

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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ROBERTSON-MAGE-WHITE-HARPER-IRELAND CASE

Part IV

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### Editors Note

The statements by Robertson and Ireland contained in this bulletin were made at the beginning of the plenum deliberations on the internal party situation. After these statements had been made, the plenum heard the PC report by Dobbs and the minority report by Myra Weiss, both of which have already been published in Part III of this series of Internal Information Bulletins. Following that there was discussion from the plenum floor, the first part of which appears in this bulletin.

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

## Statements to Plenum by Suspended Members

Ireland: Comrades of the N.C. I appear before you this morning to demand that you abrogate the suspensions against the five minority members. I also ask it of you. At the beginning, I'd like to make it plain that I'm speaking as an individual, I'm not an elected member of a tendency, I've not been designated to make any official statements. I'm speaking as somebody who does not want to be thrown out of the SWP. The immediate question I think is not one of agreement with or support of any particular views of the minority either as a tendency or of particular individuals in the minority. No comrades, I think the question at hand is simply one of the right of a minority tendency to exist in and criticize policies of the Socialist Workers Party without the consent or approval of the leadership.

What are we charged with? What am I charged with? What in the hell did I do wrong? The Control Commission who investigated me concluded by a statement saying that a hostile and disloyal attitude toward the Party is clearly manifested. An incorrect attitude. Now, this is not true in the first place. But think of it, a wrong attitude. Well, we'll take a look in a minute to see what this attitude consists of. However, the PC motion of Nov. 3 goes beyond the findings of the Control Commission, the body appointed to investigate us and charges us, me, with advocacy of these positions basically:

First, and now I quote from the PC 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." This is what the PC says. Now, let's be clear what we're doing. Let's be straight about what we think, what I think. Nobody assumed any disguise; what we did was out in the open. There was no policy projected or undertaken to disrupt branches, to continue a business-as-usual basis in the branches of the important questions before the Party. This was never done comrades. And this was never projected. These are private documents that we voluntarily turned over to the Control Commission and appended to the PC motion which I assume you have, you'll find no such content. But comrades there's a profound, a fundamental difference between reviving discussions on the floor of the branch after the convention is over and continuing to talk about these things among the various groups and individuals.

Do you stop thinking when the convention is over about the Negro question? Do you stop thinking about Cuba or Algeria? I mean, is there a time -- now for 2 months we can think about it, maybe talk over with somebody over coffee -- no. What does this mean? At least what does it mean to me, and correct me if I'm wrong. It means that an action line is taken by the Party, that's what we act on for the next year or 2 years, and it means that on the floor of the branches you don't raise hell and raise havoc going over and over this line, you can't do anything that way. But do you stop talking about it? Do you stop thinking about it? No. Anybody who would just turn his mind off and on like that isn't worth a hill of beans to me.

Now, in these documents we turned over -- you remember that they're inter-tendency documents submitted by individuals for discussion within the tendency, never voted upon, never projected as an action line of the tendency and were in fact preliminary views by the authors of the documents themselves. That's why in part you'll find this study circle thing. This was an attack and an answer to Wholforth and had reference to raising the intellectual, the theoretical caliber of Party members. What we were in effect saying, trying to say was that the level of cadres in the SWP and in our tendency should be as high as possible.

If you expel us then, it won't be for disrupting the branches on this point, it won't be for raising havoc or trying to disrupt the SWP. Is this a crime to continue to think about these things and to discuss them or is it a duty?

Secondly, the PC said that 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. This is a lie. I think anybody who operates like that ought to be thrown out of the Party right away. How in the hell are you going to recruit people to a Party by indoctrinating them against the program, against convention decisions and against the organizational principles, the Leninist principles of the Party? How do you, well, I mean what do you think I am? Some kind of monster?

Listen to Trotsky writing in "In Defense of Marxism:" If the majority of Party members are mistaken, the minority can by and by educate them. If not before the next convention then after it. The minority can attract new members to the Party and transform itself into a majority.

Double-recruitment, heaven forbid. You recruit members to the Party and then you recruit into the tendency because you think you've got the best point of view within the Party, a point of view you're trying to project as the majority view of the Party. What is wrong with this? What is disloyal with this? Is that a viewpoint you think the majority of the Party should undertake to carry out? Of course you're going to try and convince new members as well as old members, anybody in the Party, but only people in the Party.

Lastly, group discipline, I quote from the PC motion, is put before Party discipline. Then let's get this clear, because this is false. We put forward, I put forward the proposition that discipline stems not from the organizational form of a party but from programmatic principles of the Fourth International. Again in Trotsky's words, the international is not at all a form as flows from the utterly false formulation of the independent labor party. The international was first of all a program and a system of strategic, tactical and organizational methods that flow from it. Cannon said exactly the same thing. Discipline is a question of program. If you accept a program, then you're bound to it.

Nobody's got a gun at my back. I came into this voluntarily. I'm fighting it voluntarily because I want to stay in. My discipline is based upon the program of the 4th International. It always has been and by Christ it always will be. No actions are charged against us -- disloyal attitude. And yet, sections of the leadership or the whole leadership or I don't know who, wants to expel us, me, from the Party.

Now I -- you don't need me, but I need the Party. I joined this Party consciously, I'm 31 now, I've only been in a couple of years, but I knew what I was doing when I joined. I knew why I joined. I knew why I didn't want the CP, and I tell you, as soon as I found out about Trotsky and Trotskyism, in other words, Marxism, I joined. And now, now you're going to expel me or suspend me, I don't know what, this is all kind of new to me. You'll excuse me if I'm a little upset. Why? Because we didn't agree on the need for political revolution in the Soviet Union, China, and other deformed workers' states? We don't disagree. Because we attack dialectical materialism? Is this Shachtman all over again or something as some people seem to think? We haven't attacked it. Because we find fault with the concepts of democratic centralism? No. Because we denigrate Marxism, Leninism, Trotskyism? No. Because we disagree with the program of the 4th International? No. Because we have broken discipline and gone outside the Party? No, we haven't. Because we refuse to accept the program and discipline of the Socialist Workers Party? No. Because we do

not agree with every aspect of the majority line? That's true. This is our crime.

We've had the audacity to declare and carry out a principled opposition to the leadership faction within the Party. Again I repeat, without the consent of the leadership. If they consent it's OK. Is the chief merit, comrades, of a bolshevik now declared to be obedience to the leadership? Have capitalist pressures become so insidious in the Party that the minority is exactly equal to menshevik in the SWP? Is it disloyal to be in a minority? Is it factional to be in a minority? Is it petty-bourgeois to try and formulate the differences as sharply as possible and to argue them out? Is this disruptive? Or is it a Bolshevik attempt to try to improve and strengthen and sharpen the majority line? The action line of the Party? Is this a disloyal act comrades, or is it one of the highest and most responsible duties of a Bolshevik, that is, the principled sharpening of the majority line?

The Socialist Workers Party is going to have an anniversary very soon. I think comrades, there can be no more appropriate time for reviewing Party history, recent as well as past, and Party principles. I urge you in the strongest possible fashion to lift the suspensions of the minority members, to return this Party to its democratic centralist course -- and the two go together -- democratic centralist course, before it's too late. To demonstrate by your speeches and your votes that the Socialist Workers Party remains true to a Leninist heritage by loyally protecting the right of a disciplined minority tendency. Thank you.

Robertson: I've wondered, comrades of the National Committee, how to approach speaking to you today in attacking and seeking to do away with the suspensions of the supporters of our tendency, myself included. An hour's time and the attention of a Party plenum is a thing of great value yet the conditions under which I'm compelled to speak to defend our group is, in terms of making use of this time, a nearly empty gesture and therefore a sadly wasteful one, given the few hours a year that the National Committee is in session.

To illustrate some of the problems: I was given a fairer deal in a recent civil rights trial even though I was convicted on boldly perjured testimony of the cops and may face jail. Fairer because there I and the others were charged with specific acts, we were able to produce many defense eye witnesses, to hear the testimony against us, to cross examine, look at the evidence. All the forms were met with in this frame-up downtown and if only there had been a bit more honesty on the part of the prosecution and the court personnel, we would have been acquitted. These kind of procedures were made most sharp, a

value of these kind of procedures, which I'm sure that too many comrades in a false and superficial version of Marxism dismiss as mere legalisms, were brought home when I looked over Mark Lane's -- who happened to be my attorney -- his able observations in the National Guardian regarding the rights of the late accused Lee Oswald.

Don't be too contemptuous of these forms. These are the forms by which you employ to fight, to struggle, and if you're denied these forms, the struggle becomes pretty empty. Because without all these procedures, and that's the situation here, we have, we could be and have been so far, convicted by the Political Committee and the Control Commission independently of the personal honesty of any of the participants, since they never had to face up to any question of evidence or rebuttals. They never heard nothing. Just handed the decisions. No cross-examination, no possibility of any verification, nothing tangible -- disloyalty, ideas, evidence, interpretations. And now this time before you the same sad circumstances prevail. We're brought in facing the accusation of rotten attitudes, say our piece -- no our attitudes aren't rotten, they're right -- and leave. What has been said to you, what will be said to you, what relationship we have, no chance on God's green earth to say anything about, to refute, give any testimony, to contradict in any fashion.

Thus, I'm talking blindly. Now, I recall at the last convention session Tom Kerry there baiting me from his seat as I was speaking against some petty outrage of the leaders and he called mockingly: Har, Har, Har. But now you've given us at least this hour of valuable time, and whatever the conditions we're going to use it and will proceed now to use it, because even if what is to be done with us has already been decided, this action whatever it will be formalized today does not close the books; and I do want to take this opportunity to speak to the comrades that make up this National Committee, whatever you may decide today.

I've got to try to take a look at the charges against us and go over the material. To go back to the original motion of the Political Committee on August 2 of this summer. Comrades Robertson, Ireland and Harper were charged with various things. Two of them were points of attitude, a hostile attitude and a split perspective from the SWP. The third had apparent substance in the matter of so-called double-recruiting. Now before dealing with these, I want to point out that by the time the process was over of looking at this written material, the accusation was metamorphised, changed into a statement that these views were the leadership policies and practices of Robertson, Mage and White. Suddenly they are sprung into the

middle of this, quite, I assure you, with astonishment and surprise.

This single thing by itself -- the simple coupling of the basis of political association in a group within the SWP -- this thing by itself before a body that was fully up to its responsibilities would be sufficient to be said by me, because it shows beyond a reasonable doubt that this was a factional move against political opponents of the leadership, a catch-all. The way you went from Robertson, Ireland and Harper to Robertson, Mage and White. Now going back; the Control Commission was requested to look into three points that were summarized by the Political Committee: the hostile attitude, the split perspective -- well about these a lot has already been written, I hope you read this material. I'll say a little bit about hostile attitude; the split perspective falls all over the floor because we've been doing our best to stay in the SWP despite provocation. The third thing, double recruiting, which at least has the appearance of substance, I'd like to look at that a little bit.

This is a term, in the use that you comrades have put it to, was invented by our journalist friend Wohlforth, who took an entirely different point than ours will be in quoting Comrade Ireland's contribution, that ours will be a problem of a double-recruitment. Which, of course, is always the problem of a minority within an organization. As a minority, if it is doing anything more than just vegetating within the party, but if it is doing recruitment work outside the party, bringing people around, contacts, then such a minority necessarily faces that double problem of recruitment to the party and recruitment to the tendency. Only if you forego all recruitment to the party do you have a single problem, and we use that remark double in a quotation.

I've got some notes here that I think, even though they deal in details or individuals, are probably worth going into because they indicate -- and since this is the one tangible piece of accusation that we've had thrown at us even if it seems pretty small, it's the only thing that I have to talk to you about in terms of the charge which presumably is going, which already in effect has severed my party membership -- and that's this business about double recruitment. Rather the reverse is the case. I assert, I don't know what happens elsewhere, but I assert that in New York City that the process that takes place is a systematic effort to politically destroy any and every contact brought around the party and the youth by the minority. Let me give you three examples.



There's a girl at a college, she's one of the few Communist Party members on that campus working as one person. She was rather a casual contact that the minority had, who came into one leadership-directed, hysterical session of the youth and that snapped the bonds that were pulling her away from Stalinism over to Trotskyism, and back she went. Somebody else, whose name is A., I'm going to refer to him later because I hoped to have him as a witness before the Control Commission which is practically ideal. He's somebody I met at work, a young comrade, radical, Latin American. I sold him a Militant sub, started bringing him to meetings, worked with him, went to work with him every day, talked to him a long time. Presumably if the charges of double recruiting were true here was the ideal thing, a young person totally sealed away from any other contact in the party until I brought him around. The first factional thing I ever heard out of his mouth, and the first exchange that ever passed between us, was when I heard him directly that he had told a minority supporter -- this was a young kid who was not in the party or the youth -- that he told a minority supporter that of course we were going to be expelled from the party. And then comrades, yes, I broke discipline, I asked him where he heard it actually talked with a non-party person about party matters, like where did he hear that we were being thrown out of the SWP. I wanted to bring this comrades before the Control Commission as a witness.

Finally, there's another case, Dave C., practically a model young person, won very solidly to the minority in the course of the party and youth pre-convention discussions; a youth member, active in all departments; applied for party membership, postponed, had to wait six months; told him to apply again, postponed, without any by-your-leave, making it very clear that he was an excellent fellow but of course he'd showed that he was a supporter of the minority -- and by God even though he was a model, you know not the ordinary run-of-the-mill contact. When you bring around an ordinary person, from on campus or somewhere, there's usually something wrong with him, usually a little too young, or a little too this or that, he's not going to be perfect; but here happens to be a perfect youngster in terms of his activity, his diligence, enthusiasm, devotion, intelligence and all the rest of it, and his length of time served. Yeah, that's the reality.

Now the problem is that it required almost a police mind, truly a police mind, to be able to give weight to the kind of accusations that are made about -- I think I have the quotation down here somewhere but I'll cite from memory about it -- about going out and grabbing people, indoctrinating them and getting them all lined up till they hate the party, hate the

party, hate the party, and then bring them in to join the party. If you'd just stop and think, each of you a minute, every one of you have had many experiences bringing young and new people around to our organization; just stop and think a minute about the actual processes of recruitment and how they must be with regard to the mind of a young sympathizer that you're in contact with. To proceed as the Secretariat motion that caused us to be thrown out of the party conjures it up, here is the quote: None but those already 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.

Now in the first place, simply on the face of this charge then, it's either one of two things: it's a lie, it is a deception, a deceit -- if it refers to youth comrades coming to agree with the minority in the course of the party pre-convention discussions and in the branch meetings and the like; in other words, if the party permits youth people to come in, hear the issues and then choose wrong, and then choose the minority, boy, then that's it -- that's a deception. But in either case, you see that that makes them guilty. And in either case, this quote about indoctrination reads far more as if it were dealing with the poor robots that the Russian Stalinists used to conjure up in order to claim that after they were properly indoctrinated in all this fashion by the Trotskyites, they went out and wrecked trains.

No real youth, no real living contact or sympathizer of the socialist movement would hang around for one minute to see his ideas of being drawn to socialism being transformed into such petty stuff, of being turned into an agent. Such a myth, as far as I can tell, only does one thing. That is it acts as a comfort to the majority to irrationally give some kind of explanation -- like McCarthy talking about the Commie menace -- talking about double-recruiting Americans -- about why we can and have won and held, despite all the pressures of the majority, a certain number of young people, party comrades.

One of the -- here again I appeal to your own experience, where you will notice -- one of the greatest aversions that a person new to the socialist movement has is the hate of the apparatus and paraphernalia of factionalism, for that matter. That comes under the enormous overhead of struggle within our organization. Presumably, comrades, we are all well aware of it, but particularly well aware of it are those who are just being won to the movement in the first rosy glow and it certainly requires generally something like a pre-convention discussion with the serious viewpoints being presented, until

there's even an appreciation that factionalism is justified. The kind of people which we're presumably supposed to have gone out, dug up, indoctrinated, done a brainwash job on and then sent them like robots into the party, are the most hostile to factionalism because it seems so senseless to them. Factionalism is something that is a struggle of groups within an organization over issues and over program, that is, something that has to be learned hard. It's one of the acquisitions of Leninism.

And as regards our recruitment to the organization, the secret is simple. It's the flow of organizational judo and you can stop it at any level and at any time you want. Because when we bring around contacts to the party and the youth, it's the very vehemence and hostility of their reception that they get at the hands of the majority that makes them wide open, if they're made of any kind of spunk, wide open to the arguments that begin to flow then in the hands of the minority. Because if you remember -- and here again I appeal to your experience -- that when you're recruiting someone, you're a figure of respect to them. If you walk to the door with them and suddenly you're spit on, and if the kid is worth his stuff, you know, he's not going to react to fall down before the great leaders who were doing the spitting on the recruiter. That's the secret. It's judo. The harder you guys scream at our contacts, you know, the further in the direction of us -- if they're any good at all -- you drive them. That's the secret. It's no secret. You can do away with it by developing a healthy attitude, a political rather than organizational attitude, in the organization.

Now in the Control Commission, we in general and I was anxious to turn the tables on the majority and not only bring in witnesses to bear out everything that I've said to you and witnesses -- not only those who have gone ahead to become supporters of the minority, but those who didn't too -- simply to testify that what I've just said is the way things are, to offer evidence. We didn't get any interest in that evidence. Not only that, we wanted to turn the tables because the majority has been playing a dirty little game -- I'll explain to you why it felt it had to -- and that is, that when people just walked in the door of the organization, not contacted by majority or minority, we're happy to introduce the evidence that individuals of this category have been told: Watch out, we have a petty bourgeois minority around -- before they were permitted to join the youth.

Talk about double -- going outside the organization. We were perfectly happy to introduce that. Now there's reason for that, that is, I'm certain the majority doesn't have to do this to people recruited by the majority. They come in already friendly and predisposed. But when somebody just walks in the door from reading the paper or something like that, some kind of mass work, they know from nowhere, and the majority couldn't resist the temptation to do a little nudging to line up the neutral people before they were brought to the door. OK, now we don't propose to suspend or expel those people the way they falsely do it to us; but at the same time we would have liked to have had the opportunity, which we did not have, to point out that this is the way things are.

Now I've taken all this time because this is the only substantive accusation against us, which the Control Commission was supposed to inquire into, and the one in which they were least interested. Absolutely unresponsive to my readiness to hold some kind of inquiry and to actually interview people on this. The only thing we got was a fishing expedition where they called in three of our newer comrades and asked them in some kind of coy trap: Could you mention the dates on which you joined your tendency, joined the youth and joined the party. And when the comrades pointed out that wasn't the case, that was the end of it. So, if this has any real meaning, this charge -- if it's not just a way to make you comrades of the majority feel good and explain that it's because we're playing it dirty that we could possibly hold some new comrade in the face of the overwhelming power of your arguments -- if it's anything besides that, it's something else, the real meaning of this accusation. And that is that we should half-suspend ourselves from the movement, that we should give up every kind of outside work which brings us in contact with or opens the possibility of contacting or recruiting people, both of whom are sure as hell going to be heading in our direction. Inevitably. That we should half-suspend ourselves from the party.

At least one group in this party, although they never had such good recruiters anyhow, they've gone underground in the party. One group has. You won't find them bringing around anybody. They just creep through the woodwork. I don't know how you're going to get them. But that's your problem. So what it ends up is that we're accused of a hostile and disloyal attitude. Which is a transition from oppression of us, our searching antagonism to this oppression, which is certainly hostile, and then picking up on our expression of our internal discussion and reveal what they're doing to the party and doing to us, and then using that as a way to eject us. Now, to summarize that point. That if you comrades of the national committee don't react uneasily against the idea that we've

been convicted of some kind of thought crime, then I assure you that the degeneration in the SWP is a lot further advanced than I've been willing to give credit to -- and I've not been one of the most complimentary.

I hope that you've all read our material, including the general statement by the five suspended comrades. In the event that you haven't appreciated what I consider to be the key meat in it, I'd like to indicate those several points, coming under the heading: What our expulsion would mean to the party. First, there's the international question, that's right. Here we are, here I stand before you, and other comrades, the living example of some bitter fights, who share a lot of similar political viewpoints, by no means entirely, with the Healy and Posadas and other groups, with the left dissidents in the Trotskyist movement -- willing, anxious, able, struggling to stay in, now that there's been a reunification, which we opposed, of the Fourth International.

You're gonna eject us? Okay, then we take your measure internationally, and although we're a very small group, hardly any threat to the SWP, we're not one you're going to choke out of existence, unless you shoot us as we go down the stairs. What you've done will be known. The course, the putting the results into practice of the words that Lenin was fond of saying, the test of the deed over us. And that will show, indeed, that the true scope of the unification was on the very narrow Pabloist base, that the promises made were illusions. Secondly, you should think a bit about what this is going to do to the internal life and the capacity to change and to function as a revolutionary organization for the SWP itself. If you kick us out for this kind of stuff, the kind of life, the kind of mechanism by which change is going to be arrived at in the struggle, is going to resemble something very much on the course of the Stalinization of the old CP, where open defiance of the leaders is going to be forbidden. But that's not going to stop it.

I remember the comrade who <sup>was</sup> on National tour from the West Coast, speaking about the Communist Party in his day when it was totally Stalinized; that never stopped struggles, comrades. If you're looking for a resting place, you won't find it by proscribing even more fully minorities. All that happens is that you get the most intense, internecine fights over, if nothing else, the selection of personnel for posts. You can never stop struggle. All you can do is denature it, so that it's not clear, it's not political, it's not over the question of line, and destroy the ground rules of democratic centralism.

But do not believe if you create some kind of autocratic regime, that life becomes easy for the ruling regime. It doesn't become easy. It's that then you always wonder what the hell Indians are really out there, what kind of rumblings are from below, and you've got to start using mine detectors inside your own organization, trying to infer, because no one will speak the truth then, which is what I'm trying to do to you now and have been doing.

I'd like to even quote what we have to say in the probably most key part of our document and that is that: for the National Committee to intervene to return the party to the revolutionary organizational practices of the past is to hold open the possibility -- I take a dim view of it, but at least it's a possibility -- of a revolutionary future for the SWP. If the National Committee permits the destruction of our party membership, it thereby permits the destruction of any chance for a reversal of the rightward revisionist course of the party, because those who oppose it would be excluded. By eliminating the content of party democracy, the degeneration of the party becomes irreversible.

Comrades, this need not be. The SWP majority reflects no implacable bureaucratic social layer. Its loss of a proletarian revolutionary perspective, its eager search for substitutes and shortcuts, idealizing the radical petty-bourgeois leaderships -- Castros, Ben Bellas, Malcolm X's -- is not some inevitable, automatic reflex based upon a position of privilege. Rather despair and ensuing degeneration have come through prolonged isolation, persecution, weakness and aging. The National Committee stands now at a last crossroad, at which it yet has a conscious choice open. Sections of the party leadership may already have gone much further in political revision or bureaucratic organizational practice than they ever intended. Although it would be idle to deny that it is very late, there is still a choice. The party does not have to, if it is not predestined, to continue down the road that it is traveling at full speed. To repeat, to halt now, is to leave open the way back, so the party might again have a revolutionary future. That I think is the most important thing we have to say.

I think it unfortunate that there has been no provision for any give and take or exchange at all between the representatives of the minority and of the plenum as a whole. Because, surely I was hoping someone might have come up to me before the plenum or there might have been some other kind of connection. Aren't any of you interested, for example, in hearing from our own mouths such questions as whether or not the Robertson-Ireland document was or was not, did or did not,

become a position of the tendency? Don't any of you care, for example, don't you want to know, don't you want to find out at least whether I'm lying or not about whether Mage and White ought to be thrown out as subscribing to every letter, every word in that document? Or are any of you interested in whether or not we believe, or particular instances or examples or methods or forms, whether or not we consider ourselves to be democratic centralists, whether or not we propose and seek to abide by the discipline of the SWP as a condition for membership, irrespective of our appraisal or liking of the decisions? Instead, no.

So to get to my concluding point. It's going to have to be sort of in lieu of a summary. I'm going to try to anticipate a discussion which I'm not going to be at, which I cannot defend myself against, and cannot deny, refute, and to think ahead about the kind of charges and to try to anticipate them. And I'd like to offer two such points in lieu of a summary in the defense of my party membership and that of the tendency with which I'm associated.

One, I'm of the opinion that the party leadership at this point in order to make a good case -- I'm sure they can get a majority -- but in order to make a good case, so that those of you who may have some question in your mind will be convinced, that they're going to have to introduce some new sensation of some kind. And there I'm really kind of stuck, I can't quite figure out what it is. You might make the point that we're agents of Healy or Posadas or somebody because so far all we've been accused of is being agents of ourselves, which is true, but since we're in the party, the charge of disloyalty goes all to pieces, because disloyalty -- if it has any statutory definition at all, as in the 1938 motion -- means holding loyalty to some organization, agency or persons outside the party. So I think that you've probably got to try to indicate, you know, some sensation of some kind, you know, that we're actually agents, creatures, that somehow I've got a transistor in my head and that Gerry Healy is busy talking into it. Otherwise, it's just not gonna look good comrades, it's not gonna look good.

The other thing, and a somewhat less cynical, more real, meant, felt point, is that I'm very much afraid that because of a fortunate circumstance which I'm sure has happened, that is, that many of the critics and of the minorities and dissidents in the SWP are uneasy at a minimum -- or actively intervening in the defense of our party rights -- that the natural easy wrong response of the party leadership is to say: Aha,

rotten bloc of all the dissident elements of left, right, center, above, below, all combining to come and overthrow the party regime even though they have nothing in common. This, of course, and then go on to show just how bad a rotten bloc is. So I thought a little about what rotten blocs are and how it applies here and I'd like to present these observations to you, in the event that that charge is raised -- the question of the possibility of a wide range of party opinion coming to the defense of our party rights.

Now a rotten bloc, as its been used, means the unity of extremes against the middle, that is there are left and right wings getting together and perhaps ganging up on a center group. And what is wrong, of course, is that it always plays into the hands of the more right wing group, that the revolutionary policy is lost by such a subordination, necessary subordination. It's kind of in a smaller version of a popular front. A good historic example of such a rotten bloc would have been if Trotsky and Bukharin had united to overthrow and supplant the regime of Stalin in the late twenties. It would've been a wrong thing. Likewise, you sometimes get rotten blocs if forces, dissimilar forces, agree to set aside their fundamental differences in order to bring to the fore secondary or ephemeral agreements against some third force that actually shares fundamental agreement, at least on paper, with one of the two conspirators. A classic example of this, of course, was the unity of Abern and Burnham against the party majority in 1939 and 1940, Abern who presumably agreed with Trotsky on the Russian question and Burnham who didn't. This contradiction, too, inevitably undermines any revolutionary program. Now neither of these kinds of formulation of a rotten bloc apply here. What's involved is not any challenge to a political majority to run the party, it's a question of the ground rules of party democracy, of democratic centralism, how they run that party.

It would indeed be wrong, for example -- this would be where rotten blocs would be -- if fortuitously there were a majority of dissidents of all hues, colors and opinions in the SWP, and if they wrongfully put forward as their plank to take over against the incumbents, to defend party democracy, put us in power. You'd destroy the party with that. But that's not the case. Rather to retain, simply this, to retain the dissidents and critics who abide by democratic centralism in the party, and that is no rotten bloc. Rather, that particular bloc, that is the question of simply the maintenance and the upholding of democratic and disciplined practices in the party, above all, is not the responsibility, comrades, of the minority, although they generally tend to be the most sensitive on that score; it is above all the responsibility of the majority



itself, because they have the majority, they set the ground rules, they determine far more than any minority the tone, the character and the conduct of party life.

So it is in this so-called rotten bloc that the majority itself should be the leader, because if this is done and if the majority stands as the decisive part of the party in making the opinions through political victory in properly regulated internal discussion, then you do away with all this organizational kind of squabbling -- this taking up of the time of the plenum and writing of these kind of documents-- and are able to address the attention of the party, through overcoming the shabby organizational questions, are able to address the concern and hold a debate, not on whether or not we should be thrown out for alleged disloyalty, but on the question of the substance of what the political line should be. Of course, this has a drawback for the majority that it contains the -- puts them on the defensive before the party; they have to come before the plenums and the memberships from time to time and defend their conduct, justify it. It's not easier if they can come before the party going after some dissidents. And that's why given the condition of the party, which I for one sought to analyze in the document on centrism in the SWP, this inability of the majority to date to reverse is not an accident. So with that sort of final summary remark, I can only ask you for whatever it's worth to rescind our suspensions.

I could go on and ask you to make some additional kind of re-affirmation whether you believe in democratic centralism within the SWP, so that we not merely see the party pull back from the brink on which it stands now in organizational transformation, but restore a larger measure of health to what has been not only politically but organizationally a very sick party. And if you do, good. It'll be in any case to your credit and a step toward a serious revolutionary future for the SWP. If you don't, well, we've taken everything you could hand out without flinching and we'll go right on fighting you, you shouldn't make any mistake about it. I think maybe that's what has led to this situation now that you thought perhaps that we were just a bunch of petty bourgeois cookie pushers and if you just put a little more pressure on us maybe we'd run away. Don't make that mistake. For we have an overriding obligation despite our small forces, so small for that matter that you should be ashamed for shooting at us.

I put it in the document, I'll try to recall it from memory as best I can -- it's also given in the document on discipline and truth where we first reply to Brother Wohlforth -- and that this that there are historic processes at work in

the Socialist Workers Party: certain cycles of opportunism; the tendency toward polarization within the SWP between revolutionary and outright revisionist forces; the exceedingly strong responsibility of a left wing in the Party not to let itself be driven, run out, sucked in and demoralized in the SWP, but to stay and fight, to fight against any split or expulsion and not to be deterred. The issue that justifies all this trouble and this perseverance is nothing less than the future of Trotskyism in this country. Of that comrades I'm convinced and that's what motivates me, and should it motivate you then we can perhaps go through an awful lot of exceedingly harsh and sharp differences and still be involved jointly in the revolutionary struggles that certainly lay ahead in this country. But if they don't bother you any more, if you want to have a tidy little house without a lot of trouble, then that is your problem and your tragedy.

Plenum Discussion on Internal Party Situation

Harris: Comrades, in the Bay Area I would say that the majority of comrades, overwhelming majority, are firmly in favor of the suspension that took place and of the expulsion of the leadership of the Robertson tendency. However, we have reservations on the procedure which I won't take up first but last. If we had had sufficient notice to prepare a document for the Control Commission we could have done it, because we had intimate experience with the Robertson tendency, and especially with Robertson himself. He was recruited in Berkeley as you know, and I played a role in bringing him into the Party. I also played a role in getting him out of Berkeley and the person who took the lead, and said we had to get him out of the youth work there or else he will destroy the youth movement in Berkeley, was Jeff White. We intervened and Robertson was removed from youth work and shortly afterward he left and came to New York, to your happiness I presume.

However, let's talk about incidents. I don't think they're that important myself, because I think the document in itself is enough, because we take ideas very seriously in this movement; and we assume a connection between a document, even if it is for internal circulation, and action. But if a man of the stature of Jim Robertson as a factionalist and representative of a tendency writes a document, he means it; that is the connection between documents and action that we always assumed in our movement. This was pointed out to the minority during the discussions we had in the Bay Area. However, when I made the presentation at the joint branch meeting just a couple of weeks ago, I cited certain incidents which I will cite here.

One, on double recruitment. There was a comrade, Louis, who was here in the East for a while, went to Trotsky school, who was in the youth. He was recruited into the Robertson tendency before he was ever in the Party. He attended meetings at Jeff White's house at which they discussed their differences with the party. He was recruited into the Party as a member of their tendency. Later he was convinced of the error of their political line and became a member of the majority, and therefore we are acquainted with this particular incident. And there are others. The most recent attempt, just before the convention, involved the wife of one of the minority people who is indifferent to the Party and when she expresses anything at all is hostile. They brought her down and tried to bring her into the movement to get another vote, and we rejected this very firmly. The person hadn't been around the movement, had no connection with the movement, had hostility to the movement, and yet they bring her down and want to bring her into the Party to get a vote. We said nothing doing, we don't go for that.

On the other side of the Bay they had a fellow who came out of the fascist movement originally, and at the time he came to the youth he was a Moslem -- not a Black Muslim for whom we have a lot of respect -- he was a white Moslem. When he came to the youth he was still trying to convince people of the correctness of his religious point of view. Well, the youth stopped that. But he went on and took up the Robertsonite point of view on Cuba and became a minority supporter in the youth. Some time before the convention they presented him to become a member of the Party in San Francisco. We said nothing doing. We saw this for what it was, double recruitment. But we didn't even have to raise that issue because there was plenty else against him. We said we don't want him and we turned him down. We stopped it. This sort of took them aback and we had a wave of resignations in San Francisco. At this time we don't have any Robertsonites or Wohlforthites in San Francisco, they've all resigned. Well, one of them went to the SP.

Now in Berkeley -- I want to read to you a document prepared by the Berkeley youth comrades; just a couple of paragraphs about all the trouble they had with the minority, including the question of SNCC where they disagree with the youth policy and attempted to carry out their own line in Berkeley where they had control of the youth. That was stopped. But here I quote a report of minority conduct during the Cuban crisis of October, and this is absolutely true: "The conflict with the minority came to a head in the Cuban crisis of October -1962(This is the document from the youth in Berkeley). During this extremely trying period for the movement, the minority leadership of the youth movement came to open conflict with the Party leadership in the Bay Area to the point that representatives of the youth movement in Berkeley were blocking openly in public meetings with the liberals and Stalinists and Social Democrats to oppose the proposals for demonstrations put forth by the leadership of the FPCC and the Party in the area. This action was carried out by non-Party youth members who adhere to the minority position."

Now the minorityites who were in the Party kept their mouths shut during this time, and the people who were not in the Party but belonged to their tendency carried out their line. This is the way they operate. This is Petris and that whole bunch that have now left the Party and I understand Petris is now conducting lectures for the SP-SDF. The Party members, who were the real organizers of the minority faction, claimed they had no control over the non-Party members of the faction who were carrying out their line. But we have the admission of at least one minority Party member, who has since left the movement, finding social democracy more to his liking, that he had spent 3 hours with one of these non-Party people instructing

him what to do.

After the missile crisis was over the minority Party members in the youth then attempted to use this incident to discredit the Party and to create a breach between the Party and the youth movement in the Bay Area. During the entire crisis the majority leaders of the youth movement were not permitted by the minority leadership of the local to play any role except that of waiting for telephone calls to be told what line to be put on the leaflets, how to make the stencils, how many copies to run off. At this point the majority members in the youth felt it was absolutely essential to obtain political clarity and to bring into the open the real political issues behind the undercover carryings on of the minority. They conducted an organizational struggle, implementing their political struggle against the minority and they won control of the youth in the East Bay. Then Petris and the rest of them left the movement when they lost organizationally.

Now on Jeff White. He's a nice guy, but politically he's just as responsible as they are. Now there may have been some doubts in our minds until we read his document. He was saying other things, you know, in the corridors, but when we read his document we got the line. You've all read the document, I presume, I don't have to read it to you. In his last points he says, "I deny that I have practiced or advocated or believe that other leaders of our tendency have advocated double recruitment of the type claimed in the charges." I or anybody else -- in other words he takes responsibility for the tendency, this is not an individual thing. He takes responsibility and I taxed him with this business of Louie and these other things. He can't deny it. He knows we know, and he knows it's true. As for his concept of the way the Party is organized, did you notice his remarks that the "loyalty to a diseased shell passage of which much is made the basis for this statement is merely the concept which is I trust held by all comrades of a Marxist as opposed to a religious persuasion" -- get that -- "namely that the Party is a means not an end." Since when, comrades? This is one of Jeff White's, Robertson's and Shane Mage's difficulties. They are rigid, non-dialectical thinkers. Hasn't he read Trotsky, especially Their Morals and Ours? The relationship between the means and the ends. The Party is an end at this time. We haven't even built the kind of Party we want, we're in the process. It's an end, then it becomes a means. And it is not a religious concept with us. You know you can get lost in this business of "I am devoted to ideas and the organization is incidental." That's not true at all. Our Party is an end. It's an end and will become a means. But it is not yet.

Well, you see I come from an area in which we have Robertsonites. A lot of you don't have Robertsonites you know. We could send you a few.

Now I agree with the point that some of the Robertsonites are pretty good people and they've been sucked in by this business and some of them are very worried about being thrown out of the Party because it's their life. But they have to make up their minds. As we put it to them, you make up your mind what you want to do. You'll be judged by your actions from now on in the Party. Now at the present time in the Bay Area, the minority is circulating all the documents. They circulated the document from Los Angeles by Wendell Phillips before I even knew it existed. I didn't see it until I came here. But they had all these things mimeographed and they go around and circulate them. They come over to San Francisco --we don't have any Robertsonites -- so at our meetings they send someone over to distribute them to our members. It saves us circulating them because we've been circulating all the documents too, but we get them after they get them. They get them before we do. This is the situation. And, incidently, they knew exactly what was going on in the Control Commission, because I discussed it with Jeff White, and I didn't know. And here I come to the criticisms that we have of the procedure.

Comrades, I started off by saying that if we'd had information, if we'd known what was going on, we could have prepared a document for submission to the Control Commission. I believe that the branches and especially in our area which has Robertsonites, we have 9 of them -- we're split on the question by the way -- that we should have<sup>\*</sup>known what was going on, we didn't. The NC members got the letter from the National Office 4 days before the branch got it, we got it on Friday and the Branch got it on Tuesday; and so we weren't adequately prepared, we weren't able to mobilize a majority. We weren't able to do the necessary educational job, and it hit the branches sort of cold. I'm telling you we had a lot of problems of education, and it was a very difficult period for the majority leadership in the Bay Area. I think this was incorrect. I think it was an error.

Now on the question of White himself. I see no reason why White couldn't have been directly informed and somebody there couldn't have been designated by the Control Commission to take evidence from him. It would have allayed a lot of suspicions; it would have helped; and the result would have been the same. As for written charges, why not? There's nothing against that, and I think it would have been correct to have given written charges. Then the report that came from the Control Commission was inadequate, didn't have enough information, and there had to be a lot of telephone calls and dis-

\*had advance information. We should have

cussions among ourselves to get it straightened out. Basically I would say there was too much haste in it, and I don't think it was necessary.; I don't think it was necessary and I think the result would have been exactly the same. I believe they should have been suspended, and they should be expelled from the party; and the majority is solid on that in the Bay Area, and as I say the Swabeckians are split. One of the Swabeckians made a sharper attack on them than we did. He said they were finking on the party. He is a trade unionist, you know, and has a different point of view than some of the comrades. He said that Robertson had been finking on the party for years, and he knew it and they all knew it.

Now I have a statement here that Sharon asked me to read so I'll give it to the secretary to be read later, after I finish.

Let us not forget when we talk about White that he was the one who nominated Robertson for the NC at the convention. He knew about all the documents; he knew about the incidents with Louie and others; he knew about everything that had been done; he nominated Robertson; and I think he's playing a rather slick lawyer's game. Nice fellow personally, but I didn't know all these things before, and I've begun to revise my opinion even on that.

Now coming back in closing to this question of specific incidents and overt acts: We started out with some of the comrades in the Bay Area having rather a, what I call, civil libertarian approach to this question. You've got to have him treated like he was being tried for murder or rape or something you know; you've got to have the finger prints; you've got to have the gun; you have to have all the witnesses and you have to line them up; because you're going to put the man in jail, or you're going to bar him from a job or something. This is not the case. People come into our party voluntarily; we don't force them to come into the party; and we haven't asked very much of people in the party in the past period I assure you, because there hasn't been a hell of a lot to be done in some areas. But on this question, when a person leaves the party, they don't lose a job, they don't lose anything as far as their rights in society are concerned. What they lose is their membership in the party and they lose it on the basis of a very elementary thing, their loyalty to the party; and loyalty to the party, you know, is taken very seriously by all comrades who understand party organization.

The minority tries to equate loyalty to the party with some sort of a loyalty to a capitalist class, you know. They

say, why do you ask us to be absolutely loyal, you ask what the capitalist class asks of us. We don't. The capitalist class of course is our enemy, but without the Party we ~~can't~~ do anything, and to ask Party loyalty is elementary and that is what they violate. In my opinion the document itself is sufficient reason for expelling the leadership of the minority tendency because that is an act; it is ideas, yes, but it's ideas which are intended for action and we have no counter documents by minorityites. I ask the comrades who said they they -- By the way, no minority comrades in the Bay Area disavowed the documents. They got up and they'd slide all around it but they will not say that they disagree with the documents. All they said is that the documents were withdrawn, we never voted on it, all this sort of thing, but they will not say they disagree with the documents. We'll see what happens when we go back because I believe that this plenum is going to expel the leadership of the Robertson tendency and I believe they should.

Now on the organizational question I will have something else to say on the general situation inside the Party insofar as some of the factional atmosphere that has existed is concerned, but that is not now, another time for that.

Himmell: Comrades, we're on a point called the internal situation in the Party and, as Farrell indicated in motivating his report earlier, what we're faced with is a threat to the Leninist character of the Party, the threat of a decomposition, a watering down, a transformation of the Party into a talk shop.

The point I want to make however today, although in a sense it might be seemingly out of place, is that the threat -- and I agree that we face a very serious threat -- the threat to the Party is not just one of disloyal minorities. We have that threat before us; I think we're handling it; I haven't heard anything in the defense of the minority in question that has caused me in any way to develop a counter position to that put forward by the presiding committee. But I think, and I think that comrades should give this some serious thought, that there is a far bigger threat to the Leninist character of the Party within the majority of the Party. I went to a New York branch meeting after I came here and I, coming from the provinces, suppose I was a little over sensitive. I took it for about 10 minutes. I walked out because the New York branch was in an utter shambles.

I think the existence of conditions like exist in New York is an example of the real threat to the Leninist character of the Party. And the threat is two-sided, not the ability of a disruptive minority to inject their poison into the New York branch but the inability of the majority to do anything about it. And I'm not sure whether removing a few Robertsonites is going to change that -- they're not attending the branch meetings now anyway.



Secondly, I think a far bigger threat to the Leninist character of the Party is manifest in the results of the sub campaign. Who are we going to blame for that? Who are we going to blame for the scandalous results in a number of branches and some of the largest branches in the SWP? I think that a far greater threat to the Leninist character of the Party exists in the fact that members are continued on the books of this organization who don't accept the most elementary obligations of membership. Who don't contribute financially, who don't attend meetings regularly, who don't accept responsibility in sub campaigns and other active Party work.

Now I don't agree with Asher that this situation is -- that we don't ask much of members. It's true we haven't for some time and it's not because we don't have much to ask of them. We've had a hard time keeping members. We haven't been very selective in the past several years and comrades I think that has reached the danger point now and we're going to have to change that. I'm glad to see the Party leadership reacting sensitively and firmly to call a disloyal minority to order and, quite properly, to hold the leadership of that minority accountable in its entirety for what the minority is up to. I have criticisms like other comrades of some of the ways in which this expulsion was prepared. I think that it could have been prepared differently, better in many respects, but I don't have any question that the minority involved has left itself open to expulsion from our ranks.

What I would like to see, when we're here discussing the internal situation in the Party, is a little of the same firmness applied to the Party majority. I want to see the leadership of locals in the Party and departments in the Party who are not behaving in a responsible fashion called to account. And if we have dead wood in the Party, and we have a lot of it, that dead wood should be lopped off. I feel that if that were done, and done firmly, and not side-stepped in any respect, that we would not be experiencing one-half of the difficulty that we are in relation to this tiny handful of Robertsonites that exist in the ranks of the Party.

We had a disruptive minority in Detroit, I'm not trying to make an exact analogy between the Wohlforth-Phillips and the Robertson minorities; admittedly there are many differences. But Phillips is a rather rambunctious fellow and he contributed a good bit to disrupting a lot of our Party life in the pre-convention period. But the very first thing we did with Phillips when we returned from the convention was serve notice to him privately and before the entire Detroit branch that this has got to stop, that you're going to act responsibly, that you're going to accept the Party decisions, you're not going to disrupt meetings, you're going to participate as a responsible party member, or you're going out. We set a certain precedent on people going out, because we dropped over the course of the last year people in our branch who in many other branches would be considered active members I'm afraid.

But we've begun that process and I'm submitting here that this is a process that the Party as a whole needs to turn its attention to and very quickly.

Statement by Sharon read:

"The recent suspension of Robertson, Mage, Ireland, Harper and White and their appeal therefrom pose to the committee and the Party one basic issue above everything else. Are we going to build a Leninist Party or some grotesque caricature of the all-inclusive mishmash.

"By their content the documents cited by the Control Commission stamps this gang as Party wreckers. They argue that these were merely the personal opinions of some of them and were not accepted by their group. To date they have failed to inform us or show us with other documents that they did indeed reject the hostile line contained in the former. Nor have any of them stood up to sharply and clearly condemn that line.

"They have dealt us a rotten blow and even now it is clear from their appeals that what they couldn't accomplish from the inside they will do their damndest to accomplish from the outside.

"This is factionalism gone mad and it will go down in the history of the movement as one of the sicker manifestations of the rootless intellectual in a petty bourgeois frenzy.

"The suspensions should be followed up by expulsion and the Party should demand of every follower of the five his or her declaration of loyalty. There can be no suggestion of hampering their right to their political opinion but there should be no ambiguity about their loyalty to the SWP. If we hesitate or fail in this course we can kiss our chances good-bye, we will truly signal the decline of our Party."

Alvin: Comrades, I want to deal just briefly with one or two aspects of the problem that's before us. You know we have several minority opposition factions in the Party at the present time and have had for some time in the past. It is very interesting to note that despite the deep political differences among some of these groups, they have all united on a common position in defense of the Robertson group which is under suspension and most of their criticism is directed at the formal aspects of the action that has been taken and the one that is proposed.

They ask why wasn't a trial held? Why weren't there written charges, witnesses called, subpoenas issued and so on? And this also is the criticism of some comrades who are in agreement with the decision that was reached by the Political

Committee. I don't think that that's the real issue before us. In my mind that occupies a subordinate place, although on occasions we all know that formalities must be observed and have an importance of their own. The reality that confronts us is that we have to consider or rather reconsider once again what is the nature of the party that we are trying to build -- that's the real problem.

Do we want a party like the Communist Party of the 1920's that Comrade Cannon described in his book, where there are permanent factions, and where the first consideration of each faction is it's own interests, and only in the second place do they put the interests of the party as a whole? We have to ask ourselves that, because that appears to be the conception of some if not all of the opposition factions. Certainly it is the conception of the Robertson group. Or do we want a Party that strives towards homogeneity, whose members are made up largely of people with similar views, yet where there is room for differences of opinion? Between now and the next convention of the Party this question once again must be thoroughly cleared and clarified. I'm glad that there is a proposal to form a commission to codify our ideas on the nature of the Party and to publish them for our own reeducation and for the education of the newer people in the movement. Our theory of the Party must be taught to them.

We are thoroughly opposed to the conception of permanent factions and never ending warfare between them. That's not our conception and that can lead to nothing. Our view is that factional alignments are or should be temporary in formation. They are or should be dissolved after discussion and debate and a decision has been reached by the Party as a whole in convention. Now I know that this isn't always possible; factions persist even after decisions have been made and that's the situation\*we expect, and we even demand, that the further existence of a faction be based upon its loyal functioning in the Party and upon the acceptance of the decisions of the Party made by the convention. If a faction wants the right to continue its existence -- and we have not put any restrictions on any faction -- it must loyally carry out the decision of the Party majority, that's the condition for its existence. And this is the minimum basis, it seems to me, for its right to remain in the Party.

The Party majority has certain rights as well as duties too. You never hear anything from the minority oppositions on the rights of the majority. All you hear is this talk about its duties and some people view the majority as just a grouping whose duty solely is to defend the rights of minorities. That's a lot of poppycock. The majority has rights, its charged with the responsibility for carrying out the decisions and it \*we have now. But confronted with that kind of situation

has the duty to see to it that every minority not only has its rights protected but that the minority also carry out the decisions of the Party as a whole. Yes, we have some rights and in my view, I don't know what's the point of talking about Party democracy unless what we mean by that is the right of the majority to rule. That's what democracy means, it means the right of the majority.

The Robertson group, according to what they've written and what they've said and what's been reported about their actions, have an entirely different conception. They're not being punished or moved against, it seems to me, because they wrote a couple of documents and now they're trying, some of them, to disassociate themselves from these documents and to say that they were not officially adopted and so on. From everything I know about this group they've been acting in precisely the way these documents describe the way they should act. So I think the documents were written rather after the fact than before in an effort to lay out a line of activity for them. Since they formed themselves into a separate faction they have used the Party simply as a happy hunting ground for building their particular faction and that's their only and sole interest in our organization. If they thought they had a better chance to build their group in some other party they would leave this afternoon or they would have left a long time ago. Only their factional interests command any loyalty from them. The Party means nothing to them except as an arena in which to work. The reality therefore is that they have no place in our Party.

Halstead: I think just about the most ridiculous analogy that we've been treated to is the one about the bourgeois court raised by Robertson. Now we are not a state apparatus and we are not putting anybody in jail and we are not suspending anybody from their country or expelling them from their city or from their unions so they can't get a job. We are none of these things. We are not that kind of an apparatus. A workers state of course would not expell somebody from it for expressing such a point of view. But we are not a state apparatus. We are a party. Lenin -- in "What is to be Done" polemizing against those in the Russian social democracy who at that time were widely arguing about freedom of criticism -- explained that the party was not a state apparatus. We don't have a government anywhere, he said. We are a small band treading a difficult path with terrible swamps on either side. We have to hold hands in order to make it, and if somebody wants to go into the swamp we will defend their right to do so, but they have no right to pull us in with them.

The Robertsonites have simply declared that they are in our Party as a device, as a happy hunting ground, to recruit people to a group that doesn't have our conception of the Party, not to speak of our political line on any number of questions. We don't have to be such a happy hunting ground and if we were we wouldn't be a responsible organization, let alone a Bolshevik organization. I should like to say that I can understand the position of comrades who lack information and I'm for all due elaborate procedures. In this case however I do not think there was too much haste. No, I am one of those that thinks that if there was any error on that level it was waiting too long, and I personally was very adamant on this question and still am.

Our practical work is being and has been interfered with for some time by the existence of this disloyal group in our party. Our younger members who have come around and want to do practical work are figuratively up in arms about this kind of interference. We can't afford that kind of thing. We don't have a whole lot of opportunities right now for mass work but we do get a little angle once in a while. With these people around you can't go through anything that's the least bit subtle or requires the least bit of unified and disciplined action. It ties our hands impossibly.

Perhaps even more important is the general question that the whole Party faces. It's a problem which is no secret. We have a cadre which we have kept together for long years. Many are growing a little older, having to take it easier. We have to educate the younger people we're getting, and educate them fast, and educate them right, and put tasks in their hands. Throw them in the water and let them swim. And if we wait any longer on this thing we wouldn't be giving them the right education.

Bob's point that this has got to stop is true, it's absolutely true.

Ring: I want to disagree with Fred on a secondary point and agree with his central point that he made. I don't agree with the point as he presented it -- maybe I didn't quite understand his meaning -- about we're not a state power and we're not expelling anyone from a job, or as a union leader, or from a country, and so we don't require the same rules of evidence.

First of all our democratic procedures are a precious thing to us and must be scrupulously observed. Secondly, for anyone who lives his whole life in this party and devotes his whole life to it and for whom it means everything, expulsion from the party is just as meaningful or more meaningful than expulsion from a job or from a country. So we have to take it very seriously and I take this question very seriously. I know

Fred does too, I just disagree with his formulation.

If I thought that was the case with the comrades involved here I would oppose the proposed expulsion. If I thought they were comrades who had the most profound disagreements on this or that question but whose basic interest was in building our party, I would say no and I don't think anyone else would say yes. It is an important thing that all comrades should be assured of the democratic procedures of the party and that all comrades should understand what's happening. I re-made up my mind, so to speak, on this question when I attended the branch meeting, got a picture of the branch meeting here in New York this Thursday.

To approach the problem in all of its political aspects, rather than simply organizationally, we have to state first of all that in the Robertson tendency specifically we're dealing with a group that has proven itself politically unassimilable into our movement. Aside from their petty-bourgeois character, their political disagreements are so profound that they cannot be assimilated into our movement. Their position on the reunification of the movement; their scandalous position on the Cuban revolution and on the Algerian revolution; their equally scandalous position on the rising Negro struggle in this country; their general Stalinophobia and sectarian abstensionism --these I think made them politically unassimilable in this movement and that's why we have the problem that we do with them.

Now, they could be all of these things and we could still live with them within the movement and tolerate them no matter how profound their disagreements, but they are a petty-bourgeois tendency that is not capable of restraining itself -- even from the viewpoint of its own narrow interest of people who are clinging to the SWP because they have absolutely no place else to go and they know they'll disintegrate if they're outside the movement. They can't even exercise that self restraint. And it poses a problem. I agree with Bob there's a real problem but I say the place to start is with the most extreme problem and to begin to work on the whole problem. Today the cadre of the movement is so to speak holding on for the younger people who are coming along and who are going to have to take over the leadership of the party. Now we've got a responsibility to them. We've got the responsibility to hand down a democratic legacy to insure their education in the most profound meaning of internal party democracy. But also a legacy on the nature and meaning of our party.

Now let me tell you about that meeting Thursday. Phelps came in with his proposal, his criticism of the paper that was submitted here, demanded a discussion on the eve of the plenum. All of the opposition tendencies joined in supporting the motion

that it be discussed right then and there. They hadn't even seen the document; they didn't even know whether they were in agreement or disagreement; but typical of the way they have functioned, all of them joined in the motion. It was defeated by a majority of 2 votes I understand. Later there was a report on the rent strike in Harlem. The first action in 15 years that I know of where our Negro comrades, all of them, have been involved in an action up in Harlem.

After the reporter got finished the other Wohlforth minority made a motion to the effect that the comrades, or that the party, ought to get involved in the rent strike. Leroy was making the report. I came in at the time he was making a rebuttal on this motion. Jack A. was sitting there and starts shouting "You're a liar" and repeated it several times. Now I became completely enraged, and let me tell you what I became enraged about. Not at Jack A, particular, he's an unstable person, I'm not too shocked -- but what shocked me and made me absolutely beside myself was the way the party branch sat there. You're worried about democracy in this party? I'm worried about the opposite side of it. The branch sat there as though to say: well, that's his democratic opinion; he thinks the reporter is a liar; he can just sit there and shout. And nobody said a word. I had to stand up and demand that the chairman call A. to order. Not a word from the branch. You'd think a group of revolutionaries trained in our tradition would have risen as one and demanded that this person be called to order or face charges from the party branch. That's what's happening in the New York local. That's the reality of it, the situation.

If our young comrades who we expect to take over the leadership of the movement get the idea that this is the norm, then we're finished. I say it's from this viewpoint that we've got to approach the problem. And within that framework take into all due consideration every necessary safeguard for all of the internal democratic rights of our movement.

Stevens: Comrades, I don't think there should be any question at all in our ranks about a disloyal minority having any place in our party, even disloyal individuals. Class loyalty and party loyalty is of a special kind. We hold it dearly, It has nothing in common with being her majesty's loyal opposition or loyal opposition to the state department. And I don't think anybody should be ashamed of such loyalty to the party. Democratic rights in our party do not include the right to organize a disloyal grouping in our party. Anybody who's read the documents can have no question in their minds that the documents at any rate unquestionably express complete disloyalty to our party. It's there in black and white. I don't want to utalize

my time to read extensively to comrades who have read it. And it isn't a thought you can't touch. Robertson, although he has a tiny little group who could have gotten all this by word of mouth, was foolish enough to commit it in material form -- black on white -- for all to see and read. It is no longer a thought in his head but communication in material form.

There is no question in my mind, and there has been no question in my mind, about the nature of this group. I would however have preferred a different way of struggling against this group and of defeating it, small as it is. I would have preferred the publication of these documents before the entire party. I would have preferred compelling them -- not suspending them first -- but compelling their leadership to debate us on those documents before the ranks, prior to organizational steps being taken. I would have preferred, in the course of this, a political exposure of the nature of this group: where it came from, why it resorts to this kind of action and where it's going. The record of this could be perhaps of some use to our co-thinkers; and to educate new members in our own body; and maybe even break away one or another from this disloyal grouping, instead of having them all feel persecuted and thrown together as they must feel at this time.

In my experience in the party, whenever we arrive at such an organizational parting of the ways we bring to the fore, in addition to the organizational step, the political nature of the struggle; but not just plain statutory and Control Commission action on the basis of justified charges. Their document is completely damning and to say that it is simply a thought in somebody's head is to be naive at the very best. We had a grouping called the Johnsonites who came into our party and had internal discipline of their own. We gained nothing from that experience. They gained new young comrades from us. When they got them in their group they told them don't discuss in the party, but we don't want to make any trouble, we're loyal in a close little enclave. And when they felt like it they finally marched out of the party. Johnson had the good sense not to commit to paper his particular raiding aims. The Robertsonites did, they put it down there on paper.

I would like to see, for example, a discussion of this group to take up their contentions that we are a right centrist party and to examine their contentions of what a left centrist party is. Do you know that in their document as an example of left centrism, the kind of centrism they could live with, they cite the Workers Party from 1941-1946. Now why do they do that? Why would Robertson defend that view that the Workers Party -- which broke with us on the eve of World War II



and was opposed to the defense of the Soviet Union -- was a left centrist party unlike the SWP today which he calls right centrist? That's just one example of what I would have liked to have seen in a discussion in the party ranks about this grouping prior to the final organizational step.

I want to take up one thing here though about this business of thought control, suspending people just because of what they say. They had every opportunity to say: this was indeed a preliminary discussion we had among ourselves; we don't hold to that view now; it was mistaken; so we disavow it, not in a craven way because you're going to punish us, but because it's not our position. We'd of had a hard time to suspend comrades from the party who would say that. Why did they not do it? They were here today. Why didn't they get up and say: it's true we wrote this, it sounds pretty bad looking at it now; we don't agree with it any more? Why didn't they? There's a reason. The reason is that they couldn't hold their particular type of grouping together with such a disavowal. This special kind of nature that they claim for themselves is what inspires, mistakenly, some of their youngsters with some kind of zeal, and their discipline as a revolutionary is first to their little group not to the party.

What do you mean it's just thoughts that they have? Myra said, for example, that they regard the SWP as a basic revolutionary party in this country. They say here just the opposite: that because the SWP is the ostensible revolutionary party in the eyes of the radical public and the party membership, we work through the SWP but we can have no intention of building centrism; we work within the party because it provides us with the best possible opportunity for building our tendency and not through any mistaken concepts of loyalty to a diseased shell. Does this mean that they regard us as the revolutionary cadre in this country? No mistaken loyalty to us as a diseased shell!

Now, suppose a new member were to come to us and say he wants to join the party and a comrade reports that the applicant has written a letter to him making statements like Robertson's. The branch would say: What, he wrote this and he wants to join our party? Sorry, he can't come into our party. And he says: Well, it's true I wrote it but now I've changed my mind, I think that's wrong, I think you are the revolutionary tendency in this country although I have differences with you; but I'll be loyal and obey your discipline down the line. Such a new applicant, unless he disavows this letter, would not be permitted into our party.

Now that wouldn't be thought control, that we don't let a person into the party because of thoughts. Sure we don't let people into our party with thoughts that are incompatible with membership in our party; and the ideas expressed in these documents, and not disavowed, are incompatible with membership in our party. But we'd have had a much easier job of it, and would have learned a lot more, if we'd have gone about this operation in the traditional Trotskyist manner -- politically -- so that in breaking with the group and throwing them out, the political lessons on the nature of the group -- why they came to be as they are and what we can learn from this in the future -- would be coupled with that process.

Forbes: Comrades, I agreed with the procedure of the Political Committee and the Control Commission without any reservation as to the method, to the rapidity of recording the events, or to the conclusion and the formal motion made by Comrade Dobbs at the end of his report. I'd also like to say that we discussed all these questions in the Newark branch and the comrades there agree completely unanimously with the decision to suspend. They don't know yet about the motion to expel of course, but I think they will agree to it.

Now the action and -- without going into their names each time -- the question involved here is not as some of the comrades have written in statements objecting to the procedure. Of course, comrade Myra constantly and continuously insisted today that we are barring and preventing a minority from expressing itself, if not from organizing. This is not what is involved. What is involved is not a minority organization, but a minority trying to scuttle and destroy the party. Now it seems to me that there is a difference. There have been minorities in the past, many of them, and I don't know of any of them, until they were ready to leave, who expressly avowed a position of destroying the party; and these people do.

One example. If I were a member of a group, or if I believed that this party really had a diseased shell -- which means the organizational structure and the program -- I would do my darnedest to destroy it. I don't see any point in permitting a diseased shell which stands in the way of the socialist revolution to continue to function. It wouldn't make any sense to me. And my objective in being in a minority with that point of view would be precisely to accomplish that goal of removing the shell from the American scene and from the path of the revolutionary movement.

Now why do these people insist on remaining in the party, if they believe it's a diseased shell? Comrade Myra, and some

of the others, feel that they do believe that they retain a loyalty to the SWP. That's not true. They say so specifically. Comrade Stevens just read it -- so I'm not going to repeat it -- that they use the SWP right now as a means of recruiting to their tendency. That's it. In short, it's easier for them to work here in trying to recruit members out of the SWP than to do it the hard way by ringing doorbells, making contacts, distributing leaflets, holding forums and so on. They have a ready made captive audience. It's not out of loyalty to the SWP, it's out of loyalty to their tendency. I repeat again, and I don't think anyone can dissuade me from this, that if they are serious about the characterization of the SWP as a diseased shell, then it is their duty to remove the SWP from the scene, no more and no less. And I think that they feel this is their duty.

Now in various paragraphs of this document, which I'm not going to re-read but simply call to your attention for emphasis, they speak about picking and choosing their battles in order to avoid -- mind you even the language is the language of civil war and guerrilla movements, isn't it? Battles, defeats, losses which might weaken the fighting spirit of the minority. It's civil war. In paragraph 20 they not only speak about what their ideas are -- by the way this is the first time I've heard of disemboweled and disembodied ideas not having any material foundation or expression -- but if there is any confusion about the relationship between ideas and material action, it's clarified in paragraph 20. They state that in the Berkeley-Oakland and New Haven branches they have tremendous possibilities for winning organizational support and control. This is not an idea, this is a material action. Not only that, if you'll pardon me, they continue to say all comrades in these critical areas should be encouraged and aided as completely as possible. Visitations, and they don't mean by that spiritual seances either, visitations by groups or individuals to lend, not ideas but material aid, presumably in the form of money and so on and so forth, should be made available in order to make the most of any opportunities which may present themselves.

Now in a sense their worst crime is not against the SWP. That is, it's criminal but the worst crime is not against the SWP, because I believe that the comrades in the Socialist Workers Party are capable of defending the program, heritage and perspectives. I think the worse crime is against the youth. If you read carefully appendix No. 2, again they reiterate quite strongly, this is by Lynn Harper, in Section 3 -- which definitely says that they do not intend playing the role of a loyal opposition -- she writes that their orientation

should be to expose the rottenness and the inability of the present youth leadership to the greatest extent they can without jeopardizing themselves; consideration of youth members either through local debate or by statements and counter motions in the minutes and so on and so forth. And again: "No matter," -- this is again in relation to the youth -- "no matter what our analysis of the SWP and of our perspectives therein this approach transferred to the youth, i.e., being loyal, disciplined members of the youth is incorrect for we have already seen that this perspective for our youth work is out of the question."

Then they state, "We do not seek to be responsible members of the youth in the sense given above but rather to be responsible, loyal, disciplined members of the Marxist tendency working in the youth for the purpose of building that tendency!" The fact is that, under the bludgeonings of bourgeois reaction at a time when youth movement is just beginning to grow, these are the people who are trying to destroy that movement from within. Unfortunately, many of the young people there don't have the experience, or the temper, or the capacity, to really defend themselves organizationally or programatically as well as older comrades who have been around longer; and this is where the Robertsonites make their base of operations.

Now then, there's been a lot of talk about a lack of democracy in the SWP as a result of this, and that we don't want to have a repetition of what happened in the Soviet Union with the dissolution or negation of the proletarian democracy and its overthrow by Stalinism. The overthrow of proletarian democracy in the Soviet Union consisted of the replacement of that democracy of workers control by an apparatus. Now the comrades who defend the Robertson faction believe that the apparatus, or the rising apparatus of the SWP, is replacing a democratic procedure of the party. That's the trouble with most of the bleeding heart defendants of that viewpoint. That is they're willing to say something but they're not willing to spell it out. For example, in none of the letters, nor in Myra's discussion this morning, was there any mention of whether or not the party is in fact a diseased shell. Do you agree with that characterization or don't you? If you don't then the conclusion is obvious. If you do then the other conclusion is obvious. Defend the rights of this minority to remain.

Now democratic centralism in my book does not mean giving unwarranted freedom to any group who decides to wreck the party. There is nothing in the views of Leninism, or the views of democratic centralism, that says that the party must be paralyzed and prevented from acting in its own defense.

Democratic centralism permits free expression but not the free destruction of the party; and this is what the perspective is of this faction, so far as I can see. The question of proof: where have they done it, when have they done it? I'm from the sticks right now comrades, you know, I'm not in New York any more, and I don't know what they've done in New York. They're not in existence in Newark and that's not due to any particular bureaucratic faults. But I'm not interested, frankly, in whether or not they've done this. Let's presume that they were incapable of convincing anyone to follow and practise what they preached in theory. So what? What are we supposed to do? Try to convince a whole group of people not to carry out their destructive policies, is that what you want? If that's what you want, all I can say is I'm absolutely opposed to it; and I will tell you comrades that if the party leadership did any less than it is doing, I would be opposing the party leadership for being remiss in defending the revolutionary party and movement in America.

Weinstein: Comrades, Robertson mentioned a model member of the minority in the youth and applicant for membership in the party, a comrade by the name of Dave K. I want to go into it just a little bit because I figure it's raised a point, although it's not the question whether he was a model that's important. I want to go into it because there's something that I think we can learn from this experience. Dave K. first applied for membership following the convention and he hadn't yet been in the youth a period of six months. We have a standing rule in the branch that no people from the youth would be taken into the party until they had served an apprenticeship of at least six months, so the comrades would have a chance to judge them. Now we apply this rigorously to everybody, whether members of minorities or the majority and we applied it to Dave K. That's the explanation of the first 6 months' postponement of his entry into the party.

The second 3 month postponement came as a result of this: Prior to the convention -- when the minority followed a tactic of trying to mix in organizational differences with the political differences in order to gain more sympathy for their point of view -- the party, I think correctly, found it necessary to lean over backwards. We leaned over backwards and we admitted another young applicant into the party, just before the deadline. In fact, in one case we even squeezed the deadline a little bit, because we didn't want to make it appear that these comrades, who happened to be minority supporters, were going to be excluded from the party because they had differences with the majority; or that we would be afraid that it would strengthen the minority at the

convention, giving them another delegate or two. So we leaned over backwards.

Now what does this symbolize? It symbolizes a whole period in which the party has recognized that it deals with human beings who functioned under adverse political conditions. We had to permit comrades to remain members of the party, even though they didn't attend meetings, even though these comrades took no assignments. And maybe in some cases we went overboard. But you can't do everything exactly right and the general approach of the thing was correct. Now we're entering a new period, and in this period we're trying to make a change. I just want to lay this basis to defend the New York branch from some of the assertions and implications that there's something wrong with the New York branch.

We're trying to make the turn. We made the turn to some extent; maybe a little slower than some of the other branches; maybe we're a little faster than some of the others. The fact that we got a thousand subs in this campaign I think is one of the indications that in some respects we're faster than some. In other respects we're not as fast as some other branches. It's going to be a lot harder for New York to be as fast. We've got a little different situation in New York than you have in other branches. We've got old time comrades that I wouldn't expect to come to branch meetings and I wouldn't be for dropping them from the rolls. Now it's very hard then to insist that everybody adhere to some abstract norm that doesn't really exist in our branch because it's not applied in every case. It's going to be harder here because this is the center and the New York branch has a lot of responsibilities aside from the normal responsibilities of a branch. We have the responsibility of providing comrades to help the center function.

We try to deal flexibly with a living situation, but some comrades say we were too flexible at the branch meeting last night. We permitted the kind of discussion on a procedural motion that should not have been allowed. But you see, it's the habit we've been in of bending over backwards. We don't want the comrades to feel that we're trying to deny them their democratic rights and we make errors in that way. Now we've got to make the change.

Myra made a point about measures the party offered the Schachtmanites to try to head off their split. I wasn't around at the time, but I don't think the purpose was to prevent the split. Probably the real purpose was to undercut the effectiveness of the split; to win away a few of the people who were supporting the Schachtmanites; to show that the party was willing to lean over backwards, so that they could not say that

it is headed in the direction of Stalinism. Whenever we lean over backwards, there are some comrades who don't understand why this is done, or they even take it as the norm in the party, as Myra attempts to maintain. It is not a norm and we've got to stop now.

At the branch meeting last night there were a number of instances where we could have cut through the minority disruption, but what held us back, or me personally back, was excessive caution in assuring the democratic rights of the membership. But formal rights are claimed that have no justification and actually cut across the essence of democracy. So there was a motion, for example, to challenge the decision of the chair during the educational. Imagine, during the educational challenging the decision of the chair! It was while the comrade who gave the educational was making the summary, that the minority started interrupting and challenged the decision of the chair. We made an error in even considering a challenge of the decision of the chair under these circumstances. Because if you allow them to get away with that they become all the more demanding and disruptive. Nobody would be able to conduct any business if you permitted people to utilize such claims of democratic rights in order to prevent a branch majority from carrying out its necessary functions.

(Apparently someone asked a question from the floor at this point.) Yes, let me go into this. The first time that young Robertsonite came around he was sitting in the back of the hall, he was invited to a branch meeting because we had a policy, at that time, of inviting youth to pre-convention discussions. After the meeting I talked to him. He started off by pointing to an article in the Militant and our discussion concluded with him calling the Militant a counter-revolutionary newspaper. When he applied for membership we put him off for three months and said, we're going to give you a three-month test. We want to see how you respond. I invited him over to the house for dinner, I wanted to talk to him. First of all he maintains that he's not really a supporter of the minority, that he agrees with them on some questions but on other questions he doesn't. He points out that at the last meeting of the youth -- the only time that I know of -- he voted against a motion that the minority voted for. That didn't strike me too well because he was trying to con me, that's what he was trying to do and I felt it; especially when he began to argue that a minority can't ever become a majority if they can't recruit from the outside. He said you people are fixed in your ideas, there's no possibility of winning you people over. He says the only way a minority can ever become a majority is by going outside the party, he says that's justified. I tried to explain the party's principles to him and he didn't quite get it.