

LETTER FROM THE WEST COAST

San Francisco, Jan 7, '46

Dear Lydia:

The lid is off! Yesterday's meeting was a slam-bang, knock-down affair very reminiscent of the gory battles of Chicago. For the first time a full discussion was held in Frisco - with the minority here to defend themselves.

I wrote you before that a member from Bayonne, P. F., was in the area. He had prepared the opening presentation. On Friday nite we held a caucus of the minority sympathizers - F., Nine, the two girls and myself. Technically this was not an organized faction, since all do not consider themselves members of the minority faction; but to all intents and purposes it was, for we decided on who was to speak, what would be covered and how we would act. It was agreed that F. would give the opening presentation, the two girls would speak from the floor during the discussion period and I would summarize.

Upon arriving at the meeting Sunday afternoon, it was more or less evident that the leading members of the majority had held a little caucus beforehand. There was noticeable tension in the air as we entered, for there was none of the usual cordial greetings that existed before.

B. Chester was the main speaker for the majority. But before the debate opened a series of communications were read - which included Natalia's and Munis's letters, the letter from the PC on your case and Bartell's letter which detailed the charges against you. The letters of Natalia and Munis were read because I had demanded this at the previous exec. meeting. After the letters on the Bennett case were read, I moved permission to have the statement of the Chicago Minority on your case read. This was approved and it was read. Then the debate started.

Chester spoke for 20 minutes, giving a typical argument that we have come to expect from majority hacks. His entire talk was devoted to the question of our lack of loyalty. He said that "we must put our own house in order before we can discuss the question of unity with the W.P." He made a great fuss over the Bennett case, saying this epitomized our position, that we were hell-bent on split, etc. At this point he sprang the news of Dave Jeffries's defection. (We did not receive your letter on this news until after we had returned from the meeting). Nowhere did he talk on the basic issues but used all the slander in an effort to impress the new people who were there,

F. Devoted his 20 minutes to an exposition of the basic question: that of unity, how Cannon had sabotaged it, how this false conception was leading to a monolithic party. He dealt with the positive advantages of unity.

Then came the discussion from the floor. Here all the majority spokesmen competed with one another to slander us, to camouflage the real issues, to accuse us of the worst crimes possible. Our two girls took the floor and both did excellent jobs. They each stuck to the major points and presented their arguments - on the reasons for unity - with dignity. The branch was startled that they had exposed themselves. One majority speaker reached a new low in political knowledge. He said

that we wanted a bourgeois revolution in Europe and that therefore we were petty bourgeois of the worst sort. This pained us because the fellow is a damn good trade unionist who is rapidly being built up locally, has a great deal of prestige because of his devotion and sincerity. What grieved us was that his remarks epitomized the tragedy of the whole fight: here in action before us was visible evidence of the corruptive influence wrought by Cannon and his stooges on the basically good rank and file workers.

At this point the door opened and in walked Sam Storm of Chicago! He had just come in for transfer. He heard what was going on. He asked permission to take the floor for the minority. We vouched for him and he was given this right. He spoke for a few minutes and effectively countered the false conceptions of our European program. But the har-
rague continued. One after another the majority speakers took the floor and indulged in the worst bit of misinformation that I've ever heard. None dealt with the issues - all spoke on our disloyalty, etc.

Then I took the floor for the minority summary. I tried to answer the most important points raised: disloyalty, the false conception of our program, the political errors of the majority. I turned the tables against them and accused the majority of disloyalty to the building of the party. I was vehement as they were and I tried not to spare them. I argued our position on the W.P. - told them that we considered the W.P. as a tendency of the 4th Int., refused to consider them as opponents and why we did so.

After this, Chester concluded the debate by repeating his previous line, that we were headed out. But the meeting did not end here. The majority decided to continue the discussion by hurling questions from the floor at me. Their most demagogic speaker, F. R., tried to extract a loyalty oath from me. He threatened expulsion or something (he inferred my removal from the exec. com.) unless I would agree to eternal loyalty to decisions of the majority of the party regarding relations with the W.P. But I refused to commit myself to my future conduct. I retorted that they had no right to demand such a thing - my future conduct would depend on future developments and not on the majority's bureaucratic conception of what my conduct should be. The meeting finally adjourned but with relations tenser than ever.

Thus did our meeting end. None of the minority speakers convinced any of the majority. But we did defend our position and we did shake the majority out of their serene smugness. We took everything they had in the way of slander and abuse but we countered with arguments of principle. We made the record with out clear and unequivocal position. We placed the onus of the split on them. I do not know what effect we had on the new people but I am positive they were startled by our arguments. It was the first they had really heard of the minority position.

The struggle finally broke here - late - but the law of combined development again showed itself. In this one meeting was engendered all the rancor, all the bitterness that has accumulated for months in New York and Chicago. This accahrine tenor of the branch which was used to impress the new people was shattered in one blow.

Now we are convinced that events will move fast and furious. The two girls who spoke for our position finally exposed themselves. This

means that they will have to decide on their future activity... I am convinced that they will soon be hit on the head by the full impact of Cannon's bureaucracy. They want tangible evidence of Cannon's degenerative influence; they will probably see it soon.

I expect some move in the near future to attempt to force me off the exec. committee. They'll probably try to raise it on a loyalty issue: that I cannot be trusted with confidential news because I publicly stated that I refused to consider the WP an opponent group and that I considered them a tendency in the 4th. When R. raised my loyalty, I quoted J. G. Wright's public statement, in which he lauded my activity in the branch. They have no tangible evidence of any disloyalty on my part. If they try to bust me, I'll make a fight of it and demand a control commission hearing.

Yesterday was the first time I had spoken publicly in over four years. Lydia, I now appreciate how you feel. This was the first time I had ever spoken to an openly hostile audience. I have spoken at union meetings, etc., in which I had to present an idea to an unsympathetic audience. But here was an audience ostensibly composed of comrades - yet who were leering at me, straining at the leash to misconstrue anything I might say, who heckled and hooted - an audience that you knew beforehand would not be convinced by logic. My speech was not made to them, except as I refuted their lies. I tried to direct my arguments to the new people. But you know well enough what it's like, so I don't have to go into details. Again I reiterate: here was the proof of Cannon's degenerate influence upon our party. Validity of political ideas has no more meaning to these people. Perhaps only the blows of history itself will jar them.

After the meeting we had dinner with one of the newer members - an excellent type of intelligent worker. We spoke to him about the discussion. He is not yet corrupted and so far has not made up his mind on the issues. He is rather sympathetic to the ideas of fusion and the Cannonite conception of loyalty has not yet impressed him.

We are both well but getting awfully tired of this mess. Regards.

Barney.

LETTER TO EUROPEAN EXECUTIVE OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL
ADOPTED BY THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE
WORKERS PARTY AT ITS PLENUM, JANUARY 20, 1946

January 20, 1946

To the Executive Committee
Of the Fourth International.

Dear Comrades:

The National Committee of the Workers Party addresses itself to you as the most representative body of the sections of the Fourth International, and wishes to present its position to you for submission to the delegates of the International Pre-Conference. We are presenting our position in this communication because it is not possible for our Party to have a representative present at the Conference to present our views orally.

Since its foundation, the Workers Party has not been affiliated with the Fourth International, nor with any of its executive or secretarial representatives. Such affiliation was precluded, among other things, by the decision adopted on the split in the American movement at the special conference of sections of the International held in New York in 1940.

Nevertheless, the Workers Party has always considered itself and still considers itself firmly attached to the fundamental Marxian principles and movement of the Fourth International. We have always considered and still consider the Fourth International as our international organization. This has been sufficiently demonstrated by our program and our activities in the course of our existence - the period comprising the crucial years of the second world war.

After the 1940 conference in New York, our Party sought to maintain the cohesion of those comrades of the Executive Committee of the Fourth International who were elected at the regular International Conference in Paris in 1938 and who were removed from the Executive by the extraordinary conference in New York. These comrades constituted themselves into a committee under our direction. However, the committee, due primarily to the defection of two comrades, never actually functioned. In any case, neither this international committee, nor the Workers Party itself, sought, at any time, to establish or build a new or rival International. Its aim was the aim that the Workers Party still has: to restore the unity of all the Fourth Internationalists and to gain the greatest possible support for the views of the Workers Party within the ranks of the Fourth International in accordance with the best traditions

of our movement which accord every Marxian tendency the fullest possibility of defending and propagating its standpoint.

As you are aware, the Workers Party has adopted a position on a number of questions, including the Russian question and the national question in Europe and Asia, which is different from the position adopted by the Socialist Workers Party and by other sections of the International. In addition, we have not concealed our criticism of the course pursued during the war by other sections of the International, including the European Executive. Nor have we concealed our criticism of the functioning of the International Secretariat in America, a Secretariat which, in our opinion, was reduced to complete impotence primarily as a result of the leadership of the Socialist Workers Party whose conduct finally imposed upon the responsible International Secretary his resignation from that body.

We wish to present our point of view on the theoretical and political questions in controversy, and our criticisms of the policy and work of the International to you and to all the sections, so that they may know our political position as it really is and so that they, in turn, may be able to submit our views to a critical examination. Only in this way can we have the international discussion which leads to the necessary clarification. Toward this end, we wish to submit to the International Conference our main theoretical and political documents in the expectation that they will be transmitted to all the sections.

We are of the opinion, furthermore, that the international clarification and consolidation of the Fourth International also require a loyal and critical discussion of the main political documents of the Minority Group of the Socialist Workers Party and of the I.K.D. (German Section of the Fourth International). If we single out these two groups in the International for reference here, it is not simply because they have made political and theoretical contributions of the greatest importance to the further development of the Fourth International and in harmony to a great extent with the position of our Party - although we do not agree fully with their point of view on all questions - and not simply because our Party has succeeded in establishing and maintaining the most intimate fraternal relations with these groups, but because their documents are either partially or totally unknown to the membership of the Fourth International.

For our part, we are of course desirous of receiving the political documents of all the sections and of the European Executive, including the documents of the coming Pre-Conference, in order that we may acquaint ourselves

with them and thereby be enabled to express our views. This will make it possible for us to participate fruitfully in the regular International Conference which, in our opinion, cannot be delayed too long.

This point brings us to the central question:

The Workers Party wishes to become a formal part of the Fourth International, and asks that the Pre-Conference discuss our proposal for affiliation and adopt a position on it. Under the circumstances, we do not ask that the International should decide that the Workers Party is its United States section. However, we request that the International decide that the Workers Party is one of the two United States parties affiliated with the Fourth International. If the Pre-Conference, contrary to our wishes and hopes, does not find it possible to adopt such a decision, we request that it decide to accept the affiliation of the Workers Party as a sympathizing section, for the time being. As you are aware, there is ample precedent for such affiliation in the history of the international communist movement.

At the same time, the Workers Party joins in support of the proposal of the Minority Group of the Socialist Workers Party that the Pre-Conference adopt a resolution firmly supporting the decision we have taken here in favor of the unification of the Workers Party and the Socialist Workers Party into one section of the Fourth International.

We are compelled to record with regret that all the efforts made not only by our Party but also by the Minority Group in the Socialist Workers Party have failed to move the leadership of the Socialist Workers Party to take a single step toward the achievement of unity of the Fourth International in this country. The responsibility for this failure is revealed unequivocally by the documents on this question which have already been sent to you.

The initiative of the Minority Group was rejected by the majority of the Socialist Workers Party leadership, amid a campaign of violent attack upon the Minority carried on, as it still is, in the ranks of the Socialist Workers Party. The initiative of the Workers Party was likewise rejected by the leadership of the Socialist Workers Party. Our Party, as you know, made every conceivable attempt to realize the unification at the earliest possible moment and on the best possible basis. All the concessions and proposals were made by our Party; no proposals of any kind for unity were ever made by the Socialist Workers Party. In the two joint meetings held between the delegations of the two Parties, we offered to acknowledge the fact that the united Party would have the majority of its leadership composed of the Socialist Workers Party; that the policy of

the united Party on all controversial questions would be the policy of the Socialist Workers Party unless and until revised by the democratic decision of the united membership expressed at a regular convention; that the control of the press of the united Party would be in the hands of the Socialist Workers Party. We offered to give up our independent party and independent National Committee; to give up our popular press, and our theoretical review and our independent publishing activity. No greater effort in the direction of unity was possible on our part.

It is true that our proposal for unity has been referred to as a "maneuver" by those who were never in favor of unity. In reply to this charge, it is only necessary to understand that if our proposals were a "maneuver", the maneuver could have been "exploded" in one minute by the leadership of the Socialist Workers Party. All it required was to declare that it accepted our proposals as outlined above and detailed in the documents now in your possession.

It is true, also, that in the negotiations for unity, our Party proposed that in the united Party our tendency would publish an internal political educational tendency bulletin of its own. The attempt has been made to suggest that the failure of the unity negotiations was due to this proposal. The suggestion is false. Upon the initiative of the Minority Group, which worked to remove all possible obstacles, real and arbitrary, to unification, the Workers Party declared that in the interests of achieving unity, it withdrew its demand for an internal bulletin of its own, and would insist only upon the joint recognition of the right of any political tendency in the united Party, or in the Fourth International as a whole, to issue such a bulletin. Even this ultimate concession on our part elicited no response from the Socialist Workers Party in favor of unity. We cannot, it will be understood, take seriously the position of the Socialist Workers Party that before unity can be discussed, it is first necessary to examine the political differences between the two groups. This position is an afterthought. It was never mentioned in the two negotiation meetings between the representatives of the two parties; on the contrary, it was jointly acknowledged there that the differences were known and needed no discussion beyond what could and would take place normally within the ranks of a united, democratically-centralized party. The differences between the two Parties are perfectly well known, and we demand only the right to advocate our point of view inside the united party, in the proper way and at the proper time. The position now taken by the Socialist Workers Party leadership is either an attempt to postpone the unity indefinitely, or to inculcate the idea of a Zinovievist-monolithism which we reject totally, or both.

To this brief outline must be added two other facts of importance:

One is the fact that not one single European comrade now in the United States supports the majority leadership of the Socialist Workers Party - not one. These are well-known, responsible, experienced and qualified comrades, with years of service in the Fourth International; none of them is a member of the Workers Party. They are here on the scene of the dispute. All of them oppose the position taken by the leadership of the Socialist Workers Party. Their views cannot but have the greatest significance to the comrades abroad.

The other is the fact that the Socialist Workers Party leadership has not taken any steps or made any reference with regard to the proposal contained in our last letter to the S.W.P. asking that the latter consider what measures should be taken - now that the unity proposal has failed in this country - to gain the assistance and intervention of the International on this score.

Because of these facts, we repeat our proposal that the Pre-Conference adopt a firm position in favor of the unification of the two Parties in the United States on the basis proposed and jointly supported by our Party and by the Minority Group of the Socialist Workers Party. The failure of the Pre-Conference to adopt such a position would not correspond to the best interests of the movement and would be met in this country, if not elsewhere, by complete incomprehension.

We repeat, finally, our proposal that the Pre-Conference accept the affiliation of the Workers Party as one of the two sections of the International in the United States, or, failing that, as a sympathizing section of the International, as a transition to the complete unification of all the forces of the Fourth International in this country.

With best Party greetings,

National Committee of the
Workers Party

Max Shachtman
National Secretary

February 26, 1946.

Robert Ferguson
Chicago, Ill.

Dear Fergie:

I am glad to hear that we recruited two new members in Chicago. It confirms my impression that we have some new wind in our sails. According to computations just made by Gould (they are being sent out in a circular), we have picked up in about seven cities close to 30 new members in the last month or so. If things keep up at this rate, I don't give a damn about anything else.

I am especially glad to note that Mash. has joined up. I have known him for many years and, even though I haven't always agreed with him on controversial questions, I know him as a man who takes the movement seriously. I wish you would go out of your way to give him my best regards.

As for the question of the SWP Minority, I am not sure I can write calmly on the matter. Every once in a while I have to exercise special control against throwing up my hands in despair. As was reported at the Plenum, Goldman, Morrow, Williams and I seemed to have arrived at a common definitive agreement. The Minority presented an ultimatum to the SWP PC Majority as was its right. We don't present ultimatums to the masses but you have the right to present an ultimatum, under certain conditions, to your political equals. In one sentence, the ultimatum said: "If you don't give a serious sign of opening or resuming negotiations for unity in the next few weeks, we are joining the WP." No serious person could consider this a split - at least not a split as it is ordinarily understood. It was simply a question of leaving one organization, in which a continuous struggle was practicably unfeasible, and not founding a new organization to complicate matters but joining an already existing organization. So far so good.

Cannon receives the ultimatum and he replies: "We reject it!" And he adds, "What are you going to do about it?" What can the Minority do about it? There is no way on God's green earth of forcing the Cannonites into unity. Formally they have the right and the duty to reject the ultimatum. In the first place, they cannot go beyond the resolution adopted at their plenum, which is an anti-unity resolution. As for the international resolution, twist and turn as you wish, it endorses the line of the Cannonites on unity, that is, it endorses this whole preposterous and reactionary fraud of "probing the differences to the end" before examining the question of unity. All that is left for the Minority to do is to carry out its ultimatum. If it does not, it leaves itself open to the charge of playing with the threat of "split". And if there is anything worse, in my opinion, than a "split", it is to play with the threat of a split. You either mean it or

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SWP Minority

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you don't and if you don't mean it, you have no right to play with it as though it were catnip. You can only discredit yourself not only with your opponents but also with your followers and friends. What else can people say except that you don't take your politics seriously?

Nevertheless, now that the Minority is confronted with the consequences of its ultimatum, it doesn't seem to know clearly what it wants to do or what it is going to do. Morrow says, "Let's wait." Wait for what? I don't think he knows. Goldman writes me excellent letters about what is to be done next but he omits from them one tiny detail, namely, what about the ultimatum? Was it made? Yes. Was it meant seriously? No one seems to know for sure. How is it possible to carry on a fight in such a way? The answer is; it is not possible.

The political indecisiveness of the Minority has resulted in the following to date:

It lost a little group of two or three comrades who have decided firmly to stay in the SWP and operate there under the direction of the German group. It has lost the Bayonne branch to a man. It has not gained a single supporter in the SWP for the past several months. It has brought down upon itself a savage criticism - a little overdrawn and wrong in at least one quintessential, to be sure, but very telling nevertheless - by the German section. It has irritated any number of members of our own Party. It has not consolidated its promising support in Belgium or France. The English section, upon which it counted so heavily, has just adopted a violent and very stupid resolution against the Minority. All the indications are that the International Pre-Conference, a basket in which the Minority laid so many eggs, will go strongly against the Minority. Meanwhile, in the ranks of those who remain with the Minority there is uncertainty, hesitation, disorientation, absence of perspective, bewilderment, and, in effect, a dissociation from the actual movement in the sense that it doesn't yet belong to the WP but is to all intents and purposes not active in the SWP. How long can this purgatorial existence be maintained? I might be able to understand it if the Minority had a genuine perspective of a long struggle inside the SWP with the idea of winning a considerable section of the membership to its point of view. But there is not one single solitary member of the Minority who has this perspective or anything like it.

I have pointed this out time and again to Goldman, and I point it out every day to Morrow. Up to now, I confess, I have not been too effective. The weeks pass into months and the activity of the Minority exists almost exclusively in the motions and counter-motions made by Morrow in the PC and

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the documents he writes for the European comrades and for the SWP bulletin. The Minority itself as a group does absolutely nothing and can do absolutely nothing inside of the SWP.

My final proposal to the Minority, to Felix specifically, has been this: We wait another two or three weeks at the outside. In that period, if Cannon communicates to us his fantastic "list" of subjects to be "probed to the end", we will reply within 24 hours that we are ready to discuss these questions and a thousand others and that we will discuss them in the press (which is where Cannon wants to discuss them). At the same time, however, we shall issue a statement pointing out that this whole business is a fraud and has absolutely nothing whatsoever to do with the question of unity. At that time I propose that the Minority shall issue a statement joining the WP. That point will in all probability coincide with Colman's return from his trip south. The coincidence is excellent, in my opinion.

Now, I don't say that the Minority as a whole will agree to this. Too bad. In that case, those comrades who do agree with it will act accordingly. In New York that means that several comrades whom it is no longer possible to compel to remain in the SWP, will join the WP. Those comrades who want to continue to remain as the Minority of the SWP may do so. We will continue to cooperate with them but obviously we will not be able to devote the same time and attention to that question as in the past. There are other and more pressing tasks before us. We have devoted almost a year to this business because it has been a most important business. I don't want to minimize it or, retrospectively, to begrudge the efforts that we made. But there is a limit to everything. I certainly do not intend to fall into Cannon's trap, where we are tangled up in fierce shadow-boxing around the by now utopian unity, while he proceeds blithely to concentrate on building the SWP.

I think you should convey the substance of these sentiments, firmly but in the most comradely way, not only to our own comrades but to all of the Minority comrades. I have no objection to them kidding about "Shachtman's strategy". I am only sorry that they have not drawn up a balance sheet, not of their strategy but of their ten strategies almost each one of which excluded all of the others.

In a few days the membership will have in hand a heavily documented balance sheet of the unity question which I drew up. It is long overdue. If it was not drawn up before now, it was only because of the delicate circumstances about which we reported at the last Plenum.

Best personal regards,

CC - N.C. Members

Max

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February 26, 1946

Dear Oscar:

Let's assume the worst - that our stay in the SWP will be prolonged until the next convention which will take place six months from now. I do not think it will first because there may be an expulsion and second because we may decide that the farce has gone far enough. But I shall present my arguments against your leaving on the supposition of a tortured six months or so stay in the party.

What led me to advise taking advantage of the last paragraph of the ES resolution? It should be clear that I do not think that there is much likelihood of a change of attitude on the part of Cannon. In my mind it was the question of making it easier for our friends in the International to defend our actions in leaving the party. Naturally I do not altogether exclude the possibility of a change of attitude on the part of Cannon but my basic motive was to do everything possible to keep in contact with our friends in the International.

You will notice that I do not say the International but "our friends in the International", who are all opposed to our leaving. I do not pay the slightest attention to the Cannonites in the International. I do pay some attention to those people in the International who are serious but not very smart. I am inclined to believe that the resolution of the ES was framed by just such people. For our friends and for the serious but not very smart people it is necessary to show that we have gone out of our way to give Cannon every possible chance to show that he is for unity and we have shown that he is against unity although unwilling to come out and say so. What will be our gain, if we can show that? Not much in the way of any tangible results but some in the way of retaining good will.

What do we stand to lose by remaining in the party until we decide either that we have shown that Cannon is actually determined not to have unity or until a convention which does not go on record in favor of unity? (Actually these two are the same). The loss of a few more members, perhaps. But as against the possible gain of good will of people who are all in favor of our staying it is worth losing some people, especially when one realizes that they cannot be our best people.

On what basis do you propose to leave? I must say you give no political basis whatever. "If we take ourselves seriously, we must carry out the promise" to leave. But if we take ourselves seriously as people who are interested in unity as the best possible solution then we must take advantage of the serious even though foolish suggestions of the ES. Every loophole to show that we are for unity and Cannon against it is helpful - and more advantageous than the advantages of leaving immediately. These latter are mainly in the sense that we can get to work in the WP but they are outweighed by the larger considerations that I have mentioned above.

Furthermore when we consider that your leaving and our subsequent leaving destroys fifty percent of the effectiveness of the leaving you

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should be willing to subject yourself to the opinion of the majority of the faction. I shall always defend the right of comrades to act as a minority provided the issue is big enough but in this case I defy any sensible politician to say that the issue is big enough to justify a minority to act on its own.

Conclusion: you will do the faction harm, you will do our cause no good, even if you are correct in your position, if you leave. Six months at the most is not such a long time and if you leave it will be only evidence that your impatience is greater than your political perspicacity. Personally I want to leave but if I am convinced that leaving is no good I'll stay and grit my teeth.

P.S. And what about leaving the faction with a majority of waverers?

Yours,

Al

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To N. C. Members:

February 28, 1946

Dear Al:

Thanks very much for the copies of the letters to Felix and Oscar, including the latest one dated February 26th which I received this morning.

I regret very much that I have to disagree with the course that you recommend in these letters. By this I do not mean to say that I disagree with the idea of exhausting the possibility of unity to the end. I have always been of the opinion that I expressed to you almost at the very beginning of our discussions, namely, that, as you said at the time, it may be necessary to go through another experience with the Cannonites in a united party. Even now I have the same point of view and I defend it vigorously even with those of our own comrades who deny that there may be such a possibility or such a need. My policy is not determined by my opinion of Cannon or the Cannonites or their political line, but by the objective needs of the movement, and if these require unity, I am 100% for unity. When I say 100%, I mean it literally. I have been in a common party with worse and more dangerous people than the Cannonites, and I imagine that before I die I will be again.

But my idea was to exhaust the possibilities of unity, and not to exhaust our comrades or the comrades of the SWP Minority. Please understand me: I am not referring to physical exhaustion but to political exhaustion. That, I am afraid, is what your policy, as I understand it from your recent letters, will inevitably signify.

In none of your latest letters do I find a single reference to the declaration submitted to the PC of the SWP of two weeks ago by the Minority. This declaration was a political act which was both significant and important. The Cannonites called it an ultimatum. That is exactly what it is. I have tried to point out to comrades that an ultimatum to the masses is one thing - it is impermissible. An ultimatum to political equals, on the other hand, is perfectly permissible and under certain circumstances justifiable and necessary. The stage that the "unity negotiations" have reached presents a model example of such circumstances. The ultimatum said in so many words: If in the next few weeks you, the majority, do not give us a meaningful sign that you will seriously take up the negotiations for unity, we, the Minority, who do not want to enter into a course of what are or may appear to be formal violations of party discipline by collaborating with the WP in a manner that you have prohibited, will leave the SWP and join the WP. Such an action will not be a split, in the ordinary sense of the word, because we will not be creating a new organization and thus be open to the charge of dividing the movement and promoting confusion. We recognize your declaration said in effect, that the movement is already divided into two sections. We recognize further that the WP is

no less a revolutionary organization, and no less worthy of support by revolutionists than the SWP. If, therefore, we join the WP, we are simply joining an organization where, from a purely practical point of view, we can carry on our revolutionary activities in the class struggle more effectively without there being in the slightest degree an abandonment of our political position or our campaign for the unification of the two parties. Once we join the WP, it, for its part, does not abandon its campaign for unity either. Its position on that score remains unaffected. ... That was the sense of your declaration.

Now, Cannon has very coolly replied to your ultimatum and he has rejected it. According to all the dictates of logic and politics and good sense and anything else you can think of, the next step is up to the Minority. If it fails to carry out the logical and clearly indicated consequences of its claim, it opens itself up to a serious charge; you are guilty of playing with ultimatums; you make threats which you do not mean and which, therefore, you have no right to make; your policies - or, if not your policies, then your tactics - are not to be taken seriously. I cannot for the life of me see what answer you can give to such a charge.

You may reply that you want to exhaust the possibility of unification to the very, very end. I am with you on that! But at the same time I don't want to play into the hands of the enemies of unity by providing them with a cover that they do not deserve. You want to take advantage, you say, even of the ambiguous formula in the resolution of the European Secretariat. The only trouble is that it is not even ambiguous. And it does not in the slightest degree embarrass Cannon or impel him to move so much as one millimeter towards unity. On the contrary, the resolution not only accepts Cannon's fundamental premise on the unity question but deepens and "strengthens" it. It is a direct rejection of the fundamental position on the premise for unity by us, by you, by Munis, by Natalia and others. All it "calls upon" Cannon to do, he is quite capable of doing with both hands tied behind him and yawning in his sleep, namely, to draw up "jointly" with us a list of subjects to be discussed. What in heavens name is new or progressive about this? I say it is a malicious fraud and that is what we are going to say about it in public. In order to carry out the ES recommendation, all that Cannon has to do is what he is already doing, according to Felix. He is drawing up "a list of subjects" which are to be "probed to the end" in the pages of the Fourth International, for him and The New International, for us, and he is going to send us a copy of the list. If we want to "add" to the list, we are free to do so, and Cannon will undoubtedly welcome the addition of ten subjects, be cheerful at the addition of 20 subjects, and be hysterically jubilant if we add 40 subjects.

Please understand that we intend "to accept" the list. We intend to discuss from now to the end of time, if necessary, and I really mean discuss. We will write article upon article about our differences and about our points of agreement. We will carry

on the discussion on the most objective plane possible for us. Absolutely! We have never rejected discussion, anywhere, at any place, with anybody, and we will certainly not reject it now. But again, in the name of anything that makes sense, what has this to do with the question of unity? We once had a genuine public discussion with the AWP people. There wasn't an ounce of fake in it. It was all part and parcel of a unity movement and was accompanied by serious negotiations for unity. But that had nothing in common with what is proposed now.

We, as the Workers Party, are in no dilemma whatsoever. We are ready for discussion; we are ready for unity or unity negotiations; and for the rest we continue with our work. But the Minority, if it pursues the line you indicate, is in a hopeless dilemma. Will you call Cannon's "list" a step toward unity? That is impossible. People will laugh, Cannon loudest of all. Will you say that Cannon has been forced to change his line on discussion? Again, Cannon will laugh and point out that he decided some time ago in favor of probing the differences to the end in the pages of the respective theoretical organs. Will you condemn him for having failed to draw up the "list" "jointly"? Cannon will shrug his shoulders and rightly so. What the devil does this "jointly" business mean? Does it mean that he has to sit down in one room with us to draw up the list? He will ask and, by God, we will ask: Why? What difference does it really make? Isn't it the same thing in effect if he sends us the list by mail instead of conveying it to us orally and asks us by mail if we want to alter the list, or amplify it, instead of asking us orally? A complaint on that score would be a pretty small potato. Will you complain that Cannon does not say the discussion should lead to unity? He can very easily and properly reply: The resolution officially adopted by my National Committee, after a thorough discussion in which the Minority put forth its point of view, does not permit me to say this; and the resolution of the E.S. likewise does not permit me to say this. Both resolutions bind me to take the position that the question of unity can be examined only after the discussion which my plenum, my European Secretariat and my PC have ordered me to arrange.

What is the Minority left with? An unfulfilled ultimatum. What perspective is left? Apparently to stay in the party until the convention, which will take place when God and Cannon or Cannon without the aid of the Almighty decides it shall take place. The decision of this convention is an absolutely foregone conclusion. And after the convention what does the Minority - or, rather, what is left of the Minority - do? Carry out its ultimatum then and join the WP? On what grounds then that do not exist now? Exactly the same arguments can and will be made then as are made now. If they are valid now, then it is my opinion that they will be valid then. The "friends" in the International will simply repeat: You have not yet convinced the ranks of the party and you must stay in it until you convince them. And the worst of it is that your most concrete task will not have been

performed, namely, to hammer home to every member of the International that the WP is no less a revolutionary organization, and no less worthy of membership in the International than the SWP, and that a Fourth Internationalist has as much right to be a member of the WP as of the SWP, and that any other opinion is wrong and outrageously wrong and based upon ignorance and prejudice which is absolutely unwarranted. Your remaining in the SWP after the delivery of the ultimatum, and without the presentation of any new reasons for remaining in, without showing that there is a new situation, without showing or being able to show that in the next period there is the prospect of winning to your side even one SWP comrade more than you have won up to now, will only deepen the prejudices against the WP and consequently their prejudices against your eventual adherence to the WP.

You make one very serious and important point in your letter to Oscar, namely, that the effectiveness of the Minority joining the WP in a block would be diminished if a minority of the Minority joins us now while the rest of the comrades, especially the leading comrades like yourself and Felix, remain in the SWP. I am compelled to acknowledge the weight of this argument from a practical point of view. If I had even half agreement with the course you now propose, the course of delay - I would do all in my power to prevail upon Oscar and all of the other comrades, as you put it, to grit their teeth and remain for another period. In spite of what Felix often thinks, I am not looking at this problem from the standpoint of the WP snagging a few more members in the quickest way. As from the beginning, so now, I look at the problem politically and seek to follow such a course as can be justified politically, but I cannot agree with the course you propose. I cannot justify it. I cannot defend it to others let alone myself. I think it will compromise the Minority, and to that extent, also the WP. I think it will lead to further defections, in God knows how many directions, from the Minority, I think it will promote a situation which has developed already, and which amounts to Felix being "active" in the SWP in the form of maneuvers, motions, resolutions, etc. at the top and purely at the top while the entire rest of the membership of the Minority is in a state of complete inactivity and passivity, out of which nothing on God's green earth can lift them so long as they remain members of the SWP. This is not a subjective reaction on the part of the comrades. It is simply a reflection of the hopelessness of the present perspective in the SWP.

You undoubtedly know how much time and effort I have spent on some of the comrades of the Minority, urging them to exercise patience and patience and patience. I did that because I considered it politically correct. I cannot do it now. They have me by the throat politically, that is, they present arguments which I cannot answer because they are politically correct. Therefore I am compelled to agree with their proposition to put the matter of immediate action before the group for discussion and decision - for the tenth time, to be sure, but this time with the aim of having those who agree do one thing and those who disagree do another thing.

Oscar proposes to present his motion or resolution to the group and then submit it to the Chicago comrades for vote. If his point of view carries, the time it would take to carry it out in full would coincide with your return to Chicago from the trip south - a very fortunate coincidence in my opinion - especially if you were to insist with our friend in the south that you intend to follow the course indicated and previously agreed upon when the question of ultimatum was settled in New York and Chicago. If you do not agree with this line, I am certain that it will be impossible for anybody any longer to restrain comrades like Oscar and Henry. They will join the WP in the next period. I hope the friction that this creates will be reduced to an absolute minimum. Above all I ardently hope that there will be no change whatsoever in the relations between ourselves on the one side and the comrades of the ^Minority who decide to stay in the SWP on the other. I personally see no grounds for such a change.

With best personal regards,

MAX

FOR MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE

March 26, 1946

Dear Al:

I learned from Louise that both you and Lydia were taken ill after your return from Mexico. I hope that it is not too serious and that it will not incapacitate you for very long. It goes without saying that I am extremely anxious to hear the details of the discussions you conducted during your visit and I can hardly wait for the letter which Louise reported you will write toward the end of this week.

I am writing you this letter in order to clarify my own views to you about the latest events.

In your brief note from Mexico you asked why I should consider the ultimatum presented to the SWP PC as "sacred." Of the very few things I hold sacred, the ultimatum is not among them. What I am concerned with, however, is that there should be some measure of consistency in the line and tactics that are pursued so that the comrades not only here but abroad get the feeling that there is a sure hand in this fight and that we know at least a few weeks in advance what we are doing and what we expect. I don't think it can be argued that anyone has gained this feeling from the course pursued up to now. However that may be, I don't want to discuss so much the question of what has been done up to now because I do believe that on the whole it is quite defensible. What I am worried about is what is going to be done from now on.

Felix has been kind enough to send me a copy of the last letter he wrote you, in which he deals with the Russian question and with his proposals to open up a fight on it. I have had several desultory talks with Felix about this. What I have to say on it I want to say in the most careful way so as not to be misunderstood.

I am the last man in the world to complain about the position that Felix has developed on the Russian question. Quite the contrary. Although I have not seen his formal document, I think I can say, on the basis of oral discussions with Felix, that his position on the Russian question today is a good 80% in solidarity with the position of our party, and for these difficult times, 80% is a pretty high and substantially satisfactory figure. What remains in the form of differences can, in my opinion be discussed and argued out in common and in the calmest and most scientific atmosphere. He is for a real struggle against Stalinism in the occupied territories. Good! He is against the reactionary idea of "unconditional defense of the Soviet Union." Good. He no longer considers it a workers state and he has abandoned, as I insist every Marxist will likewise have to do, the truly preposterous theory that the existence of nationalized

property makes Russia a workers state. Good. He has not fallen into the equally preposterous theory that Russia is now some sort of capitalist state. Good. He agrees that Stalinist Russia represents a new social formation. Good. He doesn't agree that the ruling bureaucracy represents a ruling class, or that there is any ruling class in Russia, and contends that Russia is ruled by a new bureaucratic caste. That's bad, but it is arguable, and we will straighten it out in due time. In a word, on the whole it is a development which I find exceptionally gratifying, especially inasmuch as it avoids that stupid type of sectarian debate which mixes up abstract and scientific questions with active concrete political questions.

But I am afraid I cannot say the same thing about the line he proposes to adopt with regard to the presentation of this point of view and the connection between his presentation and the fight that has been made up to now by the Minority on the question of unity. There, I am afraid, he is impulsively falling into a Cannonite trap. Up to now the Minority has steadfastly maintained that the political differences between the two parties, although they continue to exist, have been reduced (especially on the Russian question!) to the point where sufficient political agreement exists to warrant unity and that there is not enough political disagreement to warrant the existence of two independent organizations. Cannon's reply has been: That's what you say; but as for me, I want to find out just what the differences are, just how deep and extensive they are, whether or not there really exists a political basis for unification. Therefore, I want a long, long, long period of discussion of the political differences, which should last approximately 50 years.--- We all replied: This is humbug. We know what the differences are. It isn't necessary to spend two minutes to discuss them. Whatever discussion is necessary on them can take place within one united party. The only thing that stands in the way of the establishment of this united party is Cannon's factional fear of introducing into the ranks several hundred conscious and educated opponents.

Now, this was either right or wrong; I don't have much patience with any sophist who is going to start to explain to me that it was both right and wrong. Now, if it was right up to last night, it is still right this morning. Nothing fundamentally new has occurred. If, however, it was wrong, we owe it to the SWP members, to the members of the Minority and to the members of the WP, and to the radical public to say: Comrades and friends, we were wrong, and if anybody was right, it was Cannon. In effect, what I fear is that is just what Felix is proposing to say. How?

In his letter to you he says in so many words that what now stands in the way of unity are the differences on the Russian question (to which he adds, and correctly, that Cannon is wrong and we are right). I don't even want to debate this point of view for the moment. As a matter of fact, I am ready, again for the moment, to assume that it is correct. But precisely, if it

is correct, the Minority, and, if we agree, then the WP too, must formally announce the withdrawal of their proposals for unity, motivation and all, and declare instead that until the Russian question is settled, the unity can and must be laid on the table. Are we prepared to say that?

That isn't all. The adoption of Felix's line means not a slight but a complete reorientation of the Minority (and correspondingly of the WP). Up to now the Minority has had what has been erroneously referred to as a "split" perspective. Whatever the perspective was called, we know what it has been. If Felix's point of view is now adopted, this perspective must be radically revised - more accurately, it must be abandoned and replaced by an entirely new one. If Felix shifts the fight primarily to the Russian question and, as he indicates, fights it through up to the next national convention of the SWP, what happens then? I am afraid that in this case, as in so many others, no serious attention has been paid to the consequences of the line, to the practical working out of a perspective, to the systematic and clear preparation of one's followers, etc.

The convention comes. Felix's position will, I regret to say, be defeated. Then? What do you say? What do you do? I will bet the whole campaign fund of the WP against anything you want to put up that Felix cannot possibly answer these questions. Does he get up then and say: I will continue to stay in the party and fight for my point of view? All right, he may say that. But then what happens to the fight for unity? It is postponed to the Greek Kalends. Cannon will get up and with complete justification will merely quote from Felix who says that it now is clear that the real obstacle to unity is the wrong Russian line of the Cannonites; he will simply add that, naturally, from his point of view, the real obstacle to unity is the wrong Russian line of the WP! Felix must thereupon reply (as in everything else I am assuming that Felix is to be taken seriously and that an effort is made to maintain a certain political consistency): I intend to stay in the SWP for the purpose of fighting to remove this obstacle to unity, namely, the party's false Russian line.

It may be argued that Felix (i.e., the Minority) is compelled to say and do no such thing. All right, but if it does not do this, then it is compelled to do something else. Its line having been defeated, Felix must then rise and declare: Your Russian position is wrong, it is intolerable, Shachtman's position is right, I am therefore leaving you and joining the WP.

I would be very happy to hear from you or Felix or anyone else of a third choice under those conditions!

But if Felix walks out on the basis of the wrong Russian position of the SWP (and a wrong position not in war time but in peace time) how will you make that give with all of the pronouncements of the Minority, up to and including its last ones, which characterized our action in the split of 1940 as a "crime"? How will you explain the walk-out to the other comrades in the

International? In my opinion there is no problem in explaining to the comrades of the International why you leave the SWP and join the WP on the basis of the unity question. But, paradoxical as it may seem to confused people, you will have one devil of a time explaining to them leaving the SWP and joining the WP on the basis of the Russian question as it will appear in the fight Felix proposes to conduct.

There are more aspects to this question than I can possibly cover in a letter. For example, will it not be necessary for the Minority to declare now, openly and honestly, that the German comrades were right in their proposals to the Minority, that Jeffries was right in the action he took, and that the Minority was wrong in its rejection of the proposal of the Germans? I was against and I remain against the essence of the proposal of the Germans - not in general, and not for always, but in the concrete circumstances. Along with you, I held and hold to the view that a faction is not formed in order to work out a political platform, but, on the contrary, that a faction is established only after a political platform is worked out. I was especially afraid of the German proposal because it could so easily be interpreted or, if you wish, misinterpreted to provide a justification for cliqueism, that is, the formation of political groups which seek "to find" political differences with other groups. I have burnt my fingers with such cliques so many times that I am scared to death of them. Be that as it may, the fact remains that the Minority, if it now adopts Felix's proposal, must make public acknowledgment of its indebtedness to the Germans and of the error of its own preceding course. There is nothing terrible about this. But something else follows. In that case, why should the Minority confine itself to adopting a political position on the Russian question? There are not less than three other major questions in controversy in the movement today; and, given the promise of the Germans, the Minority would first have to sit down and work out its independent position on these questions (national question, perspectives of the European revolution, significance of Stalinism, "military question", trade union question, significance of the transitional program, etc.). The working out of such positions, I need hardly emphasize, will take a bit of doing. Felix has a bit of a fixation, a fixation common to those who arrive at a new position by themselves, so to speak. Does he think that all that will be necessary in order to have the entire Minority, or even most of it, adopt his radically new Russian position is to present it with a new document at 8:30 some evening and have it voted on at a quarter of 11? If he succeeds in doing that, I take my hat off to him but not to the comrades of the Minority.

Enough. I don't want to squeeze this point dry. I still stand fundamentally by the course that was decided on by the Minority. I want to see that course carried out with some degree of consistency and with a minimum of delay.

More accurately, I think it is time to make a really final deci-

sion in the group. Those who are for one course should vote for it and carry it out; those who are for the other course should vote for it and carry it out. There need be no break in fraternal relations with the comrades regardless of how they vote. I can't say that I am violently against those who want to stay in the SWP to fight for a new political line. I will try to work with them and to help them to the greatest possible extent. But I, for one, cannot and will not agree to anything that means a postponement of the execution of the very firm decision that has been reached by other comrades who want to make an open declaration summarizing the unity negotiations, showing that they have collapsed, placing the responsibility where it belongs, and joining the WP.

I hope that these notes reach you in time to be considered before drafting your report on the visit with N. and M. and your proposals for the course that the group should take.

With best personal regards,

Max

P.S. I have just read your letter to Felix which seems to me a fair presentation of the alternative but it does not deal with Felix's own proposal. I hope to be able to write you in a few days. Meanwhile, I cannot urge too strongly that you come to New York on April 7th, which you say is possible.

Section C

Pages 605-609

These page numbers were inadvertently skipped
when the superimposed handwritten pagination was added.

There are NO pages missing.

Please read continuously from page 604 over to 610.

"The WP wants to come in just to split again. How do we know they're sincere?"

According to this argument, once two groups have split (and one ALWAYS thinks that the other has split unjustifiedly), then from that moment unity is forever and ever impossible.

The question is an important one, of course, but I shall show that as it is used here it is only an excuse to cover up and NOT the real question that is bothering Cannon.

It is not true that once a split has taken place, unity is thenceforward impossible because one can never know whether the other fellow is "sincere". There have been too many examples in the history of the socialist movement, in particular of the Bolshevik movement, even more particularly in the history of the Fourth International. For one thing, when the Founding Conference of the Fourth International took place in 1938, there were at least 3 different Trotskyist groups in England, with a great deal of antagonism between them. They reunified, especially under the pressure of the international movement, and the reunification was a great success by and large. In our case, too, the international movement is pressing for unity.

Probably the outstanding example of reunification after a split and years of antagonism is the merging of Trotsky's group with Lenin's Bolsheviks in 1917. From 1903 to 1917, Trotsky and Lenin were political enemies. Lenin called Trotsky a "conciliator," "a preacher of capitulation," "unprincipled," "a diplomat of the lowest order," "a distorter of history," "one who deceives the workers in the most unscrupulous and shameless fashion," and last but not least "that petty-bourgeois, Trotsky." On the other hand, Trotsky called Lenin a "bureaucrat," a "dictator," "the party disorganizer," a "liar," etc. There were important political and politico-organizational differences between them for 15 years, at least as important as there are between the WP and ourselves, really much more so. Yet, in 1917, when they ascertained that they had come to a basis of fundamental political agreement on the basic programmatic questions, neither hesitated to fuse into a unified party. Yet Trotsky's group in 1917 (the Mezhrayontsi) were a tiny grouplet almost entirely concentrated in St. Petersburg, but a formal fusion convention was held and an agreement made on proportionate representation on the leading committees. That is how Trotsky joined the Bolshevik party for the first time. Wasn't the question raised in the Bolshevik party: How can we unify with a fellow like Trotsky whom we have denounced for 15 years? - Wasn't the question raised in Trotsky's group: How can we unify with a fellow like Lenin whom we have denounced for 15 years? How do we know they're sincere? YES, these questions were raised in both groups. But both Trotsky and Lenin insisted that the fusion was justified and made necessary by the basic programmatic agreement between the two groups in the light of their tasks, in spite of continuing differences. They were both revolutionary leaders, not mere factionalists.

They say that the WP wants to come in just to split again. There is not a scintilla of evidence or indication offered to substantiate this argument. It is just asserted, it is just thrown out to cast a veil over the question. They ignore the fact that, obviously, if Shachtman comes in just to split again, he and his group would be therefore so discredited that they could never recover from that black eye. It is not only Shachtman who says he's for unity. The rank and file of the WP all over the country, individually and collectively, say they're for unity. Is it just Shachtman who is trying to pull this Machiavellian trick, or have all the rank and file members of the WP also been organized to put over this hypocritical maneuver on a grand and convincing scale? The latter

The latter is well nigh incredible; it presupposes a degree of coherence and unity and organization -- to organize the rank and file that way without evidence of it somehow leaking out -- that does the WP too much justice, or injustice, depending how you look at it.

If it is just Shachtman or the WP National Committee that is being Machiavellian, and the WP rank and file really want unity (as cannot be doubted if you look at the situation without prejudice), then Shachtman is uncommonly stupid. It is impossible to pull a grand maneuver like that from the top. You are saying then that Shachtman can pull the WP members in and out like pushpins at will, (especially the new recruits who are a large percentage, perhaps a majority of the present WP) -- as if we weren't around at all. If he "engineers" another split, not only will he be discredited but it is inevitable that the best people of the WP will remain ours -- especially the workers who are not used to fancy maneuvers like that. I believe you are mistaken if you believe that Shachtman is that stupid or that suicidal.

But without going further along these lines, it is possible to PROVE that this question of "sincerity" that is raised by the Majority is NOT the point in question. Let us suppose that this is really what is bothering Cannon. He is in favor of unity, he asserts it as a good thing to be accomplished, he agrees that it is politically possible...the only thing he questions is: Will it work? --- Such an attitude would at least make sense. But this is not the attitude taken by the Majority. They REFUSE to say that they are in favor of unity. They REFUSE to say that the political differences involved are not an obstacle, that unity is politically possible. They REUSE to answer any of the very first questions to be answered. They raise the question of "sincerity" as a blind to cover the fact that they are opposed to it in any case.

This can only be denied affectively if the Majority came out and said: We are for unity, it is politically possible and desirable, the only thing that has to be settled is, Will it work? In THAT case, we could say: If that is what is involved clearly, then let us proceed to find out whether it can work, whether they are sincere, etc. Not by blindly rushing into fusion (no one proposes that), but by laying the basis for it by joint work, joint meetings, joint discussions, fraternization, etc.

Just standing aside and talking about some scientific test to test the "sincerity" not only of a person but of a whole group is obviously just a way of evading and confusing, since nothing - absolutely nothing - can ever be settled that way. Get a representative of the WP before you and put him on the spot. Send one of our leaders to the WP rank and file meetings. Or better still hold a joint discussion where the rank and file can express themselves. If you really want unity, that is the way to lay the basis for it, to find out if there is a basis for it. That is why Lenin repeated so often, when this question of subjective "sincerity" was raised, that the question cannot be posed that way. "There is no such thing as a sincerometer," he used to say. It is politics that settles the question.

The WP has raised ~~xxxx~~ one question in the course of the negotiations. What is remarkable, in view of the distrust and antagonism between the two groups, is that they did not raise many many more. They raised this one question: the RIGHT of a minority to issue an INTERNAL bulletin to the members of the party expressing its point of view on questions before the party, as a tendency bulletin.

In the course of seeking pegs on which to hang their fear of unity, the Majority have practically climbed all over this point with the greatest enthusiasm -- and the greatest misrepresentation.

In the first place, I have heard it said that the WP has demanded the right to have a public organ of its own. This can only be said by comrades who have not had the opportunity -- or who have not been given the opportunity -- to find out for themselves what has gone on. The position put forward by the WP is public in full. And this statement is false. The WP has made no such demand, or even brought up the idea. What IS true that in the course of discussing the question of a tendency bulletin in the negotiations, it was Comrade CANNON who admitted that, as he put it, EVEN the right to issue a public organ was possessed by a minority in abnormal cases. He added that this right existed in the "abstract", whatever that might mean. But there is no question of a public organ before us. The question before us is that of an internal bulletin issued by a minority, only that.

In the course of the negotiations, Cannon admitted verbally that a minority in a revolutionary party possesses that right, and himself cited cases of it. Why then the to-do over it? Because we would not like the WP to issue a tendency bulletin in a united party? I will show just what the danger is of that, but it is enough to answer right now that of course the majority never "likes" the minority to press its point of view vigorously. In a democratic revolutionary party -- and not a minolithic Stalinized bureaucracy -- however, it is not a question of what the majority would like their opponents to do, but rather what are the RIGHTS of a minority. For without the rights of the minority, democracy no longer exists, and the revolutionary party becomes something quite different.

Is it because it shows that the WP'ers don't really want unity, because they raise this question in the negotiations? If that 's what it is supposed to show then it is settled, because Cannon admits that a minority has this right.

But the Majority says: That is the right of a minority in the "abstract", but in the concrete it is an obstacle -- or a potential obstacle -- or it may possibly become an obstacle to making unity work, if the WP'ers started putting out a tendency bulletin after fusion.

Now in the first place, before discussing this question, it is necessary to say that it is difficult to understand what is meant by "a minority right in the abstract." If it is a right merely in the abstract, and not in actuality, then it is not a right at all. Under capitalism we have the abstract right to free speech, but in the concrete it is constantly violated; that is why under capitalism, the so-called right of free speech is so much of a pure fake. Is this "abstract" right that Cannon admits grudgingly also a fake? Of course the Majority dare not take such a stand, at least not on paper where some one might read it.

In the second place, to get down to the question itself, it is not true that the WP proposes to put out a tendency bulletin on entry. They have put that down on paper, and recorded themselves on it. They

put it down on the record and write: "We look upon a factional war the morning after unity as an absurdity." They say, in the tradition of the revolutionary party attitude, that the existence in a party of a group of comrades with a minority point of view is not the same as an organized factional situation.

How can the obstacles to unity be overcome -- how can the WP overcome them, or how can anyone else overcome them -- if nobody says what they are? We are on the spot when Shachtman asks: "If the question of a tendency bulletin is withdrawn, what then are the obstacles to unity?" and our own leadership has nothing to say. It is because there is nothing to say.