicals, since he views the failure of black civil rights

activists to adopt a working class socialist perspective as a result of the conditions of ghetto life and the indifference of the white working class. (This is another example of the minority's tendency toward sociological determinism). Comrade Turner's views have a certain similarity to that of SDS. SDS believes that before white radicals can seek to influence the black liberation movement, they must first build a mass anti-racist base in the "white community". Comrade Turner believes that we should first build integrated trade union caucuses primarily aimed at fighting the oppression of black workers, and then we can turn to the Browns and Cleavers and say, "see, I told you the white working class isn't racist". In advocating these policies, the minority is transferring the burden of radicalizing the white working classes from the leadership of the black liberation movement, who command potentially enormous political power, at this time, to the obviously much weaker Spartacist League.

Commenting on the drift to the right in Reagan's election as governor, Geoff White wrote:

The decisive factor in preserving the impasse and permitting continued rightward drift is the failure of the left to provide leadership toward a serious class-oriented alternative to capitalist politics. If the crisis of leadership can be overcome, then an alternative can be presented which can attract support on a mass basis, among Black militants, the working class, the disaffected intelligentsia and even among some of those very elements whose false consciousness places them today in the Reagan camp.

It is not clear just what groups White included in "the Left", but the "black power" radicals are an important part of the left, and their responsibility in not providing an attractive alternative to discontented white workers should not be overlooked. If black civil rights activists have more sociological justification in rejecting proletarian socialism than white college students, the effect of this rejection is far greater, because the black masses can be won to a revolutionary political organization, at this time. The "black power" radicals are as much our political opponents as other "Marxists" groups, although, naturally we don't adopt the same tone toward them. To the extent we are able, we must convince the Browns, Foremans, and the Cleavers (the latter might listen) that their failure to mobilize the black masses to fight for the general interests of the working class as a whole, and thereby overcome the racism of the white population, may well have catastrophic consequences for the black masses and the white working class, as well as themselves and ourselves.

* * *

I was quite surprised to find such serious differences on the Negro question erupting so suddenly in our midst. I believe the reason is that we have never been able to implement our vanguard concept for the black movement in a concrete way. Between defending black militants against state persecution, opposing pro-Democratic Party liberals on the one hand and exclusionist nationalists on the other, our ability to initiate action in the black movement has been limited. With the Deacons and in New York Core, we have attempted to act as consummate civil rights militants, but were working with programmatic principles other than our own. The program of MLCRC is essentially an attempt to extend the principles of the militant or movements to the trade unions and industry. Within the limited framework of civil rights-pressure group politics, such an extension is both important and desirable.

We have, for the most part, unconsciously, adopted a two stage approach to recruiting black cadre. We work in the civil rights movements, try to function

as model civil rights militants, while at the same time trying to win individual black activists to a view of society and the role of the black masses, that is fundamentally at variance with that of all sections of the black liberation movement.

This two-stage approach may be the best, perhaps the only, way to recruit black radicals and working class militants. This is why I don't oppose the program of MLCRC, even though I differ with Comrade Turner's views on the black question. Nevertheless, I believe we owe it to ourselves to create a control to MLCRC-type activities in unions with significant black composition. I suggest that in some union, with a large black population, we establish an oppositional caucus with a more universal class program than MLCRC to see if black workers can be attracted more directly to a proletarian socialist viewpoint.

14 August 1968

* * * *

STATEMENT TO THE NEW YORK LOCAL

In February, Cmd. Kay got a part-time job in a union shop. In 6 mos. she would have been a full union member. In March it was decided by the local that we would begin the process of building a caucus in that union.

Cmd. Kay joined the rank and file organizing committee of her local in order to begin to get to know some of the militants, shop stewards and the functioning of the union. She was then instructed to get a full-time job in order that her application be processed more quickly. This was finally accomplished by the end of June. The process of becoming more familiar with the union militants through meetings, small work projects of the organizing committee and informal discussion with individuals was well under way.

Cmd. Shirley had the possibility of teaching the machine she works at the union school thereby probably getting a book in the union. This was originally going to be full-time, but has since been reduced to 6 hours a week, requiring her, for financial reasons, to work an additional job.

Meanwhile in MLCRC, the contacting work which, in addition to our general discussions, had provided information for the hospital newsletters, was being done primarily by Shirley and Kay.

When the hospital contracts were signed, 1 July, the question of continuing this work was to have been posed. We had at that point about 6 contacts in various hospitals who were willing to continue giving information for newsletters. On this basis, we asked the local to allow us to continue the hospital newsletters. If we could continue this work, we were going to try to invite these contacts to an informal MLCRC function to discuss how the newsletters might best be handled.

Cmd. Jim then turned this around. The MLCRC social was now going to be a "test". The National Chairman, the local organizer, some cmds from the local exec were to attend in order to determine whether or not the newsletters were to continue.

This turned everything on its head. What criterion were to be used by these cmds in order to make such a determination? This was never answered. We had already made clear that only 2 of the contacts were even slightly political--one who had been a Stalinist 20 years ago and the other had been in the SL a short while 2 years ago. They were the only ones who were familiar with the SL or Trotskyism and the latter was possibly working with the 2 hospital workers comrades who recently left the SL.

The MLCRC cmds, especially Shirley and Kay who had been seeing the hospital contacts, felt that much more contacting needed to be done before such a "test" could possibly have meaning.

Cmds. S and K were then told by Cmd. Jim that they should stop contacting; K was to go only to required union meetings--because they are now to work in the NO 2 evenings a week.

The cmds are not unwilling to work in the NO, but it must be understood that the MLCRC and trade union work will suffer.

It is clear that the cmds of the majority are not in the slightest bit interested in this "test" of the hospital work. If they were, then it would require that S and K continue seeing the hospital worker contacts.

This situation also reflects a lack of seriousness on the part of the majority toward trade union work, for once some work is begun, such as Kay's participation in the rank and file organizing committee, it is a set back to drop it before even having a chance to evaluate it.

Cmd. Jim has established a peculiar criteria of "party work"--that it is synonymous with NO work. At least this seems to be his criteria when referring to the time minority cmds, particularly Shirley and Kay, spend doing political work. (Do not forget that these 2 "arenas" were party assignments for S & K.) It should also be remembered that most of the cmds. do not have regular assignments in outside "arenas" (not to mention the lack of work in working-class "arenas"), and can consequently put in much more time in NO work.

If the majority feels that the development and continuity of work in these 2 "arenas" should be placed in jeopardy because Shirley and Kay are needed 2 evenings a week in the NO, so be it. We do not then believe that they know what they are doing in relation to "party work."

We make this statement to make clear to the cmds. that by not being able to fulfill all these assignments, we do not thereby get caught in a "disciplinary trap."

7 August 1968

Kay E.
Shirley S.

AN OPEN LETTER TO OUR "HARASSED" MINORITY COMRADES

Two prominent minority comrades complain that their important trade union activities will suffer greatly, because they have been capriciously and maliciously ordered to work in the National Office. There is only one thing wrong with this statement, comrades Ellens and Stoute. YOU HAVE NOT BEEN ORDERED TO WORK IN THE NATIONAL OFFICE. YOU HAVE BEEN ORDERED TO CO-EDIT AND FACILITATE THE DISTRIBUTION OF FACTIONAL DOCUMENTS IN A FACTION FIGHT YOU STARTED.

It is not the majority's fault if our trade union work will have to be cut back. It will have to be cut back to supply resources for a faction fight you started and you want. It was you who submitted the first factional documents and demanded a national discussion on them. And it was you who forced the local to devote three, full meetings to the fate of M.L.C.R.C., and still wish to continue the debate after the local has voted on the issue. And it was you who demanded a local executive meeting be skipped, in order to devote a full local meeting to the political issues raised by your faction.

And trade union activity is not the only aspect of our work that is likely to suffer because of this faction fight. The Spartacist supplement has been suspended to release the N.O. staff to distribute factional documents (remember the precious frequency of our press, minority comrades). Hard-working and important majority comrades will have to cut back their contacting and external work to reply to your documents and distribute these replies (you would like replies to your documents, wouldn't you?). Contacts will be turned off by the factional hostility.

Comrades Ellens and Stoute wish to cease working on internal documents and devote all their political energy to trade union work. Good - nothing could be easier. Simply disband your faction, withdraw your documents, cancel the local meeting to discuss factional issues. Now let us see where your real priorities lie, comrades Ellens and Stoute.

Joseph Seymour

09 August 1968

19 August 1968

Berkeley

Dear Stan,

I arrived in N.Y. three weeks ago intending to set up a print shop here to help our little propaganda group become a little more stable. Such a move indicates a certain confidence in the S.L. My present opinion, however, is that Jim Robertson's Spartacist League is on the verge of collapse because it has completely abandoned the revolutionary road, and it is necessary, once again, to start all over.

Current membership is down to about 50, one-fourth of the CC has resigned in the last 6 months; several others are extremely inactive, PB minutes for the past nine months await Jim's "editing," foreign correspondence has been abandoned; despite a new editor the current issue is just as late as usual.

All of this would be merely bad except that it takes place in the context of the SL's absolute refusal to become involved with the working class. MLCRC, the NY implementation of the Turner memorandum, has been scuttled, and don't be misled by the complicated maneuvers by which it was accomplished. This was the exemplary working class activity we have been hearing about for years (as long ago as the '63 convention we talked about building a caucus in the Transport Workers union as evidence of our seriousness.) The claim that MLCRC work was interfering with other activities is phoney. The only other activities were the SSEU fraction, which even Jim concedes has failed to recruit anyone because of a failure to do systematic contact work; and CIPA, a hollow shell which we captured in order to run a make-work election campaign. Campus work has been non-existent, and a semi-annual paper does n't require a great deal of sales work. But a handful of the best comrades were enthusiastically writing leaflets addressed to workers, and going on early-morning distributions to hand them out, and developing a few real, live worker contacts.

Why did Jim see this as a threat? Because at some future time we would have been asking a militant worker to join our club, and would have had to face the awful truth that the SL is not in any way functioning as a serious group. Jim is basically to blame for our infrequent press, but all of the rest of us (with 2 exceptions) go along with it. Everything else is almost as bad, no systematic education, or contacting, no delegation of responsibilities to anyone on the PB and consequently no developing of a collective leadership, no communication with outlying comrades, etc.

On top of all this came comrade Kay with information of fascinating significance: a Trotskyist group in an industrial country in the present period has been recruiting worker-militants. The majority cannot deny this fact and so argues all around it. But it completely torpedoes our basic Spartacist operational theory; that we can never by our own efforts grow into a stable propaganda group or revolutionary party, but must at some future date merge with a sizeable chunk of some ORO. This is the "Sperm" theory; that we cannot grow without fertilization from some outside source. The essentially Pabloite character of this is so obvious I wonder how we have let it go by.

The majority points to some structural and theoretical deficiencies of VO, which do exist, and then simply concludes that since its theories and practice must be an integrated whole, its methods are therefore bad. But it does not show that the deficiencies are necessarily and inevitably traceable to its proletarian orientation. They did not appear, for example, in the party Lenin built on this basis.

And so the fight began. It has gone on in a confused sort of way. (Note, for

example, that there is no Majority document , or anything written by Jim.) But the more I dig into things, like old minutes, etc., the more I find that every problem, every crisis, every deficiency ties into the same source; that the Spartacist League as presently constituted is petty-bourgeois in its origins, its outlook, its activities, its functioning. Formally, neither the Turner memorandum nor anything in the VO report was in contradiction with official SL policies (which is why the dispute made no sense to me at first.) Both majority and minority stand on the Turner memo; but the minority wanted to implement it and Jim correctly understood that this would have meant changing the entire organization; thus it became a split issue.

So things are rushing on; faster here than elsewhere; threats of disciplinary action abound, the locks on the office have been changed and no minority member has a key, etc. We are working on a fairly comprehensive statement that you should receive in a few days. It is clear that we will be pushed out shortly; given the small size of the SL, the formal procedure of a protracted faction fight against the Old Master himself might be less worthwhile than working out our own future. There are more people involved than I first realized; they are mostly young, mostly top quality, many experienced, and all absolutely serious.

Basically we are planning to do what you did many years ago; get into a real industrial union situation. And with the assistance of other comrades, carry on systematic progapanda and contacting. Trotsky outlined the idea in In Defense Of Marxism; but nobody except VO ever seems to have taken seriously. Their experience shows that it can be done. A solid proletarian core is of course, no more an absolute guarantee than anything else, but it sure as hell should improve the odds against the degeneration the SWP and now the SL have succumbed to.

Would be glad to hear whatever ideas you may have on the situation.

Marion Syrek
c/O Kay Ellens
New York, N.Y.

P.S. I am passing copies of this along to a few other comrades in outlying areas.

San Diego
8/21/68

New York

Dear Dave C.,

- - -

I support the position of the majority in the present factional struggle. Although I agree with some of the specific features of the minority criticism, particularly about the 10-month hiatus between issues, I think that they have completely failed to justify their position on theoretical ground. They have ignored entirely the empirical facts of the present level of consciousness of both minority and white workers and of the particular stage of the revolutionary movement in the U.S. Their polemic against the petty-bourgeois character of SL wholly ignores the fact that this is characteristic of most revolutionary movements at their inception. Their attitude is also inconsistent with the Leninist theory of the professional revolutionary who breaks ties with his class origins. This conception is extremely important because the worker's movement cannot achieve state power without the most scientific theory guiding its practice.

Revolutionary greetings,

Bill G.

MINORITY RESIGNATION

To the Comrades of the Spartacist League:

With this letter the following comrades resign from the SL: Cde Shirley S., full Political Bureau member; Cde Marion S., full Central Committee member; Cde Kay E., alternate Central Committee member; Cde Jerry E., New York local executive committee member.

To the comrades in isolation from the center, these additional resignations from the SL might seem unwarranted. If this is so, it is because communication from the center concerning various disputes has been virtually nil, or politically unclear.

For more than a year now, the increasing evidence of a serious crisis facing the Spartacist League has been gradually forcing itself upon the consciousness of the membership. Five CC members, all capable comrades who have made important contributions, have resigned in the last year. Our membership, during a period of greatly increased radical activity in all sectors (student, anti-war, Black struggle trade unions) has not "stabilized," but declined. The Political Bureau does not function as a collective leadership; the irrelevancy of its decisions is demonstrated by the fact that it does not insist on an accurate, current record of them. All responsibility is held by the national chairman, who is unwilling to delegate any portion of it and who is himself notoriously lacking in self-discipline. Letters from comrades in outlying areas seeking political guidance go unanswered; and international correspondence has been virtually discontinued. Even though propaganda is given top priority, our press remains as irregular as ever despite a new editor (current issue is dated September-October; last previous issue was the May supplement). Despite an obvious upsurge of radical political activities, we find ever fewer opportunities for intervention.

Faced with an aggregation of problems which could destroy the SL if they were not dealt with immediately, the majority leadership refused to recognize that the crisis is fundamental; therefore, its explanations dealt only with the symptoms (e.g. the political bureau is not functioning) and its proposals to improve the situation were superficial (e.g. broaden the membership base, add another effective full-time functionary, etc.).

For the background of the crisis in the SL, see the various documents, particularly those of the minority: "What Is a Working Class Perspective"; "Whither the SL," the tendency document; "Politicalizing to Avoid Politics"; and "Proletarian versus Petty-Bourgeois Politics." (The latter document is primarily an analysis, in class terms, of the reason for the crisis in the SL.)

Even the comrades who realize the fundamental basis of the dispute may be surprised that we leave at this time rather than fight through to a convention. We do not leave now because we feel overworked or demoralized, as Cde Robertson has accused us of being. Nor have we always had a split perspective, as he has charged. These charges have been a factional attempt to cloud the issues.

(As a side comment on the factionalism which has surrounded this dispute, we might indicate how much Cde Robertson attempted to force our split. The enclosed statements, one to the PB by Cde Kay E. and the other to the New York local by Cdes Kay E. and Shirley S., taken together with Cde Robertson's statement that he intends to get so much work out of the minority that they won't have time to write documents make this clear.)

The "split perspective" charge carries with it the onus of not having "party loyalty". A group such as the SL, suffering from variegated and inconsistent politics and functioning in a like manner - a not quite serious propaganda group - cannot appeal to party loyalty.

One is loyal, if one is serious, to the principles of Marxism-Leninism-Trotskyism, and to the program necessary to create a new reality from those principles. To the extent that a party becomes the living embodiment of these principles - i.e., the organ which can lead the struggle for the emancipation of man from class society - it deserves one's loyalty. And if the party proves unable to commit itself to advocate, work toward, and carry out this task, and if this failure is manifested not by the "objective situation," but by a qualitative incapacity of the leadership to break with its past, and if the party has no roots in the working class ...then one's loyalty should go to the program, and not to the party.

Basically, the SL has "inherited" a Marxist, working-class line, but practically it functions in a petty-bourgeois manner, in petty-bourgeois milieus. One might say that it has two lines: the real one, as expressed in its actual day to day functioning, and the "ideal," Marxist one, which it is either saving up for some future, "more opportune" time, or is urging some one else to implement.

When these fundamental class differences became clear to us, a very short while ago, the question of leaving the SL was posed. It was no longer a question of straightening out the faulty implementation of a working-class perspective, but a tactical question - that of how to explain to the comrades the class basis of this dispute.

This explanation could be done in two ways: (1) by showing the comrades what is meant by the development of working-class revolutionary cadres, and (2) by discussing with the comrades the basic meaning of this dispute.

We can no longer do this within the framework of the SL. The majority leadership has stymied us on both counts: with subordination of the developing MLCRC to CIPA and its election campaign; and with the unreal, non-basic, formal discussion.

Given the newness and inexperience of most of the comrades; the restriction on developing even examples of our political approach to the question; and the tension under which most of the comrades who support the majority, or are neutral, are placed because of factionalism (which could easily politically destroy the newer comrades), we believe that a dialogue with these comrades can best be continued from outside the SL.

We hope that the comrades will read the documents and contact us for discussion of them. We hope we can work together with you toward the building of a working-class revolutionary party.

Comradely,

Shirley S.
Marion S.
Kay E.
Jerry E.

New York
22 August 1968

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Comradely,

Shirley S.
Marion S.
Kay E.
Jerry E.

New York
22 August 1968

Letter To A Young Ellensite Who Had Been
Recruited To The S.L. By The Letter's Authors

Austin, Texas
30 August 1968

Bay Area

Dear Comrade Jim D.,

We are shocked, angered, and disgusted with the course you are deciding to follow. We feel that there are several things that you should consider before leaving; that you should completely think out the seriousness of your move before proceeding on the disastrous course that you seem to have chosen for yourself.

Consider the following points:

If this group is really serious, if it wanted to strengthen the SL, and if it supported the Turner document, why didn't they stay in the organization as Turner did? Turner would seem to be a logical choice to follow. Why Kay, Comrade? If she was really serious about anything she would have stayed and fought for her position in a serious, Bolshevik manner. Kay and her group are a dangerous, diseased, malignant infection and must be removed and destroyed.

Why would the Majority sabotage MLCRC since it supported the same concept in the Bay Area Committee for a Labor Party? This is strange reasoning. And if Larry S. was so hot for MLCRC why was he opposed to it in the Bay Area? What does the Minority have to say about that? Your point about sabotage is unreal and reeks of coaching from someone else. Why those who want to work in unions (as this group says it does) stay? This is our line. Why do you feel that you have to quit because of a disagreement? Who is really the one who is being petty-bourgeois? A Bolshevik does not quit, he stays and fights for his position; he does not carry on like a crawling, devious, subterranean worm! If Kay and her group really wanted to be workers, why didn't they get jobs, why didn't they make an effort to help solve the problems of the organization. The answer is that they had a split perspective! Their only aim was and is to destroy the SL - not to carry out any semblance of a Marxist-Leninist political program.

On the CIPA leaflet, I don't see how you can say it does not carry a consistent class line. It certainly is not a petty-bourgeois statement. There is a copy enclosed with our pertinent notations on it. First, it is aimed at PFP, pointing out its basic mistakes and has an excellent analysis of what PFP is and could turn into. It shows what the Democratic party is and poses an alternative - a Labor Party. What does Kay have to say about that? Comrade, if you cannot see through this bull shit you haven't even begun to understand the politics that you claim to have - Marxism-Leninism.

Comrades, this group will be expelled and Kay's flippant reference to correspondence with SL members is BULLSHIT! We will cut you off COMPLETELY and DESTROY you politically. MAKE NO MISTAKE! This is NO idle threat, this is no game - it is for real and forever. Perhaps you feel isolated - we have REALLY been isolated for four years, but we haven't given up. You haven't been away 3 months and you are ready to sell Trotsk.yism down the river!

True, comrade, there are problems with our organization but we are small and young and we will grow, we will lead the coming revolution. We have strong, consistent, correct politics and we realize that there are weaknesses and limitations to

our functioning. But comrade, make no mistake, the Bolsheviks won not only with their strong organization but because their politics were correct and the key to their victory. What does Kay have to offer politically? She offers all kinds of rhetoric about organization and how we will draw masses of workers to a program of her organizational concepts. BULLSHIT! The workers will be drawn to a political program which articulates their interests - not to an organization with no politics

Organizational positions are political and our org. has differences over functioning. The NO has been horribly negligent in its functioning but the problem rested in the whole local. Incidentally, Kay refused to be NYC organizer, she refused to work in the NO, and she refused to go to New Orleans where she was originally supposed to go. Why all this refusal to work? This is clear evidence of her real perspective. She was ready to let the Party go to hell in order to "go to the workers." This is wrong! You cannot build roots in the working class without an organization - she contradicts herself. She would liquidate the org. in order to become super-activists with no theoretical basis for her activities - THIS IS PETTY-BOURGEOIS IN THRUST AND IS IN NO WAY RELATED TO CONSISTENT CLASS POLITICS OR TO MARXISM-LENINISM! Sounds just like Dickie R. and Howie H. - let's go to the workers but we can't offer them anything because we don't have a program, that might come later. Kay is hot about organization but she doesn't want one that can't control and that won't follow her sinister, liquidationist tendencies.

If there ever was any truth to the Stalinoid screams of "Trotskyist Wreckers", Kay and her group are the living, cancerous, diseased embodiment of it!

Granite Hardness,

John S. Anne S.

cc: PB, SRB, Houston, file

RESIGNATION BY JANACEK

To the Comrades of the Spartacist League:

I would like to state my reasons first for placing myself in solidarity on basic questions with the comrades of the former Minority (Ellens-Turner-Stoute) Tendency and for submitting my resignation as an alternate to the Central Committee and a member of the New York Local Committee of the Spartacist League.

My agreement with the Minority came only after lengthy discussions with its supporters; as is probably the case with most other SL'ers, particularly those outside NYC, I found it difficult at first to see the relevance, and implications, of the Minority's views, as expressed in the documents, to the "allocations of forces" dispute in the NYC local. The NYC dispute was over only tactical differences, but the opposing views raised questions of broader implications--such as the recruiting of worker-cadre, internal education and contacting, and the entire orientation of the SL to primarily the "ostensibly revolutionary organizations" (ORO's) and petty-bourgeois circles and movements.

When I re-read "What is a Working-Class Perspective?" by Comrade Ellens, it became clear that Lenin and Trotsky placed the recruiting of workers and their political development into cadre capable of recruiting others at the top of the list of priorities for an organization claiming to lead in the building of a revolutionary vanguard working-class party. To do this, the cadre already in the organization must be carefully educated in Marxism-Leninism and become experienced in conveying the ideas to others. They must also be conscious of the turns in the class struggle, of the methods by which militants engage in political work in the trade unions, and of the particular difficulties to be encountered in contacting workers.

The fundamental nature of the questions raised was obscured for most people because of their acceptance of the traditional orientation and perspectives of the SL. Not only the SL but most other Trotskyist and ostensibly revolutionary organizations have posed for themselves the task of gaining political hegemony over the left as a prerequisite for seriously beginning work in the working class. The reasons given vary from Cannon's argument in the 1920's that most serious working-class militants were to be found inside the CP and could be reached, to that of the SL, that it is not yet stable or large enough to plunge into trade union work and must gain radical cadre first. However in the 1920's, '30's, and even '40's the so-called "vanguard" parties did indeed largely include the most class-conscious and political workers. Today the ORO's, anti-war movement etc. are cut off from the overwhelming majority of the working class and have been since the witchhunt, and have either lost their base of workers or, like the CP, have become so reformist that their workers are not the most militant or class-conscious. Thus the SL's continuing orientation to the ORO's etc. is a tacit admission of its complete lack of a working-class perspective, or at least of plans to implement such a perspective.

The comrades of Voix Ouvriere approach this question from a fundamentally different vantage point--one which I think is yet unproven by them, but which may prove to be more valid--that of declaring that as a revolutionary vanguard party must be (by definition) based on the working class, it therefore, from the beginning, must orient itself primarily to the recruitment and development of workers into cadres of the party. Then, when and as it develops a firm working-class base and solid experience in the working class, it can draw around it, recruit and proletarianize students, intellectuals, cadres from other parties, etc. The references from writings by Lenin and Trotsky on this subject, as mentioned in Comrade

Ellens' "What is a Working-Class Perspective?", indicate that they considered this basic to the building of a Leninist party.

For several different reasons the carrying out of such a perspective is impossible within the SL as it is presently constituted and as it presently functions

Firstly, the consideration of trade union work as "just another arena" precludes concentration on this work to the extent necessary for even minimal success --and possibly even indicated a deep-rooted petty-bourgeois attitude toward such work similar to that of Abern and Shachtman (In Defense of Marxism, pages 144-145, 1965 edition.) which from the beginning makes it highly unlikely that the persons with such an attitude could ever recruit workers.

Secondly, the internal education of SL comrades, once they are inside the organization, is minimal, and so haphazard that most of the comrades could not lead worker contacts through the ideas of Marxism or through actual struggle situations except by trial and error, or by learning tactics by rote from either the SL leadership or from past experience in a very similar situation. This I think is why some comrades had difficulty with expounding the concept and tactics of the "anti-war Friday" line and the Labor-Socialist Ticket idea. In spite of the claims of the Majority-- that the Minority would prefer to abstain from arguing "high Trotskyism" with opponents in the ORO's, it is much easier to argue with close opponents with whom one shares a common background, jargon, conceptual framework etc., than with relatively less conscious, less political or even anti-communist militants.

Thirdly, with the placing of contact work on the bottom of the priority list, as it has always been in the SL, there is not the necessary commitment of comrades to sustained work with even politically close contacts.

Fourthly, serious working-class militants would be quite sceptical of the seriousness of an organization with such minimal membership requirements that marginal members are often forgotten about and only dropped months after they had been first discussed as not being membership material. With such minimal standards the average level of activity, and even political development can only be fairly low (this may not necessarily be true for small OC's involved in many activities, and comrades of which may have set themselves much higher standards for functioning than the organization as a whole). The advice of Trotsky quoted by Comrade Ellens is particularly relevant here--the leadership of the SL is reluctant to demand much consciousness or even activity of any member (what is important is that he gets the paper around in various far-flung localities), not to speak of the complete break in life style that Trotsky deemed essential to turn petty-bourgeois students and intellectuals into revolutionary cadre. The SL leadership has always claimed complete helplessness in the task of helping comrades, including themselves correct personal weaknesses which affect functioning as a revolutionary. We do not advocate authoritarian or totalitarian attitudes towards comrades, but as Jim Robertson is fond of saying, "Membership in the revolutionary party is a privilege, not a right," for petty-bourgeois types anyway, and comrades must be expected to function on a level consistent with their consciousness and development. If they do not, they should be demoted to a lower level in the party, ultimately to that of sympathizer--this must apply equally to a local member who refuses to do party work or to a Central Committee member who refuses to function at the level of their capabilities. Such members remaining in the organization only serve to demoralize and make cynical the other comrades. Likewise, although a Leninist division of labor within the organization is more efficient and desirable, the personal weaknesses or hang-ups of some comrades should not be allowed to bog down the work of

the entire organization. Comrades even in the most responsible positions who refuse to work consistently or have difficulty performing certain tasks should not be allowed to retain responsibility for these tasks--other comrades should take them over and perform them to the best of their ability. This sounds Utopian for the present SL simply because the lack of education--both political and technical --means that there are usually very few comrades competent or experienced to perform many of the necessary tasks.

That systematic and thorough education to enable us to politicize and recruit workers has been a felt need in the SL since its beginning is shown by the following amendments (proposed by Doug H. and passed by the Founding Conference of the Spartacist League in September 1966) to the document "Tasks and Perspectives of the SL":

"The SL must carry on a continual struggle to acclimatize its non-proletarian members to the class struggle. Overcoming the 'fear of the masses' implanted in many radicals by the reactionary atmosphere of the '50's, and helping our new members to gain experience in mass work, is one of our major tasks. Newly formed locals and organizing committees will be encouraged and guided in making contact with trade unions and other mass organizations and carrying on political work among them. While a universal policy of sending every new member 'into the shops' would be self-destructive, the SL will encourage suitable young comrades to acquire those skills which will give them access to several industries and which will not result in their being stuck in low-paying dead-end jobs...."

and:

"The relatively high proportion of new SL members to experienced cadres, and the similarly high proportion of SL locals and organizing committees made up entirely of new comrades, puts an especially heavy responsibility upon the national office and regional bureaus of the SL to assist their theoretical development and guide their political work."

The degree to which even these modest perspectives have been carried out by the SL is a measure of the degree of its seriousness.

For reasons I have never understood, the present SL leadership (particularly Robertson and Nelson) has had and has fostered a habit of spending any amount of time necessary to recruit someone and then completely ignoring his further education as a comrade. At that, they usually only attach a high degree of priority to recruiting unusually bright young people with already high levels of consciousness --anyone else must virtually recruit himself. Many leading comrades either no longer active or no longer in the organization had a much more responsible attitude towards education, but this found only limited expression inside the SL with its orientation and with lack of seriousness in general.

Obviously the SL feels that the pressure to intervene in all possible struggles carry on international work and national coordination and maintain a high quality press is too great to allow the luxury of educating and building cadre. Yet, if or when the SL feels of sufficient size or stability to "go to the workers" whom will it send? An organization of 500-1000 half-baked Marxists practically untrained in union work, in contacting etc., is no better equipped to recruit workers than such an organization numbering only 50 to 100. And at present the SL's involvement in so many activities-- plus the minimal membership demands--prevents it from working

in any way except very shallowly or on a short-term basis--lessening even more the chances of recruiting large numbers of even petty-bourgeois "cadre" in any foreseeable future.

The argument is raised against the Minority's perspective that Lenin said we must be "tribunes of the people." Very true--but the Majority seems to interpret this to mean that a small organization primarily composed not of professional revolutionaries, but of revolutionary enthusiasts, must intervene in every kind of struggle of oppressed layers of society, and approach every other student or radical stratum, engage in mass activity such as election campaigns etc., in order to recruit more enthusiasts before they can even begin to build a base in the working class and recruit working-class militants. This is surely contrary to Leninist practice. A Leninist organization aiming to recruit workers certainly must be able to show them how their day to day struggles are linked with the world situation and to the struggles of others who are oppressed in this society. But until it has a firm base in the main class struggle attempts at other interventions can only be to the detriment of the main work.

Again, the point is raised that our perspective is "not Trotskyist." Trotskyism is not an independent system of thought but the continuation and development of Leninism--the strategy and tactics of bringing the working class to power, through socialist revolution. Trotskyism is not to be memorized and applied mechanically at each stage of history; Trotsky himself was not infallible, but made both theoretical and tactical errors in his lifetime (the pinpointing of the time of the degeneration of Soviet Russia and his refusal, in spite of Lenin's urging, to fight Stalin in the early 1920's). The traditional Trotskyist orientation to the Stalinists and other organizations on the left was first advocated when those organizations were based in the working class. Now, when in the U.S. the ORO's are mostly isolated from the working class, retaining only a few of their former worker-cadre, orientation to them comes either from habit, or from a petty-bourgeois reluctance to change one's way of life, of arguing, of approaching political questions as would be necessary to "go to the workers." Anyone in the ORO's with a truly working-class perspective will be recruited to the organization which is implementing such a perspective, as all the ORO's pay lip service to the idea that the socialist revolution can only be made by workers. And although the SL Majority claims that the political line of Spartacist shows no such petty-bourgeois deviations as would be expected in an organization motivated by lack of a working-class perspective, we can only reply what was said to the Baltimore local--that a disparity between practice and theory is bound to eventually be reflected in a change in the theoretical line.

* * *

In closing, I would like to repeat the urging of the other Minority comrades that any and all comrades remaining in the Spartacist League read or re-read the documents and contact us for further discussion, in the interest of the building of a working-class revolutionary party in the U.S. and the rebuilding of the Fourth International.

Communist greetings,

Helen Janacek
31 August 1968

cc: NO
SL locals
NYC cdes.

New Orleans
Received 16 September 1968

Helen J.
NYC

Let me start by saying that your idea of the organizational status of the SL is a lot like mine. Discipline stinks, contact work is sloppy, and education is largely a matter of luck. That is, reasons two, three, and four that you give for not being able to carry out your plans within the SL are at least points of fact, and not arguments about what is the traditional, or the necessary, or the optimum schedule for building a Bolshevik party.

To my mind, these three points are interlocked. But the key is discipline. And I believe the source of the problem is not "lack of a working-class perspective" but simple poverty of numbers and resources.

This poverty leads to two things - recruitment of bad material, and reluctance to expel it when it fails to get better. Some are recruited before they're ready. Others will never be ready because of ingrained character defects and instabilities. In either case they are permitted to stick around for months or years demonstrating to the rest of the membership how much they can get away with. And watching these punks perform is sure to make a dedicated, hard-working comrade feel like a damn fool.

As morale fails, it is harder and harder to get people to work. But the work to be done is the same or greater. If you put highest priorities on international correspondence, or national press, contact work will suffer, education will sag. But don't blame the priorities, the fault lies with galloping punkism.

You know as much as I do - more, probably - about the way this sort of thing can paralyze a local. But I don't think you know it can be any other way. You are assuming that the organizational problems stem from or show the error of the ORO perspective. You believe - I think - that this situation is normal.

Now, let's suppose Robertson wants to bounce a few people who don't think they have to do anything they don't want to. Let's further assume that he can find other comrades to do whatever work is compatible with their tastes. Now where does he go for support? To a membership that has elevated "I don't want to, therefore I would n't be good at it" to an organizational principle.

Maybe Shirley will support him. Wasn't Shirley supposed to come to New Orleans? And isn't Kay a little overdue?

Until the disciplinary problem is resolved neither the V.O. plan or the ORO tactic has a chance. And you better watch out, baby, because everybody who split is used to being a chief except you and Jerry. With one exception, lousy material for starting an ambitious establishment on the European Plan.

I happen to think that most - well, half anyway - of the current SL is excellent raw material. That half needs some education, but it needs training more. It has to learn that there is no humiliation in taking orders, that no necessary task is menial. In short, the attitudes that the worker learns by his daily life plus.

It's the responsibility of the leadership to train members for the tasks they have to do, and to educate them so that they can select which jobs to take on when.

It is possible to build the Spartacist League into an outfit that can make the ORO strategy work. If your tendency believed that the SL could be straightened out, it would be your duty to stick around, assist the process, and then try to sell the VO strategy to a disciplined and effective membership.

I would start this way:

1. \$12 a month or 10% pledge whichever is greater. If some people have to buy a few less records, see a few less movies, or settle for a lower hi-fi, that's a shame.
2. Absolute authority for the League to transfer members from one city, state or area to any other on two months notice. If some members have to leave college and take up honest employment, that's a shame.
3. Sharp cutback on everything except press, internal education, and contact work.
4. Authority over spare time for the local leadership.
5. Sympathizer status for those who agree politically but don't want politics to interfere with their private life. A sympathizer should pay half again as much, listen only when specifically invited, and speak only when asked. He is not doing his share, and no one should pretend any differently or allow him to complicate decision-making.
6. Six-month candidacy for new members. Three months of paying, working and studying on a membership level. Two months of permission to attend local meetings without voice or vote. Voice in the final month. No waivers.

Is this authoritarian or totalitarian? I don't think so. Nobody is twisting my arm to keep me in the Sparts. I'm in it for the bennies - a better understanding of the world than you could get in any college; increased effectiveness as a rebel; a national press; the opportunity to consult with other revolutionaries and develop a common policy. Cheap at the price. All my life I've been taking orders from people with whom I had no common cause. How could it disturb me to accept a discipline that is needed to change that fact? Especially when I help to set the strategy that guides the discipline.

The above sort of outlines my general misgivings about the viability of the organization and my ideas about the sort of measures that are needed to correct the situation. A year or so of these tactics would stimulate the greater part of the membership to wake up, clean up, and stand up. That part could continue its education - and training - as apprentice Bolsheviks. Those who preferred to fuck up would be required to do so under other flags.

This would allow us to take advantage of our only real assets - our politics, and objective conditions which constantly generate questions that only our politics can answer. I think the widespread acceptance of Doug's position on the draft shows that, with a disciplined outfit, we could take our ideas anywhere in the "movement", compete with the OROs, and recruit.

Aha! says the minority, you mean recruit more student shitheads.

No, dear lady, I mean to get the raw material for revolutionaries. Trained, educated, political activists who, once trained, can be used for mass work anywhere factories included. Remember, VO was so deep in its union struggles that it had

to suck up to the Pabloists to get to the French "movement". That movement was still petty-bourgeois - but in the crisis it was extremely important. If VO had been able to lead the students it could have addressed the whole working class through them, rather than simply those workers at factories to which it had access.

Similarly, I hope someday we can guide the American "movement" to address the working class instead of the petty bourgeois. Combined with our own, independent, operations in the unions, it could make a difference. Why choose one or the other, when with hard work you can get both?

When a person is recruited his background may help or hinder subsequent training, but that training has the same goals and standards. It is not intended to idealize either the discipline of the worker - which is characterized usually by a lack of initiative - or the analysis of the student - which typically proceeds far beyond that necessary to make a decision. My idea is to get revolutionaries, and their family background is a minor consideration. If I thought I could make a Bolshevik from a monkey, I would be at the zoo every night with a bag of peanuts.

I'll assume that you're being fair to the VO strategy on p.1-2. VO says "First, recruit workers, then you can absorb other elements and cop cadres from OROs." Now this strategy doesn't refer to particular situations. It states these priorities as natural and obvious from a given maxim: that a vanguard party must be based on the working class.

The state is the executive committee of the bosses. It's "based" on them, I suppose, although we bear its weight. Who is in the state? The indispensable parts are the armed forces and police, drawn overwhelmingly from the proletariat. The bureaucrats are almost all from petty-bourgeois backgrounds, with a sprinkling of hobbyists, dilottantes, and dabblers like the Rockefellers and Kennedys.

It is my impression that a vanguard party is supposed to be a conscious agent of the workers in the same way that the state works for the bosses. VO is stretching the word "based" to the breaking point when it suggests that the vanguard has to be almost all working-class in composition, or spend most of its resources in trade union work, regardless of the political situation.

A vanguard does have a responsibility to build class consciousness. And no outfit that swears off trade union work and disdains opportunities to recruit workers will have a chance. But if VO claims that their "priorities" are necessary or optimum in all places, in modern times, in the USA, now, then they are wrong. They have yet to show that their plan is optimum for France.

The SL is sick, but the minority is not interested in that, except insofar as that makes it unlikely that they can use the League for their purpose. P.2, para. 1. "...the carrying out of our perspective is impossible within the SL." Presumably the SL has an incorrect line, but they will not stick around to argue the point. They are leaving because the League will not let them do precisely as they please. They go with all the dignity of a parasite leaving the host. Lots of luck.

Leon D.

Sunday, September 8 1968

TO COMRADES OF THE SL:

After five years in the SWP, watching the systematic crushings of all minority rights, I came into the Spartacist League in 1966 highly impressed with the SL critique of the SWP's degeneration and the SL's serious orientation towards the building of a revolutionary working class party.

However, the events of the last nine months inside the SL have clearly revealed that there is no internal democracy inside the SL and, even more important, that instead of a serious orientation towards intervention in working class struggles, the orientation of the Robertson leadership is towards petty-bourgeois layers. In the last nine months the statements and actions of the Robertson majority have clearly unveiled the non-Leninist, non-working class perspective of SL which lies below the "formally correct" positions of the organization. The SL has exposed Pabloism in all its numerous variants, but now we can see that the SL itself is a left Pabloist tendency whose essential perspective is towards and is dependent upon petty-bourgeois layers in society. This petty-bourgeois orientation of the majority has been analyzed in its various aspects in the minority documents. Comrades would do well to re-read Trotsky's In Defense Of Marxism and the numerous parts of Lenin's Collected Works which deal with the class character of the Bolshevik Party.

As the minority has formulated and struggled for a genuine working class orientation it has been met by a conscious, systematic campaign of slander and distortion which is strikingly similar to situation inside the SWP or a Stalinist organization. In fact, the majority leadership has done everything possible to drive minority comrades out of SL.

On the basis of solidarity with the minority tendency, its analysis of the SL and its perspective for building a Leninist working class vanguard in this country, I submit my resignation and urge all SL comrades to seriously study the documents and the works of Lenin and Trotsky in order to discover the fundamental political differences which have come to light in the internal struggle in SL.

with communist greetings,

Lawrence Shumm,
executive committee,
Bay Area Spartacist League

Chris Kinder
Berkeley, Cal.

14 September 1968

Dear Larry,

I fail to comprehend your behavior or that of the ex-minority in the S.L. You have done your utmost to wreck an organization with which you claim complete political agreement and for which you did practically nothing, considering your cadre abilities. Your brief stay in the S.L. and the rapid departure of the rest of the minority demonstrate a lack of seriousness which will soon make itself felt in your political responsibility to Trotskyism.

The position of leadership and respect you held in the Bay Area branch render absurd your abstract charges of "no internal democracy" and "bureaucratic practices" charges for which you have never once provided the slightest substantiation. Your proposals were always given the most careful consideration and thought by the comrades here. You can really know nothing about the internal democracy of the S.L., since you were in too big a hurry to leave when it was being tested.

The truth of the matter is that after a brief attempt to deal with the problems faced by the S.L. in developing a real, long-term orientation to the working class, you got frustrated and disappointed at the lack of results. You found it easier to blame the difficulties on Robertson and the S.L. leadership (of which you were a part) than to face the problems honestly and continue the struggle. The faults and hang-ups in the S.L. leadership, of which there are indeed many, do not constitute a petty-bourgeois tendency opposed to a working class orientation and the building of a vanguard party. Rather it is you who, by your actions, have given up and abandoned your responsibility to these goals.

The pitiful little note about the BASL literature which accompanied your statement of resignation is a small reflection of this. Your desire is to avoid responsibility for it and pass the buck to someone else. Of course I, as organizer, approved the decision to keep the literature where it was, but it was to be in your care for use by the campus club, which consisted solely of you at the time. I doubt that you checked on it or used it much as you were preparing to leave the S.L. If you managed to hang on to it in the whole period before the split, why not during it also? At any rate, the position of the Bay Area branch is that you are responsible to make good the loss (if indeed it was lost). Until you do, why should we cooperate with you or Kay with regard to her books?

Despite all its faults and shortcomings, the Spartacist League will go on towards the building of a Trotskyist vanguard in this country. I wish I could say the same for you.

Fraternally,

Chris K.

cc: S.L.N.O., Kay, files