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THREE FLAWS IN THE PARTY LEADERSHIP'S POLICY ON ECOLOGY

by Jan Garrett, Twin Cities Branch

The SWP was ahead of most radical groups in recognizing the existence of the environmental crisis. It has, with fair consistency given the fact that it is hard to make any immediate gains on the issue, integrated it into our election campaigns, press, etc.

But there are three areas related to the environment issue where the party leadership has not only failed to lead, but has failed to admit the existence of problems. It has clung to traditional formulae where new facts, real steps forward in the scientific understanding of humanity's links with nature, necessitate a serious reconsideration. The party's attitude on these questions has been almost purely sloganistic, agitational. The slogans have often been correct, but the analysis that gives them content has not been forthcoming, at least not adequately.

This article will try to deal with these areas briefly.

1. *Population and Economic Growth*

While correctly arguing that capitalism, not population, is the real cause of the declining standard of living, the party leadership covers over the point made by Marx that each mode of production has its own law of population growth; therefore, just because capitalism is the ultimate cause, population as an immediate cause is not automatically ruled out.

I agree, of course, that population is not a major factor among immediate causes. Even if it could be, there is no reason to get panicky. Birth rates at least in industrial countries are declining and women, with more control over their bodies than they have had in a long time (perhaps in all time), have the intelligence to prevent a numerical catastrophe, if that should somehow depend on them.

But it does not follow from this rejection of the fears of the population fetishists that one should grasp at every conceivable straw to throw at them.

One should not, as writers for *The Militant* have done, take the product announcements of bourgeois science at face value. The highly touted claims of new techniques to grow such things as miracle grains in any kind of soil with minimal labor are mostly hot air. They have been tested only under special conditions. Who knows what ecological, social and nutritive effects they would have if actually widely used?

One should not, as Joe Hansen did in 1960 (the pamphlet was recently reprinted unchanged), present increase in population as a positive good, just because it seems to have been in previous history because it allowed an increasing division of labor. (This led Comrade Hansen to virtually *advocate* the growth of world population to 28 billion!) Of course, in 1960 we did not realize the impact that the Third Industrial Revolution was to have—or begin to have—on the division of labor, that is, to begin to counter its tendency to increase.

Finally, the party must admit, at the expense of otherwise seeming to be ecologically naive and politically op-

portunistic, that there has to be some finite limit to economic growth and, therefore, to population size.

The reasons for this are as follows: Human economy is a totality that feeds off another totality, nature. The internal life of the latter is a complex network of interlocking chains of species, each of which feeds on some others and produces output upon which still others feed. Each one of these chains has a weakest link, which is the organism which reproduces most slowly, for example, fish in a chain that involves fish, insects, algae, etc. We can "harvest" the algae and they will grow back, but we must be very careful about overharvesting the fish or killing too many with pollutants. The whole cycle is destroyed when the weakest link is destroyed.

It is the nature of economy, of human labor, to consume nature's products. If there is too much economy, too much material labor, then we risk breaking many cycles at their weakest links and terminating everything.

Recycling is often put forward as the solution. Let us keep everything within the economy. Here it is important to point out that some things are very difficult to recycle and nothing is humanly recyclable 100 per cent.

We have to allow nature the living space it needs to regenerate the preconditions of human life and economy, which the labor process tends to negate. That is the essence of this point.

2. *The Technological Flaw*

The party's semiofficial answer to the authors of *Limits to Growth* written by Fred Feldman used extensive quotes from Barry Commoner's *The Closing Circle*. Feldman was happy to find Commoner linking the fantastic post-war increase in pollution levels to capitalism's profit drives.

But what Feldman did not do—and here he was intellectually dishonest—was mention *how* Commoner linked pollution increases with the profit drive. I say "intellectually dishonest" because the whole of Commoner's beautifully and dialectically constructed argument depends on this central point. Without it, it collapses into mere assertions.

The reason that polluting industrial developments (nitrate fertilizers, phosphate detergents, synthetic fibers, synthetic pesticides, plastics, processes consuming fossil fuels, mercury used in industrial processes, etc.) have been so profitable is that, by formal economic standards, they have been the most *productive*. For the least human labor, they have produced the most consumable results, at least in the short run, on the annual basis on which profits are calculated.

But it turns out that, in the long run, the wastes produced in these industries or in the use of their products are poisonous and/or nonbiodegradable. What is more, they tend to accumulate at certain points in the ecological network, where they can be especially deadly. These calculations are not taken into account when capitalism

figures its productivity. And there is some doubt as to whether it is possible to reduce them to numbers so that they can be "figured in."

The secret of the Midas touch of capitalist economics since World War II has been the application of scientific developments which were prepared in the labs and universities between the wars. This science, taking off from mathematical-empirical methods that are as old as capitalism and whose practitioners often share the system's disregard for phenomena that cannot be easily isolated from the rest of reality, gave capitalism a new lease on life, along with the war budget and Keynesian economics (and Stalinism, too).

The method it used was to cheat nature, to take from it something it could not restore and to return, as wastes, things that are virtually unreabsorbable.

"No organic substance is synthesized in nature unless there is provision for its breakdown; recycling is thus enforced," remarks Commoner. Why should we be surprised that so many artificial organic chemicals are carcinogenic? Nature undoubtedly tried them out in an early phase of its evolution and found them wanting; that's why they do not exist there.

One fourth of the entire U.S. productive apparatus is tied to these highly profitable, inevitably polluting technical processes, according to Commoner's estimate. A rational society would embark at once on their replacement.

Commoner raises a point which we have to carefully weigh: "One major requirement for the ecological reconstruction of industry is to reduce the present reliance on synthetic materials and power-consuming processes, to substitute for them natural materials and processes that rely relatively more on labor than on power."

Ernest Mandel, who has a high regard for Commoner's work, believes that socialist society will still continue the replacement of labor-intensive processes by automation. But in any case we cannot be as optimistic about the actual rate of automation as we have been in the recent past. And I am not sure that automation can be carried even near to completion, even under socialism. (This does not mean, of course, that we cannot restructure the labor process so that the mind-and-body-deforming assembly line labor becomes a thing of the past.)

Commoner also argues, "Ecological wisdom . . . would require that industrial nations give up as much as possible of their synthetic production in favor of reliance on natural materials. And for this they will require the friendly cooperation of the developing nations of the world. For to meet the need for natural fiber, rubber and soap, production of the necessary raw materials in the developing nations will need to be increased—an undertaking they might be unwilling to accept in the absence of appropriate reciprocity."

What Commoner is saying is that the "favored nation" status of the imperialist powers in the Third World has got to go. "The world will survive the environmental crisis as a whole or not at all."

The large populations of the tropical countries would prove to be an advantage—this is not an argument in favor of run-away birth rates in the future there, but against panicky Malthusianism: "The developing nations, with their large and growing labor supply, will have a special advantage [in the new labor-intensive processes]

and, given effective economic and social organization, could enjoy an opportunity to meet their urgent need for generating productive employment."

What an irony! The best ecological argument that has come along, since the beginning of the environment movement, against the Paul Ehrlich types, and Feldman neglected it. Was it because he and the other party leaders who agree with him, however much they want to fight pollution, are still hung up in the fetishism of productivity, or the productive forces, bowing down before their quantity regardless of their qualities?

3. Transitional Method: Populist Exposure of the Rich or An Attack on Capitalism's Imperative to Accumulate

The ability and honesty to present the gruesome details of capitalist oppression in all its facets, with an eye to winning support for the sectors of the population that have begun to organize to fight for their rights—this is a major, if not the major, agitational and propaganda contribution of the SWP in the current period. As a socialist organization, the party adds to this that it is the capitalist class and the capitalist system which "bear the responsibility." The government acts to benefit the wealthy few and not the laboring and potentially laboring mass. A "call to arms" here means a call to join in a demonstration against the specific iniquity and for its abolition. In this context too, the SWP's speakers "point out" that it is the capitalist class that benefits from what hurts the rest of society.

What the SWP does not usually communicate is the direct challenge to capitalism's Number One Principle. This is not simply "profit," which might be interpreted as the right of the few to live in luxury, to consumer-like Roman conquerors, etc. Rather, it is "profit" that leads into the accumulation of capital, to the replacement of old capital on the basis of greater productivity and to the absolute quantitative growth of individual capitals.

Now this is not to say that spendthrifts, conspicuous consumers and gluttons do not inhabit the ruling group in capitalist society. But that is not its specific sin, and is only derivative from it. In a capitalist society where class tensions are very high, as they are everywhere today in the capitalist world, the system cannot be preserved except by interesting a certain layer in relative luxury; Protestant frugality is no longer a common characteristic of capitalists as it once was in some countries. Yet this does not negate the fact that the driving force of capitalism is the accumulation of capital, just as it was in the days of the first bourgeois revolutions.

Isn't it true that vast sectors of American workers—and probably of European as well—are prevented from breaking fundamentally with capitalism because they still accept, to a significant extent, that the increase in productivity is a, no, *the* positive good? The capitalist story is that we all benefit, even if not equally, from increases in productivity. Even the insanity of the war budget, given the fact that fear of Russia and China is not as effective as in the 1950s, is tempered by the argument that it is in the military-space sphere that technologies are first developed which can then be picked up by consumers' goods industries and generally peaceful production purposes. (This argument is probably enhanced by the fact that military spending prevents the U.S. capitalist economy from plunging into a terrible depression,

thus being in a way responsible for not facing the American people with the prospect of general starvation, given the fact that the majority have not entertained the thought of socialism.)

The implied antisocialist argument, which I don't think the party has squarely faced, is that spending to directly meet human needs (schools, day-care centers, health, etc.) would cut into this concentrated technical development, especially when a large sector of the radicalization which supports socialist demands in these areas is also sensitive to general consumer needs and environmental issues. This sector is against, if not all technical development, at least the majority of technical developments, which have not been proven less environmentally hazardous than the products they are designed to replace.

Now, the way *not* to reply to this fear of the radicalization and, implicitly, of a socialist movement built partly upon it, is to say what Comrade Linda Jenness and others have said, that socialists are not opposed to technology and productivity, that we simply wish to orient their uses toward human needs. This implies that we could do with technology what Marx and Lenin said we could not do with the bourgeois state, simply seize the old machinery and turn it to serve positive social needs.

But technology like the state has a structure that has evolved to fit with the capitalist mode of production in its last and most degenerate years. It must be replaced with equal definiteness, although perhaps not with equal speed. Instead of bending to the majority of Americans who are still willing—in a pinch—to sacrifice their health and environment to the Great God of Productivity in Itself, we should take it on ourselves to explain to them why human survival depends on "suspending" the majority of new technical developments of a material kind until (a) the basic consumption needs and social services have been allocated and (b) ecologically unsound and nutritionally dangerous processes and products developed over the last 25 years have been replaced by safer ones the technical basis for which already exists.

Of course, this is not the same as totally suspending technical progress in all areas. Restructuring technology to subordinate productivity increases to planifiable human needs will itself require experiment, research and discovery. Building a "sewage pipeline" to recycle urban wastes to the rural soil will require some new designs, etc., even though the basic techniques probably already exist.

Such development cannot, however, be construed as capital accumulation, because it represents not a postponement of use-values to the indefinite future, but an immediate investment in the quality of life, the standard of living or, in a term of Marxist economics, humanity's *necessary product*. (Another way of looking at this is to say that the categories of capitalist economics, and of Marxist theory about capitalist economics, no longer can be treated in the same way.)

I am advocating, therefore, a real subordination of human productivity to *humanity*. It will mean a slower, because more careful, technical growth rate than we have experienced over the last few decades. Simply to avoid the waste of war production might enable us to regain (for a period) the quantitative growth which caution in technical change would "lose" for us. In any case, the quality of life for everyone would improve. And that is what we are about, after all.

We are asking people to postpone new technical wonders growing out of the military-space industrial concentration, to abolish the ills of capitalism: to trade, as it were, their option to buy quadrophonic sound for not having had the war in Indochina.

My argument is not simply based on a sensitivity to environmental issues. Nixon's budget cuts and the problem of inflation also point out the negative social effects of capitalism's imperative to accumulate. The cutback in necessary social services, the throwing of people into the reserve labor army, along with the maintenance of certain government aid for technical training, fits right into the government's support of industries where concentrated productivity increases are the "thing."

It is not only the Vietnam war that explains the vast military budget (which explains inflation), but also the military-technical emphasis of the economy since 1940 that explains the size of the military budget and, partly, the size of the expenditures in Vietnam. It is impossible to say to what extent one caused the other. Without U. S. war expenditures, of course, there would still be a Vietnamese revolution, but it is just as true—and the history of the war budget before heavy U. S. involvement in Indochina proves it—that without a Vietnamese revolution, the U. S. military-technical emphasis would continue to increase.

Inflation hits primarily in consumer goods. Given the fanaticism of capitalism towards accumulation, productivity investments and increases are always accomplished first in non-consumer goods industry, in heavy industry. When less social capital is spent on consumer goods production, under a market economy, their prices rise. Capitalists in the food industry are not going to miss out on the profits that are being made in military and high technological spheres. They will either leave consumer goods production or raise prices. In either case, we have to pay more.

This is all ABC to students of Marxist economics. But Marxist social and economic theory, properly understood, should not fail to carry over into our more agitational discourse.

To make the socialist point to the movements that will arise in response to attacks on our living standards, it is necessary to attack the central feature disfiguring Western culture: That is the priority of the accumulation of capital over everything else. People before profit! yes but also PEOPLE BEFORE PRODUCTIVITY! PEOPLE BEFORE TECHNOLOGY! TECHNOLOGY FOR THE PEOPLE—AND NO MORE!

* * *

If we expect to see a socialist revolution in our lifetime, we will have to do it with a population most of whom will not be experienced and disciplined members of the SWP. They will have to understand, therefore, something basic and central about the need to go from capitalism to socialism, that unites their reasonable assent to the demands we raise in our various transitional programs and will help them decide what stands to take in workers self-government that will replace the present system. I think that something is *the negation of capitalism's imperative to accumulate*, or put in a positive (though less sharp) sense, planning to *directly* meet hu-

man needs. It is that that underlies the thrust of the specific transitional demands, gives them unity and direction. To the extent to which we fail to evoke this unity of the transitional program, we place exaggerated emphasis on the party alone as the unity and mind of the total revolutionary process, thus giving unwitting support to those who accuse us of elitism.

If, as I expect, the general line of this article is not

incorporated into the political resolution, I will submit it as an amendment to the resolution. It should be stressed that the anti-accumulation theme is directed against U. S. capitalism (and by implication also Japanese and Western European, to a lesser extent) but not those countries oppressed by foreign imperialism.

April 8, 1973

IN SUPPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL MAJORITY
TENDENCY: IN SUPPORT OF THE FOURTH
INTERNATIONAL

by Bill Yaffe and Estelle Yaffe, At-Large Members

We declare our political adherence to the International Majority Tendency. The political basis for adherence to the majority is agreement with the general line of the following documents:

1. "In Defense of Leninism, In Defense of the Fourth International";

2. The United Secretariat's Draft Thesis—"The Building of Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe";

3. The Declaration of the International Majority Tendency made at the IEC in December 1972.

Events of the 1960s throughout the world have demonstrated that the Fourth International is qualitatively stronger than ever before. The majority in the International has recognized that now it is vital for the world Trotskyist movement to turn towards the transformation of Trotskyist organizations from propaganda groups into organizations capable of those initiatives of a mass vanguard level which are required by the dynamics of the class struggle itself. The positions adopted at the Ninth World Congress of the Fourth International reflect this crucial turn. The minority, objecting in the name of "Leninist-Trotskyist" orthodoxy, has refused to implement and has even attempted to block this historic transformation.

The comrades supporting the minority tendency have asked for an open and democratic debate so that the differences which are now dividing the International could be cleared up. This, however, can be achieved only if the debate is focused on the true differences in the Fourth International rather than on the imaginary opposition between a guerrilla strategy that nobody defends and a so-called Leninist strategy of party building.

If one carefully compared, for instance, the practical recommendations made by both majority and minority tendencies to our Bolivian section, it would be abundantly clear that the Bolivian section and the members of the majority tendency do give primacy to party building

and to mass work, and that the basic differences between minority and majority have to do with whether our sections should take initiatives of action and try to lead the masses, or simply tail-end the mass movements and limit itself to a largely commentarial role. The differences over party building in Europe show this pattern even more clearly. Evidently, two interpretations of the Transitional Program and two different strategies of party building are confronting each other in the International.

We believe that the position adopted by the minority in the International debate is not independent of the experience of the SWP in the United States. In effect, the minority line is linked to the difficulties facing revolutionary organizations which must work in the imperialist stronghold. That is to say, the historic political isolation of the revolutionary workers movement in this country and the relative retardation of the working-class radicalization in the United States in comparison with that of capitalist Europe, for example. Not having been confronted with a whole series of new problems faced by other sections of the Fourth International posed as a result of the development of the class struggle, the SWP too often confines itself to a conservative role, projecting its national political experience to the entirety of the other sections of the International. It is in this light that one can understand the minority's refusal to politically approve the United Secretariat's Draft Thesis for "The Building of Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe."

Today one of the problems in the SWP and with its fraternal interventions in the International debate is the confusion between the vanguard party and the rearguard; that is to say, many seem to forget that the role of the revolutionary organization is to always be "one step ahead of the masses" and not simply to be in the mass movement as "its best builder," or worse yet, at its mercy. Therefore, we insist that it is necessary and possible today

for the SWP to develop a serious program of revolutionary socialist activity directed toward the most radical elements of the mass movement and the revolutionary movement at large. This means, for example, that we have to combine the single issue approach like "Out Now!" in the antiwar movement with a specific socialist activity directed toward a more limited audience explaining the permanent revolution, revolutionary violence, the role of the party, and so on, down the line. In brief, we're talking about the necessity of taking revolutionary Marxist initiatives based on a dialectic conception of the relationships between the vanguard, the party, and the working class.

Many in the SWP have made tail-ending a principle because they limit the use of the Transitional Program to raising demands simply corresponding to the level of consciousness of the masses. This is false and very dangerous. We feel that the consciousness of the masses must be raised in relation to the objective necessities of the class struggle. Transitional demands form a bridge between the present level of consciousness and the historic objective necessity of socialist revolution. Demands are transitional when they unleash struggles through which the masses recognize this necessity. After all, what is transitional in a transitional demand is the moving beyond, the raising of the existing level of consciousness. In conclusion, we state that differences in the interpretation and use of the Transitional Program are, in fact, the real heart of the International debate.

We reaffirm the necessity of building a strong centralized

International with an international leadership which effectively synthesizes the real experiences of the revolutionary movements on all the continents instead of juxtaposing them or mechanically generalizing them. We think that it is to be regretted that the minority refuses to decisively settle the international debate and instead chooses to further postpone the world congress under the veil of wishing to ensure democratic discussion. Everyone supports democratic debate, but all that means nothing if important decisions are never made. We believe that the further postponement of the Tenth World Congress would serve to paralyze our movement and be detrimental to its growth.

We strongly believe that the SWP has over the years, over the many difficult years during the long march of Trotskyism, shown that it is the real core of the future revolutionary party in the United States. We hope that the discussion will clear up the problems and that the minority politically led by the SWP will elaborate its political strategy in a more dialectic manner. We will soon issue a long contribution to the debate. We call upon comrades to indicate their fraternal agreement with the International Majority Tendency and work with us.

Long Live the Socialist Workers Party!
100% Support to the Strategy of Armed Struggle in Latin America!
Victory to the Fourth International!

April 27, 1973

MEMORANDUM ON THE GAY LIBERATION MOVEMENT

[The general line of this memorandum was approved by the National Committee on April 29, 1973.]

The plenum of the National Committee held last year adopted a motion that read in part, "To open immediately following the plenum an internal party literary discussion, for a three-month period, of the gay liberation movement and the party's orientation to it, leading to a decision by the subsequent plenum of the National Committee." This is that subsequent plenum, and the purpose of this memorandum is to make that decision.

1. The struggle against the oppression of gay people is a struggle for democratic rights. The party has taken a position in support of this struggle, and adopted the following position at the 1971 party convention: "To reaffirm the party's position stated in the Political Committee motion of May 25, 1971, of unconditional support to the struggles of homosexuals for full democratic rights, including full civil and human rights, and against all the forms of discrimination and oppression they suffer under capitalism." The adoption of the general line of this report will include reaffirming this as the basic political

position of the party on the oppression of homosexuals.

2. While we reject with contempt all forms of bourgeois prejudice against gay people, including quack psychological "theories" labelling gays as mentally ill—prejudices echoed by the Stalinists—the party does not and should not take a stand on the nature or value of homosexuality.

The party should not do this for the following reasons.

First, the party is a political organization. Its aim is a political one: to construct a mass revolutionary proletarian political party that will mobilize the working class and its allies, and lead in the conquest of state power by the working class, opening the road to the construction of socialism. In keeping with its aim, the party adopts political positions that guide its work. It does not take positions on a whole range of scientific, artistic, cultural and other questions—to do so would cut across its purpose, dilute its nature as a political organization, transform it into an organization advancing one or another

scientific or cultural viewpoint, narrow its appeal, and cripple its ability to mobilize the masses on political questions.

Second, this particular question is further complicated by the fact that the whole question of the scientific investigation of sexuality and the related one of psychology is still in its infancy. Especially concerning homosexuality, little is known, and it is difficult to ascertain what is objectively based and what represents prejudice in what knowledge is available. If we were to attempt to adopt a particular viewpoint on the nature of homosexuality or sexuality in general, we would become embroiled in a hopeless tangle of opinions, prejudices and personal preferences with little hope of reaching any scientifically valid conclusions, even if that were within the purpose of the SWP, which it is not.

Neither is scientific knowledge advanced enough on this question for us to be able to say what future human sexuality will be like in a classless society. The socialist revolution will lay the foundations for the transformation of human culture in all spheres, including sexual and other personal relations, but exactly how this will affect sexual relations can only be a subject for speculation at this stage, as is true of a whole range of aspects of the future classless society. We can say that, in sexual relations as in every other human sphere, we have every reason to expect that future communist humanity will be superior to present-day humanity, and that sexuality will be freed from all prejudice, superstition, mysticism, and religious morality. We cannot go much beyond the assertion that the present sexual misery of the masses of people will be overcome. If we attempt to extrapolate further, we run the strong risk of merely projecting our own psychological makeups, losing sight of the fact that each and every one of us has been formed under capitalism.

We should reject the idea, propounded by some in the gay liberation movement, that homosexuality is more progressive than heterosexuality because it involves sexual relations that fall outside the family system, and therefore leads to liberation from that system. Sexual activities of any kind outside the family—whether heterosexual or homosexual—cannot replace the family system. They in no way replace the social functions of caring for the young and old, performing such labor as cooking, laundry, etc. The reactionary institution of the patriarchal family, and the ideology and morality that buttress it, will wither away only in the process of the construction of socialism, as the social and economic functions it now performs are progressively taken on by society as a whole.

The party should take no position on the nature or value of homosexuality, nor try to determine what is "good" or "bad" about heterosexuality or homosexuality, and not advocate any specific sexual orientation.

3. We cannot abstract our consideration of this question from the rise of the gay liberation movement itself. In fact, it has been the rise of this movement that has made it necessary for the party to clarify its position concerning the oppression of homosexuals, and to discuss our relationship to this movement.

The gay liberation movement is an aspect of the current radicalization and developed out of it. There are a number of factors which prepared the way for the development of this movement.

First, there have been changes in the prevailing attitudes on homosexuality in society as a whole, together with changes in prevailing views on sexuality in general. While the prejudices against homosexuals remain, and they are deep, an attitude of greater acceptance of homosexuals as fully human has developed. At bottom, this reflects a loosening of the hold of traditional sexual morality that has accompanied the growing crisis of the social mores of capitalism in its decline.

These changes towards lessening of prejudices concerning homosexuals is evident in many ways, in the cultural and information media, in the number of challenges to various legal aspects of the discrimination against gays, and even in statements by bourgeois candidates.

The development of greater acceptance of homosexuals has been most pronounced among radicalized young people. One aspect of the youth radicalization has been a widespread and growing questioning of repressive sexual morality. This critical attitude towards traditional morality undermines the ideological basis of the prejudice and discrimination against gay people. This shift in attitudes has provided an atmosphere in which such a movement could develop. At the same time, a layer of gay people, especially young gay people, have been affected by the radicalization. Seeing other oppressed layers and groups begin to fight against their oppression, young gay people were inspired to begin to struggle for their rights too.

Under the impact of movements such as a Black liberation struggle and the women's liberation movement, radicalizing young people have begun to reject any discrimination against people for their physical or sexual characteristics. For many in this generation, opposition to the traditional repressive sexual morality and to discrimination based upon sexual characteristics is becoming the norm. This trend among youth was reinforced by the rise of the women's liberation movement.

The women's movement itself is concerned with sexual oppression, as women are oppressed as a sex. The literature of the women's movement has analyzed and exposed the objectification of sex and the debilitating and reactionary character of traditional sexual morality, and the distortion of sexuality in capitalist society. The Marxist theory of the origin, structure and role of the family as the basis of the oppression of women has, for example, become much more widely accepted. In this context, many in the women's movement have begun to see the prejudice towards homosexuals as another facet of sexist oppression.

The women's movement not only helped pave the way for the rise of the gay liberation movement on the plane of ideas, it had to confront the question of the discrimination against homosexuals directly in the form of lesbian-baiting. This included baiting of lesbians in the women's movement, and baiting of the whole movement with the charge that any woman who fights for her rights is stepping out of her place, is rejecting her "femininity." The women's movement has by and large rejected lesbian-baiting as an attempt to divide and weaken the movement.

While these developments in the radicalization lay the ground for the rise of the gay liberation movement and helped inspire radicalized young gay people to fight against their oppression, the movement itself has in turn

brought about a higher level of understanding of and opposition to the oppression of gay people among radicalizing youth, and has already had a considerable impact on the society in spite of the movement's shortcomings.

This development of the gay liberation movement is progressive. It confronts and helps break down the reactionary morality that helps preserve class society. The struggle of gay people for their rights is directed against the capitalist government, and is in the interests of socialism, which can only be built by the mobilization of the working class and its allies in the historic task of rebuilding society, eliminating every vestige of discrimination and oppression spawned by class society, including the oppression of gay people. The party identifies with the aims of this struggle and supports it, and this is reflected in the political position the party has adopted and reaffirmed in this report.

4. Given our political position of support to the struggles of gay people against their oppression, how we carry out that support is a tactical question.

First, let's look at the question of priorities in a strategic long-term sense. The gay liberation movement directly relates to a relatively narrow sector of the population. The issue it raises is essentially limited to the struggle for the democratic rights of this sector. The gay liberation movement does not have the potential mass of either the women's movement or the movements of the major oppressed nationalities, nor the social weight of these movements, which result both from their mass and the scope of the questions they raise. The movements of the major oppressed nationalities in the United States—both because their national-democratic demands cannot be met except through the proletarian revolution, and because of their overwhelmingly proletarian composition—raise almost from the beginning demands of the working class as a whole. The women's movement, also, because of the role of the family as a pillar of class society and the character of the economic exploitation of women, raises class demands. The gay liberation movement is much narrower in the scope of its demands.

In our long-term strategic priorities, the gay liberation movement is much more peripheral to the central issues of the class struggle than either the women's movement or the movements of the oppressed nationalities. Neither does it raise such a central issue of world politics as the struggle against imperialist wars. Our propaganda, our election campaigns, *The Militant*, our forums, etc., must reflect the relative weight and importance of the gay liberation movement compared to other movements and issues of more central importance. The major issues we should be concentrating on are the big questions of the class struggle, and this must be reflected in the totality of the party's projection of its program. It would be a mistake to place equal emphasis upon the struggle of women or Blacks, and that of gay people, for example.

Exactly how the party should orient towards this movement at the present time has to be considered in light of the concrete situation of this movement, and in relation to other fields of work and tasks facing the party. The gay liberation movement is at present very diffuse, not organized into any single grouping or action front on a national scale. In 1969 and 1970, gay liberation organizations sprang up on campuses and major

cities across the country. A number of demonstrations and actions were held—the largest have been the annual Christopher St. demonstrations in 1970, '71, and '72. From what we can tell from the probe of the gay liberation movement conducted by the party, and developments since then, there has been an evolution of the organized gay liberation movement. A sector of the movement developed in an ultraleft and inward-turned direction. This sector became part of the broader ultraleft and commune-oriented youth current. In some areas, this process resulted in the virtual disappearance of any viable organized expression of the gay liberation movement.

There have been some notable exceptions to this. The most stable of the gay rights organizations is the Gay Activists Alliance in New York, which has continued to carry out activities directed against gay oppression. On the campus, many groups have become essentially social groupings to provide social outlets and help for gays, although we can expect that these organizations could support struggles should they develop.

Since the 1972 party literary discussion on the gay liberation movement, there has been no significant steps towards the formation of a national framework of gay liberation organizations or a national focus of action by gay liberation groups. In fact, the direction seems to be the opposite at this time, with such a national focus or organization less likely.

In view of the present state of the organized gay liberation movement on a national scale, we should not attempt to carry out a national party intervention in the gay liberation movement or project a national party campaign on this question at the present time. Thus we should make no reallocation of our forces to generally assign comrades to this movement. Our support to this movement will be mainly in our propaganda in the next period, as it has been. There is no national gay liberation organization which could be a focus of our intervention. There is no national action coalition around specific issues of gay oppression which we could support and help build. Any attempt by us to start from scratch and try to build such an organization or coalition would fail in the given conditions, where we do not see much motion toward such formations. We cannot attempt to substitute our own small forces, in any movement, for broader forces we might like to see organized, but which are not at the present time.

On a local level there has been somewhat of a dropping off of struggles for the rights of gay people in the past period, but what struggles have occurred have been locally organized. Where such demonstrations, defense cases, etc., occur, the party should support them. Branches have the responsibility to carry out any such work within the context of carrying out the major campaigns being conducted by the party.

5. During the party literary discussion, an issue was raised concerning the party attitude concerning dress and appearance of comrades. This question and others related to it go beyond a discussion of the gay liberation movement, raising a more general question of the image and functioning of the party.

The party does have a concern with the image of the party as projected by the dress and decorum of individual members that would in fact prohibit certain clothing, like dresses, from being worn by male comrades. There is

a more general question involved, concerning the dress and appearance of all members. While we have no set of rules concerning dress, we do have a tradition of assuming that SWP members will dress and act in such a way as to project the party as a serious organization. If our image were to become exotic, that would stand in the way of recruiting and influencing masses of people justifiably suspicious of people that are obviously extremely eccentric. A political person who deviates too far from the social norm in questions like that of dress has lost or never had a sense of proportion about what is politically important and what is secondary.

The wearing of this or that kind of clothing has nothing to do with being a revolutionary, and responsible members subordinate personal whims or desires in this regard to the political objective of not placing unnecessary obstacles in our way. Our general rule should be to dress within the socially accepted styles, and the party units have the responsibility to see to it that individual members to not abuse the party by projecting an exotic image of the party.

There are other aspects to this general question. One of these is a pressure upon the party from a small and ultraleft section of the women's movement that asserts that to be a "true feminist" a woman should be a lesbian or at least not live with a man, or must not wear certain make-up, etc. Our conception of a feminist has nothing to do with an evaluation of her personal life. It is of a woman who fights politically for the liberation of women — no matter what her personal life.

Another question which has been raised concerns all-women functions organized by the party. In certain cases, all-women's classes, discussions, or more informal gatherings organized by the party can help bring contacts closer, provide an atmosphere for contacts to more easily exchange ideas with party spokeswomen, etc., and the same thing can be said of similar all-Black functions. Such functions must be organized in such a way that they do not project an image that the function is in reality restricted to lesbians. This can drive away many women who feel uncomfortable in such an atmosphere.

The same can be said of our attitude towards social functions of women's organizations we support.

A word should be said concerning our social functions in general. Such functions organized by the party are political functions, and must be organized as such, with a general tone and atmosphere that all the various types of people we seek to recruit and bring around the party are comfortable in. Sexual activities, whether heterosexual or homosexual, have no place at party socials.

In general, we must resist pressures upon the party that originate from certain sectors of the radicalized layers (not only in the gay liberation movement, of course, but among all the radicalized layers) who have turned towards counter-culturalism and away from politics.

6. Since we project no national campaign of the party at the present time in the gay liberation movement, there is no need to have a separate point on the convention agenda on this question.

APPENDICES

MEMORANDUM ON MEMBERSHIP POLICY PRESENTED TO THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE OF THE SWP BY JACK BARNES Adopted, Friday, November 13, 1970

Since the early 1960s the party and YSA have been moving toward a policy which proscribes homosexuals from membership. This was mentioned in the organizational report to the February 1970 SWP plenum. The evolution of this policy was summarized as part of the organizational report which was adopted by the August 1970 YSA plenum. This report was printed in the September 2, 1970, *Young Socialist Organizer*.

The main purpose of this policy was the protection of the party now and in the future from the effects of legal or extralegal victimization and blackmail of homosexual members.

The Administrative Committee believes that this policy is wrong. It doesn't accomplish its purpose and it breeds problems and misinterpretations both internally and publicly. In so doing it shifts attention from the central question in all membership policies and decisions—the security of the party, its growth by recruitment from the mass movement, its capacity for disciplined activity in

all periods, and its political homogeneity.

* * *

Most homosexual organizations have described the problems and oppression that homosexuals face in capitalist society. These problems range from the threat of physical attacks to the invocation of archaic and reactionary legal codes concerning sexual behavior, to occupational exclusion, the threat of blackmail, housing problems, and various forms of psychological oppression and social pressure. All of these are very real problems that homosexuals face to one degree or another, and which can lead to conflicts with the cops, blackmail, and susceptibility to pressures of all kinds.

Another thing which the homosexual organizations point out is that because of the depth and intensity of social pressure and prejudice, the psychological pressure on homosexuals is such that a homosexual usually goes

through personal, sexual crises in which she or he becomes obsessed—to the detriment of other aspects of her or his life—with the problem of finding any fulfilling sex life under these conditions and in this society.

In the past experience of the party, this aspect of the life of a homosexual has led to membership problems. That is, some homosexual comrades reached the stage in a personal crisis, in which being a member of our kind of political organization and being able to throw herself or himself into the work of the party became difficult or impossible. Under these conditions they often tried one way or another, directly or indirectly, to change the character of the party into some form of therapeutic organization which would help solve the personal problems of the individual homosexual. We've had several experiences like this. What happened under these circumstances in the past was that a leading comrade in the area had discussions with the homosexual comrade facing such difficulties. No one can remember a single instance where there was ultimately any problem in such a person understanding through discussion that the best course would be to become a sympathizer or move away from the party. Quite often instances of this sort involved people moving away from organized revolutionary political life. Such a person can't handle his or her personal development to the degree that she or he can be enough of a stable, disciplined party member whose basic fulfillment comes from political activity as a disciplined member of a combat party. Needless to say, this type of problem is not limited to homosexual comrades. We also have homosexual comrades for whom this question has never come up. Their personal lives, regardless of the problems and pressures that were entailed, did not conflict with party membership.

* * *

As we have discussed this question informally, everyone agreed that we must put the discussion of our policy in the context of the changing objective situation. First, there's the change in attitudes that's gradually evolving in this country. There's no question that the general acceptance of different norms of personal behavior has increased. This has reflections in the legal sphere. One state, Illinois, has abolished all penalties for homosexual acts between consenting adults. Other state legislatures are discussing it.

In the last election the two main New York state candidates of the Democratic Party and one of the candidates for the Republican Party—Goldberg, Ottinger and Goodell—all came out with public statements endorsing what was in essence a Bill of Rights for homosexuals, demanding that they be treated like other citizens, that their private lives be their own and not be subject to legal or police restraint as long as they don't damage the rights of other people. Quite a few other candidates made statements—Walinsky, and several of the congressional candidates. This is the first time comrades can remember that major bourgeois candidates did this. The fact that they did take such a stand in the midst of an election campaign says a lot about the changing attitudes in society as a whole.

There are a number of cases now at various levels of the federal courts system demanding rights for homo-

sexuals. Legal fights against entrapment laws and entrapment practices have been successful in several states and municipalities. A homosexual in Connecticut is fighting to get a driver's license which has been denied him because of his conviction for sodomy. This case is being handled not by a small group of radical lawyers, but by the Connecticut ACLU. And this legal test, like others, is being reported objectively and favorably in papers like *The New York Times*.

* * *

One characteristic of the radicalization itself, especially in the youth movement, has been discussion about sex. Adolescents have all kinds of social restrictions put upon them concerning their private lives, and especially their sex lives. The way they're treated in the schools, under the law, etc., has become an issue among radicalizing youth. So there's a widespread and growing opposition in very broad layers of young people in this country against sexual repression and the enforced mutilation of sexuality.

This has been reinforced by the rise of the women's liberation movement, which has been even more intimately concerned with repression of homosexuals. This is true because one of the central questions faced by the women's movement is the question of sexual oppression. In addition to their class, race or national oppression, women are especially oppressed as a sex. Comrades are familiar with the many things which the women's liberation movement has done to draw attention to this—the publicity campaigns, the propaganda and educational materials that have been written by various activists in the women's liberation movement against the objectification of sex, against the exploitation of sexual relations, against the reactionary and debilitating sexual norms and pressures of society, against the possessive and compulsive sexual relations bred by this system. They see that the social attitudes toward homosexuals are simply another facet of a sick sexist, racist class society. From the beginning a certain number of women's liberation activists and leaders have publicly identified themselves as homosexuals or bisexuals. And more and more the women's liberation movement has recognized the reactionary character of lesbian-baiting and the threat it poses to the movement if capitulated to.

Finally, we have growing numbers of public political and social organizations of homosexuals, something that is unique in American history. Beginning in 1968 and early 1969 and undoubtedly sparked by the general radicalization and reinforced by the rise of the women's liberation movement, we saw across the country the proliferation of homosexual and homosexual rights organizations. It's probably not an exaggeration to say that almost every major campus in this country has either a homosexual rights organization or an organization of militant homosexuals demanding their rights, demanding an end to all discrimination, demanding a scientific and objective view of homosexuals as human beings. It's become the norm, as opposed to being unusual, for contingents of the more militant and more open homosexual groups to march in various protest demonstrations in addition to organizing some of their own.

This all takes place in the post-Kinsey period. For the

first time, scientific knowledge of the extent of homosexuality, and the characteristics of homosexuality has become widespread. This has helped in breaking down the stereotype of society divided into exclusively homosexual and exclusively heterosexual people. The fact that individual human beings go through different periods in their lives, with different characteristics to their sexuality, has become more widely known. The fact that homosexuality of one kind or another is widespread in the population, that it cuts through all geographical and class layers, has been established.

There has also been the experience, the growing body of literature available and the evolution in the understanding of the younger generation. The younger generation has begun to differentiate between sexuality and reproduction, sexuality and religious norms, sexuality and the sex-roles imposed by the nuclear family system, and has begun to understand the relation between sexuality and class society. For this generation, opposition to restrictive norms and repressive attitudes that feed reactionary ideologies has become the norm.

* * *

We had been evolving toward a policy of blanket proscription of homosexuals from membership in the party. The faults of this policy are several. One is general enforceability.

The more we thought about it the more we realized we were not enforcing this policy and we could not enforce this policy. Maybe one of the ways to look at this is to compare it to our policy on narcotics and marijuana, use of which is incompatible with party membership. We have this blanket policy for a variety of reasons the comrades know, including the chance of victimization and frame-ups, of which there's been a whole record of experience in the radical movement, and the hatred of many of the oppressed of this country for the narcotics trade. We've had a firm and clear policy on this question, which we've enforced. When we know of, have evidence of, or even hear rumors of the use of marijuana in the organization, we look into it. If it's true we tell the comrades they have to knock it off, we explain why and say they must comply with this rule or leave the organization. We've done this consistently and even-handedly. It's not been arbitrary, it has not been tongue-in-cheek, and it has not basically been handled one way in one locality and a different way in another. If our policy was to be the blanket proscription of homosexuals from membership in the SWP, we would have to enforce such a policy in the way we enforce the narcotics policy.

It is a policy that can easily be misused. If it's really going to be a policy, it would be the obligation of branch organizers and executive committees to check into the sexual predilection of prospective members, if one is supposed to proscribe a certain sexual category from membership. It doesn't take much imagination to think of the negative results of this practice.

If we do not carry out and enforce the policy uniformly, an additional problem comes up. That is, it becomes known that there is a policy of the party that is not enforced uniformly. If the policy is not enforced at all, then it appears that the leadership supports the policy only tongue-in-cheek. That would be a default of leadership.

If it is enforced, but not uniformly and consistently, there would be the suspicion that the leadership was being arbitrary. Why pick this one and not that one? Over a time, this would raise the question of the leadership's fairness in carrying out other general policies.

Our tradition, the tradition of the revolutionary movement has been that the private lives, the psychological and cultural views, and the sexual behavior of individual comrades is basically their own business. There's been a general tolerance within the movement, as opposed to a society which in general is very intolerant of anything that's different or threatens its morals and norms. At the same time, the party is not responsible for what members do as private individuals and does not take responsibility for their private conduct. While minimizing interference in or responsibility for the private lives of members, their private conduct and their personal demeanor must be subordinated to the needs of the party as a whole. If a person's private life became damaging to the party the individual is asked to leave the party. As I outlined earlier the party's security, its capacity to recruit militants from the mass movement, political homogeneity, and its capacity for disciplined action always comes first.

Leaving the homosexual question per se aside, we occasionally have comrades who go through periods where they simply are not in control of themselves personally or psychologically. We sometimes have to ask them to leave, or find a way out of the party for them at a certain stage. The same is true with comrades who get on some kick and decide they are proselytes whose mission is to put the party on trial or to turn the party into something other than a revolutionary socialist combat party.

All individual revolutionaries are very interested in culture, art, sex and the evolution of social norms. But we must always remember that the party's role is political. It is defined by its purpose and the strength of its enemy. First and foremost is the organization and recruitment from the mass movement of a combat party that has a political program for the defeat of the capitalist state. A large number of questions of art, cultural norms, mores, etc., are not really within the field of party policy or "line." As long as we in fact apply the materialist method in our analysis there is plenty of room for divergences of opinion. It is a very good idea to have a little tolerance for each others' views on these matters.

The party is a political, not a therapeutic, organization. While revolutionaries get their personal satisfaction from understanding and working to change this society, we neither accept members nor do we keep members ultimately because it is good for them. We recruit members and we keep members because it is good for the party.

* * *

Any sort of blanket membership proscription of homosexuals cannot remain and has not remained an internal question in the SWP. In several cities, we've been publicly attacked or asked to clarify our position on homosexual membership. The comrades have responded to such attacks or questions with leaflets and public statements which show the difficulty of trying to explain to nonmembers the reasons for a blanket proscription of homosexuals. Secondly, such statements have shown discomfort our

members feel in trying to carry out this policy. It raises a whole series of concrete problems within the women's liberation movement; problems of recruitment, of hidden red-baiting in the form of slander, of misinterpretation. There's no question that the membership of our movement is in its overwhelming majority uncomfortable with such a policy. We see all the evidence of that. Of course we also know that with some newer members this is for the wrong reasons. It takes a little while for members, especially new members, to actually come to an understanding of what a revolutionary party is and what it cannot be.

But more is involved than misunderstanding by new members. What is really involved is an uncomfortableness with a policy which is really not viable in that it creates more real problems for the party than it solves.

So the conclusion the Administrative Committee has come to is that we should reject this evolution toward a policy of proscription of homosexual members per se and continue the actual practice which has basically been the party's policy on this type of question for some time. That is, we will continue to deal on an individual basis with any homosexual comrade or any other comrade who because of a personal crisis or personal demeanor, more and more finds her or his personal life in conflict with disciplined functioning in the party or in conflict with the kind of a party that can recruit out of the mass movement, that is going to become a mass party. And secondly, of course, we will continue to take into account the character and personal demeanor of anyone who applies for membership. We always have. But a general policy of proscription of homosexuals is incorrect.

MOTION ADOPTED BY POLITICAL COMMITTEE
May 25, 1971

1) That the party conduct a probe of the gay liberation movement for the purpose of gathering information. The information sought includes facts about the present size of the gay liberation movement, its geographical spread, the history of its development, the specific nature of the different gay liberation groups, the demands which have been raised by the gay liberation organizations, the political positions of the different currents within the gay liberation movement, the positions of our opponents concerning it, and its relationship to the developing radicalization.

2) The probe will be conducted within the framework of the party's unconditional support to the struggles of homosexuals for civil and human rights against the discrimination and oppression they suffer under capitalism. However, steps taken for the purposes of this probe do not signify setting in motion at this time a process of party fractional intervention based on a defined strategic and tactical orientation in the gay liberation movement. The purpose of this probe is solely to gather the necessary information about gay liberation formations and actions so that the party can then determine its policy toward them.

3) The party branches are responsible for carrying out this probe in their areas. The decisions on how to do this in each case must be made in light of the overall personnel situation and the responsibility of the branch to carry out the major activities of the party.

In cases where there are openly gay comrades, individuals can be assigned to attend meetings and participate in selected activities of different gay liberation organizations and ad hoc formations as part of this probe. However, these comrades should not be assigned to this probe on any premise that in their particular case such an assignment should automatically have priority over other party tasks.

Homosexual comrades have joined or will join the SWP on the same basis that anyone else joins the SWP, on the basis of acceptance of our full program and agreement to loyally build the SWP and help to carry out its decisions in all spheres of party work. Conversely, the party as a whole has the responsibility to see that a homosexual comrade, like any other comrade, is integrated in a rounded way in party life and activities.

The deepgoing personal consequences for anyone to openly declare themselves to be homosexual emphasizes the importance of the fact that the question of whether or not a homosexual comrade decides to so declare himself or herself is a personal decision. No pressure from the party should be placed on any comrade either for or against them openly declaring themselves as gay.

4) This probe will be carried out in collaboration with the YSA, which has initiated similar action. It is to be conducted under the supervision of the Administrative Committee. All reports, results and questions concerning this probe should be addressed to the Administrative Committee.

MOTION APPROVED BY 1971 SWP NATIONAL CONVENTION

1) To approve the memorandum on membership policy adopted by the Political Committee on November 13, 1970.

2) To reaffirm the party's position, stated in the Political Committee motion of May 25, 1971, of unconditional support to the struggles of homosexuals for full democratic rights including full civil and human rights, and against all the forms of discrimination and oppression they suffer under capitalism.

3) To end the information gathering probe of the gay liberation movement initiated by the Political Committee on May 25, 1971.

4) To authorize the National Committee to organize, following the convention, an internal party literary discussion of the gay liberation movement and the party's orientation to it, leading to a decision by a plenum of the National Committee.

**MOTION APPROVED BY SWP NATIONAL COMMITTEE PLENUM
May 14, 1972**

The following motion was approved by the National Committee at its plenum, May 14, 1972.

(a) To open immediately following the plenum an internal party literary discussion, for a three-month period, of the gay liberation movement and the party's orienta-

tion to it, leading to a decision by the subsequent plenum of the National Committee.

(b) To authorize the incoming Political Committee to allow a limited extension of the discussion period if practical circumstances require.