

Marxist Bulletin No. 4

Expulsion from the Socialist Workers Party

DOCUMENTS ON THE EXCLUSION OF REVOLUTIONARY TENDENCY SUPPORTERS

Part I

Published by

SPARTACIST

Box 1377, G.P.O.

New York, N. Y. 10001

\$4.00

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PREFACE to MARXIST BULLETIN #4

Expulsion from the Socialist Workers Party
(documents on the exclusion of Revolutionary Tendency supporters)

Marxist Bulletin #4, Parts I and II, documents the provocations, suspensions and finally expulsion by the Socialist Workers Party of its left wing minority, the Revolutionary Tendency (RT), the predecessor to the Spartacist League. This collection of discussion material consists of the most significant portion* of material--well over half--from a special five-bulletin series, the SWP's "Internal Information Bulletin," originated on the occasion of our expulsion. In addition, there is included here some material which has never before been circulated outside the leadership of the SWP, and some, never circulated at all, anywhere. This suppressed material fully documents, among other things, the ugly provocation of the attempted "raid" on a minority tendency meeting, a provocation clearly intended as a first effort toward our expulsion. (See document #1.)

The purge reached its peak at the end of December 1963 when five members of the RT were expelled. Of the five, Lynne Harper, Larry Ireland and James Robertson were expelled on the grounds that they had manifested a hostile and disloyal attitude toward the party in written discussion circulated privately within their own tendency. The others, Shane Mage and Geoff White, were expelled in effect for association, for having been leaders in a tendency which held or permitted views such as those expressed by Harper, Ireland and Robertson. These expulsions were based on purely ideological grounds; despite provocations, attempts at entrapment, etc., the RT was simply too strongly fortified by its consistent Trotskyist politics to permit itself to be provoked into either breaking discipline or voluntarily leaving. Hence, neither the Control Commission nor the Political Committee could produce one piece of evidence showing a single disloyal action on the part of the RT. In fact, through the whole course of the struggle, the RT members pointed out their past disciplined acceptance of the political line of the Majority and reaffirmed their intention to comply with it in the future. It was not the RT which wished to flout discipline; it was the SWP Majority which sought by its actions to remove internal party democracy.

The Majority was so concerned with ridding itself of critics who would point out the SWP's increasingly precipitous surrender of a working-class perspective that it refused to heed the warning given by a prominent majorityite party spokesman at odds with the Dobbs regime, Myra Tanner Weiss: "The 'evidence' of 'disloyalty' submitted in the report consists entirely of opinions, and no one in the history of the Socialist Workers Party has ever been punished for thoughts that differ with those of the majority --nor ever can be if we are to remain a revolutionary force....To violate the right of a faction to its own internal life is to destroy the Leninist conception of organization." (See document #5.)

Dobbsian Logic

The logic of the argument with which Dobbs defended the purge, first in his report to the New York branch, then in his report to the plenum, could be ordered into the following set of neatly-patterned syllogisms:

1. The Minority is hostile to the Majority. (See our characterization of the Majority, made first in internal tendency discussion, subsequently published as Marxist Bulletin #2.)
2. But, says Dobbs, "the Majority is the party." (See document #7.)
3. Therefore, hostility to the Majority is party-wrecking.
4. Therefore, the Minority are party-wreckers.
5. Therefore, the Majority leadership needs no evidence of specific acts of disloyalty to the party--hostility to the Majority is enough. (See document #20, especially p. 76, for Dobbs' admission: "We don't have to await formal proof of specific hostile acts, nor do we have to let concrete evidence pile up, one fact upon another, until the sheer weight of their attack on the party makes their patent disloyalty obvious even to the most blind. Disloyalty requires corrective measures, right here and now.")
6. Therefore, purge!

The Majority's solution to the problem of its own political degeneration, brute organizational force designed to remove all critics, helped to speed up the demise of the SWP as a revolutionary organization. And these expulsions were not the last. More RT supporters were expelled; then supporters of other tendencies, both left and right, (Wohlforth, Philips and Swabeck) were pushed until they broke discipline, then were formally expelled, while whole local branches (New Haven, Seattle and Milwaukee) left. At length, the SWP had purged its ranks of nearly all who could have served as any kind of brake on its own increasing revisionism, abstentionism from class struggle and opportunist adaptation to non-proletarian forces, or even of those who offered any opposition to the organizational strangulation being perpetrated by the Dobbs regime.

International Implications

These expulsions revealed not only the SWP's own political bankruptcy. They also cut away all the centrist verbiage which had circumspectly clothed the Reunification Congress of the "United Secretariat of the Fourth International" (U. Sec.). The Pabloist forces had sought in 1963 to effect an all-inclusive reunification of the world Trotskyist movement, on a revisionist basis and with all past differences buried. In order to attract the many groups opposed to the political basis for reunification, the Pabloists promised full democratic-centralist organizational principles. Dobbs and Hansen, in the Fall 1963 International Socialist Review, claimed that: "The course now being followed by Healy and Posadas and their followers is much to be regretted. Under the democratic centralism which governs the Fourth International,

they could have maintained their political views within the organization and sought to win a majority."

On the basis of these pledges, we appealed our expulsions to the U. Sec., asking it to rectify the SWP's flagrant organizational abuse of our democratic minority rights. The U. Sec. reply gave the lie to its claim that the reunification had aimed to include all "Trotskyists" who would abide by the decisions of the organization. It upheld, on the basis of ideological differences, our expulsion, attempting however to throw up a smoke screen with the assertion that the publication of Spartacist No. 1, coming three months after our expulsions, was a "violation of the principles and practices of democratic centralism which require a minority in a revolutionary socialist party to abide by majority decision." (Our emphasis. See document #28.)

By its action the U. Sec. proved that it was neither an international nor a democratic centralist organization: It corroborated, by its refusal to intervene, the open knowledge that the Pabloists had made a deal with the SWP, offering a "hands-off" policy toward the U.S. section, in exchange for the SWP's defection from its earlier principled struggle against Pabloism. And it indicated, by its disregard of our rights as a minority tendency, how little its own promises of democratic centralism had meant.

Final Break

Finally we did become "splitters" (more accurately, the SWP's departure from revolutionary Marxism became a categorical split). The November 1965, Washington, D.C., anti-war conference marked definitively and publicly the SWP's betrayal of class-struggle politics and revealed its passage into reformism. Its organizational maneuvers there, designed to build a centralized national membership organization of independent anti-war committees on a single-issue basis, marked its rush into classless, popular-front politics. The basis for any truly revolutionary party's participation in a united front must be its class program. The SWP should have utilized a Marxist understanding of the objective processes of capitalism in order to educate sections of the anti-war movement toward class struggle against the cause of war--the capitalist social order. But the SWP at that conference subordinated its program to the possibility of building a petty-bourgeois pacifist coalition around itself. It subordinated program to the Stalinist idea that a classless peace movement can stop an imperialist war. Such subordination was a betrayal of the anti-war movement and of the working class, for it can only lead to the movement's eventual support of the liberal bourgeoisie. More particularly it completed the destruction of the SWP as a proletarian revolutionary party. When the SWP destroyed its own class program, it became impossible for us to henceforth defend or support the SWP as loyal members--we withdrew our remaining supporters still inside the SWP, who resigned in principled fashion.

Non-Split Orientation

An interesting aside is the implicit refutation of the Majority's charges against us contained in the fact that a fraction of Spartacist supporters on the West Coast could remain within the SWP for more than a year and a half after the initial expulsions. That comrades could continue acting as both loyal SWP members and disciplined supporters of Spartacist's politics gives the lie directly to the Majority's earlier accusations of wrecking and splitting. It was only the ever deeper and fuller political transformation of the SWP that later made membership by revolutionary Marxists untenable.

As further refutation stands the fact that the party tops knew full well from other sources that what Wohlforth had handed them on a platter was nothing other than a pure frame-up of us. First, a precise anticipation of our overall course had been developed by R.T. supporters as early as the Fall of 1961! (See MB #2, document #1; this document was later made available to the entire SWP membership by the R.T. as an appendix to its document, "Discipline and Truth", SWP Discussion Bulletin, June 1963; it is to be reprinted in MB #3, part II.) Second, the Control Commission (i.e. Anna Chester) had Ireland's second document which had made absolutely unambiguous the falsity of Wohlforth's accusations; this document had been written a year earlier as a contribution to our internal tendency dispute (i.e., this document was not written after the fact as a "cover"). (See MB #2.) However, the C.C. never once acknowledged it had seen this document. Finally, in response to Dobbs' outrageous demand to see the tendency's internal documents, Robertson as an extraordinary concession submitted a copy of his own inner tendency draft contribution. (See the cover letter accompanying it, document #2.) Dobbs, however, carefully obfuscated this fact also. He told the New York membership the following half-lie: "I asked Comrade Robertson for copies of the Robertson-Ireland and Harper documents. He rejected this request and said the proper procedure would be to convene a Control Commission inquiry." (See document #7.) Thus, the Dobbs regime obviously knew the falsity of Wohlforth's charges against the R.T., and just as obviously, by its concealment of this knowledge, the party leadership showed its contempt for the SWP's own membership.

1967 SWP Convention

But all this does not mean that no more revolutionary Marxists will come into existence through struggle within the SWP! Far from it; in this sense the SWP is far from written off. Indeed within a few months of the final "final solution" of the SWP's minority question--getting rid of virtually all the inner party opponents and critics of the whole period since 1958--new differences have broken the surface in the pre-convention period. Thus a provocative discussion has erupted over whether to set up a separate (but equal?) all-black "Trotskyist" party. As one poor, naive SWP comrade put it: "No one is calling into question our accumulated experience concerning the necessity for a vanguard party. It is only that the peculiar situation in the United States calls for two such parties, not one." (How nice this discovery is

for the security of the American bourgeoisie; too bad Lenin never discovered that the Czarist empire, the "prisonhouse of peoples," needed a multiplicity of parties, all "vanguard" of course.) In the 1963 pre-convention discussion article, "For Black Trotskyism," we accused the Majority of presenting a dual-vanguardist resolution. This accusation was bitterly denied; today this liquidationist conclusion is rampant in the party.

Of much more practical importance is the SWP's current anti-war discussion because the party--not despite, but--because of its effusive lip-service to Black Nationalism is steadily losing its few Negro members, while it is very heavily committed in the "peace movement." But here a party critic has pointed out absolutely correctly and very clearly in attacking the party's proposed anti-war resolution:

....The struggle for withdrawal and the struggle to build an anti-imperialist antiwar movement are one and the same. They are inseparable; to give up or subordinate one means to give up or subordinate both. Even if the withdrawal slogan did stand in the way of building mass actions, then the mass actions would have to be given up and not withdrawal.

But does the withdrawal demand stand in the way of building mass actions? If other participants in the antiwar movement cannot agree with us on the withdrawal slogan--the absolute minimum upon which we can agree programmatically--then we should propose only a united front of action against the war in Vietnam. We would demand that there be no official slogans and that each group has the right to build and participate in the demonstration under their own banners. With this agreed--and this should be the simplest thing to get an agreement on--we would participate in a committee to coordinate and publicize the action. This would be real non-exclusion, and would offer the best prospects for building the largest demonstration possible. At the same time, it would not contradict the main activity of our antiwar work, that is, building the anti-imperialist wing of the antiwar movement. This would probably take the organizational form of programmatic united front based on withdrawal through which we would work and participate in the antiwar movement as a whole. At the same time, this united front based on withdrawal would initiate and carry out its own independent actions and propaganda work.

Our principled participation is based on program and we never subordinate this program to united action. A united action resulting from such subordination would only be temporary and illusionary, and would in the long run, not only lead the antiwar movement to support the liberal bourgeoisie, but also would destroy the foundations and traditions of our own party.

And this comrade's written remarks end with a question, the answer to which raises all the issues which the leadership had sought to bury by purging the minorities. He concludes: "It is for the above reasons that the party must reject the position of the PC draft as totally unacceptable and must begin to work out a new one. In so doing, there remains one question to be answered: How has a petty bourgeois tendency been able to reflect itself in the party? It is only by answering this question that the party will be able to put itself back on the proletarian revolutionary road." And all 15 pages of Tom Kerry's supercilious, irrelevant reply detract not one iota from this critic's views.

The reason for the SWP's continuing difficulties, which have barely begun again, is simple: they flow from the contradiction between the party's claim to a "Trotskyist" heritage and its reformist practice. In other or earlier organizations it is the "Marxist" or "Leninist" heritage of social democratic or Stalinist groups which, coupled with direct experience in struggle, propel some inquisitive youth or worker militants in a revolutionary direction. Just as with such other groups, so too the SWP is necessarily driven to disparage and ultimately formally to vacate its "heritage," i.e., its revolutionary Marxist origins.

The Main Point

What emerges from the great mass of documents making up MB #4, parts I and II, is a clear verification of our claims about the workings of the SWP in regard to our expulsions: by 1963, the degeneration of the party had reached such a point that for the first time in the history of the SWP, the leadership used expulsions to rid itself of an internal opposition which met the Bolshevik conditions for party membership--disciplined acceptance of the policies of the Majority. The Majority's assertions, contained here, that we were "splitters," that we were "hostile" and "disloyal" to the party, are shown for what they are: lies, designed to protect the Majority from any criticism which might have stemmed its headlong flight into reformism. The clearest example of the SWP leadership's fear-inspired organizational maneuvers is the last document (#32) in this collection. In this prototype of double-talk, the SWP leadership attempted to convey the impression that it was allowing our appeal to the 1965 SWP Convention at the very instant it was in reality denying our right to present an appeal before the highest body of the SWP. This last document serves also to point up for what it was the sophistry of the U. Sec.'s denial of our right to appeal to that body on the grounds that "the proper place to direct your request is, consequently, to the next convention of the SWP." (See document #30.)

The last documents included here clearly show that we did exhaust every recourse constitutionally and organizationally provided in an attempt to reverse our expulsions. These final actions, attempting to reverse the expulsions, were simply an extension of our history inside the party. Within the SWP, we had maintained an active and disciplined membership; we never sought exit from the party.

Thus we forced the decomposing SWP Majority leadership to a historic turning point: our expulsion turned into a lie James P. Cannon's proud old boast that the only people ever thrown out of the SWP were those who sought it. Since that qualitative change, factional struggle--the attempt to fight to win other members of the party to one's own views--has been effectively, and almost formally, ended. "Pre-convention discussion" has become just a ritualized safety-valve mechanism.

First established by fiat of the leadership, the SWP's departure from Bolshevik organizational principles was codified at the 1965 Convention. During the Convention, the refusal to hear our appeal was so crude and unprecedented that even a few Majority National Committee members found it too much to swallow and pleaded that the Convention be allowed to "waste" even ten minutes to hear the constitutionally-provided-for appeal. But even this concern for "appearances" was voted down at the direction of the central party leadership. And finally the new 1965 Resolution on Organization gave formal cover to the SWP's long-developing departure from Bolshevik organizational principles.

Marxist Bulletin staff
23 October 1967

*Note: MB #4, parts I & II, includes over 60% of the volume of material printed in the five SWP Internal Information Bulletins on the expulsions. More importantly, care was taken in our printing to give full weight to the majority position, views and arguments; thus, for example, we print in full the two main presentations, one to the New York branch, the other to the party plenum, by the principal Majority spokesman, Farrell Dobbs, National Secretary. In addition over 20% of the material in MB #4 is not to be found in any other source.

New York, N.Y.
24 April 1963

Farrell Dobbs,
National Secretary, SWP:

Dear comrade Dobbs,

The attached statement by the Minority on the Dobbs-Kerry motion 'Party Discussion Procedure' is for the information of the National Committee.

Fraternally,

James Robertson

For the Right of Organized Tendencies to Exist Within the Party!---

Statement on the Dobbs-Kerry motion 'Party Discussion Procedure'

I. the background events

1. On the evening of January 28 of this year two young Majority supporters, new to party membership, thrust themselves uninvited into a Minority gathering in a private home. After some argument the intruders were prevailed upon to leave quietly, and the meeting then began.
2. The gathering in question was the second of two Minority study sessions devoted to analyzing recent international documents. The scope and purposes of the study were announced as follows in the introductory portion of the circulated reading list for the study group: 'To Minority supporters and sympathizers: Dear comrade, With the publication in the party discussion bulletin of Trotskyist Betrayed, the SLL's reply to the SWP Problems of the Fourth International, the international question has again become prominent within the party. This consideration together with the relative nearness of the opening of the convention discussion period has led the Minority to convene a study group. In order that Minority comrades be well informed and prepared to deal with the issues now being raised, at least two discussion sessions on the current documents have been set.' (See appendix 1 for full text.)
3. It was apparent to the Minority from the shifting and finally police-like attitude of the young 'raiders' that their crashing of the meeting was not an innocent, if misguided, act. In any case they had no right to sit in on a political discussion of a grouping for which they had not shown sympathy or agreement such as would justify their participation to any extent in a display of differences within the Tendency in its grappling with questions from a common political basis. In short, the two young comrades lacked sufficient political credentials to attend. Moreover, the incident had the marks of a deliberate provocation and a factional excess by whoever had evidently deputized and sent the two youth. On the day following the 'raid', a comrade of the Minority brought the incident to the attention of the party National Organizational Secretary, comrade Kerry, with the request that it be informally looked into and that steps be taken to avoid repetitions.
4. The result of the Minority protest to comrade Kerry was the presentation by him of a report entitled 'Party Practice and Procedure in Internal Disputes' to the New York branch on February 7. In his report comrade Kerry stated that the Minority study group violated party procedure and warned the Minority against repetitions of such violations.
5. Under pressure from the floor during the discussion comrade Kerry admitted that the two young Majorityite raiders had indeed been sent by someone else into the Minority meeting. At the following branch meeting on February 14 at which the discussion was concluded, it was revealed that the New York party organizer and Political Committee member, Carl Feingold, was the author of

the provocation and had sent the two youth on their assignment.

6. At the February 14 meeting, comrade Myra Weiss introduced the following motion: 'The branch disapproves of sending uninvited comrades to a meeting of the Minority tendency and assures the Minority that its gatherings in the future will not be interfered with in this manner.' Comrade Kerry stated that adoption of this motion by the branch would result in his personally bringing formal charges against the Minority comrades. Comrade Weiss' motion was overwhelmingly rejected by voice vote.

II. the Dobbs-Kerry motion

7. In the New York branch meeting of February 28 a motion from the Political Committee was read. This motion, entitled 'Party Discussion Procedure', was presented in the PC by comrades Dobbs and Kerry. It upheld comrade Kerry's earlier report to the branch and stated in part: 'The Political Committee concurs with comrade Kerry in characterizing the actions of the Mage-Robertson group as a violation of party procedure.' (See appendix 2 for full text.)

8. In an immediate sense the Dobbs-Kerry motion does two grave wrongs to the Minority and inner-party democracy -- one wrong of omission, the other of commission. (a) The motion simply passes in silence over the now public fact of Feingold's authorship of a provocative factional excess and his taking on the role of an intra-party police chief. Instead of disassociating themselves from Feingold's abuses and adopting a motion akin to that offered by Myra Weiss in the NY branch, the PC condemns instead the object of the abuse -- the Minority! (b) The second wrong done in the D-K motion is no less serious. In seeking to defend an evidently valued colleague, comrade Feingold, the motion's authors have been led to a misrepresentation of the actions of the Minority in order to try to make the latter seem in violation of party procedure -- thus justifying tacitly Feingold's conduct.

9. Specifically the Minority is charged with holding oral discussions on questions for which such action is not authorized by the National Committee. Thus the Minority is accused of breaking in fact, if not in words, with the democratic-centralist right of the party 'to organize the discussion and to determine its forms and limits.' The discrepancy between the charge and the real Minority action lies in the following: the discussion properly controllable by the party NC is that in the branches, formally or informally, i.e., among the party membership as a whole. The discussion undertaken by the Minority was private, among its supporters and sympathizers. The distinction is no fine point, for the purposes of the two kinds of discussion are entirely different. An intra-Party discussion is for arriving at the position of the party. Intra-Minority discussion is, as the Minority announcement stated, in order 'that Minority comrades be well informed and prepared to deal with the issues now being raised' within the party because of, among other things, 'the relative nearness of the opening of the convention discussion period.' Thus the Minority action was one of

of clarifying positions to be introduced into the party discussion,
not of engaging in that party discussion.

10. The Dobbs-Kerry motion obliterated this distinction. In order to overcome the discrepancy between charge and action, the D-K motion in characterizing the study group omitted every reference to the simple fact that it was a Minority study group; the very word 'Minority' is not to be found in the quotation taken from the study group reading list and announcement. Instead, only a quotation was picked from it which suggests the opposite. Section 1. of the D-K motion even states that the discussions were 'led by comrade Mage who opposes the [party] resolutions on the world movement.' This would only be notable if the discussions were supposed to be intended for the general party membership. Further, the D-K motion opens by stating that the Minority announcement was mimeographed, thus implying a mass distribution among branch members since the size of the Minority is too small to reasonably require such a means of reproduction. Hence again, in another way, it is suggested that the study group was a way to get around a party ban on discussion in the branches, i.e., to violate party procedure. But it is untrue that the announcement was mimeographed. Typed carbons were made. Apparently one of these came into the hands of the party Majority, to be used both to make the 'raid' and to be quoted from in the D-K motion. Later several Xerox copies were also made from one of these typed copies. Finally, in verifying the real character of the study group as a Minority gathering it should be noted that when the young Majority supporters were sent into the study group, they were turned away by the Minority even though the two youth acted in an initially naive, interested, friendly manner.

III. meaning of the Dobbs-Kerry motion

11. As soon as the reality of the situation is discerned it becomes apparent that not only is the D-K motion verdict against the Minority as guilty of indiscipline based upon factual misrepresentation, but that it is a long step toward the effective prohibition of organized groupings within the party. And it is this latter implication which is the most sinister side to the shameful situation in which the PC has landed itself.

12. The D-K motion by denying the propriety of the recent Minority study sessions has threatened the right of any tendency to function within the party except during the pre-convention discussion periods. The obvious exception to this threatened prohibition would be the Majority tendency whose role in higher party committees and the official apparatus generally automatically serves the double purpose of both giving leadership to the party as a whole and of imparting organization to the Majority itself. This difference in the vital requirements of a majority and a minority is the reason why 'factionalism' has historically been a charge usually levelled against minorities and why, for example, a majority is the last to organize as a formal caucus during a period of direct factional struggle.

13. To be denied organized existence at other times is to cripple opposition during the political struggles around the convention time to determine the political line and leadership of the party. Thus without the opportunity for trends with serious differences to prepare and organize in depth, let alone maintain continuity, the net effect would be to reduce the convention process itself to ritual having more the effect of a safety valve for ventilating grievances than of a real opportunity for a minority to seek to become a majority, since any challenging grouping would possess an ad hoc quality and be at a fundamental disadvantage.

14. The 'organizational question', particularly the question of the right of tendencies or factions to exist within the party, is closely related to and merges with the other elements in the political program of a movement. Although the Dobbs-Kerry motion arose out of particular incidents and resulting challenges to the authority and prestige of leading members of the party Majority, it is insufficient to explain solely in such limited terms what amounts to a step by the SWP Majority towards emptying the content from the democratic component of a living democratic-centralism. In the view of the Minority this new position by the PC is related to the atrophying of a real perspective of building a mass Bolshevik party capable of leading the proletarian revolution in America. Thus the party likewise becomes insensitive to the vital need for maintaining those democratic internal qualities which are indispensable in mastering the sharp turns on the road to workers power. Rather, the SWP Majority, i.e., those sections of the Majority who set its tone, increasing looks to social forces or formations other than the industrial working class and its vanguard party as the harbingers of socialism internationally and nationally; and it sees itself tending to play another kind of auxiliary, advisory role to these various formations or bureaucracies whose own intolerance of internal opposition is well known.

15. The underlying political basis to this shift in organizational outlook by the Majority is clearly and correctly spelled out at length in two documents of recent years. -- One of these is 'In Defense of a Revolutionary Perspective -- A Statement of Basic Position' (see Discussion Bulletin Vol. 23, No. 4, July 1962) which was presented to the SWP in March 1962 by several comrades including those of the present Minority. The other is the current international resolution of the International Committee of the Fourth International, 'The World Prospect for Socialism' (in Labour Review, Winter, 1961).

IV. where we stand on the Dobbs-Kerry motion

16. The Minority declares:

1-that it has and will strictly abide by the democratic-centralist practices, discipline and responsibilities normal to the Trotskyist movement;

2-that it will not surrender the necessary and essential attributes and functions of an organized and internally democratic tendency;

3-that it recognizes the right of existence as an organized tendency is only justified by the most serious political differences such as all sides acknowledge exist within the party today.

for the Minority:

Shane Mage

James Robertson

Geoffrey White

25 March 1963

15 January 1963

To Minority supporters and sympathizers:

Dear comrade,

With the publication in the party discussion bulletin of Trotskyism Betrayed, the SLL's reply to the SWP Problems of the Fourth International, the international question has again become prominent within the party. This consideration together with the relative nearness of the opening of the convention discussion period has led the Minority to convene a study group. In order that Minority comrades be well informed and prepared to deal with the issues now being raised, at least two discussion sessions on the current documents have been set.

These sessions will be led by Shane Mage and will be held... at 8 to 10 pm., on Monday, 21 January, and Monday, 28 January.

Our intention is to subject all the material under discussion to a searching examination. Comrades should feel not only free, but under obligation, to take a most critical and challenging approach to the discussion material so that the discussion participants will gain the most thorough understanding and ability to handle the various positions.

The documentary material under discussion (which prior to the sessions you should have recently read or reviewed) includes:

1. Problems of the Fourth International -- and the Next Steps adopted by the SWP-NC, June 1962 (in Discussion Bulletin Vol. 23, No. 4, July 1962)
2. Critical Notes on 'Problems of the F.I.' by Shane Mage, June 1962 (some copies now circulating, to appear in the Discussion Bulletin)
3. Trotskyism Betrayed critique of 'Problems of the F.I.' by SLL-NC, (in D.B. Vol. 24, No. 1, Jan. 1963)
4. Cuba--the Acid Test 'A Reply to the Ultraleft Sectarians' by Joseph Hansen, Nov. 1962 (in D.B. Vol. 24, No. 2, Jan. 1963)

The immediate background documents to the above include:

5. The World Struggle for Socialism adopted by SWP National Convention, June 1961
6. The World Prospect for Socialism adopted by SLL 1961 National Conference, subsequently amended and endorsed by the International Committee (in Labour Review, Winter 1961)
7. In Defense of a Revolutionary Perspective presented to SWP by the Minority, March 1962 (in D.B. Vol. 23, No. 4, July 1962).

With Leninist greetings,

Jim Robertsom

Party Discussion Procedure

Motion by Dobbs and Kerry:

1. In a mimeo graphed letter of Jan. 15 Comrade Robertson announced the convening of a 'study group' to discuss current documents on the world movement. His letter called for 'a most critical and challenging approach to the discussion material so that discussion participants will gain the most thorough understanding and ability to handle the various positions.' The 'study group' was led by Comrade Mage who opposes the 1961 convention and 1962 plenum resolutions on the world movement. In their action Comrades Mage and Robertson disregarded the 1962 plenum decision limiting discussion on the world movement to literary form until the preconvention discussion is officially opened. They bypassed required party procedures and acted without the knowledge or consent of the New York branch leadership or general membership.
2. At the request of the branch executive committee, Comrade Kerry as National Organization Secretary, led a branch educational on discussion procedure in internal party disputes. He explained why the Mage-Robertson actions violated party procedure, described the correct norms as they have been set down in party resolutions and cautioned the comrades against further violations of this kind.
3. During the discussion from the branch floor Comrade Myra stated that Comrade Kerry, in characterizing the actions of the Mage-Robertson group as a violation of party procedure, was presenting only his personal point of view and not that of the party. Later Comrade Myra notified the National Secretary that she wished to have her dispute with Comrade Kerry placed on the PC agenda.
4. The Political Committee concurs with Comrade Kerry in characterizing the actions of the Mage-Robertson group as a violation of party procedure. Attention is called to the discussion norms set forth in a resolution 'On the Internal Situation and the Character of the Party,' adopted by the 1938 founding convention of the party and subsequently reaffirmed by the 1940 party convention and the May 1953 plenum of the National Committee. Concerning discussion procedure the 1938 resolution states:

'Party membership confers the fullest freedom of discussion, debate and criticism inside the ranks of the party, limited only by such decisions and provisions as are made by the party itself or by bodies to which it assigns this function. Affiliation to the party confers upon each member the right of being democratically represented at all policy-making assemblies of the party (from branch to national and international convention), and the right of the final and decisive vote in determining the program, policies and leadership of the party...

'The rights of each individual member, as set forth above, do not imply that the membership as a whole, namely, the party itself, does not possess rights of its own. The party as a whole has the right to demand that its work be not disrupted and disorganized, and has the right to take all the measures which it

finds necessary to assure its regular and normal functioning. The rights of any individual member are distinctly secondary to the rights of the party membership as a whole. Party democracy means not only the most scrupulous protection of the rights of a given minority, but also the protection of the rule of the majority. The party is therefore entitled to organize the discussion and to determine its forms and limits.

'All inner-party discussion must be organized from the point of view that the party is not a discussion club, which debates interminably on any and all questions at any and all times, without arriving at a binding decision that enables the organization to act, but from the point of view that we are a disciplined party of revolutionary action. The party in general not only has the right, therefore, to organize the discussion in accordance with the requirements of the situation, but the lower units of the party must be given the right, in the interests of the struggle against the disruption and disorganization of the party's work, to call irresponsible individuals to order, and, if need be, to eject them from the ranks.

'The decisions of the national party convention are binding on all party members without exception and they conclude the discussion on all these disputed questions upon which a decision has been taken. Any party member violating the decisions of the convention, or attempting to revive discussion in regard to them without formal authorization of the party, puts himself thereby in opposition to the party and forfeits his right to membership. All party organizations are authorized and instructed to take any measures necessary to enforce this rule.'

5. A copy of this motion shall be provided to the New York branch for the information of the membership.

(adopted - Friday, February 22, 1963)

(read to NY branch - Thursday, February 28, 1963)

New York
July 9, 1963

Farrell Dobbs
National Secretary

Dear comrade Dobbs:

I have carefully considered your letter to me of July 5 which stated:

"Attached you will find a copy of Discussion Bulletin, Vol.24, No.27, containing a statement, with three appendices, submitted by the 'Reorganized Minority Tendency.'

"I call your attention to references made therein to a 'Robertson-Ireland document' and a 'Harper statement' which have been circulated by your faction.

"I hereby formally request that you immediately provide me with copies of both these items."

You have apparently been misled concerning the nature of the material of which you request copies. In the course of developing views of the Minority over the past period a great many pages of material have been written and supplemented by extensive oral contributions. Included in the written material are correspondence and summaries of phone calls, draft documents or statements and suggested amendments, discussion comments and critiques, procedural proposals, and the like. Certain of the material has now been brought to your attention by references in Wohlforth's and Philips' old inner-tendency discussion material and correspondence which they have submitted to the bulletin. The views offered by comrade Harper and by comrade Ireland and me were contributions to the necessary internal process of arriving at tendency positions such as those presented to the party during the current pre-convention period. The particular documents in question were never adopted by the tendency nor to my knowledge have they been circulated among Majority supporters. (Presumably had they been so circulated, you would now be in possession of copies.)

On the face of it you would seem to have no more right to copies of these documents you formally request than to other such materials from the files of the Minority. Nor is your request different in kind from asking for Majority observers to be present in tendency meetings, to listen in on tendency phone calls, or to scrutinize tendency mail. For that matter, you would have no more right to such access than a Minority supporter would have to monitor the Majority's meetings, internal reports, preliminary drafts, etc.

While not indicated in your note, it may be that you were asking for these documents not as an outrageously mistaken 'right', but rather as a privilege -- a request which is entirely in order.

If this latter is the case I must respectfully draw your attention to the sentence from the Minority's 'Discipline and Truth--Reply to Wohlforth' in which it is stated that 'We are not at all interested in carrying old inner-Tendency disputes to the Majority or involving it in our arguments with Wohlforth.'

There is another consideration which you may have in mind in making a formal request for copies of these writings: that of a fishing expedition for either general information to embarrass the Minority in some way or else seeking after evidence in the documents to support Wohlforth's accusations of indiscipline against myself or other supporters of our tendency. If this latter is the case and if, even after the Minority's documented reply 'Discipline and Truth', you still entertain any substantive doubt as to the self-serving falseness of Wohlforth's charges, the proper way to proceed is, of course, to cause a trial body or control commission inquiry to be convened.

Thus by every test but one, your request fails to find a proper or sufficient justification. The only remaining ground would be that of sheer organizational intimidation on the basis that anything the National Secretary asks for is damn well to be complied with. Such a justification unfortunately has been well prepared; the political contribution to date of the party leadership to the pre-Convention discussion has had as its central axis--threats. This is so even though no member of any Minority in the SWP has said or implied anything other than the ready acceptance of party decisions including those of the coming Convention.

As an enormous concession in order to improve the atmosphere for political confrontation as we enter the final phase of the convention period, I am making an extraordinary effort toward satisfying your formal request by enclosing my own written contribution from among those which you asked for. I must stress that this partial compliance with your request should not be taken as in any way setting precedent, nor does it imply or initiate any right by Majority comrades to be privy to the processes in which the Minority works out its views.

Moreover, it is not my place to supply you with the private written thoughts of other Minority comrades. Should you be sufficiently curious about additional material from within our Tendency, I feel sure that at your slightest suggestion comrade Wohlforth would readily oblige you. Indeed he has already seen fit to publish an extract in the party bulletin of a document which did not come into his own possession in a straightforward fashion. I am referring to a draft letter which had been considered by us, but not used, as a reply to the Philips-Wohlforth 'Reorganized' grouping.

Comradely,

James Robertson

[Encl. Part I - 'The Centrism of the SWP'
plus first sentence, Part II.]

August 16, 1963

James Robertson
New York City

Dear Comrade Robertson:

Enclosed is a copy of the Political Committee motion of August 2, 1963, requesting an investigation by the Control Commission of charges publicly made against you.

In conformity with this motion we request that you appear at a hearing to be held at 116 University Place. Please telephone SU 7-4259 on Monday, August 19, between 6 pm and 10 pm, to arrange date and time suitable to you and to the Control Commission.

The party constitution makes the following provisions concerning the Control Commission:

'The Control Commission, on completion of its investigation in each case, shall present its findings and recommendations to the Political Committee for action. Action shall be taken by the Political Committee, or by the National Committee, in those cases referred to it by the Political Committee...

'It shall be obligatory on every member of the Party to furnish the Control Commission or its authorized representatives with any information they may require.'

Please bring with you to the hearing the material pertinent to this investigation.

Fraternally yours,

for the Control Commission:

Anne Chester

John Tabor

Attachment to P.C. Minutes No. 1, August 2, 1963.

Motion by Cannon-Dobbs-Hansen-Kerry and Warde:

On Robertson-Ireland-Harper Case

During the pre-convention discussion, the Wohlforth-Philips tendency made certain accusations of a most serious character, involving the party loyalty of the Robertson-Mage-White tendency. In a statement published in Discussion Bulletin Vol. 24, No. 27, they wrote:

"It became clear to us that a section of our tendency had simply written off the party as a whole without a serious struggle to reorient over a period of time the best working class cadres of the party. In addition they displayed no serious interest in the work of our party in the mass movement and instead sought to retreat into a comfortable 'study circle.' And finally their evolution seemed at that time to be propelling them rapidly in the direction of a split from the party." (page 4.)

As evidence that the Robertson-Mage-White tendency were moving toward a split, the Wohlforth-Philips tendency attached three documents as appendixes to this bulletin. In these, they cite the following to substantiate their charges:

(1) Hostile Attitude toward the Party.

Referring to a "Robertson-Ireland" document, the following is stated in Appendix II:

"These comrades, as they have no class analysis of the party, begin with a feeling of deep alienation from the party as a whole. This is expressed in a thousand little ways throughout the document. 'We have no intention of building centrism,' Robertson-Ireland state, and they caution us on having 'any mistaken concepts of loyalty to a diseased shell.' Along the same lines is their distinction between the discipline of the party and the discipline of the tendency. They claim to reject the former and adhere to the latter." (page 20.)

(2) Double recruiting.

On this violation of party discipline and elementary loyalty, it is asserted:

"Their activity, to the extent that it occurs at all, takes on a 'circle building' character. This is expressed in their concept of '"double" recruitment.' They urge our tendency to take your fresh elements, indoctrinate them with our views (in a careful manner of course so as not to get 'caught') and then sneak them into the party and into the tendency." (page 21.)

"While the comrades recognize that we cannot operate independently of the party they urge us to operate through the form of the party as if we were in fact a separate organization. This is the meaning of their urgings that we 'act as united blocs within the party when approaching some outside activity as a strike, campus activity or the like.' Comrade Harper similarly urges us to function where the majority isn't." (pages 21-22.)

"For us to consider opening up our tendency to non-party members is simply to invite disciplinary action from the majority. This is clearly an action in violation of the statutes in our party." (page 22.)

(3) Split perspective.

Referring again to the "Robertson-Ireland" document, the following is stated:

"The Robertson-Ireland orientation, taken as a whole, has an internal logic to it that the authors may only be partially aware of, or not aware at all. To state it openly and plainly theirs is a split perspective. A tendency which rejects party discipline (even if only partially) and party building, which seeks to sneak people into the party, which functions in part as an independent entity, which carries on an organizational faction war within the party, which, in violation of party statutes includes non-party members, which is so deeply alienated and isolated from the party ranks that it has in fact already split in content if not yet in form--such a tendency is going down a road which must inevitably lead to a split from the party." (pages 22-23.)

In connection with this, Albert Philips offered the following in a letter attached as Appendix III:

"The history of the revolutionary movement is replete with individuals and little groups of frustrated and rootless petty-bourgeois, who under cover of revolutionary phraseology prepare a desertion of the revolutionary movement.

"I hope I am wrong, but the Robertson-Ireland 'document,' taken together with the Harper statement on the YSA to which he refers, appears to be heading in just that direction, and at top speed." (page 25.)

Making a comparison with the minority of 1939-40, Philips states that the Petty-Bourgeois Opposition of that time "did not start off with a split perspective anywhere near as clearly enunciated as that of Robertson..." (page 26.)

In view of the grave charges contained in this material, Comrade Dobbs, acting in his capacity as National Secretary, wrote to James Robertson under date of July 5, formally requesting copies of the "Robertson-Ireland document" and the "Harper statement."

Robertson rejected this request, declaring in a letter dated July 9 that if "you still entertain any substantive doubt as to the self-serving falseness of Wohlforth's charges, the proper way to proceed is, of course, to cause a trial body or control commission inquiry to be convened."

From the floor of the July convention, Robertson made similar remarks concerning his rejection of any form of cooperation with the party leadership in ascertaining the facts unless a control commission were convened.

In face of Robertson's refusal to cooperate with the efforts of the National Secretary to clear up this question, Comrade Dobbs sent a formal request dated July 10 to Tim Wohlforth, requesting copies of the "Robertson-Ireland document" and the "Harper statement."

Apparently solidarizing himself with Robertson in this matter, Wohlforth rejected the request, alleging that the documents that had been cited and quoted from in Discussion Bulletin Vol. 24, No. 27, were "private political material."

In view of this obstructionist course being followed by both Robertson and Wohlforth in a matter of vital concern to the welfare and discipline of the party, the Political Committee now refers this question to the Control Commission, requesting that it conduct an investigation into possible violations of the statutes of the party, especially involving Robertson, Ireland and Harper.

Adopted by P.C., August 2, 1963.

* * *

November 2, 1963

James Robertson
305 West 103rd St.
Apt. 3
New York 25, New York

Dear Comrade Robertson:

You are hereby officially notified that, effective immediately, the Political Committee has suspended you from membership in the party.

As stated in the PC decision, you are barred from internal party meetings, denied access to internal party material, and excluded from participation in any and all forms of internal party life and activity.

Copies of the PC decision and the Control Commission report of October 24, 1963, dealing with this matter are attached for your information.

Comradely yours,

FD:sf
Attch.

Farrell Dobbs,
National Secretary

Motion by Secretariat

The basic organizational resolution, 'On the Internal Situation and the Character of the Party,' adopted by the 1938 Founding Convention of the Socialist Workers Party, contains the following provisions:

'The party requires of every member the acceptance of its discipline and the carrying on of his activity in accordance with the program of the party, with the decisions adopted by its conventions, and with the policies formulated and directed by the party leadership. Party membership implies the obligation of one hundred per cent loyalty to the organization, the rejection of all agents of other, hostile groups in its ranks, and intolerance of divided loyalties in general... The party as a whole has the right to demand that its work be not disrupted and disorganized, and has the right to take all the measures which it finds necessary to assure its regular and normal functioning... All inner-party discussion must be organized from the point of view that the party is not a discussion club, which debates interminably on any and all questions at any and all times, without arriving at a binding decision that enables the organization to act, but from the point of view that we are a disciplined party of revolutionary action... The decisions of the national party convention are binding on all party members without exception and they conclude the discussion on all these disputed questions upon which a decision has been taken. Any party member violating the decisions of the convention, or attempting to revive discussion in regard to them without formal authorization of the party, puts himself thereby in opposition to the party and forfeits his right to membership. All party organizations are authorized and instructed to take any measures necessary to enforce this rule.'

As indicated in the Control Commission's report of October 24, 1963, the foregoing provisions of the 1938 resolution are violated by the leadership practices of the Robertson-Mage-White group. Assuming the guise of a 'study circle' the group leadership projects a discussion policy that disregards convention decisions to close discussion or disputed issues and goes ahead factionally on a business-as-usual basis. In external activity they purpose to function as 'united blocs,' seeking to work as free lancers in areas where they are unhindered by the presence of comrades loyal to the party. They undertake the recruitment of outside contacts into the group on the basis of the group's program, methods and practices. New people recruited into the group are considered ready to apply for party membership only after they have first been indoctrinated against the program, convention decisions and organizational principles of the party.

Group discipline is put before party discipline. Group work within the party is cynically projected as 'the best possible

opportunity for building our tendency and not through any mistaken concepts of loyalty to a diseased shell.'

Such are the concepts, methods and practices with which the Robertson-Mage-White group is indoctrinated by its central leaders and by the Harper-Ireland propagators of the leadership policy. Those concepts, methods and practices are alien to our party, wholly disloyal and utterly intolerable.

Because of their violations of party loyalty the Political Committee hereby suspends from party membership Comrades Robertson, Mage, White, Harper and Ireland. Although suspension from membership does not constitute outright expulsion from the party it has the same force and effect concerning the exercise of membership rights during the period of suspension. Those suspended are barred from internal party meetings. They are denied access to internal party material. They are excluded from participation in any and all forms of internal party life and activity.

The Political Committee refers to the plenum of the National Committee the question of further disciplinary action against the Robertson-Mage-White group.

Adopted by Political Committee,
November 1, 1963

October 24, 1963

To the Political Committee:Report of Control Commission on Robertson Case

As requested by the Political Committee in its motion of August 2, 1963, we submit on behalf of the Control Commission the following findings in our investigation of the Robertson-Mage-White tendency:

I.

During our investigation we obtained the text of the Robertson-Ireland document, 'I. The Centrism of the SWP (and) II. The Tasks of the Minority,' which had previously been withheld from the party. A copy of the document is attached. (Appendix # 1). We call your attention to the following statements contained therein:

'12. The majority rank and file...contains many valuable elements who will more and more become disgusted... One of our major tasks must be to recruit these comrades to our tendency. This in fact is our first line of recruitment... But this process ... is but one of the ways in which we will increase our numbers; it is by no means the only one and we must seriously begin to consider the possibility that we will not gain a majority following within the party...

'13. We seek to recruit to the tendency. All organization tasks must be undertaken with this concept in mind... At present, largely because the SWP is the ostensible revolutionary party in the eyes of the radical public and the party membership, we work through the SWP. But we can have no intention of building centrism. We work within the party because it provides us with the best possible opportunity for building our tendency and not through any mistaken concepts of loyalty to a diseased shell.

'14. ...our discipline must be with the minority until that time when program and form are again united... but... it is likely that this will take some time. In the interim, we must not allow ourselves to drift back and forth confusing, now, discipline with the form of the SWP and, then, with the minority.

'15. Ours will be a problem of 'double' recruitment. As we seek to build the tendency, therefore, and as we have the perspective of working within the SWP in the coming period, recruitment of new cadres from outside the party will involve considerable effort. There can be no question of meekly handing this raw material over to the party for conversion into careerists or a probable speedy disillusionment... this source of cadres for our tendency is second only to recruitment within the party and is therefore of the utmost importance.

Report

'16. As our tendency builds its ranks, the SWP will become more and more reluctant to accept members... who are evidently supporters of the minority... We cannot drop these comrades! On the contrary, we must keep them in as close a contact as possible with the functioning and activities of the Socialist movement. Under no conditions must this vigorous new material be allowed to wither up and drift away because of insufficient political and organizational contact with revolutionary Marxism...

'19. ... there is no reason why we cannot act as united blocs within the party when approaching some outside activity as a strike, campus activity or the like. This will always be a highly difficult proposition because of our position with the SWP, but we must attempt to utilize every opportunity possible for recruitment...

'21. The situation facing our forces is qualitatively the same in the youth as in the party. But in the youth a more open and revealing process takes place, paralleling the course of the SWP... at no time must we fall into the trap of lending other than critical or conditional support... to the various proposals and activities...

'24. ... a latent or explicit desire for minority comrades to shirk from mass contact and (centrist) party building concomitant with a preference to discuss revolutionary work as abstractly as possible... One of the most noteworthy complaints of these comrades is not that they do not wish to do party work, but that they do not care to be reduced to cogs in an autocratically managed centrist party, that is, a party which limits the areas of political usefulness. Our comrades want to be active, but they want to be active as revolutionary Socialists. Therefore, one of our major tasks at this moment is to become a study circle!... The carrying out of these tasks necessarily presupposes study on all problems facing the proletariat as a class engaged in struggle as well as on all problems before its vanguard.' (Emphasis in original.)

II.

The Robertson-Ireland document also states: '22. The document submitted by Comrade Harper (Orientation of the Party Minority in Youth Work [draft]) on 8 August 1962 to the New York Tendency contains our basic position in regard to youth work. This document should be supported, developed and implemented at every opportunity.' The text of the Harper draft is attached. (Appendix ~~#~~ 2.) It contains the following statement which we call to your attention:

Report

'6. ... we should pick and choose, channeling our energies into that work which will be most fruitful for our purposes. Examples of this sort of fruitful activity would be work on campuses and in organizations where we are relatively free from the hindrance of large majority fractions and actions where we can independently bring in contacts, work with them, and offer them our views of whatever struggle we are engaged in.'

III.

In these statements by the Robertson-Mage-White minority their hostile and disloyal attitude toward the party is clearly manifested.

(signed)

Anne Chester (CC member)

John Tabor (CC representative)

MOTION PRESENTED TO POLITICAL COMMITTEE

by Myra Weiss, Nov. 1, 1963

MOTION: To reject the report of one elected member of the Control Commission and a "representative" as unfair, factionally motivated, and a violation of the limited province of the Control Commission.

1. Comrades are elected to the Control Commission, not on the basis of their political maturity, to evaluate political positions and theories. They are elected as people who can be trusted to be fair, above temporary factional alignments, and scrupulously attentive to facts and their verification. This report presumes to examine and evaluate political documents, thoughts, opinions, and to characterize them as "loyal" or "disloyal." Such an undertaking is beyond the province of the Control Commission.

2. The "evidence" of "disloyalty" submitted in the report consists entirely of opinions and no one in the history of the Socialist Workers Party has ever been punished for thoughts that differ with those of the majority -- nor ever can be if we are to remain a revolutionary force.

3. It is impermissible for a ruling faction to use its majority power to pry into the written or oral work of an oppositional tendency. Any faction has the inalienable right to discuss freely and in private its point of view. Furthermore, the material presented by the report does not consist of faction decisions, but preliminary opinions expressed by individuals in the course of preparing for decisions.

To violate the right of a faction to its own internal life is to destroy the Leninist conception of organization. Democratic centralism not only places obligations on a minority to abide by the decisions of the majority, but it places obligations on the majority to protect the democratic right of organized dissension for minorities.

In an epoch which we have characterized as a crisis of leadership, in an era when socialism suffers from the monstrous tyranny of Stalinism, it is unthinkable for us to lower our own high standards of democratic procedures. The world revolution is united today in the struggle for socialist democracy. If we are not its champions in our own internal functioning, we have no right to occupy the revolutionary podium.

4. For two of the comrades cited for suspension by Comrade Dobbs, we are not even provided "disloyal" quotes, illegally obtained. Where is the evidence of their "disloyalty"? Association? Bourgeois law is at least formally more democratic.

5. Even with selected quotes of selected documents, the loyalty, not "disloyalty" of the minority tendency would be indicated. Surely these comrades know that the demand to see their internal faction discussion material is a violation of their democratic rights. Yet they show to a Commission member documents that member has no right to see. Will the repeated insistence of the minority comrades of intention to abide by the discipline of the party avail it nothing? If the majority is so anxious for a split, why not have the patience to wait for "subversive" thoughts to be translated into deeds?

6. If the minority surreptitiously recruits youth to the Party on the basis of its factional line, what is there to fear? Are we not confident enough of our point of view, and with full control of the public expression of it, to be certain that we can win the best to the majority? Since when did revolutionary Trotskyists have to resort to organization means to protect its liberating ideas? Are we afraid they will recruit so many that we shall no longer be the majority? That is unfortunately not very realistic; but if it were, we can hope that we have set a good example of how a majority should rule.

7. I propose that we apologize to the minority for the unwarranted investigation and express our desire to collaborate in comradely fashion in the future for the building of the Socialist Workers Party.

November 5, 1963

To the Political Committee of
The Socialist Workers' Party

Dear Comrades:

I have received official notification of the action taken against me and others by your meeting of November 1st. On every level your action is a shocking violation of the principles which I had been led to believe governed our organization in relation to its internal life, and which I believe to be appropriate to a genuinely revolutionary party.

In the first place, we are suspended purely on the basis of opinions, attitudes, perspectives, forebodings, anticipations, and the like. No overt act is charged. Not only have we done nothing, we are not even alleged to have done anything; we are being disciplined for criminal thinking, for alleged criminal intentions. This alone is sufficient, I believe, to condemn your action. The effect of your edict is to illegalize the process whereby a tendency arrives at its positions, and develops its tactics. The issue is not whether the Robertson-Ireland contribution to an internal discussion is correct or not, but whether a comrade who holds such views can, in the absence of overt acts, be penalized for them, and all others associated with them likewise regardless of whether or not, and to what degree they are in agreement.

However, even were it admitted that alleged criminal intentions without criminal acts should merit punishment, you have not established a case even on this basis. Your method is to wrench out of context, a context of sharp struggle within our tendency, a series of admittedly somewhat overblown statements and various conjectures as to possible future developments, to give these the most damaging possible interpretation, and then to recoil in horror at a spectre of your own creation.

There is, for example, the question of double recruitment. Persons recruited to the party by one or another individual almost without exception enter the party with the general outlook of the person or persons recruiting them. This is an inevitable outcome of the recruiting process itself, and does not mean that they are therefore, if recruited by minority comrades, automatically committed to a struggle against the majority line. Rather they are predisposed to favor those who recruited them and their views. This elementary fact of political life, which is of course well known to you, I take to be the basis for this passage in the Robertson-Ireland document. Actually, to avoid double recruitment in the sense which the document uses it, not in the sense the PC [Political Committee] abuses it into, a minority would have to cease recruiting to the party altogether.

As for the 'loyalty to a diseased shell' passage of which much is made, the basis for this statement is merely the concept which

is, I trust, held by all comrades of a Marxist as opposed to a religious persuasion, namely, that the party is a means, and not an end in itself.

The remaining specific points made by the PC based on the two documents before it are of even slighter merit, and the whole procedure is that of a prosecutor waving about a particularly titillating piece of evidence and not that of a responsible leading political body evaluating a tendency within the party. To do the latter would require an objective assessment of the whole history and development of our tendency, and would include how alleged disloyal thoughts were implemented in disloyal actions. Both the objectivity and the reference to acts, however, are missing from the motion of the PC and the CC [Control Commission] report on which it is based.

The foregoing objections, however, do not exhaust the defects of this action of yours. Even were it admitted, as I deny, that the Robertson-Ireland document and the Harper statement are in themselves actionable, no justification can be found in them for the suspension of Comrade Shane and myself. These documents do not have and never have had official status in our tendency. Section III of the CC report which refers to these as documents of the Robertson-Mage-White tendency is factually false. These documents were circulated in the tendency by the authors as individuals, and were withdrawn before they even came up for discussion in this area. At no time and in no place were they voted on by our tendency. Under these circumstances only a concept of conspiracy law derived from the seamier side of the bourgeois law courts could justify the inclusion of Comrade Shane and myself in your action.

Finally, I would like to point out that up until the time I received Comrade Dobb's letter of November 2nd informing me of my suspension, I had received no notification from the Control Commission or any other authoritative party body or leader that the tendency was under investigation or that disciplinary action was contemplated. Surely it would have been possible to set up a sub-committee of the CC in this area to take my testimony, or failing that, I could have been questioned in writing by the New York CC. The fact that this was not done further suggests factional motives for this action, and furnishes an additional example of your disregard for the essence of internal party democracy.

I plead guilty then, only to being opposed to your political line, as I have stated before the party on numerous occasions. It should be needless to say that I regard this fact not as a fault but as a merit.

In sum, then, and in formal reply to your charges, I state that I am not guilty on all points charged against me, and specifically:

1. I deny that I have practiced or advocated or believed that other leaders of our tendency advocated double recruitment of the type claimed in the charges.
2. I deny that I have wished to split the tendency from the party or believed that other leaders wished to do so.
3. I deny the intention to flout or evade the legitimate discipline of the party or that I believe that others intend to do so.
4. I deny willful violation of any party statute, rule, or constitutional provision whatsoever.
5. I hereby file notification of intention to appeal your action to the December Plenum of the National Committee.

Comradely,

Geoffrey W. White

Berkeley California

REPORT TO NEW YORK BRANCH ON SUSPENSIONS

By Farrell Dobbs

I. Presentation

Comrades, the purpose of my report tonight is to inform you of a disciplinary action taken by the Political Committee. On November 1, the Political Committee suspended from membership in the party comrades Robertson, Mage, White, Harper and Ireland. The action was taken after a report had been received from the Control Commission which the Political Committee had asked to conduct an investigation of the Robertson-Mage-White group. At the outset I want to remind you of the Constitutional provisions that specify the procedure to be followed in a matter of this kind. The Party Constitution invests the Control Commission with full authority to investigate any individual or circumstance within the Party as it may deem necessary. The Commission is authorized by the Constitution to designate representatives to participate in such matters if the Commission so chooses. The authority of the Control Commission supersedes any local investigation or trial. It applies even in strictly local branch matters where, in the judgment of the Control Commission, its investigation is needed.

In the case before us, we are dealing with a national problem and that is why action has been taken directly by the Control Commission rather than proceeding through a branch investigation. As the Constitution provides, the Control Commission presents its findings to the Political Committee for action. The decision of the Political Committee is binding upon the Party branch—upon all Party branches—and the branch has no authority in the matter. The comrades who have been suspended from membership by the Political Committee can appeal from that suspension to the plenum of the National Committee. Pending any action by the plenum on the matter, the decision of the Political Committee has full force and effect and the branch must by Constitutional mandate comply with the Political Committee directive on these suspensions. The report I am presenting tonight is therefore given for your information and not for any action by the branch.

As a further preface, I will undertake to present a brief sketch of the background factors involved in this case to help clear up some possible confusion concerning basic party procedures and principles and the enforcement of party discipline. For several years, as you're all generally aware, we have been having a continuous literary discussion in the party, involving first the Chinese question, then later including the Negro struggle and then taking into its scope the question of the world movement. This process, as you know, culminated finally in a general pre-convention discussion that

began last spring. Now this long period of literary discussion, on the questions I mentioned, was a special circumstance due to a series of unusual factors stemming from the peculiar nature of those three questions at that particular juncture. This circumstance could well have given newer members of the party an unclear picture of our basic procedure. It could seem from the nature of that discussion that internal discussion is always in order within the party. It could seem that party policy can be tossed up for grabs at any time by anybody who so chooses. That's not the case. The party is not a perpetual discussion circle. The party discusses in order to decide and it decides in order to act. It simply took longer than usual on the three questions involved. But firm decisions on those and other disputed questions were made at the convention of the Party last July.

In addition to the circumstance of the long literary discussion, some confusion also resulted from the conduct of minority groups within the Party in the course of the discussion. What had been authorized as a literary discussion was carried beyond the literary form. Not by chance, not by accident, not out of ignorance, but by deliberate act. Comrades, particularly young comrades, were invited into private seances for coffee and conversation to give them a one-sided view of the dispute within the party and warp their capacity for objective political judgment before they ever had a chance to participate in an open confrontation in the Party in a formal way. Spokesmen for minorities on the branch floor resorted to one and another ruse to shoot angles on various points on the agenda to introduce their political line and did so with the aim of trying to make it appear that the party has no set policy on anything. Branch procedures were disrupted, you may recall; majority rule flaunted; tendencies toward paralysis inflicted upon the branch by points of order, points of personal privilege, points of procedure, challenging the rule of the chair. In short, the party was subjected to a demonstration of factional hooliganism.

Let me touch on some provocative acts on the part of the Robertson-Mage-White group. Last winter, you will recall, they set up a so-called study group here in New York. It was supposed to be for minority supporters and what they called "sympathizers" of the minority. It was led by Comrade Mage, who was going to present his views which, as everybody in the branch knew, were in opposition to the majority views. And this so-called study group was organized behind the back of the party in violation of party procedures. The Robertson-Mage-White group was called to order by the Political Committee for this violation of procedure, after the correct procedure had been explained, as you will recall, when Comrade Tom Kerry, as National Organization Secretary, appeared before the New York branch on the question.

What you may not know is that not long thereafter comrades Robertson, Mage and White jointly submitted a statement to the National Committee in which they denounced the Political Committee for its intervention with respect to their so-called study group that was organized in violation of party

procedure. They said that they will abide by what they termed "the democratic centralist practices, discipline and responsibilities normal to the Trotskyist movement." They declared that they will not surrender what they term "the necessary and essential attributes and functions of an organized and internally democratic tendency." Now that's a slick piece of double talk but it leaves some questions. What do the leaders of the Robertson-Mage-White group consider "normal" in Party procedures? What "attributes and functions" do they consider "necessary and essential" to their group? That they didn't explain. But later on we were to get a plainer definition of what the leadership of the Robertson-Mage-White group considers "normal, necessary, and essential" practices.

You will recall that shortly before the convention serious charges were made concerning the conduct of the Robertson-Mage-White group by Comrade Wohlforth in an article that was published in Discussion Bulletin, Vol. 24, No. 27. The charges of Comrade Wohlforth involved the party loyalty of the Robertson-Mage-White group on three main counts: a hostile attitude toward the party, a practice of double recruiting——recruiting people into the group and then seeking to bring them into the party——and the projection of a split perspective. In his article Comrade Wohlforth quoted from a Robertson-Ireland document and a Harper statement. When the Wohlforth charges appeared, acting in my capacity as National Secretary, I asked Comrade Robertson for copies of the Robertson-Ireland and Harper documents. He rejected this request and said the proper procedure would be to convene a Control Commission inquiry. I then asked Comrade Wohlforth for copies of the documents he had quoted. He too rejected my request, saying the documents he quoted were "private political material." That's where matters stood shortly before the convention. The party leadership took no further action at that time and I want to touch briefly on the reasons why.

In a political dispute, particularly a serious political dispute of the kind we were engaged in before the convention, it is best generally to try to avoid organizational controversies. Warn those who are guilty of violations of correct procedure, explain correct procedures, explain the party principles, but try to avoid mixing up political and organizational issues. In general it is best first to resolve the political issues on a political basis and then deal with the organizational problems confronting the party. Another factor that should be kept in mind is that organizational violations, particularly when they assume an intensive character in the course of a deep political controversy, are very often simply an organizational form of expression of political differences, a form of expression that can involve very fundamental questions concerning the character of the party, as is true of the case now before us. It was for these reasons that the party leadership took no further action in the period prior to the convention. But the action on these organizational matters was only temporarily postponed; it was not cancelled, it was not relegated to the Greek kalends. In those circumstances,

some comrades could get the mistaken impression that factionalists can get away with anything in the party. That's not the case. First we reach a decision on the political issues in dispute, and then we proceed to deal with indiscipline and disloyalty.

In that connection the convention marked a definitive stage in the development of the internal party dispute. The political issues were firmly decided at the convention by an overwhelming majority. In the argument leading up to those decisions the minorities had received a full opportunity to present their views. Recall the huge volume of discussion bulletins that were published and recall the fact that the bulk of the material in those bulletins was submitted by minorities. Recall the generous time allotments that were given to minority reporters and minority speakers in the branches and in the convention. There was no suppression of their right to express their views. All that happened was that they lost the political argument in the party.

While they were waging that political argument they raised a great hue and cry, a great clamor, about the democratic rights of minorities. They tried to create an impression that democracy is a possession only of a minority, and that if you're a majorityite, you're automatically an anti-democratic hooligan who's got no rights, but who is just abusing the rights of poor, innocent, victimized minorities. Well that's not the case either. Party democracy involves more than the democratic rights of minorities, even though you wouldn't think so from the attitude the minorities have manifested. They have claimed special license to defy majority rule. Why? Because, they argue, they constitute an organized group, because they've differentiated themselves in that organized way from the party as a whole. They act as though the majority had no authority whatever concerning their factional conduct in the party. They attempt to picture the majority of the party as simply a rival faction, and on that basis they claim equal factional rights with the majority of the party, contending that the majority can't interfere in their internal factional affairs.

That's a concept absolutely alien to the Socialist Workers Party. The minority has the right to present its views in internal discussion when issues are in dispute and a decision is being reached by the party. The majority has the right to enforce the party decisions, and the right and the duty to see that everybody in the party abides by the basic principles of the party. In the last analysis, comrades, the majority is the party. I'll tell you why. The role of the majority as the decisive force in the party flows right straight from the principle of majority rule. The right of the majority to decide is just as fundamental as the democratic right of a minority to present its views. In fact it's vital to the health and functioning of a revolutionary socialist combat party which we are working to organize.

The party has the right by majority decision to supervise the public activities of its members and to regulate all internal party affairs. For example: Minorities have the right to express their views internally when discussion has been formally authorized on an issue in dispute within the party. The party has the right by majority decision to regulate that internal discussion. Or again, minorities have the right within our party to form an organized group and nobody is challenging that right, nobody is seeking to impair that right. All that's happening is that, because the party through its majority insists upon the organized groups of minorities within the party living up to the principles and policies of the party, a phoney hue and cry has been raised that we're trying to suppress factions. That's not true at all. All that the majority of the party is insisting on is that organized minorities within the party live by, and within, the principles of the party and that they be loyal to the party. And the party has the right by majority decision to enforce disciplined and loyal conduct by organized minorities within its ranks.

Now the reality of a party majority does not necessarily infer the existence of a majority faction. Basically it means party action by majority decision. There may or may not be a majority faction, but the party majority has the right to organize itself as a faction, just as minorities are granted that right. The existence of organized minority groups within the party does not, as the minorities try to make it appear, automatically make the party majority simply a rival factional group. The fact is there is not a majority faction in the party today. The majority of the comrades in this party act simply as members who relate themselves to the party as a whole. A majority of the comrades in this party today function only through formally constituted party bodies. They do not differentiate themselves in perpetuity from the rest of the party on a special group basis. Their's is a correct attitude.

It's a big mistake, comrades, to think of the Socialist Workers Party as though it were simply a loose federation of factions. The party is not an all-inclusive political jungle that allows itself to be perpetually torn by factional warfare. That is not the nature of our party. Historically our party has striven to constitute itself as a politically homogeneous body. Membership in this party presupposes basic agreement on program and on party principles. It is that basic component in the party that cements us and permits political compatibility, even though we have differences of opinion from time to time over one or another issue. It is those basic factors that permit us to maintain objective conduct internally and to keep an equilibrium and a dynamism and a stability in the party with respect to carrying forward the work of the party, even though we may be having differences of opinion about one or

another point. Now, the fact that historically we have striven to be a basically homogeneous party does not at all mean that we are a monolithic party. Not at all, not at all. The record is crystal clear. All down through the years of the existence of our party—and it certainly has been proven to the hilt in the most recent times—there has been ample room within the party for political differences, even major differences of serious import. The record is crystal clear that organized tendencies and factions are permitted to exist in our party, but there is something else that wants to be kept crystal clear as well. These organized tendencies and factions must abide by party principles and they must be wholly loyal to the party.

Some of these basic concepts got lost from view to a certain extent during the pre-convention period. But now the convention is over and these principles have to be emphasized and practiced and enforced. In that sense the democratic rights of the party majority come to the fore now with full force and effect. The political decisions have been made by the convention; the line for the party work has been set; the discussion is ended until it is again officially authorized. We proceed now to party-building work on the basis of the convention decisions and on no other basis. No minority will be permitted to run wild inside the party. No internal disruption will be allowed. Flaunting of party principles, violations of party loyalty will not be tolerated.

Now, at the convention, Comrade Robertson repeated his assertion that no information would be given concerning the Wohlforth charges unless a Control Commission inquiry was convened. Shortly after the convention, the Political Committee referred the matter to the Control Commission for investigation. Hearings were held by the Control Commission across a period of several weeks, and a report was submitted under date of October 24, 1963, to the Political Committee. In its report the Control Commission stated: (See text of C. C. report elsewhere in this bulletin).

The report of the Control Commission makes clear that the leadership of the Robertson-Mage-White group characterizes our party as a centrist party upon which they declare open season. It makes clear that they put group discipline before party discipline. It makes clear that they're loyal only to the group and that they have no loyalty to the party. It's a hostile attack on the party from within and illustrates what they consider "normal, necessary and essential" practices within our party. The party has the right to tell the engineers of that scheme, you'll have to try it from outside the party, you can't get away with it from within our ranks. And it's the duty of the leadership of the party, before all others, to defend the integrity of the party against this attack. Otherwise the leadership would deserve to be tossed out of office and replaced by leaders who will meet their responsibilities to the party, and it's with that consciousness that the Political Committee has acted in this matter.

I now want to read to you the full text of the Political Committee decision on this case: (See text of P. C. Motion of November 1 elsewhere in this bulletin).

A plenum has been scheduled for the last week-end in December. The National Committee at that time will make its own decisions concerning the question of further disciplinary action. But it is reasonable for the comrades to assume that the Plenum of the National Committee will affirm the following basic obligations as conditions for party membership: Members of the party must comply with convention decisions; members of the party must adhere to party principles; members of the party must have unconditional loyalty to the party. And no one will be allowed to stand immune from these basic obligations.

II. Summary

Comrades, as I have listened to the minority spokesmen in the discussion here tonight, I've been reminded more and more of summer TV schedules. The whole thing was a re-run. They don't have any more sense of proportion on a fundamental question of this kind than they had in earlier times when they were maneuvering to get the floor to talk about a subject that wasn't properly before the branch in the first place. They've got no sense of proportion at all in any way, shape or form.

We hear the same old argument: all the suspensions can mean is that the party is confronted with a crisis and why don't you sneaky bureaucrats who are running the party with an iron hand tell what the crisis is, instead of trying to fog the comrades up with organizational measures. That's the theme. There is a crisis, they say. Comrade Wohlforth adds to Comrade Steve's remarks on that count that the crisis is one of growing minorities and the majority doesn't know what to do about it except to take organizational action. Well I'll let you in on a little secret. You're going to find out there isn't any crisis in the party. You're going to find out just the opposite. This party is solid. This party knows the score. The party means business and it intends to enforce its principles. That was the meaning of the party convention. The convention not only decided on the political issues in dispute, the convention made itself crystal clear on its attitude toward the question of loyalty and discipline within the party, and that was a mandate from the democratically-elected delegates at the democratically-conducted convention of this party to the leadership. The leadership is duty bound to carry out that mandate.

Now all kinds of Philadelphia lawyer's arguments, or sea lawyer's arguments, or whatever you want to call them, are brought in here. Did the Control Commission question Comrade White in connection with the suspension

action? No, Comrade White was not here in New York, so he was not called before the Control Commission. It wasn't necessary. Comrade White is a leader of record in the Robertson-Mage-White group, and when leaders stand up and proclaim themselves as leaders and take responsibility for a line, they've got to accept the consequences of that line. Comrade White falls in that category.

Why do we suspend now? Why don't we wait for the plenum? Those questions are just an indirect way of asking why we are doing anything at all about disloyalty. We didn't have any trial proceedings, one spokesman for the minority says. Another one complains that the Control Commission dragged their hearings out for weeks and weeks and weeks. They argue up one side of a question or down the other depending on what little axe they want to grind at the moment.

Why does the Political Committee suspend now? Because it's confronted with a fact of disloyalty to the party. It's the duty of the Political Committee to act and it acted. The Political Committee has referred the question of further disciplinary action to the plenum, not because there's any doubt in the Political Committee's mind about what's got to be done, but because we're confronted with so important a question of disloyalty and indiscipline that it must be brought to the attention of the plenum, and the plenum should bring it to the attention of the whole party.

Tim says the Control Commission report mentions not one single action by the Robertson-Mage-White minority, all it shows is that they stated a point of view. He says that point of view was stated over a year ago. Well, about a year ago, Tim Wohlforth disavowed that point of view. But not a single one of the leaders of the Robertson-Mage-White group has done so, and not a single person speaking in the name of that group here tonight did so. They wiggle like greased pigs and raise all kinds of diverting, distorting, vulgar arguments—from the point of view of "Bolshevik political concepts and organizational principles" if you please. They do everything but disavow their hostility to the party. They do everything but disavow their practices of double recruiting. They do everything but disavow their split perspective in the party. They do everything but disavow their intentions to conduct a raiding operation and a wrecking operation from inside the party. The whole intent, aim, line and practice of the group, as it is promulgated and taught by its leadership and carried out, is set forth in those documents, and that's a declaration of war upon the party. If this party doesn't know how to meet that kind of a declaration of war, we just as well all put on our hats and coats, go out, lock the door, throw the key away and let the landlord worry about where he's going to get next month's rent because we'll be out of business as a party.

Steve argues that we only brought up the question of a study group; that the comrades who were suspended were suspended for their political

opinions. He says this is going to paralyze thought inside the party. All these arguments he raised in his best judicial manner, that is, before he got back to his seat and started to heckle other speakers like a hooligan. He leaves out, among other things, one little point—the matter of loyalty to the party. How can a person who takes this party seriously be neutral, Steve, when a question of loyalty to the party is involved?

Henry G. gets up here and calls the Control Commission professional cops, if you please. What a piece of uncomradely insolence that was. How do you feel about the question of loyalty to the party? Do you take it seriously or don't you? You'll find a big majority of this party does.

Doug makes reference to the Smith Act on the question of advocacy not acts—dragging in something that's got nothing whatever to do with the case before us. Our fight against the Smith Act has to do with the right of the people of this country to organize politically on the basis of any program they choose, without governmental interference or reprisals, and having organized politically into a party, to express themselves freely, fight for their program. We defend these rights for our party and every other party. But we don't invite opponent parties to enter the Socialist Workers Party to conduct an inside operation calculated to destroy the party. We say, no, if you want to be an opponent of our party, if you want to be disloyal to our party, if you want to combat our party, do it from the outside, don't try to do it on the inside. The same thing goes for those suspended by the Political Committee. They haven't got a right to conduct a wrecking operation inside this party, but we'll defend their democratic right to act as an opponent party apart from us and opposing us in the public arena. There's a world of difference, Doug, and it's got something to do with fundamental Bolshevik principles that you ought to refresh your recollection about.

Steve argues that the suspension of the leaders of the Robertson-Mage-White group means in practice the outlawing of factions in this party. He drags in, completely out of context, in a very learned, professorial way, of course, an action of the Bolsheviks under revolutionary conditions in temporarily suspending factions. He says now our party is expelling a faction and that means we will allow no more factions inside the party. Nothing could be further from the truth and you know it, or you ought to know it. You said you've been 25 years in the party. That would be since 1938. There has been quite a few factions, quite a few tendencies, there's been quite a rich body of internal party experience in that time. What is being done now by the Political Committee, in these circumstances, is in direct accordance with what the policy of the party has been all down through the whole 25 years you've been in it. If you don't remember it, go back and refresh your recollection.

Somebody argued we didn't suspend the Marcyites. No, they walked out. They beat us to the draw. The Cochranites didn't do that. They got

suspended. And they, too, said that's Stalinism, that's the end of the right of factions inside the Socialist Workers Party. And do you know, we've had some factions since. And we've tolerated them, we've tolerated them. It's a phoney argument that we're suppressing the right of organized dissent in the party, it's a fake and a fraud from beginning to end. They're not really arguing for the simple right to have a faction, they're arguing for the right to do as they damn please as a faction, without the party being able to do anything about it. And that they can't have, that they can't have.

Harry T. says the minority has the right to fight for its ideas. Nobody denies that, and they sure were given a good chance, and they sure exercised the opportunity to the best of their ability, and nobody stopped them. They lost the argument as far as the political issues were concerned. Now they've got to face the question of their responsibility to the party in a very fundamental sense, the members of the Robertson-Mage-White group. Are you going to be loyal to the party? Are you going to be disciplined? Are you going to abide by the basic party principles? Or are you going to continue as the faction has been acting, and screaming, as you did tonight, that this party is descending into Stalinist monolithism. That can only be viewed by the party as an attempt to conceal the fact that the group intends to continue acting in an indisciplined and disloyal manner. That's something to think about and think about very seriously.

Arthur Phelps says we're getting into the habit of dealing with political questions organizationally. Well you know, I think there's quite a good many comrades in the party, who are fed up with the acts of indiscipline and disloyal conduct on the part of this group and who would say the opposite is true. We've let them get away with so much that some comrades are afraid we're getting rusty organizationally. Comrade Phelps says the PC should present a political analysis of the Robertson-Mage-White group. Well— after all!— we've gone through several years' discussion on an ascending scale, with the dispute reaching from one question to another to another, and finally culminating in a very intensive pre-convention discussion in which all questions were open for consideration. Still Comrade Phelps says we ought to present a political analysis of the minority! The Robertsonites have had a chance to pop off for a long time and everybody that knows the time of day knows what their line is and why they stand for. We're not a perpetual talk shop and we're not about to do a retake on that scene.

There's another small factor involved. We're dealing now with the question of basic principles of the party. We're dealing with a question of protecting the integrity of this party, it's inner vitality, its good and welfare, its whole future. And it so happens that this party has some well-defined principles that are to be enforced. It's not a matter of starting a debate now as to whether or not we've got some principles and if so what we should do about them. The principles are established. They're the fundamental concepts on which this party has been constructed and they're going to be enforced.

Now, some sneering reference was made by one of the speakers, I forget who, to the fact that the Political Committee motion quotes the 1938 resolution. Well that 1938 resolution quoted in the P. C. motion just happens to be a basic organizational document, adopted at the founding convention of the party, and it sets forth the basic concepts and principles upon which the party is organized. Let me tell you something else that's in that resolution. It describes the task before our party in this country as involving what can be expected to be one of the most ruthless and irreconcilable struggles for power in all of history. It states that an organization that is loosely knit, heterogeneous and undisciplined would be utterly incapable of accomplishing the revolutionary socialist tasks that the party sets for itself. That resolution states that the party must make an unconditional demand upon its membership for complete discipline and 100 per cent loyalty. Those are basic premises that are fundamental to the very existence of this party, and the party leadership is charged with the responsibility of scrupulously protecting not only the rights of minorities, but also the principle of majority rule in keeping with the concepts of democratic centralism. The party cannot tolerate indiscipline. The party cannot, and it will not, tolerate disloyalty. It is the duty of the leadership of this party to see that its principles are enforced and this leadership is going to see to it.

I come finally to the motion by Comrade Harry T. to demand that the Political Committee lift the suspensions; the statement by Comrade Edie that the members control this party and that the members have the right to reverse the Political Committee; and the ringing pronouncement by Comrade Al S. that the Dobbs regime is not the party. They turn everything upside down. They try to make the comrades forget how this party is constructed. Why, you wouldn't think that this party just went through an actual experience in which there was a completely democratic discussion, during which the leadership bent over backwards to assure the fullest democratic rights to minority oppositions within the party. A discussion in which everyone who had a point of view on any question before the party had an opportunity to express that view, had an opportunity to put it in writing and have it published in the bulletin just as written. Discussion after discussion, debate after debate, with time allotted for reporters for each viewpoint, were carried on in the branches. The convention was organized through a democratic election of delegates on the basis of the branch votes on the resolutions before the party. And that convention decided the issues in dispute.

The convention selected a Nominating Commission. The Nominating Commission brought in a slate for the National Committee. Its slate was debated on the convention floor, other nominations were made, a secret ballot vote was taken and through that vote a National Committee was elected. The National Committee in turn designated a Political Committee and designated national officers, including a National Secretary who happens to be me. Now, Comrade Al, speaking for the Robertson-Mage-White faction, tries to

make that whole democratic process appear a piece of bureaucracy by simply stating the Dobbs regime is not the party.

No, of course the Dobbs regime is not the party. What you call the Dobbs regime is just myself as National Secretary, constituting only one component part of the leadership. The national leadership—the regime—includes the Secretariat of the Political Committee, the members of the Political Committee and the members of the National Committee, all of whom were democratically elected by the party. To the best of its ability that national leadership is carrying out the program and principles on which this party was founded. It is insisting on the carrying out of the convention decisions. It is demanding disciplined conduct and loyalty from every member of the party. So long as the leadership does that there will be no crisis in the party. There would be a crisis only if the leadership defaulted on its responsibilities. The leadership is not going to default and the membership is going to back the leadership, because the action taken by the Political Committee to defend the fundamental integrity of this party is necessary to the good and welfare of the party and it will be welcomed by the party.

November 7, 1963

8 November 1963

Farrell Dobbs,
 National Secretary
 SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY
 116 University Place
 New York, N.Y. 10003

Dear comrade Dobbs:

Your letter of November 2nd conveying the Political Committee's decision to suspend me from membership in the party is acknowledged.

By a Leninist standard, this suspension is illegal. The Control Commission, through adroit selection of phrases from the Robertson-Ireland document, can only weakly conclude that a 'hostile and disloyal attitude toward the party is clearly manifested.' A wrong attitude, comrade Dobbs! The Control Commission, after nearly two hours of interrogation and after reading both documents which I submitted (the second half of the Robertson-Ireland document and 'What the Discussion is Really About') can only come up with a 'hostile and disloyal attitude.' This is false.

I think that men's minds are most clearly read in their actions. Yet the Control Commission is unable to produce evidence of any disloyal actions. Why not? Because, Comrade Dobbs, there have been none.

It is left to the Secretariat, in its November 1st motion to the Political Committee to charge that provisions of the 1938 organizational resolution, 'On the Internal Situation and the Character of the Party,' were violated. This charge, Comrade Dobbs, is a lie. This motion is dishonest because it does not even fairly state what I wrote. This motion is cynical because it goes beyond the Control Commission's findings. This motion is disloyal because it attacks a minority tendency member for his opinions and ideas alone. Here is how a Bolshevik views tendencies and discipline:

If there are no...tendencies, if the membership is fairly homogeneous, there will be only temporary groupings--unless the leadership is incorrect. And this will be shown best in practice. So, when a difference occurs, a discussion should take place, a vote be taken, and a majority line adopted. There must be no discrimination against the minority; any personal animosity will compromise not them but the leadership. Real leadership will be friendly and loyal to the disciplined minority.

It is true, of course, that discussion always provokes feelings which remain for some time. Political life is full of difficulties--personalities clash--they widen their dissensions--they get in each other's hair. These differences must be overcome by common experience, by education of the rank and file, by the leadership proving it is right. Discipline is built by education, not only by statutes. Organizational measures should be resorted to only in extreme cases.

It was the elastic life within it which allowed the Bolshevik Party to build its discipline. Even after the conquest of power, Bukharin and other members of the party voted against the government in the Central Executive on important questions, such as the German peace, and in so doing lined themselves with those Social Revolutionists who soon attempted armed insurrection against the Soviet state. But Bukharin was not expelled. Lenin said, in effect: 'We will tolerate a certain lack of discipline. We will demonstrate to them that we are right. Tomorrow they will learn that our policy is correct, and they will not break discipline so quickly.' By this I do not advise the dissenting comrades to imitate the arrogance of Bukharin. Rather do I recommend that the leadership learns from the patience and tact of Lenin. [L.D. Trotsky, In the Middle of the Road, pp.29-30. Some emphases added.]

Do not interpret the use of this quotation as an admission of having broken discipline. I have not. It is you, Comrade Dobbs, and the Secretariat who are behaving in an undisciplined fashion. You are penalizing me for the 'crime' of submitting my views and opinions to a loyal and disciplined minority tendency for consideration. The question is not even whether or not these views were adopted by the tendency--which they were not--but whether or not I had the right to offer dissenting views without the sanction of the leadership faction.

If I had committed a heinous act against the party, I would have been tried and expelled. This would be proper. But my alleged crime is entirely in the realm of ideas. This is a frame-up, Comrade Dobbs, and is unworthy of a man who has struggled so courageously in the past against similar outrages. No party member even attempted to speak to me in an informal and comradely fashion concerning the allegations. There was no attempt to determine if this allegedly rotten material could be salvaged. Instead, a hard--organizational--tactic was pursued. Not to determine the truth, but to silence loyal opposition! This is not a Leninist tactic.

Your suspension is therefore illegal as it is based on no crime against the party; only disciplined criticism of certain leadership policies. I protest this bureaucratic maneuver of the Secretariat and demand my right to appeal this criminal act before the National Committee at the earliest possible moment. Meanwhile, ignoring the provocation, I shall continue to abide by party discipline which flows from the program of the Fourth International.

Leninist greetings,

Laurence Ireland

New York
10 November, 1963

Political Committee
Socialist Workers' Party
116 University Place
New York 3, N.Y.

Dear Comrades,

The Political Committee resolution of November 1, suspending five comrades from membership in the Socialist Workers' Party, constitutes a crime against the fundamental principles of the Trotskyist movement. I and the other comrades have been excluded from the party for no other reason than our consistent, open, and loyal political struggle against the abandonment of Marxism by the clique(s) in control of the S.W.P. That this Cannon-Kerry-Dobbs apparatus did not have the courage to declare openly the real motive and ground for its act, but resorted instead to the familiar Stalinist methods of slander and frame-up, proves the drastic extent of the political and organizational degeneration of the S.W.P. leading clique(s).

This is a harsh charge, admittedly, but the texts of the Political Committee resolution of November 1 and of the Control Commission report on which it is allegedly based provide more than conclusive evidence that it is true.

A. The Control Commission report does not charge me or any other opposition comrade with a single violation of party discipline, with a single hostile or disloyal act. Why? Obviously because we have engaged in nothing even remotely approaching such an act.

B. The Control Commission accuses us of one thing alone -- a 'hostile and disloyal attitude': we are thus accused of nothing but a thought-crime. Anyone who actually needs to have the totalitarian nature of this accusation pointed out to him is referred to the speeches of Cannon and Dobbs on the Smith Act trials.

C. The 'evidence' presented by the Control Commission for its charge of subversive thoughts is drawn entirely from two internal discussion documents of the opposition dating from mid-1962: a series of fragments wrenched from their real context and strung together with dots in the fashion of the best schools of falsification. But this mendacious presentation is the smallest fault in the whole frame-up. The Control Commission concludes its 'findings' with this declaration: 'In these statements by the Robertson-Mage-White minority their hostile and disloyal attitude toward the party is clearly manifested.' THIS IS A CONSCIOUS, DELIBERATE, BARE-FACED LIE. The Control Commission knew perfectly well that the documents signed by Robertson, Ireland, and Harper were personal discussion contributions and had never been adopted, in whole or in part, by the 'Robertson-Mage-White minority.'

Why was this LIE necessary? In order to drag comrade White and myself, as leading figures of the opposition, into the frame-up against Robertson, Ireland, and Harper; and thus to take the last step before exclusion of the opposition as a whole. This LIE is prima facie evidence that the real motive of the operation is the suppression of political dissent.

D. Not content even with the falsifications of the Control Commission report, the Political Committee resolution introduces still another cheap swindle by accepting the thought-crime charges of the Control Commission as evidence regarding luridly and slanderously outlined 'leadership practices of the Robertson-Mage-White group.' It thus can conclude: 'Those concepts, methods, and practices, are alien to our party, wholly disloyal, and utterly intolerable.' One can only be amazed by the cynicism with which the leadership clique(s) cites a Control Commission report dealing only with 'concepts' as evidence for false accusations regarding 'methods' and 'practices.'

E. Finally, the entire procedure used against us is not merely dishonest--it is in direct contradiction with the provisions of the S.W.P. constitution, and therefore utterly illegal. Article VIII, Section 3 states: 'Charges against any member shall be made in writing and the accused member shall be furnished with a copy in advance of the trial.' I have no way of knowing if charges, written or oral, were ever made against me--I do know that if such charges exist I was never furnished with a copy of them, and still less did I ever get a chance to answer these hypothetical charges at a trial.

If this exclusion of the opposition is allowed to stand, whether in the hypocritical guise of 'suspension' or as open expulsion, the career of the S.W.P. as a revolutionary-socialist party will have come to an end. The political degeneration of the S.W.P. has already turned the concept of workers' democracy into an empty fetish, at least in the cases of the majority's policy on Cuba and Algeria. Now the exclusion of the opposition within the S.W.P. itself eliminates the basic right of the members of a democratic proletarian organization--the right to unite on a common political program in opposition to that of the existing leadership. Henceforward opponents of the leading clique(s) will have no rights: at most they can hope to be tolerated so long as the leadership does not regard their 'concepts' as 'hostile' or 'disloyal'.

The duty of the party is clear. These criminal exclusions must be unconditionally rescinded and those responsible for their perpetration severely censured. The alternative is irremediable bureaucratic degeneration.

Fraternally,

Shane Mage

Fullerton, California
November 12, 1963

The National Committee
Socialist Workers Party
116 University Place
New York 3, New York

Dear Comrades:

I am profoundly disturbed by the action of the Political Committee suspending comrades Robertson, White et al, from membership in the Party.

Let me say at the outset that no one could differ more drastically from the political position of this group than I. I have never read one of their documents with which I did not violently disagree, and their opinions on the "Negro question" are particularly repugnant.

This, however, is irrelevant. I do not have to point out to fellow Trotskyists, the role of differences of opinion in the development of a correct program. Nor do I need to use historical analogy to show that those who make serious political mistakes at one period may play a valuable role in the revolutionary movement at another.

I do not intend at this time to go into a detailed examination of charges made against this group. The most important charge, and the one which concerns me, is that these comrades have failed to maintain the organizational loyalty demanded of members of the Socialist Workers Party.

What is this loyalty which the Political Committee demands? If it consists in the suppression of legitimate programmatic differences, and the abandonment of all attempts to change the opinions of the majority, then it is the sort of loyalty which will lead inevitably to political isolation and defeat. The right to differ from the majority, the right to organize dissenting groups within the Party, the right to proselytize among both members and potential members so long as it is not done in the name of the Party, and does not monopolize and disrupt Party meetings, must be vigorously protected. To deny these rights to any member, no matter how mistaken he may be, must inevitably lead to the establishment of the sort of "monolithism" which is so hateful to us all. Furthermore, any member who has not been convinced by convention discussion, by documents, by argument both polemical and friendly, but who will abandon and cease to advocate an idea which he believes to be correct from fear of disciplinary action, is a spineless weakling and hardly the stuff of which revolutionaries are made.

It is admittedly difficult to maintain a revolutionary organization in the introverted circumstances in which we are forced to exist. The temptation to concentrate on internal disputes and to exaggerate their importance and gravity is difficult to resist. But it must be resisted if we hope to increase our numbers. After the bitter experience of the Russian Communist Party, the manner in which a party treats its dissenters will be a criterion to those whom we must have to make a revolution. Our record must be immaculate in this respect!

I urge you to rescind immediately this unfortunate action of the Political Committee.

Comradely,

Wendell Phillips

STATEMENT ON SUSPENSION OF ROBERTSON-TENDENCY MEMBERS:

November 15, 1963. By Clara Kaye; Dick supports this statement.

1. The Seattle Branch representative to the Nominating Commission at the July Convention questioned the procedure of the Commission on 2 counts: penalizing two Wohlforth-tendency National Committee members by throwing them off the Committee in response to charges made against them in the Convention and refusing to place Robertson on the Committee for similar reasons. The Nominating Commission thus transformed itself into a virtual Control Commission and exacted punishment--without any hearing or trial on the charges. This procedure was unprecedented. The Convention was presented with a fait accompli--an execution before a trial.
2. The current suspension, accordingly, was well prepared psychologically. But that does not make it politically or legally supportable in terms of democratic centralism and the SWP Constitution. The latter nowhere enjoins comrades of any tendency from engaging in private, personal and normal debate over disputed questions or any other questions; to cite the Constitution as evidence against the suspended members is meaningless.
3. The Control Commission was represented by only one regular member. In a case of this seriousness, surely the entire Commission should have been involved.
4. The Control Commission evidently never held a hearing nor solicited the reactions of the minority to the charges. The party has not heard the other side; the minority had no chance whatsoever for self-defense. The Control Commission therefore acted not as an impartial body serving the party as a whole, but exclusively as an agent of the Political Committee, which is not its proper role.
5. Not actions or official group policy are being punished here, but the ideas of two individual minority members. And 5 people are suspended. Both possible intent and guilt by association with individual ideas are the crime here. Yet it would appear that the charge is more dangerous than the crime.
6. How did personal minority documents come to be in the hands of the Control Commission? Have minorities no longer the right to internal private discussion amongst themselves?
7. The "double recruitment" charge is puzzling. A minority often recruits a person to the party and not to itself at the same time. This may or may not materialize later. But a minority may recruit a person to both, simultaneously, or almost so. The charge of disloyalty would only make sense if someone were recruited only to the faction and not to the party, or out of the

party and into the faction. This is exactly what the Goldman-Morrow faction did, as well as some other factions in the past. But this is not the charge in this case.

8. The one Robertson tendency member in Seattle (recruited in New York) is an active and reliable branch member and youth organizer. His behavior would belie the almost wholesale charge of Robertson-tendency disloyalty. Is there concrete evidence in other branches of disloyal behavior, selective activity, contempt for the party, etc. ? In lieu of this type of real evidence, the Control Commission has given us only an indignant expose of two unutterably ignorant and pretentious documents by two minority members; but since when has individual stupidity, privately or publicly expressed, been grounds for suspension? This is, indeed, an impossible precedent.

9. Such primitive fervor against a generally young and sincerely revolutionary tendency, their own factionalism notwithstanding, is unnecessary and ultimately degrading. The present explanation of the suspension is entirely unconvincing.

Seattle, Washington

New York
November 18, 1963

National Committee
Socialist Workers Party

Dear Comrades:

I have received notification of my suspension from party membership, not for any alleged disloyal acts on my part but on the basis of a single sentence culled from a document I once submitted to the Minority tendency. This document was neither discussed nor voted on within the tendency. The views contained in it are my own personal opinions, and I take full responsibility for them.

I would like to call attention to certain statements in this document which the Control Commission did not see fit to quote in its rather 'selective' report. In paragraph 1 I state that minority orientation, objectives, and perspectives in youth work must be formulated within the framework of a primary perspective as a minority tendency in the party. Continuing along this line, in the second paragraph of the document I state: 'The party not only limits us in the discussion of our politics within the youth, but prohibits us from revealing this limitation. We are not even able to discuss openly the relation of the party to the youth organization. In our work in the youth we must act as disciplined SWP members at all times, even when SWP discipline is counterposed to Leninist principle.' In the fifth paragraph I make clear that while minority comrades in the youth ought to consult on questions coming before the youth organization, that they do not act as a disciplined caucus or faction in that work. It seems to me that it should be perfectly clear to anyone reading my document--that is, to anyone not utterly blinded by factional prejudice--that even though I disagree totally with the distorted concept of party-youth relations currently practiced by the SWP, nevertheless I unconditionally advocate abiding by these grossly perverted standards because of the overriding importance we place on carrying out what we consider to be not only a necessary but an obligatory political struggle within the SWP. And, if my document alone were not sufficient to make this clear, I also furnished the Control Commission with a several-pages long cover-letter to the document written to Comrade Freeman in Seattle at the time explaining why I felt the document was necessary, outlining the youth and tendency situation in New York, and explaining several parts of the document in greater detail. But the Control Commission was not interested in this, or in the obvious intent of the document as a whole, in their search for an individual tidbit which might sound unsavory out of context. In my whole document they were only able to find one! And even then the Secretariat in its motion felt it necessary to change the words of this sentence, which were that we should seek to work 'when we are relatively free from the hindrance of large majority fractions...' to 'seeking to work as free lancers in areas where they are unhindered by the presence of comrades loyal to the party.'

As a matter of fact, minority youth comrades have had the chance to engage in just the sort of work I advocated ever since last February. I am referring to our work on the Columbia campus. There we built a socialist forum, sponsored two majority-speakers, held weekly sales, and distributed leaflets on all party-held or supported functions. All views presented by us in the forum were in accord with the majority line, and no other person we worked with knew that we were in any sort of minority in the YSA or SWP. In short, our work there was a model of disciplined functioning which no one can challenge. How, then, could this sort of work benefit the Minority? Through the simple fact that anyone won to socialism by our arguments and our work will naturally have political respect for the person recruiting them. And once in the YSA the rabid factionalism, constant organizational injustices, and false, slanderous attacks perpetrated by majority youth against minority supporters will (and has) only serve to bind most people we recruit closer to us and predispose them to consider a minority viewpoint during proper discussions. The very factionalism of the New York youth majority which I have just attempted to describe (which, in fact, practically defies description) has made it largely impossible for a minority supporter to function as a political person in arenas heavily dominated by the Majority; and as a matter of fact, where possible the Majority has consciously sought to prevent minority supporters from engaging in normal arenas of mass work (for example removing Shirley from southern SNCC, refusing to let Edith join CORE, etc.).

One final word, on the Control Commission investigation itself. This investigation could in no sense of the word be termed impartial, or hardly even an 'investigation'. The two comrades conducting the investigation were Comrades Chester and Tabor. The former is the wife of a leading majority member of the National Committee and both have been years-long supporters of the central party leadership, incapable of distinguishing between loyalty to this leadership (a leadership and line we openly state we wish to replace) and loyalty to the party. If this is not sufficient to establish the pre-biased nature of the investigating body, there is also the fact that Comrade Chester remarked to Comrade Harry T. nearly a year ago (months before the investigation) that we were disloyal! The investigators assumed from the beginning that we were guilty and even obviously thought that we also knew we were 'guilty', and the bulk of the investigation itself consisted of attempts to trap us into admitting that we were guilty on one or another point. This is why I say the procedure could scarcely be termed an 'investigation'. In addition, sadly enough, the complete lack of understanding of the party's organizational principles and statutes by the comrades conducting the investigation is revealed in their report itself. This report was incompetent even from the point of view of the needs of the party leadership and has placed them in the embarrassing position of having to go beyond the findings of the Commission (to twist the thoughts and attitudes cited in the report into 'methods' and 'practices') in their final attempt to get rid of us (after having failed to drive us from the party in 2 1/2 years of ever-increasing organizational provocation and harrassment).

I have nothing more to say than that at all times I have abided by the organizational statutes and principles of the party as stated in the 1938 convention decision and in the party constitution, and believe that these statutes are correct and necessary for the functioning of a Bolshevik organization, and I protest to the uttermost my suspension from the party.

Fraternally,

Lynne Harper

STATEMENT TO NATIONAL COMMITTEE ON ROBERTSON GROUP SUSPENSIONS

The Trotskyist movement was born in the struggle against the bureaucratic degeneration of the workers state and of the revolutionary party of the working class.

It is therefore hardly necessary to say that never in the history of the Trotskyist movement have comrades been suspended, not for what they may have done, but their ideas.

In the current suspension of members of a minority tendency, namely Comrades Robertson, Mage, White, Ireland, Harper, the Political Committee has not only suspended comrades for their ideas, written for internal tendency discussion some time ago, but has also suspended some who may or may not share these ideas.

At the proper time we propose to discuss the political problems which have led to these organizational crisis steps. For the moment we repeat that political problems cannot be solved by organizational steps. Indeed as the current suspensions indicate, the underlying political problem is emphasized.

We call upon the National Committee in its forthcoming plenary session to uphold the unblemished history of the Trotskyist movement. We call upon the National Committee to uphold the revolutionary honor of the SWP by lifting the suspensions of all the comrades involved.

--Reorganized Minority Tendency
submitted 11/21/63

COPYMotion Passed by New Haven Branch November 28, 1963

THE NEW HAVEN BRANCH PROTESTS THE SUSPENSION OF THE ROBERTSON GROUP. THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT ANY TRIAL OF THESE COMRADES TOOK PLACE. THERE IS INSUFFICIENT EVIDENCE THAT DISLOYAL CONTACTS WERE MADE WITH OUTSIDE GROUPS OR THAT VIOLATIONS OF PARTY DISCIPLINE TOOK PLACE. THE CHARGES ALL REVOLVE AROUND STATEMENTS MADE IN INTERNAL DISCUSSION. WE REQUEST THE PC TO RECONSIDER THE SUSPENSION. IF THERE IS EVIDENCE OF OVERT ACTS OF VIOLATION OF PARTY DISCIPLINE, THE COMRADES SHOULD BE BROUGHT TO TRIAL.

#

Vote on motion: 5 For; 1 Opposed.

For NC and CC Information

Seattle, Washington
November 29, 1963

Political Committee
Socialist Workers Party

Dear Comrades:

In regards to the suspension of the Robertson group: It is my opinion that this action was taken in haste and a somewhat arbitrary manner. It also appears to me that the trial--indeed if they had a trial, was not in the best procedures of democratic centralism. It is my belief that they were denied the privilege of having formal charges preferred against them before the whole party membership. And that they were denied access to internal bulletins and other party channels to defend their position and allegations against them. It is also my belief that the manner and method of their suspension was highly irregular and not in keeping with the best traditions of our party and the principles of proletarian democracy.

The rights of minorities to defend their position through regular party channels is the cornerstone of proletarian democracy. And the right to have formal charges preferred against them before the whole party membership stating their errors of commission and omission is a fundamental principle of democratic centralism.

The best traditions of proletarian democracy demands that all trials, suspensions and disciplinary actions be based squarely on the issues involved under the objective circumstances and that the only partiality shown is a partiality to revolutionary principles, the preservation of the party and the best interests of the working class. Any weakening of laxity in the fulfillment of the requirements of this principle can only tend to damage our party in the eyes of the workers and weaken the morale of all our comrades.

In 1954 I was locked out of the Communist Party. I was denied either a hearing or a trial, which I repeatedly demanded. I was denied any access to any body or organ of the party to defend my position and refute the slanders and accusations hurled at me. Comrades, I do not wish to see any form or degree of this creep into our party. It is precisely the opposite of this that attracted me to the SWP. In the SWP I found a party where even the most erroneous of my ideas and proposals were heard, expounded and corrected. To be a Socialist one must continually grow, both ideologically and politically. Without the clash of divergent views, discussion, study and activity this is impossible.

I respectfully ask the Political Committee to reconsider the suspension of the Robertson group, and to re-examine the evidence and charges against them. And if then, in their considered opinion they find these comrades in violation of party discipline and/or democratic centralism that formal charges be placed against them and that they be allowed access to internal bulletins and all legitimate channels to defend their position and refute or attempt to refute the charges against them.

It has not been made clear to me by the communications from the N. O. or PC that violations of party discipline have been committed.

Nothing in this letter is to be construed as endorsement of the views or policies of the Robertson group.

Comradely,

/signed/

Jack Wright

TO THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE PLENUM

DECEMBER 27-29, 1963

The suspension of Comrades Robertson, White, et al. by the Political Committee is, in my opinion, a violation of our principle of democratic centralism as we have hitherto conceived it, and as is necessary if the party is to remain on a revolutionary course. I therefore protest this action to the National Committee Plenum and urge its reversal.

I have no sympathy whatever with the outrageous statements made by some of these comrades in their own internal tendency documents; nor do I view kindly what seems to be their group objectives. But reprehensible as this may be, the far more important question for the revolutionary integrity and healthy growth of the party is the right of comrades of a minority group, or any other comrade to hold and express views, be they ever so critical.

To members of the leading party body, the National Committee, it should not be necessary to emphasize the importance of maintaining that right. Only the most complete freedom of expression of contrary views, even mistaken ones, without, of course, interfering in any way with the pursuance of regular party activities and duties--only such practice of internal democracy can give reasonable assurance of arriving at correct policies. A good deal has been said about demands for internal party democracy elsewhere--in China for instance. Let us make sure that we ourselves set a good example. It will be helpful also in the very serious task of maintaining clear revolutionary perspectives.

The suspended comrades are charged with disloyalty to the party; the charge is based merely on opinions expressed in internal tendency documents. No acts have been cited to justify the charge. In any event, loyalty to the party and to the principles for which it stands can be tested only over a period of time and under varying conditions. In no case can the mere engaging in, or refraining from, sharp criticism be considered a measure of loyalty.

I submit this protest in all earnestness to the National Committee, hoping for favorable action. In connection with the Milwaukee case my protest was rebuffed by the PC, and in the type of rude terms that should not be practiced among comrades. I was accused of mistaking the party majority as "nothing more than a rival faction." No, Comrades, I am not making that mistake. I know the majority is the party leadership. I respect that as an established fact. This does not mean that I consider the leadership to be free from factionalism. Quite the contrary. In the case of these suspensions political differences are settled by organizational means--by means of a purge--which can have no other motivation than that of factionalism. Therein lies the great danger to the party. Unless this is changed, it can lead straight to the monolithism we abhor.

December 5, 1963

Arne Swaback.

