

INTERNAL INFORMATION BULLETIN

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ROBERTSON-MAGE-WHITE-HARPER-IRELAND CASE

Part V

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Editors Note

This is the fifth and final number in a series of Internal Information Bulletins containing copies of material submitted to the December 1963 plenum on the internal party situation and a report of the plenum deliberations on the subject. It contains the concluding portion of the discussion from the plenum floor, summaries by the reporters and the plenum vote on motions related to the internal party situation.

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

Continuation of Plenum Discussion on Internal Party Situation

A. Chester: Comrades, I would like to make just one or two points about the questioning by the Control Commission of the members of the Robertson-Mage-White grouping. You know we have been taught all our lives in the Socialist Workers Party that a document is not produced lightly. Any document that is produced in the process of a fight is something that is produced with seriousness. You don't just write something just for the sake of talking. And every question that was asked of the minority members was based on the documents that we had received, that they had given to us at our request.

On one of the questions put to Robertson concerning hostility to the party, he says: Yes, of course, very deep hostility, I make no bones about it, I'm in extreme opposition to the SWP. This from the leader of a minority within the party who claims he wants to be loyal.

Every single member of the minority that was seen by the Control Commission was asked if they reject or support the line of the Robertson-Ireland document. Every one, without exception, says: Why of course we support it, we are part of the tendency and we support this document. I asked the question: You didn't vote on it, you said you didn't vote on it, how can you support a document that you didn't vote on? On what basis do you support it? How do you know that everybody in your tendency supports it if you don't vote on it? The answer was: It wasn't necessary to vote on it; this document was written in reply to Wohlforth's proposed statement on orientation within the tendency; and when the Wohlforth group split from us we no longer had to vote on it, because all of us who supported it remained in the tendency.

Mage said: No, we don't vote on this document but we recruit to the document, to the line of the document. Mage said that to the Control Commission.

Now what other conclusion could the Control Commission come to except that this document was their basic ~~document~~, on the basis of which they carried out all their activities; that it expressed hostility and disloyalty to the Socialist Workers Party? The Control Commission could take no other action than to point that out to the Political Committee...

(A break in the tape occurs at this point.)

Feingold: ...was an error to pose the issue at one point as she did, Dobbs vs. Myra. That is not the issue here today. The issue is the Robertson group, and the broader issue, the

nature, concept of the party. Just a point on freedom and democracy, you can't have a free discussion in this party anymore with these minorities around. If the Robertson group was here there are many things I wouldn't talk about in front of them because it would get outside the party quickly. I'll take all the comrades here at face value when we speak today. And on this issue I agree with the PC, the majority, the report made by Dobbs. I disagree with you, Myra, and I want to tell you why.

I am convinced that all the rights of the Robertson minority have been safeguarded not only in letter but in spirit. That they've been tried and are being tried before the entire party. We are their accusers and they have to answer to us. Now in hindsight, and I say hindsight because that's always a lot easier than foresight, I can see things that I think we should have done. But I don't think that they're substantive as far as preserving the rights of the minority goes, and just as important, preserving the rights of the majority, which is what we do when we defend minority rights. For example, I think now that it would have been a better procedure to have delegated someone in the Bay Area to interview White. It would have been a better procedure. But White's letter and his response makes it very clear where he stands. That's about as phony a letter as I have ever seen and if I had any question, that letter certainly dispelled it. He argues all around the point but he doesn't say that he disagrees with this group, with their ideas -- and its not a loyalty oath. He had every opportunity to say what his point of view is, and he argued all around the point. That was enough to convince me that he is part and parcel of this whole gang. And probably more than anyone else in the Robertson group I respected him and his opinion when he spoke.

If we made any error I think it was on the side of being soft with the minority. Looking back now, I think we should have thrown them out right after the convention, not this convention, the convention previous when they violated immediately after the convention, two and a half years ago, the party decisions on the youth question and other questions. They violated it. It would have been clear to everybody. We had just finished a political discussion, but this group was not carrying out the decisions of the party convention. That was the entire group, the Wohlforthites included.

Now what's central to me is that this group has been given every opportunity in the course of 7 years in the party. I have never seen a party in my experience with any group bend over so far in attempting to integrate this group into the party. Why they could have had anything, written for any organ, practically taken over the magazine, been in the

the national leadership, been in the leadership of virtually any branch they participated in. We went to great extremes to integrate these people over a seven-year period. And in that entire period they failed, they failed to become Trotskyists in their political conceptions or in their organizational views and concepts of the party. And more and more they developed, if you please, alien political views and we debated these political views and we had it out at convention, several conventions before the entire membership. They developed alien and anti-Trotskyist views on key questions, major questions of the day facing the party.

It's wrong in principle for majority people, as I've seen some comrades do; to bloc with members of alien political tendencies, like the Robertsonite, on secondary, on organizational questions; to bloc with them against the majority. We had a political fight with them and whatever alien political view was possible they developed. It's inevitable from their point of view that they were bound to develop in such a way as to make them organizationally incompatible with the party, disloyal, and in violation of the party's norms and procedures. This happened and if you think back it's a seven year history and that's what it was. That's what happened and that's why I support the expulsion of the five that's being proposed today.

Lavan: Comrades, a number of comrades have adequately made the point that the civil liberties arguments of the Robertson comrades and their defenders don't apply because there can be no comparison between the party and its disciplinary regulations and the bourgeois state. Still I'm going to take objection to the use by so many comrades in the correspondence -- and what's been said here -- of catch words, of phrases taken from the witch hunt or opposition to the witch hunt, terms like loyalty oath, guilt by association, and the use of the term stool pigeon against some one who gives or is asked to give evidence to a Control Commission. That's absolutely impermissible to my way of thinking. Start that and it means that any comrade who, no matter what the offense charged, is asked to give evidence to a party body or to the Control Commission, who is asked to tell what he knows or submit whatever documents he has, and who does so -- that comrade is to be called, or is to be charged with being, a stool pigeon. That's absolutely unforgiveable in our movement. If we're a voluntary association of revolutionists we have nothing to hide from the party and in testifying about what happened on some occasion, what was written and so forth, there's no stigma involved in doing so.

Now when the Robertsonites use terms like this I think they're sincere. I think they're sincere because they believe that this is analogous to the bourgeois state, that the party

has become penetrated like the trade unions with representatives once or twice removed from the bourgeois power; and they're fighting as one would fight against the corrupt trade union leadership. You can charge witch hunt, and you can charge anybody who testifies with being a stool pigeon, and you can object to the loyalty oaths and so forth; but unless comrades believe as the Robertsonites do about the party, then to use these terms in this debate is being demagogic, or naive, or it means the people who use them never really understood the nature of this party.

There are roughly two categories of offenses inside the party that come under disciplinary action. There are offenses which bear a personal stigma on the honor of the individual: that is, if someone is charged with being a police spy, or someone's charged with being an informer or having become an informer out of malice or out of weakness; or if someone's charged with stealing funds from the party, or from some working class organization. That's one category of charges. Whenever such charges are preferred by any party body then the utmost guarantees for the person so charged should be observed. That's because the person's personal honor is involved, and it's because a decision by the party that these charges are justified is tantamount to ruling that person or persons out of the working class movement. That is, no other working class party normally would want to take in, or would allow in, a person who had been branded as a thief, police spy, informer and so forth. In any such cases then, there's a good argument for extreme caution, for giving every benefit of every doubt to the defendant. Of course it's impossible to observe all the guarantees of Anglo-American common law and the U.S. constitution, we're not set up that way and those are formal guarantees anyhow. But to observe most of them.

But there's another category of offenses, and these are organizational offenses where organizational measures are taken; that is, they are violations of discipline. Now there are obvious examples where there is no question involved. But when an individual or several individuals violate discipline because he or they cannot subordinate their own view to that of the majority decision -- they may do so because out of egotism they just can't accept the majority position and have to go and present their own view publicly; or because they're so convinced of the correctness of their viewpoint and consider it so immediately vital that it transcends party discipline; that is, it can't wait until the majority of the party has been persuaded to that viewpoint. So they violate discipline, and organizational measures of one kind or another up to expulsion should be taken. There's no question about such a thing.

Another obvious example is where a faction is voted down after a factional struggle in the party and a convention

decision and it decides to split. And for its own reasons it prefers the split to be in the form of an expulsion. So there's a deliberate and usually ostentatious defiance of party discipline simply to provoke that expulsion. By a boycott or a proclamation of their own views and so forth. Well, that's obvious and there's no question about such things. But there are other violations of party discipline which require organizational measures to be taken. How do we handle that? For example, how do we deal with somebody who is sent into the SWP by an opponent organization? Or, if somebody in the party is won over to the viewpoint of another organization and starts working for that organization inside the party to build a group, to carry out some maneuvers. These people act circumspectly; they don't obviously or ostentatiously defy party discipline.

But what about a faction which for its own reasons doesn't want to get out of the party, doesn't want to split, but figures that the pickings are better inside than outside and wants to stay until a later time when it may decide to split. A formation which becomes a year around faction, a permanent faction giving lip service to the program and to the organizational discipline of the party, but actually violating it to the extent that they think they can get away with it. Now how do we deal with such groups? Do nothing about them because there's no ostentatious defiance of party discipline? Must such groups be allowed to enter into relationships with other parties and we can do nothing as long as they're careful? Obviously such a group can violate and poison the party's internal life. They can recruit people to the party who are members only in name, because they come into the party with a different program and with a different set of organizational rules for themselves.

Myra asks, why object to having the Robertsonites recruit young people to their own program and bring them into the party? Don't we have enough confidence in our line that we can win them over? I think our line's good enough to win over a good number of them, but I think that should be done outside the party not inside. It means that the whole party life is disrupted when you have to be continually recruiting to the membership or trying to recruit to the program rather, people who are supposed to be already members. It means guaranteeing a faction fight all the time. It means that work that should be done outside is being done inside and consequently neither is done well or effectively.

Now to ferret out every violation of discipline from a group which is violating discipline, but is doing so circumspectly, would mean having system of surveillance, having a

police system which we don't have, and which we don't want, and which would make an impossible atmosphere inside the party. So in such cases as these latter which I've listed, it seems to me that the decision has to be not on the strict evidential rules which some comrades demanded. All the more so because they involve no stigma. These comrades if they're expelled, are not expelled from the working class movement. They have to set up business for themselves inside the working class movement, that's all. In other words what we have to say to them is that it's time for them to go out into the cold political world and to do their opponents work from the outside rather than inside. We're no longer the host organization.

B. Chester: Comrades, I think if we've learned anything over the years, it's to take things at their reality and not on the basis of only a spoken word or a statement made, no matter how vigorously or strongly. What we've been handed here by the Robertsonites has been a series of legal fictions. The major one being that these documents are the opinions of one individual only. I think that Myra's statement this morning that the document was a preliminary statement or a preliminary thought of one individual is the same type of legal fiction. Because we've had the experience of the last three years anyway with the actions of these groups. They're clear.

I don't want to repeat what the other comrades have said but, my understanding of democratic centralism is that it's a mechanism whereby the opinions of the party are expressed and the party can establish its program and policy after which the party then acts on that policy and that the purpose of democratic centralism is to get the greatest amount of democracy in a decision of that type. But what you have here, especially in the Robertson group is a history of shifting ideas, of shifting policies for the same group. They began with an opposition to the youth leadership on a series of organizational issues and they went over to a group in opposition to the party's line on Cuba. Then they extended it further into support of the SLL and its policy as counterposed to ours. And after that the minority split over the question of how to designate the SWP and what their actions toward it ought to be.

Before their split the pro-SLL minority all supported a document called Toward a Revolutionary Perspective, I think that was at the plenum in June of 1962 wasn't it? All of them signed it, but at the same time they start a discussion not on a programmatic point but on how to characterize the SWP. And that discussion lasted all summer with correspondence and arguments and debate, apparently with Wohlforth adding more documents, with Robertson and Ireland writing this document in

answer to Wohlforth, and ending in a split in October, I believe. A period of 6 months discussion, ending in a split. Now how anybody can construe this development as the thinking of one individual is beyond me. It isn't reality. These people operated in the full organizational apparatus manner for which Robertson is noted. All the letter writing and correspondence we've seen, I'm sure is only a fraction of what went on. And all that we've seen already indicates what their kind of thinking is.

You see the split wasn't the only action. This document proposes even a further one. They've established the SWP and its leadership as revisionist and right centrist. They've declared war on us not for now but for a long period of years. They've established that they want a faction that will continue indefinitely fighting this revisionist current in the country and their whole attitude therefore is one of continued open hostility.

Now, as to the question of democratic centralism, I know they don't follow that. They don't follow it in the party but they follow it in the faction. Because I haven't seen one of their faction's members differ with another one on the floor over the past period and I've been listening for it. The time we found out there was a split between the Wohlforthites and the Robertsonites was when they came up with different lines. Now obviously they follow their own centralism but they don't want to follow that of the party's. And these are the actions that have convinced us over a long period of time what the character of the opposition is. And a final point on that. They speak of loyalty to the party as against our charge of disloyalty, and I find it very interesting when I come down to what they define as the party. Examine their answer to the question of their loyalty to a diseased shell. Read it carefully. They say the party is a program, the program is Trotskyist, that's what they endorse; but the SWP doesn't endorse that program any more; therefore their loyalty is to their program and the party itself is a diseased shell.

Their attitude is further verified in this little appendix Lynn Harper added in her letter attacking Ann and me, accusing us of being long-time supporters of the central party leadership who are incapable of distinguishing between loyalty to this leadership and loyalty to the party. Now I puzzled over that. To me the party came first. Leadership, as far as I know had been expressing the will of the party. She said leadership when she really meant the party; what she meant was the program of Trotskyism as they define it -- that's what they claim we have betrayed. You get the whole picture of their double talk brought out in very careful detail. Their whole concept is a party of permanent factions warring with each

other; that the party leadership is just the majority faction leadership -- that's repeated throughout. And this concept of permanent factions is the first thing we have to attack and attack right now. I think this is what's called for.

Barry: I think it was very good and wise for the discussion not to be centered on the politics of the Robertson group, which we've had enough of, but on the organizational question and around the question of loyalty. For the reasons that Harry and Bob brought up the focus on the organization questions is exceedingly important right now, both for the party and especially for the new younger people that are in the party and are coming around the party. I also think it was a wise decision to concentrate, to focus upon the idea of loyalty rather than this or that specific violation of discipline that the Robertsonites might be guilty of; and among those of us who have had experience with the Robertsonites, we could sit here and reel off a hundred or two hundred specific violations. Because by concentrating on the document and upon the concept of loyalty, which is more fundamental than discipline, we will come out of the plenum with a real education. That will be valuable for the new, young people that are coming into the party.

Robertson is particularly hysterical when it comes to dealing with the youth leadership, and that's probably for two reasons. One is that we haven't always been the most intelligent in dealing with this factional hooligan's provocations. We've allowed him and his faction to make us lose our tempers once in a while in the face of their provocations, and we haven't always dealt with them most intelligently. The reason for their hostility is of course that we've prevented them as much as possible from carrying out their factional line.

Now with the understanding of what I said first, I would like to touch on some of the specific aspects of their work in the youth. When I read the document that they came out with, the document you had to pry from them, I found in every paragraph things I could fill in with concrete forms. I'd say, oh yeah, I know how they carried this particular paragraph out. Take the concept of working where the majority isn't. Well, due to the history of the youth here in New York we unfortunately have been weak on campus. So they went to work at two colleges where they have people. They had classes there, private classes; and they had private parties there which they brought contacts to, tens of them. They had to go through maybe 50 or 70 before they culled out this little group of people who would be willing to join a factional group within a party. That's what they did and they set us back in the city through that and in every way they could. The most recent thing they've done is to set up a socialist club on the campus. We asked them for the mailing list of the club so we could send out notices of our forums and classes, and they

refused to give it to us.

I want to talk about the problem of double recruitment in specific examples. I want to talk about Dave K. who has not been recruited to the party, but who was double recruited into the youth. Double recruited. He was already in their group. When he first said that the party was counter-revolutionary he hadn't been in the youth more than a month. Take another example. Someones' been double recruited right into the youth, then into the party, Comrade E, who gave us a nice display last Thursday night. The day she joined we happened to have a report of a youth plenum dealing with the Negro struggle. No sooner do I get done giving the report when she starts. She gets up and explains to us, in the most vicious terms possible, what's wrong with the entire youth leadership, what's wrong with our whole program. Later on she was allowed to come into the party, which I think was a mistake.

Just one other example, I think I could go on. In this thing around the Cuba trip, when they had a disagreement with us on tactics. We found out from the Progressive Labor people that people in the Robertson minority told them our entire position, word for word. They told it back to us and they told us the names of the people who told them. Now that's what PL people told us. I don't have any substantiation of it, but they were able to repeat back to us our position.

The focus on the organizational question, the focus on the concepts of loyalty, and the proposal for the presiding committee to publish the facts around this case -- coupled with the proposal to re-codify the principles of the party -- will be invaluable. These things will help educate the young people already in the party and the young people coming to the party; they will help the young people in the party explain what the party is to those youth who are coming to it. They will be invaluable to help raise the consciousness of the young people a great deal.

At the minimum, if this plenum didn't take the action which I hope it certainly will take, I can predict that, at the minimum, it would result in a great disorientation among the youth, a great miseducation for them. At the maximum, at every place where youth come into contact with Robertsonites, what would happen would be that the youth would lose respect for the party and wonder why we didn't take action against the Robertsonites. And we would face a real crisis.

Vernon: A lot of the defense of this minority consists of the idea that they're being persecuted for their politics.

This is what the minority said inside the party and certainly what will be said outside the party by the minority itself and by anybody who is just critical -- I mean whether they know what they're talking about or not. That is that the party's afraid of them as a political threat. Now this would be interesting, if true, because I mean it would be something to be seen in judging an organization, no matter how good the charges against the minority on an organizational basis were.

As I see it they were at their peak, that is, taking both minorities together, or either one separately; that is, Wohlforth and Robertson were at their peak in 1961 and 62; when they were running rampant in the youth and had picked up some sizeable following, had relative freedom to apply their line and had some sort of receptive hearing. Apparently they had struck their momentum by 1962, especially by the time of the missile crisis, and started to lose their members right and left, either by simply drifting out or perhaps some being won over. They were cut down to size, way down to a small size, in New York and in the Bay Area in the youth; and on most questions they had been discredited politically. The only conclusion you can draw from their staying in the party, given their whole attitude, has nothing to do with any question of loyalty but simply that they're strategists.

An able leadership would organize themselves towards a split, would recognize when their momentum is at it's height, see that they had done the best they could in this organization and that it's about time to stand up on their own feet, otherwise they'd be wasting time. They would not hang around until they get wittled down still more, and get still further discredited and become a laughingstock and just an embarrassment, both to themselves and to the organization they're in. It's a reflection on them that they represent nothing on any of these points. The only threat they represent to the party is the picture they present of the party for people who come in contact with them and who take them to be representative of the party.

In the case of the Robertson tendency my opinion would be that the people they have in the youth could not be won over at this time. They're certainly not assimilable to the party and the party would do very well without them. To the working class youth, in particular Negro youth, they seem to be somewhat repulsive creeps. For instance, I attended the conference of the youth last September in Chicago. There was one minorityite there, who was brought into the party along with the other dead wood and useless material, who started to use his time to expound something on his sex problems or something like that.

He did so at a time when new Negro contacts were coming in and a large part of the audience, frankly, would have just liked to disappear from the floor at having to be in that position.

The reason why they are in, apparently, is simply that they have no place to go. They've burned their bridges behind them. Nobody on the left wants them, nobody on the right or centrist left or otherwise -- nobody wants them. They're poison, useless, nobody wants them. They're also useless here. It would be a mistake and a bad reflection on the party to not only tolerate disloyalty, but to have them to show around as our comrades, to have them represent the SWP to working class kids or to Negroes.

Another point on the question of oppositionalism inside the party is that they are relatively dormant and spent by this time, these two minorities have lost their steam. I don't know if there are any other minorities who find a favorable opportunity to pick up somebody, or find a favorable recruitment move right now; I don't think so. So at this particular time that sort of oppositional frenzy would be -- even from the point of view of the minority itself -- would be a bad reflection on their command of tactics and strategy. What would be indicated now would be sort of to lay low and wait until they can find something to hop onto that will present them with a better opportunity. In any conceivable way you look at it, even from the narrow point of view of the Robertson tendency itself, they fall flat as really poor and shoddy tendency.

Lovell: Comrades, my remarks are kind of an extension of what Vernon said here. My thesis is that this is all a vast misunderstanding, mostly on the part of this Robertson-Mage group. But also it's partly our fault I think. When we first encountered them we began with an agreement we reached with them. They were already a constituted group as I understand it. It's been reported here that at previous conventions we agreed that we would form a youth group and we wouldn't have any factions in this youth group. We weren't going to push our program too hard, and we understood that they on their part wouldn't do too much in that direction either. We had a theory of working together. And we promulgated that idea. It was during the period of regroupment, which I think was a valid proposition on our part at that time, but times change.

We went through a long period of experience with these people and the trouble was that they didn't change. They were just the same after -- how many years is it now? -- as

when we met them. They're not youth anymore, that's for sure. So after all this period of time, we came to the convention last year and they'd begun to develop, not only some organizational notions which they had originally, which they brought with them from the Schachtmanite swamp and jungle; but they began to develop some political notions and all kinds of ideas, especially on Cuba, which was the big question then and now. That to me, the attitude and position that they took on Cuba, ruled them out as a part of the revolutionary and radical movement in this country. They were completely alien to all of our ideas. They were alien originally to our organizational ideas and principles, and they've developed a political program that is completely hostile to everything we've stood for.

Now I don't think these are serious people at all. Their main interests are not in the party. I don't know what they do outside the party, but I think this is just one or two nights a week maybe for them. I don't know what else they do. They don't have any interest in the party or any serious interest in politics, I'm sure of that. That have not learned from us and I think this is where the misunderstanding comes. They have not yet learned from us that we are not an all-inclusive party. If we had a misunderstanding originally, this ought to by now have been corrected. But it hasn't. The truth of the matter is that they've failed to learn anything about the kind of party we want to build. In fact, our long period of work together appears not to have convinced them of anything, but to have convinced some of our older comrades that we ought to change our concepts to accomodate every free-loader and every political kibbitzer that comes down the pike.

Now if you compare these people with other tendencies that have developed in the party and other tendencies that have joined the party -- you know the party has been built through a whole series of unifications and splits, and in the course of our history we've had defections. You can go through the list, beginning with the Schachtmanites in 1940. They developed a political program hostile to ours, a program which was designed to accomodate them to the war dangers at that time. And they had no hesitancy, the issues were discussed and the party had reached a decision, they had no hesitancy about leaving the party. They left. We didn't expell them, that was a formality.

That was true of Morrow and Goldman after the war. Goldman left, he didn't even play out his string. He left. I remember him in this hall, saying, well comrades it's been a nice experience, we have a difference of opinion, I can't live in the party any longer, he had made that completely clear.

So we have other individuals, not so much groups, although the Morrow-Goldman tendency was hardly more than individuals. But we have individuals like Charlie on the West Coast, who is most

responsible for building the Los Angeles branch, one of the central contributors to the building of this party. He began to develop changed ideas in 1948 about the nature of the party, and he is a thoughtful person, a serious man. When he raised his doubts about the whole Leninist concept of the party, the Los Angeles leadership began to proceed as if they were going to expel him, and they made it very clear. Well, he came to the conclusion in a very short period of time that the Socialist Workers Party, the kind of party that we stood for and that we were building, was not for him because his ideas were different. He left and he joined another party, where he found people who agreed with his ideas, where he could get along mostly easily. He was looking for some place where he could find people who would collaborate with him on his body of ideas.

I think the same is true with Cochran and Clark. They developed ideas different from ours, with no misunderstanding on their part. They knew what the party stood for, and they said we disagree now and they left. We expelled them, but that was nothing more or less than a formality. They were more than happy to leave. They couldn't live in the party and they understood that. There was a certain amount of understanding on the part of all of these different political tendencies that developed within the party and they weren't just ideas. These tendencies that developed, developed as a result of social pressures upon the party which were reflected in the actions of these groups and individuals.

Now we have this present tendency which falls into an entirely different category. They don't understand what kind of party we are and I think it's our fault. We've got to make them understand that as we've made all the others understand it; and that's why I subscribe to the proposals that we are submitted here, because that's about the only way I know of making them understand this proposition. Perhaps it's a little bit overdue. Well, now there's another part. I don't think that we have only to make them understand because they are not very important; they're kind of like fleas, you know, that you've got to get rid of somehow, they just hang on. But the whole party has got to understand this, and we must once more explain it to the whole party.

Now I thought in this respect that Comrade Stevens' remarks were very much to the point. What he said here at this plenum is what must be said in the branches, at the branch meetings. I thought his remarks were good, but they weren't spoken in the right place. I believe that Dave ought to take a night off perhaps, and come to the New York local and explain these things that he explains here at this plenum. Now I'm

not just referring to Dave. I know there are other comrades who can make the same kind of speeches and in their branches is the place to make the speeches, not so much here at this plenum, because as is indicated by the whole discussion the misunderstanding here is well understood by nearly everybody. But I don't think its so well understood in the branches, and one of the reasons it's not understood in the branches is the fact that comrades like Dave don't make their speeches there.

Comrades who are capable of making these kind of speeches have to back them up with something. When you go to the branch you can't just go down one night in the month and make this kind of a good speech. You've got to be there every week and you've got to carry out some assignments. You've got to go out and get subs, become some kind of a public speaker for the party, you've got to represent the party. And that's what this plenum should be doing. That's what we are supposed to be, the representatives of the party in all of its actions, carrying out the work of the party and not sitting back.

I sympathize and subscribe to the general proposition of putting young comrades in the leadership but I certainly don't believe in this notion of just throwing them in there and letting them swim, because they're liable to sink, especially if you've got a bunch of sharks around. They'd be gobbled up by this Robertson outfit. If these comrades had a little bit more experience -- not all the talent in the world but a little bit of experience and some will to do something now -- got out and get a few subs, make a few public speeches, go to the branch meetings, try to help out in the parliamentary procedure and so on -- that's what I'm thinking about.

DeBruce: I find it a little hard to understand the criticism being made about the denial of the rights of a minority within the party. Comrades who live outside of the New York City area don't have the problem we've had here. They can say well there's no real question about it. But after sitting through the discussion, after reading the numerous documents circulated throughout the party, this argument that we are violating the rights of a minority just leaves me cold. Now it just happens to be a fact of life that in the New York local some of these individuals who are shouting the loudest do little for the party. The only time they attend a meeting is when they know some factional issue is coming up, and that's the extent of their participation in the party life and that's pretty much the extent of their contribution to the party. Since the convention most of them have done absolutely nothing partywise.

Then they talk about their rights. I heard this bit about minority rights so much in the past period that I begin to ask, well isn't there such a thing as majority rights in existence? We are a party which has gone through one of the best conventions that I've been in in my time in the party. After a whole period of discussion took place, decisions were made and we came out of that convention with determination to carry out what was decided at that convention. Along with that we've seen indications that we are beginning to grow, and there are new opportunities for us to grow at a much faster rate than we have, as elaborated by Comrade Fred's report yesterday.

Now I find it hard to understand how we are going to go out and attract youth to a party where we would let a bunch of political hotshots make a shambles out of the branch. What I believe has happened here -- and I too am of the opinion that it's long overdue -- what is beginning to take place at this plenum is a demonstration of responsibility by the leaders of this party, to set an example as to what a revolutionary party is. I will say to Bob Himmel, don't worry. The decision made here will serve notice on everybody that we're out to build a party, and anybody who stands in the way is going to get knocked right out on their rear end. I think this is all the New York local has been waiting for; and I believe that, in spite of its complex problems, gains have been made by the New York local, as is demonstrated by its participation in the sub drive. We must begin to make a turn, and in making a turn we've got to tighten up our ranks. We have to demonstrate to the youth what a revolutionary party is, what is demanded of membership and how leaders of the party have got to teach by example. Within that context, I certainly hope that in the summaries -- particularly the one made by Comrade Myra -- a clarification can be made about the accusations that the leadership is bureaucratic and monolithic.

Now here is a group who initiates a so-called study class to discuss party documents before the opening of the pre-convention discussion. We're not talking about new people, we're talking about people who've been in the party for a period of time. Following that, when the comrades were called to order, leading comrades criticised the fact of their being called to order. I think the time has come when leaders have to carry out their responsibility as leaders here. To me the question is what kind of a party are we going to have and so far as I have seen these tendencies in the New York local do very little but disrupt. People talk about lively branch meetings; you know they're relatively small here until somebody in one

of these factions knows that there's an issue coming up where they can attack the leadership. Then they notify everybody and they all come down to do their little deal. This is what they did during the whole pre-convention discussion.

I believe they've had more than their rights. Now the Robertsonites stand in the way of our building a party and therefore they must be removed. I feel that it is a farce to try to claim in any way shape or form that their rights as a minority are being violated. We're demanding only one thing -- loyalty. And it's not something abstract, it's something concrete. That is a willingness to carry out the line of the party. Let political differences wait until the re-opening of pre-convention discussion, but until that time carry out the line of the party just as every other loyal member does. At the same time contribute to the party life by participating in its activities, by contributing to the fund drive. This is party loyalty, and that's not asking too much. That's the minimum that has to be asked or demanded of anybody.

As I say I'm strongly of the opinion -- just as I'm sure other comrades of the New York local feel -- that to demand such conduct is long overdue. But now the leadership at the plenum has set the tone. We're going to carry it out from there.

Barnes: I just have a very brief message I want to bring you from the young comrades of the Midwest. I'm sure it reflects the attitudes of young comrades elsewhere. And that's on the question of loyalty. We feel especially strong on this because to some degree we feel that Robertson belongs to us more than to you. I should try to explain this is an old, old thing, it's not just a little flea which needs flicking. But to us it was our first experience. And the thing we're concerned about is the thing that was raised briefly here but which was not gone into by anyone. That's the question of self-respect -- of you, the cadre of the party, for yourself -- and the attitude of a tendency like the Robertson grouping.

Many, many things about the Robertsonites, and those like them, have been documented today. But one thing that should be emphasized is their attitude toward the cadre of our party as individual human beings. And this is the thing that disturbs us more than anything right now, because the other things have all been decided and will probably be taken care of in about half an hour. You see there's quite a contradiction in our minds to someone who came in saying: We're loyal to the program of Trotskyism, we're loyal to the working class, we're loyal to the revolutionary party and to the American revolution; but every single individual that has built,

maintained and carried this party program during the past period is diseased, rotten, sick.

We don't grovel at the feet of the party leadership -- not the youth now -- do we? That's not our problem, that's not the problem here. The problem of the youth is getting over the idea that the ordained task of the middle class intellectual was to come into the revolutionary party for entry work -- during a period of prosperity, which necessarily meant that everyone over the age of 39 had rotted -- and lay the groundwork for a party inside a party to take over. It's not an exaggeration, ask Sherry. That was the central guiding concept for our youth for a period of time as set by Robertson.

We've got different ideas today. Very, very different. We don't find that the history of the youth, important as that may be, is required reading. We bureaucratically, in Chicago, require classes on the '40 split and American City. That's one of the required things. We don't think that it's cute to go around on a tour like Comrade Robertson -- and I can give you a hundred examples of this. He went to Minnesota and to Indiana, sat down with not only non-party people, but non-youth people and began the conversation by telling us that Hansen is a Stalinist in the Trotskyist movement and by giving a long dissertation on the Dobbs regime. He said that in Indiana -- it was very needed down there, wasn't it?

That's not our idea, and we think that this type of attitude is the one type of attitude that can destroy our ability to make the American revolution. If we were to entertain within our movement that concept and let it grow, help it along, fertilize it, co-exist with it, IBM with it, or whatever you do with it -- that the main object of the young people is to drive out the leadership or win away from it the cadre of the movement -- we're done.

We've already begun eliminating that concept. Some areas of the country are extremely clean right now. The other areas will be in a very short period of time. There's only one thing that goes along with this, and that's merely to second what Comrade Frank said: All the living links have got to show plenty of life and help us out, and we can take care of the fleas with no problems.

Kerry: Comrade chairman and comrades, I was rather bemused by Robertson's analogy between his treatment in the capitalist court and his treatment in the Socialist Workers Party. Now I don't know much about bourgeois law. What I've learned I get mostly from watching Perry Mason occasionally. But I did

learn this much: that when the accused sign a confession it is hardly necessary to start looking for the fingerprints, ballistics tests, etc. To carry the analogy further, that's what we have. We have a confession signed by the leaders of the Robertson group which encompasses not ideas, thoughts or opinions, but a line, a line of action in the form of a directive to their supporters in which they blatantly proclaim their disloyalty to the Socialist Workers Party. Now this doesn't seem to satisfy our critics; they keep demanding a corpus delicti. The rub is that we don't relish casting the Socialist Workers Party in the role of corpus delicti. We not only have the right, but the duty, to defend the party against attacks by this self-confessed disloyal minority.

I was very much impressed with Dave's speech. I thought it was a good analysis. However I don't agree with Dave even though I think that were it possible to carry out the kind of procedure he outlined it would have been preferable. We were confronted with a very practical problem. We had just gone through a convention in which unfortunately, the organization question was squeezed off of the convention agenda. To re-open the discussion in the party under these circumstances would be self-defeating. It could only encourage all of the tendencies to conclude that the convention had solved nothing and the discussion was continuing. We were very emphatic that once the convention made its decisions the discussion was over. And so, while I say that it might have been preferable to have carried on the sort of "educational" discussion Dave suggests, it would have been done at too high a price to the party.

Myra often amazes me. I listened very attentively to her speech here this afternoon and several similar speeches in the Political Committee. And then I ask myself, is it possible that we have both been in the same Party for these past thirty years? I listen to her exposition of the theory, the politics, the organizational principles and practices of the Party as she expounds them. I can only conclude that this is not the Party that I have been in! She contends that never has there been anyone expelled from this party for disloyalty. She declares she has never heard of such a thing! A warning for violations of discipline, yes...and then she defines violations of discipline very concretely, as advocacy in public of an opposing point of view -- outside of that anybody can say or do anything they please in the Party.

Now if my memory serves me, it seems that in 1953 I had the impression that the Cochranites were expelled from the Socialist Workers Party for disloyalty. And comrade Myra Tanner Weiss voted for the expulsion. They were expelled for disloyalty because they boycotted an anniversary meeting.

And we didn't only expel the leaders, we expelled the whole Cochranite faction. It was only in New York that they boycotted the meeting but we expelled them in San Francisco, in Los Angeles, in Chicago and throughout the entire country. For being disloyal.

You want a concrete case? Very well! Last Saturday and Sunday the youth held an East Coast conference here in this hall. The Robertsonites boycotted the youth conference. That is, they held an organized caucus meeting in New York while the youth was holding its Eastern Regional Conference here. Is there really a fundamental distinction between that action and that of the Cochranites? If my memory serves me again, I seem to recall that Myra at that time was critical of the leadership because we didn't move fast enough and soon enough against the Cochranites. It seems that comrade Myra has a very selective memory. Another question. The question of double recruiting.

Some of our critics have written -- I think White makes this a big point in his document, -- how can you avoid double recruiting if you belong to a group that has differences with the party? Isn't it natural to want to recruit individuals to your point of view? Yes, that's a natural tendency. But double recruiting in this instance meant, as the comrades have amply testified, recruiting individuals to an anti-Party, wrecking caucus, before they brought them into the party. You don't get the distinction? It's one thing to recruit new people coming into the party to your point of view if you proceed from the premise that the Socialist Workers Party is your party; that this is the party you propose to build; that this is the party that will provide the nucleus for the mass organization that will lead the American revolution. But when you begin with the concept that this party is an obstacle in the development of the American revolution and recruit people on that basis, you're recruiting agents to engage in a wrecking operation against the party. That kind of double recruiting cannot and will not be tolerated.

You know, I think that comrade Myra and the others who sent in their protests, unwittingly perhaps, served to embolden the Robertsonites to brazen it out. Healy did his bit with his numerous warnings, ⁱⁿ the pre-convention period, stating that if you dare take action against the pro-Healy minorities we are going to hear from him. It was a disservice, because it created the illusion in the minds of these comrades that the party could be intimidated; that the party could be frightened off from taking whatever action we feel necessary to defend the party. That's one of the reasons, I think, that Robertson and Company come in here with a demand, not with an appeal from the decision for a suspension. Did you listen to

Robertson here today? The same warning that this is not going to be the end of it, that the international movement is going to be brought to bear upon us, plus his supporters in the Socialist Workers Party. Robertson is making a very bad mistake.

The suspension of the leaders of the Robertson faction was in the nature of a test, whether they knew it or not or whether the comrades who defend them knew it or not. The suspension of the leaders of the Robertson faction was a test of what their reaction would be. We waited to see. Would they abandon and disavow their obvious party wrecking concepts and course of action? Would they try to find their way back to the party? No. Comrades have pointed out that not a single one of them have done that. The expulsion of the leaders of the Robertson group is going to be another test for those people in the ranks who support them, whether they know it or not, because the party is going to be watching them. And if I gauge the temper of the plenum and party ranks correctly, we're not going to tolerate wreckers in the party.

One final point. You know we're sort of between Scylla and Charybdis on the question of transforming the party into a Leninist combat party. Some of us are growing old, getting conservative and soft it is claimed, and so we are inclined to proceed a little slowly. To begin with we propose to set up a commission to submit a document, a codification of the laws, the organizational principles of this party, the rights and duties of party members. But it's not going to stop there, we propose to enforce those provisions. We haven't done so in the recent past; the comrades are perfectly correct in making their criticism on this score.

Such criticism is voiced largely by the youth. The youth resent the fact that they're being called upon to carry a double burden, and don't think they're not expressing this resentment. You know I carefully edited out numerous such expression from articles submitted to the last issue of the Party Campaigner. I didn't think they wanted to stir up any kind of storm on this question. But resent it they did, especially during the recent subscription campaign, for almost the entire burden of the campaign to be loaded on their shoulders; the same comrades are called upon to assume the major burden in carrying out the activity of both youth and party tasks. That's too much to ask. These comrades are young, they're energetic, they're devoted, they're self-sacrificing, but the danger is that of sowing the seeds of demoralization among this precious cadre of young revolutionists who are now coming to the party.

We have been informed, by more than one person, and Comrade Myra repeats it here, that for Lenin to build the kind of party that he did in Russia was correct because of the circumstances of Czarist illegality. That in the United States, however, we can permit the ultimate in party democracy including the pandering to and toleration of the kind of factionalists like the Robertsonites. And thereby, to demonstrate to the radical public that the SWP is the most democratic of democratic organizations. Nothing could be more false. Our task is to build a party in this country under conditions of the most powerful capitalist, imperialist power that this world has ever seen, with all the tremendous pressures to which the party is being subjected by this imperialist ruling class. We can succeed only if we follow the Leninist path. That is, we've got to create granite-hard revolutionaries, loyal and devoted to this party, because this party is their life and their hope for the socialist future. And we've got to begin now!

If ever I've heard the formula for an all-inclusive swamp, it's the one that Myra presents. That is for even those questions that have been decided by convention, if they are raised in a new form, how wonderful it would be to liven up what would otherwise be a dull branch meeting. The section of the agenda dealing with party activity is the dull part, don't you see. The lively part is when everyone squares away to have a go at each other on questions which presumably are raised in new forms, but are really intended as a device to justify continuation of the same discussion on the same questions which the convention has decided. No. That's not democratic centralism. It's a caricature of party democracy.

Summary on Internal Party Situation

by Myra Tanner Weiss

A great many of you went through the document presented by -- that we caught Comrade Robertson with -- and quoting from it, expressed your outrage and indignation. And I understand that outrage and indignation full well. But when you have a political position, if you're going to deal with that of your opponents, in this political controversy, it is necessary to put yourself outside of the dispute at least for a moment to get perspective. It is necessary to remember that Robertson is something of a wild character, there is no gain-saying that -- although I think Comrade Wohlforth outdoes him in this -- that they are young, even if they are old youth, they are not as old as Comrade Dobbs or myself, and certainly have had much less experience, having been in our movement only six years. Now, I wouldn't hold them to account for everything they said and especially I wouldn't hold them to account for what they say when they are trying to work out a strategy and a line in a pre-convention period.

Now Mage has written to us. In the course of his document he says that the Control Commission knew perfectly well that the documents signed by Robertson, Ireland and Harper were personal discussion contributions and had never been adopted in whole or in part by the Robertson-Mage-White minority. Is this true or is it not? Now Ann comes here today to tell us it is a lie. The only reason they didn't vote for it was because they didn't have to and that they're all in agreement with it. Now I asked the Political Committee to have the Control Commission present before we suspended them so I could ask precisely this kind of question, and the Political Committee majority wasn't even democratic enough -- not to give a trial to the minority -- but to have the Control Commission present that was supposed to investigate the facts, so I could assure myself, if no one else cared, exactly what this document was.

Now I regard that as a disassociation with the Robertson document. I regard that as a rejection of it. I don't require that Mage beat his chest and say that Robertson's a stinker and an irresponsible hoodlum or anything else. All he needs to say for my satisfaction here is that they were part of a personal discussion, never adopted in whole or in part. In other words, Mage's association with at least these ideas, according to Mage, is his own association with Robertson in a group, in a tendency, and they are not a disciplined hard tendency. They're not that experienced, they don't know how to build a tendency as we have built tendencies in the SP, and in other circumstances were we were engaged in a fight not only for our programatic position, but for power in the party.

Now White also -- what was his attitude towards this document? He said, he called them a series of admittedly somewhat overblown statements and various conjectures as to possible future development -- but you can check that yourself. Comrade Ireland, whose identity I didn't know until today, had this to say: The question is not whether or not these views were adopted by the tendency, which they were not, but whether or not I had the right to dissenting views without the sanction of the leadership faction. Now this constitutes to me, for me, three refutations of agreement and support for the documents which all of you or many of you were basing yourselves on when you justified the suspensions.

In building a party, any kind of organization, there are two problems not one: There's the recruiting and educating of an intelligent, active, cadre to the party; there is also the problem of leadership. How to do this? Now in my opinion there has been evidence enough in this discussion that many mistakes have been made, and many of you believe so, even though you don't draw the conclusions I draw from them. You can have a split, a faction struggle, as we have many times, and come out with a fully agreed, unanimous majority. I believe we had that in the fight with Shachtman in 1940. I believe we had that in the fight with Pablo to cite the latest example.

There was no one in the majority caucus who felt that we had erred in the course of resolving that struggle. Comrade Kerry was right. I voted for the expulsion of the Cockranites. But I did so believing that they had violated Party discipline in boycotting, not just any meeting -- failing to show up for that other tendency meeting -- but a very, very important anniversary of the organization in which we had put years of work. It wasn't difficult to expel them either, because as Frank pointed out they wanted to leave, and so did the Schachtmanites want to leave; and when they want to leave that is usually because they feel they have exhausted the possibilities of political recruitment or for clarification of their position and they must go out alone. And when the majority is united in expelling a group it is because they're satisfied that this group no longer wants to remain in the organization and will no longer abide by its discipline as demonstrated by its procedure.

Now we have a case however, of a group that apparently doesn't want to leave and I think it's correct to say that they probably regard it as a happy hunting ground. My objection is not that we should not fight them -- with an eye to resolving this trouble once and for all which will lead undoubtedly to expulsions -- but how we do it.

Comrade Dee, you say they are not worth saving. I don't know if they are or not, as a group certainly not, but as individuals they might be. But I am not concerned with saving them. I am concerned with saving the Party. I agree with you who have complained that they have violated discipline, that there has been too much laxity and all of that. I am willing that we should discuss the question of changing the set-up, as we have in the youth movement where they were brought -- despite the fact that they were not members of the Party -- into our political disputes. I'm in favor of discussing these questions and changing our tactics and tightening up, yes, I believe we must. But I believe we must do it in a political fashion as Comrade Dave has said and others after him. And above all, in a legal fashion. I do not believe in scrapping the constitution. And if anyone is going to compose documents to describe in more detail how we function, I am absolutely certain the commission we set up will include safeguards for any member of the organization who wants to remain in it to be able to do so.

Now there have been occasions in the past where we could have said, look comrades, we charge you with disloyalty for doing such and such -- according to some of the incidents that Comrade Asher described, although they apparently all have left already -- to say, you broke discipline and so forth. You call them in before the Control Commission and you take an action. You warn the Comrades that we do not look kindly upon their concept of dual recruiting and we ask them to desist if we are convinced that they have done it. Good. And if they do not desist, we expel them. You warn them on a number of other occasions, or we could have in the past, or we can in the future, and establish beyond a reasonable doubt that they not only -- they may say they want to be in the Party and abide by its discipline, but they cannot do so because their hostility to us is too great.

Now if you look at the situation as it actually is and get out of this mood of hysteria -- patting yourselves on the back how militant you are and how ready you are to destroy this little insignificant group -- and look at the situation as it really is, you will see that it's going to do the Party more harm than it can ever, than the good it could possibly ever do us. It is not only that all the minorities are in opposition -- and I see nothing surprising about that -- if anybody is in a minority position they better be careful and cautious on questions of democratic procedure. And we have to say that these comrades are agreed and that includes the Seattle branch, New Haven, sections of San Francisco comrades -- apparently all of them have criticisms of the way we proceeded, excellent comrades who we have recruited during the course of the regroupment period -- but all of that is just the beginning.

You'll have to face it in the youth movement, as you try to recruit people to the youth movement in competition with them, as you have to ~~with~~ YPSLers and others; and we will have to answer this charge that we expelled them for their point of view, just as you do, and this is going to prove a burden that in my opinion is much too much to pay for the hasty and unwise and bureaucratic expulsion of these people for their ideas. The problem is not over. Let me point out that there are ways in which we can act without violating the constitution and without creating for ourselves a problem that will take many years to overcome.

We could proceed by proposing to these comrades after their suspensions -- tell them how we expect them to function in the future and make these the conditions of lifting the suspensions. If they agree to these proposals, proceed and then see what is going to happen from there. And I think ~~then~~ no one in our Party and in the majority, or even the minority tendencies in opposition to us over one question or another, would find any basis for complaint.

Summary on Internal Party Situation

by Farrell Dobbs

Comrades:

In the discussion from the floor a few references were made to the procedural aspects of the disciplinary action against the Robertsonite faction leaders. Comrade Harris indicated that, as they saw the matter in the Bay Area, there were two different processes involved. One was the expulsion of Robertson, which if I heard him right, he testified they unanimously agreed was long overdue. The other was the immediate preparation of the Party for the suspensions. They felt there should have been more advance information. They didn't see any reason why a hearing couldn't have been arranged for White, or any reason why there couldn't have been written charges. They expressed a feeling that the Control Commission report was inadequate in its explanatory aspects. In these respects they thought there was too much haste in the action of the Political Committee. Comrade Stevens, in his remarks on this point, advanced the thought that we should have published the documents in the bulletin and should have held a discussion within the Party about this disloyal faction before we took action.

I think it's fair to say that these observations reflect only some differences of opinion about the mechanics of the disciplinary procedure. I sense nothing in these remarks that indicates any substantive difference about the necessity and propriety of the action that has been taken. And as I indicated in my report, I believe the proposal to supply full information to the Party membership as a whole immediately following the Plenum will go a long way in clearing up any misunderstandings. More than that, I think it will contribute something to the education of the comrades on the problems involved, particularly when they receive the analysis and motivation of the disciplinary action as it has been so richly discussed here at this Plenum. I also believe there will be a profound value for the cadre in the work projected for the special commission to codify in a single document the organizational principles of the Party as they've been established across the years.

Now, from another point of view in this same general connection, Comrade Himmel observed that the threat to the party is a two-sided one. That we have on the one side, the problem of a disruptive and disloyal minority, and on the other the problem of a certain inability on the part of the majority to cope with the situation. That we have to be firm against the disrupters, but we must also be firm in

enforcing generally responsible conduct in the Party. A number of the comrades touched on that question in the discussion. There is much to be said on the subject, but at the present I will simply indicate that before we can enforce responsibility generally on the part of individual comrades in the Party, we've got to enforce responsibility and discipline and loyalty on the part of any organized group within the Party. At this Plenum we can take a long step in the direction of accomplishing both these objectives: enforcement of responsible, disciplined, loyal conduct within the Party; and stimulation of an atmosphere of responsiveness, a feeling of Party patriotism, the restoration of some good old-fashioned socialist competition within our ranks to see who can be the best Party builders.

Concerning the question of our acting with too great haste, let me remind you that this is the first disciplinary action taken by the Party in the ten years since we tossed out the Cochranite faction in 1953. And really, this action was not taken precipitously. The provocation has been long present. It began quite some time back within the youth, and it has steadily gone from bad to worse. Yet we have come clear to this point before taking disciplinary action, and even then it has not been done lightly.

We act against the Robertsonite leaders for disloyalty to the Party. Myra objects. She stated to the Plenum today that loyalty is an idea, that you suspend or expel people for indiscipline, not for disloyalty, and that we never took action of a disciplinary character on the issue of loyalty. Well, my memory is the same as Comrade Kerry's; he pointed out that it was precisely on the issue of loyalty to the Party that we expelled the Cochranites in 1953. It is also my memory that Comrade Myra voted for that action and was one among a number of comrades who felt then that we were being too slow in taking the action. I'd like to call attention to yet another aspect of the 1953 action for which Comrade Myra voted. There was no Control Commission hearing whatever, there was no presentation of written charges and there was no trial. The Cochranites committed a disloyal act by their boycott of the 25th anniversary celebration of the Party shortly before the November 1953 Plenum. The fact came before the Plenum and they were tossed out right then and there. Yet Myra says we're now carrying out an absolutely unprecedented action that tears down everything she felt to be the norms and forms of the Party.

Myra quoted from the 1953 resolution on Party Organization, the resolution that's in your folders, citing the part about the need to have people who think for themselves, I

forget the exact phraseology. Well, it's been my observation and experience that by and large the members of this Party are as independent as a hog on ice. Nobody leads them around by the nose, because if they weren't independent-minded people, they couldn't stand the gaff in a witch-hunted revolutionary Party like ours, isolated from the mass movement within the main fortress of imperialism. If the comrades didn't think for themselves you wouldn't have a party. The very fact that we've defied all the laws of average in revolutionary history by holding the cadre together across this long period under adverse conditions testifies to the fundamentally critical, self-reliant attitude of the cadre. I say that it is a false attribution, to put it charitably, to infer that this cadre is anything else, or that the leadership, even if it tried, could get away with making the cadre anything other than a critical-minded body of men and women who think for themselves. That's why they're revolutionists within this hateful capitalist society in which we live.

The 1953 resolution also says something else. It says the Party can tolerate no divided loyalties. So don't tell us the Party has never made loyalty a criteria as to whether or not you can be a member of this organization. It's right in the Resolution and that same Resolution also stipulates that the appropriate bodies within the Party shall be empowered to take action to enforce loyalty and discipline. It is part and parcel with Article VI of the Constitution concerning Control Commission procedures and action by the Political Committee or the National Committee on Control Commission reports. That just happens to be Party law -- it's in the books.

Myra, in the concluding portion of her presentation, challenged the report I gave you about the split of the previous Robertson-Mage-White-Wohlforth-Phillips faction. As against the liar Dobbs, she cited information obtained from that sterling model of revolutionary veracity, Shane Mage. Now, as I listened to her description of what happened in the minority split, the connivances with Healy and the differences of opinion over that, I got the impression that it was further testimony of their disloyal conduct in this party. It's disloyal to connive behind the back of the Party with Healy or anybody else. I believe this cadre has more than had it's fill of self-proclaimed world leaders who purport to set themselves up as the be-all and end-all of revolutionary wisdom, undertake to make rulings as to who is a centrist and who's a revolutionist, and then fish around for stooges to connive with them behind our backs. I think it's been made crystal clear that in this Party we won't stand for that. If the former Robertson-Mage-White-Wohlforth-Phillips combine had a difference of opinion about relations with Healy; if as Myra

seemed to be saying, they split in their common fight against the bureaucrat Dobbs because Robertsen-Mage-White wouldn't capitulate to the bureaucrat Healy -- then why didn't they let the Party know about their discussion with Healy and their differences of opinion? Myra, why didn't you inform the party as soon as you knew about this? I believe it would have been the correct thing to do.

Implicit in the main criticisms of the suspensions is a demand that we go by the rules of an all-inclusive party. Some comrades told me during an intermission that there's been an argument advanced in some branches that we want to have things both ways. We're denying within our Party, it is argued, a right we demanded from the Socialist Party when we entered it during the Thirties. Well, you know there's a small difference. The Socialist Party openly proclaimed itself as an all-inclusive party. All our cadre demanded of Norman Thomas' party was that they live up to their avowed principles as an all-inclusive party. But they didn't do so. They weren't quite that all-inclusive. They weren't all-inclusive enough to include a revolutionary cadre, and they threw us out in violation of their avowed principles. Our party, on the other hand, repudiates the all-inclusive concept and openly proclaims itself a democratic-centralist organization. It is, therefore, false to seek an equation between the present case and our earlier demands upon the SP. The aim can only be to overturn our Leninist principles and reduce us to an all-inclusive federation of autonomous factions, and we're not going to go for it.

Is the action asked of the plenum unique? In a sense, yes. It is unique only concerning its form, not its content. In previous cases of disloyal factions out to organize a split, they generally tried to conceal their split perspectives, and the problem was to demonstrate through their actions that they were trying to deceive the Party, that they were organizing a split in the name of unity. In this case, we're confronted right from the outset with an arrogant declaration of war against the Party. As has been pointed out by several comrades in the discussion, the need to maintain the kind of anti-Party attitude they have whipped up in their faction is so important to holding the faction together that the Robertsonite leadership couldn't refrain from putting down in writing their split perspective.

In this circumstance, what about actions? Well, in the discussion today plenty of actions have been cited. But in the last analysis, the question of the actions is beside the point. Do we have to let one concrete fact after another amass, to demonstrate to the hilt that these people who have declared war on the Party really mean it, before we can take defensive action for the Party? Not at all, not at all. Not

a single one of the suspended faction leaders has disavowed those hostile documents declaring war on the Party and on the basis of which the suspension action was taken. Not a single one of them has affirmed his loyalty to the Party. Instead they've reaffirmed, with the usual double-talk, their hostility to the Party. Ever since the suspensions, they've been carrying on as usual in their war against the Party. They're out to disrupt and split this Party. It would be a crime against the Party to let them get away with their disloyal wrecking operation until they decide the time has come to make their split. We don't have to await formal proof of their hostile deeds, or the accumulation of overwhelming evidence of their disloyalty. The Party has the right and the leadership had the duty to take disciplinary action against the splitters.

In conclusion I want to sum up just briefly some of the main points I sought to make in my presentation. As a voluntary organization, the Party has the right to define the conditions for membership in terms of its program and of its organizational principles which serve the program. We can't allow people to advocate anything they please. We can't allow them to conduct a wrecking operation behind the back of the Party. We can't allow the Party to degenerate into a loose federation of autonomous and undisciplined factions. We must preserve the Party's integrity as a Leninist-type organization.

The Party has the right by majority decision to control its public activity and to regulate its internal life. A disloyal faction can't be allowed to conduct a war against the Party, acting in the name of so-called minority rights. As a disciplined organization, the Party must regulate the conduct of organized groups, just as it regulates the conduct of individual members. Official Party bodies must enforce correct procedure in keeping with the Party's principles and statutes.

Myra said in her summary that, when the special commission we propose codifies our principles in a single document, she's confident some provisions will be made to assure anyone who wants to stay in the Party can do so. It's already there. No one is asked to surrender dissident views. There is no impairment of legitimate rights of minorities in the Party, no demand of loyalty to individual leaders -- just be loyal to the Party. Abide by its program and live up to its organizational principles. Be responsible, be disciplined, be loyal and anybody can live in this Party. That's already in the principles and it will simply be reaffirmed in the document to be prepared by the commission.

In the present case however, we're dealing with disloyal people who've characterized the Party as right-centrist, who are conducting a factional raid on the Party, and their protest against the suspensions is completely hypocritical. They simply want to remain in the Party for a while yet to continue their internal disruption in an effort to inflict maximum damage on the Party before they make their open split. And if I correctly read the sentiment of this Plenum, these disloyal faction leaders are not going to get away with it. They're going to be expelled right here and now.

* * *

Plenum Vote on Internal Party Situation

Vote on motion by Presiding Committee:

(For text see Internal Information Bulletin, January 1964 - II; Part II, Item 1.)

Regular NC Members: For 22
Against 1

Consultative vote of NC alternate and advisory members and National Office department heads:

For 17
Against 0

Motion Carried.

Vote on motion by Myra:

(For text see Internal Information Bulletin, January 1964 - I; Part I, Item 8.)

Regular NC members: For 1
Against 22

Consultative vote of NC alternates and advisory members and National Office department heads:

For 0
Against 17

Motion Lost.