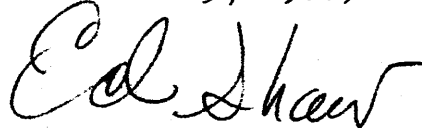


New York, N.Y.  
January 13, 1967

TO ALL NATIONAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

The attached correspondence is being circulated to the National Committee as authorized by the Political Committee. (PC Minutes, No. 33, December 15, 1966)



Ed Shaw  
Organization Secretary

Los Angeles, Calif.  
Oct. 2, 1966

Dear Comrades:

Here is a very hasty story on the Conference that just concluded a few hours ago. We are trying to make this coming issue.

A full evaluation of the Conference will be written for the PC in a few days. I just tried to sketch the general line.

I will put some background material from the PW and the Times in a separate envelope.

Comradely,

Hayden

New York, N.Y.  
October 4, 1966

Los Angeles

Dear Hayden,

Your article on the Conference on Power and Politics was received today by the Militant office. We had heard yesterday [by phone] from Asher and Pete C. and when we read your article it was clear that they have a very different estimate of the conference and its significance.

The Militant is already filled up for this week because of the fire and there is no real need to rush into print with a story on the conference. Given the different estimates of the conference, we decided to wait for your fuller report to the PC and to ask the Bay Area comrades to write down their estimate of the meeting. To facilitate an early reply we have sent a copy of your article to the Bay Area so that they may indicate wherein the difference lies.

It would also be helpful to send us more of the background material on the CLR and related developments in the Democratic party's liberal wing (leaflets, articles in local press, etc.).

We will expect your full evaluation for the PC in a few days and will ask the Bay Area comrades to send a copy of their stated disagreements to you so that we can clear the matter up as rapidly as possible.

Comradely,

Ed Shaw

cc: Oscar, Bob H.

New York, N.Y.  
October 4, 1966

San Francisco  
Bob Himmel, Organizer

Dear Bob,

We have an article by Hayden on the Power and Politics Conference in L.A. last weekend. The article was vastly different in tone, emphasis and general evaluation from the offhand report we got from Asher and Pete yesterday.

The crisis of middle class liberalism in the Democratic party is more manifest in California than anywhere else right now and we have to maintain a consistent and clear line in relation to these developments. Therefore, we have held off on printing an article on the conference -- the paper was filled because of the fire-bomb story, anyway -- until we have had a chance to clear up the apparent differences.

Enclosed is a copy of Hayden's article. Please get together with Louis and Pete and Asher and let us know your criticisms and suggestions as soon as possible, so that we can take a clear position in The Militant. I suggest you send copies of your correspondence with us on this matter to Hayden and Oscar.

Comradely,

Ed Shaw

cc: Hayden  
Oscar

San Francisco, California  
October 5, 1966

Los Angeles

Dear Comrades:

According to Louis' report on the conference last weekend, sponsored [by] the Californians for Liberal Representation, the policy followed by the L.A. comrades was one of participation as voting delegates.

At the meeting of National Committee members held at the recent West Coast Vacation School we voted unanimously for a motion dealing with our attitude toward this conference. My understanding of the sense of this motion was that we do not regard this "New Politics" formation in any way as a break from capitalist politics. It is not any concern of ours how the Stalinists, liberals and any other so-called radicals inside the Democratic Party choose to cover their left flank in this year's election. Our task is to counterpose our own politics and expose these formations as an obstacle to genuine independent political action.

It was obvious that there were differences of opinion about this, and that some L.A. comrades viewed this grouping as a potential break from the Democratic Party which we should greet and participate in. But no such opinion was presented as a motion and everyone agreed that we would not be official participants in the conference. Rather, we would use the occasion to present our election propaganda, sell our literature and explain to anyone friendly to our ideas why we did not view this type of formation as any alternative whatever to capitalist politics in or outside the Democratic Party.

On the basis of Louis' description and my reading of the leaflet prepared for distribution to the conference I can only conclude that the L.A. comrades did not follow the policy we agreed on, nor the general policy followed by the party in relation to the "new politics" groups. Your attitude toward the CLR conference appears to me to be one of adaptation to a political grouping inside the Democratic Party.

I most strenuously object to the course you seem to be pursuing. Unless this matter can be clarified I intend to raise it formally at the forthcoming plenum of the national committee.

Comradely,

Bob Himmel

cc: National Office

San Francisco, Calif.  
October 10, 1966

Ed Shaw  
New York

Dear Ed,

Yesterday the NC members in the Bay Area met to discuss the recent Power and Politics Conference in Los Angeles.

It is clear that our evaluation of this development is different than the one expressed in Hayden's article.

We are preparing a general statement of our collective views which will be sent within the next few days. Since we wanted to give the subject careful thought it is our opinion that we do this independently of one or another Militant deadline.

From the point of view of achieving clarity on an important political question we suggest holding off on the article until there is an opportunity for an exchange of ideas.

Comradely,

Bob Himmel

cc: Oscar, Hayden

San Francisco, Calif.  
October 14, 1966

Ed Shaw  
New York

Dear Ed:

The enclosed statement represents the views of the Bay Area NC members on the recent L.A. conference and the New Politics groupings in California. Pete's draft was approved in general outline at the NC meeting last Sunday. Most of the NC members have seen the revised article since that time. Paul and Nat have not, and may want to add something after they have read it. If so, their comments will be forwarded.

Asher asked that the following comment be added:

"According to the current issue of The Movement, organ of California SNCC, 'there was a lot of politics and no power at the conference called by CLR on the weekend of October 1st.' SNCC is right. The politics were those of frustrated left Democrats, hurt because the Democratic Party provided them no Gubernatorial candidate they could support. They were powerless because they are tied to capitalist politics."

Comradely,

Bob Himmel

cc: Paul M., Pete, Nat, Asher,  
Oscar, Hayden.

October 10, 1966

## Analysis of CLR-CNP Development in California

1. The "reform" or "liberal" wing of the Democratic Party in California has recently undergone a period of substantial growth. These formations have traditionally been composed of a variety of elements. Some of the typical types include Stalinists seeking coexistence, minority "leaders" seeking personal gains, social democrats, and opportunistic middle-class liberals. This layer has now been augmented by new sections: a substantial number of student antiwar types and an increased response from the intellectual and professional community affected by the antiwar movement.

2. The antiwar movement has been partially siphoned off into this milieu and thus the milieu itself has been partially altered. It is this process whose effects were evident at the recent L.A. CLR conference. We should analyze its direction and tempo and formulate our approach to it only after we establish its class base and program clearly.

3. The CNP-CLR forces are strictly petty-bourgeois, although occasionally a capitalist may be involved. There is no labor or Negro base within it. The organized labor movement, including Chavez, etc., remains solidly within the regular Democratic Party machine. The active Negroes within the CNP-CLR are either the typical Negro Democratic Party candidates, or represent tiny "community" groups. The base of the CNP-CLR is students and middle-class professionals.

4. The literature of the CNP-CLR, its public spokesmen, and its electoral campaigns have all established its programmatic position quite clearly. There is no break with capitalist politics in any way whatsoever. There is not one piece of literature put out by them that opposes capitalism, calls for a workers government, supports socialism, etc. They call for a "representative democratic government." Their key programmatic demand is that the present representatives do not correctly represent their constituency and therefore new and better candidates are needed. They want candidates who will support a series of typically middle-class "reforms." The CNP states, "We will only support candidates who fight for our needs, whether these candidates are Democrats or Republicans or Independents." Their whole approach is the classical middle-class approach of seeking an individual liberal candidate. The individualist criterion is placed above and apart from class or party. This is to be expected since they do not hold that classes exist as such. It follows that party affiliation is therefore purely a tactical question for them. No section within the CNP-CLR has questioned this overall approach.



5. There is nothing new in terms of class composition or program. What is new is that the student antiwar elements tend to favor a principled stand toward the Vietnamese right to self-determination and have been burned by the LBJ-Goldwater experience. As the CNP states, "In 1964 many of us voted for Lyndon Johnson because we thought that defeat of Goldwater would constitute indirect representation. We were wrong but we shall not make that mistake again." Recognition that voting for Johnson did not work out is not really very much. It simply offers us a starting point in trying to explain our class conception of politics. There is no indication anywhere that the conscious understanding in these layers has gone beyond rejecting LBJ as too evil for lesser-evilism, although they do speak against the concept of lesser-evilism.

6. The rejection of Brown which took place at the recent CLR conference and which is the basis for all sorts of grandiose claims by left elements in the CNP was nothing more than a rejection of Brown as an individual who does not meet the necessary requirements for their approval. This was a victory for the student elements since the traditional established forces preferred to support Brown. The CP, which is the largest socialist tendency within these formations, was primarily concerned with maintaining unity between the "liberal" or traditional coalitionist and the "radical" or student wing. This was especially true of the Northern California CP which is under more direct pressure from the student milieu. The CP, of course, will support Brown and is unhappy over the rift created within the CLR-CNP on this question. Some formula which appeared to reject a repetition of the Johnson-Goldwater business was necessary if the CLR-CNP hoped to keep their recent student recruits. The conference gave the left wing an overwhelming majority on this point, but then could muster no more than 15 out of some 1500 delegates for an alternative candidate. Usually there are endless numbers of those in these milieus, but apparently, at the critical moment none could be found.

7. The phenomena of a massive vote against Brown and then no alternative candidate is easily explained by their general approach. The third party talk is mostly hot air. It is a left cover for the "socialists" involved, and demagoguery by Scheer and Company. The split within their ranks which would result in a rejection of Democratic Party factional politicking, which the "third party" advocates want, is unthinkable at this time. The motion instead is toward loose electoral groups such as the CNP which run candidates or endorse candidates within the two parties with occasional "independent" campaigns where it is easy to get on the ballot. To some of the CNP-CLR'ers this in itself is already a sort of third party.

8. But even if the "left" wing of the CNP, which has as its most radical components SDS, PL, ISC, Spartacist and left independents, were to gain a solid majority of the CNP-CLR all they would be is a third liberal capitalist party and a rather pitiful one at that.

9. The students within the CNP-CLR feel they won at the conference and are enthusiastic over a third party perspective. The question has been put off until March of 1967 at which time another conference will be held.

10. Instead of the recent conference having indicated a break from "coalition" politics as the suggested Militant article indicates it was a victory for class collaborationist politics, in fact, pro-Democratic Party politics, although it did express the developing anger of young people toward the "establishment" and a rejection of compromise with their idealist feelings. The conference helped solidify the large number of students who have been drawn into capitalist electoral politicking. And it involved for the first time our ultra-left critics in a Democratic Party formation; that is, PL, ISC, Spartacist, and even the Committee for the Fourth International. These socialist groups in the past had all opposed working within the Democratic Party. They are now providing a left cover for the CNP development.

11. The joining of the CNP by the ultra-lefts provides us with an excellent opportunity to expose their petty-bourgeois base.

12. Our approach should be first of all to make it crystal clear that the SWP and YSA are not part of the CNP-CLR. Secondly, we should explain our position in a carefully thought out way and in an explanatory tone. Thirdly, we must recognize and explain to our own cadre the simple fact that our program on this question is unpopular with the student movement in which we are working. To them our position appears simply sectarian. There is nothing we can do to get around that. Our own campaigns and our opposition to LBJ in 1964 aid us substantially in explaining our position. On the one hand we indicate that we recognize the value of electoral activity and that we who recognized LBJ before any one else, etc., must have something on the ball.

13. We must not get caught up in setting forth a list of criteria under which we would enter or support a new formation or candidate. Instead our approach should be to emphasize that intellectuals, students, and so on can help the working class by building a socialist movement. This must become our emphasis. Demands that they call for a labor party, quit the Democratic Party, establish democratic internal processes, go to the masses, etc., etc. within the strictly middle-class milieu involved can only lead to confusion.

14. The best arena of work within this milieu remains our independent antiwar formations. It is precisely there where we have the maximum tactical flexibility to participate and recruit.

Comradely,

Pete Camejo  
for the Bay Area NCers

Los Angeles, California  
October 12, 1966

Political Committee

Dear Comrades:

Enclosed please find a statement on the points requested in the letter of Comrade Shaw dated October 4th.

The L.A. branch has adopted the general line of this statement.

We hope this information will help the P.C. to evaluate the events here.

We are also enclosing a copy of the document on independent politics distributed to the conference, the call for the conference and our California election platform.

We are sending a copy of our statement to the San Francisco, Oakland and San Diego branches for their information.

Fraternally,

Milton Alvin, for the  
Los Angeles Branch

## Los Angeles Statement on Conference on Power and Politics

Meetings of National Committee members present were held at the West Coast Vacation School encampment over the Labor Day weekend. Two main questions were discussed: (1) SWP policy in the gubernatorial contest in California this year; (2) SWP policy towards a projected conference scheduled for Los Angeles Sept. 30, Oct. 1 and 2, sponsored by Californians for Liberal Representation. The conference was advertised as one on Power and Politics.

On the election policy, differences of opinion on whether or not to run a state-wide write-in slate had been expressed. Southern California branches of the party wanted to run; Bay Area branches did not. At the meetings held in camp it was agreed to run candidates. Los Angeles was to furnish a candidate for governor, Bay Area branches a candidate for Lt. Governor and San Diego a candidate for another post, if they could.

On the second point, differences appeared during the discussion. Los Angeles comrades wanted to participate in the forthcoming conference. They pointed out that it was expected to draw two to three thousand participants, most of whom would come from the antiwar and other movements that we want to reach. Some of the Bay Area comrades objected to any participation beyond distributing our literature, claiming we should have nothing to do with such a formation which did not really represent a break with the Democratic Party.

After discussion a motion was adopted as follows:  
(1) to intervene in the conference with our political line;  
(2) to take no responsibility for the conference or its decisions. This was precisely the policy followed by the Los Angeles comrades.

The conference was organized in such a way that any individual who wanted to take part in it had only to register and pay a one dollar fee. He was thereupon made a "delegate" There were no delegates, as we normally understand that term, from organizations, elected to attend the conference and represent their organizations. In other words, the conference had an ad hoc character about it, much as many gatherings have in the movements of dissent in these times. The obvious reason for this is that there is no mass political organization in this country that enjoys the support of oppositional elements.

No one was asked, in the call for the conference or at any other time, to assume responsibility for it and its decisions. Despite the wishes of those who called the conference, who wanted to make it a vehicle for staying in the Democratic Party, it turned out to be a wide open kind of affair, where

everyone's ideas and proposals were heard rather than one where tight organization, program and activities resulted.

Also in attendance were all the left wing parties and groups in the state, hundreds of activists from the antiwar movement, people from the Black ghettos, from the Mexican-American community and assorted others. An estimated 2,500 attended, almost 2,100 of these registered as delegates.

The organizers tried to put across a two-thirds rule for passing motions. The L.A. branch decided to oppose this bureaucratic measure. The motion lost and the conference voted that a simple majority would decide.

As the Los Angeles branch estimated in advance of the conference, only one real issue of substance was to be decided there. That was whether to support Gov. Brown for re-election, as the right-wing liberals and the Communist Party wanted, or to oppose both candidates of the major parties.

We adopted the policy that SWP'ers at the conference introduce motions in the workshops that our slate in the state-wide elections be supported by the conference. This was done. The idea received a friendly reception and some support in some of the workshops but our people did not bring it to the floor in the plenary sessions.

The conference divided into two distinct groups. The right wing consisted of the sponsors of the conference supported by the CP and an official from the International Longshoremens and Warehousemens Union. The left wing had a clear majority, supported by the younger elements and the other radical groups and parties.

When the right wing saw it could not hope for an endorsement of Brown it brought in a motion not to endorse anyone. But the left wing amended this proposal to oppose both Brown and Reagan. The debate took place over this question. Scheer and his followers from the Bay Area had caucused prior to the plenary session where the debate took place and decided to take a firm stand against both Brown and Reagan. In the discussion at this caucus it was stated by some of those in attendance that they were in disagreement with Scheer's running in the Democratic primary last spring.

The vote on the motion before the conference resulted in a 7 to 5 victory for opposing both Brown and Reagan. Thereupon about 200 ( out of 2,000 ) left the conference after some of their leaders made statements that they could not participate further.

Communist Party leaders were very much in evidence during the conference, beating the bushes for the right wing.

They must have had an agonizing appraisal between late Saturday night, when the decision was made, and the Sunday morning session. At any rate, they did appear on Sunday thereby affirming traditional Stalinist practices of operating as a right wing in the left wing. DuBois Club members were split right down the middle on the critical vote, some supporting the right wing, some the left.

The open support to the pro-Brown elements by the CP and the result of the vote must be considered a heavy defeat for the Communist Party. They stand exposed before the antiwar youth elements who made up the overwhelming majority of the left wing at the conference.

The Los Angeles branch had decided in advance of the conference to counterpose any motion to boycott the election with a motion to support our slate, but if it came to a showdown vote whether to endorse no candidate or to oppose both candidates of the major parties, we would vote to oppose both. This is what we did. A fairly large number of L.A. members and ex-members and sympathizers participated in the conference, attending the various workshops that were held and the plenary sessions. We had a literature table there, as everyone else who wanted one had. A considerable amount of literature was sold.

In addition, 2,000 copies of a special statement entitled "For Independent Political Action," was distributed as well as 2,500 copies of the state election platform. Our propaganda covered the entire gathering and it was reported to us that some old time CP'ers thought this was a "Trotskyist rigged conference." In short, we made a certain impact upon the participants with our statement and election platform in addition to our attendance.

At the last session, held Sunday, after the vote on the gubernatorial race, a number of resolutions were adopted, mostly good. But there was no time to discuss these at the plenary session. They came out of the workshops. But this was anti-climactic, the only meaningful decision had already been made the previous night.

In assessing the weekend's results the Los Angeles comrades think that progress has been made, especially among the young antiwar elements that came to the conference. We had nothing to lose by attending and participating in it. What we had to gain was the opportunity to reach a few thousand people active in various fields in which we are active, or want to take a hand in, with our point of view.

The Los Angeles branch proposes that we continue to maintain the same relationship with the local Committee for New Politics that we have had in recent times. That is, that we

send an observer to their steering committee and some of our members to their meetings. We have made clear that we are not responsible for this group and we have tried to get them to endorse our state candidates. Some of them are willing to do this.

Finally, we think it would have been an error to turn our backs on the developments described above and we think we have made some gains by following the policy agreed upon at the camp. At any rate, the conference results dealt some blows to the concept and practice of lesser evil politics.



New York, N.Y.

Oct. 21, 1966

Dear Milt:

I have been asked to write for The Militant on the "New Politics" development which would probably include its California offspring, the Committee for Liberal Representation.

I read your letter but it does not deal with the central political question involved. I am not concerned with the procedural-organizational controversy which I consider subordinate to the political evaluation made of the recent "Conference on Power and Politics" recently held in Los Angeles.

In the original article submitted under the signature of Gordon Bailey for publication in the paper, which I presume you have seen, the opening paragraph reads:

"Over a thousand Californians have voted against lesser evil politics, and have pledged to oppose Democratic Governor Brown as well as Republican Ronald Reagan in the November election. This very significant step towards a break with coalition politics was taken at a statewide 'Conference on Power and Politics' held in Los Angeles the weekend of Oct. 1." (My emphasis)

Does this represent your view? We have always understood "coalition politics" to be capitalist politics, the politics of class collaboration and not, as could be narrowly construed, as coalition with the Democratic Party. The New Politics group overtly reject the concept of class politics as they do the Marxist concept of the class division of society and class struggle. But their superficial non-class approach is merely a petty bourgeois version of capitalist reform politics in which they presume to resolve all political and social problems within the framework of the capitalist system.

So far as I can determine by the evidence available there was not even the remotest hint of a class approach to politics in any of the declarations and actions taken prior, during or after the Conference on Power and Politics. I note the same absence of a class approach in the article on the conference by Grace Simons in the Oct. 15 National Guardian where she deplores the fact that the gathering failed to consider "the larger question of the need for an independent third party." I don't hold you responsible for what Simons writes in the National Guardian, or anywhere else for that matter, but it does make it imperative that we make it known publicly that Simons does not speak for the Socialist

Workers Party on this question. That is what I propose to do -- to make clear what our position is on working class politics as contrasted to the politics of class collaboration whether of the "third party" coalition or reform variety.

It is this fundamental political question which concerns me and about which I would very much like to have your views.

Comradely,

Tom Kerry

[Faint, mostly illegible text, likely bleed-through from the reverse side of the page]

Los Angeles, Calif.  
October 24, 1966

Dear Tom,

I have your letter of Oct. 21st and I am glad to give you my views on the questions you raise.

I did not see Gordon Bailey's article until he showed me a copy after he received a note from Barry Sheppard that the Bay Area comrades had a different appreciation of the L.A. conference than ours. When I read his copy I told him I disagreed with his evaluation that, "This very significant step towards a break with coalition politics was taken ..." After a short discussion he agreed that he had gone too far and that is when we decided that he should phone N.Y. and ask that this and another evaluation be taken out of the article.

My view of the elements that made up this conference (they can hardly be called a movement in the sense of an organized grouping or party) is that they represent a large sector of the antiwar, pro-civil rights people in California. I am speaking only of the Calif. development as I am not sufficiently informed about other areas. These people are not satisfied with periodic demonstrations against the war and are looking for fields of more effective action. In their search, they have turned to political activity.

Of course they are not a proletarian, proletarian-revolutionary or socialist tendency even though here and there one comes across individuals who so consider themselves. In their turn towards political activity they have made and probably will continue to make mistakes. These take a number of forms including supporting Scheer and similar elements in Democratic primaries and elections, hunting for third parties regardless of class character, etc.

I should add that I am referring not to the handful of leaders but to the thousands that, up to now, make up their following. These latter are the antiwar militants that we want to reach with our ideas. The fact that they are just as petty bourgeois as Scheer, Cassady, etc. should not influence us to turn our backs on them. After all, we have built a youth organization of sorts precisely out of such material.

This is what has influenced us to intervene, wherever it is permissible, in meetings, conferences, etc., to reach these people. We do not agree with the view expressed by Bob Himmel in a letter to us of Oct. 5th, in which he writes,

"It is no concern of ours how the Stalinists, liberals and any other so-called radicals inside the Democratic Party choose to cover their left flank in this year's election." We think it is very much our concern and we have taken and will take steps to utilize the present disaffection with Brown to push our line on political activity.

You are correct in saying there was no class approach to politics in the recent L.A. conference. Actually, as you also state, the elements we are speaking of do not view things in that way. However, they take a good stand on certain questions, such as the war and civil rights. Since they have no formed ideas on political action, it is our duty to pedagogically explain the correct approach. I hope your articles will take that line.

I cannot stress too strongly that we have before us a layer of militants, admittedly petty bourgeois, who are in flux, some moving one way, some another and virtually all ready to give us a hearing. At the recent camp up north two women took the floor in discussion (on Pete's lecture) and complained that while they were working for Scheer in the Democratic primary no one bothered to explain to them what was wrong in that. Now convinced that it was indeed wrong, they still remained unfriendly to the YSA because of this neglect. We should draw a lesson from this experience.

I think the Bay Area NC members are making an error in saying, "14. The best arena of work within this milieu remains our independent antiwar formations. It is precisely there where we have the maximum tactical flexibility to participate and recruit." (from Oct. 10, 1966 Analysis, etc. sent to PC in name of Bay Area NC'ers) This leaves out of account literally thousands of antiwar militants who want to go beyond the limitations of the antiwar movement. We do not agree at all with this approach.

I think you know that Scheer has many more followers than any of the present Bay Area antiwar groups. These are also antiwar elements. The antiwar movement was split at the time of his primary campaign. I think that, without conceding a single thing to Scheer or the idea of running as a Democrat, we should be the ones to take the initiative to heal the split, at any rate, in the antiwar movement. As it is, our people and the Scheer people have no contact since the split and no longer cooperate on questions where they are in agreement. This is wrong and must be corrected.

One last point. We should understand that any new political strivings, even the limited ones that confront us today, must of necessity be tinged with Democratic politics. This is not to say that we should make concessions of any kind; our stand must be rigidly principled, but tactically flexible, at least to the extent of reaching people with

our views. Even the union movement, when it gets around to taking the first steps breaking with capitalist parties will carry over with it all kinds of vestiges of Democratic Party politics. We should be prepared for that because the new movement we are trying to build (at this time our own party, later a Labor Party) must come out of the Democratic Party; that is where the flesh and bones of the new party are at present. They are all tainted and there are no virgins around, at least very few if any.

One more point. In L.A. the branch had extensive discussions on the conference held here prior to its convening. We took the stand that we would not propose the formation of any new party or even running an independent candidate precisely for the reasons, I will not repeat, that your letter mentions. I assure you we are under no illusions about the class character of this "movement" but we did think and do think now that it presented a good opportunity to intervene with our ideas. And how else can one intervene except by going there and speaking up?

Fraternally,

Milton Alvin

Los Angeles, Calif.

Oct. 30, 1966

Dear Tom,

I have read your article in the paper, "Developing Crisis of Coalitionism." I don't know if you got my letter before you wrote it, or if you did, anything in it was of any use to you. I also received a letter from Ed Shaw, dated Oct. 25, 1966, which came after I had written you.

I am not sure if we see eye to eye on the current problems from a tactical standpoint. I am considerably more sure that we in L.A. do not with the Bay Area comrades, judging from their communications and reports we get.

Ed's letter says, "It's not clear what developments with regard to the Bay Area comrades you are apprehensive of. The current differences of evaluation of the Democratic party crisis can and should be discussed without any serious problem." I covered some parts of this point in my letter to you dated Oct. 24th.

It is necessary to say something more. The Democrats have some problems; you discuss these in your article. These are new problems, as you point out, at least they have become sharper since 1964. If, as generally expected, the Democrats lose 20 to 40 seats in the House next election day, this will not be a serious blow; the "in" party normally loses some seats in the off year election. It will be instructive to see what happens, at least as a gauge of the loss in support as a result of Johnson's policies, domestic and foreign.

However, adding up all their difficulties, the elements who normally supported them and who can not go along with the war policy, the Negroes and poverty-stricken people and even the N.Y. unions who are split on the contest for governor and all the rest, I don't think it constitutes a "crisis." The party is still largely intact, unfortunately. What we do have is a series of split-offs such as the Black Panther movement and the California anti-Brown development, the latter being, of course, not fully developed by any means. If the coming election results in a really decisive loss of support to the Democrats, say 100 seats, then we can speak of a crisis. But if the loss is held to the 20 to 40 range, as the polls indicate, it is wrong to refer to the present situation as a crisis. I am not trying to split hairs on what we call this business, just trying for precision since the manner in which we judge the situation determines how and where we concentrate our work.

That this is of considerable importance to us is manifest from the Political Resolution we adopted at the last convention. The document speaks of the future break up of the coalition that makes up the Democratic Party, a coalition that contains disparate elements that must, under the pressure of events eventually break up. What we are going through at this juncture is only a partial, in fact small, manifestation of this process. But even this small development is important to us. We cannot do effective work in the larger sectors such as the union movement at this time. We are limited in what we can do in the movement for Black Power. But among the youth there is a good field in which we can intervene with considerable effect.

The conclusion I draw from an analysis of what we should be doing now and in the immediate future flows directly from this central fact: the youth movement is the place where we can do the most effective work. Therefore, it follows that we must find the road to this youth and speak to them in our press, and in our general propaganda.

About a year ago, when Farrell was on tour, I discussed with him the idea of a series of articles in *The Militant* on the 30-year history of class collaboration politics in this country and the publication of the whole thing as a pamphlet. It seemed to me that we needed this as an educational piece for exactly the kind of situation we are in today which was not hard to anticipate. I was gratified in his agreement and offer to write it himself. I know that practical difficulties prevented him from doing this. But don't we still need it? Can't it be done now? on the basis of whatever results the elections show?

I have been giving some thought to our general theoretical outlook for the development of American politics, as outlined in the theses adopted 20 years ago. I am coming around to the conclusion, based on the experience of these years, that there will be no meaningful building of any large-scale independent movement, from the unions, the Negroes or anywhere else, without our direct participation. This idea forces itself on me because of the failure of any of the disparate elements in the Democratic Party to break with it in the direction of independent politics. I think any new movement, which is of course in the future, depends heavily, perhaps decisively, upon our own aggressive intervention. I also think this is a somewhat different approach to the problem than we have held. I think the party should be educated in the idea that the building of the new movement depends to an enormous extent upon what we do and what we say. No one else, in 20 years and more, has even posed the question in the way we have theoretically. I do not see anyone on the horizon who will. That leaves it up to us.

This brings me back to the situation in the Bay Area and our disagreement with them. I think their problem is that they have nothing to say to those people (largely in the youth) who supported the Scheer campaign except perhaps to ask them to vote for our candidate for governor, as they indicate in their Analysis, etc. of Oct. 10th. I wonder if it has crossed their minds what they would say if we had gone along with the their proposal not to run a write-in slate?

In addition, they conclude in the same document that our best work can be done in the antiwar milieu. Let us take that as our point of departure.

In New York, the largest antiwar center, the movement is unified, everyone belongs to it and participates. If I am not mistaken, some credit for this achievement belongs to us; we have pushed the idea of non-exclusion harder than anyone else. In the Bay Area, the second largest antiwar center, the movement is split. Regardless of where the blame for the split lies, and I would agree with the Bay Area comrades that the Scheer campaign is responsible, is it not our duty to try to unify it? Should we not mount an aggressive campaign to bring all the antiwar elements into a single organization such as you have in New York? Would not such a campaign, sparked by us, remove the image of sectarianism that the Bay Area document says is held by the students? The document says there is nothing (underlined in the original) we can do. This is wrong. We can do something, that is try to unify the antiwar movement.

On this basis, we can reach the Scheer followers, who are considerable in numbers, with our other propaganda, on political action and other questions. Who is going to educate these people and teach them principled politics, if not us?

I think we must teach our own cadres, as Pete calls them, that a great job of education that requires the patience of saints, is before us. In the meantime, cooperation in action on those questions where there is agreement, should be followed. My impression is that there is too ready a tendency on the part of our own people to brush off youth that have ideas other than ours, and not only in Berkeley. I don't want to burden you with this last point on which I intend to write something prior to the next plenum, assuming we will have one in the period prior to the convention.

Finally, on the L.A. Conference. We still have no word from the PC on its opinion of our intervention. The last minutes I received indicate it has not been on the agenda. We would like to know here what the PC thinks, that is, if we were right or the Bay Area comrades. On this point, it seems to me that what must be decisive is this: was this a caucus of some sort of the Democratic Party? (in this case



the form of our intervention was impermissible) or was it a wide open meeting, made up largely of antiwar elements who are thinking of going beyond demonstrations, etc., in which anyone could, and did, participate? (in this case the form of our intervention was correct). To sum up this point and all the foregoing, we are very much concerned with what we say and how we say it to the considerable numbers in the antiwar movement who want to go beyond what has been done since the movement first arose.

Comradely,

Milton Alvin

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[Faint, mostly illegible text on the right side of the page, possibly bleed-through from the reverse side.]

New York, N.Y.  
Nov. 7, 1966

Dear Milt:

It is unfortunate that you will be unable to attend the forthcoming plenum. It would have been good to have a personal discussion to clarify our views on the developing political situation in this country.

From our correspondence thus far I get the distinct impression that we are both concerned with different aspects of the problem. As I wrote in my letter to you under date of Oct. 21, I was not so much concerned with the organizational-procedural (or tactical) controversy between L.A. and the Bay Area in re: the Conference on Power and Politics, as I was about the political evaluation. Did it represent a break, significant or otherwise, from "coalitionism," i.e., the politics of class collaboration. What were the dominant political tendencies represented. Did they constitute a viable social formation moving in the direction of a break with capitalist politics? What did we consider the probable perspective of development, etc., etc.

You, on the other hand, seem to be largely concerned with demonstrating that the form of intervention (tactics) adopted by the L.A. comrades was correct as against the tactics advocated by the comrades in the Bay Area. It is hard for me to judge on the basis of the information now available to me precisely what the tactical differences involved. They will perhaps be made much clearer once we have had an opportunity to discuss the question with the comrades attending the plenum.

Let me briefly review the circumstances that impelled me to undertake this informal exchange of correspondence. First, we received an article from H.P. on the Los Angeles conference characterizing it as a "very significant step towards a break with coalition politics." Then an article appears in the National Guardian over the signature of Grace Simon deploring the fact that the conference failed to "consider the larger question of the need for an independent third party." The question was naturally posed: did these views represent any section of the L.A. leadership or ranks. I conclude from your letters that they did not -- although you do not mention any reaction to the Grace Simon articles in the National Guardian.

Once questions of such fundamental political importance are raised I consider it of far more importance to us than any differences that may have arisen over what tactics to be pursued in one or another conference or in the antiwar move-

ment in general. If we see eye to eye on the principled political line there should be no difficulty in working out a correct tactical approach.

It is good to hear that you intend writing on this whole matter of current political developments. In the meantime would you have any objection to making available to the NC our correspondence on this topic as there is considerable interest in the matter.

Comradely,

Tom Kerry

Los Angeles, Calif.  
Nov. 10, 1966

Dear Tom,

I have your letter of Nov. 7th and I agree that we seem to be concerned with different aspects of the problem.

It seemed to me that there was (and is) agreement in the party on the political evaluation of the so-called New Politics elements. That is why I spent little or no time in analyzing this aspect. I think that the following of this movement consists largely of young people in the antiwar movement, and they are almost entirely of a petty bourgeois class character and that their views reflect the ambivalence of this class. So far as I know, this is largely the view of this tendency held by all the leading comrades here and by the branch. There may be some nuance or shading of different estimates of where they are going, as is only natural, on the part of one or two comrades, but no substantial differences.

So far as Grace Simon is concerned, she is not a spokesman for the party in her National Guardian articles or anywhere else.

I can understand your misgivings when you received the H.P. article. But as I explained in a previous letter, I did not see the article before it was mailed and I do not know if any of the other leading comrades did. At any rate, H.P. was convinced that his evaluation was wrong.

I would like to answer some of your questions point by point. First, did the L.A. conference represent a significant break from the politics of class collaboration? On the face of it, it did not. It would be more accurate to say that the refusal to support Brown revealed that many people were looking for a new answer. Not everyone, but a significant number. The fact that they were unwilling to support the Democrats in the face of a strong Republican challenge led by a Goldwater leader (Reagan was Southern Calif. Chairman for Goldwater in 1964) was important. The fact that the overwhelming majority did not support a candidate of their own or try to form a new party is not necessarily negative. It may have indicated that they were taking a sober look at the situation and that they decided, for one reason or another not to go that route at this time. However, even if we take the position that the conference took no real steps towards breaking with class collaborationism, we must also see that certain possibilities are now open to us that did not exist previously. Under the actual circumstances, their rejection of Brown is a step away from lesser-evil politics

and permits us to bring our ideas on political action into the picture under better conditions than if they did support Brown no matter how reluctantly.

Second, you ask what were the dominant political tendencies represented. At the conference you could find every political tendency to the left of the absolute center in American politics with the exception of the SLP. There were the dead center liberals, the left-liberals, the CP, all the smaller groups like Spartacists, PL, CFFI, etc., and ourselves. As I have written previously, it was a wide open forum for all kinds of views rather than a controlled conference under the domination of any single political tendency. It must also be said that the majority of those attending were not particularly identified with any of the established political tendencies; they were the young antiwar elements looking for some answers. We must conclude from the composition of the conference, as well as the results, that no single political tendency dominated the conference. The fact that the only meaningful decision, not to support Brown or Reagan, in other words, to do nothing, was all that came out of the conference (in addition to calling another meeting in the spring of 1967) testifies to the formlessness of the whole thing and to the fact that nothing has been settled yet by these people.

Next, you ask if they constitute a viable social formation moving in the direction of a break with capitalist politics and what do we consider their probable development. If there is one thing that is sure, in my opinion, they do not represent a viable social formation moving towards a break with capitalist politics or anywhere else. I think the political tides and storms will wash them away in time. I do not think there is room in our time for a viable formation of a petty bourgeois character to play an independent role in politics. Eventually, this grouping must break apart and go in different directions.

It is at this point that our tactics towards them become invested with a great importance, especially since we do not have favorable circumstances and conditions in other arenas of work. If we intervene in a meaningful way, pedagogically, with patience, we can win over those who can be convinced of acting in a principled way in politics. The others will, in one way or another, move towards capitalist politics.

I do not think that we here in L.A. have any different principled approach to this problem than you have or even the Bay Area comrades have. That is not the area in which we have a disagreement. It is over tactical questions that we do not see eye to eye with the comrades up north. This is clear from the letter of Bob Himmel to us and from the statement of the NC'ers there. Their policy seems to turn away

from those who are now questioning lesser evil politics and those who have rejected Brown in the face of a right wing Republican threat. We, on the other hand, see this development as an opportunity.

In connection with this point, I hope the plenum evaluates our work in the antiwar movement and projects some ideas for future developments. We must, I think, conclude that the kinds of activities that the movement has engaged in up to now are becoming less attractive. Recent nationwide and local mobilizations, days of protest, etc., are not drawing as well as they did. In California, north and south, a considerable number of antiwar people are looking for other, more effective ways to act. Most of them seek some kind of political solution to the problem. I heard part of a speech by Stokely Carmichael last night on the radio in which he stated in the strongest way that the moral approach to the solution of the Negro question was all wrong and should be abandoned. He advocated a political solution, although he is not clear on what kind of politics.

At the same time he attacks Brown, Reagan, Johnson, Rusk, McNamara, etc., in the most unrestrained manner. Doesn't he represent a tendency among the younger Negroes to find some other answers in the struggle for Black Power not unlike the tendency in the antiwar (white) movement? I think both tendencies are groping for political solutions. Doesn't this offer opportunities to us that have been absent up to now? For some time the Negro movement was dominated by demonstrations, marches, protests of various kinds designed to show the immoral aspects of discrimination and segregation. Similarly, the antiwar movement demonstrations stressed the immoral character of the intervention in Vietnam. In both cases, of course, certain political overtones, slogans, etc., were also present.

I think we have to try to estimate if there is not a change taking place, both in the antiwar and Negro movements, that calls for a change in our tactics. As I see it, considerably larger numbers of people are looking to political activity as the only road to the solution of current problems. This is what we must orient to in an educational manner, bearing in mind the background of the elements that make up these movements. It would be a mistake on our part, as I indicated in a previous letter, to confine ourselves to building a single issue antiwar movement as the answer to all questions.

Since we are opposed in principle to advocating the formation of a new party of a petty bourgeois type, we must find a bridge between the present consciousness of those in motion and our program. This does not lend itself to easy solutions. But, as a friend of mine advised me in connection with another

matter, there is no such thing as a problem, only an opportunity. That is why I suggested that the Bay Area comrades, who are in the second largest antiwar center, mount a campaign to unify the movement which is now split. This, at least, will put them into closer contact with others that we should reach. It will also help to dispel the image of sectarianism that they seem to think nothing can help.

If you agree with me that we are passing through a changing situation, and I hope you do, and that there is a certain groping and flux in the direction of political action, on the part both of the Negro and antiwar movements, doesn't this require that we adjust ourselves to the new situation?

Undoubtedly the current stage of the motion that is taking place revolves around discussion of possible lines of political action rather than action itself. What is important in the situation is that involved here are young people, from the campuses, SNCC and CORE, who have not gone through any kind of political experiences, who are not identified or tied to existing political tendencies. Our experience is that they are willing to give us a hearing. In many cases, their response is friendly to our ideas.

One of the Bay Area comrades told me that what scares these people off is the YSA's Leninist organizational principles. Can it be that the YSA is not attractive to some of the youth because it is too tight? My impression is that it is harder for one to join the YSA than the party.

If we see the present situation as one in which we should intervene in a broad discussion of politics with the antiwar and Negro movements, if we project this from the starting point that they themselves see political solutions as the necessary ones, if we take the election results as the best proof that there is no hope in the capitalist parties or any sections of them, then we must take steps to make it easier for us to reach all who will give us a hearing. In other words, we must loosen up things so that the atmosphere of a full and free discussion takes place. I think it would be well to start among our own youth, to convince them that they should carry a campaign of education into the movements where they are already involved and to make it easy to join the YSA.

Comradely,

Milton Alvin

P.S. I have no objection to publishing our correspondence. I suggest that if you do, the L.A. statement on the New Politics Conference, the Bay Area NC statement and the letter to us from Bob Himmel should be included to round out the picture.