

Information, Education, Discussion **Bulletin**

In Defense of Marxism

Published by expelled members of the Socialist Workers Party, Fourth Internationalist Tendency

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“All members of the party must begin to *study*, completely dispassionately and with utmost honesty, first the essence of the differences and second the course of the dispute in the party. . . . It is necessary to *study* both the one and the other, unfailingly demanding the most exact, printed documents, open to verification by all sides. Whoever believes things simply on someone else’s say-so is a hopeless idiot, to be dismissed with a wave of the hand.”

—V.I. Lenin, “The Party Crisis,” Jan. 19, 1921 [quoted in Trotsky’s *The Challenge of the Left Opposition* (1926-27), p. 247; for another translation see Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 32, pp. 43-44].

The *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* is published by the Fourth Internationalist Tendency, founded by members expelled from the Socialist Workers Party because we opposed abandoning the Trotskyist principles and methods on which the SWP was founded and built for more than a half century.

Denied the right, specified in the SWP constitution and by Leninist norms, of a full and free discussion of all programmatic changes, we were subjected first to gag rules and slander and finally to wholesale expulsions. The present leadership has resorted to these bureaucratic methods in order to impose their revisionist political line upon the party without discussion or approval by the membership.

We are now forced to organize and conduct this discussion outside the SWP. Our aim is to encourage discussion and debate within the party by those seeking to defend revolutionary Marxism and to bring about our reinstatement in the party.

We firmly believe that the present leaders of the SWP cannot avoid that discussion through organizational measures and expulsions. The relevant issues will increasingly appear on the agenda as their new course comes into conflict with the reality of the class struggle in the U.S. and around the world.

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EMERGENCY CONFERENCE AGAINST U.S. INTERVENTION CALLED

by Jean Y. Tussey

The urgent need now is to unite all opponents of U.S. government intervention in order to mobilize the kind of broad, clear, massive expression necessary to stop the war against the peoples of Central America/the Caribbean. Toward that end an emergency national conference will be held. The purpose of the conference will be to educate and to plan for specific national actions against U.S. intervention in Central America/the Caribbean. — **Join us!**

[from the CALL to an Emergency National Conference Against U.S. Military Intervention in Central America/The Caribbean]

It is no accident that Fred Halstead's Out Now! (Monad, 1978) is the "bible" of some of the young social activists in the growing army of volunteers enlisting to build the Emergency National Conference Against U.S. Military Intervention in Central America/the Caribbean.

That account by a socialist worker and leading participant in the movement against the U.S. war in Vietnam documents the fact that "In human affairs there is still nothing so powerful as an idea whose time has come."

A small Cleveland conference eighteen years ago initiated a process that profoundly affected the course of the Vietnam war. That meeting, and those that followed, drew together the various threads of the anti-war movement into a national coalition that could organize unified action on a far broader scale than any of the local groups or national peace bodies had been able to do. We know the final outcome of that process. In solidarity with the people of Vietnam, it helped end U.S. military intervention in that country.

The Cleveland Emergency National Conference of September 1984 has the potential for being even more historically significant. Opposition to the governments escalating military intervention in Central America and the Caribbean is more unpopular today than intervention in Vietnam was fourteen years ago. The anti-war movement is larger. Particularly significant, the new dynamic component of the sponsors of the conference this year is trade unionists--men, women, Black, white, Hispanic—who feel so strongly on the urgency of the issues that they are taking a stand as individuals rather than waiting for others to take the lead. Finally, there is the continuity provided by the veterans of the Vietnam era anti-war movement who have not forgotten the lessons of that experience.

It is not inconceivable that the process could be telescoped--that the September 14-16 conference may unify the anti-intervention forces for effective mass actions capable of stopping the undeclared war against the people of Central America before the Pentagon plans for expanded military involvement can be carried out.

That is the stated purpose of the conference: to educate and to plan specific national actions against U.S. military intervention. The program is planned to serve that purpose.

The Friday evening session will consider strategy questions before the anti-intervention movement: Winning the Labor Movement to an Anti-Intervention Position; The 1984 Elections; Relating U.S. Intervention in Central America/the Caribbean with U.S. Intervention in Other Areas of the World; Building Unity in the Anti-Intervention Movement; The Anti-Intervention Movement and the Anti-Nuclear Movement, How Do the Two Relate?

Saturday morning keynote remarks by two leaders of the labor and solidarity movements, Dave Dyson, secretary of the National Labor Committee in Support of Democracy and Human Rights in El Salvador, and Catherine Sunshine, associate director of the Ecumenical Program for Interamerican Communication and Action, will be followed by a series of workshops. Topics for discussion at the workshops will focus on the relation between U.S. intervention and major domestic concerns such as: union-busting and trade union solidarity; cuts in social programs; attacks on equal rights for women and minorities; education; democratic rights and civil liberties; immigration policies. Workshops will also deal with the history of U.S. intervention in Central America/the Caribbean and other areas of U.S. military intervention, such as the Middle East and South Africa.

The first plenary session, on Saturday afternoon, will hear and consider action proposals. Conference participants are encouraged to submit their proposals and to bring enough copies for distribution. Following the plenary, a second series of workshops will discuss building the movement in specific constituencies. The rest of the afternoon will be available for caucuses, meetings by area, union, organization. The evening session, starting at 7:30, will be devoted to discussion and voting on the action proposals presented in the afternoon plenary.

The Sunday morning session will deal with implementing the action proposals adopted by the conference, after hearing reports by anti-interventionist organizations on their plans and activities.

From the first meeting, on May 20, 1984, of Cleveland area labor, solidarity, religious, academic, and other community activists the central concern of the organizers of the emergency conference has been how to unite all opponents of U.S. intervention for effective national actions to stop the war against the peoples of Central America/the Caribbean.

The people involved in the first meetings and who continue to function on the organizing committee include active retired workers from the garment, machinists, typographical and other unions, members of religious and other Central America solidarity groups, several generations of anti-war activists, veterans of the anti-Vietnam war movement including academic figures like Richard Recknagel and capable labor organizers like conference coordinator Jerry Gordon.

The historic import of the conference was recognized by the Cleveland Plain Dealer of July 17. Under a banner headline, "Antimilitarists plan parley here," reporter David Beard wrote, "The first nationwide conference against U.S. military intervention in Central America will be held in Cleveland Sept. 14 through 16, a group of area academics and religious and labor leaders announced here yesterday."

The response to the call for sponsors and endorsers of the Emergency National Conference has been phenomenal. This confirms the estimate of the initiators of the call, in consultation with grass roots groups around the country, that the time for action is here. The job now is to build the conference so that it reflects the widespread opposition to U.S. military intervention.

EMERGENCY NATIONAL CONFERENCE

Registration Information

DATES: September 14-16, 1984

LOCATION: Masonic Hall, 3615 Euclid (entrance E, 36th St., between Euclid and Chester)

REGISTRATION: \$15. Low income, retirees, and unemployed, \$5.

LODGING: Holiday Inn, 1111 Lakeside, Cleveland, Ohio 44114. Phone (216) 241-5100. Special National Conference rate per night: \$40 single or double, \$45 for three, \$50 for four to a room. (Make your own reservation by Aug. 14, 1984 to assure rooms. For special rates, ask for "Emergency National Conference.")

Limited private housing available on request. For further information, call: Emergency National Conference, (216) 398-0919.

REGISTRATION FORM: Clip and return to:

EMERGENCY NATIONAL CONFERENCE
P.O. Box 21672, Cleveland, Ohio 44121.

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Union & Local _____

Other Organization _____

(if registering for others, please include same information for them.)

Enclosed is registration fee for _____ persons at \$15 each and _____ at \$5 each.

Total enclosed: \$ _____

Make check payable to EMERGENCY NATIONAL CONFERENCE.

Please send me: _____ Additional Calls. _____ Map and directions to Masonic Hall and Holiday Inn. I need private housing for _____ people.

POLAND: KOR vs. BUREAUCRACY

by Carl Jackson

Four militants of the former Committee for Workers' Defense (KOR) went on trial July 13th before a military tribunal in Poland. On July 18th, a short five days later, Colonel Przygodzki, the presiding judge, announced that the trial was being adjourned pending a special session of the Polish Parliament that will consider the possibility of an amnesty for political prisoners to mark the 40th anniversary of the Polish People's Republic. The defendants, who had pressed for the trial as an opportunity to present their case and who had not yet had any chance to do so, were reported to be unhappy with the adjournment. Accused of having sought the overthrow by force of the Polish government, they face sentences ranging from five years in prison to death. Jacek Kuron, Adam Michnik, and Henryk Wujec were arrested on December 13th, 1981, at the very beginning of the military crackdown directed against the strongest working class upsurge in recent years in Eastern Europe. The fourth defendant, Zbigniew Romaszewski, managed to elude the authorities until August of '82. During those months he served in the underground leadership of Solidarnosc and organized the movement's clandestine radio station.

The common history of these four men began in the summer of '76 when an announcement of increased food prices was greeted by the Polish working class with a wave of strikes. The Stalinist bureaucrats who govern Poland were forced to withdraw the price increases but were also determined to punish the workers. Hundreds were fired from their jobs and several were sentenced to stiff prison terms. Kuron, Michnik, Wujec, and Romaszewski were among a group of students and intellectuals who organized the KOR in order to aid those workers who had been victimized. They enjoyed some success in this work, organizing legal and material aid for the workers and their families while creating a network of support. By '77 the government felt itself forced to grant an amnesty to the victimized workers and KOR was established on an ongoing basis.

KOR then undertook the regular publication of Robotnik (The Worker), a newsletter which pledged "to support the independent organization of the workers which must replace the official unions." Robotnik served as a means of exchanging information and breaking down the isolation of the workers. KOR also continued to supply legal and material support to workers victimized by the bureaucracy. KOR came to play an increasingly important and valuable role in what the Stalinist authorities referred to, among themselves, as the "illegal workers' leaders."

In July 1980, the government again proposed price increases and again the workers rebelled in a massive strike wave. KOR first organized an information bank to facilitate communication and cooperation within the Polish working class, then joined wholeheartedly in building the independent union, Solidarnosc. Solidarnosc quickly became the leadership of the workers, not "officially" or bureaucratically but through winning their confidence in struggle. The pretensions of the Polish Stalinists were thoroughly exposed as the Polish working class began to mobilize in its own interests. Class conscious workers throughout Europe were inspired by the example of their Polish brothers and sisters and expressed solidarity with them in large demonstrations. The issue in Poland was

clear to revolutionary Marxists throughout the world—would the Polish workers take the leadership of Polish society and proceed to build a real workers' democracy or would the Stalinist usurpers, hacks, and parasites succeed in beating them back and protecting bureaucratic privileges while smothering the creative power of the workers under a blanket of totalitarianism? A dramatic and fateful struggle began to unfold in Poland.

Kuron, Michnik, Wujec, and Romaszewski played an important role in the leadership of the struggle from the earliest days. Their active support of the workers had earned them respect and a hearing. Thus, they put forward their own views on the direction that the movement should take. Far from urging the overthrow of the government, as they are today accused of having done, they repeatedly argued against such a perspective and proposed instead an historic "compromise" with the authorities which would allow for the free and open functioning of Solidarnosc without calling into question the basic state apparatus. Revolutionary Marxists, while praising the honesty and courage of these activists, must disagree with this perspective and argue that only a thorough political revolution can lead to the real emancipation of the Polish working class.

The chief responsibility of class conscious workers outside Poland is, however, not to offer criticisms but support. The Polish bureaucracy does not represent socialism or the interests of the workers. When the Polish workers took to the streets in opposition to it they were acting in the interests of workers all over the globe. Their fight was labor's fight and they deserved labor's support. To refuse that support, or to support the other side against the workers, is to commit a serious error.

Fourth Internationalists, on the whole, did not make that mistake. We have compiled a good record of practical support to and solidarity with the men and women of Solidarnosc. One remarkable exception has been the course followed by the SWP here in the U.S. The Militant has not published a single article on the KOR case. Nor has there been any attempt by the SWP to organize even the most modest demonstrations in solidarity with the KOR defendants. This is a continuation of the policy which they have been following since the coup.

By the time of the December '81 military crackdown in Poland the SWP was in the process of drastically altering its view of the political revolution. Unlike their position during similar events in East Germany, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Poland itself, the leaders of the SWP now spoke of "defense, extension and democratization" of the workers state, not political revolution, as the primary concern. The SWP reaction to the coup was muted at best. Participation in demonstrations and picket lines in defense of Solidarnosc was prohibited. The leaders of the SWP contend that the basic confrontation within Poland itself is between the Polish workers and U.S. imperialism -- not between the Polish workers and their Stalinist rulers. Defense of Solidarnosc was virtually abandoned to the right wing and the reformists.

In Poland itself, of course, the position of the barricades between the workers and their parasitic tormentors was clear and obvious to everyone. The KOR defendants, even though charged with a capital crime, did not hesitate to choose, as they had chosen before, the side of the workers.

They have not wavered in their insistence that they have done nothing wrong and that an honest trial will vindicate them. In fact, it is not these defendants who fear such a trial but rather the Stalinists in power who have sought to avoid it. General Jaruzelski and his minions have tried both threats and bribery in an attempt to get the accused to agree to go quietly into exile or even just to forget about politics. Kuron, Wujec, Michnik, and Romaszewski have stood firm and demanded a trial. Whether that trial will yet take place, or whether the Polish government will avoid further embarrassment through granting amnesty, remains to be seen.

The KOR defendants deserve the support of all workers. They have provided a fine example of intellectuals who have chosen the workers' cause. In jailing them and trying them, the Polish Stalinists are attempting to jail and try Solidarnosc itself. How will history judge a working class party that does not come generously and enthusiastically to the defense of such a great movement?

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[EDITORIAL NOTE: Because the SWP Political Committee was late in producing its draft political resolution (it was first available in party branches on July 15) we, like the party membership as a whole, have been blocked from commenting on it before the end of the formal preconvention discussion period. We had hoped to present an analysis of this document in the present issue of Bulletin IDOM, but this will now have to wait until our September issue.]

THE CASE OF THE TARDY POLITICAL RESOLUTION

by George Breitman

Between its 31st national convention, in August 1981, and its 32nd convention, in August 1984, the SWP has undergone many changes, few of them for the better. The same can be said for the party's "central leadership team" headed by national secretary Jack Barnes. There is no formal body bearing such a title, but there is a small group of NC and PC members who consider themselves part of a central leadership team, and who have actually been responsible for the direction of party policy and the functioning of the party apparatus throughout the period between the two conventions. Of this central leadership team it can be stated flatly that it is in confusion and disarray on the eve of the 32nd convention.

There are many signs of such disarray, and some examples have already been cited in this Bulletin. I shall confine myself here to seemingly humdrum details about a formal convention resolution, which might easily be overlooked or misinterpreted by new party members, YSA members or active supporters unacquainted with party norms and traditions.

The NC called the convention on April 26, in a letter to the branches and members that was printed in SWP Information Bulletin, No. 2, May 1984. The NC set the convention dates as August 4-10; this later was shortened by a subordinate body (the PC) to August 4-9. The preconvention discussion period was declared open as of May 5 -- 92 days before the convention will begin, and almost 90 days before the election of delegates that is mandated by the party constitution. It was announced that a discussion bulletin would print articles, submitted by members, which had to be received not later than July 19. Information was also provided about convention assessments, the basis of representation to be used in electing delegates at the end of the discussion period, etc. And there was also, of course, an agenda for the convention proposed by the NC.

The first point listed on the proposed convention agenda was "Appeals of Disciplinary Action" (the central leadership team's terminology for the demand by many expelled members for reinstatement in the SWP). Second was "Workers and Farmers Government." And third was "Political Resolution."

It was entirely normal for the "Political Resolution" point to be on the convention agenda, and it would have been abnormal if it hadn't been put there. That's because by party custom and expectation one of the high points in SWP conventions is the political debate on the key questions facing the party which formally starts with the publication of such a resolution, which is then discussed in branch oral debates and in the bulletin, and serves as the major basis for the election of delegates and for the adoption of the party's policies at the convention.

That's how it was at the 31st convention, for example; the NC adopted the line of its written political resolution early in April 1981, it was published in a party bulletin in May, and most of the 27 thick discussion bulletins between then and the August convention dealt with one or another aspect of the NC's political resolution. And that's how it was at most of the preceding 30 conventions of the SWP and its predecessors.

So the only surprise that greeted the convention call's promise of a Political Resolution was that it was still not available in May, after the formal opening of discussion on May 5. The later the Political Resolution is printed, the less discussion it can expect to elicit because of the time factor. The branches were advised to go ahead and discuss a document published two years ago on the Workers and Farmers Government, in the confident expectation that the Political Resolution would be available before they had exhausted the Workers and Farmers Government discussion.

But everything proceeded in slow motion. At the end of the first 30 days of the 90-day discussion period, many branches had not gotten around to holding their first oral discussion--on the Workers and Farmers Government or on any other convention issue. The central leadership team sent out all kinds of letters directing the branches how to conduct the discussion but somehow it had no effect in getting them to actually discuss anything in the period designated for that purpose. No wonder Frank Lovell called it the "most peculiar discussion the SWP has ever had" (Bulletin No. 8, June 1984).

Meanwhile, in May, the first discussion bulletin was issued, with a short article by Eileen G., a rank and file member in Philadelphia. In it she advocated the creation of a tendency that would defend political positions already discarded or being discarded by the central leadership team and that would seek the reinstatement of recently purged SWP members. This brought down on her the swift wrath of the central leadership team in the form of a heavy-handed letter from Jack Barnes that was distributed to the members simultaneously with Comrade G.'s article. The Barnes letter warned her--and obviously all other members--not to try to discuss or correspond or meet with any other member about her or their political views, which can be aired only in written form in the discussion bulletin. The effect of course was to intimidate members against having anything to do with holders of critical or oppositional views, and to discourage participation in the written discussion (which had gotten off to a slow and sparse start anyhow).

And so the month of June dragged by. In many branches the Workers and Farmers Government discussion had petered out by the end of the month--at the two-thirds point of the discussion. And still no Political Resolution. What was going on?

Only the members of the central leadership team could explain authoritatively why the Political Resolution had been promised on April 26 and not delivered in May or June. Could it be that for some unstated reason a Political Resolution was no longer needed? Were the authors too busy with more important work? No, that couldn't be the explanation because preparations for conventions, congresses, and NC meetings are always given top priority by the central leadership team. For example, it had been reported many months ago that the conduct of the party's entire presidential campaign this year was transferred to the YSA national office in order to free the central leadership team's undivided attention for the coming convention and world congress.

Now comes a curious letter from the PC and signed by Barry Sheppard, an authoritative representative of the central leadership team. Dated July 4 (one month before the convention will open), it does not tell why the Political Resolution had not been produced but it does represent a response to the natural curiosity about the resolution. Addressed to "executive committees," the PC letter is printed in SWP Information Bulletin, No. 3, July 1984, where it has the title "Organization of the Party's Ongoing Political Discussion."

The first news in this letter is not to worry, the Political Resolution is still coming and in fact will reach the branches for purchase by members the weekend of July 14-15.

But the deadline for submitting articles to the discussion bulletin is July 19. Are the members expected, in a four-day period, to read the Political Resolution, discuss it adequately at branch meetings, and write articles about the Political Resolution or (God forbid) articles against the Political Resolution that will reach New York by July 19? More good news from the July 4 letter: The PC has graciously extended for five days--until July 24--the deadline for receipt of "motions or resolutions for convention decision" (but it has confirmed that the July 19 deadline still applies to other, non-motion or non-resolution, articles).

Neither a four-day discussion nor a nine-day discussion of the Political Resolution looks very attractive to party members accustomed to ten or twenty times that number of days. The central leadership team understands this and realizes some changes are needed, but at the same time it doesn't want to concede to critical questions from the members wanting to know why they didn't get the Political Resolution at the start of the discussion period. So the July 4 letter doesn't acknowledge this question or answer it--as if it's not the members' business to know why the preconvention discussion was turned into a shambles. Instead, the letter tries to turn the question aside by offering all kinds of concessions to the members: (1) The convention will be asked to organize the "continuation" of the written discussion of the Political Resolution in the discussion bulletin after the convention, with the aim of resubmitting it for a second vote by the party later. (2) The PC's perspective is to hold another SWP national convention in the summer of 1985. (3) There will be still another national SWP convention, probably early in 1985, to adopt resolutions and elect delegates for the world congress of the FI that will be held next year.

The implications (and tone) of the concessions in this letter are: Stop bellyaching about the delay with the Political Resolution. If it is discussion you want and conventions you want, we'll give them to you (now

that practically all oppositionists have been expelled) until you are sick and tired of them.

There are other aspects of this July 4 letter that are worth mentioning briefly. The PC has shortened the convention from the seven days announced in the NC's convention call in April to six days. Sheppard hails the reduction for bringing the convention "more in line with the party's need and resources." The paternalistic message: you don't "need" a seven-day convention (even after the central leadership team unconstitutionally postponed the 32nd convention for a full year). This is reminiscent in some ways of Jack Barnes's injunction to Eileen G.: you don't "need" to discuss your views with any other member except in the discussion bulletin, so you'd better watch your step. The central leadership team's paranoid distrust of party members and active supporters is becoming more pronounced. In May, nonparty YSA members and active supporters of the SWP were informed that they no longer have permission to read the party's preconvention discussion bulletin or to attend oral discussion in the branches. This was the first time that such a thing had happened in the 24-year history of the YSA. Now we learn from the July 4 letter that non-delegates (including party members as well as nonparty observers invited to the convention) will be barred from 40 percent of the convention. This is around double the amount of time such restrictions have been put into effect at previous conventions. The central leadership team has been trying to inculcate a "siege mentality" among the party members so that they will never forget for a moment that they are surrounded on all sides by enemies. Whatever the SWP members may think of that, the central leadership team now feels itself surrounded by suspicious and untrustworthy elements among both members and supporters.

As this is written, I still have not seen the promised Political Resolution. I am quite sure that it is not going to say anything new or surprising. It has now been some years since the central leadership team spoke openly and frankly to the party about what it really thinks and where it wants the party to move--their real platform, their true and complete platform, has remained unwritten all the time they have been taking the party away from its revolutionary continuity. In the corridors and at the party leadership school sessions they whisper parts of their platform to the members they consider salvageable, but nowhere have they written it. I doubt very much that they will do the opposite in the 1984 Political Resolution. So my interest in this document derives not from what it will say but from the unquestionable fact that they were unable to make good on their promise to produce it for an ample discussion by the membership before it is voted on in the branches and at the convention.

I have explained the context of this embarrassing failure--it is a sign more of political than organizational weakness. I do not take solace from the embarrassment of the central leadership team because its state of disarray and its paranoia are, in my opinion, very dangerous. If the SWP members sit back and accept or seem to accept such irresponsibility in the leadership without protest or even questioning, then the central leadership team will be encouraged to continue traveling along the road away from Leninism, Trotskyism, and Cannonism. The present floundering of the SWP might then be succeeded by the foundering of the SWP as a revolutionary force. That is what genuine revolutionaries should be striving now to prevent.

July 17, 1984

A FEW MORE STEPS AWAY FROM MARXISM

IN REPLY TO MARY-ALICE WATERS ON THE WORKERS' AND FARMERS' GOVERNMENT

by Steve Bloom

The term "workers' and farmers' government" is one which has been current in the revolutionary Marxist movement since the Bolsheviks first used it to refer to the Soviet government in Russia in 1917. It then "represented nothing more than the popular designation for the already established dictatorship of the proletariat" (Trotsky, The Transitional Program). Since that time, the concept of a workers' and farmers' government has been used by revolutionary Marxists in a variety of contexts and with significant differences of meaning. Its correct application has been the subject of some theoretical discussion in the Fourth International--in particular since Joseph Hansen applied it to an analysis of revolutionary developments after World War II.

Today, debate about the meaning and significance of the workers' and farmers' government has taken on a particular acuteness. This is true, in part, because of the objective development of the Central American and Caribbean revolutions; but more important has been the programmatic revision undertaken by the majority leadership of the Socialist Workers Party. They are attempting to twist and distort the history of the workers' and farmers' government idea so it can be used as a theoretical bludgeon against Trotskyism and the theory of permanent revolution.

This campaign was initiated by Jack Barnes in his report, "For a Workers and Farmers Government in the United States," which was approved by the February-March 1982 plenum of the SWP National Committee, and has been made the centerpiece of the present pre-convention discussion inside the SWP. No explicit link was made in this report to a rejection of Trotsky's theory, but Barnes's general approach was clearly in contradiction to our traditional views on the class nature of revolutionary governments. Then, less than a year later, Barnes did openly repudiate permanent revolution in his speech, "Their Trotsky and Ours: Communist Continuity Today" (see New International, Vol. 1, No. 1, Fall 1983).

Now, in the Spring-Summer 1984 issue of New International, Mary-Alice Waters presents an article, "The Workers' and Farmers' Government: A Popular Revolutionary Dictatorship." This is the first

public effort by the SWP leadership to present its new concept of the "workers' and farmers' government" slogan.

The Waters article contains many theoretical and historical errors, and we will look at some of them. But it is far more important to begin by understanding why Comrade Waters has made these errors. Like the rest of the SWP leadership, which is now in headlong retreat from a revolutionary Marxist perspective, she has the historical and theoretical background to do better. She knows (or at least she should know and has known in the past) that many of the things she says are simply not true.

The real purpose of her article, however, has nothing to do with an investigation of Marxist theory. Its goal is to serve as a theoretical rationalization for the SWP leadership's abandonment of a revolutionary Marxist program--specifically in this case as a cover for their rejection of permanent revolution.

For the Barnes faction, theory has ceased to be a tool for understanding the world and the revolutionary process so that we can intervene in a more effective way. It has become merely a flexible means for accomplishing some immediate goal. At the present time their objective is to bring about a fusion between the SWP (along with the forces allied to the SWP in the Fourth International) and the Castroist current. To do this, bridges must be built between our "old" theories and those of Castroism, even (or especially) where these views are not compatible--as they are not on a number of important questions. The membership of the SWP must be convinced that the continuity with our revolutionary past is being preserved, while at the same time any political views which would be obstacles to the desired regroupment with the Castroists must be abandoned, or altered beyond recognition.

Thus the stage is set for the "theoretical" gymnastics undertaken by Comrade Waters. The Barnes faction's new analysis of the workers' and farmers' government is based not on a serious study of any new reality in the world, despite claims to the contrary, but on an organizational perspective. This leads them into major errors of a his-

torical and theoretical nature--without the slightest concern on their part.

Such a development is characteristic of revisionist tendencies. Trotsky pointed out many times that revolutionists must have good memories--because our goal is to understand the past thoroughly in order to apply its lessons. Those who are retreating from a revolutionary perspective, on the other hand, have short memories--and little concern about historical accuracy--because their main concern is to forget their past.

Methodological problems

To correct all of Waters's errors would require an article several times the length of hers. We will not tax the patience of our readers with such an exercise. There are, however, two outstanding problems of a methodological character which must be highlighted to begin with.

First, the Waters article has a completely non-Marxist approach to the growth and development of Marxist theory. If we are to believe Waters, the development of Marxism has been simply the gradual accumulation of knowledge--each stage flowing logically and inevitably from the one before: from Marx and Engels (who improved their understanding step by step from the time of the Communist Manifesto, through the 1848 revolutions and later the Paris Commune), through Lenin (who also added progressively to our knowledge as a result of his experiences in the 1905 and 1917 revolutions), through the first four Comintern congresses after World War I, to Castro and the Sandinistas today. This idealized notion of the development of Marxism--which lacks any appreciation of the evolution of theory through ideological conflict and contradiction--is one of the fundamental flaws in Waters's method.

It is most striking that her historical review of the workers' and farmers' government, and the development of the revolutionary Marxist position on the transition from capitalism to socialism, leaves out any mention of the Stalinist degeneration of the USSR, the struggle of the Left Opposition, and the contributions of Trotsky on this question (China, Spain, the Transitional Program, etc.). It also, of course, leaves out the fundamental transformation in the perspectives of the Bolshevik Party that occurred with Lenin's famous "April Theses" in 1917. These omissions are inexplicable from the point of view of a serious theoretical work. They are, however, perfectly consistent and absolutely

necessary if we understand the true purpose of the Waters opus--to provide an orthodox cover for her theoretical retreat from Trotskyism.

The second basic methodological problem in the approach of Comrade Waters is that her concept of a "popular revolutionary dictatorship," with which she equates the "workers' and farmers' government," is never given any explicit class content. For Marxists, however, the concept of "dictatorship" is above all a class concept. It means, and can only mean, the rule of one section of society--with a specific relationship to the means of production--over society as a whole. If we look at the various quotations Waters uses from Marx, Engels, and Lenin on this question they are all quite explicit about what class is exercising its "revolutionary dictatorship". Most of them include a class modifier before the term "dictatorship"--invariably either "proletarian" (or some variation, such as "working class") or else "democratic," which means, in classic Marxist usage, that it is bourgeois democratic. Mary-Alice Waters calls it simply "popular," which has no class content at all.

Why is this necessary? Because the basic premise of the SWP leadership's new conception of the workers' and farmers' government is that there is no significant distinction between Lenin's concept of a "Democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry"--which was his formula for the revolutionary dictatorship he envisioned in Russia before the actual events of 1917--and the government that in fact took power in Russia in October 1917. But, as Comrade Waters herself notes, Lenin and the Bolsheviks consistently referred to the Soviet government in Russia as the proletarian dictatorship. In order to argue that the "democratic" and "proletarian" dictatorships are really one and the same, Waters must transform her version of the workers' and farmers' government into a classless abstraction, and declare the "revolutionary dictatorship" to be merely "popular."

Waters is aided in this task by the fact that the term "workers' and farmers' government" has actually been used in the history of the revolutionary Marxist movement to refer both to proletarian governments in power following a successful insurrection (the kind of government which took power in Russia in 1917 and the kind of government revolutionary Marxists advocate to carry through the transition from capitalism to socialism) and also to petty-bourgeois governments which might emerge in the course of a revolutionary crisis. In

addition, it has been used as a transitional demand, linking the present consciousness of the working class (which conceives of things only in the context of bourgeois society) to the socialist revolution (to the dictatorship of the proletariat).

Until the present theoretical efforts of the SWP leadership, however, these uses of the term workers' and farmers' government have always been separate and distinct. Mary-Alice Waters, and Jack Barnes in his report mentioned earlier, have tried to dissolve all such distinctions and to meld them together. The SWP leaders treat the term "workers' and farmers' government" as if its meaning as a transitional slogan has been the same as when it is used as a scientific characterization of actual governments in power. The petty-bourgeois and proletarian forms of such governments in power are likewise treated as if they were interchangeable. In this way Barnes and Waters try to give the workers' and farmers' government an indeterminate class character.

The dictatorship of the proletariat

Through these two mechanisms--1) approaching the history of Marxism as a smoothly developing process and 2) leaving out a class characterization of her "popular revolutionary dictatorship"--Waters tries to avoid discussing what every serious student of the Russian revolution knows to be the key debate among Russian Marxists in the years between 1905 and 1917: What would be the class nature of the regime that would replace tsarism after a successful revolution? She pretends to be unaware of the fact that Lenin changed his mind on this (that his thinking went through a qualitative leap, not just a quantitative accumulation of knowledge) as a result of the actual development of the 1917 revolution. Where he called for a democratic dictatorship in 1905 he now proposed a proletarian government after April 1917. Lenin knew the difference between the bourgeois and socialist revolutions. His change in terminology reflected an actual change in the class content of his perspective.

Waters attempts a terminological sleight of hand with the concept "dictatorship of the proletariat" in order to dispose of this problem. In a long footnote (#8) she states, "Here, as elsewhere, I use the term dictatorship of the proletariat to indicate a state that is based on and defends state property in the means of production, a state monopoly of foreign trade, and a planned

economy." At the end of the same note she explains, "I make this clarification because quotations from Marx, Engels, Lenin, and others elsewhere in this article generally use the term dictatorship of the proletariat in a sense that also encompasses a state in which political power has been wrested from the exploiting classes and taken into the hands of the proletariat and its allies, but in which socialist property forms do not yet predominate."

Waters accurately describes how Marx, Engels, Lenin, "and others" (including Trotsky and the Fourth International) have used the term "dictatorship of the proletariat." Her proposed change in this is far from merely terminological--it has a specific and conscious political purpose: to blur the distinction between the democratic and proletarian "popular revolutionary dictatorships." The method of Marx, Engels, Lenin ("and others" unmentioned by Waters)--unlike that of Waters herself--has been to make this necessary distinction as clearly as possible in our theory and program, and the blurring of such theoretical distinctions is not a characteristic generally consistent with revolutionary Marxism.

Waters even goes so far as to cite Marx as an authority in her effort to transform the meaning of the dictatorship of the proletariat. "It is worth noting," she writes, "that among the many descriptions used by Marx to capture various aspects of the Paris Commune's significance, he nowhere described it as the dictatorship of the proletariat. Engels did describe it in these terms on one occasion twenty years later . . ." (p. 44).

Waters considers Engels to have been mistaken in this judgment, and offers a gentle rebuke: "As history has demonstrated, however, the revolutionary dictatorship established by the Commune was, more accurately, a transitional, revolutionary government of the producers--the first anticipation of what we today call a workers' and farmers' government" (pp. 44-45, emphasis added).

We should note here a problem with Waters's presentation of Marx's views. Even if he never used the term "dictatorship of the proletariat" to describe the Commune, he was never ambiguous as to its class nature--as Waters is with her "revolutionary government of the producers." Waters herself, on page 38 of her article, quotes Marx to the effect that the Commune "was essentially a working class government," (though she goes on to try to explain this formula away).

But there is a bigger problem. If Marx never referred to the Commune as the dictatorship of the proletariat, and Engels did so only once, in an apparent slip of the pen, nevertheless Lenin--whom Mary-Alice Waters considers to be the consummate authority on the "transitional revolutionary government of the producers"--used this characterization of the Commune many times in his writings after the Bolshevik insurrection of 1917. (Is it possible, Comrade Waters, that Lenin, who understood the nature of the "popular revolutionary dictatorship" in Russia so well could make such an extraordinary mistake in his understanding of the Commune?)

Volume 2 of the index to Lenin's Collected Works, under the heading "Dictatorship of the Proletariat," lists 59 references to the Paris Commune. All but one of these are from Lenin's writings and speeches after April 1917, and the large majority are after the October revolution. We confess to not having researched all 59 in preparing this article, but a random check indicates that this body of writing, analyzing the lessons of the Commune, would prove highly instructive for Comrade Waters. We will cite one example here: "'Soviet power' is the second historical step, or stage, in the development of the proletarian dictatorship. The first step was the Paris Commune. The brilliant analysis of its nature and significance given by Marx in his The Civil War in France showed that the Commune had created a new type of state, a proletarian state" ("Letter to the Workers of Europe and America," C.W., Vol. 28, p. 431).

Perhaps Waters will object that Lenin was using a different terminology than she (as explained in footnote #8). We would suggest, however, that Lenin was discussing class content--and he drew some rather different conclusions in this regard from his reading of Marx. But even if we grant Waters this feeble protest, we must at least demand that she stop hiding behind Marx's coattails in presenting her "more accurate" explanation of the Commune--since she herself has acknowledged that Lenin's use of the term "dictatorship of the proletariat" corresponds to that of Marx, Engels, "and others."

The New Economic Policy

This is not the only historical web in which Waters gets tangled as a result of her schematism. Let's take up the question of the New Economic Policy in Russia, or NEP. Much of what Waters says about NEP is correct. It was a series of concessions to the peasantry and to

capitalist market forces in Russia, made necessary because of the excesses of the period of War Communism that preceded it. The Bolsheviks came to the conclusion that they had moved faster toward socialist economic relations than the objective conditions had warranted, and if they wanted to maintain the alliance with the peasantry drastic remedial steps were required. It is also correct that NEP represented a period of transition from bourgeois to proletarian economic relations which is a basic feature of the proletarian revolution. The form and extent of this period will vary considerably in different countries depending on objective factors.

Where Waters gets into trouble is in her effort to link this NEP-like period of transition to her new version of a "popular revolutionary dictatorship." She denies our programmatic call for a government that represents the political rule of the working class--the dictatorship of the proletariat--to organize the transition, insisting that it takes place instead under a "two-class government." She is on extremely shaky ground in citing the Bolsheviks and the Comintern as her authorities in this.

Let's take a look at the evidence Waters herself cites. She quotes the following comments by Lenin on NEP: "We shall make as many concessions as possible within the limits, of course, of what the proletariat can concede and yet remain the ruling class" (p. 75). "The whole question is--whom will the peasantry follow? The proletariat, which wants to build socialist society? Or the capitalist . . . ?" (p. 78). "We tell the peasants quite openly that they must choose between the rule of the bourgeoisie and the rule of the Bolsheviks--in which case we shall make every possible concession within the limits of retaining power, and later we shall lead them to socialism" (p. 79).

If the peasantry must "choose" either the workers or the capitalists as the rulers, must "follow" either one class or the other, then it is obviously not a question of their sharing power, as Waters contends. The form of the alliance between the workers and the peasants is not a "two-class government" but a proletarian government, which rules in the interests of all of the toilers. In this sense it is indeed a workers' and farmers' or workers' and peasants' government. One of the keys to NEP for Lenin was that the proletariat remains the ruling class (i.e. it continues to exercise its dictatorship). In these passages the dispute between Waters and Lenin can in no way be passed off as merely terminological.

Waters also faces an interesting dilemma in claiming that the NEP-like period in the socialist revolution represents a workers' and farmers' government that is distinct in some programmatic sense from the dictatorship of the proletariat. Waters would date the dictatorship of the proletariat in Russia from the radical measures to nationalize the economy undertaken in the fall of 1918. Yet NEP was introduced in 1921. If we follow her schema through to the end, then the conclusion follows inescapably that the dictatorship of the proletariat in Russia must have been overthrown with the introduction of NEP!

Trotsky's perspectives

There are many other historical and theoretical errors, problems, and even outright falsifications in the Waters article--some major, some relatively minor. Above all, these demonstrate the undialectical, antimaterialist, and eclectic methodology which the SWP leadership has now adopted.

Perhaps the most remarkable of her falsifications is contained in this sentence from page 66: "The government established by the October insurrection was not a 'workers' government,' as that term had been used prior to 1917 by centrists in the Russian Social Democratic movement, who counterposed it to the Bolshevik governmental perspective of a democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry."

Any reader who is not already familiar with the recent work of the SWP leadership in rewriting the history of the Russian revolution will, no doubt, be quite mystified by this reference. Who are these "centrists" who held this view? What precisely did they propose?

Of course, the reference here is to Trotsky. The supposed call for a "workers' government" is Waters's own interpretation of the theory of permanent revolution. Trotsky, however, did not call for a "workers' government." This use of quotation marks by Waters amounts to outright dishonesty (by no means the only misuse of quotations in her article). The slogan put forward by Trotsky from 1905 to 1917, as Waters knows full well, was for a "workers' government in alliance with the poor peasantry"--a slogan that accurately captured the class content of the October revolution. Any objective reading of Lenin's writings will bear out the fact that this was also his analysis of October--an analysis that Mary-Alice Waters would now have us cast aside.

In developing their new version of "Leninism," the SWP leadership must

falsify the real meaning of permanent revolution (asserting that it fails to take into account the need for an alliance with the peasantry) and also retreat from a correct class understanding of the Russian revolution (as a proletarian revolution that was able to forge the necessary alliance). Permanent revolution is nothing more than the idea that the class content of any revolutionary struggle in the world today must be proletarian in order to successfully satisfy the needs of all the oppressed masses, be they workers, farmers, or anything else.

Trotsky's advocacy of permanent revolution was never in contradiction with the need to forge an alliance with the peasantry. The accusation that there was such a contradiction is an echo of the Stalinist slanders of the 1920s and 30s. The present leadership of the Socialist Workers Party is well aware of that fact, and used to defend Trotsky against this slander. It speaks volumes about their present retreat from Marxism that they have seen fit to pick up this long-ago discredited accusation in order to miseducate a new generation of revolutionary fighters in the United States.

Waters's main thesis--that there was a unity in Lenin's perspectives throughout the course of his life on the essential bond between the workers and the peasants in the Russian revolution (and not only in the Russian revolution)--is certainly correct. The problem is that she limits her analysis to this one fact, and leaves aside the fundamental question on which Lenin's views went through a qualitative change: what was the class nature of the revolutionary government which could forge and maintain that alliance? Would it be "democratic" (i.e. bourgeois) or "proletarian"?

The Barnes leadership of the SWP talks a great deal about learning lessons from the revolutions in Central America and the Caribbean, but they have in fact learned very little. The Sandinistas have shown above all an ability to respect the truth and to learn from the reality of the class struggle. They are able to apply creative solutions to specific difficulties and problems. Mary-Alice Waters and the SWP leadership, on the other hand, believe that they can substitute scholastic schemas imposed on history and on reality--and that in some way this will gain them a hearing from the serious revolutionists in Central America and the Caribbean. Such a course never has succeeded, and never can.

GOVERNMENTAL SLOGANS: A BRIEF HISTORY

by Evelyn Sell

The Socialist Workers Party has advocated two governmental slogans at different times in its history: "For a Workers Government" and "For a Workers' and Farmers' Government." In all cases, the content of the slogan remained the same. This continuity of meaning can be traced through books such as The Founding of the Socialist Workers Party, The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution and Socialism on Trial as well as through many party bulletins.

The constitution of the party, adopted at its founding convention in January 1938, stated: "The purpose of the Party is set forth in its Declaration of Principles: its purpose shall be to educate and organize the working class for the abolition of capitalism and the establishment of a workers' government to achieve socialism." (The Founding of the Socialist Workers Party, 1982, p. 175.)

The concepts underlying this very brief statement were presented in the Declaration of Principles and are summarized below:

The Role of the Working Class

The working class will play the central role in the struggle against capitalism and for socialism. This particular class is singled out because of its key position in the productive process and because its conditions of labor impose a coherence and discipline on it -- especially on the industrial workers. Although the working class will play the central role, it requires the support of the other exploited sections of society: large parts of the middle classes, debt-ridden small farmers, Blacks as a persecuted race, and colonial and semi-colonial peoples fighting against imperialist exploitation. The working class must win these groupings as its allies.

The Capitalist State

The big bourgeoisie, bankers and industrialists own and control the instruments and distribution of production, and communication. This gives the capitalists the power to run society in order to maintain their interests and privileges. The state or government is simply the instrument through which the owning class exercises and keeps its power. The ruling class is served by all the organs and institutions of state power: the bureaucracy, courts, police, prisons, and armed forces. The variety of governmental forms in capitalist society (monarchy, democracy, military dictatorship, fascism) all serve the dictatorship of the ruling capitalist class.

The Conquest of Power

The workers must take control of the state power and transfer the sovereignty from the ruling minority to the workers state -- the dictatorship of the proletariat. This is the necessary political phase of the change of ownership and control of production from the capitalists to the workers. The workers will have to destroy the entire machinery of the capitalist state in order to help prevent counter-revolutionary activities and because new state forms will be needed to establish the new social order.

The Workers State

"The workers state is a temporary political instrument making possible the transition to the classless socialist society. Its task is to defend the workers' revolution against its enemies, both within and without, and to lay the foundations for socialism and the final elimination of all classes and class rule." (Ibid, p.185) The workers state will take measures against the handful of big capitalists not against small-scale farmers, individual proprietors or craftsmen. (Measures to be carried out by a workers state are detailed on pages 186-7 for readers wishing this information.)

The Socialist Society

The need for a state machinery will vanish with the creation of a full socialist society. Such a new society can only exist on a scale encompassing the whole world.

All of these understandings and definitions were included in the shorthand formulation about establishing a workers' government to achieve socialism.

Several months after the SWP's founding convention, Leon Trotsky made a series of proposals to the party relating to the programmatic document he was writing for the founding conference of the Fourth International. An SWP delegation met with Trotsky to discuss the matter. In the course of this exchange of views, James Cannon was convinced that the SWP should change its slogan to a call for a workers' and farmers' government. When the Political Committee drafted the resolution "The Decline of American Capitalism and the Revolutionary Transitional Program for the Next Period," Cannon favored using the "workers' and farmers'" slogan. Cannon's amendment was referred to a membership referendum (the result is not recorded in any available document) and the resolution was published in a June 1938 internal bulletin -- retaining the "workers' government" formulation adopted earlier.

When Trotsky met with an SWP delegation in July, he told them he thought it was an error to call for a workers' government.

"The farmers play a very important role in the United States.... Why deprive us of the possibility in the rural districts to say, 'This government would be yours'? That is our drive on the basis of progress, what can you object, farmers? What are your propositions, etc.?"

"The farmers are not a class, but a series of layers of social strata beginning with semiproletarian elements and ending with exploiters, big farmers, etc. The slogan 'workers' and farmers' government' doesn't include for us the whole peasantry or farmers. We signify by our slogan we will introduce a political delimitation in favor of the poor farmers against the rich farmers....we are interested in introducing a wedge, and to omit here the higher stratum and to attract to us the lower..."

"The important thing is that we ourselves understand and make the others understand that the farmers, the exploited farmers, cannot be saved from utter ruin, degradation, demoralization, except by a workers' and farmers' government, and that this is nothing but the dictatorship of the proletariat, that this is the only possible form of a workers' and farmers' government. By and by we must give this understanding to the agricultural workers and to the semiproletarian farmers, that their own government cannot be conducted by LaFollette and other bourgeois, but only by revolutionary workers."

"We must thoroughly understand ourselves that the peasants and farmers who economically represent a survival of the productive system of the middle ages can have no guiding role in politics. They can decide only through the cities; better, they can be guided only by the workers. But it is necessary to pose this slogan before the peasants themselves. We say you must not choose as your alliance the bourgeoisie, but the workers who are your brothers. And this government would be your government of workers and poor farmers, not all farmers, but poor farmers." (The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution, 1973, pages 158-60.)

The program adopted at the September 1938 founding conference of the Fourth International included a section on the workers' and farmers' government. Use of this formulation was explained this way: "The agitation around the slogan workers'-farmers' government preserves under all conditions a tremendous educational value. And not accidentally. This generalized slogan proceeds entirely along the line of the political development of our epoch (the bankruptcy and decomposition of the old bourgeois parties, the downfall of democracy, the growth of fascism, the accelerated drive of the workers toward more active and aggressive politics). Each of the transitional demands should, therefore, lead to one and the same political conclusion: the workers need to break with all traditional parties of the bourgeoisie in order, jointly with the farmers, to establish their own power." (Ibid, p. 95)

Over the next two years, the literature put out by the SWP used both governmental slogans: "For a Workers' Government" and "For a Workers' and Farmers' Government." In October 1940 the Political Committee adopted a series of slogans to be published regularly in the Socialist Appeal newspaper; the last one in this series was "For a workers' and farmers' government." This became the governmental slogan then used in resolutions, statements, etc.

That same year the Voorhis law was enacted making it impossible to continue the formal affiliation with the Fourth International as stated in party documents. A special national convention was held in December 1940. It was decided to suspend the Declaration of Principles and to draft a new declaration for a referendum vote by the membership. This draft was ready on December 8, 1941 -- the same day the U.S. officially entered World War II. The referendum was cancelled and it was decided that the party's basic positions would be presented in resolutions, statements and other forms.

The Marxist concepts and principles embodied in the founding documents of the SWP and the Fourth International remained part of the SWP's programmatic and ideological heritage. This was made clear in the 1941 trial testimony of James P. Cannon when the government utilized the Smith Act against 28 leading members of the SWP and Minneapolis Teamsters Local 544.

Cannon testified that "the fundamental aim of the party then (in 1938) and now is to popularize the doctrines of Marxian Socialism and to aid and lead in the work of transforming society from a capitalist to a communist basis. ... We have set as our aim the establishment of a Workers' and Farmers' Government in place of

the existing government which we term a capitalist government. The task of this government would be to arrange and control the transition of society from the basis of capitalism to the basis of Socialism." (Socialism on Trial, 1965, pages 13 and 14.)

Cannon elaborated through further questions and answers:

"'Dictatorship of the Proletariat' is Marx's definition of the state that will be in operation in the transition period between the overthrow of capitalism and the institution of the Socialist society. That is, the Workers' and Farmers' Government will, in the opinion of Marxists, be a class dictatorship in that it will frankly represent the workers and farmers, and will not even pretend to represent the economic interests of the capitalists." (Ibid, p. 27)

"...when we set up the Workers' and Farmers' Government in this country, the functioning of this government, its tasks, its whole nature, will be so profoundly and radically different from the function, tasks, and nature of the bourgeois state, that we will have to replace it all along the line. From the very beginning the workers' state has a different foundation, and it is different in all respects." (Ibid, p. 31)

These understandings and definitions continued to be the content of the SWP's governmental slogan although the 1967 national party convention amended the constitution from "workers' and farmers'" to "workers' government."

In its statement proposing this change, the Political Committee explained that both governmental slogans were designed to present the idea of a revolutionary government to the workers and their allies. Both slogans were designed to initiate mass consciousness about the need for class struggle politics and help that consciousness develop toward drawing revolutionary conclusions. The Political Committee pointed out that calling for a government of the workers and their allies was a way of leading mass consciousness toward understanding the need for a dictatorship of the proletariat as it had been conceived by the Bolsheviks and as brought into being by the Russian Revolution in October 1917. It was, of course, recognized that the term "dictatorship" would not be immediately understood in its true meaning as the dictatorship of the vast majority over the tiny minority of capitalists -- but many people would respond to and agree with the idea of a government by and in the interests of workers and the masses generally. In the course of struggling for such a government, workers and their allies would be educated about the nature of capitalist politics, the dictatorship of the ruling class, and the need for all-out struggle.

The Political Committee statement affirmed that the long-range sense of the slogan for a government of workers and their allies is a pseudonym for the concept of a proletarian dictatorship -- and this was the same sense given previously to the slogan for a workers' and farmers' government. The content of the slogan was not being changed. A change in the formulation, however, was now indicated due to developments in the general political situation. In 1938 the relative political weight of the farmers had been substantial; this was no longer the case as compared with the political weight of other potential allies of the working class.

The recommendation to amend the constitution and to call for a workers' government was made with the understanding that: "The key factor is the idea of a struggle for power led by the workers and supported by all their allies. These allies can be mentioned specifically and their political roles discussed in our propaganda put forward around the central concept of a workers government." ("For a Workers and Farmers Government in the United States," p. 61.)

The 1967 national convention adopted this proposal and for the next fifteen years the SWP constitution read: "The purpose of the Party shall be to educate and organize the working class for the abolition of capitalism and the establishment of a Workers Government to achieve socialism." There were no changes proposed nor adopted regarding basic concepts, perspectives or definitions in relation to the governmental slogan and related questions.

Once again, a change in the SWP's governmental slogan has been proposed. In a report to the March 1982 National Committee plenum, Jack Barnes presented the motion to change from a call "For a workers government" to "For a workers and farmers government." In his report motivating and explaining this motion, Barnes advanced concepts, interpretations, perspectives and definitions which were -- and continued to be -- debated both in the U. S. and in the international Trotskyist movement. For some contributions to that debate, see Issue No. 6 of the Bulletin In Defense Of Marxism.

At this time, SWP branches and local organizing committees of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency are discussing the issues raised in Barnes' 1982 report, subsequent speeches and articles by central leaders of the SWP and the Fourth International, and the latest contribution by Mary-Alice Waters in the Spring-Summer issue of the New International magazine, "The Workers' and Farmers' Government: A Popular Revolutionary Dictatorship."

FOR
RELATED MATERIAL ON THE WORKERS' AND FARMERS' GOVERNMENT

SEE
BULLETIN IN DEFENSE OF MARXISM, NO. 6, APRIL 1984:

Theses on the Workers' and Farmers' Government
by the Fourth Internationalist Caucus in the SWP National Committee

The Workers' and Farmers' Government and the Socialist Revolution
by Steve Bloom

[to order, see page 48]

RETURN TO PARTY BUILDING METHODS OF TRANSITIONAL PROGRAM

by David Williams

At this writing the Political Committee of the Socialist Workers Party has just submitted its political resolution to the membership for pre-convention discussion, barely three weeks before the opening of the convention. This is indeed unfortunate, for the SWP has some important decisions to make, perhaps the most important decisions in its history. The entire membership, including those who have been undemocratically expelled, should be involved in those decisions.

The SWP must decide whether it is content to remain a small propaganda party, commenting from the sidelines, or not, and, if not, then what steps to take to recruit and educate the cadres who will be capable of intervening with authority in the mass movement. The first step must be to recognize that our policy for the last several years has not led to recruitment and development of cadre but rather has caused shrinkage and disorientation in the party's ranks. The party's course of action has failed the test of practice and must be changed.

Published at the beginning of the discussion was a report by Mac Warren adopted at the April 1984 plenum of the National Committee which is incorporated in the political resolution. The report, "Political Priorities and Party Perspectives," sets forth the party's tasks for the next period. It charts no new course. It projects nothing which would begin the process of breaking out of isolation, establishing political leadership in areas of the mass movement where that is possible, and recruiting and training a new generation of revolutionary leaders. As a guide to revolutionary action it is inadequate.

Comrade Warren's article begins by stating the obvious and drawing the wrong conclusions from it. He says, "The bosses' offensive against the working class is headed for a showdown, one that will transform the unions and lead to big possibilities for recruitment to the revolutionary party. This is the future we see being concretely prepared for in the present. This is why we have decided at this meeting to deepen our turn to industry and the industrial unions." The "bosses' offensive" is very real indeed and is striking severe blows against all workers' living standards.

Warren goes on to describe the gap between the level of attacks by the bourgeoisie and the level of response by the workers to those attacks. He concludes, "only a small number of vanguard fighters are beginning to connect the current fights against union-busting, racist attacks, and war with the need to struggle for workers' political power, to replace this capitalist government with one run by workers and farmers." Later he says, "It is vanguard workers...that we focus our attention on."

There is no question that the SWP needs to pay close attention to such workers! But, what does Warren mean by "focus our attention?" Why, "use our propaganda to explain what is happening and how to advance the battles that are developing in the U.S. class struggle." Warren, after reciting a list of struggles going on in this country today, projects as a major focus of activity--a campaign to sell the Pathfinder book, Maurice Bishop Speaks! Yes, this is a good campaign, but is it really of the central importance that Warren ascribes to it? Propaganda is important but not enough.

Workers will not join the SWP in any significant numbers without seeing what it does in action. That means not only talking to already radicalized workers about how struggles should be led--it means joining with them and leading. It means talking to all workers--not just vanguard workers--about questions that are important to them and organizing in such a way that their consciousness is raised and they in their turn begin to come to socialist conclusions.

This is the method that Trotsky outlined in The Transitional Program, which all comrades would benefit from rereading as they participate in the present discussion. The method of The Transitional Program was developed out of years of experience in class battles all over the world. It is a guide to action that can involve workers at different levels of consciousness and lead to the recruitment of the most conscious.

What is needed now is a guide to action that looks at specific situations in the class struggle where the party has an opportunity to intervene, win respect for our ideas and our organization, make important political points illustrated by the experience of the struggle and convince people to join the party. There may be no opportunity on a nationwide scale, but in this period of capitalist crisis there is no lack of confrontations between employers and labor in cities all over the country.

The branches need to get to know their cities better, to become part of their cities' political lives and, in collaboration with the national office, assess opportunities for intervention and make assignments accordingly. It may not be in one of the nine unions targeted at present for building national fractions. It may not necessarily be in industry at all. We need to be flexible. Most importantly, we need to go where we have real opportunities for growth right now. We need to focus more on making workers want to join and stay in the party. If we wait for a big showdown we won't be ready. We prepare for the big battles of tomorrow in part by engaging in struggles today. We prepare by developing confidence in ourselves in action and by winning the confidence of those we work with. Leadership requires the balancing of short-term and long-term perspectives. It means building the party right now while preparing for events in the class struggle whose timing cannot be predicted.

One of the most important opportunities for the party nationally is posed by the 1984 elections, although Comrade Warren barely mentions this. Our socialist election campaigns are a terrific chance to intervene in national political life and, through state and local campaigns, in the political life of our branch cities. Our campaigns for public office deserve to be a high priority and require a great deal more attention than Warren pays to them.

Our campaigns for public office are more than a propaganda institution on the level of our bookstores or public forums. We stress over and over that the working class must break politically with the two party system and take political action on its own. The SWP campaigns offer a concrete way of doing just that. The party has a special opportunity in 1984 with Mel Mason as its candidate. This year, for the first time, the party has a candidate who has held elective office and can point to a record of activity as a public official. The party can point with pride to what Mason and those with whom he worked in Seaside did. The party can say, "This is what socialists would do if elected. This is what you can vote for." Mason's record as a city councilman is one that most conscious workers, especially Black workers, will respect.

The problem facing the SWP is crystallized in the section of Warren's report subtitled "Avoiding Political Retreats." Warren says, "In deepening the turn, we also want to advance politically in our discussions and our work in the class struggle. If we begin to retreat politically from real struggles that are going on, if we retreat from political discussions that are needed, then it will begin to affect the turn, too. It will be a back-door way of retreating on the turn itself." Specifically, Warren raises criticisms of what he calls the retreat from the National Black Independent Political Party (NBIPP). In reality, every area of party work has suffered from the same kind of political retreat that Warren describes happening in NBIPP. It is not enough to say, "Let's not do it." That's only half the battle. The party must come to grips with the reasons for political retreats and take concrete steps to make sure that unnecessary retreats do not take place in the future.

It is true—big class battles are going to take place. We can't tell when, but we have to get ready now. That means, first, all obstacles in the way of recruitment and integration of new members into the party must be broken down. Second, the party needs to work actively in areas where party-building opportunities exist right now, realizing that what these areas are may vary from city to city. We need to be active where we can play a leadership role, get a hearing for our socialist program, and win the best activists to the party. Third, we need a turn to industry that is based on long-term perspectives. We need to learn how to explain more than our broad socialist goals. We must also present our program in terms of day-to-day experiences to people who instinctively distrust politics and politicians and whose primary concern is economic security for themselves and their families. We need to go through the experiences of the working class and become known not only as socialists, but as people. We just happen to be people who have some very definite ideas about what working people need to do to make their lives and their children's lives better.

It's time to return to the party-building methods outlined in The Transitional Program.

ON THE SWP DISCUSSION

by David Williams

The preconvention discussion in the SWP this year is remarkable in many respects, most of them negative. The lack of participation by members of the NC shows a lack of seriousness and a lack of respect for the membership. The lateness of the PC in submitting any line resolutions is contemptuous of democratic procedures. Usually a preconvention discussion is opened by a draft political resolution, around which the discussion centers. This year, by contrast, the discussion opened with a slanderous "report" on the "Gerardo Nebbia Disruption Campaign." The expulsion of comrades who held opposition views has had a chilling effect on the discussion and the volume of articles submitted to the Discussion Bulletin.

Regardless of the leadership's intentions, comrades are thinking about the party's course of action. The revisions of the political program and organizational norms of the SWP are at the center of the discussion, and some of the discussion articles have attempted to come to grips with them. Jack Barnes' speech to the 1982 YSA convention did not make the theory of permanent revolution go away.

The ironies of the SWP discussion in 1984 are many. The first contribution in the Discussion Bulletin is from Comrade May S. of Los Angeles, who believes that Mao Zedong and his collaborators were a proletarian revolutionary leadership. Yet, it is Comrade May who, from her point of view, defends the theory of permanent revolution.

This is not such a tall order as it may seem. Mao Zedong, of course, rejected the theory of permanent revolution in favor of his theory of "new democracy," an intermediate stage between imperialist domination and socialism. But "new democracy" was never more than a theory. Under direct attack from the United States and facing sabotage from the native bourgeoisie, the Chinese revolution had to advance. It was faced with either the expropriation of the bourgeoisie or its own destruction, and a workers' state was established in China. And what, besides this, is the essence of the theory of permanent revolution? Either the revolution moves forward towards the establishment of a workers' state or the capitalists will destroy it.

Problems associated with the leadership's schematic and rigid approach to work in the labor movement are raised in contributions from Comrades Mike C. of Denver and Dave E. of Indianapolis. Both have as their starting point what will best build the party. Both point out party-building opportunities lost by rigidly applying what Comrade Dave calls the "Big Nine" formula. Comrade Mike's contribution focuses on the positive opportunities in an unorganized plant where comrades were participating in an IUE (a "big nine" union, to be sure) organizing drive. Comrade Dave focuses on the negative side, pointing out opportunities the party is missing in his city.

The radicalization of the working class is in its early stages. It is fruitless to prejudge where important class battles will take place and where the best party-building opportunities will be. In 1934--again in the early stages of a radicalization--there was no way to know that a major battle would develop in the Minneapolis coalyards. The International Brotherhood of Teamsters at that time was a small, old-time craft union--had the Communist League of America based its trade union work on any prejudged formula, the Minneapolis comrades would not have been working in the coalyards and participating in an IBT organizing drive. They may even have been transferred out of Minneapolis. The point is this: in a period of working class radicalization the party will be presented with many opportunities to intervene in struggle. The most important thing is to intervene, and to do so correctly. The party should worry less about the historic impact of the struggle or the social weight of the industry in which the struggle is occurring. The decisive question is the question of the party--the recruitment and training of revolutionary leaders and the growth of the party's authority in the mass movement.

There has been little direct discussion of the workers' and farmers' government, considering the importance which the PC has given to it. Ernest H. of the Newark branch has contributed an article which mostly defends ideas which are not under attack. Everyone agrees that after a revolution

the pace of transition to socialist property relations cannot be allowed to outstrip the consciousness of the broad masses. In general, however, the transition to socialist property relations is made necessary rather quickly by "destabilization" efforts of the imperialists and native capitalists, often combined with direct military attack. A post-revolutionary government with a clear and conscious proletarian perspective will be in a far better position to defend the revolution than will a leadership that lacks a revolutionary Marxist program. Comrade Keith M. of New York says much more on this subject with far fewer words than does Comrade Ernest.

Comrade Keith focuses on the decisive question--proletarian leadership. He points out that the only real benefits to the peasantry can come from socialist revolution. Even measures designed to give direct benefits to the rural masses--such as cheap credit, cancellation of debts, shifting the tax burden to the rich, and, in most underdeveloped countries, thorough land reform--have an anti-capitalist thrust.

Comrade Howard P. of Chicago returns to the beginning of the present dispute over the theory of permanent revolution in his article, "Did Lenin Discard the Slogan of 'The Democratic Dictatorship of the Proletariat and the Peasantry?'" He answers that question affirmatively and challenges the false position taken by Doug Jenness in his 1981-82 ISR articles. Comrade Howard insists that Jenness can arrive at his conclusions only through a systematic misreading of the sources. Unlike Jenness, Howard places the quotes from Lenin in the context of actual events in Russia from February to October 1917. Although Howard confines his remarks to the Russian Revolution, it is clear that this is one of the main points upon which much of the SWP leadership's revisionism hangs. Howard proposes that the convention vote to acknowledge the incorrectness of the Jenness articles by withdrawing them and rewriting them to reflect our "traditional view." Such a step is certainly necessary and would reflect a turn away from the headlong revisionism of the SWP leadership.

Comrade Eileen G. of Philadelphia has brought all of these considerations together in a coherent program of opposition to the SWP's self-destructive course. In so doing she has stood up to a thinly-veiled threat from Jack Barnes himself. Barnes let her--and the rest of the party--know that she can think what she will as long as she takes no organizational steps to convince the party to change its course. Comrade Eileen not only speaks to the political questions--she also raises the question of the undemocratic expulsions of 1983-84 and calls for the participation of the expelled in the debates facing the party. Her "Draft Platform of the Permanent Revolutionist Tendency" and her earlier "For a 'Ruthless Criticism of Everything Existing'" represent a return to Trotskyism. Should the majority of the SWP be won to Comrade Eileen's views it would be a giant step forward for the SWP.

JAMES P. CANNON ON THE 1928 EXPULSIONS

[Note:--James P. Cannon, a founder and leader of the SWP and the Fourth International, died ten years ago, in August 1974. The start of attempts to assess his role in American political life was made in a book of reminiscences, James P. Cannon As We Knew Him (Pathfinder Press, 1976). It will probably take some more time before an objective and thorough appraisal can be made of the relation between his role in the SWP and the severe crisis that struck that organization after his death. While awaiting the outcome of the crucial SWP convention that will be held in August 1984, we observe the almost simultaneous tenth anniversary of Cannon's death by printing extracts from a letter he wrote in November 1928, shortly after he had been expelled from the Communist Party for defending Trotskyism against its Stalinist persecutors. We do not mean to suggest that the 1928 expulsion from the CP of Cannon and his colleagues was identical with the 1982-84 expulsions from the SWP of oppositionists who sought to defend the program and traditions of the SWP and the FI. But there were several areas in which the two events were similar, and Cannon's old letter expresses the spirit of indignation and struggle against the purges that is justified in both cases. The letter was written in reply to questions from Albert Glotzer, a young CP leader in Chicago who wanted details about the expulsions, and who was soon expelled himself, to become one of the leaders of the American Left Opposition. Cannon's letter was originally printed in the very first issue of The Militant (Vol. 1, No. 1, November 15, 1928), and is reprinted in full in his The Left Opposition in the U.S. 1928-31 (Monad Press, 1981).]

November 15, 1928.

THE MILITANT

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Concerning Our Expulsion:

*A Letter to a Comrade
by James P. Cannon*

Dear Comrade:—

We were very glad to receive your letter and to hear of your reaction against our expulsion and your wish to receive more information and advice as to procedure. Enough of such letters have already been received to make it clear that the attempt to dispose of the principle questions we have raised by the simple mechanical expedient of our expulsion from the Party will meet with resistance from the worker Communists in the ranks.

The "suddenness" with which the whole issue has burst upon the Party was unavoidable on our part. The Polcom majority declared us expelled from the Party for our views without even waiting for the Plenum of the Central Executive Committee, before the party members had the slightest inkling of the situation and before we had the opportunity to inform them. Their object was to confront the Party members with our expulsion as an accomplished fact and then to terrorize them

into an endorsement of it before the slightest information is in their hands. They expelled us, as they have expelled many good Communists before, in order to deprive us of the possibility of speaking to the Party as Party members. Then they tell the Party it has no right to listen to us because we are "not members of the Party." Such shallow trickery can be based only on the most profound contempt for the intelligence of the rank and file of the Party. To allow such methods to succeed would be to give the power of self-perpetuation to any clique which might gain control of the apparatus and to reduce the principle of democratic centralism to a fiction. According to such procedure the fact of expulsion settles the question. But in the absence of any preliminary discussion, the Party can decide the question wisely and responsibly only if it knows why the expulsion took place and what the expelled members have to say. A Party member who does not demand that right, who keeps quiet, or who votes to endorse this act of bureaucratic disruption for fear of expulsion is not acting like an upstanding Communist whose vote means understanding and conviction.

The wisdom of our action in presenting a clear and direct statement of our position was questioned; but it seems quite clear that its correctness has already been established. The Party needed an alarm bell; it needed an awakening from the stupor of factional intrigue over small questions. The Party needs plain speech now above everything. Strategy, of course, is not to be excluded in such a fight, but it must be strictly subordinated to the major task of telling the truth and stimulating the Party members to demand the truth. This is the real duty of leaders now. It is from this standpoint, in our opinion, that you and the other leading comrades must decide your course—from the standpoint of your responsibility as leaders to the Party and to the rank and file comrades who have confidence in you and look to you for guidance.

Regarding our expulsion and the expulsion of others which is already being prepared a few words should be said. The great significance and unbounded consequences of such criminal acts by the Political Committee cannot be overestimated and no kind of diplomacy or expediency will be able to subordinate such an issue. It will inevitably rise up and confront the Party at every turn. The expulsion, for their views alone, of loyal Communists, founders of the Party, with honorable records of 15-20 years of activity—in contradistinction to the shady records of many of those who expelled us—cannot be covered up or minimized by any kind of slander. For we are revolutionaries who will fight for our right to belong to the Party and will not let anything tear us away from it. The Polcom "settled" the question by summarily expelling us, but it will arise again immediately after the election campaign when others will demand our reinstatement and are also expelled.

Expulsion is a dangerous fire to play with in a Party which has all too few forces of the kind that are being expelled, forces loyal to the Party and working for its future, who have contributed not a little in building the Party and establishing its prestige among the workers. As the struggle continues and our material is made available to more and more Party members the issue will grow more acute. The wholesale expulsion of proletarian fighters while the petty-bourgeois careerists and adventurers are attracted and drawn to the center—this is the only possible logic of the expulsion course initiated by the Polcom.

We do not believe it is in principle possible for any comrade who disagrees with such a course and understands its unavoidable consequences to give

any kind of support to our expulsion. To say that a protest against our expulsion can be made only if one agrees with the position of the Russian Opposition on all points seems to us to be putting the question upside down. It would be more correct to say that the expulsion can be endorsed only if one is convinced that the position is wrong on all important points and that we have become enemies of the Party, which no Communist adult believes.

We surely intend to advise a certain tactical line to some of the rank and file comrades to avoid expulsion without repudiating their principles, but leaders to whom the whole Party is looking are duty-bound to speak clearly and tell the Party just what they think, even if it is not a complete support of one position or the other. What is wrong about voting against expulsion when one does not know the facts and has not had sufficient opportunity to adopt a definite position one way or the other? What kind of an atmosphere is it in the Party, what form of Party democratic rights exist, when members feel compelled to vote one way or the other on the spot without any real knowledge of their own? A Party uprising against this whole system will be one of the most fruitful results of our fight.

It is to be expected that those who deprived us of all rights to defend our views in the normal Party way will now raise a great hue and cry because we take other means of bringing our position to the Party membership. They pervert the great Leninist principle of discipline based on a correct revolutionary policy into an instrument for shutting the mouth of the loyal Party member and protecting their opportunist policies and disloyal acts from any real criticism and exposure. Such bureaucratic machinations have nothing in common with Leninist organization principles. We would be unworthy of the name of revolutionists if we allowed our views to be suppressed by such sophistical methods.

It is only miserable bureaucrats and philistines who can keep silent about their views on principle questions. Revolutionaries advocate them. The issues of the Russian Opposition, and their indissoluble connection with our own specific problems will be discussed by the Party in spite of all. And it is our task to see to it that this is not a one-sided discussion, or rather distortion, of the questions, but a presentation of them to the Party as they really are. The regeneration of the Party and the reconstitution of its leadership on a proletarian Communist basis will proceed from this.

Yours fraternally,

J. P. CANNON.

JAMES KUTCHER APPEALS TO THE CONVENTION

Introduction

Revolutionary continuity depends not only on a certain kind of leadership in the revolutionary party but on a certain kind of membership as well. James Kutcher is the best known rank-and-file member of the Socialist Workers Party in its 46-year history. He has been and remains the kind of member that a revolutionary party needs and relies on.

Comrade Kutcher is now 71 years old. He was 25 in 1938 when the SWP and the Fourth International were founded. He remained a member of the SWP from then until October 1983 when he was expelled.

After being drafted in World War II, he lost both legs in battle. Although this disrupted his life, his loyalty to the SWP never faltered. Outfitted with artificial limbs, he got a job as a clerk with the Veterans Administration. When the cold war began, the U.S. ruling class launched a witch-hunt to purge all "subversives" from government jobs. Kutcher was branded a "security risk" because of his SWP membership and was fired from his job in 1948. Unlike many other victims of the purge, Kutcher, with the SWP's support, decided to publicly challenge his firing as illegal, unconstitutional, and politically discriminatory.

The Militant recently wrote (April 20, 1984) that the U.S. government "tried to fire him during the McCarthy period." They not only tried, they succeeded. The "Case of the Legless Veteran," as it became known, was fought in court and on the field of public opinion for a full decade--through many court hearings and appeals and a vigorous defense campaign directed at the unions and other progressive forces and led by Kutcher himself, who spent eight years fighting for his own reinstatement and the SWP's right to function legally as a revolutionary Marxist party.

In that decade, when Kutcher spoke to hundreds of organizations representing millions of workers and their allies, on radio and TV, in the press and any other place he could get a hearing, he probably introduced socialist ideas to more people than any other member of the SWP in those difficult years. The SWP was badly damaged by the witch-hunt but it survived, thanks, in part, to the persistent struggle against repression symbolized by the Kutcher defense case.

Kutcher won his job back in 1956; two years later he even won back pay. It was a setback for the witch-hunters and a sign that people were beginning to see through redbaiting. The record of this fight can be read in Kutcher's book The Case of the Legless Veteran (Monad Press, NY, 1973) and can be seen in Howard Petrick's award-winning film of the same title (1981).

After winning his case Kutcher returned to his rank-and-file activities in the SWP, as modest as ever, until August 1983 when, as he tells in his letter, he was suddenly brought up on charges twice and was expelled from the SWP.

In April 1984 the SWP National Committee rejected appeals by Kutcher and scores of other unjustly expelled members. Their last resort is the SWP convention in August where the appeals will be considered as the first point on the agenda.

The party leadership has refused to tell expellees whether they will be allowed to appear personally when the delegates consider their appeals. Notification is to be made "by telegram" on the same day this point is taken up. The Fourth Internationalist Tendency has submitted a request for two representatives to speak on behalf of all tendency members. We also have requested that Frank Lovell and Steve Bloom be permitted to attend the trial which will consider their expulsion. Thus far there has been no answer.

Since this is a matter that concerns the entire SWP membership, we asked the NC to publish the written appeals in a pre-convention bulletin. The NC has refused even to acknowledge the request. That is why we are compelled to make the text of the Kutcher appeal available to SWP members through our Bulletin.

Oct. 18, 1983

Delegates to the next Socialist Workers Party Convention

Dear Comrades:

This is my appeal against the actions of the Manhattan Branch declaring me guilty of violence against a comrade and censuring me at a trial on Aug. 28, 1983; suspending me at a second trial on Sept. 20 for violating discipline and informing me that I would be expelled by Oct. 5 if I didn't comply with instructions by that date; and expelling me as of Oct. 5. I will try to keep this appeal from getting too long, but it involves two separate trials and I have to explain some things in detail because the branch has refused to let me use or see official branch documentation about my case.

The Background

I was a charter member of the SWP when it was founded in 1938 and a supporter of the Fourth International since 1937. In all those years I never was accused of violating discipline in any way and never was brought up on charges for any reason until August 1983. Being called undisciplined or disloyal by party leaders is a new experience for me; in fact, I could hardly believe it when it happened.

It is also necessary for me to mention two other things in the recent period which I think have a bearing on my case.

One is that relations between me and some leaders and members of the Manhattan Branch have not been satisfactory during the last two or three years. I began to feel that some of the members were being prejudiced against me by things said to them about me behind my back, that they were making fun of me or laughing at me, etc. When I asked comrades I trusted if this was so, they told me I was imagining things or becoming a little paranoid, and assured me I had no reason to suspect an imaginary whispering campaign. But I was not satisfied with these assurances and began to feel uncomfortable and irritable around some members. Since they were not acting in a comradely way to me I did not feel much like acting in a comradely way to them.

Another thing I have to mention is my growing worry about several unhealthy developments in the party nationally since the last convention (1981). At that time I abstained in the voting for convention resolutions, but since then I have found myself in definite disagreement with some of the National Committee's political and organizational decisions, which I think are undermining many of the party's traditional policies and practices. The party leadership is changing many political and organizational positions without having a party discussion to consider such changes, and comrades who want such a discussion are being expelled or encouraged to resign. It seems to me that our concepts of a Leninist party are also being changed -- changes that are turning the members inward and encouraging them to think and act dogmatically, and on the whole making the party less attractive to the ^{workers} ~~we~~ hope to recruit. As a result, I have sometimes voted in the branch in favor of positions taken by minority members of the National Committee, against unjust expulsions, against cancellation of the 1983 national convention, etc. But I have never acted in a disruptive way at meetings or violated any of the new organizational norms, even the ones I think are incorrect or harmful.

What Happened on August 14, 1983

A New York-New Jersey district membership meeting was held at the Manhattan branch hall on Aug. 14, four days after a plenum of the National Committee at Oberlin. The meeting was called to hear plenum reports. I didn't know

it yet but the NC had just suspended four NC minority members. Somebody decided (the district committee or another) that trouble might erupt when this purge was announced, and so a security guard was appointed, headed by NC member Dick McBride. I did not realize it at the time but this guard was supposed to defend the meeting not against outside forces but against part of the membership. I can't remember such a strange thing happening inside our party before this.

Quite a few members were upset or unhappy hearing about the four NC members being ousted from the party, the decision to postpone our next national convention for a whole year, and other disturbing news. But nobody disrupted the meeting or tried to do so. All they did was ask for the floor during the discussion period and express their opinions. That left the security guard with not much to do. But, as Comrade McBride told the branch two weeks later, he remained alert and on the job and decided to keep his eye especially on me (although I didn't even ask for the floor once at that meeting). So he stationed himself near me and watched me like a hawk.

According to his later testimony, he saw me "punch" Berta Langston without any advance notice or provocation during the second part of the Aug. 14 meeting, following an intermission. He said Comrade Langston had looked startled when I punched her, but had said nothing, moving away from me to the side and later to the rear. McBride said he had not done anything to intervene at the time because he did not want the situation to "escalate." When he saw it was not escalating, he returned to his previous role of surveilling me. He then thought it over and talked it over for an entire week, and on Aug. 21, at a branch meeting, he gave me a piece of paper informing me he was filing charges against me for "hitting a comrade."

What actually happened was this: I was sitting in my wheel chair near the back of the hall listening to the discussion up front. My view was partly obstructed when Berta Langston, also listening to the discussion, walked in front of me, a little to the side, and stood there. So I reached forward a little and touched her on the back, to get her attention so that she would move a little. I touched her either with my right index finger or, possibly, with that and the middle finger. I don't think any rational person could mistake this for a punch. It could correctly be said that I touched, nudged or prodded her, but not that I punched her. Comrade Langston turned when this happened. Since I did not want to talk aloud during the discussion from the front of the hall, I indicated to her silently that I would like her to move out of my line of vision. She understood exactly what I meant and moved aside. That was the end of the incident, or non-incident.

At my trial two weeks later, Comrade Langston testified in complete accord with my account here of what had happened. Since I was not present at the trial, she sent me a letter the next day saying what she had told the branch. (See the appendix following this appeal.)

Requests and Denials

I can't convey how shocked I was on Aug. 21 when McBride filed his charges against me at the Manhattan branch meeting. It was like a nightmare. I told myself McBride must be hallucinating or making some impulsive mistake. But I couldn't avoid the fact that he had taken a whole week before filing the charges, or the fact that the branch Executive Committee, instead of throwing out the charges, was treating them seriously and preparing for a trial. I couldn't believe that the whole EC was hallucinating too.

That night was a real ordeal for me. I couldn't explain what had hap-

pened, I couldn't believe what had happened, I didn't know what to do. What was happening to the party? Did the EC really believe the McBride fantasy? Would the members of the branch? I turned hot with anger, feeling under intolerable pressure, isolated, helpless, humiliated and in despair. By morning I must have been in pretty bad shape. Later in the day George Breitman, a comrade and friend who lives across the street from me, visited and said I looked so shaken and distraught I ought to go to the hospital for medication to calm me down.

I tried to regain my bearings without seeing a doctor. But before I could do so, I got a phone call from Ken Shilman, then the branch organizer, which further aggravated my condition.

I told Comrade Shilman the same thing I had told McBride the day before, that I had not hit Comrade Langston in any way. But he was not interested in that. He was phoning to inform me that the EC had appointed an investigating committee that would meet in three days (Thursday, Aug. 25) and that my trial would probably take place three days after that (Sunday, Aug. 28). I then told him I was in a state of shock and unable for the time being to defend myself effectively. I asked him what was the hurry, why did the investigation and trial have to take place so quickly? Shilman did not answer that at all. I then made two requests:

1. Can I have a comrade come with me to the investigating committee, to advise and help me if I need it? Answer: Absolutely not; if you need help you can get it from the investigating committee.

2. Since I am emotionally and physically unable to handle the tension of an investigation and trial so soon, can I have a brief postponement of both for a week or two, until I am able to respond normally and defend myself adequately? Answer: A postponement is entirely out of the question.

I think that this arbitrary refusal of a reasonable request was more upsetting to me than the filing of the charges had been. Shilman didn't even pretend to take my postponement request up with the EC before rejecting it. I felt I was being treated as a criminal before I had even been tried. I had the same feeling many years ago when the government was persecuting me, but at least some of the time the government witch hunters pretended I had some rights, including the right to ask for a postponement when there was a legitimate reason for doing so.

Later the same day, Craig Gannon phoned from the National Office and said a Political Bureau subcommittee (himself, Mac Warren and Ken Shilman) wanted to meet with me the following morning at the National Office. I told him I was too upset to have any meetings at that time, and I did not hear from them again.

The Investigation

The date of the investigating committee's hearing was changed from Aug. 25 to Aug. 28. It wasn't delayed because of my request but because the committee wanted more time to prepare the case against me and to line up witnesses to testify against me. Since I was unable to attend, for the reasons I had told Comrade Shilman, I was not present. Three members appeared before the committee: Dick McBride and Berta Langston, who presented their conflicting versions of the Aug. 14 incident, and George Breitman, who told the committee my version and urged that the case be dismissed without a trial or, if a trial was insisted on, that it be postponed until I could be present to defend myself.

The EC voted to accept the McBride version, reject the Langston and Kutcher versions, deny any postponement and hold the trial that night. It also approved a report to be given by Shilman to the trial that night, including motions the branch would be asked to adopt.

Since I was not present at the investigation or the trial, what I say about them is obviously second- or third-hand. As will be seen, I tried to get official verification of what actually was said and done, but was prevented from doing so by a decision of the leadership.

The First Trial

The only written charge against me was that I had hit Comrade Langston. The 45-minute EC report, presented by Comrade Shilman, spent only around five or ten minutes on the hitting charge. According to Shilman, the EC recognized there was conflicting testimony, by McBride and Langston, but it had no doubt whatever that some violent incident had taken place; the only question in doubt was the severity of the incident. The EC held me guilty of violence against a comrade, but since the severity or degree of the violence was uncertain, the EC did not propose a penalty that would be appropriate for very severe violence. This was said to be the logic of its motions to find me guilty of the violence charge, censure me, and warn me to mend my behavior in this and other respects if I wanted to remain in the party.

By around 43 to 6, the branch voted to approve the EC's report and motions, and by a similar vote it defeated a motion to postpone the conclusion of the trial for two weeks so that I could be present to defend myself. I ask you to rescind these motions of guilt and censure on the ground that the EC's report was deliberately and maliciously distorted in order to prejudice the members against me. For reasons explained below, I cannot give exact citations here to demonstrate this. But I will give a few examples that are typical of the report as a whole.

I had told the EC, through its organizer, why I could not be present at the trial. But the EC's report did not mention why I was absent -- as though I had not informed the EC, or as though I was absent without good reason. This omission was deliberate, not accidental.

I had asked to be granted a postponement of action on my case "for a week or two." The EC report given by Shilman did mention this but only in a deliberately falsified form, so that it was made to seem something else. According to Shilman, I had asked for a postponement "for a week or two or a year." The addition of the last three words, invented by Shilman and never said by me, makes the request seem frivolous or cynical. Instead of a sincere request by a loyal comrade in distress it is transformed into a transparent attempt to evade any judgment of serious charges.

Is it any wonder the members voted to condemn me? How could they know that the EC report was filled with such lies and distortions?

Members on trial have the right to honest reports by the leadership. Members deciding verdicts in trials have the right to honest reports by the leadership. The members sitting in judgment at my trial and I were both cheated out of our rights by a lying leadership.

The only written charge against me was about the Aug. 14 incident, but the great majority of the EC report was about something else -- alleged acts of violence against other comrades in the past, threats of violence against comrades, and abuse of women comrades through vile sexist language against them, which added up to a so-called pattern of my conduct.

According to the EC, these offenses against our norms had been going on for at least two or three years, but the EC had never spoken to me about them or tried to get me to stop committing them. The EC admitted it had been at fault in never even mentioning this problem to me or to the branch; they had, instead, "organized around the problem" by going to individual members and urging them to avoid me as much as possible, not sit near me, etc. Now they realized that was wrong, and so they were bringing the prob-

lem out into the open and would demand that I discontinue my obnoxious behavior if I wanted to remain in the party.

And then, in the absence of written charges about these offenses and in my own absence, the EC and some members whom the EC had mobilized during the week turned my trial on another charge into a campaign of character assassination against me. The Aug. 14 incident paled into insignificance by comparison, and any doubts people had about the Aug. 14 facts were washed away in a torrent of mud. I maintain this is a crooked way of conducting a trial, violating the party constitution's requirement for written charges, and that the branch's verdicts are invalidated on this basis alone.

Not that I claim to be above criticism or reproach. I have said and done things I later regret -- usually, I believe, under provocation. But I am not the monster I was painted to be at this trial. One EC member told the branch that when he moved to New York a couple of years ago, three different members warned him that it would be dangerous for him to sit near me with his new-born infant! If I haven't always said the right thing, or if sometimes I have spoken too harshly, this kind of incitation behind my back should be taken into account in judging me. And the EC report certainly did not take it into account. Instead, it sought to inflame the members against me. I will give only one example:

As part of its charge of sexist abuse of women, the EC report said I had called women comrades "cunts." This is an absolute lie. I have never used that term in my entire life, either out loud or to myself. It was made up and attributed to me by the EC, for only one purpose--to smear and discredit me completely, to make me an object of contempt and hate. Whatever other terms I may have used that members consider sexist, I hereby apologize for and will try to never use again. But I maintain the EC's deliberate falsification on this point taints the entire trial. It justifies your rescinding the verdicts and your passing of a motion to censure the EC that resorted to such poisonous methods.

Playing Games With Me

Two days after the trial, on Aug. 30, Comrade Shilman phoned me again. His account of the trial decisions was very terse, which he explained by adding that he was going to send me a copy of the EC report to read, after which I was to meet with an EC subcommittee to discuss the conditions under which I would function in the party in the future. He indicated that until I had read the report and met with the subcommittee I was not to go to the branch headquarters, but that this would not be a problem because I would get the report immediately or very soon. I replied that after reading the report I would be glad to meet with the subcommittee as soon as possible.

I really appreciated being offered the report, for at least two reasons. I had heard second-hand what had happened at my trial and I wanted to see for myself whether or not the report contained the distortions by the EC that I have mentioned above. Reading it was the surest way to settle this question in my mind. Secondly, it would help me decide what to do about possibly appealing the branch decisions to a higher body. I knew I needed the text of the EC report to make the most effective possible appeal to a higher body.

So I waited for the report to arrive. And waited and waited. For eight nerve-wracking days and nights. I phoned the branch office and was told that Shilman was out of town, on his way to another branch, and no longer was our branch organizer. On Sept. 7 I mailed a letter to the EC, expressing my bitterness and frustration. I wrote, among other things: "Now eight days have passed and the report has still not arrived. Considering your refusal to grant my reasonable request for a postponement of the trial for a week or two, until I could appear to defend myself, you seem to me to be

displaying a damned casual attitude to the rights of a member whose name has been dragged through the mud. I hope you will read this letter to the branch so that I won't be blamed for your failure to send the report eight days ago."

The next day Susan Jacobson, the acting branch organizer, phoned to say the EC had received my letter. She said she thought Shilman had sent me a copy of the report before leaving town, but now she herself would have it copied without delay and get it hand-delivered to me at home.

On Sept. 8 the acting organizer and the EC still thought I should read the report and still intended to give it to me. But in the next three days their minds were changed, and they now decided it should not be given to me. Why? They did not bother to explain to me; they did not tell me they had changed their minds. Instead, in a letter to me on Sept. 10, they acted as if the offer of the report had never been made or accepted. Was I exaggerating when I said the EC was playing cruel and heartless games with me?

I answered their letter the same day it was handed to me, Sept. 11. I reminded them of my agreement to meet with the subcommittee after reading the report and asked to be given a valid reason for their denying it to me. "Are you afraid," I asked, "that I, a rank and file member, might dare to differ with the report of your almighty committee and even disprove some of your claims against me?" I also asked why they were "now in such a hurry after dawdling with the report for two full weeks of promises that were not kept.... Now you are rushing ahead again and trying to twist things so that I will appear to be violating discipline when it is you who are violating the real norms of the party by your distortions about my case, your refusal to grant me a brief postponement, your false promises to let me read your report about my case, and your threats to take further action against me because I refuse to accept your versions of reality. Instead, I urge you to cease and desist your campaign against me and to send me a copy of the report...."

That same night the branch complied with the EC's request that it approve the EC's Sept. 10 instructions to me. It also complied with the EC's new position to deny me the report. The reason given for this reversal was that if I got the report I might circulate it, presumably outside as well as inside the party. This, it was said, would damage the security of the party. Therefore I should not be allowed to read the report about my case, even though it had been read to the whole branch during the trial and even though I would have heard it at that time along with the other members if I had been able to attend my trial.

For the second time in my life I was being declared a security risk. The first time was in 1948 when the government fired me from my clerical job with the Veterans Administration, not on the basis of anything I had done (other than belonging to the SWP) but on the basis of a bureaucratic decision, without a trial, that I might do something threatening security. Now the EC was taking similar action against me, without the slightest evidence in the world that I would ever do anything to harm the interests or security of the party I have supported and tried to build most of my life.

I think that the day I learned about this was the worst of my life. If I was emotionally unable to meet with the subcommittee before this, I was even more unable after. So I didn't attend the new investigation and I didn't attend my second trial. I therefore was not present when the EC introduced new lies: that I was challenging the party and its norms, that the effort to build a proletarian party would be undermined unless my challenge was repulsed, that I wanted to meet the subcommittee only on my

terms, that I had "declined" to meet, that I "chose" to absent myself, etc.

The Second Trial

At the trial on Sept. 20 the EC proposed and the branch agreed to find me guilty of violating Article VIII, Sections 1 and 2, of the party constitution by failing to meet with the subcommittee on Sept. 13, as ordered by the EC; to suspend me from party membership; and to expel me by Oct. 5 unless I met with the subcommittee before then. A counter-motion to simply send me a copy of the EC's Aug. 28 report on my case was defeated by a heavy margin. Two EC members came in with the new alibi that I couldn't get the report because it was only notes, which require editing; a third EC member said Shilman had let him read the report and he could testify that it was not just notes but a regular text.

A letter to the branch I had sent that day was read at the trial. In it I explained once again why I hadn't attended the investigation sessions or the two trials: "It wasn't because I was trying to violate discipline or defy the EC.... I did not participate because I simply couldn't, physically or emotionally." Everything the EC did in my case, I continued, "only aggravated the stress on me. If I am not present at the second trial, that is the reason. I am still shaking with anger at the thought that such a thing could happen in the party we have worked to build for so many years. If I am to blame for this, the EC is ten times as much to blame, because of its off-again, on-again arbitrariness and its disregard of my rights as a loyal party member."

But the EC report at the second trial didn't even mention the reasons why I couldn't meet with the subcommittee or attend the trial. Why? Was I lying? Was I actually able to attend but pretending I couldn't? That was the clear implication when the EC refused to comment on my explanations and acted as if the only reason could be hostility to the party. Some supporters of the EC even took the floor and said that since my letters to the branch were rational, that "proved" I could not be under real emotional stress: if I could write such letters, obviously I also could attend the trial or subcommittee meeting. The EC reporter, in her summary, did not dissociate herself from these profound and authoritative psychological insights.

After the second trial, during the two-week period when I was suspended before being expelled, I made a last effort to draw attention to the fact that I had legitimate reasons for being absent and had presented these reasons to the EC and branch several times, without ever getting acknowledgment of them. In a letter to the EC on Sept. 27, I put it this way: "If I suffered a concussion of the skull as a result of smashing somebody it with a club, wouldn't you accept that as a valid reason for my not meeting with the subcommittee? Why then haven't you accepted as an equally valid reason the fact that my equilibrium or composure have been smashed (only temporarily, I hope) by the shock of false charges, unkept promises, outrageous slanders and dirty tricks -- not by class enemies but by members of my own party? What must I do to convince you that I am unable to meet with your subcommittee now, short of jumping out the window to satisfy the branch's psychological experts? Haven't any of you smart people on the EC heard that emotional injuries can be as disabling as physical ones?" These questions went unanswered, like the earlier ones.

I also want to quote the last part of the letter I sent the second trial which as I have said was read to the branch but ignored by the EC:

"Comrades, I urge you not to be distracted by the technical side of the new charges against me. Much more is at stake than that.... In the capitalist army soldiers are taught that they must obey any 'direct order' from a superior officer or they will face severe punishment. That is formal discipline and soldiers are invariably ruled guilty for violating it. But discipline in the SWP is not and should not be the barracks type, formalistic and rigid. In judging violations of this kind our party has always taken into account the specific circumstances, extenuating factors, etc. Let's not throw out the flexible and comradely practices and traditions the SWP has had since its foundation. Criticize or punish me if I am wrong, but don't forget to do the same thing with those who provoked what I did by their lies to me and about me. Most of all, please reaffirm the earlier decision to let me have the report. That would be the best outcome there could be to these harmful trials."

Summary

1. At my first trial I was falsely accused of an offense which merits expulsion. I was found guilty and censured in the face of the preponderant testimony that I was not guilty. Although I was charged in writing with a single offense, I was denounced viciously in the EC report to the trial for a "pattern" of misdeeds stretching over three years or more, about which I was given no advance notice before the trial. This pattern consisted nine-tenths of lies, distortions and exaggerations; the one-tenth that did have some connection with reality was never discussed with me or the branch at any time before the trial. If it had been, I would have responded to criticism and tried to avoid repeating offenses or mistakes.

2. I asked for a one- or two-week postponement so that I could regain self-control and be able to defend myself properly. This was denied by a branch leadership that routinely gives much longer leaves of absence to members for personal or other reasons.

3. I agreed repeatedly to meet with the EC subcommittee, as directed, and at the same time explained why I could not do so immediately. The EC ignored my commitment to meet with the subcommittee and acted as if I had not explained to it the temporary disability that prevented me from complying with its time table.

4. I was offered the EC report about my case and then the offer was withdrawn under cover of the most vile slanders about me. Every request I made to see the report after that was treated as a hostile act. Denial of this report weakens my appeal, because it prevents me from proving some of my accusations by the EC's own words. The EC pretends that this denial of my right to see what I was accused of is an example of "proletarian justice." On the contrary, it is an injustice of the kind made notorious by all non-proletarian bureaucracies -- capitalist, Social Democratic, Stalinist and labor.

5. I urge you to rescind or nullify the branch's verdicts in my case, dismiss all the charges against me, reinstate me to membership with all rights, censure the Manhattan EC, and issue a report to the membership explaining why the methods used by the EC in my case are incompatible with Leninist norms and practices.

Why I Appeal to the Convention

The reason I am appealing to you, the delegates to the next convention, instead of to the next higher body (the district committee) or any other higher body, including the National Committee, is because I do not have confidence at the present time that they would handle my appeal objectively.

There are two reasons for this. One is that in the last year or so the National Committee has given short shrift to appeals against expulsions on flimsy grounds of a large number of members whose chief crime seems to be that they disagree with one or another of the new policies and practices that have been introduced recently without prior discussion by the membership.

The second reason is that the Political Committee and the National Office have been involved in my case from the beginning. Dick McBride consulted with the National Office before filing the charges. A subcommittee of the Political Committee asked for a meeting with me the day after the charges were filed, which I wasn't able to attend. A member of this subcommittee, Mac Warren, was made a member of the investigating committee for my first trial although he was not a member of the EC, as the other members of this body were. Comrades Gannon and Warren of the Political Committee's subcommittee met with acting organizer Jacobson at branch headquarters to discuss how to handle my second trial. That is why I don't expect much objectivity in what they say or do about my appeal -- they were too implicated in everything that made this appeal necessary.

Am I claiming that I was tried, censured, suspended and expelled for factional reasons? I lean in that direction because, frankly, I can't think of any other reason for these measures against me. At the first trial George Breitman asked if the EC believed Comrade McBride's story because he is a member of the National Committee majority caucus and rejected the stories of Berta Langston and me because we have voiced disagreements with the majority caucus. I understand that Comrade Breitman was castigated for asking this question, but I will ask it again. I had no motive to hit Comrade Langston and I did not hit her. Everybody who has heard branch reports by Comrade McBride knows that he has a tendency to over-dramatize. Why should the word of one bystander be taken over the word of the two principal participants in whatever happened? If there is some other explanation than the political one I am suggesting, I will gladly consider it. But it will have to square with the facts, and the first fact is that I did not hit Comrade Langston.

I am mailing out only three copies of this appeal -- one to you convention delegates (through the Political Committee), a second to the Manhattan EC, and a third to the United Secretariat of the Fourth International. I hope that I will not be held responsible for any use or misuse of this appeal by them or anyone else. Dishonest people will attack this appeal as "proof" of my hostility to the party, disloyalty, etc. My hostility is not to the party (which they equate with the party leadership) but to anti-Leninist practices that are undermining and discrediting the party. My loyalty to the party remains unchanged. I have always defended the real interests of our party, and I intend to continue doing this in the future. This appeal is part of that defense. The party will be stronger and healthier if you will act favorably on this appeal.

Comradely,
James Kutcher
James Kutcher
New York

August 29, 1983

Dear Jimmie,

I am sorry that you weren't feeling well enough to attend the branch trial last night, and hope you'll soon feel better.

I'd like you to know that I informed the executive committee trial body that the charges brought against you by Dick M. were completely baseless. Despite my testimony, the executive committee decided to press those charges at the branch meeting.

I'm enclosing a copy of some excerpts from my statement to the branch.

Comradely,
Berta

Ken, in his report to the branch, distorted my replies to the executive committee trial body. He said that the e.c. had decided to recommend censure rather than expulsion because there was "conflicting testimony over the severity of the incident." But I did not question the "severity" of Jimmie's violence against me — I denied it outright. In fact, it was only after Dick described the time and place of the crime in considerable detail that I recalled the event at all, or rather, the non-event that sparked this ludicrous investigation.

The facts are as follows: I was ill and had to leave the district meeting before it was over. However, since I was interested in hearing the remarks of the comrade called upon to speak after I left my seat, I stood listening at the rear of the hall. When I was tapped on the back, I turned and realized I was standing in front of Jimmie, obscuring his view. I, of course, moved away and shortly afterwards left....

These are the most bizarre charges yet in the series of spurious charges, trials and expulsions that constitutes the on-going purge of comrades who protest the escalating violations of democratic norms, who uphold the program and principles on which the FI and SWP were founded....

The charges brought against Jimmie at this trial is that he struck me — not tonight's revelations of his alleged improper behavior over the past three years. Since there was no victim and no crime the branch should reject the e.c.'s recommendation...

1984 ELECTIONS

[The next few pages contain material relating to the 1984 election campaign and the support of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency to the SWP ticket of Mel Mason for President and Andrea Gonzalez for Vice President.

The first item is an article addressing Jesse Jackson's supporters now that Jackson has declared his support for Mondale.

Next we print several letters expressing our support to the SWP campaign. The F.I.T. offer to work on the New York petition drive--to help get the SWP candidates on the ballot--has still received no reply. Offers have been made by other F.I.T. groups around the country, with the same result.

Third is a national leaflet which is being distributed by the F.I.T. in support of Mason and Gonzalez.

Finally, the letter from the three national coordinators of the tendency to the Revolutionary Workers Party (PRT) of Mexico--Mexican section of the Fourth International--is a contribution to the public discussion which they have initiated in the pages of their newspaper, Bandera Socialista. For background on this discussion see the issues of Intercontinental Press which are cited in the F.I.T. coordinators' letter.]

A QUESTION FOR JESSE JACKSON SUPPORTERS

by Steve Bloom

What will you do now? That's the question. On July 17, speaking to the assembled Democrats in San Francisco, Jesse Jackson pledged, "I will be proud to support the nominee of this convention for the Presidency of the United States."

Many of you asserted when you called for support for the Jackson campaign that this was a move toward independent Black politics. That was a sad illusion. Is the fight for independent Black and labor political action in this country stronger than it was before Jackson corralled tens of thousands of new voters into the Democratic Party? There has certainly been no outcry from Jackson delegates for him to run now as an independent--despite the Democrats' rejection of the overwhelming majority of their platform proposals. The main effect of this campaign has been to reinforce the crippling "alliance" that has trapped Blacks in the two-party shell-game of bourgeois politics.

Many who supported Jackson in the primaries really intended to vote for Mondale (or Hart) from the beginning. They simply thought that the chances for the Democratic candidate to "defeat

Reagan" would be better if Jackson could breathe some new vitality into the party, or that they might get some concessions in the platform if Jackson made a good showing. But others genuinely believed--even if mistakenly--that supporting Jackson was the road to independent politics. If you were one of these, then you must consider the question of what to do now.

At the very least, you should be calling on Jackson to break with the Democrats and run for President as an independent. But of course Jackson has announced his support for Mondale, so the question remains posed: who will you vote for when Jackson refuses to run?

Your only proper response will be to support the candidates of the Socialist Workers Party--a party that refused to play an opportunist role like other American left groups. The SWP told the truth about Jackson before the convention and is working to put an independent Presidential ticket on the ballot in this country, representing the interests of working people and their allies. The ticket to support in 1984 is Mel Mason for President and Andrea Gonzalez for Vice President.

LETTERS TO SWP

[FIT Letter to the SWP New York Branch]

June 5, 1984

Comrades,

As you know, the petitioning drive to place our party on the ballot in New York is fast approaching. The importance and value of our election campaigns is, if anything, growing. We wish to help with this important party-building task. Therefore, we offer without qualification or condition to help place our party's candidates on the ballot in New York. Of course, such help would be under the direction of the party.

Surely our help with this task can do nothing but advance the interests of our class and our party. We urge you to respond quickly and favorably to our sincere offer.

Comradely,

Sarah Lovell and Naomi Allen
for the New York F.I.T.

[Letter to the SWP National Campaign]

June 15, 1984

Dear Andrea,

Thank you for your letter dated June 1, with a request for a special contribution to finance Mel Mason's tour of Ireland and Britain. I am very pleased to make such a contribution. I have contributed to every socialist presidential campaign since 1964, not only with money but also with my efforts in publicity, literature distribution, building meetings, and petitioning to put candidates on the ballot in several states. Although I have been undemocratically expelled from the Socialist Workers Party, and excluded from working actively for the '84 campaign, which I would like to do, I will continue to support the Mason-Gonzalez ticket in whatever ways remain open to me.

Enclosed is an initial contribution of \$30.00.

Comradely,

Naomi Allen
Naomi Allen



Fourth Internationalist Tendency
p.o. box 1947, New York, N.Y. 10009

Comrade,

Once again we are forced to communicate with you in this manner because of the refusal of our party's leadership to tolerate a full and democratic discussion of the issues facing American revolutionary Marxists today. That is unfortunate. The loss of party membership and influence over the last few years suggests that just such a discussion is urgently needed. Now is a time when the efforts and contributions of all loyal SWP members and supporters should be welcomed instead of refused.

On June 5th we sent a letter to the New York branch headquarters offering, "without qualification or condition," to help in the coming petitioning drive. The text of that letter is included in this mailing. We have received no reply. Also included here is a copy of a letter which Naomi Allen sent with a contribution to the Mason/Gonzalez campaign. The SWP is our party and we wish to do all that we can to build it. We support the SWP campaign, plan to vote and urge others to vote for our candidates, and we wish to participate actively.

What has the SWP to fear from us? What possible good can come from this senseless exclusion of loyal socialists from the most elementary of party building tasks? The answer to both these questions is - nothing at all. We urge you to consider the questions for yourself and see if you can come to any different conclusion.

Our party can be proud of its traditional method of resolving political questions through full, democratic discussion culminating in a vote by a party convention. We think that is still a good method and we have always pledged to abide by it. We emphatically do not think that that Leninist method should be replaced by expulsion, slander, and exclusion.

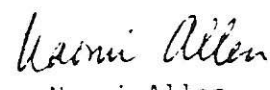
We are enclosing here a copy of a letter written by F.I.T. members in Minnesota. We think it makes some points that should be of interest to you. They not only respond to the charges made against them by Larry Seigle in IIB #1 in 1984, but also thoroughly reject the dishonest charge that our tendency has any connection, in any manner or of any sort, with the Healyites.

You will also find here a copy of the cover of the latest Bulletin in Defense of Marxism. Have a look at the table of contents. Write to the address shown for a copy.

We would prefer not to have to write this letter. We would prefer not to publish the Bulletin in Defense of Marxism. We prefer to be in the SWP where we belong. We have never asked for anything other than the rights and responsibilities of party membership. This course of action has been forced upon us.

The future of the world rests upon the working class and its vanguard. Ask yourself honestly - does the expulsion and exclusion of loyal members strengthen or weaken our movement? Great tasks and struggles await us. Let's meet them together - as comrades.


Sarah Lovell


Naomi Allen

for the New York F.I.T.

SUPPORT THE SOCIALIST CAMPAIGN MEL MASON FOR PRESIDENT, ANDREA GONZALEZ FOR VICE PRESIDENT

What kind of choice are the two "major" parties offering us this year?

The Republicans want us to re-elect Ronald Reagan, the most openly antilabor president in over a generation. Reagan supports lower wages for labor, lower taxes for the rich, and military dictatorships for countries like El Salvador. He opposes equal rights for women, Blacks and other oppressed nationalities. He cuts spending for public education, medical care for the elderly, protection of the environment, and workers' safety and health. But he spends freely for the military.

The Democrats are asking us to vote for Walter Mondale, a true friend of big business masquerading as a friend of labor. The U.S. war drive in Central America and the campaign to lower labor's standard of living here at home were not begun by Reagan. They were pursued by the Carter-Mondale administration long before Reagan took office. The 1984 Democratic National Convention even rejected one platform plank which unconditionally opposed any first use of nuclear weapons, and a second which pledged to reduce the Pentagon budget.

There is, however, an election ticket that working people can support enthusiastically. It's the ticket of the Socialist Workers Party: Mel Mason for President and Andrea Gonzalez for Vice-President.

Mason and Gonzalez are demanding U.S. hands off Central America and the Caribbean. The bankers and business interests who control this country have no right to interfere in El Salvador or Guatemala. They have no right to overthrow the revolutionary government of Nicaragua, or to invade Grenada. Let the people of other nations run their own affairs. The Socialist Workers candidates call for an end to the economic blockade and travel restrictions against Cuba.

Mason and Gonzalez want an end to the campaign that both the Democrats and Republicans have been waging to lower working people's living standards here in this country. A socialist administration in Washington would act to ensure that union contracts are honored, and that no workers are forced to settle for inadequate wages. A socialist administration could help workers fight for the right to organize a union, or go out on strike if necessary to defend their living standards. This would be a marked contrast to Democratic and Republican officeholders, who regularly use the power of government to support big corporations against the workers.

The Socialist Workers candidates believe that everyone, of whatever race or sex, has a right to a job at union wages and with decent working conditions. Begin a program of public works to build badly needed housing, roads, hospitals, schools — not for private profit but for people's needs. It is a scandal that corporations spend billions of dollars for mergers and negotiate multi-million-dollar "golden parachute" deals for displaced executives, while workers are paid peanuts or laid off.

Corporations should be stopped from using bankruptcy laws to tear up union contracts. Mason and Gonzalez call for an end to plant closings and layoffs. Shorten the work week with no cut in pay so that everyone can have a job. If management cannot find work for their employees at decent wages, then the *management*, not the workers, should be fired. Any plant that cannot keep its employees on the job should be nationalized and run by the workers themselves.

The Socialist Workers candidates are fighting for equal rights for women, equal pay for work of comparable value, an end to sexual harassment, and full reproductive freedom. Women of any age, any income level, should have the right to safe, legal abortion and contraception — with no interference from politicians, the clergy, husbands, or parents. The government should tax businesses to establish a nationwide system of free high-quality child care available to all. The Equal Rights Amendment should be the law of the land.

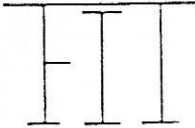
The Socialist Workers candidates are fighting to put an end to racism. Black, Spanish-speaking, and Native American children should not be segregated into inferior schools. Desegregation plans — including school busing — must be enforced. The last-hired, first-fired routine faced by workers who aren't white or male should be done away with. Socialists support affirmative action laws that will help right the wrongs done by years of past discrimination, forcing employers to hire and promote minorities and women.

Mel Mason served as city councilman in Seaside, California, where he fought for and won many measures which improved the lives of working people. Andrea Gonzalez is a Puerto Rican activist who grew up in Brooklyn, N.Y. They want a new government for the whole country — a government that will represent industrial workers, office workers, working farmers, farm laborers, teachers, service workers, unemployed and retired workers, Blacks, women, and others who are discriminated against and oppressed. There is no good reason why we should be ruled by a few bankers and rich attorneys. We need a new political party — a labor party, based on the unions — to fight for a government that would speak and act for working people and their allies. Such a government would be the most democratic ever seen in this country. Working people themselves would make the decisions.

The Fourth Internationalist Tendency urges you to vote Socialist Workers in 1984.

**WORKING PEOPLE MAKE THE COUNTRY RUN
WORKING PEOPLE SHOULD RUN THE COUNTRY**

FROM F.I.T. COORDINATORS TO MEXICAN PRT



Fourth Internationalist Tendency
c/o S. Bloom, 2186 E. 22 St., Brooklyn, N.Y., 11229

July 16, 1984

Political Committee
PRT, Mexico

Dear Comrades,

The June 25 issue of Intercontinental Press prints a translation of your statement on the U.S. elections from the April 23-May 6 issue of Bandera Socialista. It is crucial for revolutionaries of different countries to share experiences and perspectives concerning all aspects of our activities. Your party has earned our respect and admiration through the effectiveness of the election campaign of Rosario Ibarra de Piedra, and through your general participation in the Mexican class struggle. However, there are some specific aspects of the situation in our country that strongly influence the strategy of revolutionary Marxists in the U.S. elections. We would like you to give these some consideration.

You twice use formulations about the "traditional propagandistic-sectarian posture on the elections" and "sterile sectarian incantations" on the part of socialists in the U.S. This is puzzling, and it would be useful if you would be more explicit. What practices by what socialist organizations are you discussing? There is no necessary link between "propaganda" and "sectarianism." In the United States propaganda remains the most fundamental task of the revolutionary movement, and the election campaign is one of the best vehicles we have for this work.

The kinds of campaigns carried out by the Socialist Workers Party in the 1960s and 70s were far from "sectarian posturing" or "sterile incantations." They were essential contributions to the education of broad layers of working people and their allies in this country, and important tools for building the revolutionary party. Whatever tactical criticisms we may have about more recent campaign efforts by the SWP (including the present Mason-Gonzalez campaign) these criticisms do not question the strategy of running socialist propaganda campaigns. Nothing has happened in the American class struggle that changes the necessity for this kind of activity by the revolutionary party.

You seem to disagree with this assessment when you say, "Today in the United States there are two points that can unify important sectors of the workers and the democratic forces: the struggle against austerity and capitalist restructuring of industry; and the struggle against the imperialist intervention in Central America.

"These two points, which between them are of concern to a large number of forces and parties that are currently dispersed, can be the elements that bring them all together in what could be a common platform to achieve an effective responsible intervention in the elections. . . ."

Of course, stated in such a general way, there are many who would agree with the need to fight against austerity, the capitalist restructuring of industry, and imperialist intervention in Central America. But once we go beyond these generalities--to a specific program to carry out such a fight--the problem of a common platform among broad forces becomes a different matter. Getting agreement on such a specific program is not a simple task, or one which any left group in the U.S. has yet accomplished (though many have tried). Nevertheless, an election campaign must present such a positive program for change, and cannot be based simply on opposition to the plans of the American ruling class.

Extensive agreement does exist around the need to oppose present government policy on the questions you mention, and this creates the possibility of broad united front activities on specific points. But much more extensive programmatic agreement is required for a common electoral platform than for simple united front demonstrations.

The most fundamental problem facing the U.S. working class today, particularly in the electoral arena, is the need for a political party independent of the ruling class. It is this question that creates the greatest confusion and misunderstanding, especially among those who agree on the two points you mention. It would be impossible to create a common electoral platform today that would include a correct stand on the problem of independent working class political action. Yet a platform that fails to take such a stand would be totally inadequate for the political tasks of U.S. revolutionaries.

It is a correct and necessary approach in 1984 for the revolutionary party in the United States to run its own campaign. The SWP ticket remains the best expression of the need for independent working class political action in this country, and it deserves the wholehearted support of every working class militant. It was a serious weakness of your statement that it failed to mention the Mason-Gonzalez campaign--the campaign of your sister party in the United States--and your attitude toward it.

Despite these problems, your statement was a step forward from the article by Enrique Hernandez in the Feb. 27 Bandera Socialista (reprinted in IP in the April 16 issue), which called on the American left to support Jesse Jackson. Yet even here ambiguities remain. You assert that "the Democratic Party would not nominate a Black" for President, and that we must explain "why the Democratic Party is incapable of nominating Jackson--in order to bring the masses to independent political action."

It is not true that the way to explain the need for independent political action is to point to the failure of the Democratic party to nominate Jackson. It is not impossible for the American ruling class to nominate a Black for President in the future. Just 15 years or so ago there were no Black mayors of major cities in this country. Many said that it would be impossible for the Democrats and Republicans to allow such a thing. Yet today there are Black mayors in Los Angeles; Gary, Indiana; Chicago; Washington D.C.; Birmingham, Alabama; Atlanta; Newark; and Philadelphia. The only requirement of these mayors, of course, is that they work loyally to preserve the interests of the ruling class.

If they ever need a Black President in order to help defuse the class struggle, those who rule this country are quite capable of electing one. Even short of this, it is perfectly possible for them to nominate a Black Democrat, and then make sure the Republican candidate is elected.

One of the functions of the two-party set-up in the U.S. is to side-track social movements into the dead end of bourgeois electoral politics. This maneuver was carried out with considerable success during the anti-Vietnam war movement in the 60s and 70s--through the nomination of "peace candidates" every time there was an election. This can be done with a Black candidate if needed, or with a woman, as was recently demonstrated when Walter Mondale chose Geraldine Ferraro as his running mate.

It is correct, as you point out, that the present situation in the U.S. "pushes a segment of the workers and the oppressed minorities to seek their own solution, a class solution, to the crisis and the austerity policy of the Yankee government. As a result, the campaign of Reverend Jesse Jackson has stirred interest among some radicalized sectors." But the task of revolutionary Marxists in the United States is to make clear the contradiction in this reality. To explain how the Jesse Jackson campaign is leading away from, not toward, independent political action, and that even if the Democratic Party were to nominate him, this would offer no solution for working people.

We hope you will agree that the problems we have raised are important ones, and that you will give them serious consideration.

Comradely,

Steve Bloom

Steve Bloom

Bill Onasch (B)

Bill Onasch

Evelyn Sell (E)

Evelyn Sell

(National Coordinators of the
Fourth Internationalist Tendency)

LETTERS

Editor:

A letter from one of your readers (printed in issue No. 9) expresses curiosity over the use of initials in place of a last name to identify authors of articles for the SWP Discussion Bulletins.

This seems to me totally in keeping with Jack Barnes' admonition to Eileen G. (and everyone else) that members not communicate directly with each other. If full names were printed, someone from one branch (who might not know Eileen G. or any other comrade who writes a thought-provoking article) could easily write to such a contributor (c/o the branch) or--frightening thought--find their phone number through long-distance information and call them up! But one can't ask information for an Eileen G.'s phone number. One can, however, imagine the stir that would be caused in a branch by the arrival of letters addressed in such a fashion.

Anon
(who was often a woman)

Editor:

A recent (July 20) issue of the Militant carried an editorial with the title, "Anti-Soviet Sakharov Campaign." I found this editorial very disturbing and wonder what it means. Does the Militant no longer consider the idea of workers' democracy something that needs to be raised and defended? Is the defense of Soviet dissidents being surrendered to the enemies of the Soviet Union? From reading this editorial you would almost think that the Militant was engaged in covering up the crimes of the Stalinist bureaucrats.

The editorial notes at great length that the capitalist press is using the Sakharov affair to attack the Soviet Union, as if that proved anything. It also declares that, "Sakharov does not speak for or represent the interests of working people," as if that were a prerequisite to supporting his rights which are supposed to be guaranteed under the Soviet constitution. The important points about the Sakharov affair are missing from this editorial.

Real revolutionary socialists should certainly expose the hypocrisy of the capitalists who have no interest in democracy either in their own countries or in the USSR. But the criminal misleadership of the Stalinist hacks must also be exposed from a working class point of view. Democracy, as an issue, properly belongs to the working class--not to the bosses.

A Reader, Los Angeles

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