

International Socialists
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In the last year and a half, the IS has accomplished tasks it was unable to carry out in the previous ten years. In part, this stemmed from the change of objective circumstances. In part, it was the result of the leadership's theoretical and practical grasp of the new objective circumstances. The history of the revolutionary movement, however, is strewn with groups that grasped a situation and were still unable--for many different reasons--to turn theory into effective practice. The most fundamental reason for the growing effectiveness of the IS is the dramatic change in the dynamic between the leadership and the membership.

To begin with, in the last year and a half, the leadership has led. It selected and organized three major theoretical discussions (the permanent arms economy, bureaucratic collectivism, and class struggle unionism) that were needed so that we might grasp the objective situation. It selected and organized a series of campaigns each of which has been more professional, more aggressive and more successful than the one before -- among these are 1974 International Women's Day, the UMW campaign, the unemployment campaign, April 26, and the postal campaign. Again, this year, the leadership has selected and organized those discussions that are needed to make the next important turn: the turn to agitation and bolshevization and the actual transformation of our social base to a workers' organization.

In selecting and organizing the discussions and actions needed to actually create a workers' combat organization, the leadership and particularly the EC have actually faced the membership of the IS as a leadership body for the first time in the history of the IS. That change, above all else, has created all of the positive accomplishments that almost everyone in the IS halls and enthusiastically supports.

There are, of course, many things that have contributed to the leadership's ability to make that fundamental change, that is, to become a real leadership. One important factor was the conscious decision of the members of the EC--all of them--that the task of turning the IS into an outward facing combat organization was the task that stood above all others. Theoretical discussions were picked for their relevance to that task. Organizational changes were proposed that would facilitate that task. One of the key political changes the leadership made, quite consciously, was that one of the primary jobs of a leadership that was attempting to create a combat organization was precisely to select which questions the organization should discuss, how they should be discussed, and what conclusions the leadership desired. This conception of leadership, the Leninist conception, is minimal for a combat organization.

The opponents of this conception are clear that they do not see this important leadership job as a legitimate one. The document by JE and EE of LA says, point blank, that one of the main faults with the EC's conception of leadership is that "it is up to the leadership to decide what is a critical division among the leadership, what is a critical issue for the membership to debate." JE and EE have hit the nail on the head. Yes, that is what a real leadership must do. A leadership that leaves the debates and discussions the organization is to have up to chance or random selection is a bankrupt leadership. That is what the old leadership of the IS did.

The conception of leadership that denies the leadership the right--indeed, the duty--to decide what issues are to be discussed is suitable only for a discussion group. It is suitable only for a "study circle" type of group in which it doesn't matter what is discussed. Any theoretical question is as interesting and important as any other, because there are no priorities to be carried out.

Now, of course, there is no one in the IS today who actually favors a discussion group. That is not the point. The point is, however, that a number of comrades still favor maintaining some of the norms that are proper only for a discussion group.

The norm of leadership they favor is that which says leadership bodies are to be formed and organized around differences. It is differences, these comrades feel, which must define the composition of all leadership bodies. While no one would deny the importance of minority representation on leadership bodies, this conception would, and always has, prevented the development of a workers' combat organization.

First of all, the theory that leadership bodies are meant to represent differences precludes any real or effective prioritization of tasks by the leadership. Under this theory the leadership is explicitly denied the right to select what is to be discussed. This theory, in the realm of practice as in that of ideas, denies the leadership the right to select which differences need to be represented. Are leadership bodies to be divided up according to differences on the nature of Stalinism, trade union tactics, Marxist philosophy, or (as seems to be happening now) on how the EC organizes itself?

In a study circle group all of these issues and many others are important. In the past the IS or its predecessors organized themselves in this way because the primary task of the group was to preserve and develop the political ideas of our revolutionary tradition. This meant that all of the ideas had to be preserved and developed. Naturally, the preservation and development of theory does not stop when objective circumstances make it possible to move toward a workers' combat organization. ~~But~~ But they take a different place in the functioning of the organization--one that is unified with a combat presence in the outside world. Furthermore, the theory and politics of the organization develop in a fundamentally different way in a workers' combat organization than in an ideological sect. Now our politics grow in the process of real struggle with our political and class enemies in the context of the class struggle.

This means of political development differs radically from the more abstract method of intellectual debate of a study circle. In the old ~~IS~~ IS, and all other discussion group sects, it was the clash of ideas that advanced or preserved our politics. It was the method of the middle class intellectual, the academic or student, that determined the way we functioned and therefore the way we were organized. Now our politics advance through experience in external activity, through the struggle of real material forces in the field. In this situation the discussion group norms, the methods of the middle class intellectual are entirely inappropriate. What is needed now is not so much "dialogue" as decisiveness. Our discussions must be less those of disembodied ideas than those of concrete experiences. Our organization is not to be organized around the discussion of differences, the clash of ideas, but around the need to intervene in struggle in the most effective way. Leadership must not be chosen on the basis of discussion group norms, the discussion of differences, but on its ability to lead and organize our intervention in the class struggle.

The reader will note that, as yet, we have not even mentioned the matter of voluntary EC discipline. This is because it is not simply that formal question that is being debated in the IS now. It is rather two counterposed views of organization and leadership. What is wrong with the proposals and arguments against EC discipline is first of all that they embody the study group norms of the past. The arguments presented in the JP/EP document, for example, are quite explicit in presenting those norms--though the authors undoubtedly do not really want a discussion group. Other opponents of EC discipline are less consistent in what they want. Nevertheless, the first point of departure between what the EC is proposing and what its opponents want is that between a discussion and a combat group.

As we said to start, most members of the organization support the accomplishments and future proposals of the EC. ~~But~~ But, to repeat, it has been the ability of the EC to face the organization as a real leadership that has made these things possible. And what has made that possible has been the voluntary discipline of the EC. Without this the IS would be a very different, and much worse, organization than it is today. And here are some of the reasons why that is so.

First, because internal discipline has allowed the EC to become a truly collaborative body. Because votes are not reported out, and the EC can decide as a body which questions warrant presenting differences on, members of the EC have been able to discuss freely issues which could well have produced factionalism. Because they are not under pressure from members and other leaders to organize for positions they vote for one week, they are able to bend and change positions. That is, EC members do not develop a stake in positions. There is more exchange, flexibility, and disagreement on the EC now than there was before internal discipline. When disagreements are public, it is necessary to exercise a type of self-discipline which in fact inhibits thorough discussion. Under that situation each EC member would have to ask him or herself, is this disagreement worth risking a debate in the organization that might deflect the external orientation of the organization? In fact, on the old NAC, before discipline, this happened regularly. With discipline this is unnecessary and ECers are free to fight it out down to the last dot on the "i."

Second, is the fact--so frightening to opponents of EC discipline--that by facing the membership as a united body the authority of the EC is much greater. This is partly because those who disagree with the EC ~~and~~ or are more conservative or cautious cannot find the "weak link" on the EC to pick away at. This fact too appalls many opponents of EC discipline. To be frank, underlying much of the resistance to EC discipline is the fear of an authoritative leadership--or a fear of this leadership having authority. We wish to be quite clear on this question. We want greater leadership authority. We don't believe for one minute that a leadership without the absolute maximum of authority can carry this or any other organization through the turns we are proposing. Naturally, there is more to having actual authority than being able to present a united front. But the ability of the EC to present such a front to the organization is one of the ways it maximizes its authority, in which the EC can lead and the organization is more effective in carrying out decisive action without lingering doubts or the action being in question by fears that some leaders disagree with it.

At this point, cries of elitism are undoubtedly coming forth from some readers. Aren't we saying that we don't trust the membership not to degenerate into factional squabbles over every third rate question, etc., etc. No, we are not saying that. In fact, we firmly believe that it is those who argue, like JP and EF, that confronted by a united leadership the membership will be incapable of correcting the EC's mistakes. This is, indeed, elitist nonsense. If the EC loses touch or goes off half cocked the membership would certainly make its displeasure known. Further, it would use the many channels, like the NC, the convention, branch and fraction meetings, that it has in this democratic centralist organization to fight and overrule EC policy. If we did not believe the membership capable of this, we would believe the IS to be worthless.

What we do believe, however, is that the IS membership--leaders included--is, like every other body of human beings that ever existed including the working class and its vanguard, uneven in consciousness, development, combativity, talent, and every other attribute that is essential to a workers' combat organization. How could it be otherwise? How could the IS rise above all of human history? Indeed, if this were not the plain truth, we would not need a leadership in the IS anymore than the class would need a vanguard as a result of its unevenness. Yes, we believe that the leadership of the revolutionary organization has a relationship to the membership that is analogous to the relationship of the entire organization to the working class. This, comrades, is the AEC of Leninism and democratic centralism.

What this means is not that the leaders don't trust the membership, but that the leaders have a solemn duty to wage political struggle with the backward elements of the organization, members and leaders alike. The discussion group mentality sees the solution to the problem of unevenness as an educational one, a pedagogical task. Education is essential, but it never has or will overcome unevenness since, virtually by definition, various people start at different points. "Education" is the middle class intellectual's solution to the problem of the unevenness

of the class, as well. But it doesn't work in either case. (At this point, training stands above education as a need of the organization. Training, as ~~an~~ opposed to education, is gotten through action and intervention in the class struggle. Effective training, in this sense, is gotten only in an organization that intervenes effectively, and that means an organization with a decisive, authoritative leadership.)

Let us be clear that unevenness is not a matter of knowledge, sophistication, or the other attributes of the middle class intellectual. The backward elements of the class, the revolutionary movement, and the revolutionary organizations--IS included--are filled with highly educated intellectuals, sophisticated politicians, and recognized leaders. Nor is the personnel of the backward elements of any revolutionary organization stable. People move in and out of backwardness. No one is immune, no one beyond its influence. The leadership of any revolutionary organization worth a dime must constantly combat backwardness in itself and in the membership. It does this by leading external combat as well as by waging internal struggle. Once again it does this most effectively when it has maximum authority.

The EC does not see EC discipline, leadership authority, or organizational tightening as "bending the stick." The moves we propose, including the maintenance of EC discipline, are just first steps. We want an organization that is thoroughly professional and efficient, we want an organization that is a machine. That is, we want a machine in the working class. That is Leninism. To get that we need and will build a machine inside the organization that guarantees its effectiveness. By machine we mean a network of comrades who are the most effective fighters and organizers and who share fundamental agreement with the program of the IS, and with the leadership democratically elected to carry that program out, the EC.

Many of the more cautious comrades have seen the EC's first attempts ~~at~~ building a machine as examples of bureaucratic cliquism. People who try to defend the lines of the EC to the organization, to act as agents of the EC are labelled "hacks." These attacks are both demagogic and elitist. They are demagogic because the EC has not asked people to be agents on the basis of personal ties or friendships, but on the basis of politics. The EC's network is open to anyone who wishes to fight for EC policies, it should be inclusive, drawing in as many of the cadres of the IS as is possible. The critics of the EC and its agents are also elitist because they cannot recognize that it is possible for people who share basic policies to disagree. They assume that EC agents are "hacks" who simply take orders. This is nothing but the snobbery of the intellectual individualist. In the EC's network, as in the entire organization, there is disagreement and initiative from below.

The EC proposes to build a revolutionary combat organization that is as effective, hard, and combative as its enemies. We do not propose to perpetuate the Trotskyist proclivity for failure. The claptrap about the EC moving toward Stalinism is simply demagoguery. But we do want an organization, a democratic (not bureaucratic) centralist organization, that is every bit as hard and effective as the Stalinists', the labor bureaucrats', and the capitalists'. This means an authoritative leadership, a machine internal and external, a staff (another boogymen of the opponents of EC discipline) of dedicated, hardened professional revolutionaries, and a worker cadre that is tougher and more disciplined than anyone else's.

The opponents of EC discipline also argue that a disciplined EC--and, we imagine, a ~~staff~~ machine, a staff, etc.--will discourage initiative from below. That's what Rosa Luxemburg said about Leninism. But the truth is there was a hundred times more initiative from below in Lenin's Bolshevik party, than in Luxemburg's Polish party or the German party.

The real proof that there is more initiative from below under the disciplined EC, however, is not to be found in history, but in the IS itself. Since the disciplined EC has begun to act collectively and authoritatively, there has been a thousand times more rank and file initiative than ever in our past or in any other revolutionary organization in the U.S. today. Let the opponents of EC discipline tell us that there is not the most fantastic initiative in the Louisville and St. Louis branches. Tell us that the EC squelched initiative that produced important

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gains in our IET work, in a number of the local CWA fractions, in the Justice Committee. Tell the membership that the EC put down attempts by branches to bring out people for April 23, or the local initiative shown in the postal campaign. Isn't the truth plainly the opposite? Isn't it rather that in every case the EC has helped to one degree or another spark or even directly create initiative from below?

This organization is a hundred times more creative today, because--not in spite of--the leadership the EC has begun to provide. The EC and the organization has a long way to go, there have been and will be mistakes, but it is obvious that a disciplined EC has concretely moved this organization forward, inspired initiative, and beaten down the old ~~loss~~ "losers'" ~~loss~~ mentality. And that has only been possible by disciplining the former EC stars into a collaborative team. That's no projection, no fantasy. That's fact, comrades.

The concrete truth of what the opponents of EC discipline want is not even a holding action or a cautious maintenance of the status quo. They want a big step back ~~to~~ to our past. On the basis of formalistic arguments based on imaginary situations, or misread examples from history some of the comrades would have us chuck one of the major tools that has brought us so far. Everyone wants the plumbing fixed, but some comrades want us to do it with a screwdriver instead of a pipe wrench.

One more thing must be said about the conception of leadership proposed by many of the opponents of EC discipline. In addition to wanting to organize the leadership around differences, they put forth an individualist concept of leadership. EC votes are to be reported out so that individuals can be held responsible for mistakes, and replaced as individuals. This conception judges leaders primarily by their votes and intellectual positions. In fact, the idea of judging leaders by effectiveness and performance is explicitly condemned by some.

Once again this is the norm of a discussion group composed of intellectuals. The intellectual is trained to view the world as an individualist. Since each leader is to be held responsible for mistakes of the organization, each leader must become a fully rounded "renaissance" man or woman. To avoid being singled out as a failure each leader must strive to cover all bases. Under this situation, as in the past in the IS, a real, functioning division of labor on the EC is impossible.

It is often argued that it was only the factional situation in the past that made the IS ineffective. In fact, the factional situation was in part an outgrowth of the very conception of individual leadership that the opponents of EC discipline argue for. Each leader had to know everything about everything, each leader had to organize a base or get shot down. Under the individualist conception of leadership implied in the main arguments against EC discipline, a leader who does not organize for his or her point of view is a fool, in fact, an irresponsible fool. If you are to be judged on your individual politics, you will have to organize for them.

If on the other hand you are judged as part of a group on your effectiveness in carrying the majority politics of the organization, the pressures are entirely different. Under this situation the pressures are to be effective, to produce. And that means to concretely move the organization and its work. It is this kind of pressure which has allowed the leadership of the IS to become more effective as individuals and as a group. It is this that has goaded a previously ineffective collection of individual leaders to become increasingly professional and politically effective.

If a leadership body is to be judged by its collective politics and its performance, it can for the first time honestly end cliquism. The charge that the EC is becoming a leadership clique is ludicrous on the face of it. Each EC member has broken virtually all of his or her past clique ties. These ties have been broken because EC members have been disciplined to carry out tasks vis a vis their old friends as well as their old opponents. In the past year each and every member of the EC has seen personal ties shattered by carrying out a disciplined line.

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Nor is the EC a collection of friends who subordinate principle to personal ties. This EC is the first leadership body in the IS that has not been a self-perpetuating collection of individuals. Under the old "star" system you could not possibly propose to remove or replace members of any leadership body. For the first time we are able to recognize that not all leaders must be or should be on all leadership bodies. For the first time we are able to effectively create a division of labor among leadership elements in the organization, to change leadership bodies without a split or paralyzing faction fight. If this is the behavior of a clique, then the word has lost all meaning.

The current dispute is not a "faction" fight between two groups with clearly defined positions on a range of political questions. Rather, it is a matter, for most of these on both sides, of a conflict between comrades who share a basic perspective. Nonetheless, we believe that it is a conflict in which a section of the organization and its leadership are attempting to cling to norms of the past. We believe that EC discipline has been an essential tool in moving the IS from an ineffective discussion group toward a workers combat organization, and that the record of the past year is the proof of that.

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A PARABLE ON VOLUNTARY EC DISCIPLINE

Once upon a time there lived in Thesobia, an ancient people with an architectural problem. Whatever structures these people built would, within a short period of time, come crashing down on their heads. This created serious problems. All efforts at building temples, palaces, or other enduring structures in which the people could take pride, utterly failed. Just the task of building modest homes for the people to keep out the winter cold and the summer rain proved to be an enormous burden. Time and again, these shelters would collapse soon after being built.

As can be expected, there was a constant struggle in Thesobia over the architectural theories. In the heat of this struggle, many brilliant and theoretically advanced concepts were formulated. But alas, all that was built continued to collapse.

Finally, after the most heated and intense theoretical controversy in the history of Thesobia, a new leadership group came to power. Among their many contributions to architectural theory and practice, they argued for a startling new architectural concept: "strong mortar".

At first, this concept shocked many people in Thesobia. After all, it reversed two generations of established national custom. Misgivings and grumblings were widespread. But the architectural problems were so serious, and the Thesobian people so anxious for a solution, that the doomsayers were soon quieted and the new leadership was given a chance to prove itself.

While experimenting with how to make stronger mortar, the leadership reached a startling conclusion. "No longer", they declared, "will it be the custom in Thesobia to mix piss in the mortar. Piss", they asserted, "makes the mortar crumble".

There was an immediate and outraged reaction from the doomsayers. "Without putting piss in the mortar", they cried, "it will be impossible to smell who laid which brick. When buildings continue to collapse, how will we be able to know who to blame".

But the leadership insisted. "Whatever benefits can be derived from the old methods, they just don't make up for crumbly mortar". The new leadership declared that henceforth, they would take collective responsibility for the success or failure of their architectural ventures. And despite the cries of the critics, piss was kept out of the mortar.

Over the next year and a half, the entire population marvelled at the architectural progress. There was a flowering of sturdy new construction and architectural advance. All the people of Thesobia became better builders. To be sure, not all architectural problems were yet solved. Thesobia was not yet ready to undertake the construction of massive fabulous temples and palaces. But everyone felt pride in the progress already accomplished, and confidence in the future of Thesobian architectural greatness.

The entire population, even the old doomsayers, came to strongly believe in the new concept of "strong mortar". Everyone recognized that while strong mortar doesn't solve all problems, it was necessary for all further progress. Public enthusiasm for the new architectural direction was universal.

But the doomsayers continued crying out that there still remained a single important flaw in the otherwise great architectural achievements, "We

agree with all that has been accomplished", they declared. "We just want to make one small amendment".

They organized a struggle in Thesobia raising three slogans:

1. Full defense of the concept of strong mortar.
2. Full defense of all architectural gains over the past year and a half.
3. Pass a law requiring the leadership to include piss in every batch of mortar.

Sadly, a sizable number of well intentioned Thesobians fell for it. During the years of catastrophe, brick smelling had become the dominant national recreation. On warm nights, people would go out onto the streets of Thesobia smelling the bricks of crumbling buildings and theorizing about the causes of collapse. The ability to impress a crowd with utterances of brilliant architectural evaluation as to the causes of the collapse, became a nationally recognized source of status and pride - the hallmark of true genius.

In the new era, the ability to achieve concrete results -started replacing verbal acrobatics as the new basis upon which greatness in Thesobia came to be judged. But old habits die hard. Even some Thesobians who themselves were becoming pretty good builders, still felt nostalgia for the old days. "Why can't we defend our new architectural gains, and defend our right to small bricks at the same time?" they started asking. And it was on this basis that a struggle was waged to return to the old policy of crumbly mortar, and thereby to return to the old era of architectural collapse.

IN REPLY TO S.F. --WHAT IS DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISM?

Dave F. and Jack T.
for the EC

The notions of democratic centralism are, above all, concrete. A discussion of democratic centralism has meaning only in the framework of the political perspectives and direction of the IS. What are the organizational norms needed by the IS today ϕ in order to become a working class combat organization? What kind of organization do we need in order to recruit, train and develop workers rapidly to be leaders in the factories and in the IS? What is the function of leadership for an organization which faces the task of constructing the nucleus of the revolutionary party in this country, at the beginning of what will be a prolonged crisis of capitalism?

The EC resolution on democratic centralism tackles these questions. It recognizes that we cannot build a Bolshevik organization, despite the most revolutionary will in the world, if we fail to base our organizational methods squarely on the material and political needs posed by our political action perspectives. The EC resolution is a response to the tasks posed by the turn toward agitation, toward worker recruitment and a combat organization. It gives a clear answer: the crying need is for political and organizational centralization. That's what we stand on. Without centralization, there will be no active workers' democracy in the IS - because our rank and file agitation, our campaign to recruit workers and build a cadre will all fail.

Centralization, among other things, is a key to the rapid political development of IS members at every level. It means ensuring that there is a concrete political line to which members can respond and carry out in the world. It means enabling our members to become political leaders without having to go through years of a discussion group. This is proven by the fact that because of the steps toward centralization in this organization, our members are learning politics and developing more rapidly than they ever did before. We propose to deepen that process and make it systematic throughout the organization.

In response to our proposal, a different organizational view has been put forward. It is expressed in SF's document "On Democratic Centralism" (Convention Bulletin #2). This document, in our view, does not present a "different conception" of democratic centralism, or a "variation" on the basic political direction presented by our resolution. We believe the difference to be far more radical: for this organization, at this time (and after all, both SF's document and ours were written for this organization), SF's document means in reality no democratic centralism at all. It proclaims our adherence to some of the principles ϕ of democratic centralism, but then gives them an abstract and idealist content that prevents them from becoming a material reality in the practice and life of the organization. We want to show that abstractionism and idealism are the very core of SF's document on organization. That's what this reply is about.

There are some topics we do not intend to comment on in detail. For example, there are whole sections, such as the section on how the Workers Party broke with Cannonism and Zinovievism, the details of which can be left to an educational literary discussion. That discussion will be useful, and no doubt SF and others will make valuable contributions to it.

There are other sections in which SF elaborates on the distinctions between proletarian and bourgeois conceptions of democracy. Of course we accept that distinction - in fact, the whole EC resolution on democratic centralism is based on the kind of democracy through which the working class can overthrow bourgeois democracy and establish its own. But we are not going to discuss these generalities in detail - to do so would be to mislead the organization about what are the issues

in dispute. We will answer the charges that we have adopted a "bourgeois, Stalinist, liberal or anarchist" concept of democracy. What we really want to debate is the concretes - what the application of proletarian democracy means for IS right now.

ABSTRACTION ¹/₁: THE "LEVEL OF POLITICS"

Section IV of SF's document suggests that the IS has not become "an organization with highly worked out politics", but rather we have more or less "just a set of tactics passing for politics". Further, he suggests that "to the extent that we approximate a pre-party formation rather than a sect we will have a more politically heterogeneous membership". This raises two questions: what is the meaning of "politics"? And does the revolutionary party fight to overcome differences or to encourage them?

Let's take the second question first. Political differences of all kinds don't exist because we encourage them. They exist because they are absolutely inevitable in the real world, which presents thousands of problems, variations and complexities. (That is why every political monolith must eventually break down). No doubt the rapid recruitment of workers will raise many new questions we will have to take up. But as the EC resolution points out, there is a critical link that permits a revolutionary organization to recruit, develop and forge political unity from hundreds of workers from different backgrounds and experiences. That link is a cadre which is politically unified and which subordinates its differences, quite consciously, to recruiting and building the organization. Cadres cannot be legislated, they have to be consciously built in the real world as the key to the relationship between the revolutionary party and the class.

Yet this is exactly what SF heatedly objects to! In his own way he is forced to recognize that the critical problem is to "keep the members united in pursuit of a well-understood and collectively defined goal" (p.7). ~~That's exactly~~ To do this, he says / "we will need an organization with highly worked out politics". But his idea of highly developed politics is 100% abstraction, because he wants to repudiate the concept that those politics are actually carried by real people, i.e. by the layer of cadres in the organization. He believes that the very concept leads directly to bureaucratism, sectarianism and cliquism (we intend to show later why he is all wrong). But without the real people who are known as "cadres", the very possibility of a "high level of politics" evaporates into thin air.

In this framework we obviously regard differences as natural and inevitable, not as heresies which will destroy the organization unless they are stamped out. But our conscious aim must be to overcome differences, not to develop them. We want the maximum political unity possible. The best way of achieving that is through a unified political practice, which is the heart of democratic centralism. Thus we are not for what SF poses as the desirable norm, a "more politically heterogeneous ~~heterogeneous~~ membership". No, we want the opposite. We want a less politically heterogeneous membership, and above all a tighter and less heterogeneous cadre. But this cannot be achieved through blind loyalty or a passive membership. It requires an active membership which is proving IS politics in the class struggle every day - in other words, it requires the turn toward agitation.

And in the framework of a turn toward agitation, what is the correct conception of "politics"? It is a cheap truism that "politics" is more than "tactics", but not very helpful. In fact, "politics" in industrial agitation ~~means~~ means using our tactics and strategies to create an audience among workers in struggle for the revolutionary program and organization. "Politics" for us is

not the idealistic notion that every one of our members is going to be an expert in the same things. Politics for us is putting the talents of each of our members, from the newest recruit to the oldest and most sophisticated comrades, at the ~~xxxx~~ service of the revolutionary movement and building the IS. Politics for us is not separate from what we are doing in the factories, the unions, the rank and file movement. Politics ^{is} what we are doing there - which involves a lot more than tactics, as ~~every~~ ^{every} industrialized comrade and worker member knows). It ~~is~~ precisely our politics which are being proven by the fact that we are building an international revolutionary political tendency in the working class - and no one else is.

And if anyone says that's "economism", we suggest they need some classes in basic Marxism.

ABSTRACTION #2: FACTIONS AS A "CORRECTIVE"

The outgoing EC takes pride in having ended a faction fight, built a national leadership without a new faction fight, and carried the IS into a critical turn without another faction fight. And we have done this without in any way banning the right to factions. Our conception of the right to form factions is different from the old concept that national leaders are free to form factions at the drop of a hat (like clockwork at every Convention). Rather, we now have a leadership which is politically organized, self-disciplined and by that token has some aspects of a faction in its own right. (Of course, with the exception that it is politically responsible to the whole organization and is not a separate organization within it). Thus, rank and file members must have the right to form factions when they wish to organize a fight to change the policies of the leadership. It is a democratic right - nothing more or less.

Against this, SF throws out the idea of "the right to form factions as a necessary corrective and method of bringing about a needed change", etc. (p.9). But this meaningless generalization is not what matters. The point is, what is the correct political attitude to take toward the possibility of factions in the IS today, when we are making a major turn involving large numbers of workers rapidly? We have a clear answer. We are against factions. We want to prevent them from forming, unless there are absolutely profound, principled issues which leave no recourse whatsoever except factions. On any other basis, the formation of factions would be criminal - and totally irresponsible to the membership.

It is not only leaders who must take a clear attitude on this. All IS members must have a responsible attitude toward the question of forming factions. Factions should not be considered the normal, healthy mechanism for changing or developing the politics of the group. Members should be very well aware of the immense damage that factions can do, and be prepared to support them only when worse damage would result from not forming them. We ~~g~~ hope SF in fact agrees with us on this. Generalities about how ~~g~~ factions may play a progressive role under some unspecified circumstances do us no good at all.

ONCE MORE IN DEFENSE OF THE CADRE CONCEPT

The core of the idealist method of the SF document lies in Section V, in which he attacks the conception of the cadre as the backbone of the party (whose relation to the party is the same as that of the party to the working class).

Our resolution makes clear that the cadre is not a closed circle inside the organization which exists to fill a few spots at the "top". It extends beyond the

leading committees, and is defined by its consciousness rather than the posts it holds. It is an expanding core which seeks to become more and more inclusive. But it is the core. Even more, it is a conscious core.

Of course, one can be a formalist and point to all the organizational barriers between the party and the class, which do not exist between the cadres and the party itself. Yes, of course it is true that the policies of the party are determined by the party membership, not by the non-party workers or the party cadres (that is all that SF's objection boils down to). But that's hardly the point. What matters is that the cadres inside the party are constantly trying to raise consciousness, to educate, to take initiative, to recruit to the cadre in order to strengthen it. The cadres consciously (voluntarily) subordinate their differences to building the party. They win the political respect of the rank and file members through an open political relationship, by being the best fighters and party workers. They fight to politically unify the party on the highest level. Those are exactly the same tasks which the party undertakes in the working class. (It wasn't only James P. Cannon who pointed this out - Max Shachtman understood it too).

What does SF oppose to this? Another idealist abstraction: the notion of "only one kind of member" as "an indispensable part of building a non-elitist IS" (p.10). So among our other crimes we are also charged with elitism. Let's leave aside the demagogic trash that is thrown up around this ("the essentially bourgeois idea that The Leaders are permanent specialists in leading...") and deal with the substance. How does SF actually define "having only one kind of member" and how does he actually propose to reach this wonderful utopia? Very simple - he doesn't. If you don't believe this, re-read SF's section V. ~~My dear SF~~

The truth is, he doesn't say a single thing about his ideal - it's just another Nice Idea. And with good reason. The only way to the abstract "equal level of ~~political~~ politics" SF wants is in the discussion group. It has never existed, and never will, anywhere else in the working class movement or the rest of the real world. Because in a real, fighting movement there is unevenness in politics, consciousness and other things at every single level.

We have an answer that will work, that will produce a revolutionary organization that is fully democratic and will create a revolutionary party. Yes, in one respect we are for having "only one kind of member" - revolutionary socialist fighters who are totally committed to smashing everything this system stands for and replacing it with working class rule. But in every other respect, since we are real people who are unfortunately products of a real and very imperfect world, we are not equal as political leaders or fighters just as all workers are not at the same level of consciousness. That's why the working class needs a revolutionary party - and that's why the party must have a cadre and a leadership. Our members are far too advanced to be patronized by meaningless phrases that "all members are equal". No, we have a cadre that struggles for political unity, by educating our members about IS history (of which we are proud), by carrying the national line in the branches, by trying to develop every new worker member as a leader, and by repudiating the disgusting charge that those who fight for a political line inside the IS are "hacks". That is how we achieve real democracy instead of platitudes. And the best thing about IS today is that for the first time in a least fifteen years we have a cadre that is beginning to do just that.

IS THE STAFF A "MACHINE-CLIQUE"

One of the fashionable methods of undermining political leadership that has grown up in this organization is the technique of taking cheap shots at the full-time IS staff. Precisely because the staff has been successful, has provided leadership and example to the organization, has created effective teamwork, and has a close working relation with the EC - precisely because of this, the staff has come in for more sniping and underhanded abuse than any other group in the organization//.

Of course, everyone knows that a staff is necessary. But the attitudes that exist toward the staff today result from the fact that many comrades do not accept the fact that those who lead the organization should work full-time for it. That is what this staff is built around. We are not for the central political leadership ~~and~~ of the IS having other careers elsewhere. We put EC members on full time staff and give them responsibility for running major areas of work. The EC, of course, is not the whole professional staff. All the comrades on staff are extremely valuable. But the ability to create a professional staff which is committed and competent rests first and foremost ~~on~~ the leadership taking responsibility for it. That's where Bolshevik leadership differs from various forms of social democracy and New Leftism where those who dominate the organization lead from the comfort of intellectual careers or trade union posts.

Everyone in the IS should be aware that we are enraged by the attitude that exists toward the full-time staff and we are going to stamp it out politically. Without the work of full-time professional revolutionaries on the staff all the external work of this organization would be impossible. The creation of an EC that works full-time for the IS is a major step forward and should be so recognized. The same thing goes for the staff as a whole, which goes beyond the EC itself.

It is an intolerable situation to have comrades who are completely ignorant of what the staff does and how it works, without even bothering to find out, turning out documents that imply we have divided the staff into "permanent specialists on unpleasant work" and others who "claim that their time can be more productively spent in exclusively 'leadership' tasks". What we have to say to SF is this: it is bad enough for you to produce this kind of stuff, but it is even worse if you think we are going to sit here and leave it unanswered. The reality is that this staff has a division of labor that this organization would do well to learn and study. Any branch which could do as well would be light years ahead. The staff is based on the principle of maximum political initiative from each comrade. It has nothing to do with "creating specialists on unpleasant work", and it has equally nothing to do with SF's utopian fantasy of "everyone's equal". If SF or other comrades want to know how the staff actually works, they might be able to learn something by talking to us.

Of course, it is not only the staff (including full-time branch organizers) who are full-time professional revolutionaries. In particular, comrades working in industry are every bit as "full-time" as the staff. Which brings us to the next point. We are lectured by SF (p.9) that the leadership role of the staff is counterposed to a worker-leadership. For the staff to functionally lead the organization "would greatly facilitate machine-cliquism" and push out the workers. More abstractions. Is that what is happening in this organization, comrades? Isn't it this EC and this staff which has pressed and fought for the turn toward agitation? Isn't it this EC and staff which have pushed worker recruitment to the fore, and created a newspaper which is our best

tool for doing that? Isn't it this EC and this staff which have finally created a working political relationship with comrades in industry and brought their work to the center of the life of the IS? Wasn't it the alliance between the EC and the industrialized comrades which overcame resistance to the turn in the branches? Wasn't it that alliance which made possible the success of the April 26 Coalition? The answer to all these questions is yes. And that answers SF's charge about the "machine-clique".

The leading role of the staff and worker leaders are not counterposed. In a Bolshevik organization they depend on each other. At various times leading committees like the NC may be weighted in one direction or another, depending on political need or on which section of the organization is most in advance. But what always underlies it is the alliance between the full-timers and the industrial worker cadres. That alliance is the vety axis on which the revolutionary party is built.

REACTION # 3: SOCIOLOGY OF "CLIQUISM"

SF's document does not proceed from the political perspectives of the turn toward agitation. It appears to exist in a kind of timeless void, with references to bourgeois armies and the like. In fact SF starts out with a long description of what might be called "the sociology of cliquism". ("Cliquism of all political shades always means that th se of more political influence or prestige develop a network of clients...the mutual exchange of political services...internal cohesion based on keeping information away from the world outside the clique". Etc.).

SF of course is not the only comrade who has referred to the "inevitable dangers" of cliques in an organization with a strong leadership. But what is missing is any kind of political characterization: is the IS leadership a clique? Is this EC building a clique? Is the organizational machine we are building (yes, we are for a machine!) based on clique loyalties?

Let's be clear. Not a single one of our opponents has come out with such a charge against us. We are treated to all kinds of lectures about the dangers of cliques. But no one is actually willing to charge us with cliquism. And for good reason. This EC has done away with clique leaderships in this organization. That is the political fact that stands behind all this sociology: there is no EC clique whatsoever. What is a clique, anyway? Very simply it is a grouping that holds together on a basis other than principled political agreement. The IS used to be a mess of cliques in the past precisely because there was no political agreement and no leadership. Above all, there was no common political practice (which is why, Sam, you hear so many different versions floating around of "what happened in Peace and Freedom"). Common political practice throughout the organization is at the heart of democratic centralism, and fighting for it has been our main political weapon in breaking down the old cliques. It has been this leadership which has done that. We are not ashamed to say it is among our finest achievements and one for which we take a great deal of credit.

Let's expose these sociological generalizations ^{about "cliquism"} for what they are: a fudge to avoid coming to grips with what the IS leadership actually is, and what it has accomplished. If SF or anyone else wants to honestly charge us with clique functioning they should honestly say so and not make veiled hints. The real charge against us is not that we're a clique held together without political

agreement - but the exact opposite. We're an organized political leadership, and we defend that. Some comrades think we're too politically cohesive. We can't be penetrated and organized by old friends and ties from the past, as was the case with all previous EC's. Internal voluntary political discipline has been one technique for achieving this (it has been effective ~~of~~ only because it does rest on political agreement). What comrades are reacting to is the fact that we aren't a clique. Why not recognize and deal with that?

ABSTRACTION # 4: THE ROLE OF DISCUSSION

SF charges us with proposing to "restrict the rights of the membership". What is the foundation of this charge? It is that we do not publish EC votes and
(cont'd on page 8)

((THE FOLLOWING PARAGRAPH SHOULD BE READ FOLLOWING THE LAST FULL PARAGRAPH ON THE NEXT PAGE. SORRY ABOUT TYPOGRAPHICAL MISTAKES!))

But the real crux of SF's concept of the paper is revealed by his notion that the paper should have carried discussion articles opposing our line on compensatory treatment for women and minority workers in the layoffs. On that subject there were of course internal debates and documents. But what would that have meant for our work? What would it have meant in the UNC in auto, where we are involved in a fight with the UNC leadership who refuse to raise the question? By opposing our own line in our own paper, we would have made Workers Power worse than useless in that arena. Our own paper would have been the best organizing tool against our comrades trying to raise our politics in a difficult enough situation. This illustrates what we are talking about. The norm is now going to be that our political decisions are taken into the world to fight around. The norm is going to be that the paper is a weapon for us in organizing that fight. And therefore the norm is going to be that we don't permit discussion articles where that would undermine the work we are doing! What matters for us in discussing the paper is precisely/ the norms, not the exceptions - but SF appears to see no ~~need~~ need to distinguish between them.

have not published discussion articles in the paper. The issue of EC discipline is being fully treated in a separate discussion document. As for the question of discussion articles in the paper: on its own merits this is truly a fourth-rate question, but it is quite a good example of some of the idealist conceptions that grew up inside the IS during our years as a discussion group.

What are the rights of the membership with regard to the newspaper? Clearly, the fundamental right is the right of the membership to control the newspaper! The paper belongs to the membership. The whole membership, not just those who write for the paper. That includes our newest recruit who is selling the paper in his or her factory, just as much as the most politically sophisticated comrades who have been members for five, ten or twenty years.

The IS membership has the right to a paper whose political line it controls, and which it can use in building the organization. We reject the notion that any individual comrade has the "right" to express his or her ideas in the paper, regardless of whether the membership wants those views to be publicly expressed in our paper. There has been no question in the past two years of discussion articles from organized political minorities, but rather from individuals. In the most recent case, the Miller article on auto, this was a point of view which had never even been discussed within the IS! It is fundamentally and ~~totally~~ undemocratic for comrades who use the paper in their work to open up their latest issue of Workers Power (which they are expected to ~~sell~~ sell, defend, etc.) and suddenly discover a "discussion article" with a point of view they didn't even know existed! That is why we reject the nonsense that democratic rights means a "free exchange of ideas" in our press.

Let's be clear about this. We can have discussion articles, and sometimes after a discussion in the organization we will. But that decision rests with the organization, not with individuals. If the organization wants a debate on a given issue in Workers Power, we'll have it. Otherwise we won't. That's called "protecting the rights of the membership". Furthermore, any other conception of discussion in the pages of Workers Power means giving in to the idea of a discussion group.

There are several other things which show the weakness of SF's approach to this question. He suggests, for example, that we should have had discussion articles opposing our line on the October 1973 Middle East war. But the fact of the matter is that not one single comrade even wrote a document for the organization to discuss in opposition to our line! The idea that we should have discussion articles without internal documents and discussions simply means turning our paper into a discussion bulletin. We totally reject that.

Or is SF suggesting that the EC should have actively solicited an opposition article? Should we, for the sake of discussion and public debate over our line, gone out and organized the opposition to our own line? To do so would mean that the responsibility of the leadership is to organize the IS around differences. That would be the norm of a discussion group, pure and simple.

> ((see p.7 for missing paragraph which should be inserted here))

We also disagree with SF's proposal (p.6) for what is in fact a shallow substitute for a theoretical journal. We especially want comrades to notice that this is actually the heart of SF's political conception of "Bolshevization": a "re-vitalized internal bulletin" (with the EC to find differences to organize it around), and a bi-weekly supplement which does essentially the same thing only slightly more externally oriented. That is the whole substance of SF's proposal for a "politically harder and more developed IS". Where do the politics come in, comrades? The notion that political development comes from these kind of literary make-work projects (that is what they are) is 100% idealism. As we have stated we will propose publica-

tion of a proper theoretical journal (which we urgently need) when we are able to commit the necessary resources to it. That is the correct way to proceed, not an ad hoc supplement to Workers Power which would in fact be shallow, largely irrelevant and assuredly unread by most of our members who would find ~~it irrelevant~~ it useless.

We appreciate the fact that SF is concerned with raising the political level of the whole organization and its work. That is a correct concern. But years of the discussion group should have taught us that discussion outside the realm of our practice - which is, today, industrial agitation first and foremost - cannot do this. The role of political discussion and education in IS today is spelled out in the "Bolshevization of IS" document. Carrying out the turn and learning from it will give us a political depth and expertise our tendency has lacked in this country for the last 25 years.

ONCE AGAIN -- AGAINST ABSTENTION!

We don't intend to respond to the rest of SF's document in much detail. But there is at least one other important question: the idealist nonsense that makes a principle of avoiding "misrepresentation to our audience" on the personal views of individual IS members.

On p. 16 SF goes so far as to say that "the member presenting the line in public and who also has important disagreements with it should at some point indicate his/her own views on the matter". That means a ~~step~~ huge step backward from even our current norms. When you speak at, say, an IS forum you speak for the organization, not for yourself. Just because you are the speaker doesn't mean the meeting belongs to you. It belongs to your comrades who built the meeting, who worked to bring to contacts to it to hear the IS point of view.

Even in the old, pre-faction-fight IS, for that matter in the ISC, it would have been a ~~joke~~ joke for a comrade speaking in an arena or mass meeting to get up and say, "My organization believes this, but I have a different view". Even ~~if~~ a discussion group knew that it had to act with a common face in combat!

What happens if you are speaking in public and afterward your friend asks, "But I thought you personally believed the moon is made of green cheese, yet you said in your speech it was blue"? In that case the answer is to tell the truth: "Yes, but when I'm speaking for the IS I present the views of the organization, not my own". This might also be a good time to explain to your friend the ABC's of Bolshevism and why it is no way dishonest, misrepresentation or "monolithic" to function in that way.

If your friend is the Man in the Moon and has no experience in political practice here on earth, he may not understand you. But if he or she has had some contact with the IS and its work, your point will be well made. By showing that your commitment to building the IS takes precedence over all your individual differences, you will impress your contacts with the seriousness of our politics and the fact that the power of the organization is much greater than the sum of its individual members alone.

WORKERS PARTY

We promised not to go into the details of Workers Party history, important as it is. But we want to make one or two points clear.

SF is quite right that organizational practice - Bolshevism versus political monolithism - was part of the split in the American Trotskyist movement that gave rise to the Workers Party and the IS. We rightly rejected, and we still do,

the phony pretense of a monolithic party with no political differences. But let's make sure we understand that important as they were, the organizational differences were secondary. By themselves they would never have justified a split, a faction fight or even a breakdown of the disciplined collaborative leadership the American Trotskyists had. (Far more disciplined than we are!). The fundamental issues that made that faction fight necessary and progressive were the Russian Question and the nature of World War II.

The Workers Party quite correctly prized internal democracy as one of its most precious assets. But it also took from Bolshevism and Trotskyism the conception of a tight cadre and disciplined leadership. We are for the organizational norms of the Workers Party, which believed it was building the party to lead the American revolution. We are proposing the first steps toward these norms. What we are now fighting for will move us toward the kind of centralized disciplined party the WP was. They will still leave us a long way from realizing it, comrades! To achieve that we will have to prove our cadres and leading committees as leaders in the class struggle and demonstrate the ability to recruit and train industrial workers in large numbers. To suggest the EC is proposing a tighter, more centralized organization than the Workers Party is historically and politically ridiculous.

THE SPECTER OF "CANNONISM"

It is not only SF but also other comrades who are raising a specter of "Cannonism" over our resolution on democratic centralism. Frankly, we do not consider this a first-rate question in ~~the~~ ^{this} organization. The question of "Cannonism" is honest that the tendency to be raised superficially when it happens to meet concrete revolutionary needs. In the IS today it has no meaning as a political characterization of anything.

However, we want to clear up two very important misunderstandings in SF's document. The first is on the bottom of p.5, where he says there is a danger that "our correct turn will degenerate toward the Cannonism we were originally organized to reject". We are shocked by this, because it suggests that the bureaucratism of Cannon's SWP leadership was a result of the Trotskyists' efforts to engage in agitation and root themselves in the struggles of the working class, to build a proletarian revolutionary party. We totally reject and repudiate the view that the Trotskyists' turns to agitation had anything to do with creating their bureaucratic practices or that it was Cannon's insistence on proletarianization that led to his bureaucratic machine and its practices. To accept that view would lead us straight to capitulation to the worst of those practices.

Second, on p.9 SF wants us to "repudiate the Cannonite formulation that the leading cadre plays the same decisive role in relation to the party that the party plays in relation to the class". We will deal later with the question of whether this idea is right or not. Here we just want to point out that just because Cannon said it (which he did) doesn't make it uniquely "Cannonite" (which it isn't). In fact, Shachtman said it too, throughout the 1940's, when he and other WP leaders discussed the role of the Workers Party cadre. Shachtman referred to the cadres as the backbone around which the party was built, who were the fanatical party loyalists and recruited to it as the single most important activity in their lives. That's what we stand on, too.

...rights of the leadership".
 ...charge? It is that we do not publish "votes and

IN CONCLUSION

Without belaboring further details, we believe the point has been made. Our proposal on democratic centralism shows that centralization is the road to a more active membership, with genuine political input into the line of the organization, with more rapid political development. We believe this has been proven in theory and in practice.

SF's alternative presents us with a conception of Bolshevism that is abstract, utopian and idealist. First and foremost it is lacking in real political content. It calls for strong leadership, but threatens every such leadership that actually emerges with the charge of "cliquism". It wants to break with the discussion group - but its proposal for "hardening our politics" consists exclusively of organizing discussions.

The real value of SF's document is that it elaborates a certain method and approach. It is the method which, in its essentials, also lies behind the main amendments to the EC resolution on democratic centralism. We are referring specifically to the Mike P. amendments and the opposition to EC discipline. A careful reading of SF's document - which is clear in its point of view - demonstrates why those amendments, confusing though their wording may be, actually negate the essentials of democratic centralism for IS in the period we have entered. ~~SF's~~ SF's document is the best demonstration of why the amendments are totally wrong and should be defeated.

Nancy ~~Wechsler~~ - contact in Boston Socialist Feminists
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