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14 Charles Lane  
New York, N.Y. 10014  
July 16, 1971

TO ALL NC MEMBERS

Dear Comrades,

Enclosed is some correspondence between the National Office and Comrade David Keil.

This material is for the information of National Committee members only. It is not for general membership distribution.

Comradely,

*Jack Barnes*  
s/Jack Barnes  
Organization Secretary

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David Keil  
3523 Hennepin Ave. S.  
Mpls., Minn. 55408  
Feb. 25, 1971

To the P.C.:

Dear Comrades,

Enclosed is a copy of my article, "The European Sections' Activity in the Working Class and our Trade Union Work." I submitted it to the Party Builder before Oberlin, and it was rejected because "it deals in part with policy and line questions that are not now under discussion."

I am considering resubmitting it for the pre-convention discussion coming up, together perhaps with an article explaining better what I think should be done and why.

(I still, by the way, don't consider these articles to be raising immediate political differences in the party, only organizational and policy questions.)

I have shown my July article to a number of comrades who I thought might be interested in it or agree with it. I also showed it to Ken S., after we got into an informal discussion on our orientation to the working class. He told me that, since it is not a pre-convention discussion period, it might be best for me not to show the article to comrades, since the other side has had no chance to answer it. Since then, I haven't been showing the article to people.

I would like to ask you, do I have the right or permission to show this article to comrades before the pre-convention discussion starts? In any case, I would not distribute it to any and all comrades, just those I think might agree with it or to better show my position to comrades with whom I get into a discussion.

I also have another question. I have heard that some other comrades have asked the P.C. a related question. From one source, I heard that they asked for permission to form a faction and were refused, and from another I have heard that they asked for permission or whether they had the right to co-author a document even though they lived in different cities, and were refused.

(I hope that neither version is true: I hope nobody in the party is trying to form a faction, and on the other hand I hope the comrades have the right to co-author documents freely.)

So I would like to ask, does one have the right or permission to co-author a discussion article (or even a resolution, for that matter) with anybody one pleases, and if so, when? Before a pre-convention period, or during, or when?

The matter isn't urgent, but I hope you will reply soon so that my confusion will be ended.

Comradely,  
s/David Keil

Copy to Ken S., Charles S.

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14 Charles Lane  
New York, N.Y. 10014  
March 22, 1971

TWIN CITIES

David Keil

Dear David,

In re: your letter of February 25, concerning proper procedure governing internal discussion within the party, I call your attention to the resolution adopted by the 1965 convention on "The Organizational Character of the SWP." This document is available to all members and I'm sure copies are available in the branch.

I call your attention especially to the section of "Factionalism and Party Unity" which deals with the problem of selective discussions prior to our regular pre-convention discussion period.

I would commend this official compendium of our organizational principles and practices as a more reliable and authentic source than the anonymous authorities cited in your letter on the question of our alleged refusal to grant "permission to form a faction," and the "right to co-author" discussion documents.

We are about to enter our pre-convention discussion period. The opening date of the discussion will be made known to all party members through official action of the National Committee. You may, at that time, submit whatever material you wish for publication in the internal discussion bulletin, whether singly authored or co-authored by multiple signers, for circulation to the entire membership.

I trust that neither corridor gossip nor malicious rumors to the contrary will deter you from fully exercising your right to submit your views and opinions, not to just a select few, but to the entire membership for free and full discussion.

Comradely,  
s/Jack Barnes  
Organization Secretary

cc: C. Scheer  
H. Scheer  
K. Shilman

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1 University Ave. N.E.  
Mpls., Minn. 55413

July 11, 1971

To the P.C.

Dear Comrades,

Enclosed is a preliminary draft of a proposed amendment to the NC draft political resolution, which I am presently circulating in order to obtain suggestions and sponsors. It will be submitted to the internal bulletin once whatever changes may be necessary are made.

I am sending it to you now for your information. Of course, I am also very interested to know whether you would consider it a counter-line. I think that to know this as soon as possible would bring political clarification to comrades who tend to agree with "For A Proletarian Orientation."

The enclosed draft is not for publication in the internal bulletin. I expect that it will be submitted, in a form very similar to the present one, in a week or two.

Comradely,  
s/David Keil

(Preliminary -- not for publication in the internal bulletin.)

PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO THE NC POLITICAL RESOLUTION "PERSPECTIVES  
AND LESSONS OF THE NEW RADICALIZATION" (draft)

The document "For A Proletarian Orientation" is a good initial criticism of the party's orientation. Its essence and thrust are correct. It has certain weaknesses, however.

The most important is that, as a counter-resolution, "For A Proletarian Orientation" is inadequate and represents a mistaken approach. It does not discuss a number of questions, points which the party traditionally includes in its political resolutions. These include a discussion of the character of the present period, and a characterization of our opponents. It does not discuss the tactics needed for a "proletarian orientation."

"For A Proletarian Orientation" is mistaken in saying that the party has given up its proletarian orientation. The proletarian orientation of the party is expressed in its working class program and in its long-range perspective for a socialist revolution carried out by the working class under the leadership of the proletarian party. These, the program and perspective, are correct and there is general agreement on them. What is really under discussion is the orientation of the party's practical, day-to-day work. This question is not simply one of a few tactics, but nor is it one of principle. There is no disagreement over programmatic line, so the clearest way to express criticisms of the NC draft resolution would be in the form of an amendment rather than a counter-resolution.

It is necessary for the party to discuss the concrete forms of propaganda work which should be carried out in the trade unions and in the direction of workers, in the present situation. To show what is meant by a proletarian orientation of our work, it must be explained what actual possibilities there are, what difficulties and limitations there will be in our work among workers, and what tasks impose themselves on us. "For A Proletarian Orientation" does not do this adequately.

We are now seeing a strike wave in the United States. Workers, despite their trade union bureaucracies, have used the most militant tactics, as in the New York city workers' strike. New layers of workers, organized in newly developing trade union formations, have gone on strike unexpectedly, as in the case of teachers and the postal workers. Railway workers and others have struck in face of injunctions and open government

strike-breaking. The employers are responding with attempts at union busting, such as the Boulwar tactic of GE, the forcing of long strikes combined with stockpiling of products, and such government measures as the abrogation of the Davis-Bacon law. All this takes place in the midst of a hated imperialist war, inflation and unemployment, as well as a general student-led radicalization which the NC resolution discusses.

Therefore, even for those who wrongly believe that the class struggle comes to a halt at times, it is incorrect to say that the workers "are not now in motion." Our party has the only program which meets the objective needs of the working masses. It is our duty to outline a plan of intervention in the working class, to put the program in practice. The fact that the present period is for us a propaganda period only means that our work among workers will be mainly propaganda work. We must not expect to lead mass class battles right away, or even find a situation where we can lead caucuses to overthrow the union bureaucracy. Rather we must outline a realistic set of tasks, foreseeing many difficulties and limitations. Above all, a propaganda period is not one in which we stay out of the working class, but one in which we assemble cadres from all parts of the society, orienting our propaganda work toward the proletariat as a priority.

"For A Proletarian Orientation" is mistaken in saying as its concrete proposal (which is not explained), that we must colonize basic industry massively, an operation for which "all comrades should be considered." This proposal is not realistic or justified. Rather, what is needed is an outline of work to be carried out by all comrades, trade union or not, to implement a proletarian orientation.

The NC political resolution, "Perspectives and Lessons of the New Radicalization," on the other hand, is more complete than "For A Proletarian Orientation" in some regards, but it has important weaknesses of its own. Its assessment of our opponents deals primarily with tactics rather than programmatic and principled differences. While it does not explicitly reject all colonization of trade unions and industry at this time, its vague treatment of this subject might lead one to believe that it does. The resolution also lacks clarity in dealing with the party's general perspectives with regard to the working class, and its tasks in allocation of forces. The resolution should discuss the party's methods of recruiting, training and assimilating cadres, instead of saying there are no general rules about this. It should also discuss what our priority areas of work are.

If it is not certain which trade unions will revolutionize, or whether or not there will be a labor party, then the implications of these new "uncertainties" for our party should be discussed. The NC resolution poses these "uncertainties," but does not discuss the implications. For example, should we begin supporting formations outside and counterposed to the unions? Should we make our support for a future labor party conditional? These are some incorrect conclusions which might be drawn from these "uncertainties."

Finally, the NC resolution doesn't discuss the need for a proletarian orientation of our work. This is a most serious weakness, so it is necessary to enumerate a number of steps which could be taken in order to restore to the party the correct proletarian orientation. The need for a discussion in the world Trotskyist movement of a concrete plan of orientation toward the working class was called for by Comrade Peng Shu-tse in 1969 in his document "Return to the Road of Trotskyism." As Comrade Peng wrote then, "...the reorientation toward and integration into the working class is the most urgent task facing our movement today." As he said, "The student movement must be considered secondary and subordinate to this orientation. (P) Our orientation toward the working class must, above all, be concretely based on our work in the trade unions." (page 21, International Information Bulletin Number 5, March 1969, 30 cents)

Comrade Frank Lovell's article "Have We Given Up Our Proletarian Orientation?" is a valuable and positive contribution to the discussion on our orientation. In it he points out certain weaknesses of "For A Proletarian Orientation." But, on the whole, this article does not refute the main point of "For A Proletarian Orientation," that the party must orient its work and attention more toward the proletariat.

The title itself of Comrade Lovell's article indicates agreement that a proletarian orientation is needed. The discussion, then, is on what we mean by a proletarian orientation. More precisely, the discussion should be on whether we should have a proletarian orientation of our present work.

While pointing out that being rooted in the trade unions is no guarantee of success, he favors "being rooted in the unions, as any party that hopes to lead the proletarian revolution in this country must be...."

Comrade Lovell writes, "We did not then [1954] and we do not now neglect the union movement. Beginning in 1954 and extending right down to the present moment we have invited official

representatives, rank-and-file critics, and aspiring leaders of the unions to our forums to air their opinions on every political issue." This is good. But is our practice adequate in this regard? In Minneapolis, a branch which is not lax in the attention it pays to the labor movement in comparison with other branches, there was one forum in the 1970-71 season which was oriented to the labor movement. And at that forum, though a comrade spoke and it was a successful meeting, no special publicity effort was made to draw workers, no speakers outside the party were invited. It is not likely that many forums such as Comrade Lovell describes were held in many other branches.

In order to find a pamphlet by us about the labor movement which is in any way comprehensive, it is necessary to go back to 1967: "Recent Trends in the Labor Movement." As Comrade Lovell says, "Recent Trends in the Labor Movement" should be re-read now because these trends have deepened in the last five years; but also because we have issued nothing like it in the last five years! No longer do we see articles like Comrade Dobbs' "The Case for an Independent Labor Party" in The Militant. Though the Pathfinder output and The Militant coverage on the labor movement are good and may have improved in many ways, neither is sufficient for the kind of proletarian orientation that is needed.

Comrade Lovell discusses Militant plant gate sales "wherever possible" as a good thing, and advocates comrades in good trade union situations taking an active interest in union issues, even organizing a broad movement in the unions on these issues. He even suggests that branches assign comrades to find work at certain jobs in certain unions.

Of course, this is good. It is hard to say, even, that it is not enough. But the work which Comrade Lovell describes is in general localized, not done with serious conscious direction, regularity and in a systematic way. This is evidently not the fault of the comrades involved, neither in the leadership nor in the unions. Rather it is because our national orientation does not provide for a serious orientation toward work in the trade unions and working class.

What is needed to solve this problem, in addition to general prescriptions such as Comrade Lovell's, is a national orientation. Some comrades, for example, not understanding the need for a proletarian orientation, will tend to want to subordinate all work to campus work, and will tend to think that plant gate sales cut across campus sales. Or that a comrade should pass up a good trade union situation in order to "build up" a campus situation. That is why a national orientation is necessary.



Articles like that of Comrade Lovell are helpful in discussing and moving toward such a national orientation. But the orientation itself must be explicit and must be written into our resolutions for vote at the convention, in order to carry out the necessary "re-orientation" and "integration into the working class."

Therefore, an amendment to the NC draft resolution is what is necessary. "For A Proletarian Orientation" should be seen as a valuable contribution to the discussion, despite its weaknesses -- not as a counter-line to the NC resolution, which gives serious attention to the working class and, though insufficient in describing the orientation of our work, has the correct political and programmatic line.

The kind of amendment that is needed is outlined by the criticisms presented in this article and by the sixteen points outlined below. To fully discuss a proletarian orientation of our work, once it has been decided upon, the party may have to continue the discussion after the convention, within the National Committee or in the party as a whole.

The comrades who will be defending the NC draft resolution will have to make a decision regarding this proposed amendment. That is, should they regard it as a "counter-line," as they may regard "For A Proletarian Orientation," or should they say it is within the general line of the NC resolution, even if they may oppose the amendment, and be prepared to vote for the NC resolution if the amendment to it is passed.

If the comrades reject this amendment as a "counter-line," then those of us who agree with it must recognize that a counter-resolution is necessary, and join those who support "For A Proletarian Orientation" as a counter-resolution in order to work out a full alternative line. If the amendment is rejected as a "counter-line," we must also conclude that the NC resolution does not make its line at all clear, because its line would then really be for a student orientation and opposition to increased trade union work and a proletarian orientation of our work. This is nowhere stated in the NC resolution.

But if the comrades do not reject this amendment as a "counter-line," then those who support "For A Proletarian Orientation" as a counter-resolution must reconsider their position, because the comrades supporting the NC resolution would be indicating that they are open to discussing proposals for a proletarian orientation of our work within a context of general political agreement. It would be clear that, for those

who agree with the party's program and its very general strategy, a counter-resolution is not needed.

\* \* \* \* \*

Some steps which should be considered for a proletarian orientation of our work:

(1) A national survey to find out what trade unions and what industries comrades are in, how many and where.

(2) More trade union and labor oriented pamphlets published by Pathfinder.

(3) More coverage and discussion of trade union situations and labor struggles in The Militant. This is not only an editorial question, but we have also given inadequate attention locally to preparing such articles. We should make more propaganda for a labor party than we do.

(4) More general education on trade union perspectives, especially classes given by veteran trade union comrades, in order to pass on the party's tradition and understanding to young comrades.

(5) Increased and systematic work among GIs and veterans.

(6) Increased work among high school students, in collaboration with the YSA.

(7) Increased work among technical college students, in collaboration with the YSA.

(8) Stepped-up, regular sales of The Militant at plant gates and in working class and Third World communities.

(9) More distribution of antiwar literature at plant gates by the SMC and antiwar coalitions, at the party's initiative, coupled with the demand that the union bureaucrats mobilize their memberships and sustain the antiwar movement financially. Our aim should be to set up rank and file antiwar committees in industry.

(10) Increased orientation of women's liberation, Black and Chicano propaganda toward working people, on the basis of our present program, while not abandoning campus activity in these fields.

(11) Orientation of our election campaigns more toward workers, preparing special leaflets, etc.

(12) Orientation of our campus work more toward drawing campus workers into our activity and toward having student comrades follow struggles of campus workers more closely. In addition to the recruitment of workers in a milieu where the radicalization is strong, this would help us recruit students, many of whom see the limitations of their own social power as students and will be looking for an organization that is active in the working class.

(13) Preparation of special leaflets during strikes. These could explain our support for the strike, and where we are familiar enough with the situation to be authoritative, evaluate the strike and the union's handling of it. This leafletting could move in the direction of regular factory bulletins on political, economic and plant issues, such as our French comrades issue.

(14) A national trade union department of the party, when our work makes this realistic.

(15) Trade union fractions or work committees, locally and nationally. The form, as in (14), should be subordinated to the needs of the work to be done.

(16) Giving consideration to special situations, we should selectively colonize certain workplaces, in order to establish a firm base in the trade union movement. Student comrades should not be told to leave school, in general, and comrades for whom such a colonization would be unrealistic or unfeasible should not be considered for it. But for young comrades seeking a job or easily able to make a transfer into a trade union situation, the party should give serious attention to colonization.

preliminary draft

David Keil  
Minneapolis  
July 11, 1971

14 Charles Lane  
New York, N. Y. 10014

July 15, 1971

TWIN CITIES

David Keil

Dear Comrade Keil,

This will acknowledge receipt of your letter of July 11 and the proposed amendment to the NC draft political resolution. Your letter stipulates that the amendment is "not for publication in the internal bulletin." (Your emphasis) It also says that you are circulating the amendment privately "to obtain suggestions and sponsors." The amendment itself contains the following passages: "The comrades who will be defending the NC draft resolution will have to make a decision regarding this proposed amendment... If the comrades reject this amendment as a 'counter-line', then those of us who agree with it must recognize that a counter-resolution is necessary, and join those who support 'For A Proletarian Orientation' as a counter-resolution in order to work out a full alternative line."

Within this framework you ask the Political Committee to express its opinion of the amendment before it is submitted for publication in the internal bulletin by you and whatever other comrades you may be able to influence privately. In effect this means that you are asking the Political Committee to make a private political commitment to you behind the back of the party. Such procedure would be entirely out of line. In response to an earlier inquiry from you about discussion procedure, my letter of March 22 called to your attention the section on "Factionalism and Party Unity" in the party resolution on "The Organizational Character of the SWP." Let me now cite to you the full text of pertinent paragraphs from page 12 of that basic party document:

Factionalism and Party Unity

A properly conducted discussion of internal political differences contributes to the good and welfare of the party. It facilitates the hammering out of a correct political line and it helps to educate the membership. These benefits derive from the discussion provided that every comrade hears all points of view and the whole party is drawn into the thinking about the questions in dispute. In that way the membership as a whole can intervene in disputes, settle them in an orderly way by majority decision and get on with the party work. This method has been followed by American Trotskyism throughout its history and has resulted in an effective clarification of all controversial issues.

Concentration of private discussions of disputed issues, on the other hand, tends to give the comrades involved a one-sided view and warps their capacity for objective political judgment. Inexperienced comrades especially are made the target of such lopsided discussion methods. The aim is to line them up quickly in a closed caucus, and prejudice their thinking before they have heard an open party debate. When dissident views are introduced into the party in that manner groupings tend to form and harden, and the dissenting views tend to assert themselves in disruptive fashion, before the party as a whole has had a chance to face and act on the issues in dispute.

In keeping with the discussion norms set forth in the above quotation, any amendments you may wish to offer concerning the National Committee draft resolutions should be submitted directly and openly to the party as a whole through the internal bulletin.

Comradely,  
s/Jack Barnes  
Organization Secretary

cc: C. Scheer  
K. Shilman