

I N T E R N A L   B U L L E T I N - F O R M E M B E R S O N L Y

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TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE WORKERS PARTY

Dear Comrades:

The attached material is for your information. We call attention only to the following fact: the PC established an investigating committee composed of Gould, chairman, Williams and Johnson. All of the comrades involved were called into the committee for the purpose of establishing the facts and by inquiry it was established that the facts as stated in the Erber and Jensen letters were correct. They were not challenged by Comrade Stone except as indicated by the attached excerpts from the transcript of the hearing.

With best Party greetings,

Max Shachtman

National Secretary

May 4, 1946

To the Political Committee

Dear Comrades:

The purpose of this letter is to bring before the Political Committee two problems involving the conduct of pre-convention discussion and to read into the record of the party an account of a meeting of the Newark branch on May 2 which brought these problems to my attention.

These problems involve:

1 - the actual working out of the provisions for the attendance of non-party members at branch discussions on the convention resolutions; and

2 - the permissible limits to which a party member can go (either within the party or in public) in denying the revolutionary character of our party, in besmirching its record of integrity in the class struggle, in introducing appeals to race consciousness in party discussions and in citing support by Negro members as evidence of the superiority of one resolution over the other.

I was assigned to speak before the Newark branch as reporter for the Majority resolution on the Negro question. Upon entering the hall, I was surprised to see a considerably larger audience than I knew to be the membership of the Newark branch. Upon inquiry, I was told that there were some six or seven contacts present from a Negro housing project. I was also told that Comrade Ria Stone was present to represent the Johnson resolution and had been told of the character of the audience. The meeting was about to begin and it was too late to discuss the character of the discussion with the branch leadership. I foolishly assumed that the other reporters would understand the situation and conduct the discussion in a spirit suitable for the occasion. (In addition to Comrade Stone, Saul Berg was given half time to present his own differences with the Johnson resolution, the main line of which he accepts.)

I sought to make my presentation as educational and non-factional as the subject permitted. I began by explaining the character of our pre-convention discussion, how we discuss and arrive at decisions, etc. I pointed out that we were not discussing in order to adopt a position on the question of the Negro and his rights, that our party had a record of consistent and uncompromising advocacy of the right of the Negro to social, political and economic equality, that we had not only written about these things consistently in our press but had participated in every possible action which our numbers permitted. I pointed out that what was a stake in the discussion was a matter of a theoretical appraisal of the relationship of the struggle on behalf of Negro

rights and the class struggle of Labor against Capital, a matter of strategy and tactics, etc. My presentation was devoid of any direct reference to the Johnson resolution. It was an entirely positive presentation of the Majority position, with the attempt to weight it in the direction of basic education and understanding.

Comrade Stone replied with a presentation that would have been shameful in a completely closed meeting of the party, let alone in the presence of the contacts. The burden of her appeal was directed to the race feeling of Negroes, without a sentence devoted to raising their class and socialist understanding. The unbridled chauvinist content of her appeal was reminiscent of the Negro nationalist speakers I had heard in Washington Park in Chicago. Among her points were the following:

- 1 - She stated that there were people in the party who said that there was little difference between the two positions; however, every Negro who heard them presented knew the difference immediately, "he knows for what the one stands and for what the other stands."
- 2 - She stated that Comrade Coolidge had said in a New York meeting that it is our aim to "break up the Negro organizations" without explaining, as she and all other Johnsonites know, that Coolidge did not mean this in any physical or literal sense. After making capital of this point she ended by saying "Negroes know this language. They hear it from the cops."
- 3 - She said that it is the position of the party Majority to insist that "the Negroes go cap in hand to Phil Murray to beg his permission to conduct struggles on behalf of their rights."
- 4 - She said that the party had a "social service workers attitude of condescending to help the Negro."
- 5 - Her references to the labor movement were invariably to the "white labor movement."
- 6 - She turned to me and said, "I would like to see you go into a Negro organization with the aim of creating a rupture between the ranks and their leaders."
- 7 - She spoke of the March on Washington movement without even implying that the party had played an active part in it.
- 8 - She said that in the Harlem riots the cops, Mayor La Guardia, Frank Crosswaite of the SP, Yergan of the CP stood on one side of the street and the Negro masses were throwing rocks at them from the other and then ended up by asking "Where was the Workers Party in this situation?"

9 - When Comrade Shaw of the branch arose in discussion to dispel the impression that Stone had created that all Negro com-

rades are on one side in this discussion - an impression reinforced by the presence of two New York Negro comrades who had accompanied Stone to the meeting to support her position - by pointing out that Comrade Coolidge, the author of the majority document is a Negro and that other Negroes support the majority, Stone replied that she was not prepared to give exact figures but that the overwhelming majority of the Negro members supported Johnson.

(I will not cite in the same category her statement that the revolution in the South would be led by "Negro committees" which would establish their own rule which would "not be Socialism but also would no longer be capitalism." I suppose freedom of expression in pre-convention discussion covers even a position like this. However, whether this position comes within the bounds of an all-inclusive revolutionary Marxist party requires further examination.)

Comrade Saul Berg conducted himself in a responsible manner insofar as he limited himself to an objective presentation of his views on the Johnson resolution, his differences with it, and a political criticism of the Majority line. However, he failed to rebuke the unbridled chauvinism and direct appeal to the race consciousness of the Negro audience on the part of Stone. Since he stood in theoretical agreement with her, he was in a favorable position to do it and bore the political responsibility to do it, both as a supporter of a common position and as the organizer of the Newark branch. In this sense Comrade Berg did not fulfill his duty as a defender of the name and integrity of the party.

The situation in which I found myself in my summation was an exceedingly disagreeable one. All my subjective desires were to launch into the kind of an attack upon this treacherous, dirty performance of Stone's. Yet in the presence of the Negro contacts it was necessary to restrain myself and be content with such inadequate and mild rebuke as to say that I "bitterly resent the attack upon the party as having a 'social service worker's attitude' etc." and to proceed to enumerate the participation of our party in various struggles on behalf of Negro rights. It also fell to my lot to explain to the contacts that much of what Stone said about the party's attitude toward Negroes was really not believed by her, that it was a matter of exaggeration in the heat of debate, that the party has differences but that we all act as a disciplined unit in action, etc.

I am a proponent of an all-inclusive revolutionary party. But under this heading there cannot be conceived a party that includes both race agitators and class agitators. The elementary principles of class consciousness, class solidarity and socialist internationalism are at stake.

I ask that the PC note the conduct of the discussion by Stone and also the practice of the Newark branch in arranging pre-convention meetings in the further regulation of the discussion.

Fraternally yours,  
Ernest Erber

May 4, 1946

To the Political Committee

Dear Comrades:

I wish hereby to enter a formal protest against the behavior of Comrade Ria Stone, reporting for the Minority on the Negro Question at the Newark branch on Thursday, May 2nd. Were this not a pre-convention discussion, I should not hesitate to bring Comrade Stone up on charges of chauvinism, disloyalty to the party and political irresponsibility.

The Newark branch, on the motion of Comrade Phil Romano, voted to ask several Negro contacts to this discussion meeting. I voted against this motion, not because I do not think it cannot be a good educational device for contacts, assuring them of our party's democracy and intense interest in important questions, but precisely because I felt that in the current heated factional atmosphere of the party, it would not be possible to hold this discussion to the calm educational level necessary. Nevertheless, the branch voted the motion favorably, by a narrow margin, with a sense, I felt sure, of the additional responsibility it imposed upon them. The branch members displayed the necessary responsibility I think but unfortunately the same can by no means be said of the Minority reporter, who knew beforehand that contacts were to be present, but, upon whom, even if she had not known previously, it was obviously beholden to modulate her strident and hysterical factionalism.

Comrade Erber spoke for the Majority position; in what most of the comrades felt was a model manner, calm, educational, stressing the positive aspects of his position, rather than concentrating on polemics against his opponent.

Then Comrade Stone made her presentation. In a closed party meeting, I could only consider this speech as impermissible: before outsiders, it was, in my opinion, downright disloyal.

I have characterized this speech as chauvinist, disloyal and politically irresponsible. I should like to substantiate my charges as follows:

Chauvinism: Throughout her speech, Stone constantly kept saying, "Negroes will know what we are talking about. Negroes will understand." She more than implied that the overwhelming majority of Negroes in the party supported the Minority position. This to such a degree, that Comrade Shaw, not a member of the majority faction, felt it necessary to explain that all the Negroes did not support the Johnsonites on this question, that the Majority position was written by a leading Negro member, etc. Also throughout her speech, she kept referring to the "white labor movement."

Disloyalty: 1 - Comrade Stone accused Erber and the party of

having a social worker attitude towards the Negro.

2 - She said that the party advised the Negro to go cap in hand to beg from Phil Murray and "the white labor movement."

3 - She said that Comrade Coolidge was in favor of breaking up the Negro organizations and gave it in disloyal context by adding "The Negroes have heard this language before - from the cops." Protests of the comrades during the discussion on the floor, finally led her to explain during her summary that she did not mean that Coolidge would come in with a nightstick. AND BELIEVE ME, THAT EXPLANATION WAS NECESSARY AFTER HER SPEECH.

4 - She said the question before the party was, when race riots occurred, on which side would the party be, with the Negroes or with the cops. Any comrade who has any doubts on this question obviously should not belong to a party that arouses doubts of such nature.

Political Irresponsibility: 1 - Comrade Stone said, "I'd like to see you go into Negro organizations (like the NAACP) and try to rupture the membership from the leadership.

2 - She said that the Negroes would set up some sort of society which was neither socialist nor capitalist. (I am not quite sure whether she meant before or after the revolution.)

Both these astounding statements inject two new ideas into the political discussion; i.e., one that we do not try to break the Negroes from their putty-bourgeois leadership and second, that the Negroes alone can set up any kind of society. Are these positions held by the Minority? They are not in the resolution. If the Minority holds these fantastic ideas, it is politically irresponsible of them not to put them into writing for discussion.

I think that the disastrous effect that this kind of speech could have on outsiders was avoided only the responsibility of the comrades in discussion, the excellent attitude and work of Comrade Erber, and to a lesser degree the responsibility of Comrade Berg, who spoke as a minor reporter who has amendments to Johnson's position, and who confined himself to a discussion of his political differences with the majority. I told Comrade Berg, however, that I felt he had shirked his political responsibilities as well as his responsibility as organizer of the branch by not specifically disowning Stone's chauvinism, to which his objection is as great as mine.

Though I write this letter in my own name, conversations with other branch members after the meeting convinced me that their objections were equally great. I am so confident of this, that I shall read this letter to my next branch meeting and ask the branch to endorse it.

If at best, Comrade Stone's behavior is adjudged as only unparalleled stupidity, then I submit that the Minority which chose Comrade Stone as a qualified reporter, must bear responsibility for such stupidity which can have such political consequences and must disown or defend her statements, though I see no defense possible for her behavior before non-party members.

Fraternally yours,

V. Jensen  
Newark Branch



May 10, 1946

To the Political Committee:

The following motion was passed by the Newark branch at its meeting of May 9th, by a vote of 10-0, one member of the branch, Romano, being absent:

MOTION: That the Newark branch, consisting of supporters of both the majority and minority positions on the Negro Question, go on record as endorsing as substantially correct the main line of criticism of the behavior of Comrade Ria Stone at the Newark discussion meeting of May 2nd, made by Comrade Jensen in her letter to the Political Committee, and that the Political Committee be so informed.

The Newark Branch also requests that the letter of Jensen and the above motion be printed in the Internal Bulletin.

(Signed) Robert Shaw  
Secretary

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May 10, 1946

To the Political Committee:

I have read the letters of Comrades Erber and Jensen addressed to the Political Committee concerning the debate on the Negro question in the Newark branch on May 2, 1946.

I wish to state my unreserved apologies for the polemical heat of my debate and for the formulations employed therein and cited by Comrades Erber and Jensen. While within context these formulations are not as crude as they sound, there is no political justification for them in the position of the Johnson minority which is established in writing in The New International. Due to the pressure of personal difficulties into which it is unnecessary to go in this statement, I vulgarized and misstated the case in regard both to the majority and the minority position.

I want, however, to make it clear that I made no attack on the party but rather stated the alternative positions sharply and in the form of polemical questions as to which should be the party's attitude. It is necessary to state this, not only to correct any impression which I may have made but also in order to make it clear that I do not believe that the party has not participated to the best of its ability in the struggle for Negro rights. Nevertheless, for the impressions created, I take full responsibility and am anxious to take steps to correct them.

I shall be glad to read this statement before the Newark branch and to the sympathizers who were present at the branch.

Ria Stone

EXCERPTS FROM THE HEARING

GOULD: (Reading) "9. When Comrade Shaw of the branch arose in discussion to dispel the impression that Stone had created that all Negro comrades are on one side in this discussion - an impression reinforced by the presence of two N.Y. Negro comrades who had accompanied Stone to the meeting to support her position by pointing out that Comrade Coolidge, the author of the majority document is a Negro and that other Negroes support the majority, Stone replied that she was not prepared to give exact figures but that the overwhelming majority of the Negro members supported Johnson."

STONE: No, I said that a significant number of Negro members supported Johnson

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ERBER: I would just like to state that with reference to point 9, as to whether Comrade Stone said that a majority or a significant section, I didn't jot down her exact word but, to keep the record clear, I had the exact quotes on the other. The point on how many Negroes supported her, I don't have that verbatim. I don't remember whether it was "majority" or "significant". But the impression she conveyed was of that sort and it might well be that she might have said, a significant section instead of majority.

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JOHNSON: There is a question I would like to ask; the question about a statement here that is in quotation marks - I would like to get from everyone who was present exactly what was his impression. It is a statement that talks about the Negroes in the South forming some sort of regime, a statement that the revolution in the South would be led by Negro committees which would establish their own rule but it also would no longer be capitalism. I would like to hear what you have to say about it. I would like you to tell the committee. Negro committees are in quotation marks and also (reading) "not be Socialism but also would no longer be capitalism."

STONE: I am afraid that I would have to answer in the same way as I stated before, namely, that that would require a recapitulation of the speech I made.

WILLIAMS: Could you briefly summarize that?

STONE: Let me say this. I don't recall using the words "Negro Committees" but if Comrade Erber says I used the words, I assume he jotted it down. I was anxious to establish that the Negroes by themselves could not establish a socialist order. I was anxious to establish, nevertheless, that they would and would by their actions come up against the ruling class. Insofar as I counterposed the "non-socialist" and "non-capitalist", though I

do not recall using the word "non-capitalist", it was in that particular context - in order to prove that the Negroes by themselves could not establish socialism.

JOHNSON: I want to get this very clear because what Stone says here is clear - the quotation in the statement could have all sorts of meanings. I don't want to imply that what Ernie said is not accurate.

GOULD: I directed no question to Comrade Stone on this matter on this particular point because I think that is in the nature of a political opinion on a political question. She may or may not have said it and may or may not have been misquoted but as I understand it it is a legitimate question of dispute. I distinguish between that and the first 9 points of this document and consequently I could not possibly contest her right to make such statements in a pre-convention discussion as the expression of her own particular views.

ONE STEP FORWARD, TWO STEPS BACKWARD  
(Or the Development and Deterioration of a Situation)

By Irving Marnin

While the party leadership agitates the backward elements in the party about the crimes of the Johnsonites in Philadelphia, I propose here to try to help the Philadelphia branch and to help the party to understand our problems and help us to solve them. Before I sent this document in, I showed it to the leader of the C2 branch and asked him if it was a fair statement of the case. He said it was. By this I do not mean that he endorsed the ideas. But I wanted to be sure that there was nothing unjust or unfair in it. It is along these lines that we in Philadelphia could have solved our problem and were trying to build better party relations until the entry of the comrades from New York undid the work we were trying to do. One week after the comrade had read the document we heard he and the others had threatened to go to the SWP. The truth of the matter will be known in time, we are sure.

It is in our trade union work, our mass contact with the proletariat, that we can best see the actual consequences of the party's orientation toward the American working class and the application of the party's line. This article will attempt to analyze what happened in one concrete situation which was held up as an example of how the party should work. We must decide what was good and what was bad, what was correct and what was incorrect, in order to facilitate our work in the future and to make the necessary corrections in either the line of the party or the manner of application of the line. It is in this manner that the party can learn how to work and build its forces.

In the situation in ship in Philadelphia, we can see in embryo the methods on a national scale of the entire party. One party comrade, an extremely politicalized person, got a job in the yard. He worked quietly but well in his own department for a year before he made contact with a progressive group, which had been started under the inspiration of an ex-member of the CLA and one of his supporters. The progressive group then began to grow with the program of revoking the No-Strike Pledge, withdrawal from the WLB, and later for the formation of a Labor Party. It was this group which was the soil for party activity and recruitment. After some six months of constant visiting and discussion with a small group of these people (constituted as a Labor Education Club) and consistent hammering away, four people from the yard and one from UE were recruited to the party.

By this time the party members were already an influential section of the local sub-leadership with a fairly large following. The progressive group had already had the experience of one election contest (for the convention delegate in the fall of 1943) and was an established and recognized group in the yard. A separate branch of the party was constituted to help integrate these new

people into the party. The branch had about ten members and lasted for about six months, during which time it lost two members and recruited none. It carried on no party activity outside of the union itself, had very little political education, and was almost exclusively concerned with its own union problems. A single branch was again constituted in the summer or early fall of 1944. A school in elementary socialism was held in the winter of 1945 and the party then again started to recruit. From the winter of 1945 to the winter of 1946, 14 people were recruited from ship. This made the imposing total of 17 people recruited from one yard in a little over two years. Of this entire group, three dropped out completely, four are completely inactive (3 of them haven't attended three branch meetings in six months), two have applied for a leave of absence. Eight have remained - some of these sinking their roots in the party more than others, but all eight of them more or less active and consistent members. Despite the losses and inactivities of some of the recruits, the party has made some progress, some political education was undertaken, and the prospects looked bright for further progress. The number of subs per member was relatively low, but not cause for alarm. This is a brief sketch of how the party developed and with this in mind, we can return to our main problem and fit the pieces together.

The basis of recruitment of the original party nucleus was the three point trade union program of the party: Rescind the No-Strike Pledge; Withdraw from the War Labor Board; and Build a Labor Party, and a rather nebulous desire for a better world of socialism as the "ultimate" goal to be reached sometime in the distant future. In fact, one of the recruits (the ex-GLA member) actually rejected Bolshevism and the program of the party. Once the fraction was constituted, the principal axis of its work became precisely the trade union program. Political education was continually brushed aside as relatively unimportant or too far "advanced" for these workers. They, however, wanted to learn. One of them even thought that it was now his job to broadcast that he was a revolutionary socialist and leave behind trade union maneuvers, etc. in which he had been involved most of his life. This was wrong, but shows his good instincts. Unfortunately, his good instincts were improperly corrected, and he was thrown back into the "pure" trade union struggle to the virtual exclusion of his education for the job of a revolutionist in the union - a job for which he was very well fitted. It was not to his liking but he accepted it because our leadership told him that it was the correct manner of working for the party.

The original four people are still with us at this date, although two have applied for a leave of absence.

#### The "Struggle for Power"

The first major step taken by the fraction was the formation of an alliance for the union election in the spring of 1944. The "progressive" ticket and the three point program were victorious. A party member was elected to the official board, another became

editor of the paper and was able to propagandize for the three point program. It is significant that in this first election, the fraction was not inclined to accept the alliance. They knew that their allies were only using the program as a method of gaining office. Particularly, the Negro comrades were incensed because the alliance included Jim Crow sections of the union.

This tendency of the fraction to oppose a particular policy and for the party leadership to urge it upon them was a continual feature of the fractions's development. The workers were right in this instance, and the party leadership was wrong, and this happened often.

This same group was elected as convention delegates in the fall of 1944 and made a good fight for their ideas. That is to say, the party members did. The allies attempted to bolt and actually gave them no real support. This factor was decisive in causing a split in the progressive group, forcing a new alignment. By spring of 1945 the progressive group, with a new ally which was just as unprincipled as the first, was ready for another election. This one resulted in a split decision, with the opposition carrying a majority of the official board, but our candidates winning for President and Executive Secretary. (One explanatory remark must be made here about alliances. There is nothing wrong with alliances in the trade unions on the basis of our three point program, but the fact that all the opportunists rallied around the program indicates that the proper revolutionary content was not given to the slogans and program.)

To correct any false impression which may be created by the above, it must be noted that we are not saying that the party has become power crazy. In fact the fraction was under instructions not to have a party member run for President. At that time it was the opinion of the comrade who was forced to run that the party should fight on a clear program, without untrustworthy allies, take a beating and go back with their tools to fight with the men in the yard for correct union policies and do more work for the party. But some of the fraction members who had not been sufficiently well trained in Bolshevik principles of democratic centralism broke discipline and he was forced to run. This comrade and the party were correct, for now we had "power" but did not know what to do with it and we discovered that it hampered our work in the yard. That the comrades had broken discipline is not what we are referring to. What is important is that they had broken discipline because they did not understand what the function of party members in the unions was. They did not understand because the party did not teach them.

In the period between the two elections, the party recruited four people, of whom only two are left. One of these had a radical background and actually came looking for the party. He was a revolutionist to the core. The others were recruited on the basis of the three point program and not the program of social revolution. One was dropped, another dropped out of activity when he was laid off and the fourth is just finding his way in the

party. They ~~too~~ were attracted to the party because it seemed to be a ~~concrete~~ force in the union. It was a force which could actually affect them where they worked. Subs still were relatively low per capita. Education was still neglected and these new comrades, above every one else, realized the necessity for politicalization. Yet we failed to teach them.

### The Political Committee, Opportunism and Deterioration

The first major problem facing the new official board of the union was to determine a policy on the question of layoffs. The fraction was almost unanimously in favor of a strike to compel a shortening of the work-week, strict adherence to seniority and for other demands - even if it meant a closing down of the yard by the company. They wanted to fight and not take a demoralizing day by day licking at the hands of the company. The situation called for us to agitate for another Brewster sit-in. But the party leadership once more decided against it. The Political Committee had taken over the guidance of the fraction and a representative of the committee convinced the comrades that it was better to take a beating than to close the doors completely and lose thus all that we (the party) had in the yard. The preservation of the party in a concentration point had become more important than carrying on the correct policy of struggle demanded by the circumstances. That the workers could gain anything by fighting, that we should at least try it out never crossed the mind of the PC. They could not see that the desire of the fraction rank and file workers to fight was evidence of what the many people in the yard were thinking.

We had failed to prepare the men in the yard for the problem of reconversion under capitalism (other than to pass some paper resolutions for a shorter work week), had failed to pose the problem of what should be done to rally the workers in the face of unemployment, had failed to expose the national union leadership's failure to develop a program for jobs. We had not done the work that it is our duty as a party to do. The Political Committee opposed a militant line often against the workers of the fraction and the Philadelphia branch. Whereas the layoffs should have been a golden opportunity for making new party members (considering the size of the fraction at that time), for extensive propaganda on the transitional program of the party, the situation turned to our complete disadvantage. The progressives were the first to be laid off. They felt that the union had failed them in not resisting the layoffs. The militancy of the local began a downward spiral from that day on. From being the leader of the progressive trade union forces in the city, the local rapidly became one of the most backward in the area (despite its retention of the three point program which now had no meaning). "Practical" trade union politics had triumphed over what should be our real work in the unions - propaganda for the transitional program, preparation of the masses for the coming struggles, consistent and uncompromising presentation of our views so that at the proper time the union membership would recognize that we were correct and rally to the ideas of the party. We had failed to prepare the party cadres or their friends and sympathizers. Some of



us can say and it cannot be denied, that we opposed this line all the time and the Political Committee which guided the work on the spot has been proved wrong.

From opportunism on the question of the layoffs we moved to the next problem of the convention policy and election. Again the PC failed to adopt a correct line. Here the international policy of the party on Stalinism was forced upon the fraction by the PC. Every member of the fraction but two wanted to enter the "progressive" caucus and fight for our program in the caucus against the Stalinists and at any rate to ally with them to oust the Green leadership. The opinion of the PC was that "Green belongs to us. He too is part of the American labor movement, whereas the Stalinists are unionwreckers outside of the labor movement and would not give us a chance to live in the union." As the fraction members very well put it: "What's the matter here? Every time we see Stalinists we run the other way. Now we are told to support the leadership which we have opposed for three years." They were all thankful that they did not win the election, at least they did not have to defend such a line at the convention. Suffice it to say that the opposition which beat them (and which still had not renounced the three point program) carried out the party line for the PC anyway. There is a comrade in another branch who can substantiate the confusion that the PC created here with its line on Stalinism.

With the convention over, the defeated group attempted to establish a "National Progressive Group" to continue the fight. In a perverted fashion they were responding to pressure from the ranks for a militant program of struggle. Again we were told that it was not our place to enter this group and fight for our program. Under the guidance of the PC we abstained from participating in what might have developed into a rank and file insurrection. We were afraid to enter a group and contest the Stalinists for power on the basis of our program for the industry against theirs. Opportunism, conservatism, and abstentionism had now become the methods of operation of one of the party's most influential fractions. All of it stemmed from the method of having a "practical" day to day, hand-to-mouth policy rather than one of trying to advocate a correct policy which filled the objective needs of the workers in the industry. The correct policy might have meant less power, prestige and influence in the immediate period, but it would have established credit for the party in the minds of many workers who would have come to us when they saw that we were consistently telling the truth and posing the only real solutions to their problems. And it does not follow that we would have had less recruits.

#### Where We Are Today - Perspectives

The incorrect policy forced on the fraction by the prestige and persuasiveness of the party leadership has ended it in an utter rut with a perspective of further deterioration. The leader of the fraction made a report soon after the convention in which he stated that the union could do nothing but call for national ownership in the yards in the present situation. A strike was

"impossible" because of the bad condition in the industry. Thus, as so often happens, he jumped from one extreme to another. The fraction and the branch disagreed and urged a policy of calling for an industry-wide strike. When this was proposed in the union we were booted off the floor. The proposal of an escalator clause was not listened to. Locals in the city were voting on the question of a general strike as a protest against police brutality, yet we could not even propose this step in the local. From being a "progressive" local, we had finished up as the local which was behind all the others in the city. It now ranked with the most conservative.

A set-back is understandable. But when it can be traced back as flowing from a fundamentally erroneous conception of revolutionary work in the unions, the party must study it and take note. We are responsible for the local, we are in the leadership, yet it is now reactionary. It has been the most fruitful ground for party recruitment, yet it has failed to make known to wide masses in the union either the name or the ideas of the party. The renewal rate to Labor Action subs is practically zero. For a fraction of its size, it brings very few members to open meetings, not even one per member. Members recruited in the last eight months are party members in name only. They are not active and do not know what the program of the party really is. They have been recruited to the party of the three point program and not the party of social revolution, to a "small mass party" and not a vanguard party. Education was now actually feared because it would "drive people away." Politics was hushed up - "they might not understand it." The word revolution had to be removed from our vocabulary, "it would antagonize them."

The Political Committee had ordered the fraction to recruit because the yard might be closed down. "Get them into the party, no matter how. We'll teach them later." The result was that the comrade who was doing the recruiting (this was the ex-AWP member who despite his differences with the party was a sincere and loyal party member) would get hold of two or three people before a branch meeting, tell them we were for a "better world" and for the "brotherhood of man", for the creation of a labor party which would bring this about and the party accepted them for membership. It is impossible to build a party by these means; particularly when we are left in a confused state of mind because of a fear of frightening them by the ideas of Marxism. We are not meeting our worker contacts with the revolutionary confidence that they deserve. They are ready for more than we give them. The net result is to water down the party, lower the level of understanding, etc. instead of raising the workers to the level of the party. It is significant that for the Active Workers Conference, this fraction could submit a document which stated that the method of party recruitment is "beer hall schmoozing" and not driving home the correctness of our political line. Workers perhaps can be recruited on such a basis, if the party then tries to educate them properly, although it will probably mean a great many defections. We must advance the program and recruit and educate on that basis or we will fail in our primary obligations to the working class and to the workers in

the party. After hearing a speech by Johnson to the party members, two comrades in the party for months can say that this is the first time they understood what the party stood for, and they were certain that many members of their union would understand what it was about and respond to it.

These ship comrades worked long and hard to help build the party. We do not blame them at all. They recruited to the party on the basis of their activity and prestige in the union. They worked under the direction of responsible party leaders. Yet the party had failed in its responsibilities to them. We have not facilitated their work by giving them a correct orientation and perspective. We have failed to educate them in the ideas of Marxism. The press has failed to fill in for what they could not say or did not know how to say. They had no literature to read which could explain, in terms familiar to them, what the ideas of the party were. They worked heroically and persistently with the few tools given to them by the party - yet after three years of effort they find themselves worse off in the local than when they started. They find that the ideas of the party are not listened to now (just when the workers elsewhere all over the country are perking up their ears and listening to propaganda against capitalism).

At this time, our party must weigh this experience and assimilate the lessons to be learned in order to prepare for the future. We feel convinced that, while we were not right all the time, and the PC and ship comrades were not wrong all the time, yet the PC had a line and method which disoriented this important work. We ask the party to consider that if the Philadelphia Branch had been working on the lines of the minority resolution on the American question and the question of building the party, if Labor Action had been openly a revolutionary socialist organ, we would have been stronger in ship and would have had a better branch in Philadelphia. We bring this to the attention of the party so that it can discuss the question and all of us can profit by the experience.

Philadelphia, Pa.  
April 2, 1946

To all Comrades of the Workers Party:

This is an open letter to all members of the Workers Party which will present before them the facts in a new situation in the Philadelphia organization.

On Monday, April 1st, without warning of any kind, a situation unprecedented in the Trotskyist movement was thrown into the City Committee meeting. The following motions, prepared in advance and with the help of two National Committee members (Comrades Garrett and Fenwick), were passed in rapid fire order:

1. Three members of the minority shall be transferred out of the ship branch, effective that night, and two members of the other branch transferred into the ship branch.

2. Members of one branch, including City Committee members, shall be prohibited from visiting the other branch.

Such organizational methods must be made known throughout the party, particularly since Comrade Shachtman saw fit to present the "facts" to the New York membership on Sunday, March 31, before they were known in Philadelphia or discussed in the Philadelphia City Committee. He referred to them on March 31st. The comrades of the minority on the City Committee first discovered them on Monday, April 1st.

A brief summary of the background to this event is necessary in order for the party clearly to understand the issues involved. For a period of two years there have existed two differing political tendencies in the Philadelphia party. The <sup>other</sup> was represented by those who opposed this concept and felt that it was disorienting the party. This difference was expressed in all fields of party activity: trade union work, education, forums, etc. Disputes at that time were especially clear on the methods of work flowing from Lund's approach in relation to Ship.

Despite these differences, however, the leadership elected after Lund left, including representatives of both tendencies (with Lund and Shachtman both insisting that a member of the present minority be organizer), was able to work in such a manner that after almost a year's time they could summarize their work in the following manner and without a dissenting vote on the report: (Extract from Executive Report, dated November 5, 1945):

"In the past ten months the party has increased in size appreciably. Two members have returned from the army. One experienced person was sent here from New York. One old-timer rejoined. And we recruited a total of 1 from UE and 13 from Ship. This makes a complete total of 19, an increase of better than 100%. This record is probably equalled by no other branch in the country. However, this is not the end of the question. We must keep all these people, educate them, increase their understanding and loyalty to the party, in brief, make of all these new people capable revolutionary socialists. That is the biggest problem before us and one which demands the attention of every single party member. If this problem is not solved, it is

more than likely that we shall lose half of our recruits, for many of them are members in name only--they do not attend meetings regularly and do not as yet understand all the obligations of party membership. The only method of integrating our new members is by education. There is no short cut. The most important work of the branch at the present time is precisely the educational work, even if it must be done at the expense of other party or union activity.

"Another first that this committee has rung up is to establish a real collective leadership and a division of labor within the leading committee. Everyone did his job and helped out the other fellow. This kind of leadership must be preserved in the future.

"Perhaps the most important accomplishment of this E.C. is not exactly a tangible one for it has to do with the spirit and tone of the party. For the first time in the history of the Philadelphia organization, there is a true spirit of comradely solidarity and friendship. This is important for the healthy growth of any organization. Perhaps for the first time a political faction fight could take place in the party now, although it is not desirable at any time, without a great deal of personal invective, vindictiveness and back-biting entering into it. It could be conducted in the friendliest and most objective manner, and the issue decided on its own merits without leaving a great deal of rancor and ill-feeling as an after-taste. The method of operation of the E.C. has contributed in great measure to this new feature."

This was the situation up to the present period when there were new arrivals from New York of members of the majority "cadre". From that time on the old friction was revived and grew until the following series of events took place. It must be remembered that there was not a single dissenting voice to the above quoted report of the E.C. in November of last year.

On March 3<sup>rd</sup>, at which time there was a single branch in the city, a reorganization meeting was held to elect a new E.C. The old one had been in office for some six months, the organizer was involved in strike activity, the assistant organizer had dropped out of activity and later out of the party, a new organizer had come in, and there were many old-timers returned to the party from the service. All were agreed that such a meeting was necessary. The elections were held and the comrades voted for those they thought were the most capable and experienced. They did not vote along factional lines. The net result was that substantially the same comrades were returned to the committee, 4 of whom were by this time quite definitely of the majority and three of the minority.

The committee met to discuss the question of reorganization and here a difference developed along factional lines on the question of establishing two branches. Fenwick, the new organizer and the N.C. member, stated at that time. "Of course, we (?) will put some Johnsonites in the Ship branch in order to give them representation."

The minority comrades protested against the allocation of personnel with factional lines in mind, maintaining that allocation should be made only with a view toward the proper functioning of the party.

The membership voted for two branches and three comrades of the minority were placed in the Ship Branch.

At the first meeting of the Ship branch on March 17, the branch organization and the election of a branch executive were discussed. There were no disputes of any kind at this meeting. At the Second meeting, a dispute broke out on the question of the post of Educational Director for the branch. At this meeting, the branch organizer injected a factional note (needless to say he was a "cadre" man and not a ship worker), by speaking against the idea of a Johnsonite holding that post because he did not hew to the political line of the party on all questions. The branch and the Ship workers unanimously rejected the cadre concept but nonetheless for other reasons voted against this comrade and for a majorityite.

In the Educational period, which was devoted to a report and review of the development of the Ship faction, held that same nite, a member of the minority on the City Committee, who was in attendance at the meeting, asked a question of the reporter. The question was limited to a very few words, dealing with a criticism of the manner in which the party had operated in Ship, a criticism with which the reporter had previously agreed but failed to mention in his report. This was later to be called "disruptive action."

Later, another member of the minority in the branch, asked for some clarification on the statement of the reporter that "members had been driven out of the party." (This was a new discovery, never before mentioned in the Philadelphia organization and never before presented to the leading committee of the party.) The comrade pointed out that not only was the statement false but that it could and would be used in a factional manner by the majority throughout the country and therefore demanded some study and discussion. This also was considered disruption. The meeting ended in an uproar, drowning out the protests of a comrade who had recently returned from the service and who asked for another meeting on the report both because of its importance in future party work, and for the sake of clarifying the issue.

Suddenly, at the City Committee meeting of April 1st, the majority comrades informed the rest of the committee that the Ship "people" had threatened to join the SWP unless the "disruptive" activity of the minority was stopped. The minority asked who the comrades were who made this threat. Answer--"the ship people".\* They asked what the majority comrades who had known about this supposed situation prior to the meeting of the C.C. had done to dissuade the comrades from making such a serious political error. No answer was forthcoming. Only the series of motions which conceded to the alleged wishes of the unnamed ship workers.

At this session of the City Committee, for the first time in many years, an executive session was ordered, the door was locked, speaking time was limited to 5 minutes each, with no one to be allowed to speak twice.

Of the four ship workers who attended the branch meeting immediately following the City Committee meeting, it was disclosed that two of them dissociated themselves from the "threat". One said that

\*They asked when the workers had met to discuss such a serious question. No answer.

"It was not quite so, although I was going to look into it." One said nothing about the "threat". Of the other ship workers who were supposed to have been involved, only one had been at the first branch meeting. None of the others had been at the second branch meeting, where the so-called disruption had taken place, nor had they been at a branch meeting for a month. They could not possibly have experienced the "disruption" in the newly created Ship branch. It is also worth noting that the spokesman for the ship workers stated that two of the three minority comrades being transferred out were not "disruptive", had behaved in an excellent manner, but that since they had the minority point of view, they might "get disruptive".

The branch approved the motions of the City Committee, read the three minority comrades out of the branch and accepted into their branch the two members of the other branch who had not been released by that branch. The transfers were made without even bothering to consult the branch from which they had been made. Certainly, this is an unheard of organizational procedure in our party. At the same meeting, one of the ship workers resigned as alternate to the branch Executive, and a worker transferred into the branch on no one's authority was elected to fill the vacancy.

At the City Committee meeting the comrades of the minority asked for a City membership meeting where these important issues could be thrashed out before the membership. Instead a motion was passed to carry out the decisions of the City Committee and the Ship branch, immediately and to hold a membership meeting only at the end of thirty days.

These were the facts as they occurred in Philadelphia. These were the organizational steps taken by the majority. It must be clearly understood that these organizational measures were taken in the midst of a pre-convention period, and were obviously undertaken to isolate the Ship workers from the minority comrades.

These organizational measures can be viewed only as the actions of a majority "cadre" seeking a substitute for its political weaknesses. The members of the majority refused to argue on a political basis and to permit the clear presentation of the differences of opinion on how best to build the party in trade union work. They failed to point out to the Ship workers the necessity for political discussions in a revolutionary political party which places the questions of personality and temperament in their proper subordinate place. They ignored their clear duty as loyal and leading party members to teach the newer comrades the importance of listening to different points of view on political and organizational questions, particularly in pre-convention discussion periods. Instead, they placed a premium on the attitude of some of the Ship workers that the political discussions were over their heads and that they were disruptive of efficient party functioning, etc. This anti-political attitude on the part of the ship workers, while an indication of a healthy zeal for external party activity, is at the same time an indication of the failure of the party to educate them in the importance of political clarification.

Such tactics must be made known to the entire party. They are a danger to our organization which has prided itself on its democratic procedures and attacked opponent organizations for just this type of organizational procedure. The term "disrupter" is a familiar one to Trotskyists. It has been used by others against all of us to attempt to discredit us in the eyes of the workers. It is a dangerous toy to play with. It is a dangerous precedent for our party.

It is for these reasons that the comrades of the Minority see fit to place this affair before the entire membership so that the comrades may be warned and so that it will not happen again in the ranks of the Workers Party.

Fraternally,

Philadelphia City Committee Minority

Irving Matnin  
Sol Allen  
Olga Daniels



THE CASE OF J. K., (or)  
An Experiment with a "Small Mass Party".

J.K., a leading member of one of the Party's most important fractions in industry, its chief recruiting agent in this situation and one who has been able to stamp a section of the Philadelphia party with his political approach, has resigned from the party. When such an event takes place, it becomes important to analyze the role in the party and in the fraction, of the individual in question and the role of the party in relation to him and his work. In this way we can attempt to learn political lessons from this experience.

First of all, it must be made clear to the party exactly what J.K.'s views were. This is particularly necessary because there are those in the party who wish to characterize J.K. not on the basis of his political view but by personal characterizations, such as "petty-bourgeois salesman" or "war phenomenon", etc. This is the method of the "cadre" comrades in Philadelphia, such as Fenwick. From this type of characterization we will learn nothing, or what is worse, learn the wrong things.

We must start with these two facts: 1) J.K. acted in a manner consistent with his politics. 2) He was not checked by the leadership.

J.K. and the "Small Mass Party"

J.K. was an anti-Bolshevik. For him the trade union movement and the progressive groups were everything. The primary function of the party was to build these progressive groups, lead them and fight for offices in the unions. By gaining prestige and influence in such work, the party could recruit and help build a "mass party of American socialism"--not a Bolshevik Party. The programmatic basis of the union work and of party recruitment was a Three point program of 1) Rescind the no-strike pledge; 2) Get off the W.L.B; and 3) Build a Labor Party (as in England). The fundamental ideas of Marxism, the principles of Trotskyism, etc. both within and outside the party had only an accidental, if any, place in J.K.'s scheme of things. He wanted a party and progressive groups which would have "good relations" with all varieties of "progressives". He did not intend to, and never did, contest other parties and union groups too sharply on programmatic issues for fear of "isolating us" or "antagonizing them".

How could J.K.'s ideas be permitted to develop for two years unchecked except by a small minority (whose attitude was, of course, considered "antagonistic".) How is it that J.K. was permitted to go his way building the party in the image of his political ideas, teaching new comrades that the party they had joined was the party as he conceived it? Not only was he not checked. He was aided by the party leadership, represented specifically by Lund, which yielded to him on many disputed issues, and offered no basic criticism of his ideas.

That this could take place is an example, in the first place, of the politics of Lund and his "small mass party", and secondly,

of the relationship of the majority of the party leadership to Lund's ideas. If Lund's politics were directly responsible for this condition, then the Political Committee--in direct contact with the situation for well over a year--was also responsible in that it did not attempt to rectify Lund's politics.

### The Concrete Results in the Union

The process of confusing the role of the party with that of a progressive union group had its inevitable effects. The fraction became involved in the fight for power, and was rushed into the union leadership long before it had a sufficiently large base in the rank and file to warrant such a position. Power, instead of the dissemination of the party's ideas, became the main axis of the fraction's work. Union office was sought after in such a way that at the present time a comrade who has been in the party for over two years, can say that "we must win the elections regardless of the program, victory is the important thing, etc." Opportunism has crept into the minds of the members, born of confusion as to the purpose and function of the party. It is necessary to elaborate this further since it has already been dealt with in detail in the article on the Ship fraction submitted to the internal bulletin.

### The Education of the New Members

The Original fraction was recruited to the party after a long period of contacting. These, and a few others, received at least a little education in the politics of the party. But particularly in the recent period, since the Active Workers Conference, the fraction--under instructions from the Political Committee--was told to recruit "no matter how, we'll teach them later". J.K. was the comrade assigned to do the recruiting, although the P.C. was fully aware that he did not espouse the ideas of the revolutionary party. He carried out the work assigned to him, functioning as a disciplined party member as always. He recruited to the party on the Three Point Program, not to the party of the socialist revolution. The recruits were made on the basis of the work our people were doing in the union. We were a "small mass party". J.K. did not prepare them for membership in a party whose aim was the destruction of the present system and the establishment of a new one by means of revolutionary activity. On the contrary, he recruited them to a sort of club of "working men of good will, who want to build a Labor Party and take over the Government as they did in England".

Does this mean that the workers must not be recruited on the basis of such a program and without a fuller understanding of the party's program? No. But the party cannot hope to build a Bolshevik Party unless, once the workers are recruited, they receive systematic education to break down their parliamentary and bourgeois illusions. Once these workers are recruited, this was the task of the party. But J.K. and before him Lund, did not teach the fundamental ideas of the party. Why? Because of a fear that this would frighten the workers and drive them away. Classes were resisted by J.K. and others in favor of endless discussion about the unions or about how to build a Labor Party. These new comrades were actually led to believe that the Workers Party was

going to build the Labor Party. The fundamentals, which were so necessary in order to equip each of them with the ideas of Marxism were not taught because in the words of J.K., "the workers are not interested in that", or "they wouldn't understand it". The recruits were not given any fundamental literature to read, no classes in revolutionary socialism. Forums and branch educationals were watered down, not only for contacts but also for the consumption of party members. They were made hostile to theory and discussion by both Lund and J.K. What was considered important was their specific union problems. These are important and must be dealt with, but not to the exclusion of socialist education.

What were the results? Some 15 or 20 workers were recruited in the course of two years, certainly an enviable record. But only a small percentage are actually party members, at most six or seven. The bulk of them do not come to party meetings and are in no way active in the party. And this smaller group itself is antagonistic to a greater or lesser degree towards "time wasting" political discussion. One threatened to leave for the SWP, another for the CP. This after two years in our party. One member even wanted to become a Democratic Committeeman. The same member became highly aroused when a party member visited some delinquent recruits and told them that we were in business to build the Workers Party which stood for a revolution against the existing order and not to build a Labor Party, which was only one of our ideas. He thought that this should not be said to party members.

These workers are the kind who must be recruited if the party is to get any place. They are devoted and self-sacrificing. But the party failed them. They should have been and were welcomed into the party. The party was and should have been proud to have recruited them. But then we had the job of raising their understanding and consciousness. That is the job of a Marxist party. The workers cannot learn scientific socialism by themselves. But the party stayed with them at their level, instead of raising them to its level. The party recruited them but did not teach them that which they had to know if they were to become active and capable revolutionaries.

A tribute must be paid to those who did stay, but the party must be blamed for the loss of most of them. It had failed to heighten their consciousness with political education, which is the only force that can hold people in a party of our size and influence.

Here is the key to the fundamental disorientation of the party. Here is the key also to the problem of integration and activation of these workers. It is the key to losing members and the development of opportunism. These workers had joined a party of the kind outlined by J.K. and could not find their way in a vanguard party. They did not know what they were joining or what obligations it entailed in the way of sacrifice and activity. And the party did not teach them.

That these things happened was inevitable, given the nature of party recruitment and education under the direct influence of J.K. and the benevolent guidance of Lund. That the effects have not been worse is fortunate. But the party is paying for this disorientation. It is demonstrated by the fraction's lack of preparation for the pre-convention discussion. It is shown by the threats of some to leave, and the inactivity of many others who are members in name only.

One more question must be raised. What if J.K. had become Party organizer, a post for which the fraction sponsored him because they recognized him as their leader and political mentor, and had then quit cold? As it is, he drifted out during a critical period when he was in a position of leadership, although the gradual drift made his loss less keenly felt.

### The Role of the Party Leadership

The most serious aspect of this matter was that the leadership of the party was aware from the start of J.K.'s views and of his basic political differences with Bolshevism. It must therefore have been aware of the more or less temporary nature of his sojourn in the party. Yet it did not permit any clarification of the relationship of J.K.'s politics to that of the revolutionary party. It did not check or correct his views. Nor did it prepare the workers comrades politically for his leaving or for their work in the vanguard party. As far as these comrades were concerned, there were no political differences between J.K. and the party, i.e., they accepted his approach as the approach of the party.

The party should have been warned about J.K. and his ideas. His political and organization concepts should have been resisted most vigorously by the party leadership. It was an error to have J.K. act as the spokesman and recruiter for the W.P., for he was not serving the WP as we know it but as he wanted it to be. The comrades were not warned that J.K. was in the party "only temporarily", as is now claimed. The mistakes for which we are now paying are the party's mistakes and responsibility. Particularly are they the responsibility of Lund and his "small mass party" ideas and of the Political Committee, which failed to correct them.

### What is to be Done

It is the all-important task of the party leadership to do now what it has not done in the past--to eradicate the political heritage left by J.K. On a general party scale, that means unmitigated attack upon and defeat of the ideas of Lund. Yet, here in Philadelphia, the "cadre" comrades of the majority, are in an attempt to gain factional advantage, continuing to build on the quicksilver foundation left by Lund and J.K. by catering to backward prejudices and deriding political discussions. But this will not build the party. It will lead to its further disorientation. There is work to be done and it is time that it was done. We must teach these workers the ideas of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky which we all hold in common, or the party will suffer the consequences.

Irving Marnin

## THE JOHNSON LINE IN PRACTICE

(Reply by the majority of the Philadelphia Executive Committee to the open letter of the minority.)

During the war years the Philadelphia branch of the Workers Party attained to an exceptional degree the goal set by our party for this period - the recruiting of workers from the shops. Skillfully using as the axis of the party activity the fight against the no-strike pledge and the participation of labor representatives on war boards, propagandizing for the creation of an independent labor party, and conducting a bold, programmatic fight for militant unionism in the labor movement, the Philadelphia branch was able to win to its ranks a sizable group of the most politically conscious, honest, self-sacrificing, and militant representatives of the Philadelphia labor movement.

That we were able to do so is not only a stirring testimonial to the correctness of our line and the vitality of our party but is an augur for the future as well.

The acquisition of these worker comrades, however, introduced a problem which is bound to be experienced elsewhere in the organization when a similar large influx of workers from the shops takes place, namely, the bridging of the disparity which exists between such workers and certain types of older, more politically experienced comrades.

The drawing together of this gap created by differing social origins, experience, education, family status, and political development - difficult enough under normal circumstances - was accentuated in Philadelphia by the presence of a large group of vocal comrades who, in the main, subsequently became grouped together in the Johnson caucus. These comrades, when confronted with genuine workers, proved incapable of establishing the slightest political or personal rapport with them.

### The Garden of Eden - and the Cadre Serpent

The Johnson comrades attempt to propagate the comforting myth that Philadelphia was a rustic idyll until the coming of Jack Brad and, subsequently, James M. Fenwick, both of the majority tendency. Unfortunately, for their contention, such was not the case. By the latter part of 1945 relations had deteriorated to the point where the worker comrades were asking for the creation of a separate branch. At the same time, many shipyard workers who had been brought into the organization began to drop away. The branch was not functioning at optimum possibilities. It was under these circumstances that the branch requested the national office to send in a full-time organizer.

The Political Committee, after carefully canvassing the personnel available and taking into account the prejudices held by a substantial section of the Philadelphia branch, sent comrade Fenwick as the most suitable available person - that is to say, he

had the fewest disabilities: he was a member of the National Committee, he was not a "New Yorker", he had spent nearly ten years in the organized labor movement, he was a veteran, and he was of a placid temperment. Needless to say, despite the delicacy exercised by the Political Committee in attempting to please the exotic personal and political palate of certain of the Philadelphia comrades, and despite their having specifically requested that an organizer be sent in, charges were soon being gratuitously and noisily made at branch meetings that "Fenwick was sent here from New York to do a job" - a job against the Johnsonites, of course.

"I'm For the Revolution - I Just Don't Want It To Start At This Branch Meeting!"

When comrade Fenwick arrived he found the shipyard workers discouraged over the regime within the party. One of the leading members was on the point of resigning. Their major complaints were three in number. The first was that the educational program was on such an ethereal plane that they were learning nothing from it. The second was that there was little time devoted to their trade union problems and little interest displayed in them. The third was that on all issues, big or small, the major portion of the Johnsonites discussed with an unbearable vituperativeness.

The solution, universally desired by the shipyard people, was the creation of a separate branch which, they hoped, would correct the unendurable situation. The creation of two branches was additionally warranted, parenthetically, because the membership had reached thirty persons - at which point it is normally divided, and because it was desirable to set up a shipyard branch on an industrial basis, an operation which should have taken place considerably prior to this.

By this time the organizer had had ample occasion to experience the justness of the criticisms of the worker comrades, particularly in regard to the vicious atmosphere which prevailed at branch meetings - an atmosphere totally alien to our movement and one which inevitably destroys all possibility of serious work.

Irving Marnin, the leader of the Johnson caucus and the person who set the tone for the Johnsonites in this discussion, with that bureaucratic insolence which, in Johnsonite circles passes for Bolshevik firmness or, alternatively, courtly wit, referred to the city organizer as "Mr. Fenwick", "this gentleman here", and, in a burst of generosity, as "this person whom I'll condescend to call comrade." Accompanying this juvenilia were threats, made on a boy's gang level, to take the organizer outside and beat him up. At one branch executive committee meeting when asked a question by a majority comrade he replied with chilling hauteur, "I do not speak to liars," and lapsed into royal silence. Another old favorite was, with great ostentation, to read a certain well-known trade union paper with socialist coloration while majority members were speaking at branch meetings.

The effect of this sort of conduct upon the serious worker comrades, who went through adolescence in normal fashion and not while leading a Johnson caucus can be easily imagined.

This tone, established by comrade Marnin and pursued in one fashion or another by the entire Johnson caucus, effectively destroyed all genuine comradeship, human dignity, all sense of the historic grandeur of our movement. The internal life was reduced to the meanest level. On that plane, at least, the Johnsonites achieved a solid victory.

### Old Folks At Home

This factional blight has likewise spread throughout the Philadelphia youth group, which is controlled root and branch by the Johnsonites. These senile young men and women, who are desiccating in an atmosphere more suitable to Trappists than to proletarian revolutionists, never once in the first three months in which comrade Fenwick was city organizer for the party ever asked him to attend a meeting, give a lecture, conduct a class, or render an opinion. Clannishness has been described as the first stage of a developing egotism. That is not bad. Superimpose upon this a messianic belief in Johnsonism (with the pity or contempt for the majority tendency which accompanies it) and the end product is the Philadelphia Youth Labor League. That such a closed microcosm could not and did not grow is obvious. Ex nihilo, nihil fit.

### We Was Robbed!

When the proposal for the division into two branches was made, the Johnsonites, of course, were outraged. After an evening of acrimonious debate, during which every shipyard worker took the floor pleading with desperate sincerity for the establishment of a separate branch, a motion to establish two branches passed, with the Johnsonites abstaining. Personnel were then redistributed, Johnsonites being allocated to both branches, as was indicated under the given factional situation.

The shipyard comrades eagerly looked forward to a period of uninterrupted work and party building. The first meeting of the ship branch passed without incident since it was devoted chiefly to reorganization. The second meeting, however, as a result of the intervention of Sol Allen, a Johnsonite and an experienced intriguer, and of Irving Marnin, who was not even a member of the branch, ended in what the open letter of the minority - with surprising accuracy - labels an uproar.

Following this disgraceful episode several leading members of the ship fraction got together at the shipyard and decided to go to the SWP. Had these key comrades left we would have immediately lost two-thirds of our shipyard fraction, not to speak of the control of hundreds of persons we influenced in the yard.

The particular incidents which provoked this action have not the slightest importance in themselves; they were simply the



straws which broke the camel's back. The comrades had no illusions about the SWP. They were not and are not in political agreement with that party. It was simply a question of desiring to stay within the revolutionay movement for lack of finding an arena for unhampered work within our organization. Thanks to quick and diplomatic work on the part of several ship comrades and the intervention of others of the majority tendency - the only persons who had any capital with these comrades - the movement was checked.

That from the point of view of formal Bolshevik procedure these comrades should have decided to remain in the WP and fight it out is true, and they were so informed by the majority comrades. But it is also true that these comrades are not prima donnas, ever ready to walk out in a huff, but serious workers provoked beyond endurance.

### Elemental Hygiene

In the face of this alarming symptomatic act, heretofore unprecedented in our organization (since the whole drift has been away from the SWP into the WP) and at the insistence of the shipyard comrades, three of the four Johnsonite comrades in the branch were transferred out by the city executive committee and two other comrades were transferred in. A motion was likewise passed that members of one branch were not to visit the other except upon explicit invitation. (Note that the open letter of the minority misrepresents this motion.) This was done to prevent a repetition of the disruption caused by visiting Johnsonites, which was resented by the ship comrades not only because of the vicious heckling but because they felt that the comrades could well be employing their time in practical work.

What was at stake here, so far as the majority of the city committee was concerned, was whether our party was to prove a home in which workers could live, or whether it was to be victimized by a group of irresponsible factionalists whose caucus loyalty was blindly elevated above loyalty to the party.

Like so many outraged bureaucrats the Johnson comrades, with the repellant anti-party rudeness which has become their normal mode of expression in Philadelphia, immediately raised the cry of "Bureaucracy!" The majority comrades firmly replied that what was at stake here was the whole orientation of our party in recent years, that what was being tested in sharpest form in Philadelphia was the ability of our party to attract and hold workers. We informed the Johnson comrades that we did not intend to lose the worker acquisitions we had made during the war years, and especially worker comrades who had conducted magnificent union struggles during that difficult period, and to lose them, moreover, because of the disloyal antics of a group which was by no means a typical segment of our party. We therefore had not the slightest hesitancy in exercising the powers vested in the city executive committee and making the necessary personnel transfers.



We were then informed by the Johnson experts in these matters that it was the duty of the majority comrades to inform the worker comrades that they should argue out their differences, not run out of the organization, and that they should understand that in the pre-convention discussion period tempers inevitably became sharpened. (This thesis was blandly advanced, among others, by Sol Allen, the second in command of the Johnson caucus, whose practice is to call majority comrades "stupid", refer to them as "apes", "frame-up artists", and "hatchet men", and to make indiscriminate use of the phrase "dumb workers".)

We replied that these workers were thoroughly used to such a tone from bosses and in the rough-and-tumble of the union floor, but that they had every right not to expect it in our organization. From the point of view of party atmosphere, we indicated, the Johnson idolators of the SWP were also injecting the methods of Cannonism into our ranks, where we have, over the past six years, so jealously guarded the principles of the most genuine democracy.

### Prometheus Chained

The Johnsonites also charged that the personnel changes were motivated out of a desire to isolate the shipyard workers from the bearers of the Johnson political message, which we could combat only by organizational maneuvering. We pointed out that ample provision had been made for city membership meetings where issues would be thrashed out. Subsequent events adequately exposed the Johnsonite demagoguery: city internal discussion meetings were held at least once a week.

Three comrades of the National Committee, comrades Erber, Garrett and Fenwick and comrade Brad of Philadelphia were then accused of having engineered a frame-up against the Johnson tendency. The Johnsonites claimed that the move to the SWP was a fiction, that it had been cooked up to discredit the minority comrades. We challenged them to put this monstrous charge in writing. Naturally, they have not done so, nor have they repudiated the charge. To charge National Committee members of a Bolshevik organization, the Workers Party, of a frame-up, is for the Johnsonites merely political small change, part of the campaign of vilification they keep in circulation against us.

They then demanded an immediate city membership meeting at which they could carry the message to the membership. The majority of the city committee refused. Instead, such a meeting was scheduled for one month later. This was done because an immediate city membership meeting, conducted on the part of the Johnsonites with that total disregard of human, not to speak of comradely sensibility, which characterizes them, would have been all that was necessary to drive out a number of the worker comrades, who were already dubious of the ability or intention of the majority comrades to restore order to what they had characterized as a madhouse. Time was wanted to test the new arrangement and to sober up the Johnsonites.

The minority comrades thereupon appealed the decisions of the city executive committee to the Political Committee. They asked, also, that the Political Committee immediately convene city membership meeting at which the local issues could be discussed. With their customary irresponsibility and contempt for the leadership of the organization they then swamped a motion that a representative of the Political Committee be asked to be present at the meeting of the city membership which the Political Committee was being asked to call.

### Self-Mobilization

For two weeks the Johnson comrades refused to obey the decisions of the city executive committee, drifting from branch to branch and raising disturbances in each one. Sol Allen, a minority member of the city executive committee, displaying that out-lived factional intransigence which is his contribution to the education of the Johnson cause, stated that he would have to be carried out before he would leave the meeting of the branch from which he had been removed. Olga Daniels, another member of the city executive committee, stated she really didn't know which branch she belonged to.

After two weeks of this comedy of disruption, in which the younger minority comrades received an excellent education in the Johnson school of party mores, the minority comrades accepted the discipline of the party and went into the branches into which they had been assigned, under the lame excuse that they didn't know that the city executive committee's motions came as orders and not merely as recommendations.

It is at this rather unstable point that matters now rest.

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Allowing for the distortion introduced by the despicable personal behavior of individual Johnsonites in Philadelphia, the recent situation permits the party to see in action the results of the application of their political line. Confronted with a large group of Negro and white shipyard workers, who in the face of tremendous pressure from the government, the employer, and the labor bureaucracy had carried on a courageous, principled, and militant struggle of which every comrade in our party should be proud, the Johnson comrades were successful only in discouraging these comrades and in almost extinguishing the fierce hope they had placed in the Workers Party, whose implacable intransigence during the war had so attracted them.

That these workers were pointedly told that they were not socialists, that they were treated almost like enemies, and that they were bitterly attacked without the slightest understanding of the real problems of real workers - problems of leisure for reading, of children, of religion, of marital obligations, of time, of political level - is understandable.

For these persons, from the minority point of view, were very defective workers, and not at all like the real workers in the Johnson schema, who are, as we have so often been assured in loud howls by the local Johnsonites, far to the left of our conservative party.

Paralleling this maladaptation to the numerous recruits from the shops, and this inability to establish a rapport with the militant worker on the level at which he exists, went an almost total failure of the Johnson comrades to win workers to our movement.

There is the dead end reached by all sectarians.

Majority, Philadelphia City Exec.Com.

William Carney  
Alex Craig  
James M. Fenwick  
Ben Wallace