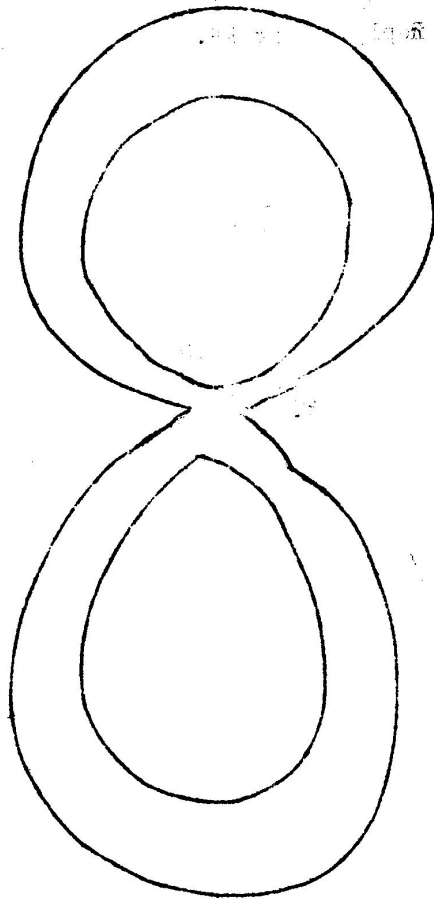


INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISTS

INTERNAL BULLETIN



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FOR IS AND RT MEMBERS ONLY

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WF vs THE REAL STEEL CONVENTION

by Steve Z., N. Y. C.

Workers Power's analysis of the steel union convention was a sadly inadequate one. In view of the fact that WF is now supposed to be an analytic paper, it was doubly sad.

The convention was many things. Some were adequately covered in WP. But one of the most important aspects, especially for us, as advocates of the R & F, was the light the convention threw on the meaning and content of the "reform layer" in the union upon which some comrades lay so much stress and hopes. What did it do and not do, and, how did we relate to it? About this, WF said nothing.

Our hopes and perspectives (and those of some genuine R&F delegates as well) at the convention were initially pinned to the organization of a single-issue caucus around workers' right to vote on the contract. (At present, that right is reserved to the Basic Steel Industr. Conference-- a meeting of some 600 local presidents in which each local has one vote irrespective of its size. The conference is biased against the large steel locals, and thus even more easily controlled by the top leadership.)

Such a caucus did emerge at the convention-- a group of perhaps 40-50 delegates (far, far less than the number who had "promised" support, etc.). The preparation of the caucus was done with the approval and support of Bill Andrews, Pres. of local 1010, Inland Steel, and home local of district director Balanoff.

But what followed was a series of cowardly betrayals and retreats which WP totally ignored.

1) The caucus was dealt a severe body blow just days before the convention began by Andrews and Balanoff (A & B below). They were both members of the convention Resolutions committee. As principled supporters of the R&F and the principle of the right to vote on which the caucus was based, A&B had only to vote NO on the official resolution, and demand the right to a minority report to the convention (or issue one if that right was denied). Instead, they voted for a "compromise" which the International had offered, namely, not to allow the convention to vote on the issue, but to refer the question of the right to vote to the Industry Conference (above). Business Week was delighted and reassured by this "compromise". A&B bought it too (and much more besides).

In the meantime, A&B allowed the R&F to go on with the campaign, unprepared for what was coming. Instead..... as the convention debate started, Pres. McBride announced that the Resolution Committee report was adopted unanimously, and that both A&B would speak on the matter from the podium. Both said essentially the same thing (A better than B). They still favored the R&F right to vote but accepted passing the issue on to the Industry Conference, IF McBride would publically assure all that the Board would actually meet and take up the matter. (McBride, said "Yes", in late 1979 or 1980).

To the 3000 delegates the message was clear. If you're for the right to vote, then its O.K. to vote for the official resolution, as A & B were doing, and not for the opposition caucus.

To the credit of the caucus, they did not capitulate (at least not at the start), but went on with a creditable debate urging a vote NO, against the "compromise". They got 10% of the vote. How much more they would have gotten if A&B had fought for the caucus line is

impossible to say, but they gave many a fence-sitter the out they were looking for.

2) That night, at the caucus meeting it all came out. The delegates (and the IS) had expected a far greater degree of support for the campaign. There was therefore quite naturally a let-down (and a smaller meeting). This mood was not helped when it was revealed that some of the caucus (the reform group from local 1010 and Samarcia) had known of the "compromise" and condoned A&B conduct, without telling the caucus. (stupid as well as bureaucratic act.)

At this point, the leader of the opposition in US Steel local 65, a delegate, protested the behaviour of A&B. First, that the A&B had put in a brief appearance at the caucus meeting the night before, they had failed to tell the caucus members of their intentions. That was to say the least irresponsible and disorienting. Second, that their vote and speeches to the convention were in effect an invitation to delegates to vote against the caucus policy. This critique was delivered in a properly dispassionate manner-- a protest, not an attack. It was supported by other delegates, and constituted in effect a left-wing of the meeting, at least on the question of dependence on and submission to reform bureaucrats.

A prolonged debate followed, with R&F delegates from local 1010 coming to the defense of their president, Andrews (and to a lesser extent, Balanoff). They argued that the compromise was in fact a modest win around which they could now organize. (They also clearly had illusions about the possibility of winning such a fight in the Industry Conference-- or at least had to appear to believe it in order to justify their defense of Andrews.) It may indeed be true that fight can be launched around the conference, but that does not vitiate: (a) the fact that we have here a classic case of leaders acting independently of, and even contrary to the policy of the R&F to whom they are supposedly responsible, and (b) the fact that while it is proper to take advantage of a bad law or an action we opposed, that does not justify defending that action or law as correct. (although that seems to be the line of the R&F reform delegates from local 1010. Was it our position too?)

Throughout the debate (essentially about the relation of the R&F to their leaders), our own comrades refrained from coming to the support of those delegates who criticised Andrews' conduct. The question naturally arises-- perhaps some special circumstances prevented our open intervention. But the comrades present agreed, subsequently, that that was not the case. That in fact they actually disagreed with the statement of the delegate from local 65 and others and disapproved her making it. So they said nothing in her support, and saw no reason to critique either A&B or to question the R&Fers who defended them. In addition to insisting on the positive aspects of Andrew's policy, they also stressed the fact that unlike other radicals, ISers are respected by the reform R&F because we don't act like nuts, and know how to relate to them. It is difficult to resist the thought-- perhaps they respect us so much because while fighting alongside them, we do not struggle with them when we differ.

3) The failure of WP to even allude to any of the above in its report adds still another dimension to the retreat. The only reference to Balanoff (Andrews is not mentioned at all); is his statement on the new election of officers policy. As for his role in subverting the key issue, the right to vote, WP maintained total silence.

In a recent IS document, we are told that it is pointless and counterproductive to harken back to a bureaucrat's earlier behaviour, betrayals, but that we should focus on his current dynamic. Some of us were apprehensive about that formulation as opening the door to

silence about his current betrayals as well. Unreasonable as that may sound, these fears were strikingly confirmed when, in the case of Harry Patrick, we kept silent about his current betrays (breaking the wildcats) even while he was being invited to address a TDU convention. Now we have a repeat. Silence about A & B current double-crosses of their own supporters, not to speak of the principle involved. The relation between the de facto cover-up of reform leaders bureaucrats and the false theory that this layer will initiate and lead the opposition must be apparent.

4) The Steel convention and the WP article also revealed the intensifying depoliticization of our union work.

(a) The developments outlined above presented us with a concrete and clearly relevant opportunity for politicization-- an opportunity which we always look for patiently and can not prematurely invent. In Atlantic City, it was necessary and eminently possible, to fight for our view on the role of the R&F and its relation to labor-leaders in the process of becoming bureaucrats; to deepen the need for self-reliance (or the awareness of that need) and hostility to bureaucrats; to show the difference between how real R&F leaders conduct themselves and how bureaucrats do, even the reform type; and, to explain WHY R&F leaders and militants tend to become bureaucrats unless they adopt certain political outlooks-- particularly in the present period! This task was evaded, at best.

(b) A recent example of a parallel phenomenon in a steel local-- was uncovered by events in local 65, Sadlowki's home local. Here, an election contest arose between Sadlowski supporter, John Chicao, and a RF opposition grouping led by a veteran unionist. The Chicao slate was FOR protectionism, and for amending the ENA, not dropping it. The opposition was clean on these issues. Yet Sadlowski actively supported Chico, not his own R&F supporters. Apparently, WF did not think this conduct of Sadlowski worth reporting.

(c) The continued depoliticization was further demonstrated by the fact that no attempt was made to sell (or distribute) either WP or our new Steel pamphlet. In view of our timidity in fighting for even the most elemental concepts of the R&F relation to leaders at the convention, it is difficult to see this failure as accidental. It seems rather to be an anticipation of the politics of the labor paper.

Lastly, the steel convention also threw light on still another question. We have been told repeatedly that "it is practice that counts", so one must not be too disturbed at "poor theoretical formulations". How dangerous this separation of theory and practice can be is amply demonstrated in "practice" described here. What we see is the fruit of a theory which insists that it is a layer of the bureaucracy which is responding and will initiate the opposition movement in the unions. The result, in practice, is, and was in steel, that we not only withheld our valid criticism of reform officials conduct, but also withheld our necessary fraternal criticism of R&Fers (who suffer similar illusions). Instead, we shared their defense and rationalization of the conduct of a section of this "progressive" layer of the bureaucracy.

Oct. 4, 1978

"THE REAL STEEL CONVENTION"--OR THE REAL MIND OF STEVE Z?

This is a partial answer to Steve Z's document "WP vs the Real Steel Convention." Other aspects of the answer will be found elsewhere in this Bulletin. A political analysis of our relationship to Balanoff is being prepared by the Gary branch. That last document will not be a specific answer to specific charges; rather it will attempt to clear up misconceptions, and to explain a situation which, though still unique in some ways, is relevant to much of our work.

This present answer is NOT a report on the USW convention. That report appears elsewhere. When that report was written, I faced a choice: should I write a genuine political overview of what happened in Atlantic City for the benefit of our members? Should it contain what I thought was a balanced emphasis, stressing what was important, leaving out the details, etc? Or should I attempt to "cover" myself, and the fraction (and indeed the IS as an organization) against the charges Steve was making? (For Steve's charges, in draft form, were already mailed to some members long before the WP coverage appeared --quite possibly before the USW convention had even adjourned.) I decided that the correct thing to do was to write a genuine, hopefully accurate and useful, convention report. I chose not to unbalance the report answering Steve. For the very fact of attempting to put things back in proportion, the very act of denying that something happened, serves to skewer a discussion in the direction of the charges, to prevent serious discussion of the real issues.

The convention report, as written, is politically accurate, and it is that report (combined with the WP article) that members ought to read to understand our view of the convention. In other words, this present document is NOT about the USW convention; it is about Steve's document.

In large part, I am forced to deal with what did NOT happen, what was NOT thought, what it did NOT mean. The method of making constant charges without any evidence has often forced people engaged in real work into this sort of frustrating response. Steve has employed this method for a very long time now, and it has only served to misinform and distort our discussion. At the risk of massive overkill, then, perhaps this answer, and the others following it, will show the membership that when the time and trouble is taken, every document of Steve's can be shown for what it is: distortion, innuendo, misquotes, and--at best--blowing something way out of proportion.

Let us actually examine what Steve said happened, including the assumptions Steve makes, without telling anyone that they are only assumptions. Steve refers to a rank and file "caucus" for the right to ratify. I do not want to quibble over words. But "caucus" means certain things to IS members when written in an internal document and Steve knows this. It means a group which agrees to function together; it takes votes; it may (usually does) have some structure (officers, dues, etc.). It may only be on a single issue, or for an election.

The rank and file meetings at the convention were not meetings of a caucus. The notion, throughout Steve's document, that Balanoff and Andrews failed to be guided by the "caucus" wishes is a complete red herring. They also could be charged with failing to act under IS discipline. But they aren't members of the IS. Oh. Well they weren't "members" of this "caucus" either--and no one thought they were, and no one thought this was a disciplined caucus. (By the end of the Convention some thought that a structure towards creating a caucus in the future was appropriate. Others, including myself, believe that this was still premature.

There had never been a call for a "caucus" a statement of

principles, etc. The origins of the right-to-ratify meetings which took place at Atlantic City are complex, but they throw a good deal of light on what the steel opposition is like and how we function in it.

Several months before the convention we, and other people in the rank and file movement, began looking for a way to focus our forces, to help build the reform movement. The single most important convention issue, we thought, was preservation of the referendum vote for international officers. The administration had floated some trail balloons to see if they could move against this. But unless they came out openly for doing away with the referendum, it would be impossible to raise it as the key issue.

In addition, the issues most on the minds of people in the mills were, of course, not convention issues at all--forced overtime, incentives, etc. were contractual issues which convention resolutions would do nothing about, in reality.

The right to ratify was seen as a key tactical issue that overcame both shortcomings. First, it had the effect of a pre-emptive strike on the referendum vote: if the administration was put on the defensive on ratification, they would not dare raise the abolition of the referendum. (Essentially this worked, though McBride went after the referendum in another way, through the campaign financing route.)

And secondly, the right to ratify was the convention issue which most clearly could be used to mobilize people about wages, conditions, etc. "It will be harder to sell us out if we get to vote on our contract; look at the Miners," etc. It was not then an abstract issue of union democracy; it could be linked to all the other aspects of building a fighting union.

The right-to-ratify issue was pushed and made the key issue with a number of people in District 31, and especially local 1010. It was one of the main planks in the 1010 Rank and File's delegate election program.

Informal contacts were made with people in other locals, especially with the Iron Range, and the Homestead group. Balanoff was not the originator of the issue; has publicly identified as being in favor of the issue, but he was not publicly identified with the right-to-ratify forces, which centered on 1010, his home local.

At the District 31 conference, it was possible to hold a press conference of local presidents to announce their support of the right to ratify; this included pro-administration people.

A Local 1010 membership meeting authorized the use of local funds to send a letter to every local in the union on the right to ratify (which would have automatically put on the agenda of every local meeting). Bill Andrews, local president, went along with this. The International stepped in, blocked the funds, and opened an investigation of how local 1010 had obtained an "illegal mailing list". The real threat of receivership which 1010's voting the funds raised did not keep Andrews from backing the move; the investigation, luckily, went nowhere (what mailing list? We were going to ask the International to mail it at our expense") but the possibility of actually mailing out the letters also died. (At this point, the right-to-ratify was being linked with a larger dues break for the smaller locals. This was an attempt to horse-trade with those locals, representing the majority of USW members, who already have the right to ratify. The loss of the mail-out meant that this angle--including the attempt to get delegate credentials from smaller locals--was far, far beyond the organizational capacity of the right-to-ratify forces.

Organizing of the right-to-ratify forces was therefore in fits and starts, with large holes. Andrews continued to support his members'

doing this, but he was not the organizer of it: that was done at the level of grievors and rank and filers, and was one of the limitations on its effectiveness.

Similarly Balanoff gave the 1010 people and the others room to operate and did nothing which might squelch their efforts. But he was not pointman on it. Steve might be glad, for this was a purely rank and file operation. Our attitude is: if we could have gotten more heavyweights to carry it, it would have been stronger.

But--and alas, nothing is simple when you force people to go into detail--the tactical wisdom of Balanoff becoming the point would have been very dubious. There is some indication that Balanoff attempted unsuccessfully to pressure Sadlowski into doing something. There is no question that he made sure that the 1010 people were backed up when they approached people from the district. But Balanoff has a hostile staff, a hostile IEB, and some important hostile locals in his own district. All you can ask of a leader in his situation is that he open the doors, that he not undercut your efforts, and that he back you on the issue itself, whether he is key in organizing it or not. These things Balanoff did.

All of which means we came into the Convention with some strength: 31, especially the 1010 people; Homestead; the Iron Range. These were the activists, and the meetings were, in effect, meetings of these people and whoever else they could get to come (plus the left).

It was the meetings of a network, or a network-in-the-making, with no officers, no votes taken, and open to anyone who wandered in. (Only delegates were supposed to speak, but after the first night or two, this was not enforced. By the end, members of organized left-wing groups constituted a large part of the attendance, though almost none of the delegates.) The meetings were open to the predd. It was not a place where secrecy of tactics was possible; nor where the "will of the majority" reflected anything more than who showed up.

Steve charges that Bill Andrews and Jim Balanoff "betrayed" this caucus. They did not see themselves as responsible to the rank and file; they did what they wanted.

But Andrews, as Steve knew, was responsible to exactly those to whom he owed responsibility: the other delegates from his local, (and the same thing is this case) the leaders of the real caucus of which he is a disciplined member: the Rank and File Caucus of Local 1010. Andrews met with the leaders of the 1010 delegation and discussed the speech he would make at the convention; they helped draft the speech, and he did exactly as he agreed to do. Is this a betrayal? Perhaps of Steve's hopes to find some dirt.

That is some of the background of these "caucus" meetings. It is very tempting to go through Steve's document line-by-line (as he does with everybody else's) and show how (1) He usually is very badly informed on matters of fact; (2) He has no hesitation in distorting things to make his points.

Examples: On the Basic Steel Industry Conference, Steve says in his second paragraph: "The conference is biased against the large steel locals, and thus even more easily controlled by the top leadership." (My emphasis.) The first clause is true: the conference is one local president/one vote, which is extremely disadvantageous to the larger locals. The Convention, incidentally, is also structurally biased against larger locals. The second part of Steve's statement is somewhat strange: does he mean it is even easier to

control than the convention? If so, he is clearly wrong (see the USW convention report for a brief discussion of this.) I want to make a methodological point here. My opinion on this question is based on a good deal of contact with the USW, with listening to the views of our own members in steel and the views of dozens of people who have been to USW conventions as delegates and even to the BSIC. Steve's "opinion" is stated as a fact--and based on no evidence, no knowledge, no theoretical reasons (except, presumably that they're all local presidents--as if the Convention represented the rank and file, and the conference the bureaucracy) no nothing. I state categorically: the basic steel industry conference, though it is not a democratic body, though it is a body which should not, in our view, have the right to ratify, though it is biased against large locals, is NOT easier to control by the top leadership than the convention. It is harder, and this can be demonstrated: the last BSIC initially rejected the contract, then submitted to arm-twisting and threats to ratify it. The convention never rejected anything, no matter how minor. Which, if you were McBride, would you think easier to control?

In the next paragraph Steve says that a group of 40-50 delegates ("far far less than the number who had 'promised' support," etc.) emerged as a caucus. Promised support to who? And what does "etc." mean? What the hell is this man talking about? Hundreds of delegates were for the right to ratify, very few had ever said they would come to these meetings. In fact the meetings were a first; our overall assessment is that they were a success, an important first step.

But folks, it takes two paragraphs of background and explanation to clear up Steve's little phrases.

Next paragraph: "cowardly betrayals and retreats": no one else except the Sparts think so; including, according to her, one delegate whom Steve quotes. This is Steve's characterization. It is false on every count.

Next paragraph: "The caucus was dealt a severe blow just days.:" Again, no one else thought so, the "caucus" didn't know about this terrible damage to its ability to wage a fight, etc.

One point here: no one at Atlantic City thought the right-to-ratify forces could win the vote on this issue; any possible illusions disappeared when the Convention opened with a test vote to change the rules. There is no way right to ratify could have been won, though it is true that this fact was not exactly our major rallying cry.

So the compromise of which Steve speaks was not a compromise strictly speaking. We--the rank and file--gave up nothing. We got the issue kept alive at the BSIC, where we have a focus to organize around. That is the essential hole in all of what Steve argues; not only can't he show Balanoff and Andrews getting something for their "betrayal", he can't even show what they gave up, what they "sold". The chance to win the right to ratify? Nonsense. The chance to make an educational floor fight? But that was done anyway. Was Balanoff's speech part of this educational process? Probably it was intended to be; it was such a poorly delivered speech (could Balanoff have had a guilty conscience, did he know Steve was watching and would find him out, and EXPOSE him), that it had hardly any effect.

Did Andrews' earlier actions on the resolution committee (Bal-

anoff, says Steve, was also on the committee. I have the committee list. Steve: maybe you have a different one; but, this is only a detail) hurt the fight for the right to ratify in any way? Did it inhibit the growth of the reform movement? Did it demoralize the rank and file? (Who?, besides your one delegate)? Did anything actually happen to get a document from Steve? In fact, we believe, Andrews' "compromise" was a small victory. It gave us something without, in any way, hurting the fight for the whole works.

Steve tells us that there was much criticism of Balanoff and Andrews at the "caucus" meeting following the right-to-ratify vote. The "leader of the opposition in Local 65", a delegate, opened it, and "was supported by other delegates, and constituted in effect a left wing of the meeting, at least on the question of dependence on and submission to reform bureaucrats".

This description is simply untrue, but it reveals a lot about the scenes Steve expects to see, and convinces himself to see, and then tells others that he saw.

The accusation of a "back-room deal" was made by a Spart, who was not a delegate. It was supported by no delegates. The delegate from Local 65, to whom Steve refers, specifically and emphatically disassociated herself from this accusation. No other delegates supported even her view, let alone the Spart. Members of MLOC, the Marxist-Leninist Organizing Committee did. That was the "left-wing of the meeting", the one our members should have supported, according to Steve. Apart from the fact that our members should not have (a tactical question, see Kim's document) and apart from the fact that the critics were sectarians, the critics were also wrong.

There is an interesting side-light to this question. The one delegate who did criticize Balanoff's conduct "the leader of the opposition" in Local 65 is the one person with whom Steve Z. has a longstanding personal political relationship, one which he has never attempted to share with the fraction, who have had to build an independent relationship with her. It is a fair question, I think, to ask: to what degree are Steve's perceptions shaped by hers--and to what degree are her perceptions and actions shaped by Steve, acting independently of, and perhaps contrary to, the political line of the IS fraction involved? Members of the IS, I believe, whether they are members of the fraction or not, have a plifical responsibility to carry the organization's line in dealing with non-members in a particular arena.

Which brings us to Steve's critique of Sadlowski's actions in Local 65, and WP's failure to report on it. Candy's document, included here, answers the question from the standpoint of WP coverage, and I refer members to it.

But there is another point, concerning what acutally happened at 65. Two sets of Sadlowski supporters ran against each other for delegate to the convention. One slate was headed by John Chico, president of the local. Chico is by no means the left-wing of the Sadlowski forces. He is moving rightwards on certain issues, as Steve points out. (His position on general social issues, for example, the Nazis in Chicago, is quite good, though it doesn't cost him much to take these positions).

Against Chico's slate was a slate led by several grievors and at least one member of the executive board. Several of the slate

members are identified with left-wing organizations.

Had we been there, from what we know, we would almost certainly have supported the left-wing slate. Sadlowski supported Chico; indeed it was almost his first activity of any sort since he ran for president. "Yet Sadlowski supported Chico, not his own R & F supporters," says Steve. Wrong. Sadlowski supported the more conservative of his supporters against the more left-wing of his supporters. Big surprise to anyone who didn't know anything about Local 65, or the USW, or Ed Sadlowski. It would have been stunning if Sadlowski had dumped one of his closest allies, John Chico, in favor of the CP--which is at least as valid a view as Steve's.

Incidentally, although Steve doesn't put this on paper, many members have somehow gotten the impression that Sadlowski and Balanoff supported Chico. So far as we know, there is no basis for this. Balanoff, to the best of our knowledge (which while not complete, is not completely guesswork either) took a complete hands-off attitude on the Local 65 elections. Is this a betrayal? Should Balanoff, the district director, have intervened in an important local election against the president of that local (who will remain president, regardless of the delegate vote), when that president has supported him against the International? A betrayal, proof of what we can expect from bureaucrats? At least a mistaken tactic? In our view, not even this last: rather a correct decision which we would support.

To sum up: there is not a single substantive point in Steve's attack. It is based on distortion, fabrication, and a preconception that makes Steve see what he wants to see. Properly, in a fully mature organization, it is something that ought to be laughed off and ignored.

Yet, we are answering it, at very great length. Perhaps this will discourage the method--write a document full of distortions, circulate some rumors, and let everyone else have to answer. The discussion then revolves around your points, your criticisms, however much they are minor, or even totally irrelevant.

But I cannot stress enough how damaging this is. Our members in industry went to Atlantic City to help build a movement; the IS sent two staffers for the same purpose. None of us feel that Steve was there for any other purpose than to find out some dirt to use against the steel fraction. It is most demoralizing to people who work very hard, with great dedication, to have to constantly worry--not about criticism--but about making sure they don't use the wrong phrase in front of a comrade, making sure they "cover" themselves. It is a terrible thing to worry about being honest to your own comrade for fear he will take your honesty out of context, or even change your words, in order to "expose" you. It is absolutely time that this method of sectarian, uncomradely, and dishonest behavior stop.

--George F.

OF PRACTICE AND THEORY: Yet another answer to yet another set of misrepresentations and distortions.

Its one thing to have sharp political differences and debate. Its another to have to spend so much time cutting through the mountains of misrepresentations and distortions that always seem to come from the pen of Steve Z. Once again we are forced to separate fiction from fact, so that we may get to the real differences. In this case, it involves two accusations made by Steve Z. in his document, "WB vs. The Real Steel Convention." This answer won't deal with the misrepresentations of what happened at the USW convention or with Steve's distorted notion of what WP is for. Both of these will be answered elsewhere. This answer deal only with Steve's attacks on IS practice and IS theory.

Steve's criticism of IS practice involves the functioning of IS members at a meeting during the USW convention in which reform activists and radicals debated the actions of local 1010 President Bill Andrews. The merits of Andrews' actions will be taken up elsewhere. Of the ISers functioning, Steve writes:

"Throughout the debate(essentially about the relation of the R&F to their leaders), our own comrades refrained from coming to the support of those delegates who criticized Andrews' conduct. The question naturally arises - perhaps some special circumstances prevented our open intervention. But the comrades present, agreed, subsequently, that that was not the case. That in fact they actually disagreed with the statement of the delegate from local 65(criticizing Andrews - KM) and others and disapproved her making it. So they said nothing in her support, and saw no reason to critique either A&B (Andrews and Balanoff - KM) or to question the R&Fers who defended them. In addition to insisting on the positive aspects of Andrews' policy, they also stressed the fact that unlike other radicals, the ISers are respected by the reform R&F because they don't act like nuts, and know how to relate to them. It is difficult to resist the thought - perhaps they respect us so much because while fighting alongside them, we do not struggle with them when we differ."

No doubt, this paragraph is meant to expose the fact that the ISers, like the overwhelming majority of delegates present at this meeting thought Andrews' policy justified, although there were some criticisms of how it had been arrived at. Since all the members of the IS who were there readily affirm this, one wonders why Steve goes to such lengths to expose the highly visible. Obviously, to give one the impression that the ISers have sinned and are ashamed. It is not enough for Steve to simply argue the political difference - for or against Andrews. He feels it necessary to discredit the comrades by implying that they just meekly went along with some betrayal by the reformers, that the ISers did "not struggle with them when we differ." And so, there is all this stuff about there being no "special circumstances" preventing our intervention on the side of the mysterious delegate from local 65.

Without in least denying that we did not "differ" with most of the reformers on Andrews policy, it is worth clearing up Steve's misrepresentation on this score for what it shows about Steve's method. There were, in fact, a number of circumstances that limited

our ability to intervene on either side of the question. There were only five ISers present at any part of the meeting, other than Steve. Two of these, like Steve, were not members of the USW, but were present as members of the press. Under the guidelines of the meeting the press was not expected to enter the debate. Two other comrades arrived only toward the end of the debate and were not fully aware of what was going on. While this probably would not have deterred Steve, it did deter these comrades. Not jumping into things when you don't know the score is one way the comrades in steel win deserved respect. This left one comrade. Yes, comrades, all this flap is over one comrade. This comrade choose to abide by the previous agreement that non-delegates should not speak at these meetings. It is true that other leftists who were not delegates spoke. In fact, it was not a delegate at all, as Steve says, who started the debate over Andrews. It was a non-delegate who is a member of the Spartacist League who led off. (The only delegate to attack Andrews was the famous delegate from local 65, who it turns out is a long-time friend and political collaborator of Steve Z.'s and with whom he spent much time during the convention. As Steve likes to put these things, it is difficult to resist the thought - perhaps Steve had some influence on this delegate.) With the exception of this one delegate, the other opponents of Andrews' policy were mostly sectarian leftists - Spartacists and members of the Marxist-Leninist Organizing Committee (MLOC).

So it is that the failure of one IS member to break the ground rules of the meeting and jump on the band wagon initiated by left sectarians is blown up into an accusation that the ISers in steel win respect by sucking up to the reformers. Unfortunately for Steve his facts, like his accusations, don't hold water.

The dishonesty of Steve's approach is even more apparent when it is realized that Steve's contention that all the comrades agree with him that there were no special circumstances preventing intervention is completely false. At a lunch-time meeting with the Steve, the fraction discussed this question and informed Steve that there were special circumstances - the one's described above. To be sure we would not have jumped in with the Spartacists and MLOCers in any case, since we did not agree with their views on the question. But to slander the comrades in steel, Steve had to go beyond mere political disagreement and turn the facts around.

Another thing must be said of Steve's method. The incident with which he chooses to slander the steel comrades was, in the context of real events, completely trivial. The debate in that meeting was not the important event Steve makes it out to be, and no one but the sectarians thought it was. But Steve is out to prove to the world that the IS is "drifting to the right" and so every trivial event becomes grist for his mill. In this case he was out to show that we don't struggle with other trade union activists or reformers when we differ. Since we didn't differ in this case, Steve has to turn a small episode into a big deal. Even if Steve could prove we were politically wrong, the fact that one ISer did not leap into the debate in one meeting would prove nothing.

Steve says we do not "struggle" with others when we disagree.

If by "struggle," a very loaded word in IS circles, Steve means we do not expose, slander and misrepresent our collaborators in the reform movement, then we are of course guilty. If he means that we suppress differences, don't argue with those with whom we work, or just generally go along with whatever they want, then we are definitely not guilty.

Steve, of course, is trying to paint a picture of the political situation in District 31 in particular, that justifies his later accusation that it is our supposed theory which leads to such alleged opportunism. The picture he tries to paint is one in which "bureaucrats" like Balanoff and Andrews do things, the lower echelons of the reform forces like Olzansky and Mezo fall into line and prepare their apologies and coverups, and the IS goes along smiling all the way. Like many of the pictures Steve paints these days, this one is inaccurate from start to finish.

Without trying to paint a detailed picture in this short document, we would point out that in reality a good deal of the activity of the reform forces in District 31 is initiated by the lower echelons. In most cases this initiative is encouraged by Balanoff. That is, he does not have a bureaucratic attitude toward initiatives from below. So, that part of the picture crumbles.

Our day to day work goes on in the milieu of the local union activists in various union locals where most of the initiatives occur. Some of these initiatives come from us. We have been in the lead, often along with others, in the women's work, the fight against protectionism last year, and the right to ratify this year. In most cases we have had to argue with some people, to convince them and bring them along. There are also people who agree with us, or with whom we agree, almost from the start. The reason for this is simple enough: we share the same experiences and the same understanding of the situations in which we work because we have worked together for some time. While Steve chooses to believe that nothing ever changes and no one ever moves politically until he has exposed them, it is our experience that many people ARE moving to the left. If Steve insists on perceiving this as a "drift to the right" that is his problem.

Quite properly, our basic attitude toward those rank and filers, grievors, committeemen and occasionally local officers with whom we work in the reform movement is one of friendly collaboration. Like ourselves, these people are working class fighters. Scarcely any of them are bureaucrats in the scientific sense. In any case it is definitely our experience that political differences are more important than sociological ones in this milieu. The fight, for example, over the program of the right to ratify campaign was not between sociological strata, but between political trends within the reform forces. If Steve were to spread the word within this milieu that the IS systematically refrained from arguing with anyone or fighting for its ideas, those who are involved would think him off the wall.

What the IS generally does not do, and what the sectarian left always does, is to take the differences within the reform movement to the public at large (meaning in reality, the rest of the sectarian left) for the purposes of exposure. This does not mean, as Steve will surely charge, that we attempt to hide the weaknesses and political

limits of this movement from its participants and supporters. You can read the 1978 Labor Perspectives, the book Battle Line, and the pamphlet "The Crisis Within" to find many of the criticisms of the reform movement that are real -- though not those that are trivial. We are loyal builders of the movement and we deal in a serious and positive way with its problems. That is why we have respect within that movement.

Now let us take up Steve Z.'s misrepresentation of and attack on our theory. Steve writes that we now have "a theory which insists that it is a layer of the bureaucracy which is responding and will initiate the opposition movements in the unions." Of all of Steve's inventions, this is the most spectacular and bold. Nowhere does he have a shred of documentation that such a "theory" exists -- not a single quote, verbal or written, from any IS document or publication. There is only the accusation that such a theory exists and is to be found in all documents emanating from the EC, in the steel pamphlet, and in the pages of Battle Line.

Accusations unfortunately don't need proof, they only require repetition. And this one is getting more than its share. I was truly amazed at a recent District meeting in New York, when one comrade after another -- some of them people who had only joined a couple of weeks before after nearly two years away from the IS -- got up and repeated the litany that the IS leadership now believed in the bureaucracy, or some section of it, was going to "lead the class struggle", "lead the rank and file" and other similar ideas.

Let's look at what Battle Line, for example, really says about the labor bureaucracy and what's going on today. Speaking of the possibilities of breaks at the top, the authors say:

"But history, or at least the history of American labor, would seem to show that these changes come slowly and painfully. And while some of the old leaders, like John L. Lewis in the 1930's, see the handwriting on the wall early enough to put themselves at the head of new developments, most will probably cling desperately to the old ways.

"The American labor leadership, after all, is not just a section of the trade union movement with one particular outlook. To a greater degree than in most countries in the West, the American labor movement composes a genuine bureaucracy."

And on the next page: "If the labor movement is to be revitalized, it will certainly take a new leadership."

And where will these new leaders come from? Battle Line says: "Most of these new leaders are far from being candidates for International union office. Most are still rank and file leaders or local officials."

And so on, and so on. None of these quotes would seem to point toward "a theory which insists that it is a layer of the bureaucracy which is responding and will initiate the opposition movements in the unions." These quotes would seem to indicate a very different theory, in fact.

Of course, the real IS theory and analysis of what is going on does not deny that some bureaucrats may "try to put themselves at the head of new developments." That is an ABC of Marxism. Here is another quote making the same point, again in terms of the 1930's and the CIO:

"The rank and file rebellion (of the CIO -- KM) was aided by two forces -- thousands of radicals and socialists (Walter Reuther was then one of them), and by a layer of the old business unionists led by John L. Lewis. Lewis saw the need for industrial unionism, but at the same time retained the basic premises of business unionism."

This quote is not from BattleLine, but from "Toward Teacher Power," by a local union president named Steve Zeluck.

Neither does the real IS theory deny that some "radicals and socialists" can win fairly high union office, such as Walter Reuther in the 1930's and Jim Balahoff in the 1970's. Such victories by the radical or reform forces, which put local presidents into higher offices, no doubt complicate the sociological purity of the movement. But whatever one may think of such victories -- and we think they are good -- one has to admit they don't conform to the description of "a layer of bureaucrats" initiating opposition movements in the unions. They are quite obviously the result of those opposition movements, not the reverse.

But let us even concede that it is possible some long-standing bureaucrat, or even a few of them, will actually cast their lot with the reform movement down the road. Would such speculation amount to a "theory" that a "layer of the bureaucracy" was initiating opposition movements? No, it wouldn't.

The real theory of the IS leadership and industrial cadre simply says that today's reform movement is being built by trade union activists. In fact, this part of the theory is not even a theory itself, but simply an observation made by those who are participating in those movements and generalized by various elements of the IS leadership. In other words, it's not a theory but a fact, which we have generalized into an analytical point.

The category "trade union activist" includes rank and filers, grievors, stewards, committeemen, and officers who keep the local unions of America's labor movement going in the work place and union hall. A few of these are objectively bureaucrats in the sense that they have full time positions, salaries way beyond anything the workers make, and operate in social circles above the working class. The truth is, even most full time local officials in this country do not meet these criteria. They live in working class areas, socialize with workers, and are almost always subject to enough turn-over to prevent them from entrenching themselves to anywhere near the degree that the genuine bureaucratic article at the Regional and International level of many unions has.

It can, of course, be argued that these local officials are tied to the bureaucracy through its political machinery and through the way in which they administer the contract. True enough in many, many cases. But, it will also be noted that this is a question of politics and policy, not of social position. And, that is where the

reform movement comes in. The reform movement is taking shape to change that policy--and eventually to change the whole setup. When it comes to power in a local it attempts to change the way the contract is used, and to change the relationship of the local to the International administration.

Before some budding factionalist runs to the typewriter to pump out yet another fabrication, let us point out that we are not saying that all union activists are reformers. The union activists are, of course, divided along political lines. What the real IS theory says is that the employers offensive and other events are causing some of those activists, those most sincerely concerned with the problems of the workers and the union, to change their ideas and begin to fight for changes in the unions.

To argue that the mere holding of union office condemns one to repeat the policies and political practices of all past administrations is simply to say that change is impossible, the reform movement is impossible, socialism, above all, is impossible. This is not Marxism, but Michels'--bourgeois sociological--"Iron Law of Oligarchy," a theory which says socialism is impossible because bureaucracy is inevitable in the trade unions and the socialist party.

That Steve adheres to the "Iron Law of Oligarchy" is evident from his reference to "labor leaders in the process of becoming bureaucrats." That is, we are to believe that the process occurring in District 31, where the militants and reformers have taken over several locals and the District, is a process of becoming bureaucratic. If this is true then, of course, it would be a simple matter to check the history of this district and show how both the political atmosphere of the district and its locals, and the politics and practice of the individuals were all moving rightward and becoming rigidified with bureaucracy. A brief survey will show this notion to be false in every respect.

Until five years ago, District 31 and most of its locals were controlled by the most bureaucratic machine in the USW. It was run by Joe Germano, who had ruled the District since the early 40s. Germano ruled with goon tactics and District 31 looked more like the Teamsters than like a CIO union. The politics of its leaders were those of the Democratic Party machine of Richard J. Daley. In 1973, Ed Sadlowski defeated Germano's hand-picked successor, Sam Evett. Sadlowski had been president of Local 65 and then a staffer. His campaign was reform minded, but basically low key and conservative. At that time, most of the locals were still controlled by pro-Abel-McBride forces. There were few rank and file caucuses.

In the years since Sadlowski defeated Evett, rank and file caucuses formed in numerous locals and eventually, in many cases, took over. One such case was 1010, where the Rank and File Club, organized by Jim Balanoff, put Balanoff and others in power after the Sadlowski victory. As the reform forces gained more power in the locals, the political atmosphere of the District and the politics of many individuals moved to the left. Under the reform forces, District 31 held annual, democratic conferences. Both of the ones held so far have been highly political affairs. Local union activists in the District,

especially those in 1010, have been active, officially backed by the local and sometimes the District, in the fight against protectionism, environmental issues, solidarity activities with the iron ore and then coal miners and meatcutters, women's caucuses and committees, anti-nuke campaigns, etc. For most people the reform experience in District 31 has been radicalizing, not conservatizing. Of course, there are some--Sadlowski, a couple of local presidents--who have remained conservative or even moved to the right, but this will always occur in a situation in political flux. The real process occurring in District 31 is not "labor leaders in the process of becoming bureaucrats," but rank and file militants and reformers becoming labor leaders.

At this point, we must ask the question of why Steve is cooking up phony theories to pin on the IS leadership. Why he is misrepresenting events and elevating trivia to questions of principle. Why he and his supporters in their documents, in the discussion of labor perspectives in the New York branch, and in the corridors of the organization, are not even interested in discussing the policy conclusions of the EC labor document or in presenting any of their own. As Steve himself might put it, it is difficult to resist the thought that Steve is not interested in constructive political debate about the actual direction of IS work. That he has no positive proposals. It is difficult to resist the thought that Steve's strategy of exposure toward the reform movement in the unions extends to his attitude toward the IS, its leadership, its cadres, and its industrial work. It is difficult, these days, to resist the thought that Steve has become little more than a professional factionalist.

Kim Moody

Every time the Russian government publishes a new edition of the Soviet Encyclopedia, the western press comments on how the facts have been changed to fit the current party line. Unfortunately, we have a similar example in our midst.

From some quarters, we hear the charge that the I.S. is capitulating to union bureaucrats. Once you "know" this to be true, it doesn't matter much whether you stretch or manipulate the facts to prove it.

In Steve Z.'s recent document on "The Real Steel Convention," we have an example. Steve has resurrected Harry Patrick, charging that "we kept silent about his current betrayals (breaking the wildcats) even while he was being invited to address a TDU convention." (emphasis in original)

The wildcats in question are obviously the strikes which occurred between late June and September last year, protesting the cuts in health benefits forced by the coal operators. Since Steve did not explain how he thought Patrick broke these strikes, a phone call clarified matters: "He opposed the wildcats," Steve said.

How do we know? He said so in a private meeting with Ken B. and Steve Z. during last year's TDU convention. Reportedly he told the same thing to miners who saw him in his Washington office.

Why was he opposed to the strikes? In Steve's words, "He argued very clearly that he was against the strikes, that he thought they were wrong, they were unproductive, they couldn't win."

And what, exactly, did he do to break the strike? Nothing. . . except to give his opinion to those who asked for it.

But to Steve, apparently, there is no difference between opposing a strike because you think it can't win and actually going out and breaking the strike.

UMW President Arnold Miller sent goons to West Virginia who traded gunshots with the strikers. Now that's strikebreaking. And in fact, Patrick actively opposed this strikebreaking. As Secretary-Treasurer, he refused to pay the bills Miller submitted for the goon squad. For his trouble, Patrick received threats and harassment from some of the goons. (He later paid the bills under the threat of suspension by the I.E.B.)

The point is not to feel sorry for poor, harassed Harry Patrick, but to understand what really went on. Patrick did nothing to break the strike. He took one significant action against the strikebreakers. And, to anyone who wanted to know, he explained he was opposed to the strike because it couldn't win and because it wasted the union's resources just before the expected national contract strike.

In fact, he took the same position as large sections of the rank and file, including some of the most militant. District 6 (Ohio) largely opposed the wildcats for many of the same reasons. (This was the district most overwhelmingly opposed to all the tentative settlements of the contract strike.)

District 6 miners honored picket lines when they were set up by West Virginians, but they didn't set up their own lines or do anything to spread or encourage the strike.

Were they wrong? Was Harry Patrick wrong? Yes, they probably were, although it is certainly a question on which honest militants could, and did, differ.

Were they strikebreakers? You'd have to twist the hell out of the English language and common sense as well to say so. Unless you're more interested in setting up a factional situation inside the I.S. than in looking for the truth.

Jim Woodward

Steve Z. vs. the Real Role of the Revolutionary Socialist Press

In his document, "Workers' Power vs. the Real Steel Convention," Steve Z. raises a lot of questions about a lot of things. About the nature of our work, about the nature of union reform forces, about what actually occurred at the USWA Convention, about the conduct of our comrades. He raises not only questions, but a series of falsifications and insinuations as well. They will all be answered in other discussion papers.

But one of the main questions he raises concerns the role of the socialist press. He chose the title of his document -- "Workers' Power vs. the Real Steel Convention" -- based on his conception of what that role is.

We have a different conception. This response has one purpose -- to explain both conceptions and two show why one is bankrupt.

* * *

Right now, we are going through a certain re-examination of what our publications need to do at this point in time. There is the convention discussion about a broad, non-socialist but left trade union paper. But we are also discussing the need for and nature of a political magazine and the limitations of Workers' Power.

Underneath it all, we understand certain things about the basic nature of any socialist publication. We understand that the revolutionary press has a big responsibility to the trade union militants it seeks to help develop and be in dialog with. The socialist press must be able, above everything else, to grasp the major dynamics involved in any political movement or event. Our job is to pinpoint those dynamics, provide an analysis and what insights we can, and attempt to move consciousness forward.

That is why we chose, given the space limitations of one page, to cover the USW Convention in the way we did. There were three points of overriding importance: (1) the entire thrust of the International bureaucracy to consolidate its machine by attempting to crush the opposition forces, (2) what actually happened in terms of the two major issues at the Convention (right to ratify contracts and elimination of "outside contributions" to election campaigns), and (3) the strength, role, maturity and organization of the opposition forces themselves.

In fact, this last point on the rank and file opposition forces was the most important in terms of what we had to say to rank and file activists. That is why it was the major focus of the coverage and took up more than half the article.

That is why the opening of Steve's document can only be termed startling:

"But one of the most important aspects, especially for us, as advocates of the R&F, was the light the convention threw on the meaning and content of the "reform layer" in the union upon which some comrades lay so much stress and hopes. What did it do and not do, and, how did we relate to it? About this, WP said nothing."

The only possible response to this is to ask that comrades go back and read the coverage in question. In fact, WP had everything to say about the "reform layer" in the union, how it organized itself, what its real strengths and weaknesses were, what it did, how it compared to the previous Convention Sadlowski opposition, and what it means for the future of the union.

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Why, then, does Steve criticize us for not going precisely what we did do? The truth is that it is not these questions that Steve is interested in. The truth is that it is not the major dynamics, the overall level of development and influence, a description of its tasks, or even an honest evaluation of its limitations, that he considers the crucial questions about the "reform layer."

What he does want, as the rest of his document makes clear, is an in-depth description of every tactical decision on how the floor fights were waged, so long as they can be used for exposure purposes against the movement we are trying to build. Steve happens to be utterly wrong about how those tactical decisions were made in this case, what they meant, and what they managed to win. But it does not even matter here.

The point is that, as a WP reporter to the USW Convention, my role was not to be the Ron Barrett of the Right to Ratify forces.

Everyone's who's had any experience in union meetings and union politics -- or any movement politics, for that matter -- knows that within any campaign for a particular goal, there are a million tactical decisions and considerations, many of them behind-the-scenes. Most people know that it would be impossible to explain these dynamics accurately and in detail in a national newspaper to an audience unfamiliar with the specifics and personalities of their union or situation. But most people know something much, much more important -- that in general we do not want to make these day-to-day discussions, maneuvers and plans the focus of our news coverage -- usually not in our rank and file publications, certainly not in Workers' Power.

If we tried to do that, our role would boil down to something very simple: we would be the Workers' Vanguard (the Spartacists' sectarian gossip sheet on every little left group's internal trivia) of the union reform forces. That is, as even Steve should know, hardly the Leninist conception of the revolutionary socialist workers' press.

The fact that we reject this role "is doubly sad," Steve says in his document, "in view of the fact that WP is now supposed to be an analytical paper." Supposedly, if and when we begin putting out an I.S. political magazine, Steve would argue even more strongly for even greater detail on the reform forces' process for deciding day-to-day tactics.

Sorry. The truth is that the Workers' Power coverage was forced to exclude a great deal because of space limitations. Even the impact of the District 31 Women's Caucus on the Convention, which was quite small but quite significant, could not be described. But there were a lot of broader political questions as well, questions which were important and interesting, which we could not cover. These include where the USW fits into our broader analysis of what is going on in the trade union bureaucracy and the American economy. They even include the level of consciousness of the "reform layer" on broader political questions. Hopefully, a political magazine will allow the development of these sorts of issues in our coverage. But that is what becoming more analytical means -- that is what we are crying for the space and depth to be able to do -- not more detail and description of tactical maneuvers and trivia used for the sole purposes of exposure and criticism.

The methodology of trivia, which not only elevates minor details to the status of major events, but also so clutters the mind that one is simply incapable of grasping the major dynamics of any political situation, is apparent throughout Steve's document.

Thus, from reading his document, here is the impression one would get of District 31 Director Jim Balanoff: "As for his /Balanoff's/ role in subverting the key issue, the right to vote, WP maintained total silence."

Forget for a moment the fact that Steve's description of Andrews' and Balanoff's "subversion" -- that is, the tactical decisions they made -- is simply off the wall. Assume, for a moment, whether it is true or not, because it is honestly unimportant, that Balanoff may have made this mistake or other on how a given tactical decision was made. And forget, too, for a moment that WP did not concentrate on Balanoff's position supporting the ratification campaign because we believed the role and organization of the opposition forces themselves was more important to address.

What, from any rational observer, was Balanoff's key role on the key question, the right to vote? Anyone--that is anyone but Steve--who was at the Convention, press, delegate or observer, McBride supporter or right to ratify sympathizer, --even Steve's "pure" rank and file opposition leader delegate from Local 65--anyone would tell you that Balanoff was the man who reflected and supported the rank and file opposition forces at the International Executive Board level. Anyone would tell you that Balanoff was the man who faced waves of booing from many hundreds of pro-International delegates when he got up to speak, including hysteric cat-calls of "Go Back to Russia." He was probably the only person at an International level who not only met regularly with the rank and file leadership of his home local's delegation, but felt himself accountable to them.

The Ratification campaign had its reflection in many different levels. Its greatest strength was on the local level. The important thing about Balanoff was that, to everyone, he represented the focal point of the Right to Ratify forces on the International level.

Now, if we had felt that the major task of the WP coverage was to concentrate on Balanoff, it is this main dynamic that would have come out. Sorry to say it, but we can't see how this can be twisted to say that Balanoff's key role on the key issue was "subversion."

* * *

There are two less important points concerning WP which need to be answered because Steve raises them.

The first is that it is supposedly a sign of our retreat and determination to bury our politics that we did not sell or distribute WP at the Convention. We do not believe that it could have helped us in the least to broadly distribute WP. Whether it would have hurt us or not, in this given situation, is open to question. We discussed this with Steve, at the Convention, explained our reasons to him, and he made no objection.

You had to be there to understand that there was the equivalent of a blizzard of different-colored left leaflets and newspapers outside the Convention hall. Most every left group was seen, by the best union activists, as sectarians and outsiders -- except ourselves, including our staffers who were there as the I.S. and W.P. (and some sections of the CP, whose delegates did not identify with their party propaganda.)/ Beyond this, there was a strong atmosphere of red-baiting from the International. Given that the Convention delegates were massively pro-International and conservative, there was only a handful of people who would have been interested in Workers' Power.

The question, then, is how you reach that handful effectively. We believe we did it. Workers' Power had established standing relationships with every section of the visible opposition (except Canada) in the couple of months leading up to the Convention. Many copies had been mailed out, letters written and phone calls made (using the explicit identification of Workers' Power). By the time of the Convention, Workers' Power already had a good reputation and standing with most of the opposition leader delegates. That was used to deepen and expand our relationships with oppositionists at

the Convention itself, and as a basis for follow-up not that it is over. This work in fact laid the basis for our meeting a couple of important leaders in the union whom we had not been able to meet previously. Hopefully we can use those relationships through WP to help and feed into our trade union relationships. This kind of use was much more effective than anonymous selling of one more trash can candidate. It was made possible by the reputation of our comrades work. We have trouble, again, seeing how it fits into "subversion" of our politics, and retreat.

Steve expresses the same concern, by the way, over the lack of distribution of the steel pamphlet at the Convention. "It is difficult to see this failure as accidental," he writes. The steel pamphlet had in fact already been sold or used with (to an excellent response) almost everyone we knew. Only a couple of copies were brought to the Convention. Now, there is a reason that only a couple of copies were brought -- and that reason is that only a couple of copies existed in the NO and were therefore available to bring. Both staffers had tried to get copies to bring beforehand, only to find that we had sold out.

What is so disturbing about this, like the facts behind other accusations Steve makes, is that Steve knew these facts full well--before he printed up his charges that we were unwilling to use the steel pamphlet for public consumption. The fact that we were unable to procure copies, to our dismay, because they were sold out, was explained at a lunchtime meeting with him and several other comrades. The fact did not deter him from making stupid charges about "non-accidental retreats." It is a small thing. Other charges are not so small. But the methodology is the same.

Last of all is a minor point. Steve plays up a local election for delegates at Local 65, where one rank-and-file Sadlowski supporter rank against the incumbent-president Sadlowski supporter and Sadlowski supporter the worst of the two, the latter. Workers' Power, to its shame according to Steve, and as a testament to our retreat and unwillingness to criticize Sadlowski, has nothing to say about the delegate election.

We will answer this charge briefly, in keeping with what it deserves:

(1) We are not immune to the need for criticism of Sadlowski, where it is relevant and important. In the coverage on the Convention which Steve so dislikes, Sadlowski is criticized for his national role -- his refusal to do anything -- and its highly detrimental effect on the needs of the opposition forces. This is surely more telling and more relevant than his role in any given internal local politicking.

(2) We do not cover every local delegate election (in fact, we did not cover any). In truth, there were far more important local delegate elections going on -- including one at Homestead, District 15, Pittsburgh, where a rank and file reform slate won a landslide and may therefore sweep the general elections in the Spring, thereby controlling that local (the only one that would be so controlled in that important District). If Steve wants to criticize us for omission, he should separate the wheat from the chaff, and pick those instances that really count.

* * *

He doesn't make the separations because he is concerned, simply, with making a case. Putting the trivial details into their proper context undermines his case. So he chooses to elevate the details, and throw away the context -- the factual context and the political context.

For revolutionaries, the method is fatal. For a revolutionary newspaper or journal, it means that none of the main political dynamics of a situation can be delineated. Without that first step, there can be no socialist analysis, no understanding of the

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steps needed to influence consciousness. A gossip sheet on the trade union reform movement, unintelligible in its detail, buried in tactical trivia, devoted to exposé, may be more interesting to some--but not many. It certainly will not take the movement forward.

--Candy C.

BATTLE LINE'S POLITICAL LINE IS OUT OF LINE

by Sam Fr., New Jersey

When I heard the IS was producing a book on the coal strike, I was really happy. Here at last we were going to make all the key political points we never seem to have space to make in WP articles. Here at last we were going to see what we could accomplish when we have a theoretical journal. And in addition, here at last we could have a serious chance to find out what had been going on in coal from leaders of our organization who had had a chance to find out.

Instead, I got a better grip on what some of our comrades have been talking about in claiming there is adrift to the right in the IS and in worrying about the political flabbiness all of us seem to be showing.

In addition, throughout the book there is a reliance on assertion as a way of making points, rather than trying to convince the reader with facts and arguments. This is both a problem for me in criticizing the book -- since it may be hard for our members to believe we are still relying on bluster and really failed to back up key points -- and a problem for the IS as we try to develop more political (and thus convincing) materials with which to appeal to other left groupings who are active in the working class.

These are serious claims -- and if correct they pose serious problems for us to deal with. Let me back them up.

First, let us all be clear. Battle Line is not simply an agitational leaflet. It is 126 pages long, spends many of those pages on economic facts and figures about the coal industry, and many pages on the way the miners organized the strike and the politics of the ruling class and the top officials of labor unions. Thus, it cannot be claimed that omissions are due to space, or even accidental (unless in cases where the points omitted are indeed minor). Furthermore, when Gay was in New York, she told a meeting that Battle Line was going to give the full story on the emerging stratum of new union officers and activists on which so many hopes are being pinned, so any absence of evidence in this regard is probably not accidental either.

Much of the current debate in the IS centers on the question of union officers and the rank and file. Let us look at how Battle Line discusses this. First, on page 28 we find the following claim: "By the late 1960's the wildcat strike, still largely local or regional, was a common tool for fighting the operators and pressuring the union. These early strike movements opened up the political life of the UMWA. First came the unsuccessful campaign of Jock Yablonski for President in 1969." The first part of this is good -- Kim and Jim recognize that wildcat movements among the rank and file are the source of larger movements and efforts to reform the union. Unfortunately, they then blew it. The Yablonski campaign was NOT the first of the larger movements, the Black Lung Association and the POLITICAL strike it waged in West Virginia came first. Indeed, Yablonski himself was responding to the BLA strike and its successes when he decided to run for the UMWA Presidency. What does this mean, then? It MIGHT be a mere error, a sloppiness of our leaders on historical detail. If it is, it's the kind of sloppiness that undermines the credibility of our propaganda pretty thoroughly. But I don't believe it's simple error. It's an error that reflects a political position, that position being that initiatives from within the bureaucracy are needed to spark off wide movements. The line we have always taken in the past on such matters has been that rank and file initiative, action and pressure is what lies behind such splits within the officialdom. But that's irrelevant, as is the true sequence of historical events, when one is writing Battle Line.

Second, consider BL's treatment of the politics of the local officers of the UMWA. It correctly points out that local officers were indeed involved in spreading the strike into non-union mines, and in trying to get the various contracts voted down.

This is important. But it is also important -- and a key part of our propaganda -- to tell our readers WHY and HOW this happened. In particular, when they did this, were they being leaders in the full sense of the word -- or were they primarily responding to rank and file pressure. And -- in either case, we should DEMONSTRATE our claim to be truth by full discussion. After all, to our contacts in auto or freight who are some of the people we want to read the pamphlet, it is going to seem odd that local leaders actually do something useful, particularly when this involves defying the President of the Union. For years we have been trying to convince contacts that it takes pressure for this to happen -- we ought to at least offer them some evidence when we turn around and say it doesn't. However, for Kim and Jim this does not seem to be a problem. They don't even examine the question of WHY and HOW it came about that local officials took a leadership stance, at least not in terms of what part the rank and file may have played in it.

And this is very unfortunate. After all, if Miners officers have discovered some way to act as class struggle leaders in the absence of rank and file pressure and organization, it would be worth while to let us know their secret. We need to know it, as do many of our contacts. Soon, we hope to have a number of our members in local union offices. They will want to know the secret, since in the past we have always argued that even our members would need the pressure from the rank and file to help keep the edge on their combativity AND in order to have the forces organized that let you lead struggles without getting smashed.

In addition, in a propaganda pamphlet, we should really thoroughly discuss the history of the local officers' politics. Ideally, if they have suddenly become the leaders of the working class, we should try to discuss how this happened. To do this, we would want to discuss how local officers had acted to send workers back to work during strikes in the past. Not just the distant past, either. For instance, their strike-breaking in the massive wildcat of Summer 1975 was discussed heavily in WP. Indeed, even last year, WP (July 18, 1977, p.3) reported that a meeting of 80 local Presidents had threatened violence against pickets during the wildcat against gutting the health care system. I would think that that requires some discussion -- but there is NO MENTION of these events in the new IS BOOK.

Let me venture a prediction. Even though some local presidents came through (under unknown rank and file pressure) during an official contract strike, there is no reason to expect much of them during a wildcat. During the next massive wildcat (which BL's blustering confidence lets us assume will happen soon) we can expect more meetings of local leaders that will call on the ranks to return to work and declare that staying out cannot win anything. Unless, of course, the rank and file are so tightly organized by then that their pressure is stronger than that of the bureaucracy.

Thus, BL's line on the officialdom is wrong, and in addition is supported only very feebly by anything more than assertion.

Let's look next at the book's proposals for solutions to the problems Miners face. Presumably, we have got something real to offer on this, given our superb politics and given the experience we have gotten in the process of building TDU. At the very least, we can point to TDU as a model, showing that rank and filers have to build an ORGANIZATION to coordinate their actions and through which serious discussion of what needs to be done can occur. BUT, COMRADES, BELIEVE IT OR NOT, YOU CAN READ THROUGH OUR LONG AND DETAILED BOOK ON THE MINERS AND NOT FIND THIS. TDU is discussed -- along with ISTC, PROD, Sadlowski (and the steel network). But it is little more than a gloss, and certainly does NOT do either of two crucial propaganda tasks: (1) We should -- but BL does not -- argue that the rank and file has to organize groups like TDU. (2) We should -- but do not -- tell the miners, auto workers, etc. who read the pamphlet

how it can be done. (That is, be the "collective memory" of the working class -- unless we have amnesia).

What does it mean that we did NOT do this? Certainly, it undermines and casts doubt on whether Jim and Kim see TDU as being a model for other workers, or even for Teamsters. Perhaps for workers in auto, steel, Teamsters and other industries; Jim and Kim believe as they do for miners:

"The real material for a new leadership team, the militants at the district and local levels, are not prepared to move for top leadership positions right now. But they will be gaining experience and confidence by various campaigns to pressure the Executive Board and top officers...

"There is no short-term solution to the UMWA's leadership crisis. Even a special election for President or for the top three officers will not resolve this crisis. For one thing, there are no apparent candidates with a big enough national following to replace Miller, Church, etc. This could change if some of Miller's supporters on the Executive Board break with him. But today there are no clear signs of this happening. The hope for the UMWA lies with the ability of the local and district leaders and activists to initiate and pressure for organizing drives, and to organize and prepare for the next series of elections. (pp.94-5)

The meaning of this for the IS is that our leaders are fully capable of writing a beautiful lead-in for the argument that miners need to set up a rank and file group ~~xxx~~ like TDU, and then shy off and argue that the solution lies with "local and district leaders and activists" getting involved in organizing drives and election campaigns WITHOUT discussing the fact that in order to do this well they need to set up something like TDU. After all, the miners do have a superb network, and enormous experience in class struggle. What they do NOT have is a rank and file ORGANIZATION -- and this is why they have no alternative union leadership. Yet somehow we no longer seem to think this is important. And I might add, the same kind of politics that says the Miners don't need a rank and file group may well decide the first time that a grouping of local officers in the Teamsters becomes at all oppositional that IT IS the "hope for the IBT" and thus that TDU should be urged to subordinate itself to these local officials and then (perhaps) to dissolve itself into their supporters.

There are a few other problems with BL that strike me as worth mentioning briefly. Kim and Jim keep saying that the Miners' strike "drew a line" across American politics, a class line that put clearly workers vs. capitalists. This is a form of bluster that can only be seen as re-worked triumphalism. And wishful thinking. During the strike, in a few areas, some semblance of such a line was drawn, and came to the conscious attention of a moderate number of people. Great. But this was limited in both numbers and in time. Few signs remain of it. The line may have been drawn, but it was drawn in coal dust, and the breath of capitalist propagandists has blown it out of sight. (Seriously, I had hoped we had learned that triumphalism fools only ourselves).

Enough. There are many other "errors in wording" and places where the authors say something that implies the bureaucracy is only inept rather than traitorous to their class-of-origin, only to pull back in the next page or two and say the opposite. But at this point I want to stop, and leave you with the suggestion that you read the IS's first book and see if you don't agree that something is wrong.

PREJUDICE AS POLITICAL METHOD
An Answer to Sam Fr.'s Critique of Battle Line

There is a method of reading books, pamphlets, documents and other types of literature that is all too common on the left. At the basis of this method is not the critical seeking of knowledge, or even the excitement of political debate. Rather the foundation of this approach is prejudice, the belief that you already know what this or that piece of literature has to say or what it is trying to prove. The reading of the book, then, becomes little more than a search for those formulations that would seem to prove that the authors meant just what you thought they would mean. This is the method with which Sam Fr. read Battle Line.

Take Sam Fr.'s first criticism. A quote is taken from page 28. It says, "By the late 1960s the wildcat strike, still largely local or regional, was a common tool for fighting the operators and pressuring the union. These early strike movements opened up the political life of the UMWA. First came the unsuccessful campaign of Jock Yablonski for President in 1969." On the face of it, these two sentences say nothing more or less than that wildcat movements opened up the political life of the union, made new kinds of political activity possible, the Yablonski campaign being the first serious political challenge to the Boyle leadership. Pretty straightforward.

But to Sam Fr. these two sentences mean the precise opposite. For, he argues that these two sentences really reveal, and I quote, "a political position, that position being that initiatives from within the bureaucracy are needed to spark off wide movements." How did the proposition that wildcat strikes made possible things like the Yablonski campaign turn into the position that says it takes "initiatives within the bureaucracy to spark off wide movements"? No tricky dialectical flourishes were needed. Interpretation based on prejudice was sufficient. Sam bases his argument on the fact that it said the Yablonski campaign was the first example of how wildcats opened the political life of the UMWA. Sam, like a leopard stalking its prey, has found the proof he sought, so he leaps. The Yablonski campaign was not first, we are told, the Black Lung Association and the strike it waged in 1969 was the first.

Of course, if you weren't looking for the proof that this book was a reflection of the famous, and much feared "move to the right," if you just took the words for what they say and were meant to say, you would know that these two sentences were talking about events having to do with the political structure of the union--which the wildcats helped open up. The "first" in reference to the Yablonski campaign meant not, and didn't say that, the Yablonski campaign was the first or "larger movements," for no one believes it was a larger movement at all. Rather it meant that it was the first serious challenge to the Boyle machine within the structure of the union, within its "political life." The second such challenge, of course, was the MFD. Which brings us to another thing that needs to be said about Sam's use of the quote and his silly misinterpretation.

The section of the book from which this quote is taken is in reality a discussion of how the MFD arose (pp. 28-29) and more broadly

of how a decade of wildcats, political struggles, electoral victories, and mass movements in general have made the UMWA as a whole stronger, not weaker. In particular, this section goes on, in the next two pages, to describe the various movements that led to the formation of the MFD immediately following the murder of Yablonski at the end of 1969. The movement that receives the most space, the greatest emphasis, is none other than the Black Lung movement and its 23-day strike. The Yablonski campaign is not given credit for the creation of the BLA. The contribution of the Yablonski campaign to MFD and other subsequent events is described explicitly as having "less vitality" than the direct action movements. Sam is not only guilty of misinterpreting the quote he uses, but in fact of using it out of context, in order to say that it means the opposite of what it really means.

Armed with prejudice, there is never the need for accurate information. So, the search for the rightward drift and the embracing of the bureaucracy continues into fields in which Sam is quite obviously ignorant. In particular "the politics of the local officers of the UMWA." As in any union there are both good and bad local officers, and many in between. And, of course, nowhere in Battle Line is it argued, stated, or implied that all UMWA local officers are good, are reformers, or are leaders of the mass strike movements of the past ten years. There are over 800 local unions in the UMWA, many of these in Districts still controlled by reactionary, Boylite regimes, who labor to keep their friends in office. And so on. What the book does say, and what is true, is that most of the active leaders of the mass strike movements of recent years, and of the activities that made the 1977-78 strike what it was are, in fact, local officers.

This fact, and it is a fact, goes against the conventional wisdom of some people, against their prejudice. That prejudice says that union officials, local or any other kind, only do good things when pressured from the rank and file--who themselves are, by definition, not office holders. This being the case, always, it naturally appears strange, even sinister, that Battle Line does not explain this process.

The process by which the rank and file pressures these local officers into doing the right thing is not described in Battle Line because by and large that is not the process that has gone on in the UMWA so far as the strike movements are concerned. While we wouldn't deny that various kinds of pressure in various situations are applied to local officers, the most important process in the UMWA is something else. It is that the local officers, the good ones, are the leaders of rank and file action, pressure, militancy, not its object. Yes, in the UMWA, there is a tendency for the local officers to be the most militant, most aggressive, bravest, fighters. Again, this is not true of all and it is true of most in varying degrees--as it is for rank and file workers.

Sam says that if this is somehow the case, there must be a "secret" and that Battle Line fails to let us all in on it. But the secret is nothing more than that these militants are elected by their fellow miners to office in the belief that they will do a good job. This "secret" is not even unique to the UMWA. Even in bastions of bureaucratic control, like the UAW and USW and IBT, workers vote for the most

militant union activists in union elections, and sometimes they even win.

There is one thing that is different about the UMWA. Unlike many other unions the officers of almost all UMWA locals are working miners. That is, they continue to work in the mines even after they win office. Naturally, this keeps their thinking more in line with that of the rest of the union members, on the one hand, and less of an attraction to bureaucratic methods, on the other. But this is not generally what we mean by pressure from the rank and file.

This fact is important for another reason. It has allowed the best elements in the union to base their movement to a large extent on the local union. Battle Line does describe this in the same chapter as the two sentences quoted by Sam in his first criticism. In that discussion it is revealed that local officers are working miners and that the militants among them use this fact to build their movement. Among other things it says:

"The basic unit of organization (of the strike movements) is the local union. Most local unions in the UMWA are small, seldom numbering as many as 1,000 members. Their officers, committeemen, and safety committeemen are working miners."

So, as it turns out, there are no secrets withheld from the readers of Battle Line. There is instead a description and analysis of a process that is different from the one that Sam expected and demanded.

The difficulty in understanding that the growth, organization, and political expression of rank and file motion or of a reform movement can be quite different in different unions (and even more different from one's preconceptions) that results from a prejudicial approach leads Sam to his final criticism, his final piece of evidence that the drift to the right is serious. Sam finds it astonishing that Battle Line does not "point to TDU as a model" for the miners and, indeed, for auto and steel workers as well.

Of course, there is a chapter in the book, Chapter 16, which does mention that, "Rank and file opposition or pressure movements for change have arisen in the Steel Workers, Teamsters, Auto Workers...." And this chapter does have a brief section describing the movements in some of these unions, including, of course, TDU. It uses TDU in particular to say something of the importance of training rank and file leadership. And it contains a brief description of how TDU was built. But ultimately it was not a book on TDU, so its treatment of TDU is necessarily superficial. Nevertheless, a slightly more objective reader of the book would no doubt conclude that we think TDU is terrific.

However, it is true that we did not "point to TDU as a model" for the miners. This is not because miners have nothing to learn from TDU. We said what we did say about TDU because we felt there was a key lesson for miners and other workers. But we did not propose TDU as a model for all workers at all times in all unions because to do so would be politically wrong.

Different unions have distinct traditions, organizational struc-

tures, and so on. In the Teamsters, for example, the militants and reformers control only a minute handful of local unions and have almost no influence above the local level, except possibly in Canada. As a result they are unable to use the organizational advantages that derive from controlling a local. The IBT is totally undemocratic above the local level. The top officials of the IBT are gangsters. Etc. Etc. The situation in the UMWA is entirely different. While there is no formal national organization of the militants, the rank and file of the UMWA has achieved an effective level of organization known in no other union. Their traditions of solidarity are much greater than those of Teamsters and give their movement a cohesion far beyond anything yet achieved by TDU. Furthermore, the leaders of this movement are more bound to and responsible to their rank and file than the leaders of any national opposition organization we have ever heard of. These differences do not spring from the moral superiority of miners over other workers, but from the history, traditions, and experiences of the miners. TDU is not an abstraction, it is a specific organization that faces specific problems, whose structures, campaigns, and leaders exist to answer those problems. TDU, for example, is not organized in such a way as to be able to assume the leadership of the IBT. Any national organization in the UMWA must have that as one of its primary tasks.

The reason that Sam feels that we should always "point to TDU as a model" is that TDU and all these other situations exist as abstractions. TDU means only national organization. Struggling workers are struggling workers. Politics is calling for the same thing all the time. But life, above all political life, isn't like that. The IS has learned that how you say things, what specific content you give them, and when you propose them are often as important as what you are saying. It is not true that it is right to call for national opposition caucuses at all times in all situations. Sometimes it is premature to do so; sometimes it will produce a false start; sometimes it will just be a set-up for a weak movement, and sometimes the existing state of organization appears to its participants to have advantages over what they understand by national opposition group--their interpretation of what TDU would mean for them.

The experience of the miners with TDU-like organization is MFD, which is not associated with the likes of Pete Camarata or Jack Vlahovic or Ken Paff, but with Arnold Miller, Harry Patrick, and Mike Trbovich. A simple abstract call for a national opposition group, the abstract TDU model (for the concrete model doesn't match the miners' needs for other reasons), will mean something quite different than you would intend it to mean. This is not to say that some sort of national opposition organization is wrong; there may be one in the wind right now. But it is to say that how you discuss the question of organization is crucial. We choose to discuss it concretely, but without making any specific organizational proposal. So, Chapter 13 takes up the question of leadership and organization, where it is and where it can go. But we were in no position to present some blueprint or to claim that now was the hour to set up the national opposition group.

While we were interviewing miners for the book, we discovered they were, in fact, debating among themselves just this question. People who agree on most things disagreed on the timing of such a move. Some were even suspicious that some of the more flaky, old MFDers would

take over such a thing and ruin it, setting everything back. The IS does not have first hand experience in the internal politics of the UMWA or the reform movement within it. We have recently learned a great deal, enough to write a book. But we did not see the purpose of this book as to take sides in that debate. The purpose was to point in much broader and more political terms the direction of the UMWA and its rank and file and, more generally of the rest of the labor movement and the class struggle. To help educate militants in all unions by providing them with a broad understanding of the economic and political context in which they struggle. The idea that we must tell the miners at what moment to set up their organization in a book of this type is misguided. The idea that we must always call for TDUs everywhere is subpolitical.

There is one other product of preconception. Battle Line is accused of "blustering" and, imagine in this day and age of humility, of "triumphalism" because it keeps "saying that the miners' strike 'drew a line' across American politics, a class line that clearly put workers vs. capitalists." What the book actually says, in the words of steel worker Mike Olszanski, is "The industrialists have drawn the battle lines," hence the title of the book. We show that the drawing of this line has extended to politics as well as to industrial relations.

We believe that, in fact, the capitalists, acting as a class, did make such a move this last year. And, we believe the book demonstrates this factually: 1) by showing that the forces behind the BCOA represented some of the commanding heights of the ruling class; 2) that there is an employers offensive generally, which reaches into virtually every industry making it a class vs. class matter; 3) that there is the growth of union busting; 4) that the employers stood 100% united in their opposition to Labor Law Reform. That fight has been recognized by far more people than are in the IS. We found that auto workers, steel workers, other unionists and miners themselves who we worked with across the country during the strike understood this for the first time. We now know that Doug Fraser, Lane Kirkland, George Meany, etc. know this and say it. The fact that these bureaucrats, rank and file workers, and IS members do not necessarily agree on what to do about it is one thing. For IS members to be blinded to the fact of what happened in 1978 because they see "triumphalism" and "drifts to the right" lurking behind every sentence is sad.

Pre-convention debate is a time for lively debate over important ideas. We know that people will disagree over many things. This can be, and on balance usually is, a healthy process. Unfortunately, however, preconceptions and prejudices often blind people to what the real question, the real existing differences are. Instead of the critical examination of ideas and information, some comrades prefer to presume guilt, and usually a specific guilt, and to set out like a detective to uncover the "smoking pistol" and the clues that will prove the guilt. It is an unfortunate method that does not advance our theory and practice, but tends to retard it.

Kim Moody