

RECORDS COLLEGE LIBRARY
FOLIO 1120
JUN 27 1940

1/36 US 1420... 1
Rmc

WORKERS PARTY

INTERNAL BULLETIN

FOR MEMBERS ONLY

ISSUED BY NATIONAL COMMITTEE W.P.U.S.

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

Statement on Recent Developments in S. P.	-- -- -- Musto - Weber
Reply to Muste - Weber Statement on S. P.	-- -- -- Cannon - Shachtman
What Is Our Problem?	-- -- -- John West
On Guard Against the Splitters	-- -- -- Larry Cohen
An Unbridgeable Gulf, etc.	-- -- -- Larry Cohen, H. Davis, R. Zetser

NO. 2. JAN. '36 PRICE 5¢

JUL 27 1940

DRAFT STATEMENT ON DEVELOPMENTS IN S.P. - December 1935
Introduced by Maste, Weber, McKinley, Johnson, Lore, Gould to P.C.

1. In view of the latent developments in the Socialist party, the split between the old Guard and the Militants in New York, which will probably become national in scope, a passive and waiting policy toward events in the S.P. would be less than ever justifiable. An analysis of these developments and the tactics to be pursued by the W.P. at this juncture is imperative. In their essential aspect these recent developments in the S.P. are anticipated in the October Resolution on building the American section of the Fourth International and must accordingly be dealt with on the basis of that Resolution.

a. The Resolution pointed out the cleavages between various elements and tendencies in the SP and specifically the aggressiveness of the Old Guard and the inability of Centrist leaders (Militants) "to establish a working collaboration with the Old Guard without facing the loss of their own followers", i.e. the certainty that sooner or later a split must occur.

b. The Resolution points out that a bona-fide left wing group can emerge and crystallize in the S.P. only in struggle not only against the Old Guard, the Milwaukee right wing, pacifists, etc. but also against the Centrist leadership (Militants) since the left wing "will not find authentic leadership in the upper circles of the present Centrist pseudo-left leaders." Putting it positively, a genuine Left wing can develop only on the basis of programmatic clarification.

c. In the course of its struggle, the Left wing elements will have to overcome "the illusion that the S.P. can be 'reformed,' i.e. transformed into a revolutionary party." Our aim and tasks are to prepare the Left elements "ideologically, psychologically and organizationally for the inevitable break with the S.P. and fusion with the W.P."

2. The split in the S.P. strengthens the position of the W.P. and greatly enhances the possibilities both for "the polemical ideological battle" against various phases of social democracy and Stalinism and for that "energetic intervention of the W.P. "to influence the leftward moving elements in the S.P. from within, which the October resolution emphasizes.

a. The split having broken out in the open, Thomas and the Militant leaders will not be able to prevent widespread and intense discussion of programmatic issues, even though they will make and have already made strenuous efforts to evade facing these issues and to cover up their evasion by calling for "unity" in a "democratic" S.P. etc. Only if the W.P. were to relax the pressure for programmatic clarification in its press and meetings, by personal contact and thru its fractions, might successful evasion become possible for the reformist and centrist leadership in the S.P. With our intervention the left elements especially in the youth will constantly force the issue and thus in the present period any real stabilization of the discordant elements in the Honn-Thomas-Militant S.P. on a vague Centrist program will become impossible.

b. In the present period the Militants will adopt a defensive or negative attitude toward the Stalinists and toward organic unity with the C.P. Organizationally they will be eager as has already been demonstrated to defend themselves against the charge of being "Communists," "selling out the S.P. to the C.P." etc. Many of their followers have fresh in their memories the Stalinist Third Period tactics and attitudes (Social Fascism etc.) and are by no means prepared to "trust" the Stalinists to the extent of taking them into the SP or fusing with them. The Militant leaders will make every effort to guard against being swamped with Stalinists and having the leadership of the movement taken over by the C.P. Politically the Militants cannot at this time adopt or appear to adopt the Stalinist position on the C.P., e.g. because it would alienate too many of their followers, not only of the Left but pacifists etc. This, again, is a situation favorable to the W.P.

c. The C.P. on its part must press harder for organic unity and in doing so will go to further ridiculous lengths in seeking to conciliate social democrats, trade union bureaucrats, etc., appearing less "radical" than Thomas, the Militant leaders, etc. At the same time, for the reason already indicated they will not at this time be able to make tangible organizational progress toward organic unity. The opportunity for the W.P., the only Party of the 4th International, with an unassailable revolutionary internationalist program in the field, to influence Stalinist workers and youth and also intellectuals is thus decidedly enhanced.

3. Insistent pressure at this time for clarification on the fundamental principled questions agitating the revolutionary movement (such as "Socialism in one country," Soviet foreign policy, Leninist war policy, Labor party, Fourth International) is also the most effective way to weaken and destroy Lovestoneite influence in the SP and the labor movement generally. Any encouragement, ideological or organizational, of the idea of an "inclusive Marxist party" on an unclear programmatic basis plays into their hands, facilitates the creation of such a Centrist "swamp", pseudo-revolutionary party and thus also promotes the Stalinist organic unity program. The organizational maneuver of entry of the WP into the SP would in the minds of many Socialists and other workers encourage precisely that idea and to that extent contribute to the very result which it must be our strategy to prevent by every possible means. Centering the development in the SP and among vanguard workers generally on the Bolshevik issue of program makes the WP, the independent party of the 4th International, and its program the axis about which the movement for unification of the revolutionary forces revolve.

e. Should Hoan, Thomas and Militant leaders enter into another pact with the Old Guard, which is not excluded the improbable, resentment among the rank and file, especially of the youth would run high and it would be completely obvious to all healthy left elements that there would be only one possible course open to them - viz. entry into or fusion with the W.P.

3. The October resolution pointed out that "the fusion of the C.I. and W.P. - providing an instance of unification after more than a decade of splits and disintegration in the revolutionary movement - permitted the proclamation of a new independent party" of the 4th International. The resolution indicated furthermore that "the economic and political conditions in the country, and the situation in the workers' movement are highly favorable for a rapid development of the W.P." The clear setting forth of this position is the most effective way to dispel such illusions as the Militants will seek to foster among leftward developing workers, that their SP is the adequate political organization and vanguard of the class struggle. As after the Detroit convention we may expect that part of Militant tactics will be to invite all the politically "homeless" to join their centrist organization where they will be afforded a chance "democratically" to maintain "honest differences" of opinion, etc. At the same time they will seek to deride the role of the so-called splinter groups, by which they chiefly mean the WP. Under these circumstances, there is the danger of moods arising even in our own Party favoring "entry into the SP" using the entry of the French Bolsheviks into the SFIO as an apparent analogy and justification. This makes it incumbent upon us concurrently with the sharpest criticism of ideological centrism to emphasize the role of the WP as the organizing independent center of revolutionary Marxism and the 4th International in the U.S.

a. Both the CP and SP in the US are numerically small and their influence in the general political life of the country and upon the working class and the labor movement is still a decidedly minor factor. The CP exercises a less distinctive role in the mass organizations of the workers than some years ago and has been compelled at many points to beat a retreat. In trade union, unemployed and defense work the WP has not experienced any difficulty in coping with the Stalinists, discrediting them and winning the confidence of the workers for its own representatives and their line. While in the early

days of the present swing to the right, the CP was able to attract considerable numbers of social workers and other professionals; not intellectuals into party membership or auxiliary organizations and may be able to continue to hold such elements for a time, there is a growing questioning and dissatisfaction among the best elements of both workers and intellectuals as the full implications of the turn are realized and the CP more obviously becomes merely a propaganda agency for pacifist societies and leagues rather than a serious revolutionary party. The recruiting has recently increased somewhat, turnover has also again increased to practically 100%. This means that there are considerable numbers who desire to belong to a revolutionary party, who find that the CP is not that and many of whom by a systematic recruiting effort could be won for the WP. There can be no doubt that the WP as an independent party standing on a Leninist program can hold its own or even make steady headway against the Stalinist party.

The SPUS after decades of existence has not a single representative in the national congress and in 1932 in the midst of the depression its presidential candidate received fewer votes absolutely, and a much smaller percentage of votes, than in 1912. After the Communist split in 1919-20, the SP became a thoroughly discredited and bankrupt organization with a membership eventually of less than 5000. Thanks to the indescribably stupid policies and tactics of the Stalinists during the "Third Period," a number of workers and some intellectuals were won by the SP following the advent of the depression. The ranks of the Party were also increased by the accession of pacifists and radical liberals who on an idealistic rather than Marxist basis wearied of the capitalist parties and were attracted to the SP as a party in which "democracy" obtained and which was striving by peaceful means to achieve a "new social order." However, after the Detroit convention of 1934, hailed as the dawn of a new day for the party, less

than 11,000 members voted in the referendum on the Declaration of that convention. When it is remembered that the vote was approximately 6,000 for and 5,000 against the Declaration, and that among the 6,000 who voted "radical," there were over 1,000 votes from the Hoan municipal socialists in Wisconsin and the votes of all the liberal, pacifist, reformist, etc. followers of Thomas, Allen, Coolidge, etc. it is obvious that the number of sound working class and intellectual elements in the party moving toward a Marxist position was not large. The same conclusion is reached by a check-up of SP strength in industries and industrial centers. The three centers - Milwaukee, Reading and Bridgeport - where the SP has a mass following and elects candidates to office are solidly in the hands of the Old Guard, except in the case of Milwaukee where, however, the party is also out and out reformist and has indeed already formed a close and open alliance with the LaFollette Progressives. Furthermore, the party and YFSL have both suffered substantial declines in membership during the past year. The YFSL active membership is not much more than double that of Spartacus. There is no ground for thinking that the more or less active membership of the Hoan-Thomas-Militant forces is any greater than it was when the vote on the Detroit Declaration was taken. Many of these elements are not even potentially revolutionary material. There are some industrial centers where the SP has some strength it is possible to name many - Allentown, the anthracite, western Pennsylvania and eastern Ohio, the steel centers generally, most of the South - where the membership is negligible. In the first burst of enthusiasm following the break with the Old Guard recruiting may receive some stimulus. The Militants, however, will not have access to the financial resources which came from Old Guard institutions and individuals. Already they tend to look to the C.P. for indirect financial aid. They will be forced to compete with the CP and subject to its pressure for united front and organic unity. That under these conditions the Militants can recruit tens of thousands and build a mass party - make their S.P. the centrist or "inclusive Marxist party" in the U.S. - is patently an illusion.

Both the Old Guard and the Militants have a certain amount of influence in a few unions. In many instances this is on the basis of collaboration with the officialdom rather than on the basis of an in-

dependent policy. It cannot be said even in the remotest sense that the S.P. has the hegemony over the unions in the U.S. Even though our forces are numerically small, they are more experienced and politically better grounded. Nowhere have they experienced great difficulty in coping with the S.P. elements whether in united front action or in conflict over policy. Nowhere has the SP intervened in the class struggles of the recent period in so significant a manner as the WP in Minneapolis and Toledo.

All recent experience demonstrates that the WP cannot and will not be isolated or barred from united front activities, save in very exceptional and minor instances. In not a few situations in fact the WP plays the leading role.

The WP is not yet a mass party - far from it. However, it has an unassailable program and tested cadres. It has made a beginning of organization in half the states in the union. It has experienced mass workers and has repeatedly demonstrated its ability to play a real part in mass movements. In the face of enormous difficulties both external and internal, it has demonstrated during the first year of its existence that an independent party of the Fourth International can function on American soil.

There is no guarantee that the WP may not at some time though not, for reasons we have indicated, in the present or immediate future - have to cope with a centrist party created by organic unity of CP and SP which would have a powerful attraction for all unclear elements. Capitalism could still make use of such a party of equivocation, confusion and pseudo-Marxism. Revolutionary internationalists could not, and would not be permitted to remain for long within such a party save at the price of diluting their program and lowering their banner. Thus the problem of creating the independent party of the Fourth International by the complete break - ideologically, psychologically and organizationally - with reformists and centrists would simply be posed again. That the conditions would in that case be more favorable for the Bolsheviks if the WP had entered the SP instead of following the course of developing the left wing in the SP for fusion with the WP is pure speculation. On the other hand, the existence today of the WP as an independent party confident of itself is precisely the one force which hampers and retards all efforts of centrist betrayers to stabilize the situation on the basis of an unclear program, as their common desire to remove the W.P. from the path eloquently testifies. Should the centrist bureaucrats, Stalinist and Social democratic, nevertheless effect a rapprochement, the W.P. having unceasingly pointed out to the clearest and most militant workers what such a bargain would mean, viz. preparation for more certain and effective betrayal in the war crisis, would only more obviously and completely serve as "the independent axis around which the proletarian vanguard would crystallize."

There is thus a thing in the relationship of forces in the workers' movement in the U.S. comparable to the conditions which warranted entry of the French Bolshevik-Leninists into the SFIO in 1934. Rather, as the October resolution stated, are conditions "highly favorable for a rapid development of the W.P."

b. While American capitalism is in the decline and the pace of economic and political development in this country is very rapid, we do not have a Bonapartist regime, the immediate threat of Fascism, etc. The time factor in the U.S. allows the W.P. to grow "in struggle against" and "at the expense" of the opponent parties

c. That "for the victory of the workers a revolutionary political party (Leninist) is all important and indispensable" is a tested Bolshevik principle clearly stated in our Declaration of Principle. When faction work is resorted to, where the independent party has not yet been created, this is only a stage on the road to the creation of the revolutionary party. That revolutionary politics predicate the complete organizational independence of the Marxist party

DR. J. W. B. STATEMENT ON DEVELOPMENTS IN SP -5-

is implicit in every line of the Open Letter for the 4th International. "Unity with reformists and social patriots of the social-democratic or Stalinist variety signifies in the last analysis unity with the national bourgeoisie."

We do not hold this position in the abstract or as a magical formula, the mere repetition of which solves problems or makes history. At the time of the fusion, we took the ground after most careful deliberations, that the objective conditions, the relationship of forces, the needs of the working class, permitted and required the proclamation of the independent party of the 4th International in the US and on that basis included the political and organizational independence of the WP along with other Bolshevik fundamentals in the Declaration of Principles. Concrete considerations today even more emphatically warrant, and demand maintenance of the Party. Its liquidation as an independent organization would be hailed by Stalinist and Socialist bureaucrats and by certain honest but unclear elements intrigued by the concept of "unity" in the abstract and at any price; but it would confuse and dishearten revolutionary elements here and in other lands who desire the speediest possible establishment of the 4th International and regard the WP as an important factor in achieving that goal.

It would set back the work of giving more definite and complete organizational form to the 4th International which is the line of the Open Letter, establishment of the Contact Commission, etc. to which the WP is committed. This it would do, furthermore, at the very moment when developments in France point to the speedy establishment there of the independent party.

From any point of view liquidation of the WP would be an extremely hazardous step, replete with difficulties and dangers of opportunist degeneration. No positive warrant for such a step can be found in an analysis of the situation in the US. To enter upon such a course under the conditions as a speculation or experiment would constitute a grave, opportunist and impermissible injury to the cause of the 4th International. We reject the concept of "entry into the SP" in the US. We reaffirm the building of the Party and its orientation to mass work as the main line of the party.

In line with this position the Party must reject any contention that the question of entry into the SP must be kept open and may be posed at any moment. Such an attitude is a serious obstacle to the growth and development of the Party. It is utterly impossible to carry on active recruiting for the party under such conditions. Objectively the line of the Party would become a sheer attitude of expectant passivity, of waiting on events, which would create the danger of liquidation by default.

4. The methods for carrying out our aim of accelerating the development of the leftward current in the ranks of the Militants which are set forth in the October resolution must be applied with redoubled energy and determination.

a. First and most decisive of all is the emphasis on the development of the Workers Party as the revolutionary vanguard, its activity in the mass organizations and in the political and economic struggles of the working class, which if effectively prosecuted will exercise the most important role in crystallizing the revolutionary left inside the Militant party and bringing it over to the W.P.

b. Our press must devote extensive space to informative and critical articles on the situation in the SP directing an especially heavy fire against the capitulatory centrists (Militants). It must more than ever stress the crying need for the break with all reformists and centrists and unification of the revolutionary forces nationally and internationally in new parties and the new, Fourth International, based on the program of revolutionary internationalism.

DRAFT STATEMENT ON DEVELOPMENTS IN SP -6-

c. An active and energetic united front policy must be pursued - such pressure to consummate the NUL-W.A. fusion; cooperation in defense work, building genuine progressive groups in the unions as against the policies of pseudo-progressive bureaucrats, etc.

d. Close personal contacts with socialist workers, especially youth must be developed.

e. Fraction work must be increased and coordinated and immediate steps taken to develop a national fraction and give it directives.

f. Energetic execution of the P.C. decisions in re Spartacus and the YPSL.

g. Recent developments make it possible and desirable also to seek occasion for direct discussion with Militant leaders as to their perspectives and on programmatic issues. Such discussions must be carried out in the most responsible fashion under the direction of the sub-committee on S.P. work. Under present conditions and in line with the policy we have laid down the main purpose of any such discussions would be to bring pressure to bear on the Militant leaders to face programmatic issues, to defeat their attempts to stabilize their movement by purely organizational measures, to expose their programmatic unclarity to their own followers and the advanced workers generally, to win the younger leaders to a full Marxist program, to stimulate the ferment and especially programmatic discussion in the ranks of the S.P., to sharpen the cleavage between the leftward moving workers and all the leaders who maintain a reformist or centrist position, etc.

~~XXXXXXXXXX~~

REPLY TO THE STATEMENT SUBMITTED TO THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE BY GOULD, MCKINNEY, MUSTE, JOHNSON, WEBER on "DEVELOPMENTS IN S.P."

1. We reject, in whole and in part, the "Statement on Developments in S.P." submitted as a resolution to the Political Committee by Comrades Gould, Johnson, McKinney, Muste and Weber. This statement is erroneous in its alleged facts, false and inadequate in its political interpretations, and wholly at variance with reality in its analysis of the developments within the Socialist Party, of the relationship of the Workers Party to these developments, and of their interconnection with the progress of the class struggle as a whole in this country.

2. Fundamentally, the statement is a re-hash of the most sterile and negative conceptions of Ochlerite sectarianism, conceptions which have been so decisively and overwhelmingly repudiated by the party. Particularly is this obvious on the question of the possible entry of the Workers Party into the Socialist Party. During the course of the struggle with the Ochlerites, the party has clearly stated and restated its position that such an entry is a tactical problem, to be decided solely on practical grounds, in the light of the concrete conditions holding within any given country. In the present statement, Muste and Weber, reaching for their epithets into the Ochlerite dust-heap, refer to the possibility of such entry as "liquidation" and as "an opportunist and impermissible injury to the cause of the Fourth International" - that is to say, they refer to entry, in true Ochlerite fashion, as a violation of principle.

3. True enough, in this statement we do not find sectarianism according to the undiluted form in which it appeared in Ochlerite documents. Rather it is now overlaid with equivocation, ambiguity and provincialism. The party, having rejected the hard kernel of sectarianism, is now being offered it with a sugar coating. "...A passive and waiting policy toward events in the S.P. would be less than ever justifiable," says the present statement - and then proceeds to outline a policy which, so far as it is any policy at all, is an epitome of passivity, and of waiting for history to do our tasks for us. It is particularly ironic to discover the "vigorous" championing of "the course of developing the left wing in the S.P. for fusion with the W.P." It was for including this conception that Muste and Weber fought against the ideas of the original West resolution, and against the concrete proposals for S.P. work made by us at the June Plenum. The inconsistencies and equivocations of the present statement serve not to modify but only to veil the underlying sectarianism.

4. The statement points out with abstract correctness, that a genuine left wing in the Socialist Party can be built only on the basis of a clear revolutionary program. The statement fails completely, however, to understand the dynamics of the development of such a left wing, the phases of the struggle through which it must pass in its own experience in order to achieve an uncompromising revolutionary position. "The Old Guard", Milwaukee right wing, pacifist, etc." together with "the Centrist leadership (Militants)" are lumped together in an undifferentiated mass, against whom, at all times, on all issues, and always in the same way, the attack of the Marxists must be carried. In the minds of Muste and Weber, only one approach to every member of the S.P., at all times, is needed: read the program of the Workers Party, and after a while you will see how correct it is and be ready to sign up.

5. In actuality, the problem is a wholly different one. The program of the Workers Party did not descend from a political Sinai to ready believers. Each of us who now adheres to it reached his position through a process of development and struggle in his own experience. We cannot palm off our experience at second-hand on Socialist Party members. Our task is to accelerate the pace and guide the direction of the process of development and struggle in their experience which will bring them to full adherence to a revolutionary position. Concretely within the S.P. this process develops, politically and organizationally, not as the simple abstraction of Marxism vs. non-Marxism, but unevenly and at successive and sharply differentiated stages. At one time the focus is the struc-

gle against the Old Guard, and for its ideological and organizational liquidation. This stage requires temporary organizational agreement among all left forces; and dictates to the Marxists an attitude in their criticism of the centrists which, while sharp and unambiguous, will yet be sympathetic to all progress away from the Old Guard and toward the left. As this stage nears its close, further differentiation sets in, between right and left centrists, and a new stage appears. The focus of the struggle shifts. In the course of the struggle, increasing sections of the membership are enabled to draw the full revolutionary conclusions. The conscious decisive zzzzz intervention and guidance of the Marxists can hasten the process; but the process itself, the fund of experience which it represents, cannot be done away with by a mere formula. The Musto-Weber advice in the present statement, to center "the development in the S.P. and among vanguard workers generally on the Bolshevik issue of program", and their dream that by this single magic charm the program of the W.P. can be made the "axis about which the movement for unification of the revolutionary forces revolves" is not Marxist, but precisely, sectarianism. Program is only one side of the Marxist medal. It is historically significant only when linked with struggle, with concrete experience and action.

5. The present statement reads (par.2): "The split in the S.P. strengthens the position of the W.P." What can be the meaning of such a pronouncement, left as it is in the abstract? True enough, the split in the S.P. opens up new and significant possibilities to the W.P. - if (and only if) the W.P. adopts a correct position and takes decisive action with reference to it. But, considered by itself, the importance of the split is that it strengthens the attractive power of the S.P., as an organization, for leftward developing workers, as against the attractive power of the W.P. Above all, the split means that during the next period it will be impossible to recruit members from the S.P. The finish fight with the Old Guard obviously and necessarily revives the organizational loyalty of S.P. workers, and spurs them to fight for "a genuine Socialist Party". Far from dispelling illusions that the S.P. can be reformed, the effect of the split and the genuine step to the left which it represents is exactly, for the next period at any rate, to reinforce the belief that it is possible to reform the S.P. in this country. If we were able to get rid of the Old Guard, a left Socialist reasons, why can we not hope, in time, to win a revolutionary majority? No amount of xxxxxx shouting from the housetops will change such a belief. Its truth or falsity must be tested directly in the development of the struggle within the S.P. itself.

6. The analysis of the role of the C.P. and the S.P. in this country, given in par.3 of the Musto-Weber statement, is radically false and superficial. The platitudinous truisms are without any significance whatever: "Both the C.P. and S.P. in the U.S. are numerically small"; "The S.P.U.S. after decades of existence has not a single representative in the national congress and in 1932 in the midst of the depression its presidential candidate received fewer votes absolutely, and a much smaller percentage of votes, than in 1912. . . ." (why 1912?). What is significant is not this or that number of dues-paying members or votes in an election, but to understand that the Socialist Party and the Communist Party represent international social forces, developing in varying manners in various nations at different times, but as truly rooted in the economic and social dynamics of the United States as in every other advanced capitalist nation. Stalinism, social democracy and centrism cannot be dismissed by an adding machine. We must comprehend and grapple with them as expressions of social forces and of class interests.

But even looked at quantitatively, the statement fails entirely to realize their role. They are small in numbers, of course, in relation to the total population. But they are not small in relation to the number of class conscious workers; and they are not

small in relation to the number of revolutionists. The idea that lies back of the Muste-Weber treatment of the role of the C.P. and S.P. in the United States is hopelessly provincial. They write: "In trade union, unemployed and defense work the W.F. has not experienced any difficulty in coping with the Stalinists, discrediting them and winning the confidence of the workers for its own representatives and their line." And again: "Nowhere have they (W.F. forces) experienced great difficulty in coping with S.P. elements whether in united front action or in conflict over policy." The whole tenor of their statement suggests that the S.P. and the C.P. are minor and unimportant forces, having perhaps a certain nuisance role to play; the W.F. can, on the whole, ignore them, and at most devote certain secondary manouvers to attacking and overcoming them.

Such an ostrich attitude would be fatal to our movement. The notion that the W.F. can go about its "independent" business in the class struggle with only occasional side glances at the rival organizations is entirely false. These organizations are, on the contrary, major and tremendous obstacles on our path, confronting us at every turn and on every field. And they are obstacles, precisely, which block our road to the masses, which stand in the way of our "independent" functioning in the class struggle. To suppose that we face two separate and independent tasks - one, of participating directly in the class struggle, and the other, of sparring with opponent organizations - and that one of these tasks is an independent and major one, and the other an occasional subsidiary, is a false and dangerous abstraction. These are two integrally related phases of one and the same task, and neither can be successfully accomplished without the successful carrying out of the other.

The elimination of the rival organizations from our road, by direct attack and by winning sections of their membership to our ideas, is a necessary and constant phase of our drive toward the masses. This whole conception that we are going to build "our" movement by staking our pretentious little claim in the virgin political soil of the American masses and going ahead to cultivate our own garden without too much worry about our neighbors' is nothing but the petty shopkeeper's attitude of keeping his own sign painted and asking only to be left in peace by the trusts and chain stores. Marxists are interested not in "their" movement but in giving revolutionary direction and guidance to the real movement of the masses which develops in the real process of the class struggle. We do not build in a political vacuum, but in the maelstrom of conflicting social forces and tendencies which exists - not in our hopes and desires, but in historical actuality.

7. The false conception of the role of the S.P. and the C.P. in this country leads Muste-Weber to color and distort even the simplest facts connected with these organizations, in order to bring them into line with their own pre-conceptions. They write, "The C.P. exercises a less distinctive role in the mass organizations of the workers than some years ago and has been compelled at many points to beat a retreat". How many years ago? And what kind of retreat? A further retreat, certainly, from the principles of revolutionary Marxism. But the past year has witnessed an undoubted advance in the influence of Stalinism as compared with the days of the third period. This has been particularly true, no doubt, of its influence over petty-bourgeois, white collar, and professional sections. But it is also true that the new line is gradually being felt in a certain rehabilitation of Stalinism in the trade union movement - as is evidenced by a greatly increased, if still minor, trade union support of the Third Congress Against War and Fascism. "Turnover (in the C.P.) has also again increased to practically one hundred percent," declares the statement. There is no evidence that this is the case; indeed, the C.P. has been unquestionably increasing its total membership, and its drive for 40,000 dues-paying members by the time of this spring's party convention will probably come reasonably close to success.

8. The distortions in the case of the S.P. are even more

-4-

glaring. The Reading, Pa. organization is not, as the statement declares, solidly in the hands of the Old Guard; but will most certainly go along at least in large part with the Hean-Thomas-Militant coalition. It is incorrect to say that "the party (S.P.) and YPSL have both suffered substantial declines in membership during the past year." Some decline in dues-paying membership has occurred, but a large part of this has represented merely the refusal of Militant branches to continue paying dues until the struggle against the Old Guard was completed. The statement announces: "The YPSL active membership is not much more than double that of Spartacus." Such a conclusion is reached by Kuste-Weber by taking the dues-paying YPSL members and then subtracting a third or more as non-active; and then taking the dues-paying SYL members and adding anyone who now or in the past has ever expressed sympathy to the SYL. The truth is that, calculated for both organizations on the same basis, the membership of YPSL is approximately four to six times that of SYL. "There is no ground," says the statement, "for thinking that the more or less active membership of the Hean-Thomas-Militant forces is any greater than it was when the vote on the Detroit Declaration was taken." That would make the total 6,000, as the statement previously explained. The truth again, is that the probable membership of the S.P. under the Hean-Thomas-Militant coalition, after the finish of the fight with the old Guard at the Convention, will be between 15,000 and 20,000.

9. The statement fails entirely to understand the present policy of the Stalinists, particularly the "organic unity" line. Kuste-Weber held that the C.P. "will not at this time be able to make tangible organizational progress toward organic unity." They give their reasons for reaching this conclusion:

"The Militants will be eager as has already been demonstrated to defend themselves against the charge of being 'Communists', 'selling out the S.P. to the C.P.', etc. Many of their followers have fresh in their memories the Stalinist Third Period tactics and attitudes (Social Fascism, etc.) and are by no means prepared to 'trust' the Stalinists to the extent of taking them into the S.P. or fusing with them... the Militants cannot at this time adopt or appear to adopt the Stalinist position on war, etc., because it would alienate too many of their own followers, not only of the Left but pacifists, etc."

And, consequently, Kuste-Weber decides:

"This, again, is a situation favorable to the W.P."

The truth about the "organic unity" development is quite otherwise. Already, "tangible organizational progress" has been made; in the fusion of the NSL and the SLID into the American Student Union, in the forthcoming liquidation of the Unemployment Councils into the WMA, and in the American League Against War and Fascism. It is correct that actual fusion of the S.P. and the C.P. in the near future is highly improbable, but this for entirely different reasons than those alleged by Kuste-Weber. They account for it because of opposition from the right on the part of the Militants (Memories of the Third Period, wish not to alienate pacifists, etc.). However, the actual reason is the continuing necessity for the Stalinist bureaucracy to have a free hand in manipulating the sections of the Comintern, in order to be prepared for the possibility of a sudden new turn which might be made necessary by a shift in the international line-up (for example, repudiation of the Franco-Soviet Pact and a rapprochement between France and Germany).

Nevertheless, delay in actual organizational unity in no way hinders "organic unity" from operating effectively as a slogan and a direction, and from making inroads in the S.P.-as it is al-

ready doing. The Stalinists are not at all disturbed over opposition to it from the right - they find no difficulty with pacifists and reformists, as the career of the American League indicates. Their concern is opposition from the left; and such opposition though in a confused form, they discover to a certain extent from the ranks of the Militants and even from Thomas, as the barrage in the Daily Worker directed against Zane, Thomas, the Militant's position on war, etc. proves. Genuine opposition to Stalinism can come only from a clear revolutionary position; and our task, in combatting "organic unity", is outstandingly to clarify and strengthen the opposition which Stalinism meets from the left in the Socialist Party.

10. The problem of "organic unity" does not of course end here. This is not the place to discuss it in detail, but it is necessary to note the superficiality of the Muste-Weber notion that if organic unity is actually accomplished in a fused party, once again the only and sufficient answer to all the problems is once again the only and sufficient answer to all the problems is the "independence" of the W.P. "Should the centrist bureaucrats, Stalinist and Social Democratic, nevertheless effect a rapprochement, the W.P. having uncessantly pointed out to the clearest and most militant workers what such a bargain would mean, viz. preparation for more certain and effective betrayal in the war crisis, would only more obviously and completely serve as 'the independent axis around which the proletarian vanguard would crystallize'." Naturally it cannot be predicted what we should do in such an eventuality. That will depend on the concrete circumstances and relationship of forces. But it can be said with certainty that it will not be solved by the mere repetition of the magic charm, "independence". It is not at all excluded that we would enter into such a party - not, of course, to "liquidate" and "capitulate", etc. such an entry appears to sectarians, but because under concrete circumstances entry might be the most effective tactic for advancing our ideas, our banner, and our influence, and for meeting the challenge of our opponents.

11. Once and for all we must rid ourselves of the idea that entry into a reformist or centrist organization as a step on the road to the creation of genuine mass-parties of the Fourth International involves any violation of principle, and "liquidation", "opportunism", or "capitulation to centrism". This was the sterile and sectarian conception of the Oehlerites, and was repudiated decisively by our party and by the entire world movement. This is the conception which now reappears as the motivating idea of the present Muste-Weber statement. It is, as we have already demonstrated to the party during the course of the struggle against the Oehler group, false to its roots. Fundamentally, our independence means the independence of our ideas; no one of us has proposed that we shall give them up. Fundamentally, capitulation to centrism or reformism means accepting the ideas of centrism or reformism; no one of us has proposed that we should do so. To propose entry into the S.P. in this country, as in France, would in no sense be to propose any liquidation or capitulation; it would be in no sense a "defeat".

The problem is merely this: if concrete circumstances indicate that our ideas and their influence can be most effectively widened and deepened, can gain a broader and more decisive following, can penetrate further into the mass movement, by the tactic of entry, then such a tactic is not merely "permissible" but it is imperatively dictated. This is the only way in which to look at the problem, and the only way in which it can be answered. It should be remarked that no question of even organizational "liquidation" is involved. It is only bureaucrats, sectarians and provincials who worry about addresses and letter-heads. Our interest must rather be in advancing the influence of the ideas for which we stand. How this can best be done must be decided not on the basis of formulas but in the light of actualities of the living movement.

12. The sectarianism and provincialism of the Musto-Weter statement is clear again in its treatment of the tactic of our French comrades in entering the S.F.I.O. They attempt to justify an a priori decision against the possibility of entry in this country by stating that conditions here are not the same as those in France. In pendorous truisms, they inform us, "while American capitalism is on the decline and the pace of economic and political development in this country is very rapid, we do not have a Bonapartist regime, the immediate threat of Fascism, etc...." No one will disagree. But likewise, no genuine internationalist would appeal to French conditions to decide one way or the other on the question of entry in this country. It is conditions here, and in France, which must determine our tactics with respect to the S.F., as well as all other tactical applications of our international perspective.

From the tactic in France, both from its successes and its mistakes, we can learn much: above all, it can teach us how a determined group of revolutionists is able to break with sectarianism, to force its way out of isolation, to intervene vigorously in the mounting class struggle, by the bold and unrealistic carrying out of a genuinely Marxist tactic. Our French comrades were not willing to wait for history to do their work for them, while they piously mumbled their revolutionary beads and delivered Marxist sermons. But this lesson Musto-Weter have yet to learn. To Ochler's accusation that the French comrades capitulated they reply like the man in the Elizabethan play: "Thou has committed fornication," he was accused, and he answered, "But that was in another country - and besides, the wench is dead." We are not interested in "condemning" the "French turn" of a year and a half ago, like a Women's Club endorsing a favorite charity. The French turn has become part of the international experience of our movement, from which we learn and whose lessons we attempt to apply for the present and the future. At present we are above all interested in the correct "American turn", and this must be made on the basis of the conditions we confront here and now.

13. The Socialist Party today is not the Socialist Party of six months ago or three months ago. The split in the Socialist Party creates a new situation in which we must intervene decisively and consciously, or run the risk of losing a great opportunity which will not soon again return. This question must now be discussed, analyzed and answered as a purely practical matter. We shall present our answer, and our specific proposals, in another document.

Cannon

Lowitt

Shachtman

Swaback

West

By John West

It has been our contention from the first week of the Workers Party, that the chief danger which the party faces is the danger from sectarianism. The main internal task has been, in its negative aspect, the problem of overcoming sectarianism. This does not, of course, mean that there have not been other dangers and other problems. But it is always necessary to understand that at a given time and under given circumstances certain things are primary, and others secondary.

Sectarianism appears under many forms and disguises, and manifests itself in a great variety of ways. Nevertheless, there are certain general characteristics which distinguish sectarianism in all of its forms:

(1) Sectarianism is abstract. Its abstractness is shown in its utter inability to take account of time, place and circumstance. The sectarian is a dealer in formulas. His whole energy is devoted to the elaboration of formulas. He is entirely incapable of applying these formulas, of translating them into action. In the abstract, his formulas may seem like the "purest" Marxism, may indeed appear ultra-revolutionary. But they lead absolutely nowhere. Thus the sectarian, in order to protect his formulas, always demands "discussion," and more "discussion." He wants discussion on every conceivable question, from the permanent revolution to the issuing of dues stamps. "These are all," he says, "principle questions. We cannot go forward until they are settled." But for him they can never be settled; for one discussion only raises more problems which in turn require still further discussions and so on for eternity. For the sectarian discussion becomes an end in itself, the very essence of revolutionary activity. He is unable to understand that for the Marxist discussion is an instrument, is one activity among others, that it takes its regulated and disciplined place in the rounded and dynamic whole of the activities of the party. He is unable to understand that "correct" formulas are, for the Marxist, only an abstraction, that they gain meaning, clarification, as well as correction, only when applied and tested in activity, in the concrete.

(2) Sectarianism is negative. The aim of the Marxists is always active and dynamic. Marxists seek to extend the influence of their ideas into the actual, living movement of the masses which exists, not to spin out dreams of an ideal movement which they think ought to be. They seek to intervene in the actual mass movement in order to alter its direction, to raise its political consciousness, to turn it into revolutionary channels. But the sectarians turn back in political fright from the actualities of the mass movements. They take refuge from the contradictions and conflicts of reality in the abstract purity of their formulas. For them the Socialist Party is only a "swamp of reformism and centrism," not a fertile seed-ground for the sowing of Marxist ideas, not a group of men in motion, many of whom can be won to a revolutionary position if (and only if) the Marxists directly and decisively intervene. For them, "the defense of Ethiopia" is impossible, because it will not "solve the problems of the Ethiopian masses." That successful working-class defense of Ethiopia now strikes an international blow at the structure of world imperialism sinks for them into insignificance before the abstract claims of the abstract formulas of "the permanent revolution." They insist on a mass movement made to order according to their formulas. And, since there is no such movement in actuality, they take revenge on it by retiring into themselves, by living a wholly inward life, gnawing at their own vitals. Thus the fate of sectarians is always to degenerate into tiny, isolated groups or cliques or sects of the "Wisbord and Field variety, feeding on the drugs of the living movement, whirling around in ever narrower and more bitter circles.

(3) Sectarianism is sterile. The abstract, negative character of sectarianism condemns it inevitably to sterility. The sectarians, in their purist refuge from the masses, can only "demand" indignantly that the masses come to them - not they to the masses - for the masses, indeed, are not made in the pattern of the sectarians' formulas. Their formulas can have no fertilizing power, because they exist outside of the realm of time and space. The sectarians are in a blind alley, from start to finish.

It is only natural and to be expected that sectarianism should have appeared so prominently in the Fourth Internationalist movement, both here and internationally. The Marxists existed as small, isolated groupings having a predominantly propaganda character. The decision to build the new world party required a determined, sharp and resolute turn - a turn many were incapable of making, and which few would make without serious struggle. The turn was, and is, the turn to the masses, the turn to break out of isolation, into the

broad stream of the movement, into actual existence as a genuine mass revolutionary party. The accomplishment of this turn, in all its implications, remains the central task everywhere. Nowhere has it been thoroughly accomplished. The fusion of the SWP and CIA, though a step forward in its application to this country, has not completed the turn here, then did the entry of the Belgica section into the P.O.B. complete it in Belgium.

It is the sectarians who, internally, present the great obstacle to the accomplishment of the turn. To accomplish it requires that we purge ourselves of sectarianism. This is our problem.

Sectarianism in its "classic," ultra-left form, was represented in the Workers Party by the Oehler-Stamm group, which had a closely knit factional existence from the first days of the party. The struggle against sectarianism meant, therefore, the struggle against the ideas and program of this group.

This struggle, as is well known to the party, was led and conducted by those who support the position of our tendency. Against the false program and disastrous proposals of the Oehler-Stamm faction, against their wholly incorrect estimate of the tasks and problems of the party as well as their campaign of slander and lies directed against us, we declared implacable opposition. At the March plenum we supported the resolution of censure against them passed by the N.C. We led the resistance to their attempt to split up the party thru their demagogic maneuvers in connection with the Zack incident. In June we condemned in detail their international and national political line, and opposed to it Resolutions embodying our own position. During the summer we continued the struggle against them, culminating in the decisive condemnation of this group by the October plenum, the rejection of their line, and the subsequent decision of their group to take the road to which their position logically led - the road of split.

What was the role of the Muste and Weber tendencies during this period? This must be clearly understood in order to estimate correctly the present situation in the party. In March the Muste and Weber groups united with us in the condemnation of the Oehler-Stamm faction. But in June the Muste and Weber groups, under the guise of defending "independent" resolutions of their own, in actuality took the floor consistently to attack - not the Oehlerites - but us. Their full condemnation was reserved, not for the Oehlerites, who were disloyally driving toward the split in the party, but for us, who were defending the party and the international movement against the onslaught of the splitters. In the last sessions of the June plenum, the Muste and Weber groups formed a bloc with the Oehlerites, against us, and prevented any conclusions from being drawn by the plenum. In their caucus documents during the summer and in the membership discussion meetings, the members of the Muste and Weber groups consistently continued the same role: they took the floor on all occasions to launch bitter and impossible attacks against us.

In this way the Muste and Weber groups acted as a cover for the Oehler-Stamm group, as a cover for the sectarian splitters.

Finally, at the end of the summer, the Muste and Weber groups, making a sudden new turn - no doubt appalled by daily accumulating evidence of the political insanity and organizational disloyalty of the Oehler faction - came to an agreement with us on the main resolutions to be submitted to the Oct. plenum.

But at the same time that we reached apparent political agreement, the Muste and Weber groups, instead of moving to mitigate the factional division in the party on the basis of the common resolutions, forged their two groups into a single faction apart from, and as was soon to develop, in opposition to, our group.

Following the October plenum, the Oehler-Stamm faction split from the party.

But what is above all necessary to understand is that the struggle against sectarianism does not end with the departure of the Oehler-Stamm faction. The events since the October plenum make this abundantly clear. Our problem remains: to rid the party decisively of all traces of sectarianism. Sectarianism in the "classic," hard, fully-developed, ultra-left form, departed with the Oehler group. But sectarianism in new forms, now disguised, or combined with inconsistencies, ambiguities, equivocations, oblique habits, remains as a central danger.

This is obviously illustrated in the case of the "Cohen group," which claims to hold the Oehler political position, but to reject the disloyal and "incorrect" Oehler organizational measures. The Cohen group, however, is not a serious tendency in the party. In time its few members will have to make their only actual choice: whether to follow the organizational path of their political allies or to reconsider their political position.

The real danger is to be found, not in the Cohen group but in the Kuste-Weber group. During the two months since the October plenum, we find that the Kuste-Weber group, completing another cycle in their shifting political course, is gradually taking over a large section of the discarded baggage of the Oehlerite sectarians. This they hand out to the party in their own peculiar, clique-motivated manner: not by formulating a platform nor by presenting clear-cut political resolutions to the party, but by sniping from the rear, by an underground campaign against us conducted in terms of gossip, rumor, slander and outright lies; and by speeches in branch and membership discussion meetings ostensibly devoted to a defense of the October plenum resolution but actually composed of veiled attacks on us. As a result, large sections of the party once more find themselves in a disastrous state of hysteria and confusion and the party as a whole is unable to go forward.

We condemn both the political content and the methods of this campaign. Much of its political content, indeed, is old and familiar, and already decisively rejected by the party. For it is nothing else than the scraps and refuse of sectarianism. Once again we hear about "Cannon's liquidationism"; "the principle of the independence of the Workers Party"; "defend the organizational independence of the Workers Party"; "bureaucratism and organizational methods"; "the issue before the party is the issue of the independence of the party." Floods of letters "reveal" garbled and distorted versions of every conversation or rumor that arises. This indiscriminate broadcasting plays directly into the hands of the party's enemies - Oehler and Budenz reveal publicly their complete acquaintance with all the internal affairs of the party - an acquaintance according to the Kuste-Weber version.

The diluted leftist sectarianism is mingled with another tendency which at first sight might seem almost the reverse, but which in the concrete leads toward closely similar results. This might be called provincial sectarianism, a sectarianism coming from a right rather than an ultra-left direction. It is manifested in the hazy notions that the business of the party is to create and "protect" "our" movement - whether the reference is to the political, the trade union, or the unemployed movement. The feeling that we should be interested in "our" movement leads, as in the case of leftist reasoning, to a drawing back from decisive activities and intervention in the actual mass movement, to a negative and "defensive" attitude in general, to a backward and primitive organizational fetishism, and to the familiar cry of "liquidationism" when any bold move is proposed for the party or the mass organizations over which the party has influence. Backward resistance to a vigorous united front tactic develops; indignation is expressed at the "proposal to liquidate the NUL into the WAA"; to have a separate office, a separate address and stationery and private name, without any "maneuvering" with rival groups, to stick to one's own garden patch without encroaching on the neighbor's, becomes the goal and end. The tendency develops even further, as in Allentown, where party members raise the loudest objections to "outside speakers" and to "outsiders in the mass movement" - meaning by "outsiders" Workers Party members who do not happen to be natives of Allentown. In this way the most backward prejudices of the workers are flattered and encouraged.

Such a provincialism is in direct contrast to Marxism. Marxism has no illusions about "our" movement. It has no wish to remain peacefully within "its own" garden patch. Marxists are concerned with the actual movement which exists and develops. Their aim is to intervene in this actual movement, decisively and vigorously; to extend the influence and power of their ideas over the actual movement. And the tactic of the united front, or the demand for unity itself, the name or address of an organization, are all subordinated to this more fundamental aim. We are not concerned over the names of things; the NUL, United Front Committees, Joint Labor Councils, the Workers Party itself as a particular organizational apparatus, interest us only as instruments, instruments to further our fundamental aims, and to be altered, merged, modified, repaired or discarded when they can be replaced by more valuable and effective instruments.

These various influences are combining to create an atmosphere of confusion and hysteria in the party. Responsible discussion of problems becomes impossible; practical, forward moving activities are in effect sabotaged; and the life of the party turns in and in an unhealthy growth all the more vicious because the entire matter remains half-hidden and underground.

Such a situation cannot longer be tolerated. If there are within the party genuine and serious political differences, these must be brought clearly to the surface, presented formally to the party, and decided. And whether or not such serious differences exist, an end must be put once for all to the methods of error-mongering, clique gossip and slander.

-4-
by

The situation is outstanding/serious at the present time because of the great problems now facing the party. The party must go forward and must solve its problems. Our task is to break out of our isolation, to force ourselves actively and decisively into the mass movement. But to accomplish this, we must break in a determined and conclusive manner with the internal bonds which prevent us from moving forward; - which, in the present circumstances, means above all the break with every remnant and trace of sectarianism in no matter what form and however disguised. John West

AN UNBRIDGEABLE GULF (By the Cohen group)

After more than eleven months of factional struggle there has emerged one fundamental lesson; the opportunists dread political discussion. Our principled critics of the line of Cannon, and our consistent opposition to every attempt to apply that line in practice, is met by the evasive assertion that since we consider the WP a centrist organization, we must, in conformity with our line, split from it. The conclusion is obvious - we represent not a tendency within the Party with whom it is possible to elaborate a line, but the embryo of every organization to be dealt with in summary fashion. We may well question the objectivity of the factionalists, the while we deal with the logic of opportunism.

This argument is false to the core. Our line, which alone can build the Party is being called a 'split' line by precisely those who propose liquidate the Party into the SP. Cannon, who wants to give up the WP, brands as splitters those who want to build it, and the significance of this article lies not alone in the attempt to defend our views, but in our determination to wrest the Party banner from the hands of its worst enemies, in our determination to lay the charge of splitter where it belongs.

Travel through the swamp is certain to bring mud into the house. Many comrades, in response to the constant propaganda of Cannon, have asked whether we do consider the WP centrist. The answer - and here isto be found our basic difference with Ohler - is that we consider the WP a revolutionary and not a centrist party. The Plenum, it is true, endorsed the "French turn" and the convention will presumably do the same. We believe that this Turn, which involves a false evaluation of Social Democracy is capable of becoming the Party of world revolution; but we differentiate sharply among its supporters who, in many cases fail to realize what they are voting for.

With Cannon, who understands the Turn as we do, but favors it none the less, we have nothing in common. Many comrades who have been alienated by the stupid provocations of the Ohlerites, or who have considered it merely a matter of supporting our French comrades against their traducers or showing their loyalty and regard for comrade Trotsky, have voted for the Turn without even beginning to understand its full implications. This is largely true of the comrades of the Muste-Heber group and of many rank and file Cannon supporters as well. Needless to say, while we are anxious that these comrades should make a serious study of the questions involved, we do not brand as opportunists those who thru misunderstanding support for the present an opportunist line. We are convinced that the overwhelming majority of the membership is fundamentally sound and revolutionary. That is why we believe that the Party, despite the existence of an organized right wing headed by Cannon, is revolutionary and will accept our line. Those who reject our analysis must explain the refusal of many Cannon supporters to accept his negative attitude toward the CP ("all we can get from the CP is the refuse of the third period" his taunting of the SP, and his proposal a few weeks back to send the SYL into the YFRLs. This was illustrated to the hilt by the rapidity with which the Cannon supporters repudiated his proposal to liquidate the SYL and forced this "principled" politician to deny his own directives:

Our perspective, though our forces today are small, is to win the Party, and when Cannon remarks that we are headed for a split, or that our line is diametrically opposed to the Party's or cannot live within the Party, he owes the comrades an explanation. Is our main line in conflict with the Declaration of Principles? On the contrary, while the Declaration of Prin. needs clarification on a number of key questions such as the need for a new party in the Soviet Union, on the colonial question, etc. we have no basic disagreements with it and can support and defend it as a revolutionary document. Is our tactical line so false and harmful as to demand our 'political' liquidation? Since we are not a party but only a tendency organized around a major political issue, we have not worked out in advance a hard and fast faction line on every question that may come before the Party. We discuss questions of tactics and strategy as they

crise, and our proposals flow from our main line; we cannot build the WP.

That does Cannon mean when he says that our line and his cannot live in the same party? He means that there is an unbridgeable gulf between those who want to build the WP and those who want to liquidate it; he means that there can be no compromise between those who are determined to enter the SP and those who are determined to stay out. In this he is correct; our line and Cannon's cannot exist side by side inside the WP, for he is against the continued existence of the WP. Unfortunately, however, he overlooks one fact. The split will not be between Cannon and ourselves, but between Cannon and all those who are against his liquidationist line; between Cannon and all those who want to build the WP.

If we thought the Party centrist, if we considered the membership hopeless, then we would believe our fight lost in advance. But precisely because we consider the Party and its cadres revolutionary we are confident that it will be not ourselves but Cannon - without quite a few of his present supporters - that will do the splitting; while we, together with the overwhelming majority of the membership, will remain inside the WP, working devotedly and with fewer obstacles for the speedy development of a powerful section of the Fourth International.

November 30, 1935

Larry Cohen

ANOTHER CONVENTION, ANOTHER MANEUVER

Comrades who believed that with the Scherers out of the party there would at once be instituted a more democratic regime have received a rude shock. The Cannon group, which controls the Party apparatus, is making it impossible for minority groups to reach the membership. By a whole series of bureaucratic maneuvers they are trying to still the voice of the only group which opposes Cannon's SP orientation on principled grounds.

The decisions of the Political Committee and the Plenum to issue an internal discussion bulletin remain on paper. Today, November 30, not one discussion bulletin has appeared since the October plenum although with the convention set for December 26 delegates from the West and Middle West must soon be elected and any discussion which is to mean anything must take place before their election.

The right of the membership to a three months discussion period is flagrantly abrogated. In New York the District Committee arranges for a membership meeting on Sunday where a PC reporter presents the views of the Plenum majority and we are refused the right to have a reporter to defend the resolutions introduced by comrade Ogden at the plenum on the purely technical grounds that she was not a regular member of the Plenum but only a member of the National Committee of the SYL. With the only opposition tendency denied recognition and confined to the same time status as any individual comrade who might want to take the floor on a minor point, we are told we have received our rights, and the branches are instructed to conclude the discussion the following Tuesday night and take a vote, three weeks before the elections of delegates are to take place in New York City. Why is this done? Why are the Cannonites in the District Committee so insistent that the vote be taken at the beginning of the discussion period and before any discussion bulletins have appeared? Is it because they know that Cannonites are joining the Muto-Weber group? Is it because they see comrades joining our group? Is it because they feel it will be doubly hard for us to win over comrades later on in the discussion if these comrades are already committed to a political position? We have seen such tricks before. They have nothing in common with democratic centralism, nothing in common with communist procedure.

Cannon, however, has sufficient respect for the membership to realize that our ideas will penetrate every barrier he may erect. In order, therefore, to ensure our exclusion from the convention, he issues directives for the election of delegates which are designed to make almost impossible any representation on the part of minority groups. (He reserves to a separate article a detailed discussion of the attitude of the Muto-Weber comrades on this question at the plenum. Here we pause only long enough to note our gratification that rank and file members of this group are opposing these convention arrangements in the branches.)

According to the instructions of the PC, delegates are to be elected on the basis of one delegate for every ten members. Provision is made whereby if only one delegate is allotted a branch he is chosen by the group casting a simple plurality; if two delegates are allotted 40% of the votes cast are required to

elect one; if three, 30%; if four, 25%; if five, 20%, etc. While this at first appears to be a fair proposal, closer examination reveals that what pretends to be the most democratic of schemes would in fact exclude the only group which offers serious ideological opposition to Cannon-Shachtman in their race to lead the WP into the stinking den of social reformism - the 3rd.

Cannon knows very well that our group is not only small, but like any other tendency, decentralized; its supporters are scattered in various branches with seven the highest number in any New York branch at present. The Plenary arrangement would deprive our comrades, because they are not congregated in particular branches, of all representation. Branch one, for example, will be entitled to four delegates; about 37 of the 42 members will come down to vote; and it will require one-fourth of the votes cast (nine) to elect a delegate. Let us say the Cannon-Muste-Weber bloc cast 30 votes and we got 7. Here is how it will work out:

9 C-M-W votes get the first delegate
 9 C-M-W " " " second delegate
 9 C-M-W " " " third " "
 27 C-M-W " " " first three delegates.

But there are 10 more votes of which we cast 7 and these 10 votes elect the 4th delegate. According to the PC, those who cast 3 of these 10 should get this last delegate, a procedure which will not only disfranchise us but which will make minority representation almost impossible. We demand that the PC take steps to provide that if a minority secures a majority of the votes electing the last delegate, they secure that delegate. The best proof of the pudding is in the eating. We therefore give below a table which shows what happened when this system was followed in electing delegates to the New York District convention in August.

	Votes	Delegates	Percentage of votes	Percentage of delegates
Muste	23	1	11	4
Weber	12	0	6	0
Oehler	61	7	29	27
Cannon	108	17	51	65
Muste-Oehlerin Astoria	6	1	3	4

Comrades of the Muste-Weber group! In August you opposed the maneuvers of Cannon to exclude political minorities from their rightful representation. In the present period it is even more necessary that these minorities participate in the convention. Do you support our demands - full political discussion, full rights at the convention? Where do you stand NOW?

We call upon the membership to demand from the EC that the convention arrangements be changed to provide a full democratic procedure. In no other way can the "ruthless and brutal" methods of Cannon be repudiated. In no other way can the Party remain firmly grounded on the principle of Democratic centralism.

November 30, 1935

H. Davis

AS THE TRUTH IS BEING

Just six weeks after the October plenum adopted resolutions which were to guarantee the continued independence of the party, a proposal is made which if accepted could only mean liquidation. Comrade Cannon, at a meeting of the top executives of the Muste-Weber and Cannon groups, proposed to send the SYL into the YFSL nationally. That the idea was later withdrawn was due to no change of heart on Cannon's part but in the first instance to Muste's refusal to go along and in a larger sense to the tremendous resentment and opposition that arose in all sections of the party. We cannot therefore regard the incident as closed, and we take this opportunity, since we are convinced that the matter will be reopened as soon as Cannon believes the time is ripe, to warn the comrades of the full implications of this tactical application of the Cannon line.

Those who agree with Cannon have erected three lines of defense. The first which fell of its own weight, was to deny the whole thing and charge it to the slanders of the Oehlerites and their agents inside the party. They have had to drop this pretense and confine themselves to reiterating that Cannon's proposal was not really a proposal but a suggestion.

Their second defense is that the proposal was unofficial since it was not made in the FC and that those who discuss it are spreading hysteria and should wait until the matter comes thru regular party channels. We would be more impressed if it were less apparent that Cannon made his proposal in the joint caucus rather than in the P.C. just because he did not want to be formally committed if Kuste should prove recalcitrant; and if we did not see the Cannonites working overtime to convince Spartacists that while no such proposals had been made, it might not be a bad idea. So anxious were they to convince comrades of the desirability of this proposal which no one had made, that Jim Dolson was caught in the headquarters trying to convince a youth, who turned out to be a member of the Ochlerite Young Workers League, who had wandered in to see somebody and remained to get an earful. Cannon's strategy was first to convince Kuste, then to convince his own comrades, and finally, when a large enough section of the membership had been favorably psychologized, to open the matter for discussion and let the opposition have 5 or 10 or 15 minutes to howl its head off. For the part we played in scotching this little scheme we have no regrets.

The third argument advanced by the liquidators is that no one proposes entry for the W.P.; only the SYL is under discussion. We know, however, that those who see the WP as the polarizing center would not want to confuse workers as to which direction the WP is traveling by giving up Spartacus as an organization. We know that the 30 year limit of the YPSL makes it virtually an independent party, and that the next step is to send in all WP members who can meet the 30 year limitation. Finally, we see clearly that every argument offered in support of Cannon's present line, could lend equal authority to a proposal to send the WP into the SP. If "Independence of the youth organization is not a principle" to them, neither is independence of the party a principle to them. "A big ferment exists in the YPSL"; the same is true of the S.P. "Organic unity is the order of the day"; as much among the adults as the youth, "the SYL is small and with little influence" but the party, says Cannon, "is not, properly speaking, a party, but only the germ, the nucleus, the mere beginning of a party." In a word, the very arguments which are used to justify the entry of the SYL into the YPSL today will condone the entry of the SYL into the SP tomorrow....Let the comrades recall that in both France and Belgium the New Orientation was first applied by sending the youth into the reformist youth organization. (We reserve to a separate article consideration of Cannon's proposal in relation to the Kuste-Keber thesis that the line followed in the US, fusion of the ICL section with left contrasts into an independent party, contradicts and disproves the idea that the "French turn" was an international turn. If, in America, too, for the ICL which seems to support Cannon, the road to the 4th International lies thru the Social Democracy, what happens to the "three variants?")

We long ago pointed out that an independent revolutionary party cannot be built by people who believe that the fate of the proletariat depends in large measure on how soon the Social Democracy breaks with the bourgeois state and transforms itself, etc. We don't believe that the road to the 4th International lies thru the Social Democracy. We believe the fate of the American working class, or the part we play in the international arena depends in a large measure on how soon the party liquidators are decisively beaten, the independence of the party irrevocably established, the party's face turned toward independent work in the class struggle.

November 30, 1935

Richard Zetman

We have been informed by Comrade Swaback of the Secretariat that "since the party is not in a position for the present to issue an internal bulletin" we have the right to circulate among the membership material that we have submitted for the Internal Bulletin.

ON GUARD AGAINST THE SPLITTERS!

The pre-convention discussion period established by the October Plenum affords the membership an opportunity to examine the whole past course of the leading bodies of the Party and to evaluate on a political basis the various tendencies within it. In the Stalinist parties this elementary communist procedure has been reduced to a simple re-affirmation of the already established line of the bureaucracy. In the Workers Party there has been--and should be--room for political discussion even between conventions, and most certainly in the present period. That we are compelled to make the following statement to the Party, stands to the shame of the leading elements in the Cannon caucus

.....

The New York Oehlerites, who were expelled on October 29 and November 5, protested to the last that they were being excluded for their political views. In every Branch they were told that they were being expelled not for political differences but for overt acts. We, who side by side with them insisted that the New Orientation of the U.C.P. is a principled error, reiterated our belief that in compelling their friends and permitting their enemies to expell them, the Oehlerites had themselves been guilty of a most serious error. The Cannonites sat by and smirked and pointed to us and told the Oehlerites, "There stands the living refutations of your slanders against the Party. These comrades share your views; they feel as you do about the French turn. But no one objects; no one proposes to expell them. For they show in practice that they want to remain in the Party. They are not guilty of disloyalty to the Party."

The Oehlerites in Branch 5 were expelled on October 29. There remained on the Executive three comrades who share our views and two Cannonites. These five met on November 4 and unanimously agreed on a slate for a new Executive to be proposed to the Branch on the following evening. The next morning, however, comrade Eidensohn came to the District Office to talk things over with Levit, and in the evening he announced that he would not support the slate he had voted for. Comrade Mendelson asked what had caused him to change his mind, and Eidensohn, Branch spokesman of the Cannonites, went into action. "You people", he shouted, "have nothing to say about the composition of the Executive. You have no place in the Party and you're lucky you weren't kicked out."

Did Eidensohn speak for himself or for the leading elements of the Cannon caucus?

The Oehlerites in Branch 1 were expelled on November 5. As they left the hall comrade Levit, District Organizer, P.C. member, member of the Steering Committee of the Cannon caucus, took the floor. "Now that the Oehlerites are gone," he remarked, "we must deal with those who intend to carry on their work of splitting the Party. There is no place for you here; you belong outside with them." For fifteen minutes he attacked our comrades with "Oehlerites who lacked the guts to do what the Oehlerites were doing," or "people who remain here as agents of the Oehlerites to further the split." We answered these slanderous remarks; comrades who do not share our views took the floor to rebuke Levit for his unwarranted attack; rank and file Cannonites apologetically explained that Levit had said more than he intended. Whereupon comrade Cannon took the floor and endorsed to the hilt everything that Levit had said!

Obviously then we are here confronting not the deplorable and irresponsible actions of over-enthusiastic Cannonites, as in the case of the Philadelphia sluggings, but a conscious effort to exclude from the Party all principled opponents of the New Orientation. (We reserve to a separate article the discussion of the full implications of the Cannon methods. Today, he seeks to exclude opponents of

the New Orientation; tomorrow, it will be the turn of those who oppose the practical application of his line. Cannon maintains that there is no room for us in the Party because ours is a disloyal tendency. He points to our "objective support" of the Oehlerites at the time of their expulsion. He complains that we discuss with new members the problems confronting the Party.

We do not believe that the Party will take seriously the idea that there is anything wrong in our approaching new members and attempting to win them to our position. Although it was barely a month ago that the Party, at the October Plenum, took a position on the New Orientation, it is a matter of common knowledge that Cannon has for months presented his views through the New Militant and that those workers who joined the Party were largely prepared in advance to join the Cannon group within the Party. Cannon has not proposed that no group approach new members or that new members have no vote for the first six months; his sole concern is that some new members are being won to our position.

The charge of lending "objective support" to the Oehlerites is presumably based on the fact that though we voted for their expulsion, we refused to whitewash the regime which had led them to their anti-Party acts. It is undeniable that from September onwards they sought to be expelled from the Party, and with their provocations we have nothing in common. But we insist in that Cannon's frenzied campaign to settle political differences by organizational methods, which reached its heights at the June Plenum, was to a large extent responsible for the case with which once loyal comrades were converted into Party enemies. We have not hesitated to act against the splitters despite our basic political agreement with them, and in warning the Party against Cannon's "brutal and irresponsible factionalism", which has already succeeded in driving so many comrades out of the Party, we are no more lending "objective support" to anti-Party elements than were Husto and Weber at the June Plenum.

Cannon and Lewit maintain that we are disloyal. Does this disloyalty show itself in violations of discipline or in failure to carry on activity? No supporter of our views has been accused of the slightest infraction of discipline, and the membership would ridicule any suggestion that we fail to do our share of Party work. We challenge Cannon and Lewit to charge us with specific violations of discipline or in some other way to prove—or else retract—this outrageous slander. Or, does disagreement with the Cannon group constitute disloyalty to the Party.

If the Party, through the New Militant, could tell the Oehlerites a few weeks ago that they could return and fight for their views if they agreed to abide by discipline, then, since we have not violated discipline, there is no basis for an organizational attack on our comrades. We are Party comrades with a political difference that must be resolved on a political level. We charge that Cannon's line means the liquidation of the Party, and that ours is the only line for building it, but comrades need not agree with our view to oppose our exclusion.

Who support and defend the Declaration of Principles have shown in action that our line means loyal activity to build the Workers Party as the independent vanguard of the working class. We therefore call upon all Party comrades to support our struggle to remain in the Party with full Party rights. The October 28 resolution of the Political Committee states that the Oehlerites are being expelled for anti-Party activities, but that the P.C. does not condemn comrades who hold similar views but have not been guilty of such anti-Party tactics. Do Cannon and Lewit, members of the P.C., oppose this resolution? It is a source of encouragement to us that many comrades who do not share our political views defend our right to participate in the present political discussion. We are not disloyal and we propose to remain in the Party. Split talk emanates from those who are preparing for a further step to the right and wish therefore to rid themselves of

principled (i.e. consistent) opponents of the new course. The disloyalty is on the part of those who propose to drive comrades from the party for their revolutionary convictions, the disloyalty is on the part of those who propose to liquidate our party.

November 11, 1935

Larry Cohen