

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

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Editor's Note

With this issue of the Internal Information Bulletin we begin publication of the December 1963 plenum discussion on the internal party situation.

The texts have been transcribed from a tape recording of the proceedings and have not been checked by the participants.

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REPORT ON INTERNAL PARTY SITUATION

(December 1963 Plenum)

by Farrell Dobbs

Comrades:

The suspension from membership of Comrades Robertson, Mage, White, Harper and Ireland involves a major question of vital concern to the party: Shall the party demand unconditional loyalty from all its members; or will a disloyal faction be allowed to conduct internal war against the party, acting under cover of alleged "minority rights"?

Criticisms of the suspensions, which have been advanced by some comrades, have raised an even more basic question concerning the character of the party itself: Shall we remain a Leninist-type party, founded on the concept of basic political homogeneity, guided by the principles of democratic centralism, and operating as a disciplined whole through the principle of majority rule; or shall the party degenerate into a loose all-inclusive formation of autonomous factions? Shall it be derailed from its basic political homogeneity, stripped of its democratic centralist principles, rendered incapable of acting in a disciplined way as a united body with a single fundamental purpose?

Our answers to those questions will be vital to the party's future. The Political Committee has taken its stand in keeping with our understanding of the established principles of the party, and it's now up to the Plenum to make its decision for the guidance of the party membership. For the information of the plenum in reaching its decision, I will undertake to recapitulate the facts in the case and motivate the disciplinary action taken by the Political Committee.

The suspensions hinge on the Robertson-Ireland and Harper documents, which were appended to the Control Commission report of October 24 and with which you're all familiar. We first learned of the existence of these documents on the eve of the last party convention. Wohlforth exposed them in an article he submitted to the discussion bulletin (Vol. 24, No. 27). He said of the Robertson-Mage-White faction: Theirs is a split perspective. They reject party discipline and party building. They seek to sneak people into the party. They function in part as an independent entity carrying on an organizational faction war within the party. They are a faction that includes non-

party members and have become so deeply alienated from the party that as a faction they have already split in content -- those were the characterizations of the document by Wohlforth at the time he made reference to them in the bulletin.

As National Secretary, I at that time, on the eve of the convention, requested copies of the documents from Robertson. He refused to make them available and said the proper procedure would be to convene a Control Commission inquiry. I then asked Wohlforth for copies of the documents to which he had referred, and he denied my request saying the documents were what he called "private political material." For the moment I will leave aside the handling of the matter at the convention and focus at this point on the steps taken after the convention.

On August 2, the subject was brought before the Political Committee. A motion was adopted noting that the Wohlforth accusations raised grave questions involving a hostile attitude toward the party, double recruiting and a split perspective. The Control Commission was asked to conduct an investigation of the matter. The Control Commission held a series of hearings in New York. It obtained copies of the documents in question from Robertson, Ireland and Harper. Mage and some others of the faction appeared at the hearings. All of them were given ample opportunity at that time to disavow the documents. Not a single one of them did so.

On October 24 the Control Commission submitted a report of its investigation. Now the comrades are already familiar with the split line in the Robertson-Ireland and Harper documents that were appended to the Commission report -- and on the basis of that report the Political Committee took disciplinary action on November 1, suspending the five from membership. I want to read to you the characterization of the disloyal conduct of the faction as set forth in the Political Committee motion:

"Assuming the guise of a 'study circle' the group leadership projects a discussion policy that disregards convention decisions to close discussion on disputed issues and goes ahead factionally on a business-as-usual basis. In external activity they purpose to function as 'united blocs' seeking to work as free-lancers in areas where they are unhindered by the presence of comrades loyal to the party. They undertake the recruitment of outside contacts into the group on the basis of the group's program, methods and practices. New people recruited into the group are considered ready to apply for party membership only after they have first been indoctrinated against the program, convention decisions and organizational principles of the party. Group discipline is put before party discipline. Group work within the party is cynically projected as 'the best possible opportunity for building our tendency and not through any

mistaken concepts of loyalty to a diseased shell.' Such are the concepts, methods and practices with which the Robertson-Mage-White group is indoctrinated by its central leaders and by the Harper-Ireland propagators of the leadership policy. Those concepts, methods and practices are alien to our party, wholly disloyal and utterly intolerable."

That was the characterization in the Political Committee motion that suspended the five from membership in the party. Since the suspensions, various comrades have raised criticisms of the Political Committee action. The texts of the criticisms as they have been received up to this time are in your folders and you've had an opportunity to familiarize yourself with them. I will not undertake a reply to each specific statement of criticism, I will seek instead to deal with the general categories involved.

A feeling is expressed that the party was not given sufficient information about the case. Insofar as the comrades have felt handicapped concerning full knowledge of all the facts, we must recognize there has been an oversight and steps must be taken to correct it. That can be quickly accomplished. We propose that all the material pertaining to the case be published internally for the information of the party membership. All of the material submitted to the plenum can in fact be ready within a few days after the plenum for distribution to the membership. And that information can be supplemented reasonably soon thereafter by publication of the pertinent details concerning the plenum action on the case. In that way we can quickly have all the facts before the entire party membership.

It is claimed that the suspension procedure violated Article VIII, Section 3 of the party constitution. The assertion is made that charges should have been presented in advance and that the accused should have had a chance to answer the charges at a trial.

Those criticisms reflect a misunderstanding of the constitutional procedures involved in this case, and they reflect a confusing of branch methods of discipline with the exercise of the national powers of the Control Commission. The Control Commission is an extraordinary body constitutionally invested with special powers as provided under Article VI of the constitution. When the Control Commission acts in any case, Article VI supersedes Article VIII, Section 3. Article VI establishes the Control Commission as a permanent national body, elected by the party convention. It is given wide latitude in acting to safeguard the integrity of the party and to enforce its

basic principles. The Control Commission has constitutional authority to investigate any individual or circumstance within the party, and it acted entirely within its power in demanding from the Robertson-Mage-White group the documents in question. Moreover, the Control Commission is authorized by the Constitution to delegate any of its authority to representatives in the exercise of that power, a provision intended to meet practical problems as was the case in this situation. Comrade A. Chester of the Control Commission and Comrade Taber, designated as a representative of the Control Commission, conducted the investigation here in New York.

A charge is made that the Control Commission acted as an agent of the Political Committee and that the Political Committee went beyond the Control Commission findings. That charge again simply misconstrues the constitutional provisions involved. Article VI specifically provides that the Control Commission shall present its findings and recommendations to the Political Committee for action. It further provides that the Political Committee may take immediate action, or it may refer the matter to the National Committee, if it so chooses. The case before us was handled exactly as the constitution provides and there are no grounds whatever for criticism on that score.

A criticism is made that White was not called before the Control Commission. It is also pointed out that White and Mage did not sign the documents in question, and the Political Committee is accused of convicting them through guilt by association.

Those allegations merely fog up the central point of the case. The documents involved constitute a declaration of war on the party. They define the party as a right centrist formation. They speak of irreconcilable internal divisions between "reformists and revolutionaries." They call for planned and united group action within the party. They state the aim to pick and choose their battles, to detect times when it is most advantageous to attack and when it is best to maintain silence. They do this within the framework of a proscription against any "mistaken concepts of loyalty to a diseased shell."

Some critics of the suspension would dismiss these documents as the product of what they call "individual stupidity." The Political Committee holds otherwise. It's a declaration of war on the party. It's a disloyal course that cannot and will not be tolerated. All leaders of the Robertson-Mage-White faction must bear the responsibility for their collective position. It's immaterial whether one or another faction leader signed the documents or not. Let us note in passing, however,

that in their replies to the suspensions neither Mage nor White disavowed the documents. They actually reaffirmed them, but they did it of course with their customary double talk. All the leaders of the Robertson-Mage-White faction must face the consequences of everything the faction does. That just happens to be the way political life works out, and people who can't face up to that fact of political life should stay out of leading positions.

It's somewhat different in the case of the ranks of the group. Some of them may have gotten sucked into the attack on the party without realizing what they were doing, what they were getting into. If any of them want to turn around they should be given a chance to do so. But the leaders of the group knew exactly what they were doing and now they must face the consequences.

Critics of the suspensions attack the Political Committee on the grounds that it is exercising alleged thought control. The assertion is made that the charges are based solely on the opinions of the suspended comrades. It is demanded that the Political Committee must produce concrete evidence of disloyal acts. And some of the critics have likened the Political Committee action to capitalist use of the Smith Act.

Here again several basic facts are overlooked by the critics. The party is a voluntary organization. People can belong to the party or not, as they may choose. But there's nothing voluntary whatever about the acceptance of governmental authority. It's exercised over everyone, whether they like it or not. And that's why governmental attempts to proscribe views are anti-democratic. People who disagree with the views of the governing party are not simply told they'll have to organize a rival party; they're threatened with jail. The difference is qualitative.

As a voluntary organization, the party has the right to define the basis of its existence. That's traditional to the whole history of organized political action. Now we, obviously, won't allow fascists or terrorists or white supremacists in our ranks. Of course, those political categories are extreme examples which do not apply in the case before us. But those categories do serve to illustrate in an immediately perceptible way the fact that the party does put distinct limits on the right of advocacy within its ranks. In addition to that, the party exercises its right to define all its basic beliefs programmatically in setting down the conditions for membership, and the party has an equal right to define the organizational principles with which all members must comply. Those who don't subscribe to the party's

basic beliefs have the democratic right to withdraw from the organization. On our part, we can't allow them to remain in the party and advocate anything they please, especially under the circumstances in which we must operate within the main fortress of imperialism.

We not only can't let disloyal people advocate anything they please within the party, we can't let them do so behind the back of the party, as the Robertson-Mage-White faction has done and is still doing. If the documents in question are only a harmless expression of views and opinions as they hypocritically pretend, why didn't they submit those views and opinions openly for party discussion? Why did we have to pry the documents out of them? The answer is plain for all to see. The documents characterize the party as a right centrist formation and project a split perspective. The leadership of the Robertson-Mage-White faction advocates rejection and violation of the most elementary condition of membership in this organization: loyalty to the party. For them, obligations to the party are subordinated to an superseded by their own factional aims. They're conducting a wrecking operation inside the party, and that's why they tried to keep the documents a secret, because party wreckers are not popular in our ranks.

We face a declaration of war, and it is the duty of the leadership to defend the party against the would-be wreckers. We don't have to await formal proof of specific hostile acts, nor do we have to let concrete evidence pile up, one fact upon another, until the sheer weight of their attack on the party makes their patent disloyalty obvious even to the most blind. Disloyalty requires corrective measures, right here and now. We recognize the right of the Robertson-Mage-White faction leaders to oppose the Socialist Workers Party. We'll defend their democratic right to form a rival party on their own to combat us. But they won't be allowed to act as wreckers within the SWP.

Our critics argue that disciplinary action against the Robertsonite leaders is an attempt to settle political differences by organizational means. They contend that disciplinary action signifies in practice suppression of the right to organize dissenting groups within the party.

Those charges are false. The party convention settled the political issues in dispute by a decisive majority. All minority viewpoints within the party had a full opportunity to be heard. There was no restriction of legitimate minority rights. In fact, the situation was just the opposite. The leadership bent over as far as it possibly could to assure full

freedom of expression and just a little bit better than 100 percent of what were the legitimate rights of the minorities. When we came to the convention and the vote was taken, it was proven that the minorities had simply lost the political argument within the party.

The actions of the convention represented, comrades, a compelling expression of the will of the party membership in its overwhelming majority. The political line was clearly defined by the convention and the comrades now want to get on with responsible, disciplined, loyal party building work. That requires party unity on the basis of democratic centralism. That means subordination of the minority to the majority; that means the unconditional right of the majority to decide and the unconditional duty of every party member to accept the decision and help carry it out. That's what democratic centralism means.

No one, comrades, is asked to surrender dissident political views. There is no impairment whatever of the normal rights of a minority. There is no prohibition of the right to organize dissenting groups, of the right to organize factions within the party. But a minority must loyally submit to majority decisions and wait for a new opportunity to advance its dissident views when internal party discussion is again in order. Meantime, comrades holding minority views should pitch in and help build the party.

So far as the party leadership is concerned, the efforts of all loyal comrades are valued, without a single exception. Political differences do not in any way disqualify any comrade from having a full opportunity to serve the party. The demand for loyalty is not to individual leaders, and there isn't a scintilla of truth in any contention to the contrary. The demand is for loyalty to the party program and to the organizational principles of the party. That demand in no way disqualifies loyal party builders who may hold dissident views on one or another point. But in the case before us we are dealing with a disloyal group of faction leaders who are out to wreck the party, and that's a horse of a different color.

Some of our critics contend that we can't do anything about these wreckers because they have minority rights. We're told that a faction has an unqualified right to its own internal life and we are instructed that official party bodies have no right to pry into the written or oral work of a minority.

It is necessary to remind comrades who hold that view that this party is not a loose federation of autonomous factions. The party's thoroughly established principles reject the

spurious concept of so-called "all-inclusiveness." That concept would paralyse the party internally and render it impotent in its external work. Historically we have striven for homogeneity in our organization on the basis of the party's principles. Our programmatic aim is a struggle for power to transform society. All our activities, our methods, the internal party regime are designed to serve that aim. And our great historic task requires complete discipline and centralized direction within the party. The party must assert its right to control its public activity and to regulate its internal life. The party cannot sanctify an atmosphere of uninterrupted conflict internally. No minority can be allowed to run wild inside the party. The part must be subordinated to the whole, the minority to the majority, in any democratic and disciplined organization. A disciplined party must regulate the conduct of organized groups in its ranks; as well as the conduct of every individual member. Its official bodies must determine what is correct procedure, based on the party's principles and statutes.

The 1953 Resolution on Party Organization, which you find in your folders, sets forth the party's organizational principles. I should note in passing that some parts of the resolution deal with a given political conjuncture. For example, the references in the 1940 section to the proletarianization campaign. But these specific conjunctural features are secondary to the basic line of the documents, and our principles are very clearly delineated in those documents. There is other fundamental material on the party's organizational principles available in other documents. One of these is "The Struggle for a Proletarian Party," by Comrade Cannon, which served as a guide to our cadres in the 1939-40 internal struggle. We propose that a commission be established to codify all of this material in a single document for the purpose of educating and re-educating the cadres of the party in democratic centralism, to inspire party patriotism as part of revolutionary consciousness, and to show the vital interrelation of principled politics and organizational principles. Those needs are more urgent than ever in the current political situation with which Comrade Halstead dealt yesterday in his report which I won't attempt to repeat here.

We are told by the critics of the suspensions that the leadership should present an assessment of the history and development of the Robertson-Mage-White faction. In reply I would point out that their articulateness in the long internal discussion has made their political history reasonably well known to the party generally. Not so fully understood, however, except in the branches where they exist, is their long record of disloyalty to the party. Well, let's take a look at the record.

In the fall of 1962, Wohlforth and Philips announced what they called a "re-organization" of the minority as it had previously existed during their cohabitation as a group with Robertson-Mage-White. Wohlforth and Philips issued a declaration of loyalty to the party, you remember it was published in the bulletin prior to the convention. Robertson, Mage and White kept mum. The party wondered who is loyal, who is disloyal, why the split? Next came the Robertsonite provocation of the New York "study group," which was a concrete act. They set up this little factional tea party for minority supporters and what they called "sympathizers," and they organized it behind the back of the party branch. When the Political Committee called them to order, Robertson, Mage and White issued a joint declaration to the National Committee, you'll recall, in which they denounced the Political Committee as "bureaucratic." They said they would abide by "normal" discipline; they said they would not as a faction surrender the "necessary and essential" functions of the group. They left the meaning of "normal, necessary and essential" to their own definition in the name of their so-called rights as an "organized group."

Next came the Wohlforth accusations on the eve of the convention. He revealed the existence of the documents in question and described them. This threw considerable light on the cause of the minority split in the fall of 1962. Those who opposed the line of the Robertson-Ireland and Harper documents wet with Wohlforth and Philips in the minority split. Those who agreed with, accepted, supported the line of the documents stayed with the Robertson-Mage-White faction. And I should say, by the way, that once that split took place a vote was no longer necessary on the documents. Those opposed voted with their feet, and that's why it's a fraud for the Robertson-Mage-White faction leadership to advance the claim that the documents aren't official because they allegedly weren't voted on.

At the time of the Wohlforth article in the bulletin exposing the Robertson-Ireland and Harper documents, Robertson, Mage and White rushed to the bulletin in a jointly signed article in which they called Wohlforth a liar. But in that article they made no affirmation of loyalty to the party. Instead they submitted as an appendix to their article in the bulletin a copy of a letter that Robertson had written to White a bit earlier. In that letter Robertson called the Robertson-Ireland **document** a reflex of the need for struggle when "Trotskyists and centrists" co-exist in one party.

At the convention the facts then known were reported to the Nominating Commission. Among some critics of the suspensions it is now contended that the Nominating Commission transformed

itself into a virtual control commission and exacted punishment against minorities without any hearing or trial on the charges. Nothing could be further from the actual facts of the situation. The Nominating Commission simply excluded the Robertson-Mage-White and Wohlforth-Philips groups from the slate it brought into the convention as its recommendations for the incoming National Committee. The Nominating Commission explained to the convention why representation was not included for those groups. It said their loyalty to the party was in question and took the view that loyalty must be a prerequisite to the usual practice of giving minorities representation on the party National Committee.

Robertson was nominated from the convention floor. A secret ballot vote was taken and Robertson got 7 votes out of a total of 61 delegates voting. Wohlforth was not nominated. Neither group got representation on the National Committee in the democratically conducted convention elections which took place by secret ballot. Now this clearly meant that the convention agreed their loyalty was in question, and remind yourselves, comrades, that the convention just happens to be the highest body in this party. When it is in session, the convention has absolute power, up to and including changing any part of the constitution and basic programmatic and organizational positions of the party that it chooses, and that was its opinion.

A parenthetic question arises: Where does the Wohlforth-Philips group stand today? In the split with Robertson, Mage and White, they declared their loyalty to the party. But they waited several months, right up to the eve of the convention, before informing the party of the Robertson-Mage-White split perspective. Wohlforth refused my request for copies of the Robertson-Ireland and Harper documents. And now the Wohlforth-Philips group has denounced the Political Committee for its action in suspending the leaders of the Robertson-Mage-White faction because of their disloyalty to the party. Clearly, the Wohlforth-Philips group still has some things to explain to the party.

To get back to the case of the suspended Robertson-Mage-White faction leaders, those who appeared before the Control Commission refused to disavow the documents in question. They failed to give any assurance of their loyalty to the party. Since then you've seen their written protests and you've heard Robertson and Ireland here before the plenum today. They remain dishonest to the party from beginning to end. They deny double recruitment "of the type" claimed. They say they will not flout "legitimate" discipline. In each instance they'll fill in the definition according to what serves their factional

aims, not in accordance with the basic organizational principles and the fundamental good and welfare of the party. They accuse the Political Committee of taking factional reprisals against them. What was Ireland's usage today -- "the leadership faction?". Everything in the party is reduced down to a game of factions in their view. Robertson says, "You guys." There's a lot of meaning comes through in these small usages of one or another kind, particularly before the plenum of the National Committee.

They predict the bureaucratic degeneration of the party, inventing nothing new, but just repeating what Robertson, Mage and the others learned from their study of Shachtman's past attacks on the organizational principles and the program of the Socialist Workers Party. They predict the descent of the party into Stalinism, the usual claim of a disloyal faction that is conducting a split attack on the party. They ridicule the idea of party patriotism. They sneer at the concept of party loyalty as a "religion." And to this day, they are carrying on as usual in their war against the party, showing letters and documents around on the sly, peddling scandal and petty gossip, fishing for new suckers in the party.

I have here a note from Comrade Dave, the Chicago organizer, who writes: "Tonight it was brought to my attention that the enclosed documents and testimonials were sent to Chicago c/o SWP, 302 S. Canal. I am returning them to you together with the covering letter which accompanied them." Now the accompanying letter is signed by Al Spanfelner of the Robertson-Mage-White faction. It says in part, "Enclosed for your information are copies of motions, letters and statements representing a number of comrades calling for the lifting of the suspensions. I urge you to give this material your closest attention, and request that, if you are so moved, you add your voice to those of the comrades who have so protested. Would you kindly forward me a copy of any material you may submit to the National Office." Attached to Spanfelner's letter is Wohlforth's statement in protest of the suspensions, Wendell Phillips' letter in protest of the suspensions, the motion adopted in New Haven in protest of the suspensions, the statement by Arne Swaback in protest of the suspensions and the motion submitted by Myra to the Political Committee on the night that the suspensions were voted.

How this material came into the hands of the Robertsonites, we don't know, but their aim in using it is obvious on the face of it. They haven't changed their methods one iota. If they were in any way, shape or form serious about wanting to be loyal, disciplined members of this party, at this time of all

times, particularly under circumstances where they were given an opportunity to address the plenum, wouldn't they be meticulously careful not to be violating party procedures? Instead they practice factionalism as usual, fishing for new suckers. And the practice doesn't end up nationally; it goes abroad.

We have here a copy of a letter that Healy wrote to Germain under date of November 8. He says, "We have just learned of the following developments within the SWP. Five members of the Robertson group, including Robertson, have been suspended from membership of the SWP by the Political Committee upon the recommendation of a report made by a Control Commission investigation. This report consists of quotations from documents written by members of the Robertson group over a year ago." Now listen to this next part: "It is the first time in the entire history of our movement that I have ever heard of people being suspended for having written things in an internal bulletin."

Whether the Robertson-Mage-White faction leaders gave erroneous information to Healy, or if Healy added his own interpretation, or whether it's a mutual effort in which they both put their considerable talents in this direction at work, we don't know. But it's a blatant falsehood. We're accused of taking action for an article allegedly written in the internal bulletin, when it actually took a Control Commission proceeding to pry this article out of these disloyal faction leaders. The false charge is made in order to try to deceive people abroad -- and if there are some branches within the party that haven't caught the full score because they didn't have to live with this faction within the branch, how much more difficult must it be for groups elsewhere in the world to understand the true situation.

Now the December 10 joint statement of those suspended, which they have submitted to the plenum, adds up simply to a renewed declaration of war on the party. They would have the comrades believe that their war is against the party leadership, not the party itself. But as their documents show, that's not true. Their fight is against the program of the party which they term "right centrist." Their fight is against the party's organizational principles which they call "bureaucratic." They're at war with the party leadership simply because the leadership is determined to enforce the program and the principles of the party. In short, they don't consider the SWP their party; they consider it a right centrist hunting ground for factional raiders. You'll find the basic intent of the Robertson-Mage-White line echoed in recent issues of the "Newsletter" in which Healy purports to read the whole SWP out of the Trotskyist movement.

Must we stand like sheep while all this is going on? Must we tolerate their factional raiding tactics until the splitters themselves decide the most propitious time to make their split? Is that what we're reduced to? What a commentary that would be on the party leadership and on the party itself. But that's not the case.

This party knows how to recognize disloyalty on the part of people who are conducting a wrecking operation, and it knows how to deal with them. It's the duty of this plenum to deal firmly and in no uncertain terms with these factional raiders. We consider it the duty of the plenum to expel them for their disloyalty. We consider that firm disciplinary action is imperative to preserve the program, organizational principles and integrity of the party. We consider that decisive action by this plenum is vital to the good and welfare of the loyal, young reinforcements who are beginning to pour their energy and devotion into our movement and who represent the future of our movement.

In closing I want to present a motion to the Plenum on behalf of the Presiding Committee. The motion reads as follows: "The Plenum of the National Committee concurs with the characterization of the leaders of the Robertson-Mage-White group as set forth in the Political Committee's motion of November 1, 1963, and approves the Political Committee action in suspending five of the group's leaders from membership in the party. Because of their disloyal conduct, the plenum hereby expels from the party Comrades Robertson, Mage, White, Harper and Ireland. All material pertinent to the case shall be published forthwith in the internal bulletin for the information of the party membership. The plenum hereby creates a special commission to prepare a draft codifying in a single document a full reaffirmation of the party's organizational principles as they have been set down in various official party documents at earlier times. The commission shall be composed of Comrades Cannon, Dobbs and Warde. Upon its completion, the draft shall be submitted for consideration at a forthcoming plenum of the National Committee."

#

MINORITY REPORT ON INTERNAL PARTY SITUATION

by Myra Tanner Weiss

Our session last night comrades, gave me little room to be optimistic about today's proceedings. The fact that we could nominate a slate for President and Vice President and my name would not even be raised for consideration, after over a decade of training and campaigning to the best of my ability, as the second leading spokesman of the party, was a personal hurt. But more than that, you will have a problem which may not be too great, but it will exist, of explaining it to the members of the Socialist Workers Party who respected the work I have done, and you will have a problem explaining it to the many friends of the Trotskyist movement with whom I have dealt in the course of three national campaigns. This fact struck me particularly hard last night when a dear friend of mine called and said, "Do I have congratulations to offer again?" And I said nothing, because I didn't know what to say. Should I say I am too old, that I am being demoted and tapped out of a major area of my activity because I am aged, after 46 years of life, or should I say that I have an organizational difference with Comrade Dobbs, and for this reason I am being punished?

No one has given me an explanation but we better find one that can be given without giving the impression that our organization is machine-ridden, unfair and bureaucratic. But, as I have said, that was just a personal hurt. The issues I am going to discuss with you today are far more important, they mean to me the very essence of Trotskyism -- which was born in the struggle against Stalinist monolithism -- which was the conscience of the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, as Daniels calls it in his book on the Conscience of the Revolution. Trotskyism, which defied the notion perpetuated by the bourgeoisie and validated by Stalinism, that power meant bureaucracy, that power in all circumstances means abuse and that socialism and freedom are an anomaly. Trotskyism alone has defied that notion and by its living example has sought to refute the slanders of the bourgeoisie against Marxism and demonstrate that our socialist future will be a free one and not a vile, bureaucratic, tyrannical thing that Stalinism has made it appear to be. And because I regard this as the issue, I hope that no matter what you feel for me as an individual, you will listen carefully to what is to me the most important speech I have ever made in the Trotskyist movement.

Now a number of comrades have suggested that I have been doing some new thinking on the organization question. This sinister sounding ~~phenomenon~~ is false. I regret to say I have been working too hard and too many hours to do any new thinking. All I have been able to do is keep alive the thoughts that made a Trotskyist of me in 1935 and have kept me going at top speed ever since as a revolutionist in this country. Now I think there has been some new thinking going on. Precedent after precedent has been set in this conflict. Innovation after innovation, until I scarcely recognize our party as what it was as I knew it all my political life. I am going to say nothing in my contribution to this discussion that I have not said over and over again hundreds and even thousands of times as your three-time candidate for vice-president and as a spokesman for the party in Los Angeles for 19 years. If I was wrong then in my perceptions of the Bolshevik movement, you should have corrected me for I thought I was speaking for you as well as myself.

I said on many a public platform and on television and radio that the Socialist Workers Party was the most democratic organization in the United States and perhaps, because we were revolutionary and in addition lived here in the country of imperialist reaction under conditions where we were able to operate as a legal party, we were perhaps the most democratic organization in history. Now, organization by definition is a contradiction to democracy. Organization means the subordination of a minority to a majority and thereby a limitation of the freedom of a minority inevitably. Full freedom for the individual will be won only with our socialist victory. But for the present, understanding the contradiction in organization, with full consciousness as Marxists, of this contradiction, we made a conscious effort to overcome the difficulty with an absolute guarantee that minority rights will be protected, including -- and no other organization can boast this -- the right to organize to oppose an existing leadership, the right to form a faction, inherent in the very nature of the bolshevik conception of democratic centralism.

Only a year ago in the 1962 election, the N.Y. State election campaign, I debated the Presidential candidate of the Socialist Labor Party before a thousand students here in N.Y.C. And I won their warm approval when I pointed out this essential difference between a truly democratic movement and one that has the form of democracy but not its essence. Now, I have built this movement, and so have you, with the help of this concept of socialist theory. A man or woman can advocate whatever he pleases within our organization, whatever he pleases,

as long as he abides by the discipline of the organization. We recruited people on this notion. We put it to them, "You're not in full agreement with our program yet, you have some reservations on materialism, you have some reservations on the nature of the Russian state. Do not let that be an obstacle. If you agree with us in our struggle to educate the American working class to the class concepts of Marxism and socialism, join our ranks and fight with us. You will have all the room in the world to assimilate our other programmatic concepts or to teach us yours if we are wrong."

Was I deceiving these people when I told them this? We built the youth movement in the first place, for the first time that the Trotskyists have had a youth movement since 1940, with this notion. Wohlforth had reservations on the nature of the Soviet State. That didn't bar him from membership. You didn't exclude him on that account. Shane Mage had reservations about our position on Yugoslavia. You didn't bar him from membership on that basis, on the contrary, you welcomed him with open arms -- youth at long last, who, together with the younger elements in the SWP, will be able to build up a youth movement. And they began that process. And how did we thank them for the work they did in a low period in our own history? With the expulsion for their political views.

Comrades is this our honesty, is this our conception of democracy? Democratic centralism, comrades, is not an obscure, esoteric theory. It is not difficult to understand. On the one hand it is not something that can cloak anarchy, the negation of organization, or something that can cloak all-inclusiveness; that is, like the social democratic movement where you are not only allowed to have your opinion, your dissident opinion, in the organization, but you can take it to the public and publish a paper on the basis of that dissident opinion; and that is what we have always meant when we spoke against all-inclusiveness. Nor is it an organizational form that can give us monolithism, or as you more carefully put it, homogeneity. It is simply this: the requirement that everyone acts as one in the public eye, that's all; that the minority abide by the discipline of the majority.

We must organize to enhance our strength, but we do not want to oppress anyone in our movement, or make that enhanced strength a burden to anyone. So we say, "Have your opinions, even if you must fight for your opinions within our organization, but join together with us when we campaign against the class enemy, when we battle the racists, when we struggle to get on the ballot, when we engage in all of our many activities.

And you will be welcome to the full freedom that is offered within our movement." Our uniqueness as a political phenomena is not our centralism. Centralism is something you can find all over the country, from the top of the ruling corporations, down to the lowest trade-union, bureaucratically-run, organization. Our uniqueness as a political phenomenon is our democracy. These are my thoughts and as I know our history, that history bears out this conception of our movement: That our struggle is not over. We are in the process of making history. We are adding to the history that has been made, or we are going to destroy that history and begin a new pattern of internal relations and organizational conceptions.

Now, I want to begin with the Control Commission. I don't see it as Comrade Dobbs put it, and this is something all of you can explain to me if his conception is correct. My conception, and I believe the history of our movement bears it out, is quite different. What is it? Why do we have it? You won't find the answers to these questions in the constitution which merely sets procedures and authorizes power. But you will understand the reasons for this body in our literature and in the history of our movement. In a truly democratic organization, where important differences are resolved through struggle, passions become inflamed and objectivity obscured. Primarily to protect the democratic right of minorities, as well as the public safety of the party, a Control Commission is established. It is composed, not of leading political figures, as a matter of fact, the constitution permits only one member of the National Committee to function on the Control Commission. It is not composed of political leaders, not those involved in factional disputes in a central fashion, but comrades who stand out as being fair, capable of being objective in the heated atmosphere of factional alignment. Their function is not political, but simply that of ascertaining facts. We want to know what is, not what opinions one has.

This Control Commission, however, has violated this conception of the Control Commission, and I believe it is the first one that has done so. At the instigation of the ruling faction in this dispute, the Control Commission permitted itself to pry into the private thoughts, the preliminary working papers of a minority tendency. And -- innovation number two -- presumed to evaluate those opinions. There was apparently no attempt on the part of the Control Commission to find out if these thoughts had ever been carried into action, or even were the final thoughts of the individuals involved, let alone a tendency decision. But aside from that, in a manner far from impartial, the Control Commission submitted to the Political Committee two of these preliminary documents, preliminary to the factional conclusions of the Robertson-Mage group; and in a totally unfair phrase referred to these documents as "previously withheld from the party!"

Now, of course, that is a lie, just a plain lie. You are not required, any member of the party, to submit your working papers, your preliminary drafts your preliminary thoughts to the party. You have a right to privacy in these matters. If not submitting these documents to the party constitutes withholding them from the party, then the majority is equally guilty. Do you think the majority faction documents and draft resolutions and correspondence, its preliminary proposals, and thoughts, are submitted to the party? They are not. They never have been. And nobody ever thought of suggesting that they ought to be. Although it might be, on occasion, interesting to learn the evolution of an opinion. However, comrade Dobbs, as he reported to you, on July 5, wrote to comrade Robertson saying that "I hereby formally request that you immediately provide me with copies of both these items"-- which Farrell has explained to you. Now Robertson who in my opinion, regarded too lightly the inherent right to keep personal possession of his preliminary papers, answered comrade Dobbs and submitted, if I am not mistaken, the document which he wrote.

As for the other documents, he referred comrade Dobbs to their authors, pointing out -- I don't know if he pointed it out or not, but I do -- that he didn't want to be compelled to be a stool pigeon. I don't know if comrade Dobbs pursued the matter further, or with what result. But I do know that the Control Commission, which constitutionally can demand to see anything it pleases, unless it stole the documents, and I don't think they did, asked for them and got them. So again, how are they being withheld from the party? The Control Commission has failed, in my opinion, to live up to the high standard of fairness and objectivity it has tried to set in the past. However, I do not feel harshly toward them, for they acted at the instigation of the Political Committee which must bear the prime responsibility for these organizational innovations. And so I come to the Political Committee and the majority motion which you have here.

I was going to say a word about the composition of the Political Committee, the fact that is is for the first time, under similar circumstances, a monolithic body, as far as political resolutions are concerned. Ordinarily, when we emerge from a convention, we have such a condition only after a split. But at this last convention, we had a number of minorities. Every single one of our resolutions was contested. Yet we emerged without minority representation for any of the groups. I don't know if the Robertson group required, or if we were required to give the Robertson group minority representation -- 7 out of 61 delegates -- I've forgotten what the proportionality was. But I do know that I wasn't told at the convention, and I have been told and you have, by comrade Dobbs, that the reason they weren't give representation was because they were disloyal. Comrade

Kerry said so on the floor of the Convention on the last day in the last hour of the convention. But that's not a trial. That, comrades, was comrade Kerry's opinion, to which he has a perfect right. But in my opinion, comrade Kerry does not have the right, and neither does anyone else, on the floor of a convention to charge others with disloyalty.

We have proper procedures for such vile accusations and we know them well. These comrades, or any comrades, deserve the right to answer such charges, outside of the heated atmosphere of a political struggle. Yet apparently they were tried, by the nominating commission, and in comrade Kerry's own mind, and they were punished. Denied representation on the PC. Alright, this is another innovation in party procedure. And now, comrade Dobbs comes before us today and submits as other evidence of their disloyalty, the fact that they were left off by the nominating commission and that the convention thereby decided that they were under suspicion of being disloyal. This is really compounding crimes of injustice.

In the PC of Nov. 1st, I asked that we postpone consideration of the Control Commission report before we acted on it, until the comrades charged with disloyalty were present. I also asked that we postpone action until a member of the Control Commission was invited to be present to answer any factual questions we might have to ask. And there were factual matters in dispute in the PC discussion. The majority voted my opinion down and proceeded to suspend the 5 comrades of the minority, and in so doing the PC violated the constitution. Not only the tradition of our movement, not only the tradition of our revolutionary movement, but the letter of its law, the minimal guarantees that we try to provide in our constitution. Comrade Dobbs explained that Article VIII, Section 3 is superseded by the section on the Control Commission. It doesn't say so. It doesn't say in the constitution that this overrides another article of the constitution. In his opinion, it superseded a part of the constitution? That's his opinion, it's not mine. Now that Article VIII, Section 3, is designed, minimally, it is true, minimally, to guarantee that anyone who is charged with disloyalty or any other crime in our movement would get a fair hearing. And that is to be superseded by the fact that that doesn't cut out a Control Commission designed to objectively verify facts? Not on your life, comrades.

Section 3 says charges against any member shall be made in writing and the accused member shall be furnished with a copy in advance of a trial. The trial -- am I out of mind? Doesn't a trial mean the presence of the accused? Doesn't it mean a defendant? Doesn't it mean the presence of those who are charged for punishment so they can see who is accusing them

and what they're being accused of? And permit evidence to refute it? Comrades, that constitution is not superseded unless you are blinded by factional motivations. And if you are so blinded that you can destroy the constitution of the SWP, who will punish you? You have power. No rank and file group opposing you, no individual like myself opposing you, has power, you have power. Only you can save the constitution, I cannot do it and I beg you to think before you take such a drastic action.

We don't even have as much protection of the right of a comrade, as comrade Robertson pointed out, as is guaranteed by bourgeois law. The right to attend one's own trial before judgment is passed was not a right given us by a unanimous ruling class, but a right, as all democratic liberties in bourgeois democracy, that was fought for by the oppressed through centuries of struggle. It was purchased at the great price of much blood of those who lacked all power except their poverty. I believe the battles they fought are our heritage and socialism does not destroy these freedoms, it guarantees them to all and extends those freedoms to the essential democracy of industrial socialism. If the constitution, as I have said, minimal as it is, cannot protect the members of the SWP, who will protect them?

Now, on the resolution passed by the PC, and here I'm going to have to skip a few points that I wanted to make, for lack of time. I wanted to read to you for example from the Struggle for a Proletarian Party, from other sections of the same resolution on which the PC is basing its suspension. For example, this paragraph: "Only a self-acting and critical-minded membership is capable of forging and consolidating such a party and of solving its problems by collective thought, discussion and experience. From this follows the need of assuring the widest party democracy in the ranks of the organization." -- and many others. But most important, let me show you the action we took at the time of the split in 1940, to try to prevent that split.

The Shactmanites announced before the whole convention that they intended to publish a document, a paper counterposed to that of the majority and take it to the public. We didn't expel them for that. We did say that any who proceeded to carry out this threat would be immediately expelled from the party. And we said, on the other hand, to show you that we do not want to divide with you, we will guarantee that while the discussion stops in all branches, following the convention, all the important articles and theoretical documents will be published in our press as a symposium under the joint editorship of both sides. We said that if either side or both desired, there would be a continuation of the discussion in written form. And finally

we said, and here I quote, "No measures are to be taken against any party member because of the views expressed in the party discussion. Nobody is obliged to renounce his opinions, there is no prohibition of factions, the minority is to be given representation in the leading party committee and assured full opportunity to participate in all phases of party work."

We were generous, we were democratic. They were offered a great deal, but that generosity is not apparent in our procedures with this present tiny opposition. Now, the resolution of the majority, after quoting this document on which it's trying to base its action, begins by saying -- "As indicated in the Control Commission's report of October 24, 1963, the foregoing provisions of the 1938 resolution are violated by the leadership practices of the Robertson-Mage-White group." Practices, group? Neither one is ever mentioned in the Control Commission report. All the Control Commission did was to obtain two documents that were the preliminary working papers of individuals in a pre-convention, inner-caucus discussion. Practices? Not a word. Thoughts? So what is meant in the majority resolution when it says "...As indicated in the Control Commission's report ..."? Do you think we aren't looking? But we are looking. Maybe not the majority members of the PC, but the rank and file will be looking. Those whom we hope to win to socialism will be looking. And will they see it there? They cannot, because it is not there.

Then, as if to demonstrate their own shaky feeling, those who composed the majority resolution, in the PC, concluded: "...because of their violations of party loyalty ...? We've always spoken of violations of party discipline, and now we have to determine loyalty and that's an idea. Don't you know what an idea is? You can't touch it. Turn and twist as you like, you will not be able to measure it, because it is a thought, a feeling, an emotion. Do I have to tell you that, comrades? And yet the majority of the PC voted to suspend comrades because of their violation of loyalty. Shame! Shame on you! And Dobbs can get away with it here? Maybe, and he did get away with it in the PC. But will you get away with it before the eyes of the radical public? I say you will not and you will have destroyed a great tradition fought for by Trotsky and all of us at one time, at least.

Did the suspended comrades really organize a study circle? I don't know, nowhere does it say that they did. In the pre-convention discussion I heard it charged on the floor of the New York Local. And these comrades replied that they were having a faction meeting, which is their right. I have heard

talk about dual recruiting. Who was dual recruited? When? In which branch? What's his name? These are facts, I don't get them from the Control Commission report. And I don't get them from the majority resolution. All I get is statements. As if that constituted a fact. But it hasn't and doesn't. I know that the majority invited non-party members in on its political and organizational disputes, as long as they belonged to the youth. Were these the people who were dual recruited? Then they were dual recruited at the invitation of the majority. Comrades, you say that they have violated party discipline -- they value group discipline over party discipline. Where? When? On what points?

Dobbs gets up and says they want to split the party, that they believe in all of this -- violation of discipline, they don't want to remain in an empty shell. These comrades get up and say "We do want to remain in the party. We regard the SWP as being the basic revolutionary cadre in this country." They say "We will abide by discipline." How many times do they have to swear a loyalty oath in order to convince you? But we don't need to be convinced. We don't know if it is Dobbs who is lying or it is they who are lying. I don't know. We can know only by what they do. So stop talking about what they think. And have the patience and the democratic decency to see what they do.

Now, I know, or I suspect, that this isn't really what's bothering the majority comrades on the committee. They think they are dealing with a Healy tendency. But they didn't charge that. And if they did, we would have a different discussion. An interesting discussion in my opinion. Not whether a group has the right to organize factions in the SWP, which I have always assumed it did, but whether or not a group has a right to organize an international faction. Now I think this is a horse of another color. And I am not so sure where I would stand on such a question. But that hasn't been discussed. And if that's in the back of your minds, you should discuss it. Let me point out comrades, that they are not in an international caucus with Healy. This is not so. If that is really what is motivating you I can prove that it's not so. And I will take just a few minutes to prove it.

You wondered about this loyalty oath that was brought in by Wohlforth over a year ago. You've got to appraise it. Why wouldn't Robertson or Mage sign it? Because they want to split with the party? Because they're disloyal? Wohlforth is right? But that's not so. That resolution presented to us by Wohlforth was written by comrade Healy. You didn't know that perhaps, but it was -- you bide your time comrades, I'm not on the witness stand -- I didn't know until very recently, but

I know now. It was written by comrade Healy. But it wasn't given to us as comrade Healy wrote it. There were certain deletions and it was those sections that were deleted from Healy's draft against which Mage and Robertson voted, thereby being expelled from the attempt to organize an international faction.

One of the deleted sentences read: "All discussion and disagreement within the tendency is part of the discussion within the international tendency. Patience will have to be exercised so that while time is allowed for such differences to be adequately discussed internationally, the political aims and functioning of the tendency remain unimpaired. For this purpose, there will be facilities available for all members of the tendency to express their opinions in a special international tendency bulletin to be published by the SLL. This bulletin will have a limited circulation amongst the leaders of the international groups who will be invited to comment and participate in the discussion inside the tendency. All written discussion must be carried out within this bulletin."

So Robertson and Mage said this was bureaucratic. It was bureaucratic on two counts: 1) that the document as a whole had been presented to them with a pistol at the head -- vote for it or else -- they had not participated in its preparation; and 2) the development of a tendency would be completely smothered under Healy's procedural tyranny and bureaucracy. Mage said, "I disagree with the proposal for centralized discussion among members of a tendency in the U.S. through a bulletin published in England. This proposal could only tend to obstruct the healthy political and organizational development of the tendency. Moreover, as far as I can see, it would be a direct violation of party discipline and certainly would be a disloyal act toward the party." And this is the man you're going to expel. While you grab Wohlforth around the shoulders, buddy-buddy. What a great guy he is. And you're going to expel those who couldn't stomach, in their first encounter with Healy, his bureaucratic, sectarian methods of organization.

Now, I only learned about this very recently. But I knew it long ago. I know it when Wohlforth first presented his document to the PC. Not being a hostile, hateful, suspicious type, I went to comrade Mage and I said, "Look, we just got word of your split. Will you tell me what it's all about?" I had no intention of taking Wohlforth's word for this deed, this fact, as did the majority of the PC. And Mage discussed his verbal disagreements with Healy. He didn't tell me the whole story and I didn't ask to hear it, but I was thoroughly convinced that any collaboration between Healy and Mage and Robertson was out of the question.

Now I am for reunification. I have played as important a part in favor of reunification as any member in this leadership. Healy honors me by making me enemy No. 1 and Swabeck enemy No. 2. The hardened Pabloites in Healy's opinion, in the SWP, those without hope for redemption, are Weiss, Swabeck, Joe Hansen, and William F. Warde. We are all hardened Pabloites. I presume he still has hope for Comrade Dobbs. And that, I think, is wrong. Because I think Dobbs is just as much for reunification as any of the rest of us.

But from the beginning I raised the question: What is going to happen with the British? Healy is a sectarian, he is going to split. Now, if he insists on it, there's nothing that can be done about it. At least for awhile. But if he makes that split, to the extent the movement can do so I think it would do well to leave a way so that Healy and the British comrades later on can find their way back within the reunification. That was my point of view, and I thought everyone agreed with it. I talked to Hansen about it, and I talked to others about it. Hansen's subsequent conduct in the course of the reunification effort convinced me that he was working along that line, and I was glad.

But what you are doing here, comrade Dobbs, is not helping to reunify the splintered and isolated and fragmented and quarreling-interminably Trotskyist cadres throughout the world. You are trying to sharpen the split, and deepen the hostility. And I declare that that is out of keeping with our objectives in unifying the Trotskyist forces. I believe you are conducting a wrecking campaign on the SWP, not only on our reunification efforts, because you are running counter -- with these bureaucratic and unprecedented procedures -- not only toward this minority tendency, but to every minority tendency in the party; and not only to all the other minority tendencies in the party, but to many of us who belong to no tendency; but who happen to be not too tired to continue the battle for the kind of socialist freedom that has always been our objective. You are going to split us, and split us again, and split us again? When will you learn to get along with people who have differences? You're always going to have them. If you do not, you will have an empty shell of an organization. A hollow mockery of a revolutionary party. When are you going to learn to get along despite differences, to tolerate them, to make it possible for some people to function?

Now comrade Dobbs says we are going to have a party based on discipline. I say, yes, I have never objected to that. I believe that if somebody takes their disputes outside our organization they should be expelled for doing so, and I have voted for such expulsions. I believe that if we tell a minority tendency we will not have any further discussion on this question, and they defy us and try to break up party meetings, they

must be disciplined, and I will vote with you to do so. But you haven't even accused these people, except in the abstract, of defying any party mandate. At which branch meeting? On which occasion?

Now, differences that are settled at conventions, arise in new forms. You cannot help that. But in the normal democratic process of discussion, these can be met, the discussion limited to the one interesting hour of the otherwise dull branch meeting, and the other hour can be devoted to planning our campaigns. But our rank and file have never been limited to those who'll go out and sell subscriptions and raise money for the party. That was the CP's concept of the rank and file. Our members think politically, speak politically, and will every day of the week. And when they cease to do that, you do not have a revolutionary party any longer.

In conclusion, comrades, let me say that if your sense of justice is somewhat warped, if you are weary, if you are too tired -- resolve the problem in your own mind, by the constitution, at least. It wasn't necessary in the past because it was presumed that the leadership, even more zealously than the members, even more zealously than a minority, would guard the rights of any individual or any minority in our party. But if you do not, you still must confront the fact of a constitution which at least guarantees a trial, and a hearing. So do not make innovation number 32. Do not make innovation number 32 a destruction of the constitution of the SWP.

December, 1963