

C O N T E N T S

Editorial Notes page 1

NAC Draft Resolution on Perspectives for American Socialism 2

Suggested Motion of Implimentation of Convention Unity Resolution by
Bogdan Denitch, Don Harris, and Debbie Meier 10

For a Realistic And Inclusive Attitude on Socialist Regroupment, I
and II, by Charles Walker 12

For a Continuation of the Revolutionary Course (II) by
M. Oppenheimer and H. Radetsky 16

Open Letter to Mike Harrington, by John Worth, Scott Arden, and
Margaret Collins 24

Reply: What is a Caucus? by Mike Harrington 26

On Leaving the Left Wing Caucus: A Statement by Frank McGowan 28

A Slight Correction, by Gordon Haskell 30

The Iceberg Below the Water, by Debbie Meier 32

Comrad Hegel-Wohlforth, by Mike Harrington 40

The Nature of the YSL and the Faction Fight, by Mel Becker 44

The Old Shell Game, by Mell Becker and Mike Harrington 47

The Real Nature of the Real Majority on the
Electoral Action Referendum, by Jean Morris 50

"The Left Wing Bulletin" and the Politics of the YSL Minority,
by Bogdan Denitch 54

Reply to Our Critics, I, by Shane Mage 58

A Footnote on Revisionism--Political Revolution: Social Revolution,
by Mike Harrington 68

Some more trivia . . . , by Debbie Meier 70

A Letter on the Labor Probe, by Scott Arden 72

Antioch Unit Report 74

(Editors note: Pages are numbered consecutively with even numbers on the right side of the page and odd numbers on the left. All articles (with the exception of the Shell Game) begin on the right side of the page, even number, regardless of where the previous article ended.)

[re-typed by MHG, June 2013 from ISL Mimeography]

EDITORIAL NOTES

What the YSR is

The Young Socialist Review is the information and discussion bulletin of the Young Socialist League. The YSR is prepared by the Chicago unit of the YSL.

The aim of the YSR is to constitute a forum for the expression of all points of view within the YSL. It is, therefore, completely open to any member who may wish to contribute his views--and to any group of members. Contributions from non-members will also be accepted, if of sufficiently high interest.

For obvious reasons it should be understood that articles signed by individuals do not necessarily represent the views of the YSL. Any material that is "official" will be clearly labelled as such.

The YSR will be published at least once every other month. However, we assume that we will be able to put out much more frequent issues. The YSR will therefore appear whenever sufficient copy is available, but not less than bi-monthly. So, PLEASE SEND COPY AS SOON AS IT IS READY!

Copy should be sent to 1343 E. 50th Street, Chicago 15, Illinois. If possible submit copy stencilled, single spaced, otherwise it should be type written, double spaced. Non-typewritten copy will not be accepted.

The circulation of the YSR is not restricted to members of the YSL. Though issued primarily for members it is open to all interested individuals. Members should make every effort to get copies into the hands of this wider audience. Send in your bundle orders now.

This issue

It looks as though YSR will be coming out frequently from now til the Convention, July 1-3 (in New York City). For that reason remember to send in copy as soon as it is ready, since an issue will be put out whenever we have enough copy. This issue is especially big and bulky, because a host of material suddenly appeared at one time. It would make the task easier if material came in steadily and evenly so that less bulky issues could be put out.

Almost all the material included here is on regroupment and unity or on the factional situation in the YSL. Included also is the Draft Resolution on Socialist regroupment (pp. 2-8) prepared by the NAC for the coming convention. Other resolutions will appear in the next issue of YSR. Suggested amendments and substitute resolutions should be sent to YSR as soon as possible also.

For nonmembers who are puzzled by some of the factional references, there is at present a "caucus" in the YSL on the basis of opposition to the NEC Resolution on "socialist realignment and socialist unity" (see YSR, vol. 3, no. 3, Feb. 18, 1957). The "Left Wing Caucus" publishes its own bulletin as well as provided for in the YSL Constitution. This bulletin, The Left Wing Bulletin (LWB), is also available to those interested (obtainable by writing Wohlforth, 305 East 21 Street, NYC).

A few articles and unit reports on other subjects are also included. We know it is hard for members to keep in mind the possibility of utilizing YSR for everyday, humdrum educational and informational tasks. BUT. It might seem pleasant for a change. KEEP THE MATERIAL ROLLING.....

—Debbie Meier, editor

March 30, 1957

777

DRAFT RESOLUTION OF THE YSL ON

PERSPECTIVES FOR AMERICAN SOCIALISM

I. AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE

(1) American socialists today are confronted by important, though limited, possibilities for regrouping and revitalizing the American socialist movement.

(2) This perspective is based upon our analysis of the specific conditions of American society taken in the context of the international scene. First, we believe that the dominant characteristics of American political, economic and social life of the last decade will, in the main, continue. We do not anticipate an imminent and thorough-going crisis in the United States, or a mass radicalization. But secondly, we see that significant changes are taking place in the world and in the United States, opening up new possibilities for socialist action - that the period of ever-increasing polarization on an international scale, and ever-increasing reaction on the domestic scene, is coming to an end. We look toward new beginnings.

(3) Internationally, the danger of World War III has receded. The settlement of the Indochinese war, the Korean armistice, the "co-existence" campaign of the Stalinists, these were the first signs of the new situation. Since then, the tactics of the two war camps have blown hot and cold, yet at no time has the world approached the state of explosive tension which prevailed in 1950 and 1951. More recently, the tremendous events in Poland and Hungary have dealt a serious blow to world Stalinism, and NATO has been strained to the utmost by the Middle-East crisis, by the pressures within various European countries to reduce armaments, etc.

(4) For socialists in America, the crisis in world Stalinism has had the most obvious and immediate effect. The Communist Party in the United States has been torn in an attempt to deal with the Khrushchev revelations and the events in Poland and Hungary. With the collapse of American Stalinism, a force which for decades distorted and disoriented the radical movement, new possibilities have appeared. But it would be an error to base an American socialist perspective on this development alone. Other factors, in particular the position of the working-class in America form a vital part of our analysis, and our tactics are related to a whole range of situations.

(5) This generally new international situation has already been felt in American life as a whole. The expectation of imminent war was a political and psychological precondition for the growth of the garrison state. As tensions have been reduced, the power of reaction and the witch-hunt has subsided. To be sure, the institutions of repression remain in force, but the power of the McCarthyite right has been curtailed, and the tempo of anti-libertarianism has been appreciably slowed.

(6) Domestically, the permanent war economy is still a decisive factor in American society, its power increased by the Eisenhower budget of 1957. Because of this "floor" of government intervention, we do not anticipate a thorough-going internal crisis of the economy, such as the Depression of the Thirties, in the immediate future. At the same time, there are many signs which point to a more limited type of crisis.

(7) The labor movement organized in the AFL-CIO is today more powerful than ever before, indeed it is the mightiest organized workingclass the world has known.

Yet, it has continued in a self-imposed bondage to the Democratic Party; it has hobbled its tremendous strength by an organizational alliance with Southern reaction. Consequently, the primary task facing the American workingclass remains that of creating its own independent political party. The tremendous fact of labor unity has made the potential of such a party all the more obvious, yet the mass of American workers have yet to be won to this most primary of struggles.

(8) Thus, for American socialists, the fight for a labor party takes on a central and decisive significance. Today, the American labor movement stands on the left of American society as the basic organized social force committed to a program of liberal reform. At the same time, it is to the right of the entire socialist movement, for it has not yet come to that political class consciousness which is fundamental to even the most reformist socialist ideology. Given our general analysis of American society, we do not expect that the workingclass will, in the next period, make a sudden, violent transition from its present trade union consciousness to revolutionary politics. Rather, its road lies through the creation of a labor party which, in its initial stages will probably advocate a program of liberal reform. Such a party would nevertheless signify an event of tremendous importance and revolutionary implications: the political organization of the American workers as a class. Once such a party exists it will, of course, be the task of socialists to win it to socialism and to a militant socialist program.

(9) However, the possibilities which have been opened up by the events of the past two years are, with the exception of the mass movement for Civil Rights, largely confined to a small segment of society. Particularly among socialists and radicals, the impact of these events has been great. In the future, the events which today have such an effect upon these groups will reach a broader stratum of American society. The task of regrouping and revitalizing the socialist movement is necessary if we are to be capable of playing an important role when this new situation develops. And today, such regroupment would immediately strengthen socialist participation in the struggle for Civil Rights now unfolding throughout the entire United States. At this time, however, our major immediate task centers about the socialist movement itself.

(10) An example from the youth arena illustrates this important point. The crisis in world Stalinism has resulted in the dissolution of the Labor Youth League. As a result, discussions and debates which would have been impossible two years ago now take place. The Stalinists and their periphery are no longer the pole of attraction they were a short time ago in the student sphere. But at the same time as this ferment has developed among radical youth, the general decline of student political organizations, and student party have continued. Similarly in the labor movement, where the new opportunities for discussion and action emerged primarily among the advanced workers, among socialists and Communists, but did not come as a broad movement within the workingclass as a whole.

II. REGROUPMENT

(11) We believe that the most effective means of regrouping the American socialist movement is through the creation of a new, broad, Debsian socialist party. We favor uniting democratic socialists of various tendencies on the basis of a minimum common program of commitment to democratic socialism and opposition to both Stalinism and capitalism. In terms of immediate politics, such a party would unite a wide range of democratic socialist opinion behind support to democratic struggles everywhere in the world.

(12) Such a party need not, and in fact in its early stages at least should not, have a defined analysis of capitalism or Stalinism, or many other theoretical questions. Only in this way can it unite within one party reformists and revolutionaries, those with some illusions about Stalinism and those with a sharp, clear analysis of Stalinism, Marxists and non-Marxists, etc. We would not push the party to adopt our analysis of Stalinism as the official position of the organization, for example, because we hope that individuals and groups will be able to function together while holding views which differ from ours. Thus, such a party could legitimately contain members and tendencies who consider Russian society as bureaucratic collectivist, state capitalism, a degenerated workers state, industrial feudalism, some "bad" sort of socialism or just plain "totalitarian." The precondition for a healthy unity in this case would be a willingness and a desire to support all struggles by the Russian and satellite peoples for democracy and freedom, and an agreement that the Party as a whole differentiate itself, clearly and unequivocally, from any kind of support to the Russian state. This does not mean that members and tendencies would have to avoid controversial questions within the unified party, but merely that they should avoid asking the Party to take a stand on theoretical issues and concentrate instead on facing specific problems which confront the American socialist and labor movements.

(13) In the general ferment in the radical world over unity, there have been proposals for unity which center around a regroupment limited to those with illusions or fuzzy conceptions of Stalinism, and Communists who have broken from the Party or are in the process of doing so. We reject this orientation. Given our perspective of a broad, Debsian party, such a move would cut the socialist movement off from those whom it must attract: the advanced workers, the unaffiliated democratic socialists, the socialist-minded intellectuals. Among these groups, and in America generally, any political organization which equivocates on its opposition to Stalinism cannot accomplish the task of revitalizing the socialist movement and of bringing socialism to the workingclass again. At the same time, we continue to seek discussion and debate with Communists and other supporters or quasi-supporters of the Communist system, especially with those of the Gates tendency. But we cannot orient toward a unity in which their ideas would dominate the movement.

(14) We believe that the best way to attract people now breaking with the Stalinist movement, and to bring them to democratic socialism, is through the creation of a democratic socialist organizational alternative, not through the attempt to build a half-way house between Stalinism and democracy. In that context, we feel that "Stalinoid" unity is self-defeating, in that it does not offer a real alternative to those whom it seeks to attract.

(15) As for the proposal of "revolutionary regroupment," that is, the re-organization of the socialist movement on a revolutionary program, we regard this as a futile sectarianism. The problem in America today is not that of creating a revolutionary party with a finished program; it is rather one of re-establishing the influence of the most basic socialist ideas - ideas which are held in common by both revolutionary and reformist socialists - in the American workingclass. Specifically, this means struggle to win the labor movement to independent political action on its own behalf.

(16) Another alternative would be to call for a unity on the basis of our own politics or an approximation of them. But such a call, which amounts actually to a recruiting campaign, cannot today create the basis for a significant socialist movement nor would it be the best means of taking advantage of the present regroupment ferment.

(17) It is the broad Debsian party which, we feel, is the type of movement which would be able to establish itself as the voice of democratic socialism and which would attract all those now seeking some new framework. This kind of party is related to the conditions of American society and in particular to the workingclass. For given the fundamental nature of the task which confronts us, we believe that many ideological differences, which in other periods are decisive, can now be subordinated to the common task of all democratic socialists. This is not to say that these differences are unimportant, or that they will disappear. Far from it, the new party would offer a place for free and fraternal debate within the framework of a united movement.

(18) But not only is the nature of this party rooted in American conditions, the possibility of creating such an organization derives from the actual events of the past two years, discussed earlier. These events have created a ferment among socialists, a general concern for regroupment. The type of party which we have described would answer this concern in a positive and hopeful way by attracting the members of existing organizations, as well as appealing to the many unaffiliated socialists in the workingclass and among the intellectuals. It could serve also as a pole of attraction for those who hitherto have been won to the Communist Party upon breaking with capitalist ideology. It would create a fresh start for American socialism.

III. UNITY

(19) As a step in the direction of creating such a party, we call for unity between the YSL, the Independent Socialist League, and the Socialist Party-Social Democratic Federation.

(20) For a series of reasons, the SP-SDF is the best framework for regroupment. It is identified in the eyes of the more advanced public as the general party of socialism, as the inheritor of the tradition of Debs. Secondly, it is not tainted by former ties with Stalinism; its compromises and illusions about capitalist society, however distasteful they are to us and however dangerous we may feel them eventually to be, do not compromise it in the eyes of the American workingclass which we seek to influence. Even for the other sects, the SP-SDF has advantages since it is the only sect whose existence hasn't largely been identified with its particular and unique analysis of Russian society, a question which has played a major role in separating the sects in the past period. It has contained pacifists, Marxists, non-Marxists, etc., and as a result it is not identified with any hard and fast theory on a whole series of questions. These are some of the factors which give it its opportunity in the present situation.

(21) While the exact details of any unity between the YSL, the ISL and the SP-SDF would have to be worked out through negotiation, the YSL does not make changes in the program or leadership of the SP-SDF a precondition for affiliation. On the contrary, it is ready to unite with the Socialist Party as it stands today. And neither are we proposing a unity between ourselves and a section of the SP-SDF. We want a unity between the YSL, the ISL and the entire SP-SDF. These conceptions follow from our basic notion that this unity would be the first step in the direction of creating a Debsian party of socialism, and of seeking to establish an organizational focus for democratic socialist unity.

IV. YOUTH ASPECTS OF UNITY

(22) Our own participation in this development however, requires further clarification, since we are a youth organization—the largest, if not the

only nation-wide socialist youth group presently in existence. The role of the YSL in such a unification will therefore be different from that of the ISL, for example. In proposing unity between itself and the SP-SDF, the ISL proposes the creation of a single united organization out of the two participants. Our proposal, on the other hand, does not constitute a call for the establishment of a single organization out of the three participants.

(23) By calling for merger of the YSL, ISL and SP-SDF, the YSL states that it favors unity between the ISL and the SP-SDF, and that it desires to constitute or participate in constituting the youth affiliate of the united socialist organization. While we do not know exactly how this will come about, we stand ready to merge with the YSL, or to participate in any other way in the democratic formation of a youth organization affiliated to the party or organization which would result from the unity of the SP-SDF. We are for the unity of all young socialists into such a youth affiliate of a regrouped and reunited socialist movement, for we believe that all the arguments in favor of socialist regroupment in general, and those dealing with the unity of the ISL and SP-SDF in particular, apply with equal force to the student and youth communities.

(24) The YSL is not presently the youth affiliate of any social^{ist} organization or party; being an independent organization our relationship with the ISL consists of fraternal ties, as opposed to direct organizational relations. We favor, however, the participation of the YSL, or any broad democratic socialist youth group which the YSL would help to create, in a general socialist unification on the basis of youth affiliate status. The reasons for this are to be found in the reasons for the present organizational independence of the YSL, and in the difference between the present situation, and the one that would be created by unity between the ISL and the SP-SDF.

(25) The YSL was organized on the basis of the merger of two different tendencies, one of which had been the youth group of the ISL, and the other of which came from the Socialist Party. While expressing its fraternal relationship with the ISL, the YSL did not wish to be the youth affiliate of an adult tendency which constituted only one of the elements comprising the YSL. The unification of the ISL and SP-SDF would bring together the two tendencies which joined to create the YSL, and therefore eliminate this reason for independence. Secondly, the YSL wished to be an independent organization because it conceived of itself, and still conceives of itself, as a broad socialist youth group existing under conditions where the socialist movement was divided into different socialist sects. Under conditions where the different democratic socialist groups and tendencies merge to create a broad, Debsian socialist movement, the adult socialist movement will itself have the character that we wished the YSL to have, and affiliation of a youth organization will contribute to, rather than be an obstacle to this kind of socialist youth organization. At the time of its founding, the YSL pointed out that it did not favor independence of socialist youth organizations in general, that indeed, it was against the concept of a "youth party," but that it was to be an independent organization because of existing conditions. The removal of these conditions would remove the desirability and necessity of our independent status.

(26) While standing for affiliation to a united organization resulting from the merger of the ISL and SP-SDF, we favor the greatest possible autonomy for such an affiliated organization, and for democratic relationships between the youth organization and the adult socialist organization.

(27) The YSL has an especially important role to play on the youth field in the various developments toward socialist regroupment--since it is the largest, perhaps the only nation-wide socialist youth organization in the United States.

It can be a focal point in assembling all democratic socialist youth into a regrouped and united socialist movement. We call upon all young socialists to join with us in this task and stand ready to unite with all democratic socialist youth tendencies, before, at the same time, or after unity takes place on the adult level, where such unification is in keeping with our general perspective on socialist regroupment in the United States.

V: THE ROLE OF THE INDEPENDENT SOCIALIST TENDENCY

(28) We have, as a political tendency, basic political differences with the SP-SDF. Our disagreements on American imperialism, academic freedom, and other questions are well known. They would continue to exist after unity. But these issues, we believe, are not immediately decisive in terms of organization and should not preclude common membership and common action. It should be emphasized, of course, that a democratic internal party structure is necessary to this conception of unity, and that the right of various points of view to express themselves would be guaranteed. The unification of the YSL, the ISL and the SP-SDF as we conceive it, is a move away from sectarian rivalry, but not a suppression of differences.

(29) We seek to maintain and to augment our own political tendency. We seek to do this however in such a way as to also build a broad socialist party, containing many with whom we disagree, and to attract new recruits to the cause of socialism. Unity cannot be based on the abdication of political identity on the part of various tendencies; it must rest upon a willingness to have a democratic co-existence of tendencies. We will continue to advocate our third camp ideas and our revolutionary interpretation of socialism, but we deny that a sectarian organization is any longer the best means for their expression. We feel that the time has come when the division of the American socialist movement into relatively homogeneous bodies can fruitfully give way to a new type of organization which will be better able to deal with the primary tasks of all American socialists.

(30) For us, the unity of the YSL, the ISL and the SP-SDF will be a tremendous step forward. We hope for and we work for such an eventuality. If it does not take place, a real opportunity will have been lost to American socialism, but that will not change our general orientation toward socialist unity. For if it does not begin today, through the type of unity we advocate, then it will take place tomorrow within the labor party. It would be a very real setback if the immediate possibilities are not actualized, but that does not change our general perspective, nor will it lessen our efforts to recruit young people to the socialist cause in general and to our own tendency in particular.

VI. SUMMARY

(31) Thus, the orientation of American socialists today: We live in a time of transition, of limited possibilities developing out of the international and domestic situation. The primary task facing the American workingclass today is the creation of a labor party, and we define our work in relation to this fact. We seek to regroup and revitalize the socialist movement, so that it may prepare itself for the more far-reaching changes which are to come. Today, a whole series of factors indicate that the best way to do this is through the creation of a broad, Debsian party of socialism. The unity of the YSL, the ISL and the SP-SDF would be a step in this direction, with the YSL constituting either part of, or the youth affiliate of such a united organization.

(32) We reaffirm our political program. But today, we believe that our program, as well as the socialist movement as a whole, is best served by our participation in a broad socialist movement. Thus we call for the unification of the various tendencies on the basis of a minimal, democratic socialist program; we call for the unification of the YSL, the ISL and the SP-SDF as a step in this direction.

(33) We look toward a new beginning. We have no illusions that a great, mass socialist movement will suddenly spring into existence. Yet, we see possibilities, an opening in American society brought about by a range of specific events; we call for a turn of the American socialist movement, away from its isolation, toward the American workingclass and the job of building a labor party.

##

Draft Resolution on American Perspectives.

Passed by the National Action Committee of the YSL.
For presentation to the Convention of July 1-3, 1957
Vote of the NAC (March 19, 1957)
For: MH, MM, AL, GR, ST Agst: TW

Suggested Motion of Implementation
of Convention Unity Resolution -

by Bogdan Denitch, Don Harris, Debbie Meier.

Aside from passing a resolution on the whole question of regroupment and the YSL's perspectives regarding unity, the coming YSL convention will be passing a motion specifically authorizing the NAC to implement this resolution. We agree in general with the Draft Resolution contained in this Bulletin and passed by the majority of the NAC (with reservations and amendments here and there), and feel that the following suggested motion for implementation is consistent with the views spelled out in the Resolution (See particularly Section III of the Resolution on youth regroupment). It would be impossible at this time to draft any kind of final, conclusive motion since much may happen between now and the convention which will effect the exact nature of this motion. However we submit the following suggested motion for the consideration of the membership in the hope that (1) it will clarify the type of youth unity and affiliation which we have in mind and (2) it will elicit suggestions and criticisms from other supporters of the general unity proposition and therefore help to clarify some of the problems. The final section, Point 8, of this motion is particularly tentative in nature, and was thrown together rapidly in the hope that it will stimulate discussion.

M O T I O N

On the basis of the previously adopted Resolution on Perspectives for American Socialists, this Convention of the YSL authorizes the NAC to undertake the following concrete steps if and when they are appropriate:

1. The NAC as a whole or any body or individual thereof is authorized to conduct discussions or negotiations with any commission, committee or representative of the SP-SDF or of the YPSL. The NAC shall attempt to keep its negotiating body as broadly representative as possible.
2. At these discussions or negotiations the representatives of the YSL shall attempt to seek an understanding and an agreement regarding the terms of unification and/or affiliation. The YSL representatives shall seek to establish (a) that all members and tendencies of the newly created youth organization shall have the fullest democratic rights of expression, discussion and representation, (b) that the YSL shall be adequately represented on all levels of the new youth organization, (c) that the youth affiliate shall have as much autonomy as possible and shall be affiliated in a manner in keeping with the best democratic concepts and in keeping with the development of the youth membership's full capacities; (d) that the program of the organization shall be determined by a democratic Convention of the elements involved, and (e) that the new youth organization shall have a unity convention as soon as possible.
3. The representatives of the YSL shall also make clear in these discussions the nature of our goals and orientation in terms of the type of organization we seek to create in America today and the reasons why we seek this, so that all the parties involved shall have a clear and frank understanding of each others views and perspectives.
4. The representatives of the YSL shall then be authorized to negotiate for specific terms of unity and/or affiliation.
5. When the NAC arrives at terms which are satisfactory to it, it shall

inform all members of the YSL of these agreed upon terms immediately so that they can be discussed by the membership as a whole.

6. The NAC shall call for an NEC Plenum in order to arrive at a final decision after a proper period for discussion and consideration.

7. The NEC shall then be authorized, by a 2/3 vote, to accept or reject these terms and agreements regarding the future status of the YSL, unless a regular call for a Special Convention or Referendum is made in order to ratify the NEC decision, in which case a simple majority of said convention or referendum will be required to ratify the NEC decision.

8. The NAC is also authorized to discuss and negotiate with any other youth groups for their participation, as an organized tendency or as individuals in the YSL. The NAC shall, of course, keep in mind the general overall unity perspectives outlined in the YSL Convention Resolution as criteria for (1) inviting and (2) conducting such discussions. Since our major orientation is for a unification of the ISL-SP to create a broad all-inclusive Debsian party with the YSL playing the decisive role in creating its youth affiliate, it naturally follows that the NAC is NOT authorized to engage in unity and regroupment activities contrary to such an orientation, or to consider unity or merger with groups unalterably opposed to such a perspective. In so far as such discussions and negotiations are in keeping with our major orientation and require also no changes in the YSL program, organization and affiliations, the NAC is authorized to negotiate terms and conditions with the assent of only a majority of the NEC. In such cases where programmatic, organizational, etc. changes would be involved

; an early convention or referendum to ratify such changes and to consummate such a unity shall be required.

##

- * A spelling out of the type of youth autonomy which we might consider fitting will be included in the next issue of the YSR, in an article by Bogdan Denitch (which was submitted for this issue, and lost by the editor!)

FOR A REALISTIC AND INCLUSIVE ATTITUDE ON SOCIALIST REGROUPMENT: I and II
(Part I written Feb. 24, Part II on March 21)
By Charles Walker

Part I: Feb. 24, 1957

The most important and pressing problem currently confronting the radical movement in America is obviously, and by wide agreement, the complexities involved under the heading of "socialist regroupment." All other problems are viewed through this glass, insofar as they bear on who should be included in a future united organization, what kind of activities should be merged in, and what kind of a progressive minimum program can serve to unite heterogeneous anti-capitalist elements.

The direct cause of this "unity is in the air" feeling is, of course, the revolutionary struggles under Stalinism - preceded by the Khrushchev "revelations" -- and arising therefrom the growing deep fissures in the world Communist movement. Naturally the decomposition of this movement occurs at different tempi in different countries, and the exact depth of the crisis will not be the same everywhere. Thus, in the U.S. and Britain, the process is more fierce and deeper, while in Asia the situation seems less affected. However, we have by no means come to the end of this process, and we will have to formulate new tactics and strategies for dealing with our small share in these developments as time goes by.

In this country, the most fruitful and considered attitude toward socialist regroupment was first broached in the "proposed Statement on Policy" of the Political Committee of the Independent Socialist League in December, 1956. I say this despite serious reservations, to be outlined below, with certain parts of that document, particularly, those sections dealing with Socialist Party-ISL unity.

I confess that I was most pleasantly surprised by the flexibility and creativeness involved in the heart of that statement. Following this, and spelling it out further, was the excellent Benson pamphlet on the CP.

That is, at this time, we are for a broad, inclusive, Debsian socialist movement, which will permit various socialist tendencies to exist inside it, and which can solve the present problems of socialism in the U.S. That on the Russian question, despite theoretical disagreements, there must be a support of democratic struggles of that population, and that it is impossible to identify publicly Russia as a "socialist" country, if the new united socialist movement is to get a hearing among the American working class. That there will be wide autonomy within the group for various tendencies, and the holding in abeyance of "solving" theoretical differences - eg splitting. That such a new socialist movement must seek to intervene in the struggles of the American working class, the Negro movement, etc., and create a program aimed at leading it toward socialism vis a successful pushing of the class struggle to its logical conclusion.

Who would make up the original membership of this new socialist movement? Precisely those existing persons who now look upon themselves as socialists of one kind or another, whether in organizations today or not. More specifically, the present ISL, SLP, SP-SDF, Cochranites, Sweezyites, Dissentites, Socialist pacifists around Liberation, some present Gatesites still in

the CP, and - most important numerically - the more recent ex-CFers, whether in various forum groups today, or simply on vacation.

Do we disagree on this broad perspective? Probably not. Even the S.P. leadership, which wanted to exclude the ISL and SP from this regroupment at first (see: "International Socialist Review" Fall 1956, See: Farrel Dobbs at the Discussion Forum symposium "Can the Left Unite?" Jan 18, 1957 in NY, etc), does not express itself so unequivocally on that score anymore. True, they didn't want to "destroy" the ISL or SP, it was said, but there were limits to unity, weren't there?

I still say - and I weigh my words carefully - that the S.P. is most ambiguous on the question of "accepting" the ISL or SP-SDF in regroupment. In the Feb. 11 Militant, the S.P. proposes to discuss its program for regroupment, which is all to the good. However, within this program, we again come to the old chestnut of "(4) The defense of the economic and social conquests of the Soviet bloc... We stand for the defense of those conquests against the imperialist drive to liquidate them."

Does this mean that the National Committee of the S.P. is in simple agreement with the view of the Benson pamphlet (p. 38): "There is no socialist worth of the name, and we know of none, who suggests that the achievement of democratic socialism in Russia requires the denationalization of industry and the conversion of the means of production into the private property of capitalists. That would be as absurd as it would be reactionary. What is required is democracy." I think that this is not what the S.P. has in mind, since its original line of regroupment based upon "defense of the soviet union" was specifically designed to exclude the ISL and SP. I DEMAND TO KNOW FROM THOSE FINDING FAVOR WITH THE SWP'S APPROACH TO UNITY, WHETHER OR NOT THE SWP WILL ACCEPT THE ISL AND THE SP-SDF IN A BROAD REGROUPMENT! I feel that such comrades simply don't know the S.P.'s official attitude on this subject, and therefor want to pass it by rather than embarass the S.P. within the Third Camp and ex-CP circles (excluding the SP for a moment).

There are several other criticisms that could be made of the S.P.'s approach toward regroupment, in particular their insistence upon the terminology common to the CP and Trotskyist tradition - and because common, given a perverted and negative meaning in the minds of CPers who have broken, and who are, after all, the "big fish in regroupment today. The insistence upon a "Leninist-type party" is a good example of this.

However, what is most important at this stage, is an explicit avowal of the change from their earlier view in the MSR and the Forum discussion, if in fact, there has been a change! To anyone who has followed their progress at all on this question, the present stance seems to be merely a soft statement of the S.P.'s original viewpoint, designed to be more appealing, but the same animal when pinned to the ground after wrestling with the new terminology.

So much for a critique of the S.P. What about the ISL and YSL leading committee's approach toward regroupment as examined more closely as it unfolded:

(1) I was opposed at the time, and remain opposed to the uncritical endorsement of the SP in the 1956 elections, as an opportunistic approach toward ISL-SP unity.

(2) More pertinently, and on the larger question, I do not think that bilateral attitude toward unity on the part of the ISL-YSL-SP would best foster progress toward broader regroupment, wherein I am quite willing to

accept the SP-SDF as a legitimate and necessary part.

(3) The canonization of the SP as the self-proclaimed "vanguard" in regroupment, and as the only force capable of affecting this change, has had a deleterious effect upon the YSL-ISL in terms of fostering a mild (as yet) ideological stampede toward entrism, or dissolution of these groups within the SP by the action of members simply joining as individuals. This will lead toward further demoralization as it becomes apparent that the SP is opposed to any immediate or quick unity with the ISL-YSL.

(4) The correct attitude toward regroupment must be that of multilateral negotiations among the various organizations, including the ex-CPers and Gatesites still in the CP, to establish the climate for unity. Even if we expected the SP-SDF to play a crucial role here, preliminary negotiations with other tendencies aimed at realizing the kind of organization mentioned above, would be an important pressure among the SP-SDF activists and the less rigid leaders toward broadening unity negotiations.

(5) It is not excluded that should the SP-SDF procrastinate indefinitely on broad regroupment, that other forces might go ahead after a time. While this is an important strategic matter, and one to be weighed heavily before action is taken, it is quite possible that such partial steps might be taken — provided the door is carefully left open for further re-unification. Even the ISL-SP unity — on the proper basis — can be progressive. Likewise for unity with the Cochranites, Sweezites, Dissent-ites, etc.

In the meantime, while problems in orientation are being discussed, it is naturally essential that we establish contact with all of these groups, and in particular with the ex-CPers and fellow travellers now in or around forum groups or simply hanging together as individuals. The latter are by no means frozen in their development and will respond to further world events — especially to struggles in the Communist dominated countries.

Outside of our active participation in all these forums, and numerous talks with smaller circles, we can perhaps go a step further in crystallizing their development toward a militant democratic socialism. We can propose ad hoc committees of individuals, say, to demonstrate in favor of the workers in Hungary and/or Poland, given a new upsurge in these countries by the working class, combined with repression from above.

This brief statement, dashed off in a hurry, is certainly not a complete approach to all the problems involved in regroupment today. I would like to hear what other have to say — in particular those sympathetic to the views of the MAC majority (and the PC) on the one hand, and to the SLP on the other. In this way the discussion will be raised from its earlier level of dark suspicions and organizational hassles. However, I am optimistic that in spite of the opportunistic approach of the ISL on the SP question, and the SLP's facing the future with its rump, that the current toward unity will continue unabated. But my object is not to say hurrah for mistakes — because they will probably not prove fatal. Rather, I would say, let us think through the problems involved, minimize our mistakes and those of our socialist comrades in other organizations, and get on with the business of recreating a viable, militant socialist movement in the United States.

See next page for Part II, postscript

SOCIALIST REGROUPMENT: II (by Charles Walker)

Part II: March 21, 1957

The above article no longer represents the views of this writer, but may be of interest to YSL'ers in terms of thought developing in the BAY AREA until recent times.

At present - following more complete exposition of the Shachtman viewpoint on regroupment - my position could be summarized as follows:

1. A democratic unity with the SP-SDF, permitting full expression of Third Camp views, is both politically permissible and promising in terms of a broader regroupment picture. This would be incorrect as a simple numerical addition of ISL, YSL and SP-SDF.
2. There needs to be more discussion of what is contemplated plus more of a critical but temperate, evaluation of the SP-SDF (viz, The Benson article in the current Labor Action).
3. Whether unity as seen above is possible at this time is problematical. I, myself, am more doubtful than some other comrades. However, we do not stand to lose anything by posing our point of view as a definite proposal to the broad radical movement.
4. Such a proposal - by its venturesomeness - stands in marked and favorable contrast to the hidebound position of the SWP, the latter desiring only recruitment. The leading Berkeley "Left Wing" spokesman agrees that the SWP does have only a recruitment perspective, masquerading as "regroupment," but supports that perspective as the only practical policy. I disagree with this perspective.

###

A political crisis has developed in the past months in the Y.S.L. The most serious aspect of this crisis is that it has become necessary for comrades to divert precious organizational time to internal polemics and faction-fighting. Such a diversion, and consequent lessening of attention to building the YSL; if continued, will lead, as it has in other left sects, to increasing concern with internal politics, ending in a vicious circle of lessening attention to the outside world, more attention to internalization and sectarianization. The origin for this serious development lies with the Right leadership (realizing of course that there are differences even within it, but lumping it together for general political purposes) and its fantastic over-optimism as to potentials for the rebuilding of the American left, especially in the direction of the social-democracy. One of the reasons for the present confusion in our ranks, which will, I think, give rise to the only progressive thing to come out of it, is the abysmal lack of socialist education which the Right leadership has given us. The present crisis, while serious in cutting down external development, will at the same time hammer socialist education into our members during the course of the actual internal struggle. It is for this reason among others that I accept the call to join in our internal struggle at this time, and align myself, in a certain, well-defined sense, with those forces who are opposed to a continuation of the development towards the social-democracy at this time, and who sincerely believe in the slogan: "Build the Y.S.L."

But the crisis only originated, and was not developed to its present state, by the Right leadership. It was fomented to its crisis/pitch by the call of the so-called "left" for the formation of a "Left Caucus," and its publication of a Bulletin. The leaders of this caucus believe that the present course of the Right "calls into question the continued existence of the YSL as an independent organization of revolutionary socialist youth." In the manner and theoretical origins that the "left" leaders are conducting their polemic I see the full development of the crisis, for which they must accept responsibility. I shall clarify this point, on the basis of which I refuse to join their bloc, later in this article.

1. Why the Right is right in theory...

No-one has characterized the social-democracy better than Shachtman: "We do not differ from the Social Democrats because they are for democracy as the road to socialism...We differ with them because of their belief in the growing democratization of capitalism. It is an illusion. We differ with them because of their belief in the collaboration between classes which are irreconcilable...because of their own bureaucratic regime and methods...because of their own not-very-well concealed contempt for the workers, because of their own resistance to the complete independence and self-reliance of the working class...because, hating Stalinism without understanding it, they oppose it by tolerating and even urging the subordination of the working class to the doomed and dying capitalist regime. That is the particular contribution which the Social Democrats make to the new barbarism! It is this very policy of reconciliation with capitalism instead of socialist struggle against it that has made possible the rise of Stalinism and its victories. The workers need a lifebuoy to carry them out of danger from the foundering ship of capitalism and the Social Democrats throw them the anchor." (III, May-June 1950, p. 143)

And yet, we know from the experience of forty years of left sects in America that we cannot pose a successful alternative to capitalism until such a time as the working class has been convinced of the correctness of our democratic socialist alternative by its own experience. The creation of socialist consciousness can come only in connection with years of practical activity in the workers' struggles. To dismiss collaboration, under all conditions, with social-democracy is sectarian; it leads to a utopian view of the achievement of socialism such as that of the Socialist Labor Party. Their view is that there will be no socialism until the workers have come (by means of correct education, not during the course of day-to-day struggle, which is rejected as "reformist") to the idea of it. Scientific socialists, on the other hand, believe in working wherever the masses are to be found, wherever it is possible to work with dynamic forces (note that this eliminates the criticism "but what about the Democratic Party or the Catholic Church? That's where the masses are..."); it is our task to convince, in Lenin's words, the backward (i.e. as yet un-class-conscious) elements, and not to fence ourselves off from them by artificial and childish "left" slogans. To refuse to compromise with even temporary and vacillating allies, to refuse ~~to~~ in advance the stretching out of a hand to leftward moving elements, to refuse to take advantage of even the smallest opportunity of gaining a mass ally, is playing directly into the hands of the bureaucratic and anti-socialist leaders of these leftward-moving elements. When a gradual shift of the workers to the left occurs, it becomes necessary to strengthen at first the intermediate parties, i.e. the social-democrats between the capitalists and ourselves. In fact it is our duty to find compromises between ourselves and the left elements in such a movement in such a way that it would facilitate the unification of these elements with us and at the same time leave us free for the political struggle against the opportunist right-wing of such a movement.

This viewpoint is essentially that of Lenin as presented in "Left-Wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder," which I recommend for the critical reading of all comrades. As Lenin put it, "It is true that (the Labor-Party type politician) is hopelessly reactionary...that they want to rule on the old bourgeois lines, and that when they do get into power they will infallibly behave like the Scheidemanns and Noskes. But it by no means follows that to support them is treachery to the revolution...what undoubtedly follows is that (we) should participate in parliamentary action... help the masses of the workers to see the results of a Henderson and Snowden government in practice...help the Hendersons and Snowdens to defeat Lloyd George and Churchill combined. To act otherwise would mean placing difficulties in the way of the revolution; for revolution is impossible without a change in the views of the majority of the working class, and this change is brought about by the political experience of the masses, and never by propaganda alone."

Thus denunciations of moving toward the social-democracy are seen in better light; Comrade Shane's "regroupment" of American socialists is, by its fantastically "correct" bases, in the same class with those who were criticized by Lenin in Germany. "The only (only!) condition of membership (in the pure Workers Union in Germany)...will be 'recognition of the Soviet system and the dictatorship!!'" Shane's conditions are even more "left:" "...a no less unequivocal democratic conception of socialism...A clear break with the Stalinist bureaucracy...formation of a Labor Party...support of all (note: all.M.O.) colonial revolutionary movements..." (We can debate

later on whether the Stalinist-led ones fall into that category...)). What do these concepts mean in terms of leftward moving workers who might be in the social-democracy? It means we hold up our hands, as the Cannonites have done to Gates in the C.P.-USA and say no, you are not pure enough for us, go back where you came from. Gates has done so. The ultimate end of this kind of tactic is the prevention of a labor party because it will be by no means pure, an end to which even those consistent foes of social-democratic capitulation to capitalism, the Cannonites, will agree to.

2. ...but wrong in practice. (Or: The Well-Traveled Road)

But even Lenin was not as opportunistic as our Right leaders. Let us compromise with the Snowdens and Hendersons, said Lenin, but "...let us retain complete liberty (emphasis V. I.'s) of agitation, propaganda and political activity. Without the latter condition, of course, no such bloc can be concluded for it would be treachery; the British Communists (in 1920-M.O.) must absolutely insist on and secure complete liberty to expose the Hendersons and the Snowdens the same way as (for 15 years, 1903-1917) the Russian Bolsheviks insisted on and secured it in relation to the Russian Hendersons and Snowdens, i.e., the Mensheviks." If the social-democracy does not agree to such terms, democratic terms in essence, they stand exposed. This is exactly what Comrade Henry and I said in the Jan. 1957 YSR when we wrote (in For a Continuation of the Revolutionary Course, part 1):

"This is not to say, of course, that we cannot ally ourselves with social-democrats, (or with Bolsheviks) on specific issues, as long as we do so as an organization with an open, well-defined program, accepted as such by the other groups, or as individuals openly accepted as socialists, and not masquerading as liberals. We work for such alliances, remembering all the time that their purpose is not to bring in socialism, but 1) to achieve the specific goals aimed at, and 2) by so doing to advance the consciousness of our allies and those with whom such an alliance comes into contact."

One notes here, in the first place, that unification is undertaken only in a certain way. The "left" caucus has amply documented how the Right leadership has not undertaken the current maneuver in that way at all and has, in fact, "bootlicked", or worse. I agree with the "left" on this, and do not go into that question any further. The second important point is that one undertakes, if one listens to Lenin at all with a critical ear, such unification only under certain conditions. Not willy-nilly, halter-skelter, opportunistically. Are these conditions present now? Again the "left" has adequately demonstrated that they are not. As Comrade Shane puts it, "...one must be at times willing to compromise one's complete program in order to move a leftward-moving tendency further to the left." Of course Shane himself has never seen the need to do this with his program; nevertheless the point that you don't compromise with with a tendency which is moving to the right, thus helping it move further to the right, is absolutely correct.

Let us examine just how the social-democrats are moving further to the right. First, Comrade Frank is quite right in saying that the SP-S SDF program will not "criticize the existing political system forcefully and concretely enough to elicit a demand for a labor party." It is above all for that reason that now, in Comrade Shachtman's words, the social-democracy is indeed an anchor, not a lifebuoy. Secondly, the "left"

leaders are correct in pointing out that the State Department orientation of the SP-SDF is exactly putting us in the position of, when going to the Stalinists, asking them to give up the "one decent political attribute they have," that is, anti-capitalism. Of course the "lefts" are just as bad in going to the Stalinists, but of that more later.

Let us compare a few documents, over the years, to see where the Socialist Party, USA, is drifting to. In 1950, seven years ago, the Libertarians declared, in a letter to an SP contact, "you have tried to build a Left-Wing in the party for six years yet today you are just where you started or probably even a little worse off because many who formerly co-operated with you have quit the party in disgust... (Note that, Comrade McReynolds. That puts it back to 1944§-M.O.) For several months our members and friends had been reporting to us that your (SP) Leftist associates around the country had been telling them to watch the convention, intimating... that something favorable to the Left was coming out of it." (Sound familiar, Comrade McReynolds?) What great progress has been made in seven years! Unity with the SDF!

Let's move on a few years, to the winter of 1952-53: "This campaign (fall '52) proves once and for all the complete idiocy of compromising with the right wing. (in the sp-M.O.) After fighting hard to make sure that no third camp platform was adopted... the right wing... withdrew from the campaign, left the party or (without leaving the party) backed the Stevenson campaign. This only strengthens our opinion that these people are waiting for the first opportunity to liquidate the SP." Further, "The SP's present negotiations (with the SDF) are a disaster--the SDF is by no stretch of the imagination a socialist organization. Their 'socialism' is anti-Stalinism, their stand on civil liberties and war is inconsistent with democratic socialism or democracy itself." Your prediction of liquidation came true, Comrade Denitch. And now we are asked to unify with the liquidators (political liquidators only--other times, other tactics) and I do not see any of the proposers even blushing.

Comrade Cahill wrote, in the same Winter '52-53 YER (then the Yipsel organ), "We are not members of the SP because we agree with its present position. We do not and cannot agree with it. We are members because it contains... many honest grassroots socialists... We have good precedents for our action: notably the Pivert group in the French SFIO..." It still contains a few of them, comrades, but the good ones leave, don't they? The Yipsels left a short time later; and so, after all, did Pivert!

But all this is really in a sense academic. What do you do, comrades, when the bachelor is rejected? The truth of the matter is, cruel as it may be, that the SP-SDF won't have us. It has become a peculiar twist of history that the SP-SDF, instead of being asked to prove its worth as a socialist organization to us and the world, has turned the tables and all others have to prove their worth before being allowed to join the force of democratic socialism. Our Right leaders remind me of a man trying to reach the moon by climbing to the top of a mountain and then flapping his arms. It is a ridiculous posture and that is how we look to the world. But protest our palatability as much as we like, they won't have us. They won't have the "left:" Absurd, they're out-and-out Trotskyites and wouldn't behave themselves in the party. They won't have Oppenheimer, either, because as long as he talks about joining as a tendency, about conditions,

and not about joining as an individual, we are reminded of...1936. Enough to mention the infamous date. But lets move over to the center-capitulators; will they take De nitch? Certainly not; he raided a YPSL unit from the YSL and split it. Honest to Max Shachtman, comrades, that's the social democrats' version of our origins! But what about the right-capitulators, will the SP-SDF take them? Martin? No, he's a S Shachtmanite, and we all know what that is, in spite of Shachtman's policing up of McReynolds. Harrington then, the pacifist, God-believing holder of a Menshevik position on the Russian revolution? No good either, comrades, he helped D nitch split the YPSL and that ends it, that. Well, that leaves us only one conclusion: we'll have to purge our NAC and other leading comrades, and the rank-and-file will join the SP-SDF, You say that's called liquidation? C apitulation? Bootlicking? Opportunism? You say that people who make such unreasonable demands of good, honest, democratic socialists are ... what? Comrade, you're being polite.

This brings up the question of Shachtman's slogan of a "bridge to the right." The social-democrats do not have their attitude towards us out of the blue, any more than the SP unified with the SDF because they simply enjoyed each others company. They are moving in an historical context, moving to the right. This is what makes the criticism by the "lefts" (that the right believes in unification as is) so ridiculous also; unification "as is" c nnot happen. In the same way, the Right assumes a static or rightward moving labor movement. To keep up with it, socialists would have increasingly to move "rightward", that is, stop talking about socialism to be "effective". Eventually they would stop being socialists, of course. Thus it is not we, by our palatable actions, that will bring about unity with the social-democracy. It is the external conditions of American Society, forcing the social-democracy towards real solutions of real problems, that will create the "bridge to the right" meaning only that the labor movement, will, faced by real conditions, become aware of the contradictions of our society, at which point our socialist position will become meaningful for America. The bridge to the right is a bridge from the right to us, not vice-versa. To travel the other way is a well travelled road, out of the socialist movement.

3. The Peculiar Role of the "Left". (Or: Portrait of some revolutionists as young Cannon-fodder)

Then we have the "lefts". I should like to call the attention of the members of that caucus the extraordinary attitude of some of their leaders. I shall yield to no one in my admiration of their intelligence; t they are not stupid. In fact, there exists for them no such thing as stupidity. There are only reflections of objective class positions: either you belong to us, the real, revolutionary working-class "marxist" group and agree with our minimum (!) demands, or you are aiding, objectivly, in a case of bare-checked, bare-faced, hand-polished, chrome-plated sellout and capitulation to the social-democracy, which, as every child knows, is a sell-out to the State Department and the capitalist class. If stupidity does not exist, then they are not stupid either. They know full well what the chances of making the YSL palatable to the social-democracy are. They are as I have stated them above. Then why the seriousness of the attack, the viciousness of the pölemic, the formation of a caucus in view of an alleged danger of our continued existence? The enemy is weak, the bachelor has lost the bride having hardly begun the chase; then why, the chase being almost over, are the relatives still so hot against the marriage? Since they are not stupid, the logical alternative must be that they wish the young bachelor to be so disillusioned with his past disappointment in love that he will swiftly fly into the arms of another woman; the Jezebel-candidate of the "left" leaders.

The tactic of the "left" leaders is crystal-clear. It takes two principal forms. One is to drag as many good revolutionary comrades into the bloc with them and, at our next convention, attempt to oust the present leadership, replace it with "revolutionary" leadership, and move towards unity with the "true left" on the basis of their minimum conditions (that is, unity with themselves and with the Cannonite youth in American Youth for Socialism). The other form is, if the bloc is not large enough, to pull as many of our members out of the "capitulationist YSL and take them directly to the Cannon-fodder camp. The former tactic is known as "taking over". The latter is known as "splitting", or more aptly, "wrecking".

If the younger members of the "left" caucus will examine the writings, i.e., terminology, characterizations, theory, of their leaders they will find a remarkable resemblance to the writings of the Cannonites. I do not know Comrade /Dave Carlton. But a comparison of his characterizations with those of the MILITANT may prove instructive. a) we are selling-out to the social-democracy. b) the traditional function of the center is to provide left cover for reformism, that is, they are selling-out too. c) music by Norman Thomas, lyrics by Dulles, (an oversimplification ~~that~~ so nauseating that even Tim, certainly Shane, must blush) center and ~~far~~ right will sail away into the capitulation. d) the S hachmenites (look who's calling the kettle black) are guilty of jesuitical causuistry, Kabbalism, the New Criticism in their rationalizations for capitulation. (How do you like that for mixed metaphors?)

What are the "left's" minimum conditions for unity, as another clue? In the Left Bulletin (Unitie for Unity) they are stated: ONLY 100% support of the Hungarian and Polish revolutions and opposition to the Stalinist bureaucracy (100%-not 99% even the SWP dares not go that far; 100% (not 99%) support of the colonial revolutions (but still we can debate those led by ~~the~~ stalinists--they don't count in the 100%); 100% opposition to our own capitulist class. Not complete agreement, mind, we exclude nobody, including the CP, SP, and SWP, only 100%, that's all. This type of unity means only one thing: unity with themselves, which means, as I have said, unity with the SWP and its youth group.

Now I say that Comrade Shane is preparing the YSL for a bare-checked, bare-faced, hand-polished and chrome-plated sellout and capitulation to the Cannonites. Let us take another coincidence in positions between the "left" leaders and the Cannonites. The Gates position in the CP is greeted with laudable lack of enthusiasm by our "lefts". But -- Gates "seems to be moving in a social-democratic direction." That is, Gates is not moving in the direction of a revolutionary concept, he is moving from the CP to the right and capitulation to the capitalists. Who agrees with this characterization of Gates? Who, besides Foster and the Kremlin on the one hand and the New York Times representing the capitalist class on the other? The SWP, to be sure. Gates was, as we know, for a moment moving to the real left, that is, questioning the lack of democracy on the part of the "socialism" of the "People's Democracies." Under such an attack, Gates promptly stopped moving toward what everybody including the SWP told him was the "right" and moved back to what must, to him, have been the alternative: the "left" of the CP and capitulation to Dennis and Foster. If this is the "left" of our "left" leaders...

But more important is the double-standard of the "left" leaders. It's not nice to sell the CALL, they say! Right. But is it nice to sell the MILITANT? We ought to get the good socialists out of the SP-SDF, says Tim. Not to do it is capitulation to them. Do I see Tim and Shane wading into

Cannonite meetings recruiting their youth? If they have, I haven't heard about it. Not to do that is capitulation, to what? Selling MILITANTS is capitulation to what? If what I have said is not true, then I call upon comrades Tim and Shane to disavow their resolution on the American Socialist Party and rewrite it to add the SWP as a capitulator to the Soviet Union; more important, to call upon youth in both the SP-SDF and the SWP, not to Split, but to consider carefully how best they can function with American youth, to work closely with YSL as a test of the YSL's ability in comparison with the various adult groups, and then, only when convinced of the superiority of our work with youth, based on our democratic socialist program, to join us.

New comrades Shane and Tim may say, well, with the social-democracy, that's capitulation, but with the SWP, that's really a revolutionary working class organization, so it isn't capitulation. It's unity towards the left. This, however, is doublethink of the worst order, and they have hoodwinked some good comrades with it. For the Cannonites accuse our Right leadership of capitulation and unprincipled opportunism and state (quite rightly, too) that "a unity (with the SP-SDF) which has no sound political basis will soon be torn asunder, engendering extreme bitter feelings and setting back the whole development of the radical movement many years." Yet they have themselves formed a bloc of persons whose basic orientation is pro-SWP and a defense of the Soviet Union, and others whose orientation is independent socialism with a third camp position. And they invite the participation of persons "even though they may have differences on many other important questions," i.e., crucial questions such as, is the SWP a revolutionary socialist group or is it capitulationist to bureaucratic collectivism? A bloc of such a nature with the social-democracy is indeed unprincipled. It has no sound political basis and opposes the working ~~class~~ class by urging its subordination to the capitulist class. A bloc towards the Cannonites has no sound political basis either, as the Cannonites objectively urge the subordination of working class interests to those of the degenerated workers state, so-called, according to my understanding of the theory of bureaucratic collectivism, to which I hold. If a bloc with the social-democracy is unprincipled, what then is a bloc with the Cannonites?

4. Our Task

One of the fundamental reasons that the Right leadership has failed to come to grips with the "left" in a successful way is that the Right has not considered any principled, theoretical basis for its position, as the "left" has. We note, for example, that the tendency of the "left" is to be over-optimistic about, and much concerned with, working with Stalinist elements. The Right has exactly the same fault in connection with social-democratic, or liberal elements. Yet the reasons behind this have not been brought out. One reason, of course, is a differing position on the role of the Soviet Union and the Stalinist movement. Another, not so well-known, is the concern of the "left" with stalinism (and recruitment of other tired radicals, rather than concern with the working class as a whole) is evidence of its position in favor of the concept of the Vanguard Party. The Right, correctly, senses that ~~the~~ the future of socialism in America lies not with the building of a Vanguard Party, but of a democratic, mass working-class party. But, carelessly evaluating the current situation, they have settled for the slogan of "democracy" without realizing its implications for the future of the socialist movement. In short (I hope to go into this at greater length in the future) the future of American socialism may be towards democracy in a mass democratic party of socialism,

inaugurating an era in which the working class will control and enjoy the fruits of its labor; in this case the development of socialism must be towards workers control of industry. On the other hand, the danger of either the concept of the vanguard party or the concepts of social-democracy (i.e., nationalization and the "welfare state") may create, instead of socialism, a new barbarism, the bureaucratic state with its new ruling class, be it stalinist-style or labor-bureaucrat-style. The bridge towards social democracy undertaken in the haphazardly opportunistic manner in which it is being undertaken now, is a bridge which not only subordinates the interests of workers to capitalism in the present, but one that may trap them into a bureaucratic-collectivist future.

The discussion of this question, that of the future of socialism in general, is one of our primary tasks. But what do we do now, of our present independent revolutionary course is to continue? The truth, comrades is always less demoralizing than the most encouraging lie--even if the truth is discouraging. And it is that. We do what we have been doing, maintaining ourselves, building socialism's future slowly, gradually; working in the day-to-day struggle of the people everywhere for freedom, equality, economic betterment. The truth is that we are not going anywhere fast. As Marxists we know that we cannot lift ourselves up by our own bootstraps. The fantastic illusions of both Right and "left" as to swift progress can lead only to demoralizing losses when our members are faced with hard reality. The desperation with which our leadership grasps for alliances of all kinds is evidence only of their lack of faith in the understanding of our membership.

As far as the SP-SDF is concerned, I stand at all times ready to discuss unity with their members as they are at the moment. I make absolutely no programmatic demands of them, since the very fact of their willingness to discuss unity with me under my organizational terms (outlined in part in section 2, first 2 paragraphs) will be sufficient evidence to me that they are approaching a real understanding of the problems facing democratic socialists in America. I do not foresee such an understanding on their part in the immediate future. When I am permitted to write an article such as this one and have it published in the SP-SDF's discussion bulletin, that will be evidence to me that the social-democracy is ready to become America's voice for democratic socialism. Until that time, the Young Socialist League, independent and democratic, remains that voice among the youth.

We revolutionary socialists have no illusions; thus we cannot be disillusioned. We know that the road is long and the struggle hard. Yet, too, we know that the road of "bolshivism" and the road of social-democracy may easily become, if traveled haphazardly, one-way roads to the new barbarism. It is for this reason above all others that we call FOR A CONTINUATION OF THE REVOLUTIONARY COURSE.

Martin Oppenheimer

(with agreement of H. Radotsky)

Philadelphia, Pa., March 13, 1957

AN OPEN LETTER TO MIKE HARRINGTON

March 4, 1957

Dear Comrade:

Your article "on the 'Left-Wing in the YSL" raises the most serious possible charges against the Left-Wing Caucus of the YSL and two of its leading organizers.* Your first paragraph states that "with the formation of the 'Left Wing Caucus,' the YSL is confronted with an organized, sectarian tendency. But more than that, the politics of this grouping are not those of an ordinary loyal faction: rather, they lead in the direction of a split toward the Cannonites." (YSR, vol. 3, no. 4, p. 2). The caucus "represents the tendency toward a split and amalgamation with the Cannonites." (Ibid.)

The article is studded with similar references. "The sectarians are, on every practical point, for a narrow, tight SWP-oriented socialist regroupment." (Ibid., p. 7). "The leading comrades of the sectarian tendency have Cannonite politics on almost every major political question." (Ibid.) "The sectarians are without persepctive - except that of building a sectarian movement with the SWP; as a result, their politics lead toward a split." (Ibid.)

You discuss the 'theory' upon which the politics of the caucus are based on the same terms. "The comrades of the 'left-wing' bulletin," you write--referring specifically to a signed article by Comrade Shane, "have...put forth as their fundamental conception"--a set of views on the application of the theory of "'combined and uneven development.'" (Ibid., p. 2) "...those comrades not only assert their 'laws' and attempt to impose them upon reality... they derive the tactics of the movement from them as well." (Ibid., p. 3); "since Comrade Shane, and the 'leftwing'," do not hold a position of "reaching the American working class;" "they want to form a tight organization;" "they disdain laying out a perspective," (p. 6), etc. **

You cite absolutely no source for your characterization of the Left Wing Caucus except your own undocumented opinion (on "Cannonite," "split," "not" a "loyal faction," etc., and three paragraphs out of the signed article by Comrade Shane on "Lessons of the Recent NEC Meeting.")

Now Mike, is it necessary for you to be dishonest? The Editorial Statement of the LEFT WING BULLETIN (vol. 1, no. 1, p. 2) clearly states "The material in this issue and in all subsequent issues represents the views of the Left-wing Caucus if it is marked as an editorial statement. Otherwise it represents the views of the author."

You pointedly ignore the "YSL Left-Wing Declaration," although you cannot possibly be unaware that it is the only statement of policy of the caucus as a whole which appears in the Bulletin. The caucus, acting democratically, will undoubtedly adopt further "official" points of view, and those will certainly be presented

* It should be clearly understood that in this letter we take no position on theoretical questions, but deal exclusively with the question of the programmatic base of the tendency, and your analysis of it.

** Emphasis ours, here and in succeeding portions, unless otherwise specified.

to the YSL as a whole. In the meantime, however, please don't trouble yourself to formulate our views -- or if you do, don't present your formulations as our views.

The same applies to our "leaders." We reserve the right to elect our own leaders and spokesmen, and consider it an outrageous presumption for you to appoint them for us -- as you blandly expound "dogma" throughout your article.

Mike, the socialist movement has suffered long enough from the sectarian vices of slander and dishonesty. You know damn well that if the caucus includes (and you haven't established it, by any means) individuals moving in the direction of the "Degenerated Workers' State" theory, it certainly includes members with such divergent views as "State Capitalism" or "Bureaucratic Collectivism."

You further know (if from no other source than the reports Comrade Debbie claims she has made) that not one member of the caucus in Chicago is "sympathetic" to the SLP, in the manner that you represent.

Despite the fact that you know these things, no reader of your article could be aware of the facts of the case. Perhaps, from your factional point of view, you consider it desirable to "forget" facts which make your position embarrassing. And it certainly would be "convenient" for you to tie the Red Herring - SLPism -- around the neck of the caucus, in place of dealing with its political views as these are actually expressed. (Or is 'realism' too 'real', when it comes to hatchet-work?) You will forgive us if we brand your tactics as they are -- slanderous and dishonest.

Concluding, we demand that you produce documentation for every charge, or issue and immediate public retraction.

John Worth
 Scott Arden
 Margaret Collins
 Chicago

(See next page for Harrington reply.)

What is the Caucus?

To the Chicago Comrades -- by
Mike Harrington

In a letter written in a tone of indignation, three comrades from Chicago challenge my last article in YSR on the "left wing."

Their attitude is one which contains some inaccuracies, but, more importantly, it is based on an incredible notion of what it means to join in a "left wing" caucus. A caucus, with its own discussion bulletin, with "minority" representation on local committees, with much discussion of "minority" rights in Challenge, on the IAC, etc., etc., is not formed because of group of comrades disagree on a minor theoretical point or two. Nor is it characterized by its "formal" programmatic statements.

A caucus, such as the "left wing," is based on the conception that there is something basically, fundamentally wrong with the leadership and the majority, so wrong, as a matter of fact, that the normal channels of debate and discussion do not suffice. This is specifically true in the case of the "left wing." These comrades have characterized the leadership of the YSL as "capitulationist" to American imperialism, social-democracy, etc. They have maintained that the "Martinite clique" is selling out the organization. They, and this is their claim, feel that they must save the organization.

Thus, this caucus does not make careful distinctions among its opponents. It sees only two tendencies on the other side: the "Martinites" and the "centrists." The former have already sold out and the latter are unwittingly following a path which will lead to a sell out of their politics. Have these Chicago comrades carefully distinguished between Max Martin and Debbie, Arlon and Bogdan? Or isn't the burden of their charges, so often, precisely that these comrades are objectively giving cover to capitulation, etc., whether they mean to or not?

This does not mean that everyone in the "left wing" caucus has Shane's Cannonite views. I specifically spoke of the part of the ice-berg below the water; I distinguished, in general, between levels of adherence to this caucus on the very first page of my article.

In point of fact, some of the comrades of the "left wing" are there by mistake. And it is to them that I address myself.

The Objective direction of the caucus is Cannonite. This is because its leadership have Cannonite politics and therefore push an orientation that can only move toward the Cannonites.

Thus, these comrades say: the "left wing" will never abandon the YSL; if the "right" capitulates, we will keep on going. Whom are they kidding? Don't we know what that means? If the "right," i.e. the majority of the ISL and YSL, move into the SP-SDF in one form or another, how will an "independent" YSL maintain itself? Do these comrades think that a youth organization (and especially one of the size which they will have) can (a) pay for its own national

office; (b) its own press; (c) its own organizational work, etc., etc? Don't they know that some kind of support from an adult organization is necessary? And if the "right" is regrouped in one place (around democratic socialism), the left will have to base itself on pure, orthodox Trotskyism. In that sense, and it is a very specific one, the proposals of the "left" objectively move toward the Cannonites, politically and organizationally.

Some comrades in the "left" disagree. Then, let them fight it out. Let them push their own spokesmen and leaders to find out where their caucus is going.

Thirdly. The "left wing" did not spring into existence overnight. It is not only an organized caucus, it represents a tendency. And when those who are leaders of this caucus (perhaps self-appointed) are politically Cannonites by their own public admission (I speak of comrades Shane and Tim), when the articles in the "left wing" bulletin almost uniformly attack independent socialist politics on every major question, my characterizations fit.

A few factual points:

In LWB #2, the editorial on page five identifies comrade Wohlforth's demands to give a class in New York with the rights of the "minority." The class in question was one on Social Democracy. Was comrade Wohlforth, and the LWB, wrong in implying that the minority, as an entity with rights, has views on this subject?

A leading member of your caucus quit the YSL, engaged in anti-Y L activity, rejoined the YSL when the faction fight began recently. (Comrade Jim, Berkeley) Is this calculated to make me think that the direction of your caucus is one of unmitigated loyalty?

But finally. The important political point to be made is that your caucus is charging. It is trying to be all things to all men, and not a few comrades belong to it without knowing what it is. Comrade Danny says in LWB #2 that the Third Camp is absolutely essential to him; in the same issue comrade Shane says that the Third Camp is not a basic question (incidentally, Shane, as a Cannonite, is against the Third Camp); comrades Paula and Harold say they are for unity with the CP-SDF under conditions with which a whole section of the majority agrees; Comrade Shane, in the same issue, does not regard the CP-SDF as socialist; the day or so after the LWB #2 appears with Shane's denunciation of the CP-SDF, comrade Tim, throwing the net toward a Newark statement, declares that the CP-SDF is a "democratic socialist" organization, against capitalism and stalinism, even if only by a hair; and so forth and so forth.

It is therefore my attitude that (a) the objective movement of your entire caucus is toward the CP, eventually toward a split; (b) that there are loyal comrades within your caucus who have been hoodwinked by all the inconsistent and unprincipled positions which you have taken.

ON LEAVING THE LEFT WING CAUCUS:

Statement by Frank McGowan

I no longer consider myself a member of the "left wing caucus." I still reserve criticisms of the majority position. However, the political basis of the left wing caucus is not merely a regroupment perspective, but a disagreement with the independent socialist tendency on a whole series of important political questions. I, therefore, think that I shall be able to discuss regroupment more fruitfully within the majority which represents my general political views much better than does the "left wing caucus."

Frank McGowan
March 25, 1957

29 blank.

[BLANK
PAGE]

A SLIGHT CORRECTION

Tim Wohlforth has circulated a description of the debate on ISL-SP unity between Shachtman and myself which took place on February 21 in New York. Even though it is doubtful that any experienced comrade in the ISL or YSL will pay attention to Wohlforth's letter, in the absence of a correction it might disturb comrades outside of New York City who did not attend the debate.

Rarely have I seen a letter in which the wish was more father to the description than is the case in this document of Wohlforth's. A super-heated imagination, which for several months has imagined nothing but Stalinophobia, capitulation, betrayal, decayed corpses, swamps, offals, death and corruption on all sides of himself in the YSL and ISL is hardly the recommended equipment with which to be able to describe a debate in the ISL. When we add to this the fervent desire to see a split, preferably of the widest possible dimensions, in favor of the SWP, we can understand why, without any question of dishonesty arising, Tim heard and reported what he heard as he did.

Tim writes that Shachtman, in this debate, was as "vicious and ruthless" as Tim has ever seen him. I don't know how "vicious and ruthless" Tim has seen Max in the past, but I, for one, was neither offended nor angered by anything he said. Both speakers spoke with conviction for their positions, and described the meaning and consequences of the adoption of their opponent's position with the sharpness to be expected when serious issues are at stake. Shachtman thinks that the minority PC position is sectarian and is not actually designed to achieve unity with the SP*SDF now. Haskell thinks that Shachtman's position tends to disorient our movement, and if carried, would not bring about a healthy, durable unity with the SP-SDF as a step toward the kind of broad socialist movement we all want to start building now. Both of them said so. Shachtman has never been most noted for the employment of the British mode of understatement in political discussions. He spoke like Shachtman. Since he didn't have a cold, he didn't whisper. He was, to be sure, quite blunt in describing the road which Tim and a few of his friends have been travelling in the direction of "socialist regroupment" inside the SWP. For the rest, in my opinion the debate was well within the confines of tone in which many important issues have been discussed and debated in the WP-ISL for the past seventeen years, whatever opinion one may hold of that tone.

"All signs," writes Tim, "point to a factional struggle unless -- as is possible but not likely -- Draper and Haskell cave in. It is noteworthy that they waited two months or more before they brought it to the membership. They share S's fear of the membership and of us. I feel, in fact, that it was our offensive and Bulletin which brought the whole business into the open."

The question of ISL-SP unity is going to be debated fully and openly in the ISL. Since the future of our tendency is involved in this discussion, the debate will be serious. Since none of the political and theoretical views which have made the ISL a distinctive tendency in the socialist movement are involved, it is hardly likely that it will

(over)

become a "factional struggle" in the sense that Tim hopes it will. No one on the PC is exactly petrified with fear of the membership of the ISL. The idea that they "fear" Tim and his couple of SWP-oriented friends in the YSL is one of the funnier notions running through his head. One thing that delayed the opening of the discussion in the ISL was an attempt by the members of the PC to clarify their own ideas before they opened the discussion, not only inside the ISL, but in front of the whole interested radical public. It might have been done much sooner, in our opinion but then a lot of things we do these days should be done sooner and better.

Wohlforth ends his letter with the adjuration to his colleagues that "we in the left wing must step up our campaign designed at building the YSL and fighting the liquidators of our movement." His contribution to "building the YSL" in the last few months is about equivalent to that of a person who, having thrown a stink-bomb into a meeting, then claims that his action was "designed at building" it up. Before he seeks to gain his spurs at "fighting the liquidators of our movement", it might be wise if he were to decide just which movement he considers "his". Some of his colleagues have already decided this frankly and more or less publicly. The sooner Tim does this, the quicker some of the comrades who have joined his crusade more out of inexperience and impatience with the difficulties of socialist organization in our time than out of clear understanding of where their "leaders" are dragging them, will be able to make up their own minds of where they really want to belong.

- GORDON HASKELL

P.S. I suppose it is Tim's right to write up everything he sees, hears or imagines in New York, and send the result to his colleagues of the "left wing caucus." They are thus furnished with inside dope, hot off the griddle, with which to stoke the furnace of gossip and scandal which is calculated to build up comradesly relations and the organization in general. The beauty of this kind of "politics" is that the rest of the organization, not being privileged to see these communications except by accident, has a certain difficulty in winnowing fact from fancy. This, of course, is all carried on in the interest of revolutionary principle against social democratic sculduggery.

On the Iceberg Below the Water:*

An Analysis of Shane's Discussion of the NEC Plenum

by Debbie Meier

Shane's article on the NEC discussion of "the crisis of stalinism" in the latest Left Wing Bulletin (vol 1, no. 2, pp. 15-) is again indicative of what Shane's politics are and where they lead. It's a good example of the left wing's essential sectarianism, and of their inability to deal with anything but abstractions and mechanical concepts. And finally it demonstrates how Shane slips his Cannonism into the heart of his criticism of the YSL's present politics.

ON THE CHANGE IN THE CP AND PARTIES TRANSFORMING THEMSELVES

To begin with let's examine Shane's arguments with regard to the question of how the NEC explains its change in attitude toward the future of the CP and the Stalinists. Shane argues that the NEC has avoided explaining its shift from calling the CP the representatives of the Stalinist ruling class to our present more sympathetic approach which calls upon them to become democratic socialists. (His argument incidentally is, I take it, with the first characterization.)

To begin with what Shane has ignored is that we still do not expect that the CP will become the party of democratic socialism, by the very nature of its roots, power relations, etc. Our dis expectations are not based, however, on any abstract contention that the CP must no matter what remain what it has been! At the moment we contend that it is moving in the direction of democratic socialism, and more important that out of its ranks may well come a host of democratic socialists. Our change in approach is based upon a change in the world situation which has shaken a section of that party and which threatens to break them away from the basic position of the Communist Party.

Shane's explanation of why we make this shift of position is that we are preparing the way for a justification soon to come of supporting the Democratic Party--i.e. that we will shift from calling it the representatives of capitalism to a party of democratic socialism! It is undeniable that there are many of us who would not attempt to deny the abstract possibility of the Democratic Party transforming itself into a labor party and then into a mass party of democratic socialism! However we think it exceedingly unlikely, due again to the roots, power relations, etc. of the Democratic Party. If the southern bloc splits off it will change these power relations and move the Party to the left; it will then reflect better the interests of the organized labor movement. But we think it is unlikely, due again to its roots, power relations, etc.; we think the Democratic Party will retain its bourgeois character and will not be able to become the class party of labor. We expect instead that sections of the Democratic Party will be forced to cut loose from it and, together with others, build a party of their own--firmly rooted in the organized working class. As a tactic to move elements in each

* The title refers to a phrase in Mike Harrington's article in the last YSR, vol. 3, no. 4, on page 2 in which he distinguishes between the so-called minimum position of this caucus and its real political basis and leadership.

to the left, we call upon those within the ranks of these parties who claim to be for socialism or democracy, to try and transform the party, while at the same time pointing out to them the other alternatives which exist and which we feel they must and will eventually have to utilize in order to reach their professed goals. But, and this needs repeating, we have no abstract position to the effect that the CP or the Democratic Party cannot be transformed, instead we have a concrete position based on a specific analysis of what goes on within each formation and how it relates to actual conditions within society.

UNITED FRONTS - THE WHYS AND WHEREFORS

Shane proceeds then to polemicize against the orientation of the NEC with respect to united fronts with the CP. Shane raises the bogey of "capitulation" to explain why his position was defeated. How then does he explain our "much worse" (in his own opinion) position of the past, when no unification perspective was being pushed? Or were we already capitulating to social democracy ten years ago in the SYL and IYL when we adopted this position and three years ago when the YSL adopted this "even worse" position? In fact, Shane would have to argue that we were, for his arguments are not based on fears of opportunism and capitulation relating to "unity with the CP-SDF," but are based on his present Cannonite political analysis.

For our motivations were then that (1) we wished to isolate the Stalinists and (2) we were for making it clear that we did not consider Stalinism part of the "left" in any way. We opposed united activity with them since we felt it promoted such misapprehensions. This still holds true by and large today. We are still interested in differentiating ourselves from the Stalinist movement and ideology in the sharpest way, and clearly separating them from the genuine "left," the working class tendencies, the democratic forces. This kind of differentiation is still important in both the world at large and in America in particular. In fact, after Hungary, etc. it is all the more vital to do so.

However, precisely because sections of the present CP and IYL are making an unprecedented break with their past politics, we wish to find a way of intervening in this struggle so as to aid those moving toward democratic politics. But this must be done without forgetting the previously mentioned problems. United fronts are beginning to be possible in some sections of the country with the IYL where the IYL is dominated by members of the Gates tendency and where it has begun to grapple with the basic question of democracy and therefore to move out of the Stalinist movement and apparatus. As for discussions, forums, etc. - we opposed them in the past for the same reasons which we would oppose friendly discussions or forums between a militant union and a completely gangster-ridden "union." However, when the situation becomes tense and ^{the} rank-and-file begins to grow restless the job of the socialist is to find the best tactical means of intervening, and for that reason "friendly discussions," in which frank and open political positions can be put forth become possible and desirable. Furthermore while several years ago the CPer could depend upon winning part of the audience by charges of red-baiting whenever basic questions were raised, the discussion within the CP and their periphery makes this impossible today.

Shane rests his arguments for cooperation on his analysis of what stalinism is and was, and on what he therefore considers is basically wrong with the CP and with Russian society. And in all these respects he differs from the YSL. For Shane, as for the SWP, the Stalinist movements are genuine working class movements which have been misdirected, misled and distorted by bad leadership and treacherous compromises. It follows then, from Shane's analysis, that you should be for discussions and united activities yesterday, today and tomorrow because after all you both represent, however badly, a common social force -- the working class, and oppose a common enemy -- the capitalists. One should cooperate with the Stalinist movements in the same manner precisely in which we favor cooperation with reformist unions, social democratic organizations, etc.

THE GATES TENDENCY

It is interesting to note that Shane's enthusiasm for cooperation with the CP is not due to an optimistic appraisal of where the CP is going. For on the basis of his politics he is for cooperation whether they are in flux or not. And, in fact, Shane is far more pessimistic about the developments within the CP than are we.

Shane is not happy at all about the Gates tendency. He begins by stressing his far lower estimate of the degree to which they have broken with Stalinism than the majority of the YSL. But it is an indication of the fact that it is the majority and the present YSL leadership, and not the minority, who are in contact with the CP and its membership (particularly the Gates grouping) that it is they and not the "left wingers" who are aware of the actual events rocking the CP today. For conversations with Gates followers in NY and Los Angeles by our members, indicate that they are moving remarkably fast, and in fact, much faster and more basically than we expected at the time of the last plenum.

Behind this different evaluation of the Gates group lies Shane's particular approach on what they represent. And on the basis of this he develops an approach towards dealing with them which is distinctly different than that of the majority. Shane makes the seemingly reasonable statement that he was for stressing those "aspects of Stalinist politics that dealt with the country we, as well as Gates live in, the U.S." (In contrast to us who insisted upon stressing Russia, etc). It sounds, off hand, like Shane was a good all-American boy and we were sectarians always interested in raising those nasty foreign issues. But it should be made clear by Shane that what he is really saying is simply a reflection of his analysis of Russian society, and not just a different approach. For while Shane always criticizes the majority for not basing the basic analysis which underlies a particular position on theory, Shane also tries to clothe his cannonite politics in the guise of sweet reasonableness which anyone, no matter what his or her particular approach to stalinism is, can accept. (Similarly, while Shane attacks the PAC for "changing" their position without admitting it, I am still waiting for Shane to tell his comrades about the very basic nature of his change of politics, and I don't just mean that he "admit" to pro-SWPism, but that he tell us the nature of the political change which he has undergone.)

For those of us who hold a bureaucratic collectivist view of Russian society or the kind of state-capitalist approach characterized by analysis such as Tony Cliff, etc., this statement of Shane's is not simply false, it is utterly meaningless! The fallacy of Stalinist politics IN THE U.S. cannot be separated from its roots--the subservience and tie-up between the CP and the Stalinist bureaucracy. The pro-Democratic Party line of the CP of late is not inherent in its ideology--it is simply a reflection of the needs of the Russian bureaucracy TODAY. Foster can sound like a revolutionist and mouth the revolutionary slogans, call for a vanguard party, expose reformist illusions, etc., etc. In fact he can and has in the past done a good job of competing with some of the sloganeering which the "left wing" is unfortunately so often adept at. The trouble with Foster is not that today he is a reformist; that's not even partially what's wrong with him!

This kind of nonsense is akin to saying that the trouble with the Democratic Party is that it's reformist and not revolutionary, or that the trouble with the official apologist for the capitalist system is that he's for reforming not revolutionizing capitalism. The fact is that what's wrong with capitalism and therefore with its parties is that it's anti-socialist and pro-capitalist. And similarly the trouble with the Stalinist movement is that it is also anti-socialist and pro-Stalinist. The Stalinist movement itself does not "capitulate" to Stalinism, it represents it. Neither do the Democratic or Republican parties "capitulate" to capitalism--they represent instead its interests.

Thus when Gates breaks from Russia, begins to demand self-determination for Hungary, raises the question of democracy and self-determination, he is not simply asking a few interesting questions, but making a fundamental and irreversible break from the anti-socialist, pro-Stalinist basis of the CP. The CP has not in the past been a socialist movement, distorted or otherwise; its members were not engaged in a struggle to establish socialism or to further the interests of the workingclass. They are today, by breaking with Russia, able for the first time to take a step toward becoming socialists. Some may be won to revolutionary socialism. But the danger is not that they will become reformists, but that they not become socialists at all!

Shane's analysis of the Gates tendency is not simply "clearer and more comprehensive" as he states, it is rather entirely different. It stems not from the YCL's third camp politics or analysis, but from the SLP's pro-Soviet, degenerated workers state type of line.

STALINISM AND SOCIALISM AS SOBEQUAL ENEMIES

To third camp socialists Stalinism and social democracy are not the two big threats facing the world--the two major enemies with us as the "third force" rejecting each equally! Rather to a third camp socialist, the main enemies are capitalism and stalinism. This is the key to Shane (and Tim, and several others). For Shane's international position has no relation to what we call the third camp position. It consists of being for revolutionary socialism and against capitalism -- and when necessary being a critical supporter of distorted, degenerated or misled "socialism" against Capitalism. His anti-stalinism is not put on the same

level with his anti-capitalism. Rather, in the struggle against Capitalism the socialist, his view goes, has two competitors, both equally dangerous--the stalinist and the social democrat. Stalinism is not linked with capitalism, keep in mind, but with social democracy. This is the line which also runs through the analysis and polemics of the YSL and which follows from their approach to Stalinism. For example, in the latest International Socialist Review (SWP organ) they base the attack on unity with social democrats on this contention: "Social Democracy is not progressive in any sense whatsoever. It is, as much as Stalinism, a blight on the workers movement." Just incidentally, the logic here, as with Shane, is interesting in that while social democracy ends up being "not progressive in any sense whatsoever," Stalinism is frequently considered "progressive" and in fact in actual practice the SWP is far more willing to make concessions to the latter than the former! (For a more detailed analysis of the YSL's traditional approach to social democracy and stalinism members ought to reread our 4-pagers in which we deal with this question in discussing the meaning of stalinism and the role of stalinist youth groups.)

This is the crux of many of the arguments now being raised, and every minority member should ponder it. It lies at the root of Shane's politics and is a key to all his attacks on the majority.

The YSL also sees a relationship between stalinism and social-democratic politics. The former has, undoubtedly, benefitted by the mistakes, by the class-collaborationist tactics, etc. of the latter. But they are not symmetrical or similar phenomena. What is similar is not stalinism and social democracy but the social democrat and the stalinoid--the apologist, albeit critical, of stalinist society. The third camp socialist (see several of Draper's excellent articles on this subject in L.A.) notes a striking similarity in these two types, both seeking a socialist alternative but both remaining equivocal in their opposition to one or both of the major enemies--stalinism and capitalism. Both are unwilling to rely on the power and independence of the working class to create a better society, and both therefore fall back on class societies in the hope that they will evolve or transform themselves into socialism under the gentle prodding and manipulation of intelligent men of good will like themselves. Both types tend toward this similar dangerous ideology which becomes, in practice, class collaborationist, anti-democratic, etc.

We do not necessarily deal tactically with both in the same way. Since one lies between us and the working class (which doesn't see the need to even apologize as yet) and the other is essentially irrelevant to the American scene, except in the immediate tomorrow vis a vis the crumbling Stalinist movement. That is why, in the U.S. of today, we must be more sympathetic in our tone, our approach, etc., in our willingness to compromise on program with the social democrat than the "stalinoid"--while at the same time continuing to draw the lessons which their similarity should make apparent and pointing to the revolutionary alternative.

STALINISTS AS RIGHT WINGERS ala SHANE

None of this makes sense to Shane who views the Stalinists as a right wing tendency in the working class. To Shane therefore the only progressive step the Gates group can make is to become revolutionary socialists (or for that matter, Cannonites), i.e. to go from reformism (where he thinks they are now) to a correct program of revolutionary socialism. To us it is a step forward for them to break with the Stalinist ruling class at all and to begin for the first time in almost 30 years to look at politics from the standpoint of the working class.

Shane refers occasionally to the appeal which his line has to Stalinist youth in comparison to the wicked capitulationist Shachtman line. It is hard not to stifle a laugh because in actual fact nothing could be less true. Shane's entire politics repel the Stalinist world for both positive and negative reasons. In one sense it is a good sign that they are not attracted to the sectarian, unreal dogmatism of the SWP. On the other hand it is unfortunate that they cannot be influenced to join, in any sizeable numbers, any small ideological propaganda group which has no pretenses to mass influence. For the CPers, and exes included, remain, like most of the worlds people today, still unwilling to break with the idea of allying themselves with the powers that be.

ON BUILDING THE YSL AND INTO WHAT?

The left wing caucus says that it sincerely wants to build the YSL. And in their own way I have no doubt that they mean what they say. In the case of a few of their leaders the statement must, of course, be translated properly. For example, I assume that when Shane, who has adopted the politics of the SWP on all important questions, speaks of building the YSL he is not referring to the same kind of YSL which I am referring to and which I am a member of--a third camp socialist tendency. But Shane has a perfectly democratic right to try and change the YSL into an organization more nearly representing his views and those of the SWP, and to rebuild it on that basis. There are others within this caucus, however, who wish the YSL to remain a third camp tendency, and it is to them that it is especially important to convince about the direction, the dynamics of the type of politics which their "left wing bulletin" and their declaration of principle leads them too--a split with the politics upon which the YSL has up to now been built. That is why it is necessary to stress over and over again the Cannonite nature of Shane's political approach on all questions and why I hope that those who sympathize with his conclusions regarding unity will clearly differentiate themselves from the rest of his line of reasoning.

Until such a differentiation and until some of the other comrades deal in as complete and straight-forward a manner as Shane and Tim do with the bases of their anti-unity position, it is within the rights of the majority to characterize their tendency as one moving in the direction, however unfortunate, of the SWP and therefore a split. In the same way members of the minority are correct to point to the NAC majority statements and base their attack on the premises which these comrades put forward. As a

friendly critic of the NAC's position let me say that while I disagree on various tactics involved in our regroupment approach we are bound together by a number of essential and basic formulations. We all stand, for example, for building a third camp tendency. We all base ourselves on the YSL's traditional analysis of the meaning of third camp politics vis a vis our analysis of reformism, social democracy, stalinism, etc. We all are in agreement as to the important role which a labor party can play and as to the nature which such a party is likely to originally have. The minority, on the other hand, seems to contain within itself the most widely divergent and incompatible elements, of which the Cannonite element is the most articulate and the most forceful. All the major attacks on the politics of the NAC and of the NEC resolutions have come from and are Cannonite to the core.

We of the majority are all united in a desire to build the YSL as the youth organization of socialism. We feel that the present YSL can in the coming period live up to our original hopes for it. We never accepted the status of an independent youth organization with pleasure, but rather with regret. We therefore look forward to the possibility of becoming part of the youth section, or the youth section of an adult socialist party. We feel we will be able, due to our politics, education, training and organizational background, to play a leading role in the new youth section and will be able, to at the very least constitute a strong third camp, revolutionary socialist tendency within such a youth movement. Before such a unity, and in case such a unity cannot be accomplished we will continue to build our organizational tendency; we will continue to strengthen our forces and our politics, always keeping in mind however our perspective of unification and ready to take advantage of all opportunities to bring us closer organizationally to the working class and other alienated individuals and groups. Within the new SP we hope to help in creating, the task becomes just as important and far easier--to win adherents not only to socialism but to a good and sound socialist program--a militant third camp program. In order to play this role we must constantly clarify what is meant by third camp position, and I think it is the majority, and not the minority, who understand the full import of third camp politics.

It is my hope, as it is that of other YSLers, that the members of the minority caucus will study fully the positions put forth by their NEC representatives and will learn from them what third camp politics are not!

##

39 blank.

[BLANK
PAGE]

COMRADE HEGEL-WOHLFORTH

by Mike Harrington

In the second issue of the Left Wing Bulletin, comrade Tim endeavors to prove that it is not the "left" but the "right" which is schematic. And in doing so, he invokes that terrible world, MENSHEVISM, against comrade Harris.

But paradoxically, comrade Tim's article betrays in every line the very same "Schematism" and abstract approach which he thinks he is polemicizing against. He has given us one more proof that our "lefts" are rote revolutionaries, mouthing phrases without reference to any actual reality.

Comrade Tim even misunderstands in a schematic way.

At a NY class, comrade Harris had presented a detailed historical analysis of the social democracy from 1900 on. He had related this to the development of class forces in various situations. On the basis of an analysis of America today, a perspective, a theory, he came to the statement of a probability: that in our general analysis, the next step will probably be a moderate liberal reformist labor party.

To Tim this is a "grandiose and detailed map through which the working class must pass," it is MENSHEVISM! (LWB, p. 31)

Comrade Tim is incapable of seeing that this is a political estimation following from an analysis of the objective conditions of society. Once again, he takes up the whole question of stages with no real reference to American society. A remark here - the American working class is large and organized; a theory there - the permanent war economy will "exhaust" labor. But nothing more solid. No America here. And therefore, he filters out all of Harris' reference to historical, concrete facts - he mis-understand schematically.

But, as I mentioned, comrade Tim does give an occasional reference to fact. There is, for example, this "Marxist" gem:

"This presents an entirely different situation for the development of the American working class. The workers are more highly organized and when they move, they will undoubtedly move more swiftly and with much more force than was true in 1900 when the capitalist system still had some capacity for reform." (LWB, p. 32; my emphasis)

"Undoubtedly." That is magnificent.

Thus, comrades, as is well known, the German workingclass in 1914, because it was numerous and well organized, because German capitalism and come to a crisis in the form of imperialist war and brooked no talk of reform, because of these facts, the German workingclass moved, defeated the war, and brought peace to Europe. Long Live Kautsky-Wohlforth!

Thus, comrades, the Russian workingclass, because it was not numerous, because the peasantry supported the SR's, because the intelligensia followed the liberals, because of these facts, the Russian workingclass put forth the slogan of a bourgeois revolution and saved the world from Bolshevism. Long Live Kernsky-Wohlforth!

The problem is, comrades, that you can't base an analysis on one big fact

(the working class is well organized, capitalism shaky). You must base it on a careful analysis of the relations of forces which results from the historical situation (that is, at bottom, the basic principles of the theory of the permanent revolution).

But Comrade Tim has an answer. He doesn't "exclude a moderate revolutionary development" (why the hell not; include it in; makes Harrington, the reformist happy); but he "thinks" that the "development will be radical" (why not? sounds revolutionary!; no price for speculating on an idea!)

A Marxist does not include or exclude developments, or state probabilities, on the basis of aesthetics, taste, a penchant for red rather than pink; he presents, as the majority has, a concrete and specific analysis of the present, and a projection of probabilities in the immediate future.

Comrade Tim asks for "evidence." Here we go again, hoping that his schematic misunderstanding won't filter it out. There is a permanent war economy in America. In the near future, that probably precludes a total collapse of the system, though it does not exclude a chronic recession. On the international scene, the basic trend is toward a recession of the threat of imminent war, and the attempt, on the part of the two main power blocs, to establish an uneasy coexistence. In America, this has meant a certain let-up in the pace of the witch-hunt, but not in the destruction of its institutions. That is, in outline, the summary of an analysis which the independent socialist movement has developed over recent years. It is based on a hard look at reality. It is the statement of a probability, not a certitude.

But Comrade Wohlforth has an answer. The only trouble is, it is incomprehensible. He writes that the war economy will "exhaust the present and future resources of labor either absolutely or relatively..." Frankly, comrades, that is gibberish. It means nothing. It is an attempt to postulate a tendency toward crisis in the war economy on the basis of a series of words. Where, in Marxism, in bourgeois economics, in sense, common or uncommon, is there any empirical theory of the "exhaustion of labor" as a crisis factor? What is the "exhaustion of labor"?

The Vance articles - so meticulous, so factual, so statistical, - in the New International, these comrades Tim doesn't bother with.

"...either absolutely or relatively;" every word is a pearl!

But, comrade Tim has argued, the war economy is not a permanently expanding factor in the economy! Right! As we have said, a dozen times. Comrade Tim might read the American resolution passed at the last YSL Convention. It takes this up, it tries to deal with hard facts. But the "exhaustion of labor"?

I repeat, comrade Tim, one of our leading sectarians, has stood Marx on his head, i.e. the motive force of history is now a series of ideas (the fifth law of inertia by Einstein-Wohlforth: take any large, organized working class in a period of imperialist war, place it in motion, and watch it go!), to be chosen without reference of facts. But don't worry, Harrington! You may be right! But I prefer the revolutionary way, though covering my Marxist flank by "being open to suggestion" that maybe the other way will come.

One final point about comrade Tim's defense of "Marxism." It is a summary point, one which points out a classic symptom of his sectarianism.

This BOLSHEVIK (!), MARXIST (!) comrade, who cannot stand Harris' MENSHEVISM, continually speaks, talks and writes of the labor bureaucracy as if it were a homogeneous social phenomenon. Thus: (a) the SP-SDF is the "ideological" expression of the interest of the labor bureaucracy (Dave Beck, attention!). The labor bureaucracy will become social democratic when it needs to as a protection against the workers, etc.

Those who don't know this, we are told, "deny the whole history of the development of the social democrats as well as...deny Marxism."

To a Marxist, the American labor bureaucracy is not a uniform homogeneous social phenomenon. It contains racketeers (Beck-Hoffa), conservative craft unionists, somewhat conservative industrial unionists, lib-lab industrial and craft unionists. These are only the important distinctions. How this un-uniform, un-homogeneous group will act cannot be predicted on the basis of an abstraction "labor bureaucracy." We must look at the situation in which it will act. It is quite possible, for example, to conceive of a situation in which Reuther-Randolph would bloc in favor of a labor party against Beck (if he's still around) and MacDonald. It is possible that every militant worker, under certain circumstances, should stand behind...Reuther. But not for Tim. There is the LABOR BUREAUCRACY. Every Marxist knows how it acts. U right-wing, majority-ite, anti-Marxists don't.

The sectarians are devoid of an analysis of reality: they have slogans and emotions, little more, dressed in "Marxist" language.

##

43 blank

[BLANK
PAGE]

YSL was formed three years ago by the merger of two different socialist tendencies - the Marxian socialism of SYL and the left-socialism of YPSL. The fused organization contained, and does so to this day, both elements.

Although the YSL is a very small group, we are broad in that many people with differing theoretical points-of-view can be found in our ranks. Pacifists, Leninists, Luxemburgists, Martovites, Mensheviks (note Tim: even Mensheviks), Marxists, non-Marxists, all under one roof. And the reason for this melange is simple: the YSL has no position on these questions. The only criteria for membership is opposition to Stalinism and Capitalism, commitment to democratic, third-camp socialism.

The broadness, of course, does not mean vagueness on political questions. We have our positions on today's politics, our revolutionary third-camp politics; and in fact we analyze so much, so clearly, so detailed that sometimes we look like over-cerebralized caricatures of alienated intellectuals. Only, I repeat, the YSL does not have positions on certain historical or theoretical questions; for instance, being neither Marxist nor anti-Marxist.

There are a few good reasons for this aspect of the YSL. One is the historical - the fusion of two different socialist tendencies. Then the fact that the YSL is the only socialist youth organization in the U.S.; a fact which has meshed with our broadness, the one interacting with the other.

Most important are the objective circumstances that the YSL lives in. The period has been one of harshest reaction; witchhunt and cold-war, labor apathy and the disintegration of radicalism, war prosperity and the Garrison State; combining to reduce us to the point where we were lucky just to keep socialist ideas alive. Under such adverse conditions it was criminal to divorce socialist tendencies merely because they disagreed on historical and theoretical questions. So the YPSL and SYL merged.

Today, still in the midst of reaction, we can see the glimmerings of a break in the reactionary front. The Negro struggle, a unified labor movement, the Stalinist crisis, a sliding depression. One of the signs that conditions are entering a new state is the ferment in socialist groups all over the world; the two outstanding manifestations being the discussions between the Menni and Saragot groups in Italy and the talk of realignment in all socialist groups in the U.S.

The break in the reactionary front is slow; with all indications that it will proceed, but only gaining momentum slowly. With the Permanent War Economy bolstering the society from collapse, the working class only slowly and sluggishly moves on to a political consciousness. And we have met these conditions by being a broad organization trying to educate students and workers to the ideas of democratic, third camp

politics. We never had any pretensions to being more (say a Party), we were always a small educational league.

Now the leaders of the minority caucus seem to have other ideas on the nature of the YSL, or rather, more precisely, what they would like to turn the YSL into.

Let us first look at Robertson from Berkeley. A short time ago, Robertson resigned from the YSL, saying it was too rightwing, and presumably because it was hopeless in this respect. In the meantime he fooled around with various friendly "rivals" to the YSL and finally, upon hearing of the faction fight, one assumes, decided to rejoin, which is certainly his right--only it should be made clear that Robertson wants to change the YSL into something quite different than it was, something not so hopelessly right wing. It isn't just unity with the SP which is bothering this spokesman for the left wing caucus.

Then there are the wavering of Tim and Shane. (See especially the postscript to this article, the "Shell Game" by Harrington and myself). They have shifted from being for a "revolutionary marxist youth organization" to Shane's calling for the organization to be so broad that it is merely for socialism and against sin, with Third Camp-ism, the nature of Stalinism, and other such theoretical questions up for grabs. Tim is at least willing to maintain the YSL as a Third Camp organization, or at least so he says. (Although if we take seriously Tim's endorsement of a recent suggested resolution by some Newark comrades, this has begun to shift as far as he is concerned too -- now he apparently wants to invite fraternal relations between the YSL and the SP-SDF, SWP, ISL, SLP, and any other organizations calling themselves socialist or something of that sort!) In the process Tim even admitted that social democrats (including the SP-SDF) are socialists and who knows what next! (Does Shane still vehemently deny this last?) One starts wondering what they really stand for at this point with all this jumping around. Are they trying to mute differences in order to recruit one more border-line YSL'er to their caucus? Or are they just muddleheaded?

Shane and Tim, the two leading spokesmen for the minority, have Cannonite politics. That is, on every political question, they agree with the politics of the SWP as opposed to both the politics of the ISL or the politics of the YSL. Neither has, incidentally, told their socialist comrades to what degree they do and do not agree with the SWP. They both say they feel close to the SWP, etc., but would it not be common courtesy to tell us whether this means they have accepted some of the very basic theoretical positions of Cannonism? However, it appears that from the colonial revolution question, to the nature of Russia, and from the American scene to regroupment, they agree with the SWP's analysis. They continually deny being agents of the SWP, and I think that in the police sense they are being honest about it. But POLITICALLY, how else can they be viewed? One is reminded of the American CP and how they react when being charged with being agents of Moscow (this is only meant as a broad analogy and I hope the minority doesn't misconstrue it). They always maintain they are not agents, that the American CP arrives at its decisions independently from Moscow. I believe that in the main this is true. Still they were POLITICALLY AGENTS, because they always agreed on every question, changed their line, even reversed it completely, on

EVERY occasion that the Moscow party did. In relation to the SWP, Shane and to a lesser degree Tim, react in a similar fashion. And although it is true that a large percentage of the members of the minority caucus are not like Tim and Shane, the fact remains that they have allowed, still allow, Tim and Shane to be their political spokesmen and leaders. Now all of this relates directly to the nature and type of organization the YSL is.

First, Tim and Shanes' Marxism (I.E. Cannonism) includes the theory of the combined and uneven development of the American working class. On the basis of predicting a crisis in American society in the near future, they need a revolutionary vanguard party. Even though they say they are now for a broad youth organization (as does the SWP now), the logic of their politics drives them towards the vanguard party standing above and dominating the broad group. For a group of trained cadre is necessary to carry out the stupendous tasks involved in leading and directly the Revolution that such a rapid change in conditions would invoke. On the other hand the YSL has always been a loose, educational league, without ideological discipline, precisely because it did not conceive its task to be the building of a cadre (at least not the cadre that the SWP means), precisely because we have always implicitly accepted our task to be to prepare, in our small way, to be part of a socialist tendency in the Labor Party. It is basically for this and for immediately strengthening the socialist movement that the majority is for unity. Shane's conception of developments in the U.S. leads to control and domination by a VANGUARD PARTY, and he means the SWP. That is not the YSL. And if he has his way, everything in the YSL will be changed, from its politics to its organizational structure; only the empty shell, the three words, YSL, will remain.

Secondly, there is the disturbing article that Carleton wrote in the first issue of the Minority Bulletin. He says that the CENTRISTS in the YSL are providing a cover for reformism. Note, the centrists, not the majority. That implies (and it is made explicit in the article) that the majority of the YSL is ALREADY reformist. That means that third-campers, I.E. the majority of the YSL, are already reformist. If Carleton feels this way, what is he doing in a reformist organization? What is Carleton doing in the YSL, if its politics and vast majority of its members are already reformist?

Thirdly, there is the fact that ANOTHER socialist youth organization is being formed in the U.S., the American Youth for Socialism under the direct sponsorship of the SWP. It has all the virtues that Shane and Tim are looking for. Although it has no official program as yet, it is safe to say the AYS is a broad group, anti-reformist but will all "theoretical" questions frozen, with the correct line on every question, the Marxists' Marxist "front" organization, and devoid God-believers (but not necessarily excluded, and if they sneak in then they will be tolerated under the heavy hand of Tim and Jim.) Shane and Tim don't ever mention its name. I have asked Tim

a dozen times how he feels about the AYS, why he isn't there when he agrees with them on everything and not in the YSL where he disagrees on everything, and so forth. He still hasn't answered.

Fourthly, is the insistence by Shane and Tim that they will continue the YSL EVEN IF the majority of the YSL decides democratically to affiliate with a united socialist party. That is simple and open split talk. Include the almost hysterical accusations of the Minority (every one of their leaders) of "sellout, capitulation, reformism, agents of the State Dept., liquidationism, boot-licking, unity-fanaticism, adulterationism," and on and on, and we have vicious split talk. Tim's quoting snatches of NEC Plenum DISCUSSIONS in DISTORTED versions (unheard of in any organization in the world, any place, any time - or as Tim and Shane would say, only ethical when applied to RIVAL organizations) and the antics of Robertson in Berkeley bring up whether they are past the stage of split and only regard the YSL TODAY as a temporary home, to raid and wreck.

Now I know that the Minority leaders will loudly denounce my words and insist that all they want is to maintain the YSL as the independent, revolutionary third-camp socialist organization it has always been. They will insist that all they want to do is prevent us from being soiled by the Social Democratic Reformists. (Incidentally a YPSL brochure just released calls itself "revolutionary socialist", also stating it is for the third camp. And I for one would fight to keep the politics of the YSL third-camp after affiliation to the "SP-SDF-ISL".) However let it be clear that the minority leaders deeds, their language, their politics have been that of a hostile and rival formation. And since they have repeatedly called for an open and honest discussion, I merely ask them how they feel about the American Youth for Socialism and how that relates to maintaining the YSL as a THIRD-CAMP organization? When they answer this question we can proceed to discuss the unity question on a sane and solid basis.

POSTSCRIPT

Mike Harrington & Mel Becker

THAT OLD SHELL GAME

or

"People with Glass Volumes of JAPITAL Should Not Throw Stones"

THE FIRST SHELL. The Shane-Tim proposal at the Jan. Plenum, 1½ months ago.

unity "around the BASIC PRINCIPLES of revolutionary socialism: class struggle, democracy, internationalism." And for maintaining the YSL as a "revolutionary MARXIST youth organization." (emphasis added)

See it? A PRINCIPLED, revolutionary unity. This is then spelled out: clear defense of democracy; clear break with the Stalinist BUREAUCRACY (not

social system); independent working class action; opposition to U.S. imperialism; support to the Colonial Revolution (only Shane's Jannonite position on what the colonial revolution is, to be settled at leisure; not a question of "basic principles of revolutionary socialism". Clearly.

And since when was the YSL "Marxist"? And clearly Shane's Marxism is third-campism...

THE SECOND SHELL. Left-Wing Bulletin #1. February.

Still for a revolutionary, democratic socialist organization, but on a MINIMUM PROGRAM. The same minimum program as above? No. Now, we only have to be for "independent political action of the working class and oppressed peoples here and everywhere throughout the world, against both Stalinist and capitalist oppressors." (p 3)

See it? A revolutionary organization, yes, but with a MINIMUM program. Not quite so principled any more.

THE THIRD SHELL. Left Wing Bulletin #2 and The End of The Revolutionary Organization. Beginning of March.

Now comrade Shane reaffirms the minimum program from #1, but not that business about a revolutionary organization. Reaffirmation is on p 42, but without any reference to a revolutionary organization.

But that was an oversight, wasn't it?

No, not quite. The regroupment as a whole will now put out a SOCIALIST program; the revolutionaries will be a TENDENCY within the new party. (p 45).

And of course all Marxism was dropped from sight before anything began. In fact it was just a mistake. Clear!

THE FOURTH SPELL. The Game is Up. Mid-March.

At the NAJ of March 19, comrade Wohlforth votes the general line of a resolution characterizing the SP-SDF as "democratic socialist," and opposed to capitalism and Stalinism. When asked about this, he admits that the SP-SDF is "democratic socialist" by a hair; but democratic socialist nevertheless. (Meanwhile, back at the ranch, comrade Shane had just published an article in the Left Wing Bulletin characterizing the "politics of both Stalinism and Social Democracy as ANTI-SOCIALIST.

You know, I don't think there ever was a pea under one of those shells....

See it? In Jan., we are for a principled, revolutionary regroupment; in Feb., we are for a revolutionary organization, but with a real MINIMUM program; in early March, we are for being a revolutionary TENDENCY within a socialist organization. Late March, the social-democratic reformists ARE socialists. By July, who knows?. they may be for unity with ADA.

Shane and Tim are political agents of Cannonism. And, of course, the SWP has had an interesting and...similar evolution. In their first statement (December in the ISR), they were for excluding the ISL from regroupment because the Russian question is decisive. That changed. The Militant statement calmed down. And by now, one of their leading members in N.Y. is talking of

entering the SP-SDF AFTER us.

And in the old story:

the guy to the girl. "Sleep with me for a million dollars," said

"Sure," she said.

"How about for ten?"

"What do you think I am," she said.

And he, "we've already settled that, we're only haggling over the price."

Yes, comrades, Shane and Tim are now haggling over the price. All that junk about principled revolutionary regroupment (first shell): forget it; and the "revolutionary democratic socialist organization (second shell): forget it; the Third Camp just got itself declared a theoretical question by Shane, and now Tim magnanimously admits the Sp'ers are socialists, so maybe we better forget all the shells and just haggle price. But the game is over.

The Real Nature of the Real Majority on the
Electoral Action Referendum,

by Joan Morris

The Children's Crusade has decided to claim a victory in the "recent" electoral action question. The minority or "left-wing" which choose to be led by Comrades Shane and Tim interpret their victory to mean repudiation of the NEC Majority's leadership in the YSL. This preposterous assertion made in the following quote by Comrade Tim is what I propose to disprove in this article.

"Furthermore, the recently concluded membership referendum gives us a clue to the degree to which the NEC majority has the 'pulse' of the membership. Comrades, remember that the minority on the NEC is the real majority on the important electoral issue.

"All this means that we have a leadership which - after a thorough discussion and two flat issues of the YSR - the membership has slapped in the face politically and warned to think twice before again acting as if it were the YSL."

("WHO IS THE MAJORITY" Tim Pohlforth,
YSR, vol. 3, no. 4)

Although I would like to discuss many of the charges about the way the NEC majority conducted its program on the electoral issue, I choose to primarily dispute Comrade Tim's statement quoted above because of brevity of space.

The first point that must be made is to contradict the fact that the electoral action question could even be considered an "important issue" as Comrade Tim states. The question which resulted in what I considered an undemocratic referendum was a tenth rate issue of very little political import in this year 1957. It was raised first as a division in the YSL by Tim and Shane at the September plenum who demagogically called for a membership referendum weeks after the plenum on the basis of their stand for a General Socialist Protest Vote. Their political analysis of why a general protest vote position was correct was hardly that of mine, Comrade Owen's, Comrade Arlon's or any number of other comrades who became the majority on the electoral question. Most of us did not consider it a basic political issue, only a peripheral and tactical one at the time.

Some of us felt that the way in which the majority of the NEC raised the question of our electoral stand was incorrect - in other words Unity with the CP-SDF should not be the overriding factor in making a decision against calling for a general socialist vote (any of the reasons for this were specified in both Comrade Owen and Arlon's articles in YSR). Those of us who felt this way made it very clear how minor we considered the electoral action issue in the face of the real political question of the day - unity with the CP-SDF to which most of us fully subscribe.

Now that we have disposed of its importance, Tim's fantastic claim that the "minority on the NEC is the real majority on the important electoral issue" is nothing but pure distortion. The minority on the NEC is Tim and Shane - nobody else. These two comrades in their discussions on the electoral question displayed little political relation to that of the majority of the YSL membership. And on other question the majority of the NEC has overwhelmingly defeated them (Stalinism, unity, etc.) As to the electoral referendum itself - the bulk of those voting for the resulting majority position thoroughly disputed Tim and Shane's politics on this issue. Comrade Owen and Arlon repudiated their SWP sectarian politics and have both been strong advocates of unity. So are the majority of those in New York, Los Angeles and Chicago who formed the majority on this issue. All the Pittsburgh comrades voted by specific statement against the Tim-Shane motivation and implementation. Many of the majorityites on the electoral issue actually stated (in a manner similar to the Pittsburgh group) in their referendum ballots their basic political support of the NAC and NEC majority and their confidence in the YSL leadership.

Let us take a good look at the results of the referendum. The official count was 37-34 for a General Socialist Protest Vote and against the NAC and NAC majority's position for a vote for the SP only. Of that 37, 15 comrades either repudiated Tim and Shane's politics on their ballots and/or politically supported the NAC majority. The so-called "left wing" constituted about ten of the votes at the time of the referendum (this is more than fair estimate, since their first bulletin with the faction members designated at 13 did not come out until after the referendum.) Many of the comrades who voted for the General Socialist Protest Vote and who did not qualify their ballots did not in any way subscribe to the attitude that they were repudiating the leadership of the YSL in any significant way at all. Those comrades in LA and New York are specific cases. Even if you could assume that all the unqualified majority votes subscribed to non-confidence in the present leadership of the YSL, it would leave the "majority," coined by Comrade Tim, at 22 to 49 who do have confidence in the NAC!

Tim tries to be squeamishly fair by pointing out that "...while the majority (on the electoral issue I presume...) of the membership may not, at present, conceive of unity the way we do; on the other hand, from all appearances, they do not conceive of unity in the terms of Martin and Harrington, either." While there are members of the majority who do not see eye to eye on Comrade Martin's approach on Unity, the overwhelming bulk of them as represented by the NAC, which Tim chooses to ignore on the basis it does not agree with him, are for Unity, and with a capital "U." And for unity with the SP-SDF. But Comrade Tim, I challenge you to find political agreement with your so-called "majority" on the issue of confidence in the present leadership of the YSL. You cannot and will not find any majority - whether it be the electoral issue or on other issues of more relevance or irrelevance who will show basic political distrust in the YSL leadership.

That is because your politics and that of Shane's are not basically that of the YSL on a number of issues, such as our attitude towards Stalinism, American perspectives, and meaningful third camp politics (discussed in other articles in this issue). The majority

of the majority on the electoral issue has very little in common with most of your basic views and does not have confidence in the basic politics of the NEC. The NEC has, and I have confidence that the Convention will again, discredit once and for all your pretensions to represent the majority viewpoint.

The reason why I mentioned in the beginning of my article the fact that the referendum was called demagogically and was undemocratic in nature is best proven by the assertions of Comrade Tim as discussed here. When the referendum was first submitted - there were only three choices before the membership: for a General Socialist Protest Vote, for a CP vote and abstention. We who constituted the final majority were forced to either abstain or vote for a General Socialist Protest Vote. The latter position had originally been raised by Tim and Shane vis a vis their political analysis - and could be interpreted as support of this analysis without qualification or with it, as Tim has so shamefully done. Tim and Shane were well aware of this problem and raised this question precisely as a test of confidence. Many of us wanted to put a separate position on the ballot which would specifically support the basic political line of the majority's, but change the tactical approach to that of a General Socialist Protest Vote. We could not do this because it was a referendum already called by Comrades Tim and Shane in the manner presented to the membership. In a referendum any new position are impossible, because there is no opportunity for face to face discussion (except in one's unit) on a national scale. It was basically undemocratic because of this and prevented the real majority on the electoral issue the possibility of coming forth with an independent point of view.

However, Comrades Owen and Arlon and many others in words of mouth and correspondence made it abundantly clear as to where their political confidence lies--with the NEC majority or the NEC minority. As a majorityite on the electoral action issue, I stand with the NEC majority on the basic politics of the YoL, and on the basic question which now divides the organization.

##

53 blank

[BLANK
PAGE]

"THE LEFT-WING BULLETIN" AND THE POLITICS OF THE YSL MINORITY

By Bogdan Denitch

To date I have written nothing on the SP unity question. The reason is that I feel that much of the discussion is useless and serves no function. Only when comrade Martin actually went to the point of writing a long document on this question - including a host of inaccurate characterizations of the SP - which seemed calculated to give ammunition to the developing Cannonite tendency in our organization did I offer an amendment to the majority resolution for the last plenum. As a matter of record I abstained on the final resolution. As a matter of record I have in the past had a number of disagreements on a number of political questions with Comrade Martin and the comrades agreeing with him. In general, in whatever sense the term has a meaning in the politics of the YSL, on the question, liberalism, war and attitude toward our own imperialists, I have been known to hold a position to the "left" of the NAC majority. It is from that vantage point that I now feel it essential to analyse some aspects of the policies of the new so-called "left-wing."

Let me say first that I am for unity with the SP-SDF. I am not for setting political conditions on that unity either, demanding only that we be allowed in as a tendency with the full rights the SP members enjoy under their Constitution. I am for functioning as a third camp socialist in that united SP. Further than that is unnecessary to go right now since no concrete unity proposals exist. To bind the hands of our committees in negotiating and working for a unity would make such a unity, difficult enough to achieve under any circumstances, impossible to achieve. This, of course, means, I take it, that a Convention will have a chance to ratify any proposed merger or entry before it occurs, if the membership so wishes. To focus an excessive amount of time to a problematic unity means to detract from our work right now for an indefinite amount of time.

In future articles I will attempt to deal with another problem: that is the politics of the majority. But it is fair to at least say this: It is true that in a revolutionary situation, the political defeat of social democracy and victory of revolutionary socialism is a pre-requisite to worker's power. We do not live in a revolutionary situation. The question is not worker's power. We live in a period where the adoption by any significant section of the workingclass of even the limited program of the SP-SDF is progressive and deserves our support. We live in a period where the move of any section of the anti-workingclass stalinist movement towards the conservative politics, but the conservative workingclass politics of the social democracy, deserves our support. This by no means is the same thing as saying that we do not continue to attempt to win workers and youth to our program, our revolutionary socialist program. But we are interested in more than the immediate growth of our tendency. To be a "political" means to attempt to move people in your direction - not necessarily all the way at the beginning, but at least in your direction. This period permits the beginning of real political work for our tendency again.

There can be two reasons for attempting to set conditions on unity, to spell them out in advance at an NEC meeting. One is if you oppose the unity, to set impossible conditions while posing as pro-unity; the other is, if you believe that the YSL and ISL leadership is stupid (and thus cannot be relied on to deal with such a question) or has already sold out to reformism and cannot be trusted.

If one believes that the second is the case, i.e. that the "Martinites and centrists" have sold out, or are about to sell out to social democracy, then discussion of SP unity is a farce. If the minority - all good and solid

revolutionary socialists-- believe, as they say they do (and I believe them) -- that the above is true, they must begin preparing for a split. The very term "centrist" if we are not playing with words means that the majority is in reality social democratic and the centrists are covering up their retreat with left wing camouflage.

What a split? Why raise that--the left wing isn't advocating it yet, is it?

If, "...only the political victory of revolutionary socialism over social-democracy can establish the necessary pre-conditions for successful proletarian revolution" (Shane: Resolution on Unity) and the leadership of the YSL is already social democratic or well down that road, two things should follow: One, that a victory over the Martinites is a pre-condition for social revolution (a modest one to be sure, but every little step counts), and two that the Martinities have to be out of any socialist regroupment the minority would support since they favor a revolutionary socialist regroupment.

What does the minority mean by revolutionary socialist regroupment?

SP-SDFers are clearly beyond the pale. ISLers and the majority of the YSL are no longer revolutionary socialist organizations for a host of reasons, according to the minority. The Fosterites are hard bitten stalinists, the Gatesites are moving towards reformism and state department socialism. That leaves only the SWP and its new youth group, the American Youth for Socialism. That is the only group the minority has to date refused to criticize and has only mentioned in order to emphasize what it means by revolutionary socialists. That can only mean that stripped of the sugar coating what is being proposed is "unity" between the SWP and our minority plus whatever else can be picked up. In other words, this isn't unity at all, but the same old legitimate raiding and picking up pieces that has gone on in the socialist movement for years.

The majority in New York has done its best to try to get a specific answer to the question I am raising -- i.e. the specific unity proposals of the minority. The answer is evasive and changeable. The closest we came to date was at a debate before the Columbia University fraction -- at which time Tim tried to answer but his answer was either a dishonest lie, or evidence of political illiteracy. Tim stated that he was for unity with...elements from the LYL, elements from the SP left-wing and...elements from the SWP. Now it makes sense, if you are for a revolutionary socialist regroupment, to say that you want only elements (presumably those won over to your idea of revolutionary socialism) of the LYL or SP, but why only elements from the SWP? If the SWP is a revolutionary socialist organization, who does Tim propose to leave out? Or is he advocating trying to split the SWP? If so, on what lines?

If you add the fact that Shane has recently resigned from the ISL on the grounds that he is closer to the SWP (and writes rather regularly now for their press) to the fact that the minority regroupment proposals are a youth version of the SWP proposals, then it is clear that Tim was trying to hide the real proposal that he is for. That is, he was attempting to disguise his real proposals in the interest of getting the broadest possible support for a proposal he is not in favor of! This is generally called opportunism.

Is this "guilt by association"? No, for the simple reason that Tim has at no time, though invited to do so, differentiated himself from Shane; and the resolutions of the minority, the resolutions around which it organized are those of Tim and Shane. To date Tim and Shane remain its political spokesmen--and since a minority caucus is based on politics that makes them the spokesmen.

If one accepts the YSL as our revolutionary tendency together with the fraternally affiliated ISL, then the question of unity is one we can settle among ourselves, because irrespective of differences between, say myself and comrades Martin and Sonny on this question, it is a question that can be settled without a split--it is among third camp revolutionary socialists. This is because I view the differences as honest differences among revolutionary socialists; because I do not orient to another tendency as an alternative to the proposals of the majority; because, in short, the differences are such that either side can submit if in a minority.

This is clearly not the case with the leaders of the "Left Wing", which makes it clear that if their politics are at all consistent they cannot submit to the majority. The politics of the minority, along with their equivocal attitude towards the youth group the SWP is trying to set up as a rival to the YSL, makes it impossible to take seriously their claim that they are trying to "save the YSL." Precisely because their politics are similar to those of the SWP, the minority is obligated, if only for honesty's sake, to take a political attitude towards the SWP and AYS, as well as to the obvious attempt of the SWP to intervene in our dispute (see Arne Swaback's open boast in Los Angeles about the "tutelege" the SWP has offered). But the spokesmen of the minority caucus have not done any of these things, as of this date.

The whole appeal to "save the YSL" sounds strange, considering the source.

In New York: The most active minority members disagree with Tim and Shane on a host of questions--so many and so basic are they in fact that one of the most active of these no longer feels he can fruitfully function within the caucus.

In Yellow Springs: Among the contributions of the minority, apart from selling the well-known YSL organ the Militant, has been to arrange for two meetings for Myra T. Weiss of the SWP. This was in case friend Weiss missed a few contacts the first time around, to make sure that she had a second chance.

In Chicago: the leading comrade of the minority, by his own boast, is Scott. To older comrades this should suffice, for newer ones suffice it to say that constructive efforts to build the YSL are not his best known qualities, in my opinion. The Chicago minority, it appears, has also been active of late, suggesting SWP speakers for the YSL. Fair enough....

In Berkeley: the building of the YSL here took strange, not to say devious roads. The leading comrade of the minority has been out of the YSL for some time attempting to build a "rival" organization on the grounds that the YSL was beyond redemption. After the faction fight started he all of a sudden discovered that bye gones are bye gones and with a group of friends has decided to save the (doomed beyond redemption) YSL out of an obviously unsectarian comradely desire to build for socialism in general and not for his "leninist league" or whatever it is called, in particular.

This flurry of activity, while putting a brake on the real growth of the YSL in places like New York, has not shown much evidence of building it. It is true that in NY our meetings and socials are now a little better attended since the comrades of the SWP have also decided to lend a helping hand to "save the YSL." (Why this sudden concern to save a third camp socialist tendency?) True, newer contacts, uninterested in eternal debate over unity are decamping, but their presence in the organization, since they are probably unreliable petty-bourgeois elements anyhow, is not needed to "build the YSL."

THE POLITICS AND PROGRAM OF THE MINORITY

Once we get past the statement that the minority is opposed to uniting with the SP-SDF it is hard to find what else unites them (in fact, even this one thing isn't apparently necessary). A whole host of issues divides them: the evaluation of the Chinese "revolution," the nature of the Russian state, attitudes toward the Korean War and the Viet Min. Not minor questions at all, but as a matter of fact the questions dividing the independent socialist third camp tendency from the SWP. On all of the above question, including even incidentally the role of the two tendencies in the trade unions, the leading spokesmen for the minority on the NEC have the line of the SWP. Their program for socialist regroupment, as I have tried to show, is the SWP's---including the dots over the i's! The reason to stress this is not malice, after all the YSL Constitution permits SWP membership. But it is in the interest of clarity I object to an SWP-oriented tendency that attempts to disguise that perfectly honorable fact in order to snare a few unwary supporters.

If the analysis that the minority has about the present drift of the YSL to the right is correct, and if the only kind of regroupment that would be supportable is their type, then they have no further reason to stay in the YSL unless (a) they can pick up a majority or (b) they expect to win over a few more people before leaving. There is no logic in staying in a non-revolutionary sect (nonrevolutionary by their definition) if you have a revolutionary sect to join and see no perspective other than the continuation of sects. Given this, their perspective in the YSL is logically now limited. Unless they are victorious at the July convention (!) all that is before them is to leave with as much as possible, leaving behind as little as possible. That I predict will be the course this group will take to "save the YSL." I happen to believe that this is the course they should take, since I favor socialist regroupment. As a prelude to it I am for people joining whatever organization they are closest to.

In their resolution on the "Recent Political Course of the YSL" Shane and Tim wind up calling for "...struggle to maintain the YSL as a revolutionary Marxist organization." This makes the situation a little clearer and perhaps now we can stop further useless discussion. You see, comrades, the YSL has never been a revolutionary Marxist youth organization. The unity between the SYL and YPSL could not have occurred if that had been the aim. The YSL is open to Marxists, non-Marxists, pacifists and non-pacifists. (Pacifists as a matter of fact have special status in the YSL Constitution which specifically excludes them and other war objectors from dues if they are serving sentence for their convictions). The YSL originally offered the pacifist Peacemakers the same relationship that it has with the ISL, i.e. exchange of fraternal representatives, etc. The point is clear - the YSL was built as a broad inclusive socialist youth organization for third camp politics. Shane and Tim if they mean what they say are calling for building something else, maybe a better organization, but not the YSL they profess to want to save.

There is one question that I would like to ask of the minority however. Will they unite with the SWP or dissolve into it? Will they make conditions on it and negotiate as two equal parties? Will they make political and organizational demands on it? Or is the SWP acceptable as it now stands? -- If they answer that question - not publicly, after all they are in a faction fight in this organization -- in their own minds, then perhaps they will draw the logical conclusion I have tried to draw for them sooner. The formulation "unity of revolutionary socialists," if taken seriously, and given the definition of the minority of the political tendencies existing today, can only lead to the conclusion I have tried to draw. I wish them godspeed, or some rethinking and reevaluation before it's too late.

by Shane Mage

The previous issue of the YSR (Vol 3, No. 4) contained three articles which attempted to defend the position of the NEC majority on entry into the SP-SDF, and to refute the political positions of the Left Wing. Because these three articles are written from at least nominally different points of view, and because they make somewhat different political points, I will answer them in succession despite their many common features - notably an almost complete misunderstanding (or misrepresentation) of the YSL Left Wing's stand on socialist regroupment.

I. Harrington - Fantasy as Polemic

Comrade Harrington begins his attack on the Left Wing with a remarkable two sentence paragraph in which he manages to accuse of (a) sectarianism (explicitly); (b) disloyalty, and (c) preparing to split and join the SWP (these last two charges by barely concealed innuendo.) Other Left Wing Caucus members have taken Mike up on the accusations of disloyalty and split in justifiably vigorous fashion, and I have nothing to add to what has already been said. However, the charge of sectarianism requires a certain amount of discussion.

On the surface, this seems to be an argument over words. Mike defines sectarianism as "the rote repetition of 'revolutionary' and 'Marxistical' phrases, and the attempt to impose them upon reality." I, on the other hand, use Trotsky's definition of the basic nature of sectarianism as "...a refusal to struggle for partial and transitional demands, i.e., for the elementary interests and needs of the working masses as they are today. Preparing for the revolution means to the sectarians convincing themselves of the superiority of socialism."

But to look at this as a question of semantics is to put things backwards. Mike chose this particular definition not because he considers it the best one, or even a particularly useful one, but in order to charge the Left Wing both with "sectarianism" and "rote repetition" etc.

As proof of this, consider the NEC majority resolution on Regroupment which speaks of the YSL (and all other American Socialist groups) as a "sect". If Mike wishes to say that the present YSL leadership is characterized by "the rote repetition of 'revolutionary' and 'Marxistical' phrases and the attempt to impose them upon reality", I will be the last to say he is wrong - but does he really mean this?

Of course, the political essence of the charge of "sectarianism" as made by Mike is meaningful, but not in terms of itself, only in terms of the overall political positions counterposed. Its truth or falsity is decided by the truth or falsity of Harrington's political arguments against the Left Wing, and anyone impressed by talk of "sectarianism" should keep this firmly in mind.

* As indicated in paragraph 1, this is the first of three sections of a single article dealing with material from the previous issue of YSR. Sections II and III will be presented in a subsequent issue.

But in seeking to discuss Harrington's political criticisms of our position we come up against an unfortunate fact - that Mike is not arguing against the Left-Wing position but against a phantasmagoria of his own which he attempts to pass off to the trusting reader as the Left Wing position.

Thus I had the unusual experience of learning from Harrington that I refuse to "raise the demand for a labor party" and propose instead "to wait around in an organization with revolutionary purity". Now, I don't think I need to prove to the YSL membership that I am for raising the demand for a labor party, that I do not insist on "revolutionary purity" in order to belong to an organization. The question is, how could Harrington so calmly and coldly present to the YSL membership statements which he ought to know are the exact opposite of the truth?

This question is an important one, because Harrington's presentation of a stand diametrically opposed to the one I actually take as my position on the labor party, is not a unique case. As those members of the YSL who read the discussion on the electoral action resolution will recall, Harrington did exactly the same thing there, that "Comrade Shane disagrees with our basic position, that the independent socialists should now constitute themselves in general, ...the left wing of the...mass workingclass parties of social democracy."

In my article (Vol 3, No 2) in YSR I exposed this falsification. Did Harrington offer to the members of the YSL a single word of apology, of explanation, or even of defense for his indefensible statement? He did not -- instead, he repeated the exact same procedure!

- COMBINED AND UNEVEN CONFUSIONISM -

Similar falsifications, some as blatant, others less so, abound in Harrington's article. In fact, there is virtually nothing else there.

Thus, Harrington states as one of his major criticisms of our viewpoint that "The comrades of the 'Left Wing Bulletin' have offered us no analysis of American conditions and our relation to them. Instead, they put forth as their fundamental conception a schematic, inaccurate and dogmatic version of the law of combined and uneven development. From this general principle, they deduce historical development and tactics." (NB. Despite Harrington's constant use of the plural, this passage is evidently directed exclusively at my article, "Lessons of the Recent NEC Meeting". On this, see the "Open Letter to Harrington" by Comrades Arden, Collins, and Worth.)

I will return to the matter of my supposedly having "no analysis of American conditions" later. I prefer to start with Harrington's effusions on "combined and uneven development".

Harrington characterizes my formulation of this law as "schematic, inaccurate, and dogmatic", but offers no evidence whatever for this charge against my summary and abstract formula, which I posed on a purely methodological level. Harrington's adjectives are merely insult in place of argument, and can be ignored. What Mike attempts to argue against is what he conceives as the application I make of the law to American politics. And here he once again takes leave of reality.

According to Mike, I offer my formulation of combined and uneven development as a "fundamental conception" from which I "deduce historical development and tactics". But what did I actually write. "Comrade Martin's prognosis for the development of American socialism is thus non-Marxist in method." I discussed this law not as a "fundamental conception" sufficient to explain the entire future of American politics, but as a refutation of comrade Martin's schema of a gradual development by stages of the American working class.

Does Harrington know the difference between ~~the~~ a fundamental argument and a rebuttal argument? I discussed combined and uneven development in only one paragraph of my article, in order to show that it is impermissible for a Marxist to assume the smooth, gradual, orderly development of the American working class from stage to stage described by Comrade Martin at the Flexum. Harrington's polemical procedure is to convert this into a "fundamental conception" (in the process, distorting it beyond recognition), then to draw conclusions from it which he attributes to me and to argue against these conclusions. In less polite terms, this is known as a "Straw Man" technique.

Let us look now at this method in operation. Harrington states that "to Comrade Shane in his article on the recent NEC meeting, the law of combined and uneven development means that the American workingclass will 'skip' the stage of social-democracy, or of the labor party, and go from its present trade-union consciousness to a revolutionary consciousness with hardly a stop. This of course, mis-states the law of combined and uneven development..." If it does not also "mis-state" what I have said that is only because it doesn't have even that tenuous a relation to my article.

At no point did I say that the American workers will skip over this, that or the other stage. I merely stated that social development is marked by "discontinuity of form". The crisis point at which a qualitative transformation of this sort takes place will be determined by history, in America as in every other country, and I have no desire to chart out this process years in advance--unlike the exponents of the American "theory of stages."

Harrington's imagination leads him into contradictions. On page 3, par. 3, he writes: "Shane's politics are based upon a conception of the American workingclass 'skipping' a state...", and on page 4, par. 1, he adds, "there will be a leap forward: the workers will go from capitalist to revolutionary politics." But on par 1 (page 3) he wrote that according to me the American workingclass will "go from its present trade-union consciousness to a revolutionary consciousness with hardly a stop." Now "hardly a stop" is not at all the same as "'skipping' a stage"--i.e., no stop at all!

SOCIALISM IN GENERAL

The differences that Harrington finds between himself and us on the question of 'stages' are imaginary ones, invented by him to attack the Left Wing. But let no one think that we have no real and important differences on this. Those political differences are most clearly concretized on the issue of the nature of the left-wing of a labor party, and the role of socialists in that left-wing. Harrington did not have to invent differences - I stated the essential issues in dispute very clearly in my article on the NEC meeting. Since none of the comrades who criticized my article seems to have read this section I will reproduce it here:

"The majority resolution on socialist regroupment also is marked by abandonment of socialist political methodology when it states that the

YSL wants to create a left wing in a future labor party which 'will aim at winning the Labor party to socialism in a broad, general, sense.' Socialist politics, as opposed to sectarian politics, does not seek to establish socialism by winning people to a set of abstract ideas, whether specific or general; on the contrary, it seeks at every stage to concretize its ultimate program in such a way as to effectively promote and stimulate the class struggle of the workers. The political program of revolutionary socialism exists basically as a Marxist world-view, but in the actual arena of class struggle it, like the program of any other tendency, manifests itself as a series of stands on concrete issues. The left wing of a labor party, whether that party called itself socialist or not, could never be based on 'socialism in a general sense' any more than it could be based on, say 'Atheism in a general sense.' Precisely because irreconcilable political conflicts on the most important issues of our time exist among those who call themselves 'socialists', any genuinely 'broad' socialist party would break wide open the moment it had to answer a real political question, such as, say, the attitude to take toward a rank and file opposition movement in a union headed by a social-democratic bureaucrat who happens to sit on its executive committee. The "permanent and fruitful co-existence of the merged forces" envisaged in the majority resolution is thus conceivable, given the political character of the SP-SDF leadership, only on one of two conditions - either the new party refuses to take a position on any significant political issue, and thereby reduce itself to the status of a sect as isolated from American political life as the SLP, or else one of the tendencies agrees to accept the position of the other on all points."

This is the real meaning of the dispute over 'stages'. The right wing believe that the basis of the American socialist movement both today and tomorrow when a labor party is formed is 'socialism in a general sense'. They believe that this 'general sense' includes the anti-socialist politics of the SP-SDF, but not socialist politics even as they understand them. We believe that Socialist politics are the foundation for the growth of the Socialist movement, because only socialist politics can "effectively promote and stimulate the class struggle of the workers."

In Harrington's fantasy things are different. "The sectarians (his term for the left wing) are without perspective - except that of building a sectarian movement". "The independent socialists (i.e., the YSL right wing) offer a perspective to turn the American socialist movement, in a serious fashion, toward the American workingclass." But it is the left wing which speaks of class struggle, which seeks to orient politically toward the working class, which can speak for a labor party because it refuses to accept a program calling for support of capitalist candidates in elections. The right wing has no orientation to the real needs and struggles of the working class. Socialist politics, to them, are simple phrases which can be abandoned in practice while being kept in a closet to be used in speeches against the left-wing and on holidays. Their orientation is formally sectarian because they base themselves only on "socialism in a general sense", but actually opportunist and capitulatory to social democracy because they declare their willingness to accept the actual, anti-socialist politics of the SP-SDF and promise in advance not to win the united party to their own supposed political program. We have a perspective to the working class. Their perspective is to the labor bureaucracy.

Let us now return to Harrington's charge, quoted earlier, that "The comrades of the 'Left-Wing' Bulletin have offered us no analysis of American conditions and our relation to them." Is this another falsification? The resolution on Socialist Regroupment introduced by the left wing at the NEC plenum stated the following: "...until economic and social changes sufficient to bring about the general radicalization of the American working class have occurred, no organizational move can lead to establishment of a mass party of socialism in the U.S., nor will American socialists be able to break out of their isolated propaganda-group existence.

"Nevertheless, within the limits of the present social and economic conditions of the U.S., the perennial disunity and fragmentation of the Left exerts a very harmful influence."

and

"The great, fundamental change in the objective conditions of today is the disintegration of Stalinism... In America it is the crisis of Stalinism. that provides the context for socialist regroupment."

A page later Harrington added specifically "you will look in vain for an analysis of American conditions in Comrade Shane's article." If Harrington had taken the trouble to look into my article himself, he might have found the following statement: "the socialist movement has not been withering this past decade because of its own mistakes, but because the working-class passivity produced by the permanent war economy combined with the boom phase of the normal prosperity-depression cycle has dried up the natural arena for socialist political activity."

Now Harrington may agree or disagree with the above analysis (which are, of course, sketchy and incomplete) - but he must admit that they do represent an analysis of American conditions, subject to intelligent discussion. Why then did he feel compelled to assert that the left wing has "no analysis of American conditions and our relationship to them." The explanation is to be found in the context of the polemic.

What Harrington is attempting to do with the false assertion that we have no analysis of American conditions is to counter the charge I made against the orientation of the right wing in my article: "Of the many criticisms that can be made of this mechanical and unrealistic orientation, perhaps the most important is that it is totally divorced from any evaluation of the objective situation in which socialist regroupment is to take place." His "answer" has three parts. First, the false counter-charge that we have no analysis, etc.

- CATAclysms AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES -

Second, and no less fraudulent for being in blatant contradiction to the first, is the charge that I see no opportunities of any sort and propose to wait around for a "cataclysm", which would absolutely guarantee a revolutionary development of the "American workingclass." His politics, and those of the 'left wing', follow from the expectation of a cataclysm and an immediate development of a revolutionary consciousness in the American workingclass."

Mike's 'proof' for this charge consists of one phrase from my article - that the creation of a labor party "requires the action of economic and social pressure of tremendous force". What has this to do with "cataclysm"? Harrington can tell you - "In other words, until there is a 'tremendous' break in American society, something which, presumably, will be on the order of the Thirties at a minimum, the labor movement remains tied to capitalist politics, there is little or nothing for the socialist movement to do," etc., etc., etc. The method is classic. Taking off from a single word -- "tremendous" -- Mike constructs a

wierd, obviously ridiculous theory which he uses as a club with which to beat the left wing over the head. Economic and social changes far short of the total collapse of the system could bring tremendous pressure to bear on the working class - for instance the appearance of sizeable unemployment plus continued price inflation in the context of today's enormous consumer debt, especially if combined with a socialist development internationally and a breakthrough of the Negro struggle into the arena of independent political action. Such a development is obviously what I meant by the phrase that Mike picked on - if I was talking about the complete collapse of American capitalism I would have said so!

The real question is this - does Mike think that the establishment of a labor party and its adoption of a socialist program will take place in a smooth, gradual, orderly process, without the operation of 'tremendous pressures'? Does he then expect American capitalism to evolve free from crises of any sort?

- THE BREAK-OUT -

The third part of Mike's effort to answer me on the question of "the objective situation in which socialist regroupment is to take place" consists of ~~xxx~~ bluster to the effect that "The independent socialists base themselves on an analysis of America today", in presumed contrast to us "sectarians". He throws in innumerable references to being for a labor party, as if he actually believed that we are against a labor party. He mentions the spirit of Geneva, the permanent war economy, the Negro struggle, the 'possibility' of sizeable ~~un-~~employment. He doesn't even "preclude the kind of process which Shane describes (i.e., the "cataclysmic" ~~xxx~~ process which he describes and attributes to me.)" How all this is supposed to add up to an "analysis of America today" we can only guess. But it is enough for Mike to conclude that "Shane really doesn't have anything to offer other than the continuation of the sects. Our politics, on the other hand, are based on the conception that socialists can now turn toward the workingclass in a meaningful fashion, that certain opportunities are opening up for us. This is not to say that we anticipate a mass socialist party in the near future. It means that we project the necessity, and the possibility, of a break-out from our sectarian existence and toward the workers."

How prettily is posed the choice before the YSL - on the one hand the "sectarian" Shane who offers only "the continuation of the sects", and on the other the "Independent Socialist" Harrington, offering "a break-out from our sectarian existence and toward the workers"!

Very true, Harrington claims to offer much more than I do - but before the members of the YSL accept this offer at face value, they would do well to ask themselves the question: Can Harrington deliver what he promises?

Before considering this question in detail a certain terminological clarification is necessary. Harrington continually uses the loaded term 'sects' to describe all the present organizations of American socialism; instead of the neutral, scientific designation of "small propaganda groups"--which is what he means. This aids him no little in performing the sleight of hand necessary to convict the left wing of "sectarianism", because he is able, without any effort, to confuse the reader by using the term "sect" in two entirely different senses: the small propaganda group like the YSL, CP, SWP, OR ISL, and the "classical" sect like the SLP.

Thus the "choice" offered by Harrington must be reatated as follows: on

the one hand the 'sectarian' Shane who offers only "the continuation of the propaganda groups", and on the other the "Independent Socialist", Harrington, offering "a break-out of our propaganda group existence and toward the workers."

What does Harrington mean by this "break-out" from propaganda-group existence? One thing he specifically says he does not mean is "a mass socialist party in the near future." Therefore the new political organism he proposes to create would appear to be a strange creature, neither fish nor fowl, neither a propaganda group or a mass party - something described as a "broad", "all-inclusive", "Debsian" socialist party. What meaning do these glittering adjectives have? What would be the real nature of such an organization?

The answer to these questions is to be found, to be sure, in the concrete nature of the "socialist unity" proposed by the YSL Right Wing - and I will deal with that in a subsequent section of this article. Here I will answer them from a different angle - from the real "American conditions" of which, according to Harrington, I "have no analysis".

As I stated earlier in this article, the present propaganda group existence of American socialism is imposed by the present prosperity and the general workingclass passivity flowing from it. Until there is a fundamental change in this objective situation, that propaganda group existence will remain, whatever our subjective inclinations. In what essential respect would the activity or size of a merged SP-SDF-ISL-YSL differ from the present propaganda groups? Would it lead significant numbers of workers in class struggle - the party of Zeidler? Would it ~~not~~ carry on an extensive electoral campaign? It could not, and does not want to, since that means opposing "labor-backed" candidates. Would it play a significant role in a rank and file opposition movement to the Reuthers and McDonalds? The notion is absurd. Would it be large enough to be considered even a very minor force in American politics? The most optimistic estimate of the Right wing, that of Comrade Shactman, is that the merged party would have 2,000 members a year from its formation - a number which is as wildly exaggerated in relation to the real prospects for the SP-SDF-ISL as it is infinitesimal in relation to American politics. The fact is, that what would be created by the type of unity proposed by the Right Wing is simply another propaganda group, not because they are "sectarians" but because that is all that is possible in America today. The difference between the Right and Left Wings of the YSL is that they are for a propaganda group with anti-socialist politics and we are for a propaganda group with socialist politics. That is all! The talk of a break-out is nothing but an attempt to avoid a discussion of the politic of regroupment.

OUR ACTIVITY IS MEANINGFUL

Does this mean that Harrington is right when he says that "For Shane there is no real possibility of meaningful socialist activity without a massive crisis of the system."? This statement is, like the rest of Harrington's article, fraudulent demagoguery. But it is also a statement with the most shocking implications.

What Harrington is saying is that the small socialist propaganda groups, which I repeat, are all I expect the American socialist movement to contain in the immediate future, have "no real possibility of meaningful socialist activity.", and this statement is just as true of the small socialist propaganda group that Harrington is National Chairman of. Therefore, according to Harrington, the YSL does not carry on and has "no real possibility" of carrying on "meaningful socialist activity."

There is nothing that Harrington could have said which would constitute a

more serious blow to the socialist movement in America. If there is "no real possibility of meaningful socialist activity" why should anyone be a socialist, and above all, why should anyone make the considerable personal sacrifices required to belong to a small socialist organization in the years of the witch-hunt? If this were true, adherence to socialism would be reduced to the level of a purely personal ideological conviction and the socialist movement would be reduced not merely to a political sect, but to a religious sect.

It is, however, completely false to think that until there is a big, powerful socialist movement there is no possibility of meaningful socialist activity. The small, weak, isolated revolutionary socialist groups are today the most meaningful political tendency in America because we, and we alone, are engaged in preparation of the future of the American labor movement - we and we alone have learned to use the method of Marxism, we and we alone point the way for the American working class to its inevitable struggle for power and for the destruction of capitalism. The small and powerless socialist propaganda groups of today are the necessary prerequisite for the socialist revolution of tomorrow. There is no higher criterion of meaningfulness.

But our activity is also meaningful in the narrower, pragmatic sense--and without this day to day activity our larger purpose can never be accomplished. Our intervention in the labor movement, most important of all the activity of our comrades as militants in the labor movement in exposing the labor bureaucracy and in opposing the capitalist political parties, and in drawing the wider consequences, the socialist consequences of the ordinary strikes and class struggles of the workers, is an essential part of the molecular process leading to the break of the labor movement from capitalism. Our fight for civil liberties, the role of the ISL in the Shactman passport case, the role of the SDF in the Kutcher case, are immediately and obviously meaningful. So is our activity on civil rights, on academic freedom, on many other questions.

Harrington pretends that only a united SP-SDF-ISL can carry on meaningful socialist activity. But how will the diffusion of socialist propaganda, the main activity of a propaganda group, be made more meaningful by the abandonment of "Labor Action" without anything, however miserable, to take its place except the "Call"? How will the activity of our militants in the labor movement be made more "meaningful" if they have to join a political organization tied to the labor bureaucracy? How can we express "meaningful" political solidarity with the colonial liberation movements and at the same time recognize as our leaders men who consider themselves the "comrades" of Guy Mollet? The indispensable pre-requisite to meaningful socialist political activity is socialist politics-- exactly the sort of politics the SP-SDF does not have!

- TROTSKY ON AMERICA (HARRINGTON EDITION) -

I will conclude this section with an analysis of one of Comrade Harrington's lesser falsifications which offers a clue to his basic political approach as well as an interesting example of his polemical methods.

On p.3, par 2, of his YSR article, Mike says that I assert "that the American working class is large, sluggish, not prone to action, and therefore will move swiftly once it takes the initiative."

Mike's argument against this is slightly on the weird side. He claims that "We have here a mechanical repetition of a point made by Trotsky in 1919" (I don't know whether or not this is so, since I have not read the book Mike refers to for several years, and have no copy available to check his reference. But I certainly cannot advise anyone to take Harrington's word as to what

Trotsky actually said). And then he moves in to give the coup de grace- "shortly after Trotsky made the algebraic statement referred to, he examined America itself and came to the conclusion that The European Revolution would probably take place before the American."

Here we have a prime example of Harrington's favorite version of the argument from authority - the argument from irrelevant authority. What on earth is the contradiction between Trotsky's prediction that the European revolution would precede the American revolution and the proposition that before, during, or after the European revolution, the American workingclass "will move swiftly once it takes the initiative"?

But let us return to Harrington's statement of my view as that "the American workingclass is large, sluggish, not prone to action, and therefore will move swiftly once it takes the initiative." Note - he has not quoted what I said, just paraphrased. I wonder how many readers of his article took his word for my views without checking against my article in which I wrote the following: "Comrade Martin's prognosis for the development of American socialism ...completely ignores the violent and radical changes inherent in the very hugeness of American capitalism. The American labor movement is as sluggish as it is big and strong, because it is under the complete control of a privileged bureaucracy profoundly attached to the existing social order."

What Harrington has done is simply to distort my views by removing any reference to reality from them - I based my expectation of rapid movement of the American workingclass on the nature of "America's fantastically unstable capitalism" and on the necessity for the workingclass to shake itself loose from the control of "a privileged bureaucracy profoundly attached to the existing social order." Under Harrington's legerdemain this is transformed into the proposition that the American working class "will move swiftly once it takes the initiative" because it is "large, sluggish, not prone to action." And after this he has the effrontery to accuse my position of having no "relation to the American facts," to accuse me of basing myself on "a formula whose life has been ossified to a dogma."

I suspect that the reason for this is not merely polemical unscrupulousness. It is significant that Harrington, so prolific of references to "American reality", "our conception of the social forces", "An analysis of the American labor movement", etc. is incapable of discussing the American labor bureaucracy as a social stratum, a social force in its own right- and in this failure he is ~~xxx~~ merely following in the footsteps of the wonderfully "independent socialist" American Resolution of the 1955 YSL Convention. But this tendency toward adaptation to the labor bureaucracy, which I believe is the basic cause of the Right Wing's desire to liquidate our movement into the SP-SDF, is somewhat more clearly shown in Comrade Meier's article, and so I will deal with it at greater length in the section of this essay dealing with her article "On Unity."

* * * * *

* Since I possess Vol. II, but not Vol I, of The First Five Years of the Communist International I checked that portion of Mike's reference to Trotsky. Sure enough, I found a statement that predicted revolution in Europe before America, but I also found a statement on the same page to the exact opposite effect from that which Harrington sought to produce: "the victory of the proletariat in the most important countries of Europe will be the premise for swift revolutionary development in America." In view of this, perhaps Mike's reference to Vol I was accurate, so only one of his two references was distorted. Oh well, .500 isn't a bad batting average for some leagues.

67 1/2

[BLANK
PAGE]

842

Political Revolution: Social Revolution
 A Footnote on Revisionism
 (cannonite variety)

by Mike Harrington

For a whole variety of reasons, the YSL has recently come into closer contact with Cannonite politics than at any time in its history. There are in our midst a few comrades moving toward Cannonism, and a few already there; the Cannonites themselves are attempting to enter the youth field; with the intensive discussion of socialist regroupment, there has been more contact between the various socialist tendencies in the U.S. For these reasons, a brief discussion of the most fundamental theoretical question which divides us from the SWP is in order.

For the SWP, Russia is a degenerated workers' state, i.e. the economic foundations, the nationalized property, are progressive, the political structure, the rule of the bureaucratic "class", reactionary. Given this basic outlook, the Hungarian and Polish Revolutions are political revolutions; that is, they do not tend toward an essential change in property relationships, but are concerned with the transfer of political power from the bureaucracy to the people. Thus, for example, Larry Weiss' analysis in the October 29th Militant.

Is this a simple academic question? After all, can't the Cannonites call a revolution "political" while we call it "social," and both of us support it, and the difference between the two approaches be a question which can be settled by Marxist scholars after socialism is a reality? Far from it. The two conceptions express fundamentally different attitudes toward democracy and socialism. That they are not sharply posed, the one against the other, is more the result of the contradictory character of the Cannonite theory than anything else. But the differences are quite real and basic, and they may well effect practical issues in the future.

For us, democracy in the transition to socialism is not an element of "super-structure," a political factor which is independent of the social base. Rather it is the very essence of the socialist social revolution. And this is not a fact because we say it is, or because we are addicted to petty-bourgeois phrasemongering: it follows from the class character of the socialist revolution. In all previous revolutionary transformation, it was a question of the transfer of social power from one ruling class to another, from one minority to another minority. Bourgeois democracy was the historical form of the capitalist revolution in certain parts of Europe, but it was not essential to capitalism itself. Capitalism was compatible with Italian Fascism, with Nazi-ism, with quasi-feudal elements in Japan. Capitalism requires freedom for capital, for commodity production, but not freedom for people.

Socialism, on the other hand, is the first revolution which is based on the overwhelming majority and on the social appropriation of production rather than some new form of individual appropriation. The workingclass cannot base its power upon individual ownership of the means of production. For it, the very essence of its power, of its social revolution, resides in its ability to exercise social control over the means of production. And that means democracy. There is no other way.

Interestingly enough, this question was posed, under another form, in the German Social Democracy at the turn of the century. The revisionists, like Bernstein,

put forth their notion of the "socializing" process within capitalism. They argued that it was only necessary to wait until this had reached its complete fruition, and there would be socialism. Rosa Luxemburg was one of the leaders of the Marxist wing of the Party. And her polemic against Bernstein is relevant to the question under discussion here.

Bernstein, she said in a speech at a Party meeting in 1899, repeats and repeats the Marxist formulation that "before any class wins political power, it must first succeed in conquering the economic power." (Does that sound like the Cannonites, et al?) But can this "model" be applied to the socialist revolution? "No....for this does not take into account the tremendous difference between our class struggle and all preceding class struggles. The affirmation that the proletariat struggles, in contrast to all other classes, not to establish a new ruling class, but to create a classless society, that is no mere phrase... it is an illusion to believe that the proletariat can secure actual power within bourgeois society; it can only first win political power and then root out capitalist property. Bernstein attempts to take Marx and Engels and apply a schema from the great French Revolution to our situation..."

The import of all this is clear. First, the workingclass' social revolution, unlike all preceding social revolutions, has at its very core the conquest of political power. Second, the separation of political and social power which is possible under various forms of class society cannot, because of the very nature of the workingclass revolution, lead toward socialism. In 1899, those who denied this fact were revisionists like Bernstein who were capitulating to capitalist society. They pointed to the "socialization" of production, to various reforms, to the strength of the cooperative movement, and saw there the beginnings of socialism. For them, it was only a matter of time until the political power of the workingclass could be added to the already "socialized" economy, like so much whipped cream on top of a dessert.

Clearly, the Cannonites are not capitulating to bourgeois society. And yet, their distinction between the political and the social revolution of socialism stands in a curiously symmetrical relationship to Bernstein and the revisionists. They, too, see socialism growing without the active participation of the workingclass. But their vision is not of capitalism, but of Stalinism. This is the basic and fundamental difference between us and the Cannonites.

For us, the political conquest of power by the workingclass, its democratic rule, is not "simply" political. It is of the very social essence of the revolution, it records a change in property relationships, for it signifies, exactly, the essential means for social ownership of property. Politics and economics are fused. In practical terms, this apparently theoretical antagonism could have immediate consequences - as it did in the case of Titoism. It also has consequences in a myriad of small, seemingly unrelated, attitudes and policies in the domestic and foreign scene.

In the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Century, Bernstein attempted to separate, if only for a while, the social revolution of the working class and its political revolution. Luxemburg answered that, since the class nature of the socialist revolution was qualitatively different from all other social revolutions, this could not be. At that time, it was the power of a prosperous and imperialist capitalism which was the basis of this revisionism. Today, the context is changed tremendously. And yet the Cannonites make the Bernsteinian separation; they too see socialism developing behind the backs of the workers - only this time, the force that is behind the theory is not capitalist, but Stalinist, imperialism.

. SOME MORE TRIVIA.....

BY Debbie Meier

Is it worth it....? Ch hell, it's hard to resist!

I wonder if Comrade Scott would come down to earth for a moment and tell us all what is ailing him! Now, if he has some objections to my piece on abstentionism, I'd be glad to hear them developed in a serious way - surely no one is obliged to agree. The actual truth is that I suspect that if Scott weren't so confused these days with anger he would realize that the article was not discussing any machiavellian plot to strengthen the "bureaucracy" of Martin, et al. In fact, I strongly suspect that underneath all that blub and bluster Scott may really agree with me! He just got carried away by factionalism and didn't realize therefore that this was not a factional issue at all!

In fact, to digress for a moment, the position I put forth is just as useful to the "left wing" caucus (I hate to admit it) as to the majority. For example, one need only note that a very large proportion of the "left wing" caucus' membership consists of very new members who apparently joined the YSL and a minority faction at almost one and the same time! While one might question the wisdom of this, certainly, using my own arguments to defend themselves, they have every right to do so--i.e. to take sides. If in their opinion, however inexperienced, etc., the "left wing" caucus is pretty much correct they are certainly right in joining it--although, as both I and Scott pointed out this does not mean they are not obliged to try and find out as much as possible about all sides of the question. And in units such as Antioch and Berkeley, where the "left wing caucus" leaders are the bureaucracy, it is they, and not the Martinities (!) who gain by abstentions, if Scott is correct. In actual fact I don't follow Scott's whole line of reasoning on this bureaucracy question!

But then maybe we should apologize today for confusing some overzealous factionalists by writing, speaking or doing ANYTHING during this heated period except rip into each other or hatch clever plots and conspiracies. Because, far from being directed at Scott, this was intended as an educational piece to encourage new members of the YSL to participate in the politics of the YSL rather than remain on the side-lines because of inexperience. I might encourage "humility" in doing this, but what I want to stress is their right, in fact their obligations, to be full voting and functioning members. "Martinism" had nothing to do with it. I've long given up convincing Scott with regard to abstentions, --for as old NAC minutes will indicate he holds a world's record for abstentions, and none of them were to his own advantage as far as I can make out, and, in fact, they have always been and remain a mystery to me.

What I was stressing, and what I will gladly repeat for Scott too, boils down simply to this: to abstain is no way to avoid taking issue, and therefore not a "way out" for those who are undecided, unsure, confused or the like!

####

[BLANK PAGE]

By Scott Arden

Introduction

The letter reproduced below was originally written for publication in LABOR ACTION as a letter-to-the-editor.

Comrade Draper returned it to me (without specifically refusing publication) suggesting that such a discussion would be more fruitful if it were based on Comrade Benson's more complete treatment of the Congressional investigation-- instead of Comrade Wilson's shorter article which Draper considered news reportage.

In my opinion Draper is in error in his evaluation of Wilson's piece and this opinion, I believe, can be substantiated by a simple reading of the Wilson piece.

I have, however, no intention of arguing with Draper on what may be a mere matter of opinion, and am therefore preparing a letter on the Benson article for L.A., with Draper's assurance that it will be published.

In the meantime the letter below is still applicable and may well stimulate discussion in the ranks of the YSL.

* * * * *

LETTER TO THE EDITOR OF LABOR ACTION - March 10, 1957

Labor Action last week (issue dated March 4th) featured an article by Jack Wilson entitled "The Heat Is On Hoffa and Beck." This article, since it was published in LA, is presumably an attempt to cover the current Teamster's Union mess from a socialist point of view.

This presumption is given weight by the fact that the Editor evidently considered Wilson's effort worth of front page space.

A careful reading of this article, however, cannot fail to raise some question in the mind of a socialist reader.

The question boils down to.... Do socialists view the intrusion of agencies of the capitalist state into union affairs as "progressive" or, rather, as something that must be opposed in every possible way?

Comrade Wilson, and Labor Action by inference, would seem to support the former view. That is, his article, standing alone, is a simple echo of the incorrect line presently pushed by the "official" liberal-labor leadership.

This line is one of some token lip service to the notion of "labor cleaning its own house" but at the same time approval of (if not endorsement), in effect at least, the past and present congressional committee hearings. Witness, simply, the stand they took on the use of the Fifth Amendment... not to mention the extremely significant anti-civil libertarian implications involved in their "prohibition" of the use of the amendment.

Socialists, in contradistinction to other political elements, have traditionally looked to the working class alone as the proper "house cleaner" of working class organizations, generally speaking. They have, historically, opposed attempts of the ruling class to meddle in the internal affairs of the union movement.

It may well be that this "traditional" and "historical" approach was (A) incorrect to begin with or (B) has been outmoded by subsequent developments. And a third possibility, of course, is that it does not, for some reason, apply to the current attack on the Teamster's.

If any of these three "exceptions" are applicable we only ask that they be stated and established. Socialist theory, it is generally agreed, can mistakenly and incorrectly be "institutionalized" and, unfortunately, achieve the status of an unchanging and semi-religious dogma. While opposing substitution of cant for thought, however, it is fair to assume that socialists, as opposed to less serious people, politically speaking, do not abandon previously held points of view however incorrect without analysing them for what they are and demonstrating a clear reason for change.

If we agree on this, Labor Action despite being the best socialist weekly in the U.S., is still manifestly culpable on the issue in question.

There may well have been, admittedly, articles in past issues which made LA's position clear at that time.

Nevertheless, facts are reported from a point of view...and judging solely from the article in question we are forced to conclude that Wilson's (if not the Editor's) point of view is one of approval of the capitalist government's attack on Beck.

It is unnecessary to waste valuable space citing quotas from an article that speaks for itself in an open manner.

Socialists should and do oppose labor racketeering (Beck's union being a sterling-silver example) and welcome every independent effort of the working class to democratically rid itself of Beck-like cancers, but at the same time we have a completely different attitude toward capitalist intervention in this direction.

State the problem however you will but it is obvious that the "lib-lab" officialdom's role has been more like that of a servant cleaning his quarters, under orders and in an objectionable manner, than that of a free and independent man cleaning his own house.

This should be the emphasis in any article on the current attack on the despicable Beck, and socialists and their publications should in no way identify with the reactionary bourgeois effort in this direction--or its lib-lab officialdom's echoes.

It should be apparent that we do not suggest a full "Marxist" analysis be incorporated into every article published in LA on this or any other question. Still less that "traditional" phraseology be employed in the discussion of these problems.

A socialist point of view must, however, be at the very least implied (if socialist publications are to serve any function as such) and Comrade Wilson's article in question does not even hint that one might exist.

UNIT REPORT: DAYTON AREA YSL

March 7, 1957

Major arenas of activity:

"Most of the student members of the unit are involved in the campus socialist club at Antioch. This club invites in outside speakers, generally sponsoring five or six public meetings each division. It is the only functioning political club on campus. Recent meetings have heard Ernest Lazey of the UAW, a symposium on colonialism with African and Asian students." Unit members also helped in the enroll for Freedom petition campaign. Ernie Dillard, a Detroit unionist active with FAPC, kicked off the highly successful campaign at Antioch.

activities and Educational:

"Anvils and Challenge are sold by the campus socialist club, along with other socialist publications."

"The unit, which re-formed recently after a lapse of a couple of months when the transfer out of several members reduced it to the status of organizing committee, holds regular weekly discussions. One member generally makes a short presentation preceding the discussion. Topics which have been or will be discussed include: "The Need for a Revolutionary Socialist Party;" "The Nature and Development of Stalinism;" "Revolution in East Europe," etc."

Special Problems:

"The major problem of any unit, composed largely of Antioch students is the 'div' system, which means that a portion of the unit is scattered around the country every few months. However, in general, members find themselves in large cities where other YSL units exist."

Help, help:

"It would be helpful if other units could suggest speakers in our general vicinity who could come to Antioch. Tours or simply visits by other YSLers would be very welcome."

Organization:

"The unit has doubled its size in the past month (Feb.), and has several excellent prospects. New members generally are from a political background in or around the stalinist movement but they have broken with Stalinism over the past couple of years, a break that was accelerated by the developments in Poland and Hungary." The unit meets regularly every week.