September 10, 1974

TO THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE

Dear Comrades,

Enclosed is a copy of a letter received today from the Socialist Union in answer to Barry Sheppard's letter of August 12, 1974. Earlier material pertaining to this matter was sent to you on September 7, 1974.

Comradely,

Gus Horowitz

August 28, 1974

Received 9/7/74

Socialist Workers Party
c/o Barry Sheppard

Dear Comrades:

We received your letter of August 12, 1974. The ostensible purpose of the letter is (1) to solicit a written counter-proposal from us regarding collaboration, (2) determine (a) how many members of the Socialist Union hold to the opinion of Comrade Mickey H. and exactly what our political evaluation of the SWP is, and (b) what relationship we see between our application for membership and the demand of the expelled IT members for reintergration in the SWP.

If this were the real purpose of the letter, it would be entirely superfluous, since all this was fully dealt with in our discussion of August 10, which you have on tape. (Incidentally, we will contact you shortly for a copy of the tapes as per our agreement.)

We are reluctantly compelled to conclude that the real purpose of your otherwise unnecessary letter, with its slanted account of the proceedings of the meeting of August 10, was not written for our benefit, but for a much broader audience, i.e., for propaganda purposes.

We will, therefore, reply for the benefit of the same audience, on the assumption that you will distribute copies of this letter to all those who received yours.

We did indeed reject your proposal for "collaboration" between the SWP and SU, because, in our opinion, it was not a proposal for collaboration at all, but for the dissolution of the SU and assignment of its assets to the SWP without the benefits of membership, and without the slightest assurance that we ever would be accepted into membership. You propose that our "political work in all areas" be carried out "in collaboration with and under the direction of the L.A. SWP branches." (our emphasis) This is then spelled out in clear detail: our money, our time, our energies, our fractions, our classes, (hence, our contacts), are all to be placed at the disposal of the SWP. This naturally means, in effect, that we drain our own organization of all its resources, while helping to "build the SWP."

But, you ask: why if we want to join the SWP do we object to building it? We offerred to dissolve our organization entirely and help build the SWP as loyal disciplined members. We did not offer to dissolve SU to become loyal disciplined non-members. If we are not permitted to work as first class members of the SWP, with full rights, then we have no choice but to work through our

own organization which, unavoidably, and through no fault of ours, places us in competition with the SWP. You cannot have it both ways; you cannot expect us to abandon our independent organization and freeze us out of the SWP at the same time. We decline to become an auxiliary of the SWP without voice or vote in its decisions.

But perhaps we should trust you to open the closely guarded doors to us in good time, (3 months? 6 months? 6 years?), if we prove our good faith? But your insistance on a prior period of collaboration means that you have doubts about us, and need to test us. Why then do you expect us to demonstrate complete confidence in you? If there is to be a period of testing it will be mutual testing, which means that we will really collaborate, and that means as independent organizations, without any subordination on either side. But beside all that, have you forgotten so soon...we have been through all this before! When the comrades, then organized in Liberation Union, applied for membership, you were ready to accept all, (without this kind of so-called "collaboration"), except Comrade Zaslow, the founder and organizer of the group. He was to go through this kind of "collaboration" first, and then if all went well, he would be able to join his comrades in the SWP. Although it was a bitter pill, they decided to "trust" you, and went along in good faith. Eight comrades joined the SWP, and Comrade Zaslow "collaborated" from the outside. What was the upshot? After 6 months, he was interrogated for 6 hours - on tape - in a deliberate attempt to dig out every possible difference (which he never tried to hide), and was then rejected, not for faulty " collaboration" at all, but for having certain opinions.....opinions which were widely held within the Fourth International and the SWP.

The letter sent to Comrade Zaslow informing him of his rejection did not refer, by a single word, to any failure in "collaboration", only to his differences. Above all he was barred because he refused to confess that in 1953 he "participated in an unprincipled bloc with the aim of liquidating the party." But all this could have been ascertained by asking him these questions before the "collaboration!"

Furthermore, Comrade Zaslow has still not changed his mind. Why then are you proposing to accept him now, i.e., after an unspecified period of "collaboration?" Have you decided that you were wrong after all in excluding him because of his differences? If so, it would be good to hear that from you. If not, then the proposal to "collaborate" - once more - prior to being accepted into membership, is a hoax.

So, to sum up: we applied for membership in the SWP. You refuse to let us in without a testing period. We don't think that it is necessary, but if you insist, our reply is then we will both test each other.

That is, we propose a period of genuine collaboration. We propose that we agree upon a number of areas that seem most suitable for

cooperation. We have in mind, for example, the campaign against the use of violence on the left, which has stirred up much interest and discussion in left wing circles, and has already put the Stalinist hoodlum elements on the defensive. It offers an excellent opportunity for educating newly radicalized youth on the question of workers democracy and principled relations among working class organizations. We can collaborate on a common policy for the struggle against those who are attempting to sabotage this effort. We observed regretfully that the SWP, although invited verbally and in writing, was one of the few left organizations that was not represented at the first conference on August 17.

We think the Lawton-Gardner frame-up trial is another issue around which we can work together. The trial is scheduled to begin on September 26, and the interest and tempo of activities should increase.

Regarding classes; we think it might be a good idea if there were cross representation, i.e., if some of our members participated in your classes, and vice-versa.

Where we have common fractions, we suggest that joint fraction meetings be held, with the participation of one or more representatives of both executive committees, in an attempt to arrive at common policies.

As part of an overall plan of collaboration, SU would declare its support for the SWP candidates, would supply speakers at election rallies, forums, etc., and would issue campaign literature. We must say frankly, however, that we do not attach the same importance to this particular election campaign as you do, (especially since you are compelled to conduct a write-in campaign), and therefore could not give it the high priority that you do.

We are open to suggestions for other areas of cooperation.

Now, on the matter of Comrade Mickey H.'s letter of resignation, which you quoted so extensively (and which had previously been read by you to us at the meeting). As we have already told you, these are Comrade Mickey's personal views, and not those of the group. What is your purpose in raising this question again? You should be pleased to know Comrade Mickey has not been lost to the movement, that indeed she is an active, responsible member of our executive committee, and is our literature director. You should instead be asking yourselves how you managedso completely to alienate such a fine young comrade. In any case, she has told you that she is prepared to rejoin if the entire SU group is accepted, and work as a disciplined member.

Regarding Comrade Zaslow's comments in response to your question as to whether he considered the SWP to be healthy, he replied that he thought the party suffered from a certain illness, but not fatally so. He refused to absolutely guarantee that it could be reformed.

Finally, with regard to the IT comrades whom you have recently purged. Since they are our co-thinkers, their fate is naturally not a matter of indifference to us. We obviously wish to be associated with them, and therefore we see the question of the reintegration of the IT comrades in the SWP and the acceptance of the SU comrades as being closely related.

We take this occasion to express our outrage at the expulsion of the entire opposition tendency without a pretense of a trial - without written charges, without a hearing, without an opportunity to defend themselves. There is absolutely no precedent for this in the history of the Trotskyist movement. Even the Trotskyist left oppositionists were accorded the formality of a trial in the Stalinized C.I. This constitutes a scandal which will terribly damage the reputation of Trotskyism, and provide invaluable ammunition to all of our enemies. It is a particularly reprehensible act when we recall that you raised an enormous hue and cry when the IMG national committee voted to censure one comrade without written charges, a hearing, etc. etc. We think that this achieves a new low in hypocrisy and cynicism.

Comradely,

Milt Zaslow

Milton Zaslow, for
Socialist Union

P.S. We just learned that you have rejected the request of the City Terrace chapter of the La Raza Unida Party that you withdraw your candudates running in the East L.A. elections, inasmuch as it (LRUP) is running a full slate, and you claim to support it.

As you know, several of our comrades are members of LRUP-City Terrace, and are very active in its campaign. We, of course, support its full slate of candidates, even though critically, since its election platform falls far short of a revolutionary socialist program. This organization, its candidates and program reflect, even if inadequately, the interests of the masses of the barrio as against the Democratic and Republican agents of their exploiters and oppressors, and it has the support of the more advanced strata of these masses. The SWP is completely isolated in the community. Your profession of support to the LRUP candidates, while you run in direct competition with them, can only appear to Chicano militants as pure hypocracy. We think your policy in this matter is sectarian, arrogant and insensitive.

We therefor favor the withdrawal of your candidates in that election, and will not support them if they run.

MZ