

# INTERNAL BULLETIN

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New York, N. Y.  
February 8, 1947

TO NATIONAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND ALTERNATES:

Dear Comrades:

INFORMATIONAL MATERIAL FOR THE PLENUM

New developments which will have to be considered by the Plenum, to be held February 15-16, are as follows:

1. Workers Party. The decisive action of our party convention in rejecting and closing discussion on the previous unity maneuver of Goldman-Shachtman, together with the expulsion of Morrow, produced big repercussions nationally and internationally as was to be expected. Now that it has been made perfectly clear by the resolute action of our convention that the SWP will tolerate no more monkey-business with discipline, and that unity maneuvers are firmly rejected and excluded for the future, new developments on a new basis are shaping up. As you know, we have a visit from Ted and Smith. Together with them we have discussed and prepared some new moves designed to put an end to all ambiguity and bring all questions to a head and a definitive settlement in connection with the Extraordinary Party Convention now definitely scheduled for the fall.

Prior to the arrival of Smith and Ted we had had a meeting with Johnson. He affirmed his complete political solidarity with us on all questions except the Russian question, and his earnest desire to be given a formula that would facilitate his struggle and open the road for unification. At the same time, Shachtman had announced his wish to participate in the EPC and in the discussion preceding it, and wanted to know under what terms and conditions this could be granted.

The information furnished us by Smith and Ted made it clear that the genuine orthodox Marxist tendency is assured of a firm majority at the EPC on all of the disputed questions. Previous experience and discussion has prepared this victory of authentic Trotskyism in the world movement. In the course of the discussion we found complete agreement between ourselves and Smith on all questions concerning the EPC. We agreed to stand jointly for the following program:

1. The EPC should not only confirm the orthodox line as laid down in the previous documents of the pre-conference and the Committee In Charge, and now brilliantly amplified in the new theses of Germain on the Russian question, but should specifically condemn the theories of bureaucratic collectivism, national revolution, retrogressionism and the conception of the Stalinist parties in capitalist countries as non-working class bodies.

2. All discussion should be closed on these questions once they are decided by the EPC, and may not be reopened without the authorization of the CIC. Membership thereafter should be conditional on acceptance of the political and organizational decisions

of the EPC and disciplined application of them in all political activity.

3. On the SWP-WP question, the EPC should condemn the political line developed by the WP, condemn the split of 1940, the maneuverist character of the unity proposal and the Goldman split which accompanied it.

Assuming the victory of this program, which seems to be absolutely assured, the question then arose as to what attitude shall be taken towards those elements inside the ranks of the Movement who hold one or more or all of the views which the EPC will reject and condemn. Following the tradition of our movement, as well as political realism in the present situation, we could only arrive at the following conclusion: Those who accept the decisions of the EPC and obligate themselves to carry them out in practice, may remain in the organization. Those who refuse to accept the decisions are to be automatically expelled. Any who may "accept" the decisions with tongue in cheek and then proceed to violate them, shall be expelled.

The next question then arose: What conditions if any can we offer to those groups formally outside the organization, including the WP or any section of it, who express a wish to participate in the EPC and the discussion preceding it. On this point we worked out the following formula, in line with the already adopted resolution of the CIC:

Unaffiliated groups desiring to participate in the discussion prior to the EPC must give a written undertaking to recognize the authority of the EPC and pledge themselves in advance to accept its decisions on both political and organizational questions. On that condition they may participate in the pre-EPC discussion and may have fraternal representation at the EPC, without voting rights.

This formula was presented by Smith to Johnson and promptly accepted by him. At the same time he announced that he would accept it and carry it out in any case, regardless of the position taken by the WP majority or any of its other factions.

Smith then presented the same formula to Shachtman. Shachtman showed him a letter already drawn up by their PC which requested the right to participate in the pre-EPC discussion but which stated the WP could not in advance agree to accept the EPC decisions. However, after a six-hour discussion Shachtman announced that he would accept the conditions, and invited Smith to attend a meeting of the PC of the WP where the question would be laid before them. At this meeting of the PC, after a long discussion and many protests from the right-wing against the harshness of the terms and unavailing proposals for amendments or modifications, this body also voted unanimously to accept the conditions and to call a Plenum within 48 hours to consider the matter.

This Plenum of the WP, called on such short notice, was held Wednesday night. There the same process was repeated. Johnson aggressively defended the formula, condemned the split of 1940 and their whole course which had led up to the unity maneuver and second

split of 1946, and announced that he would accept the conditions in any case. Shachtman, confronted by the resolute stand of Johnson with the prospect of remaining alone in the party with the right-wing, spoke for the acceptance of the terms. So also did Goldman. The right-wing, protesting against the terms as a "capitulation" and characterizing the proviso that further discussion after the EPC is to be prohibited as a "death sentence" on their tendency, finally voted to accept.

Yesterday we had another meeting with Johnson. He informed us that his faction has 70 members. They firmly agree with the SWP on all questions except the Russian question, and this they are willing to lay aside in order to concentrate all their efforts on hearty and loyal collaboration with us to build up the party in the USA.

Our PC has not taken a vote on the question. We are discussing the matter, both formally and informally, and plan to leave the decision open until the Plenum convenes. I must tell you, however, that the majority opinion is definitely crystallizing in favor of going through with the proposition as outlined above. I personally am convinced that, taking everything into account nationally and internationally, it is a correct and necessary step and that we should proceed aggressively to its complete execution. Stein has the same opinion. Even those comrades in the PC who are inclined to emphasize the disadvantages and dangers of the proposition admit the difficulty of logically motivating a rejection of the formula, or of finding a better one.

I don't need to enumerate the negative aspects of a unification with the Shachtmanites even under these harsh terms. They are quite clear to everybody. But the thing as a whole, in my opinion, is more of a plus than a minus; and this must determine our position.

It will be seen at a glance that this new formula is far removed from the original proposal of Goldman-Shachtman, which our convention correctly rejected. It is not the same thing at all. It is a new approach to the question, made possible by the convention decision, and is qualitatively different. Then, the Shachtmanites were the initiators, basing themselves on a disloyal faction in our own ranks and demanding a special bulletin of their own for permanent discussion after the unification. This time, after the original unification maneuver ended in a fiasco and boomeranged in the development of a strong faction in their own ranks putting the pistol of a split at their temples -- this time, we are taking the initiative and we are laying down new conditions. The new conditions provide that all discussion of the disputed questions must be finished before the unification. Not only is there to be no special bulletin, but there cannot be any discussion whatever of the settled questions; and this must be agreed to and signed in advance, with the additional proviso that any violation of this agreement will result in the expulsion of the violators.

Under these conditions I think it would be very unwise for us to falter or haggle over the acceptance of the program, since it contains all the provisions which we could logically demand in the circumstances. That would be like chasing a street car that has already been caught.

There will be many difficulties and irritations in carrying out a unification after the seven-year fight, even if all the Shachtmanites come into the unification with good will. There will be even more irritations if a section of them come into the unification with bad will. On the other hand, if they come with good will and manifest it in a constructive attitude in the first period -- and any other course would be absolutely suicidal for them -- we have much to gain from the unification. The most important gain would be the elimination of the last remaining rival organization to the SWP as the organizing center of labor radicalism. After the elimination of the Lovestonites, the Muste organization, the Socialist Party "militants," Proletarian Party, the Oehlerites -- the elimination of the WP as a separate organization -- after a seven-year fight -- would clear the field entirely for the SWP. This could not fail to make a strong impression on the minds of all radical workers, including the dissident Stalinist workers, and attract them more strongly to us.

At the same time, the unification would be a powerful blow against centrifugal tendencies throughout the Movement, and aid the Movement leadership in the task of unification and concentration. This would create the possibility for the first time of introducing a serious discipline to regulate and control the irresponsible individuals and groups who have been running wild up till now.

These in my opinion, are the two main considerations. They far outweigh the minuses, serious and important as the latter may be. But if everything goes well there can be other plusses too. The WP is a much smaller organization than ours -- they have about 400 members -- but we shouldn't conceal from ourselves the fact that along with quite a number of fast talkers and "discussion" fanatics, they have also some good activists who seriously want to build a revolutionary party to fight American capitalism. Johnson assures us there are many more than we are inclined to think. In any case, we should open the door for them and give them one final fair chance to integrate themselves in the party. A serious thought should also be given to the leadership of the WP. We know their faults and weaknesses, and their mistakes which have often amounted to crimes -- all of which, from a political point of view, comes under the general head of centrism. But with the knife at their throats, confronted with a virtual ultimatum: capitulate to the Movement or definitively break with it -- they decided -- "under protest" -- to capitulate. This action speaks for them, not against them. It entitles them also to one more chance -- and a fair chance -- to find a way to collaborate with us. This must be said in all seriousness if we are truly serving great political aims and are capable of subordinating everything, including personal sentiments, to the service of these aims.

2. Morrow. Following from the above, the same formula offered to the Shachtmanites should logically apply to Morrow. Having been expelled by the party convention, he naturally cannot be readmitted into the SWP by the Plenum. But if he signs an undertaking to recognize the authority of the EPC and pledges himself to obey its decisions, he also should be given the opportunity to participate in the pre-EPC discussion. We can easily agree to this, even though it is a bit "irregular." This concession on our part would help the leadership of the CIC to disarm the opportunist and unprincipled elements who represent our expulsion of Morrow as a device to deprive the right-wing of an ideological representative in the discussion before the EPC. But looked at properly, it is no concession at all. The more Morrow writes and the more his writings are translated into other languages, the simpler everything will become for the comrades in other countries.

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We think it would be a good idea for the out-of-town Plenum members to bring this communication to the attention of the leading comrades locally and have a preliminary discussion with them, so that the Plenum can have clear reports of the first reactions of the party comrades to the new developments. It goes without saying that the new proposals, if endorsed by the Plenum, must be submitted to the party membership for discussion and eventual decision by a special party convention.

Fraternally yours,

Martin

(COPY)

WORKERS PARTY  
4 Court Square  
Long Island City 1, N. Y.

March 8, 1947

TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE WORKERS PARTY

Dear Comrades:

The question of unity between the Workers Party and the Socialist Workers Party has once more been placed upon the agenda. At a special meeting called to consider the question, the National Committee of our party considered the question again and made a number of decisions on it. These decisions have already been communicated orally to the membership in several cities where a report on the question was delivered by Comrade Shachtman. In the other cities, the report is being delivered to branch meetings by Comrade Gates. This circular will reiterate the facts and conclusions presented in these reports for the discussion of the question which is now being organized in the party and for the eventual final decision on the matter which will have to be taken by the membership in a regularly convoked convention.

In order that the discussion takes place on the basis of the fullest understanding of the question and with the utmost objectivity, it is well to recall briefly the position taken on this question in the past period by our party. All the necessary documentation on the subject is already in the hands of the membership in the form of the pamphlet on "Unity" by Goldman, which includes as appendices all the important resolutions and correspondence on the subject.

The initiative and the work of reunifying the Trotskyist movement in the U.S. by means of a fusion between the WP and the SWP was taken more than a year and a half ago by the leaders of the then Minority of the SWP, Goldman, Morrow, Bennett and Williams. In brief the resolution they submitted to the leading committees of the SWP proposed that the party undertake negotiations with the WP for unification in view of the fact that the slogan of unconditional defense of the Soviet Union had been retired into the background by the SWP, and of the fact that the WP had demonstrated in the course of the war that it was a revolutionary Marxian internationalist organization. The Minority resolution further proposed that the actual unification be preceded by a period of practical collaboration between the two parties which would not only test the feasibility of unity but would at the same time help ameliorate the antagonisms that had developed in the course of six years of separation. Immediately after the presentation of this resolution to the Political Committee of the SWP, a plenary meeting of the National Committee of the WP, assembled in Detroit in August 1945, adopted a resolution by unanimous vote which, in substance, corresponded with the position of the SWP Minority. This resolution in favor of unity is reprinted among the appendices in the Goldman pamphlet and therefore does not need to be summarized here.

The SWP leadership, while it did not formally reject the proposal for unity, or commit itself formally one way or another, soon showed in practice, especially in the form of its exceptional hostility to the Minority in its party, that it did not take a friendly attitude toward the proposal for unification. Only two joint meetings of the representatives of the two parties were held. The SWP representatives declared that they had no authority to negotiate for unity of the two parties and that they were present only for exploratory purposes so that they could report back to their leading committees. Our representatives, on the other hand, made a firm and positive proposal for unity and even went into detail, at the first meeting, as to how we proposed to effect the unification in practice. It is especially important at the present moment that every comrade be exactly aware of what our original position and proposals were. We said orally, and repeatedly confirmed it in written letters and statements, the following was our basis for unity:

In view of the numerical superiority of the SWP over the WP, which we did not even think of contesting, we declared ourselves ready, from the very outset, to assume the position of a minority in the united party, with all the rights and obligations that a minority must assume. By this we meant concretely, as we stated to the SWP, that we would dissolve our independent party; give up our public press, LABOR ACTION and THE NEW INTERNATIONAL; give up our independent public activity; acknowledge the right of the present SWP and its leadership to be the majority in the leadership of the united party; and in general give up any form of independence and separate existence. We acknowledged, further, as flowing from these propositions, that the program and policy of the united party would be the program and policy of the present SWP, and that as a consequence it would have control of the principal party institutions, including the press, and control of all the public activity of the party. As a minority in the united party, we were ready to pledge ourselves to abide by the decisions and discipline of the majority until such time as these decisions were reversed by a majority of the party membership in the manner provided for by the party constitution. We further - again at the very first meeting with the representatives of the SWP - made a declaration that we were ready to give all the necessary guarantees not only against the danger of a split following on the heels of the unification, but also against precipitating a factional fight or a violent polemical discussion in the party immediately after the unification, all in order to establish the maximum assurance that the unity would be cemented as firmly and solidly as possible. To the above we added that in view of the fact that this was a unity proposed between politically similar but not politically identical tendencies, in other words, in view of the known political differences between the two tendencies, which were and are by no means trivial, we proposed, as a minority in the united party to issue an internal bulletin of our own, for educational purposes, and not for the purpose of launching a factional fight.



These were our proposals from the very beginning, and you would have to look far and wide to discover a situation in which one side was prepared to make such extensive concessions in the interests of unity with another side, without asking for any concessions in return. Our propositions were the only ones made in the course of the two joint sessions for the simple reason that the representatives of the SWP made no propositions of any kind. They did not accept or reject those made by us, and they offered none in place of ours. At a later stage, when it became clear that our proposal to issue an internal educational bulletin of our own was being presented in the SWP as an obstacle to unification, the SWP Minority again took the initiative to promote the fusion. In a letter to our party, the Minority suggested that we withdraw our proposal for an internal bulletin and that we make the following proposition instead: that both sides recognize the right of any minority to issue a bulletin of its own in the united party and that we, for our part, would pledge ourselves not to exercise that right in the first period of the existence of the united party. It should be noted that the right of a minority to issue an educational or even a factional bulletin of its own has never been questioned in the entire history of the Trotskyist movement. Even in the violent struggle in the SWP in 1939-1940 no objection at all was made to the fact that the then minority repeatedly issued internal bulletins of its own, as had minorities in the Trotskyist movement in the U.S. and elsewhere before that time. Our proposal was, therefore, in no sense extraordinary. Nevertheless, in order to remove any argument that might conceivably be used against our proposal for unity, we unhesitatingly accepted the suggestion of the Minority and communicated our decision to the SWP; that is, we requested only the recognition of the right of a minority to issue an internal bulletin and declared that we would not exercise that right in the initial period of the unity. It goes without saying, we understood also that it might not be necessary to exercise that right at all if a genuinely democratic party regime were established in which everybody in the united party would have ample confidence, thus obviating the need for any minority to take such measures to bring its views before the membership as a whole.

Yet, despite this whole series of concessions, the SWP leadership, instead of being brought closer to the idea of unity, became increasingly hostile to it. Not even the increasing sympathy for the idea of unity that developed in numerous sections of the Movement could persuade the SWP leadership to alter its anti-unity position. In August 1946, on the eve of the regular national convention of the SWP, its Political Committee published the document entitled, "Revolutionary Marxism vs. Petty Bourgeois Revisionism." The title is sufficient indication of the contents. Page after page was devoted to a violent attack on our party as petty bourgeois, revisionist, anti-Marxist, anti-Trotskyist, anti-Fourth Internationalist, as even being "on the other side of the barricades," as moving rapidly towards Social Democracy and as having nothing in common with the revolutionary principles of our international movement. Every page was devoted to digging an unbridgeable gulf between the two tendencies. In its concluding chapter, the statement of the Political Committee of the SWP

proposed that the Movement set up three new criteria for distinguishing the revolutionary Marxist tendency from all others, the adoption of which was clearly calculated to establish an irreconcilable political and organizational hostility toward our party. On the basis of this document, the Political Committee reporter on the question of unity at the convention of the SWP which followed in Chicago, succeeded in obtaining a unanimous vote against unity with the WP, except for the four votes in favor of unity cast by the remaining representatives of the Minority.

We must note and lay appropriate stress upon the fact that nowhere in the Statement of the Political Committee of the SWP, nor in any other political documents of the SWP, was there so much as a word devoted to our proposal for an internal bulletin, nor even a hint that this question, or anything like it, was an obstacle, let alone the obstacle, to unification. The opposition to unity was motivated exclusively upon the argument that the theoretical and political differences between the two parties made unity and co-existence within a united party impossible. We kept emphasizing, in line with our conception of the character of the revolutionary Marxian party, that the differences were compatible with membership in a single party. We kept emphasizing that the contrary point of view was the point of view of that "monolithism" against which the Trotskyist movement had always fought. We emphasized, not only to the SWP but to our own members that the mere fact that the SWP would agree to unity with our party would by itself already be a refutation and abandonment of the monolithic conception of the party, if not explicitly then at least implicitly, if not in whole, then at least in part.

It is true that in addition to this "basic" argument against unity with the WP, namely on grounds of political incompatibility with membership in one party, some attempts were made to reject our proposals on the ground that we were not "really" for unity, that we were only engaged in a maneuver. Under the circumstances, it was impossible for any thinking person to take this argument seriously. We answered the argument a dozen times by saying: All that is necessary to expose the "maneuver" of the WP proposals for unity is for the SWP to declare itself in favor of unity and to demand that the WP make good in deed what it offered in words. Then, if the WP dissolved its public organization and accepted the position of a disciplined minority in the united party, the charge of a "maneuver" would be proved groundless and the entire movement would be the gainer. On the other hand, if the WP would refuse to carry out the proposals that it itself had made, it would stand exposed and it alone would suffer discreditment. The fact remains that at no time did the SWP leadership declare itself in favor of unity and at no time did it call upon the WP to make good on its proposals in practice.

That is how matters stood up until recently. Any other version of this stage of the negotiations on unity belongs in the realm of mythology.

The question was put on our agenda again a few weeks ago by a visit of Comrade Smith, an authoritative representative of the Committee in Charge (CIC) of the Extraordinary Party Convention (EPC). Smith met successively with Shachtman, with the members of the PC of the party and then with the membership of the NC in plenary session.

Sometime before Smith's arrival in the city, our PC came across the text of the call for the EPC. The agenda for the Convention, as outlined in the call, was entirely satisfactory to us. It provided for reports and discussions on the most vital questions before the Movement. However, the call for the EPC contained a most extraordinary provision. In dealing with those organizations which were not an official part of the EPC, it stipulated that they could attend the Convention and participate in the discussions prior to the Convention only if they committed themselves in advance to abide by all the political and organizational decisions of the Convention. This provision which referred unmistakably to our party, was utterly unprecedented in our movement, unwarranted in the particular case, narrow-minded and infantile. That was the unanimous opinion of our PC when it considered the call. The PC decided to address a most restrained letter to the CIC, stating our desire to participate in the Convention to the fullest possible extent, and at the same time stating our complete disagreement with the provision described above. The PC also decided to hold up the dispatch of this letter because it was reported that a representative of the CIC would soon visit New York, thereby affording us the opportunity of discussing with him our letter and the full meaning of the absurd provision so as to remove all possible ambiguity and misunderstanding before we adopted the letter as a final text.

At the first meeting between Smith and Shachtman, this latter matter was gone into. Shachtman showed Smith the draft of our letter to the CIC and emphasized the unacceptability of the provision, pointing out, as did the letter itself, that the party leadership is in no case authorized to make such a commitment. In reply, Smith set forth the following view: If the WP does make the formal commitment to pledge itself in advance to accept all the decisions of the EPC, it will immediately be considered by the CIC as a sympathizing organization with full rights, it will be able to participate with full rights and without restrictions in the preparations and sessions of the EPC and, finally, what is most decisive, that the CIC was sure of the achievement of unity between the WP and the SWP. He stated specifically that the SWP had called a special meeting of its NC to take place on February 15-16 to discuss the question of unity again, and that if the WP made this commitment in writing in the form of a letter to the CIC, Smith would positively assure a favorable vote on unity by the SWP plenum. On this ground, namely, that the commitment was inseparably connected with and contingent upon the achievement of unity between the two parties, Shachtman said that he would recommend a favorable action to our PC.

Smith was invited to attend a meeting of the PC called to discuss the matter and an emergency meeting of our NC which was convened a few days later. The NC meeting was attended by all the members except two who are on the west coast and who could not attend because of the short notice on which the plenum was called.

At the meetings of the PC and the NC Smith once more set forth the position of the CIC. He reported that the Secretariat of the CIC had adopted a resolution containing two points. One was a criticism of the SWP for having adopted a position on the unity at its national convention last November without waiting to hear the opinion of the CIC. The other was a criticism of the SWP for having expelled Morrow and Jeffries at their convention on the grounds that such an expulsion as "inopportune" and deprived the two comrades of the opportunity to participate in the discussions for the EPC. The exact text of these motions was not presented to us but was summarized orally by Smith.

In the discussion of the CIC's provision for our participation in the EPC, virtually all the comrades of our NC expressed the strongest criticisms of the proposition. In part of his reply, Smith endeavored to defend the proposition on the ground that there was a precedent for it in the history of the Communist International. For his precedent he cited the case of the admission of the KAPD (Communist Workers Party in Germany), a small, ultra-leftist organization which the leadership of the CI at one time sought to win to its side. According to Smith, the Comintern demanded of the KAPD that if it wanted to participate in the Congress of the International it would have to pledge itself to accept in advance all the decisions of the Congress. The "precedent" was ill-chosen. What happened in actuality was almost exactly the opposite. Under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky - even though it represented a mass movement of millions throughout the world, and even though it had behind its program the tremendous authority of the successful Russian Revolution - the Comintern nevertheless went out of its way to try to draw to its side vacillating and unsure groups, no matter how tiny. These groups were as far removed from the program of the CI as the Socialist Labor Party in this country, the IWW, the French Syndicalists, Spanish Anarcho-Syndicalists, and ultra-leftist groups like the KAPD. Even though its strength was enormous in comparison with these tiny groups, the Comintern leadership was intelligent enough not to approach them with ultimatums. The policy actually pursued toward such groups is exemplified by the report that Karl Radek, speaking for the Executive of the Comintern, delivered to the Third World Congress in 1921 about the relations of the International to the KAPD. He said:

"The motion of the Executive proposes that the KAPD, after having been a sympathizing member of the Communist International for six months shall now have a concrete period of 2 to 3 months in which to decide it if submits to the decisions of the Communist International, and in this way come to a unification with the United Communist Party of Germany (the official Comintern section) on the basis of this decision.....Thus although from the founding Congress of the KAPD onward the antagonism of the KAPD to the Comintern was

clear, the Comintern sought to build bridges to itself for the KAPD, not out of consideration of a catch-all policy, which aimed to bring together Tom, Dick and Harry, but out of the viewpoint that with the standpoint represented by the KAPD, errors would manifest themselves in the revolutionary Communist movement of the proletariat in all countries. Where the new revolutionary strata awaken and throw themselves into the political fighting arena, it is clear that these strata cannot everywhere and always have a good eye for political necessities. And inasmuch as it was a question here of the mistakes of revolutionary proletarians, the Executive said to itself that it must do everything in order to win these proletarians for the International. And at the Second Congress of the Communist International, the Executive surmounted all the obstacles just in order to give the delegates of the KAPD the possibility of participating in the Congress, and to see, for its part, the standpoint that the big overwhelming majority of the Communist proletariat in all countries adopts. The Executive went so far that it wanted to give a decisive mandate to the representatives of the KAPD, although the latter declared in advance to the Executive that they would not submit to the decisions..." (Minutes of the Third World Congress, in German, pp. 339-341)

In a word, the "precedent" cited by Smith, and about which there appears to be such agitation in the SWP today, speaks directly against the proposition of the CIC and shows the state to which the best traditions of Lenin and Trotsky have fallen in sections of our movement.

Entirely apart from the question of the relations between the CIC and the WP there is the question of its relations with other groups that exist everywhere. They are, to be sure, small groups, but our own movement is a very small one too, and it has no "right" to be haughty towards any other groups on grounds of size alone. At a time when our own movement is so small and so isolated, it should be searching night and day for contact with all sorts of groups which have broken or are breaking with the Social Democracy and Stalinism; it should be bending its greatest efforts to establish the most friendly relations with such groups, to bring them closer to our movement, to evidence the greatest patience with them, to show the most genuine readiness to discuss with them formally, to avoid the slightest impression that we consider everything in our own movement "settled," cut-and-dried, or that we seek to impose our views upon them merely by superior voting strength. Instead, the CIC takes a position where it faces all such groups with an ultimatum that could have been worked out only by narrow-minded bureaucrats, however honest and well-intentioned - or by political infants, an ultimatum to which few groups will pay any attention.

In the discussion at the PC and NC meetings, it was also pointed out by many comrades that, standing by itself, the proposal for such a commitment by our party would create an absolutely ridiculous situation. If, for example, both the WP and the SWP attended the EPC under the conditions set forth, both would be obligated in advance to rewrite (or reaffirm, as the case might be) their programs to correspond with the decisions of the EPC. In that case we

would have a situation where two separate parties would present identical programs to the masses - one party presenting the program with real conviction, the other party presenting it without conviction and only out of consideration of discipline. That would make a fine spectacle of our movement indeed!

Nevertheless, a decisive majority of the NC voted to comply with the proposal of Smith. How is this to be explained? Smith declared, again and again, that with such a letter from the WP in his hand, he could appear before the plenum of the SWP and be absolutely sure of a decisive vote in favor of unity. He added that while some of the SWP leaders were still opposed to unity, the principal leaders, including Cannon, Stein, Warde and others, were in favor of it. On the grounds of this assurance, which was subsequently confirmed by the SWP plenum, our NC plenum decided in favor of the formality of pledging ourselves in advance to abide by the political and organizational decisions of the EPC. We made it perfectly clear to Smith that this commitment would be considered valid and operative by us only if unity was achieved between the WP and the SWP, and that failing such unity we would not have the slightest hesitation in regarding the commitment as a mere scrap of paper without any binding value upon our party.

The plenum was able to adopt such a decision without great difficulty because, formality apart, it is entirely consistent and substantially identical with the position our party has taken on the unity question since it was first raised in August 1945. I call the attention of the comrades again to the fact that for a year and a half we were prepared to unite with the SWP into one party in which - we said openly - we would be a disciplined minority from the very outset, in which we pledged ourselves to abide by the program and policies of the majority and to work loyally under its leadership. We were prepared to do this without the benefit of a special convention where we would immediately have the opportunity of seeking to become the majority and even without the benefit of a preliminary, thorough and democratic discussion of our differences, in the course of which we would have the opportunity to present our own point of view.

Our course on the unity question was unanimously endorsed by the last convention of the party. What our February 5 plenum of the NC decided was in conformity with the position we have advocated in the past. Where we were ready to submit, in the united party, to the discipline of the SWP majority and to abide by its decisions, we are now ready to submit to the discipline of the EPC provided there is unity between the two parties. And this is only another way of saying that we reiterate our readiness to abide by the discipline of the majority in the united party.

We have now gained something in addition, however, which was neither offered to us nor demanded by us in the past. Now the unity is to be preceded by a discussion of all the questions in controversy, in which not only the point of view of the SWP but also the point of view of the WP will be presented in the form of fundamental documents and articles. Furthermore, we were previously ready to

take for granted the fact that the united party would, at least for the whole first period, have as its official program and policies the program and policies of the SWP. Now, by virtue of the fact that the united party will have the program and policies adopted by the EPC, we have the opportunity of presenting for discussion our own program and policies and fighting for their adoption in the wider arena of the EPC, where it is not automatically guaranteed that all the views held by the SWP today are assured a victory.

It is true that in our letter to the CIC and in the first negotiations that we have already had with the SWP since its plenum we have not raised the question that we raised in the past, namely, the recognition by both sides of the right of any minority in the united party to issue an internal bulletin of its own. In the first place, it should be borne in mind that we never presented this proposal to the SWP as an ultimatum. It was put forward for its consideration. In the second place, the SWP never declared that this proposal was the reason for its opposition to unity, insofar as it expressed any position on it, it was more or less noncommittal. At the very first meeting between our representatives and those of the SWP, as far back as September 1945, the leader of the SWP, Cannon, declared: "The question of unity cannot be settled by your insisting on a demand for a bulletin or by our rejecting the demand." In the third place, we have never abandoned our proposal. It should be clear to everyone that our pledge to abide by the decisions of the EPC is not in any sense a pledge to vote in favor of every proposal that may be made by the delegates of the SWP to this convention or by anyone else. We are pledged only to abide by those proposals which are adopted by a majority at that convention. We are not in the slightest degree committed to refrain from presenting for consideration and for vote any proposal, be it on a political question or on a question of party organization, that our party decides to present to the EPC. Our views on the kind of organization the revolutionary Marxist party should be, on the kind of regime it should have, on the free presentation and interchange and discussion of ideas that should be assured in it, on the rights and duties both of majorities and of minorities, on the restrictions that should be placed upon them or that they should place upon themselves, and on a whole series of other matters on which we hold very firm opinions - these have not changed in any important particular and have not been abandoned. If the SWP does not agree with any or all of our views, that is not yet decisive. It is the delegates to the EPC as a whole who will decide. We will not fail to present our views to these delegates and to seek by all legitimate means to get a favorable vote on them.

For the reasons set forth above, our NC plenum was faced with no special difficulty in adopting its decision, that is, in reiterating the previous position of the party in favor of unity. The comrades who disagreed with this decision, and they constitute a minority, will present their point of view in the PARTY BULLETIN as part of the discussion on the question which is now opened in the membership as a whole and to which everyone is invited to contribute freely. There were comrades at the plenum who, though voting for the proposal of the majority, expressed reluctance or apprehensions

about the danger that our tendency would not enjoy its proper democratic rights in the united party unless we accompanied the restatement of our position for unity with the reaffirmation of our proposal that the right of minorities to issue bulletins of their own was mutually recognized. The reason why this was not done at the plenum has already been indicated above. But the party leadership made it perfectly clear at the plenum, and it is important to emphasize it in this communication, that it firmly intends to take all the necessary measures and present all the necessary proposals to the EPC to adopt motions and resolutions that will embody our conception of how the revolutionary Marxist party should be constructed, our conception of the relationship between majority and minority in a party and our conception of the kind of continuous ideological life that distinguishes a living Marxist party. Our tendency in the Movement, like all others which are legitimately part of it, has a right to an untrammelled ideological existence and to the fullest opportunities to develop and win support for its ideas in conformity with our best traditions. Our views on these questions are well known. No one need expect that we will abandon them or abandon the fight for them. Whoever thinks otherwise is laboring under a sorry illusion.

Just as the NC encountered no special difficulties in reiterating our party's position, it finds no difficulty in reporting its position and all the true and relevant facts to the membership as a whole. Our report requires no distortion of any facts, no suppression of other facts, no invention of non-existing "facts." Neither our party as a whole nor its leadership is concerned with prestige politics, nor with face-saving devices for which, moreover, it finds no need.

However, as shown by letters already received at the center and by questions asked at those branch meetings where the report has already been discussed, our comrades are very much interested, and properly so, in the reasons for the position taken on the unity question by the SWP plenum. The SWP plenum position in favor of unity is considered by virtually all our comrades as a reversal of the position vigorously maintained by the SWP for a year and a half. Inasmuch as our comrades can see no evidence of anything radically new in the situation, nor of any change in the views or position of our own party, they are interested in learning the reasons or arguments that have motivated the change in the position of the SWP leadership.

This question, although interesting and important, cannot in our view be considered of decisive significance by us. Our basic position in favor of unity was taken a long time ago, before we even knew what decision would finally be taken by the SWP. Our basic position on unity was maintained even after the formal rejection of the unity by the SWP. It cannot and should not be altered by any such secondary considerations as the reasons given by the SWP for its change of position. These reasons are the affair of the SWP and it has the full and uncontested right to present it to its membership and to anyone else.



We have the right to concern ourselves with this question only insofar as it is proper and necessary for our membership to know all the important facts related to unity and insofar as the reasons given by the SWP have a serious effect upon the achievement and consolidation of a united party on a sound basis.

In situations such as now exist between the WP and the SWP, the air can easily be clouded by all sorts of exaggerations, distortions, rumors and gossip, and even downright falsifications spread by irresponsible persons. It would be a most foolish thing to be influenced, let alone upset, by irresponsible gossip, rumors and lies. They can only create nervousness, jitteriness and lead to the disorientation which is guaranteed when subjective reactions are allowed to prevail over calm, objective consideration.

For these reasons, I am appending to this communication a copy of a circular letter to all of the leading members of the SWP, dated February 8, 1947. I append it in full for two reasons: (1) because it is not only an authoritative and official expression of opinion of the SWP leadership but has obviously constituted the basis of all the reports of the SWP plenum decision given to the membership of the SWP; (2) because, while much of the letter is of no interest or consequence to us, the sending out of excerpts alone might lay us open to the distracting charge of quoting out of context.

It is not necessary to comment at too great length on the February 8 circular of the SWP. The explanation given in it for the proposed change of position in favor of unity, when compared with the well-known facts, which are available in the documents appended to Goldman's pamphlet on "Unity" and which are supplemented in this communication, corresponds more to the particular requirements of the SWP leadership. I repeat, our party has no use for prestige politics and no need for face-saving. We need only repeat calmly that those views which were denounced by the SWP leadership as anti-Marxist, anti-Trotskyist, anti-Fourth, revisionist and even counter-revolutionary, remain our views in every respect, today just like yesterday; that our position on unity of the two parties as set forth a year and a half ago, remains basically unaltered because we have had no cause to make any basic alterations in it. Anyone who wishes may make a contrary claim. Serious people will have no difficulty in judging the merits of the claims made on each side.

We deem it necessary, however, to make a few corrections about statements of facts, explicit or by implication, which are made in the SWP circular.

1. The commitment made by our NC which pledged it in advance to accept the decisions of the EPC did not give us the right to have merely fraternal representation at the Convention without voting rights. It was expressly stated by the representative of the CIC that if our party undertook this commitment it would be entitled to participate in the EPC with the same rights as all other full participants, namely with voice and vote. Neither Shachtman, the PC, nor the NC of our party was presented by Smith with any formula.

that would confine our representation at the EPC to a fraternal basis or deprive us of voting rights. Consequently, either Smith was unauthorized to present to us the proposal that he made, in which case the commitment we undertook could not be considered binding, or else the report in the SWP circular on this point is incorrect. Which of these two is actually the case can and will be established without difficulty.

2. While there will evidently be a proposal presented to the EPC to prohibit all discussion on the principal disputed questions after the Convention, our party has in no way obligated itself to support this proposal. Anyone who wishes to has an undisputed right to make the proposal, even if a proposal of any kind to prohibit discussion at any time has never before been made in the history of the Trotskyist movement. We have an indisputable right to argue and vote against such an abhorrent innovation, and this right we have not abandoned and do not intend to abandon. A perfectly clear understanding of this point is essential. About a year and a half ago, we declared to the SWP representatives, of our own free decision and without solicitation or pressure, that we ourselves would refrain, during the first period following the fusion of the two parties, from opening up or conducting a political or factional discussion on the disputed questions; that we wished to utilize this first period to concentrate the efforts of everybody upon cementing the fusion solidly, from top to bottom. An active political or factional discussion launched in the branches the morning after the fusion could very easily be detrimental to the interests of consolidating the unity as well as the interests of our own tendency. What would be needed first of all is an intensive period of common work, both inside and outside the party, during which all mutual suspicions and hostilities could be eliminated, so that if a political discussion did take place later on, it could occur in an atmosphere of mutual receptivity, objective consideration of views and without immediately precipitating the old, rigid factional alignments. This view of ours can be found stated more than once in the documents appended to the "Unity" pamphlet. However, we distinguished clearly between an active political or factional discussion aimed at achieving immediately a change in the party's line, on the one side and an educational discussion on a theoretical and scientific plane, which does not precipitate a factional discussion or factional fight, on the other. We are quite used to this clear distinction in our own party, as every comrade knows. Such an educational discussion can and should go on permanently in a revolutionary party, especially on such controversial questions now agitate our Trotskyist movement, that is, questions on which only an idiot can contend that the last word has been said. The idea that such a discussion should be "prohibited" even after a convention is fantastic and utterly alien to us as well as to the whole tradition of the Trotskyist movement.

In 1920, under the very guns of the Kronstadt and other uprisings, when the fate of the Soviet power literally hung by a hair, the Tenth Congress of the Bolshevik Party adopted a tragic decision to prohibit factions for a time. But even this unprecedented decision, adopted with the well-intentioned aim of ending a

terribly violent factional fight which seemed to imperil the very life of the Soviet Republic, was carefully accompanied by a series of provisions for the continuation, the very day after the Congress, of the discussion of the disputed questions on a theoretical plane and in special discussion bulletins. To believe that our little Trotskyist movement, whose position is not comparable in the slightest degree with that faced by the Bolsheviki in the gloomy days of Kronstadt, should adopt a decision which goes so much further in the suppression of discussion than in 1920 in Russia, is an infantile or bureaucratic monstrosity from which we must earnestly beg to be excused. It will be interesting to see what Trotskyist champions this idea at the EPC. Our commitment in no sense obligates us to support such champions or to vote with them. We have not agreed to any such proviso nor have we signed it in advance. That is a misunderstanding of our decision. It goes without saying that we shall combat such a proposal with all our strength.

3. The references made to Johnson in the SWP circular do not correspond with the facts as we know them. Whether or not Johnson has affirmed his complete political solidarity with the SWP on all questions except the Russian question, is his affair, and once the facts are made clear, is exclusively the subject of political judgment. In view of all the other references made to Johnson, our PC at its last meeting, adopted a motion to request - not to require, but only to request - Johnson to express himself in writing on the references made to him in the circular of the SWP. We await the response of Johnson, who was unable to be present at that PC meeting. This much, however, can be said right now:

If a "knife" was put to our throats at the plenum, the members of the NC were completely unaware of that fact. The NC did not adopt its decision on unity under the threat of a split from the party by Johnson or anyone else. In the first place, anyone who tried to force the NC to adopt a position against its will and conviction by means of a threat of a split, would be a common blackmailer. In the second place, a committee which voted against its convictions because it was threatened with a split, would deserve nothing but a contemptuous boot to kick it out of the responsible position to which it had lost all rights. In the third place, no threat of split was made by Johnson or by anyone else. And in the fourth place, the minutes of our PC for the past few months contain statement upon statement by Johnson protesting against all rumors and gossip to the effect that he and his political friends are committed to or are contemplating a split from the WP in order to join the SWP as slanderous, because they maliciously violate the truth and because such a step would be in flagrant contradiction to the principle repeatedly enunciated by Johnson and his friends in political documents known to the party.

So much for the factual points in the SWP circular which require comment here.

We note, finally, that the circular speaks of an agreement between the SWP and Smith to support a proposal at the EPC to condemn "the political line adopted by the WP, condemn the split of

1940, the maneuverist character of the unity proposal and the Goldman split which accompanied it." As previously indicated, every delegate will have the unrestricted right to submit any resolution, motion or proposal to the EPC. This includes the right to present such a proposal as the SWP circular speaks of. Corresponding to this right is the necessity of assuming all the consequences that follow from the exercise of the right in any particular case. Ordinarily, we might well say that the proposal for a condemnation outlined in the circular would not be taken seriously by anybody in our Party, and would be dismissed with a shrug of the shoulders. But only ordinarily. Since this is not an ordinary situation, but one in which earnest efforts are being made to achieve a solid and workable unity of the two parties, the same attitude is not possible. The consequences that would follow any decision by the EPC to condemn our party and its past in such a manner as seems to be proposed to condemn us for the split of 1940, to condemn our position on unity which we happen to think has been confirmed, and to condemn the minority for joining us in 1946, could only place a question-mark over the possibility of an effective unification of the two parties and compromise it from the very beginning. It would seem clear to every member of our party and to serious people in general, that a unity of two parties which is launched by one party of the unity proposing or voting a formal condemnation of the other party in the unity, and of everything that the other party has stood for since its very foundation, could not be creditable to those responsible for the proposal or very auspicious for the unity.

To draw the conclusion from these comments that it is necessary to abandon our position for unity would be a pretty light-hearted political absurdity. We had no illusions about the difficulties that would be encountered along the road, and we have no illusions about them now. We do know this, that the difficulties cannot be overcome by hypocritical diplomacy or by smearing over in silence the differences that we have. That would be the worst possible preparation for the kind of unity we seek, namely, a solid and durable one which does not explode the day after it is effected. Speak out what is! That is a precept that we wish to follow in this situation too. It does not mean shouting everything from the housetops. It does not mean making a mountain out of every molehill. It does not mean treating the least important questions as if they were the most important, or secondary questions as if they were primary. But it most certainly does not mean passing over in wishful silence the difficulties and the disagreements that really do exist in the hope that this silence - and not a frank and forthright discussion - will somehow or other make the difficulties and disagreements vanish miraculously.

We are now definitely on the road to unity with the SWP. We are convinced that it is necessary, possible and desirable. Properly effected it would mean a big step forward for our movement as a whole in this country and for our own ideas. It would be a vast source of encouragement for the sections of the Fourth International all over the world, and even though neither the SWP nor the WP is or can be affiliated at the present time with the Fourth International, we are basically its comrades-in-ideas and we have deep obligations to build it up to maximum strength.

The unity has not yet been achieved. After seven years of separation and violent polemics between us, it would be idle to expect that the unification could be realized over night. But we are on the road to unity, not only because both organizations are now formally committed to the unification, but because they have both already taken the concrete steps that are needed to effect the unity in practice.

The leading committees of the two parties have already selected representatives to meet periodically and regularly in a parity committee whose specific task is to organize, promote and supervise the immediate collaboration between the two parties in all fields of the class struggle where it is possible. This collaboration has, of course, a specific aim: the preparation of the two parties for unity. By working together in the practical activities from now on, great progress can be accomplished in eliminating habits of non-collaboration which have been formed in the past, in eliminating also mutual antagonisms and suspicions that exist. This practical collaboration will also provide the best test of the practical feasibility of the unity. It will answer the question - positively and favorably, we hope and firmly believe - that was often, and quite properly, posed by the leadership of the SWP in the past: "Will the unity work?"

The joint committee representing the two parties has already arrived at unanimous agreement on several proposals for collaboration. The details will be communicated to you in official party circulars. In brief, we have agreed already to the following:

To merge all our international relief and solidarity work into a single centralized body and under a united direction. Henceforth, branches and members in all cities should join and give support to all the activities of the American Committee for European Workers Relief, in which the members of the SWP are already now active. From now on, in every city where the two parties exist together, arrangements should be made for the party fractions in all mass organizations (trade unions, veterans organizations, Negro organizations, tenants' organizations, etc.) to meet jointly for the purpose of discussing and carrying out common actions. In every city steps should be taken immediately to arrange for a united May Day meeting.

As further agreements are made, they will be communicated to all members.

Corresponding to the joint national committee, similar committees representing both parties should be set up in all localities where branches of both organizations exist. On a local scale they will have the same task as the joint national committee has on a national scale. They will organize, promote and supervise all joint local activities between the two parties. In case of disagreement that arise out of the joint activities in any locality, the dispute may be referred to the joint national committee for consideration and advice.

In the matter of collaboration, it is necessary to emphasize one more point. The two parties still exist as independent organizations. The fusion has not yet been accomplished. One of the purposes of the collaboration is precisely to prepare the ground for a smooth and orderly fusion. This means that we must seek to achieve collaboration in all practical matters wherever possible. Our comrades would be well-advised to yield on any small or trivial points on which there is disagreement. If the value of a joint action is great and the importance of the disagreement is small, it would be silly to argue too much over the small disagreement. If the mutual suspicions and antagonisms are to be eliminated as rapidly as possible, it is necessary to avoid picayune quibbling and a small-minded approach to problems. Our comrades should go out of their way to demonstrate that this is not our approach.

But this applies only to disagreements which are trivial. It does not and cannot apply to big and important disagreements. It should be understood that the collaboration is possible and mandatory only in those fields - and they are numerous - in which we have basic or substantial agreement with the comrades of the SWP. Where such agreement does not exist, then we each follow our own course. The simplest example of what I mean is a trade-union situation in which we hold that it is necessary to support, let us say, a Reutherite slate and the SWP holds that it is necessary to support a Stalinist slate. This is obviously not a minor disagreement and in such a situation we do not have a basis for collaboration, for a common policy, for common action. But it is precisely in such situations where we come before the workers with different positions in the practical fields of the class struggle that we must try to have an agreement at least to this extent, namely, that we shall not counterpose our different positions in public with a sharpness and hostility that creates unnecessary obstacles in the path of unification. In other words, in those cases where we find that we must appear in public as opponents on any of the practical questions of the class struggle, let it be as "friendly opponents."

If the collaboration works well and smoothly, then the period between now and the actual fusion can be shortened correspondingly. If it is felt on either side that the collaboration has not yet shown conclusive results, it will be necessary to extend the period of collaboration. If the practical collaboration shows, in spite of the best will and the best intentions on both sides, that common work is not possible, then the whole question of unity will obviously have to be reconsidered. We must do everything within our power to see to it that the collaboration does work. We are confident and we have all the necessary reasons to believe that it can and will work. It is toward that end that the sincere and ardent efforts of the party and of every member in it, must now be bent.

With Party greetings,

MAX SHACHTMAN  
National Chairman

## NO UNITY WITH THE WORKERS PARTY

By B. Lens

### The Tasks of the American Marxists

The Socialist Workers Party is the only party that is capable of leading the American socialist revolution to victory. This unique position is enjoyed by virtue of consistent analysis of events in the sharp scientific light of Marxism, the resulting program that answers the needs of the working class, and the building of the hard, unified, revolutionary cadre that is essential for successful leadership.

The decisive character of the revolution in the United States in relation to the world socialist revolution (see "Theses on the American Revolution") sets a vast responsibility upon our shoulders. Every tactical move we make has the implicit question written over it: -- will this aid our task or hinder it?

Our face is clearly set to masses of the American workers. (see 1946 SWP Convention Resolutions.) To them we must address ourselves tirelessly and consistently; we bring them one message, we desire one goal, we will teach them in theory and practice to strike with one mind.

We are enjoying some success along these lines. We have every reason to expect that, if we do not divert ourselves or dilute ourselves, our successes will continue and amplify themselves to the very end of taking power.

### The Conditions for Unity Do Not Exist

If we were a far smaller group and the centrist organization of Shachtmanites loomed as a terrible obstacle blocking our road to the masses; or if on the other hand, we were a mass party and could assimilate easily the shock of their entry with the accompanying fierce internal struggles with the right; in either of these cases unity might be desirable for various tactical reasons. As the relationship of forces stand, we are too much on the same order of size; true we are several times as big, but even a small cancer can destroy a much larger organism.

Our own SWP minority, while evading the task of giving a thorough political evaluation of the WP, has tried to get us to answer the question of whether we are politically "compatible" with the WP. We have refused, and correctly so, to discuss on that level. However, it is worthwhile to take up a slightly different aspect of "compatibility".

Given the same method, two Marxists with divergent views on any problem will eventually be able to reach agreement, and can work and fight together through all struggles. However, two revolutionists who start from different premises must eventually part

ways, regardless of any episodic agreements or alliances. We insist on an analysis of all questions from the fundamental premise of the class-struggle of the capitalist vs. the proletarian as the primary factor in modern history; Shachtman abandons this criterion in his analyses of the Soviet Union, of the national and colonial questions, even of the revolutionary perspectives in the United States. We have long since passed the stage where we need debate the importance of method to politics. The chief exponent among revolutionists of the notion that method is of no importance in determining politics now stands for all the world to see -- clearly and unequivocally on the other side of the barricade. The road of Burnham was classic and direct. Shachtman does not think so clearly; he travels the road more slowly, often stumbling and sometimes back-tracking temporarily (i.e. his present move to the left); but the road is the same nevertheless; anyone who has followed his political meanderings for the last eight years can clearly see his general direction. His so-called "turn to the left" (his maneuvers in the direction of organizational "Unity" with the SWP) does not by itself sufficiently indicate a real change in political direction. He accepts neither our political program nor our traditional concept of the party. The past has shown that written agreements mean nothing to Shachtman.

#### The Lesson of 1940

In our movement, all "organizational" questions have a habit of resolving themselves along principled political lines, whatever strenuous efforts may be made to the contrary. This is the indelible and perhaps for some, bitter, lesson that we learned in 1939 and 1940. Every comrade should refresh his memory by turning to page 226 of Comrade Cannon's "Struggle for a Proletarian Party" and read the written agreement that was made with the Shachtman-Burnham-Bern group before their split with us. It must be clear that they gave every guarantee against split, they promised faithfully, in writing, that if in a minority, they would not split, that they would accept all the convention decisions, that they would be true blue Bolsheviks. The similarity between that agreement and their latest written contract with us is quite startling. The record could not be any clearer. Immediately following this solemn agreement, they proceeded to organize for split, so that even before the convention, they had already set up their separate party apparatus, arrangements for a separate press, began to systematically sabotage the activity and press of the SWP, etc., etc. Even the most drastic and unprecedented organizational concessions granted by the majority, which gave them essentially everything that they had asked for (see page 240, "Struggle for a Proletarian Party"), were treated by the light-minded Shachtman as a joke, and did not deter them for an instant from their course. What is different today? Today, they are even more than the unprincipled organizational bloc that they constituted in 1940. They have consolidated politically with a hostile and ever more divergent program from ours; they are further away from Trotskyism politically than ever before. Should anyone have doubts on this score, let him re-read the statement of our Political Committee on the Workers Party ("Revolutionary Marxism or Petty-Bourgeois Revisionism", Internal Bulletin, Vol. VIII, No. 10, August 1946). To date, no one has dared to challenge the accuracy of anything said in this bulletin.



Lest anyone should think that we are moralizing, let us emphasize -- the lesson that was so dramatically hammered into our skulls was a political one, one whose meaning is sharp and clear, and one that has been learned over and over again by revolutionary socialists in every generation. Organizational forms inevitably follow the shape of political programs, regardless of the momentary subjective wishes of the politicians concerned! Even the WP'ers learned to their sorrow of the validity of Trotsky's predictions, based on this thesis, when Burnham and then Macdonald deserted them shortly after they had deserted us.

Intelligent people all suffer mishaps from time to time. Only those blinded by subjective considerations refuse to learn by their experience (as well as the broad experience of history). Let us not blunder into a trap with our eyes open, from which it will take years to extricate ourselves, at the cost of much valuable ground lost in the hard uphill struggle for hegemony of the working class.

#### The Responsibility of the SWP Leadership

In the broad picture of the proposed unity, there is an important detail that every Party leader should pause and consider. Our party is composed mostly of rank and file workers who have embraced our political program as their own. Further, they have learned, to varying degrees, the method of Marxism, plus our concepts of the class struggle and of the needs of the proletariat.

Should any formal unity be consummated, we will have a combined National Committee which will include such people as Shachtman, Carter, Abern, Draper, Erber, etc., etc. Not only do these "leaders" have revisionist positions on at least a half dozen major political questions, but they (the professional democrats) are incurable bureaucrats. Those who have read the WP internal bulletins have witnessed that these Machiavellian "revolutionists" have even worked out theories to justify the doctrine of a select "cadre" within the party, to justify second class citizens in the party.

The National Committee after unity would constitute an organizational bloc of the Trotskyist leadership with a revisionist and anti-Bolshevik leadership, which would of necessity be hostile to the interests and desires of the loyal Trotskyist ranks. Shachtman has far less grounds to come to our party and be given special rank or privileges than any militant unionist and veteran of the class struggle who honestly joins our party in full agreement with our program and with full loyalty to our ideas. The excuse that they will be "only a minority" does not justify their existence in the leading bodies and staff of the Trotskyist party.

### The Correct Tactics Toward the "Workers Party"

While never diverting ourselves from our major task of winning that vast American working class, the existence of the WP poses two tasks for us. First, we must destroy them and remove that parasitic growth that occasionally (happily, rarely) hampers our work by posing as Trotskyist and revolutionist. The crushing logic of historic events has already largely done this for us and will continue to do so without our intervention. Other centrist groupings in recent history have found no air to breathe in the stifling (for them) atmosphere of the class struggle. We can aid this natural process by consciously performing our second task, the winning over to our party of every worthwhile revolutionist or prospective revolutionist that may be temporarily lost in the mire of the Workers Party.

Up to this point I have treated the WP in general, that is, as a unit. This is obviously oversimplification. Those masters of unprincipled politics and "all-inclusiveness" have never been in any measure homogeneous. Our tactics toward them are dictated accordingly.

Those who reject the theory of retrogression might be first in our considerations. The small group of new worker recruits that exist in the WP, and who have not yet been hardened and corrupted in Shachtman's school, also rightfully belong to us. Individual Shachtmanites who can be persuaded to join us with the perspective of working and learning in our movement shall be welcomed. Those who come only to teach -- and teach what? -- revisionism! -- those we do not want. Most dangerous would be the presence of that destructive current of pseudo-erudite cynicism that can do so much harm by demoralizing and sickening new comrades and contacts who are not yet thoroughly immunized with the vaccine of Marxist theory. The world is full of the ideology of the bourgeoisie and its reflection in the petty-bourgeoisie. Workers are everywhere barraged with these lies and doctrines of a class in decay that dull the edges of their class-consciousness and sap the militancy from their struggle. Our Party is the only haven where scientific truth is taught; let not the poisonous doctrines of defeat seep through these walls and be taught herein!

We should make every concession to the Johnsonites. They who attempt to use Marxist method, who start from premises similar to ours, will be able to work with us and contribute to our success. With them we can discuss fruitfully. Is it necessary to remind anyone that in our party discussion serves principally as a means to a socialist end? We steer clear of discussions that cannot result in agreement to work together toward a common goal. We yield not an inch to professional democrats and discussion fetishists. Of course, those who join us and work loyally with the party will be given exactly the same rights and privileges to present different points of view within the party as every comrade enjoys today. In spite of the allegations of the seekers of "Stalinist germs" and various other subjectivists who howl when they fail to win a

majority, our Party is the most democratic in existence. Not because democracy is an ideal with us, but because freedom of discussion and democratic representation are prerequisites to revolutionary success.

The fact that at the present time, in spite of his important political and organizational agreements with us, Johnson once again (mainly by his silence) shows first loyalty to the WP, demonstrates a subjective weakness on his part that we should endeavor to correct. Nevertheless, the hedging of Johnson (and the fear of unity by the other WP leaders) is due primarily to the present imperialist offensive against the Soviet Union. This offensive will be intensified in the coming period. As is well known, Johnson holds a defeatist position on the Soviet Union, which, while stemming from different theoretical considerations, is in its conclusions almost the same as the position of the WP and diametrically opposed to ours. If Johnson's group is to be won over, it must be soon, before the class struggle divides the world into two military camps.

Our attitude towards Goldman, Morrow, and their satellites should be based on the same considerations as those given above. Those of their disloyal faction who have remained with us after the departures of Goldman and Morrow, have given us good indication that they have not yet changed their colors. In New York and New Jersey, they have organized as a faction after the convention, with their outstanding activity (well known to the comrades in this area) consisting of "exposés" of the party leadership, often in an extremely dishonest, dangerous and disloyal fashion. The firm attitude and decisions of the last party convention should be clear to our leadership. Those who cannot discipline themselves to the will of the majority, those who endanger the party by rash public actions, must be dealt with ruthlessly by the National Committee without waiting for the next convention, so that we may remain geared for action as an effective unit. Those who have already left or been expelled should be allowed back, not with special consideration, but only on probation, with the greatest care, so that they may prove themselves worthy over a good period of time after their too-recent defections.

\* \* \*

It is necessary to deal with the arguments that have been presented in favor of unity. In so doing, I believe that I cover the major ones that have so far been presented to the party.\* It will be clear that I am not debating with those who favor unity because they are unable to detect any important differences between the SWP and WP. Such people are either hopelessly blind or hopelessly dishonest, and fortunately they are quite rare in our party.

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\*I must apologize to those comrades whom I have previously convinced in favor of unity by means of some of these arguments. I can only beg them to read a much more considered opinion here and to change their minds once more. -- B.L.

## The Arguments for Unity and Their Fallacies

1. "We believe them now"(!) "They (the WP) are now sincere whereas before they were only engaging in dishonest maneuvers. We have the feeling that now unity will work."

These motives for unity are purely and openly subjective, and thus are thoroughly alien to the scientific Marxist method of making political decisions upon relatively objective political analysis.

Furthermore, to suddenly decide that we now trust and believe a group that have established themselves for seven years in the ideological and working-class-political fields as thieves and blackguards, is ludicrous beyond measure. Starting with their broken agreements and dishonest actions while yet in our party (described above); continuing with the brazen theft of our magazine the many years of posing as Trotskyists along with the deliberate distortion and falsification of Trotsky's teachings; the continuous falsification of the history of their party and ours in their public press; their two years of devious and phoney "unity" maneuvers designed to effect a unity only with our right wing and to attempt to split and to discredit the SWP and the Fourth International; their long history of mis-representation of themselves as official representatives of the Fourth International; their established practice of quoting half-sentences and obvious out-of-context phrases to misrepresent Lenin and Trotsky (exposed several times in the press of the SWP -- once even by Morrow); to mention but a few of their notorious exploits.

Even so, these are still not our first considerations in making the decision on unity. Our decision must be based on a careful evaluation of their present political program and their present concept of the party.

2. "A real move toward unity with our party is a move to the left. The WP, by its latest agreement to subordinate itself to the larger SWP, and to abide by the decisions of the projected EPC, has taken a decisive move to the left."

The above statement is almost entirely true, but does not constitute a basis for a real and working unity. Their move to the left was an act of desperation, an isolated and out-of-character phenomenon, and not at all representative of their tendency or general political direction. They moved to the left only after they had exhausted all avenues within the "radical" movement to the right. They still want to play with revolutionary politics; the psychological and sociological reasons for this do not particularly concern us at this moment. What does concern us vitally is that they still wish to gain adherents for their revisionist program. It is sheer folly, no matter how many written or verbal guarantees that they may give us, to expect that they will cease fighting for their

ideas, or to expect them to be loyal to our ideas. Their principal motive for entering now is to gain the ear of our co-thinkers -- most especially the right wing of the co-thinkers -- in the easiest and cheapest way for their huckstering of anti-Marxist ideology; to try, by any means that they can use, to destroy our political tendency here and abroad.

3. "The concept of the party is a political one; consequently the abandonment by the WP of their concept in favor of ours is a healthy move in our direction."

This argument, similar to the preceding one, has good logic. The trouble with it is simply that the premise that the WP has abandoned their concept of the party is not true.

The latest evidence from their internal bulletins and everything that they have said publicly or privately proves that they do not accept our concept of the party; that they consciously reject it. Shachtman even writes articles explaining that the WP is unique in the history of Bolshevism (what a peculiar assumption he makes, that the WP is the heir to any Bolshevik traditions!); no other Bolshevik party was so all-inclusive, he admits. The official WP concepts of the exclusive "cadre" and of different grades of members within the party is also alien to our democratic organization.

Most important of all, however, is their evaluation of the split of 1940, perhaps the most serious crime in their history. They still justify and defend this crime against the working class.

No one has reason to imagine that specific terms in a lawyer's contract that the sly Shachtman is willing to draw up in any way alters the convictions of the majority of the WP leadership on organization; it is in accordance with these convictions that we may expect them to behave in the long run.

(Here again, it is necessary to distinguish and separate those in the WP who have recognized their grave error of 1940 and who wish to rectify it by returning. These are a minority in the WP and deserve a different tactic on our part. They are the same ones who are closer to us politically, and should be received warmly back to the Party.)

4. "By unity, we destroy the WP and remove it from the field."

This argument sounds attractive. It's a little too easy. Even the most ardent and authoritative exponents of unity do not promise that it will stick. Leading comrades tell us that the only way to find out if it will work is to try it! It should not be necessary -- and it is not necessary -- for good Marxists to base such an important action upon such a crude empirical consideration. If there is anything that we should know well, we should know well the WP! We have seen it evolve from its birth, we have followed its development closely, we even are well acquainted with its membership

Most important, we well know their program and organizational concepts, their general direction of movement.

We know them well enough to fully expect that this proposed unity will not work -- for at least all the reasons given above. True, the WP would be removed from the field for a shorter or longer period of time, but the cost to us in internal grief is too high a price to pay. The WP does not represent a serious obstacle in our path. Outside our party they cannot prevent us from attaining our next goal of becoming a mass party. It is better to let them die a natural death than to hamper our own development so seriously by such a poor maneuver.

5. "Unity will hold back the split or centrifugal tendencies in the Movement, a) by providing no excuses for split on the organizational plane and b) by removing an organizing center outside of our movement."

Organizational devices to save souls are limited by class pressures and the objective development of the class struggle. The present imperialist offensive against the Soviet Union renders such measures on our part even less effective. The "Truman Doctrine" puts a huge obstacle in our path, in the winning over of petty-bourgeois radicals who reject the defense of the Soviet Union.

By taking them in now, we might temporarily remove an opponent organization from the field outside of our Party, but that does not mean that they become transmuted into total physical non-existence. They would now have the opportunity, with our sanction, to consolidate with right wing elements within the Movement and prepare the road for the next great split.

It is naive to imagine that by making organizational concessions to centrist and right-wing elements who have a concept of the party very different from ours, we will thereby remove their excuses for carrying out disloyal actions, desertions and splits. This is another lesson that we have learned from 1939-40, if not from the rich experiences of four Internationals. It is impossible for us to lean over far enough backwards (without breaking our backs) to satisfy those domagocic "democrats" on the organizational plane. They would, as they have done before, manufacture their excuses . . . the familiar excuses of bureaucracy, suppression, etc., etc. . . as they carreen madly down their path of irresponsible subjective politics.

If wavering elements in our movement or in the WP can be won firmly to our banner, it will not be by equivocating and quibbling and matching maneuvers with Shachtman. We have most to gain by continuing the sharpest and most open delineation of ourselves and our program from the revisionists and their program.

6. "It is necessary for the strategy of the discussion to unify with the WP so that they will be permitted to participate."

If it is deemed advisable for one reason or another to permit the WP to participate in the discussion, we should have no objections. We feel sure that a decisive blow will be dealt to any opportunist or centrist tendencies among our co-thinkers. There will be demonstrated the overwhelming support given to the Marxist program and the Marxist method.

In the meanwhile it would be scatter-brained on our part to give formal recognition, as a part of our movement, as Trotskyist and revolutionist, to the very extreme expression of the currents of opportunism and centrism and pessimism that is represented by the "Workers Party". Such recognition of the WP by the SWP, no matter how we might twist and squirm and try to explain it away as a very complex tactic, would immediately strengthen the right wing among our co-thinkers.

Some comrades tell us that while we, who have gone through the experience of the 1940 split, know full well that unity with the WP will only lead to another split, there are others, either new to our movement, or remote from the experience, who can only learn (what we well know) by going through this experience; therefore we must, as a concession, go through this experience for the sake of the other comrades' education.

The implication is that this is analagous to our going through experiences with the working class (the trade unions, the labor party, etc.). The fallacy in such a proposal is quite clear once we understand how far apart these two tactics are. The objective course of history makes it absolutely necessary for us to go through the experiences of the working class with them; the penalty for sectarianism or isolation from the mass organizations and struggles of the workers would be failure to win leadership. While the trade unions and the labor party constitute the broadest foundation of the development of the class struggle, the WP exists only in the crevices and interstices of that foundation. There is no principle of revolutionary politics that makes it mandatory for revolutionists to go through the experience of dealing with petty-bourgeois centrist politics. While many of us learned a good lesson from our first-hand experiences with the Burnham-Shachtman-Abern group in 1940, we cannot deny that the split was for the most part a serious blow against our movement. We do not shy away from such experiences as revolutionary politics lead us to; we even make the most of them by drawing lessons -- but to deliberately expose our party to another such harmful split simply for pedagogical reasons -- is to take our major tasks very lightly.

No alliance with the advocates of -- the theory of "retrogression", class-collaboration, and the mythical "Third Camp":

7. "By unity, we will increase the size of our party in one quick step. Therefore, let us grab this chance before it's too late."

Only the most die-hard formalists will contend that our concept of our party is so narrow as to believe that the temporary

addition of irreconcilable political opponents will in the long run strengthen our party. The temporary increase in size would be paid for many times over in loss of prestige, weakening of our ability to lead the working class, and in loss of potential growing power.

There are many ways for an organization to increase its size. We are aware of all kinds of stunts used by enterprising "organizers", promoters and "leaders" of dubious stripe. We choose what sometimes appears to be the most difficult way, but in the final analysis, is the only way that assures us of eventual victory of the socialist revolution. With this great goal on the horizon, we must trudge the straight and narrow road, eyeing with the utmost suspicion all by-paths and side-roads labelled "Short-cut to the Revolution".

(Comrade Cannon has explained that occasionally we find our road blocked -- and it is necessary to take a detour from the direct revolutionary path. Such a detour was the fusion with the left-ward moving left-wing of the Socialist Party. Our campaign for a Labor Party originally was viewed by Comrade Cannon as such a detour. Today our road is clear as far ahead as we can see. . . and the proposed detour (unity), in the language of the insurance companies, is too great a risk.)

8. "It is easier to convince a WP'er of our program and principles than to convince a raw worker who is steeped in capitalist reactionary propaganda."

This comparison of relative nearness to our party is shallow and describes only a temporary and superficial relationship.

The worker will come to us out of economic necessity -- providing, of course, that we continue to give him a party ready to lead him in his struggles with the program that answers his needs. This will be true regardless of any subjective ideological differences that he has with us today. Comrade Dobbs once pointed out to us, in reporting a strike, that a worker learns more about the class struggle, the nature of the state, etc., from one blow on the head from a policeman's "billy" while on the picket line, than he would from many years in the library with the works of Marx and Lenin. As materialists, this phenomenon does not surprise us. The objective decay of capitalism will place more and more workers' heads in juxtaposition with increasing numbers of unwittingly pedagogical policemen's billies.

Few workers in the United States will ever travel to the extreme reactionary position of James Burnham, who only a few short six years ago, was the outstanding leader of the WP. . . and eight years ago was an outstanding figure in the SWP. Today he gives a theoretical justification for fascism; he leads the wolf-pack in the attack upon the USSR; he leads the attack upon all "reds"! (see his latest book, "The Struggle for the World"). Burnham travelled this road easily because of his petty-bourgeois roots, petty-bourgeois job and petty-bourgeois ideology (to say nothing of his marital



relationships to the big bourgeoisie). These ties he never relinquished. Most important, however, is his petty-bourgeois method of thinking, which he never completely gave up even when he had one political foot in our camp.

Shachtman (and various other assorted "radical" intellectuals is not a professor in a university, and for other additional reasons does not have such political motility as does his former colleague, but his method differs little or none from Burnham's. His direction is the same.

We expect more from the workers than from the radical intellectuals.

### Conclusions

To sum up: The proposed unity with the WP would be a grave tactical error on the part of the SWP, resulting in great harm to our prospective growth into a mass party, and seriously threatening the continuance of our role as the party of scientific socialism in the United States. Because of the many basic cited differences between us, and because of the basic difference in method, all of which remain to this day unresolved, we must regard any unity proposals by the WP as fundamentally maneuverist and therefore dishonest in character, harmful to the further growth and development of the SWP. The question is not one of principle; we could take it or leave it and still maintain our political program. "Unity" would not destroy our party; it would simply be a very ill-advised move. Our course then must clearly be: -

1. Continue with undiminished effort our main general direction; to the great mass of American workers, most of whom have yet to experience political consciousness; to reach them in their present mass organizations; to do so, employing a unified combat party and our transitional and socialist program. No diversions or distractions with petty-bourgeois political sects at this time.
2. Reject the present proposal for unity with the WP.
3. Sharpest ideological warfare with the program and method of the revisionists, Shachtmanite and others.
4. Win by every organizational and political means at our disposal, all elements of the WP that have a common basis of method, or a common basis in the class struggle. Strengthen our party by the addition (and the subtraction from the WP) of all elements that we may reasonably expect to be loyal and disciplined revolutionists in the orthodox traditions of Bolshevism. It is clear that the present majority of the leadership of the WP does not belong in this category. Along this line we should propose a formal unification once with the Johnson faction of the WP.
5. We do not object to the participation of the WP in the discussion. We are confident of its outcome. Those who are convinced by the discussion of the correctness of our program will come

to us afterwards, regardless of any organizational moves today. The others will make it clear to everyone at that time that they have no intention of abiding by their promises. They cannot be expected to be loyal to our party or program and we do not want them now or then.

New York City  
March, 1947

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P.S. Since the above was written, immediate and remarkable confirmation has become available. The numerous violations of the unity agreement, committed by the WP leaders indicates that they neither understand nor abide by the spirit that a real unification would engender. (See communication of Comrade William F. Warde, for the Secretariat, to all branches of SWP, April 17, 1947).

Moreover, the letter of Shachtman to the WP membership dated March 8, 1947 (enclosed with Warde's letter to SWP branches) reveals a hasty retreat from the "left" turn toward unity. Already.. he denies sections of the agreement. . . he "arms" his membership against SWP organizational concepts. . . he now describes solemn agreement and pledges of the WP leadership as a mere "formality", with all kinds of oral qualifications supposedly made at the time, . . he denies that the WP is bound by any decisions of the EPC (unless unity is consummated first; once more the soul of the lawyer triumphs over the soul of the revolutionist). . . he admits that (failing unity first) "we (the WP) would not have the slightest hesitation in regarding the commitment as a mere scrap of paper without any binding value on our party."

All this hedging and double-talk was expected. Shachtman knows no other way. We will see more and worse. . . perhaps even before the EPC arrives at its decisions.

The most effective factor today against unity is not this article or any other document, but rather the storm clouds of the Truman Doctrine. All kinds of people are running for cover, and pending the next great revolutionary upsurge, only the Marxists stand ready to defend all sectors of the class front.

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WITH OUR EYES WIDE OPEN

By James Boulton

The unanimity of the National Committee behind the "new" proposal for unity with the Mensheviks has been declared. A rapid succession of preliminary steps to fusion has taken the question beyond discussion; already a joint statement for the National Committees has appeared in *The Militant*; the bridges are burning behind us and unity rolls merrily along. Above all what is most strikingly new in the present unity campaign is the lightning-like speed and force with which it sweeps aside all impediments, reverses, in spirit at least, the decision of the National Convention with a hair-pin turn, and even antiquates many previous judgments of the petty-bourgeois renegades from Marxism. If it is made clear that the membership must finally approve the decision for unity, the fait accompli character of the new unity development is even more explicit.

Audaciously putting in an appearance on the front doorstep but a few brief weeks after the Trotskyist November Convention of 1946 had resoundingly slammed the kitchen door in its face, unity has virtually marched to the bedroom in a series of steps which demonstrate that all obstacles to unity are dissolving at a rate equal to the withering away of Big 3 Unity.

Not only does Shachtman and his train, travelling top-speed away from Trotskyism, make the horse-shoe curve in six short politically compressed hours; our own streamlined proletarian special, rolling at an even greater velocity toward an opposite coast, halts on its tracks to wait the hook-up of a dilapidated combination-special of the Shachtman, Abern, Johnson Road.

Yet there is no question but that 180 degree turns are not only admissible but sometimes unavoidable, even obligatory.

And if the question of the legality of the new turn can be put aside as moot, in that its origin was beyond our control and transcends any purely formal prescriptions, the provisions for the all but immediate execution of unity, on the other hand, reflect the enheartening confidence which the National Committee invests in the ranks of the party. But it would seem more appropriate, considering the circumstances, to have evinced that same confidence at the Party Convention where an almost fastidious formalism in the quest for democracy was pursued by allocating a lion's share of the agenda time to the mousey faction of Jeffries and Morrow. While at that same Convention approximately fifteen minutes could be squeezed out for the discussion of our central tactic of the present period, i.e. for the problems arising out of the application of our labor party tactic.

Before proceeding it should be made clear that this criticism will not contend that unity can be or could have been

avoided. (Exclusive of a new maneuver or revision of the terms of capitulation by the WP). But why the rush and what necessitates the "more of a plus than a minus" motivation of this onerous responsibility? What is the special significance in the visit of Ted and Smith? And if the imposition of the WP intellectual gymnasts is inescapable, let us at least meet them with our eyes wide open, the eyes of the entire party!

"We know their faults and weaknesses, and their mistakes which have often amounted to crimes -- all of which, from a political point of view, comes under the general head of centrism." (J.P. Cannon, Letter of February 8). Yet Goldman was prepared to sacrifice 500 new workers for 50 or even 25 centrist leaders of the WP. (You may if you wish construe Goldman's formula as a value-equation, but that would give him the benefit of the doubt). But it is precisely this that we will gain: 25 or 50 centrist "leaders," good, bad, and indifferent. We are asked to give a serious thought to these leaders, not merely to recognize that we will be compelled to provide elbow room. And how could it be otherwise if we would make anything of the fusion? They will occupy their disproportionate share of posts on the National Committee, The Militant, and the magazine. Some good workers will necessarily, and loyally, step down. Good-fellowship will take its course and the worker may once again find it all but impossible to battle his way to the pages of The Militant.

More importantly they will occupy the branches with their well known and undisputed ability to scare, crowd, and literally drive workers away. They will take their disproportion of time, and we will get "50 leaders" for 500 workers; or at least the whole process of winning and holding workers will be hampered. Even where they may evince a wish to serve differently it is their habits that are decisive. All this presupposes that nothing miraculous has occurred to transform mercury into gold.

Despite the guarantees, the promise to love, honor, and obey, after the honeymoon (and what a wretched honeymoon begotten of a shot-gun marriage) there will be the incidents, the "legitimate disputes," the new departures, and the old incompatibilities will be revealed. Once again the centrists will be back in the divorce courts of factional struggle. It is not necessary to state the precise political questions upon which they might open their struggle, since the centrists always begin their course on the basis of a bloc, and upon organizational questions.

Undoubtedly the WP centrists will be immeasurably weaker in our party today than they were at the start of the Seven Year's War. Still, in the last analysis, they will have a larger arena and better guarantees for the future. And the divorcee generally takes a settlement on her departure.

Now it would seem that the "plus" arguments for unity of Albert Goldman were better assimilated than he might have surmised, if the ease with which they are so often repeated is any criterion. It is the re-evaluations of the WP leadership and the cushion-like softness with which we are wont to believe that their social taste has been transformed under the pressure of isolation, (this makes them more compatible) -- it is these shifts that are most disturbing. The old saw that "you can't teach an old dog new tricks" is probably more applicable than not in this instance.

Goldman is vindicated by Johnson who repeats "there are more serious people in the WP than we are inclined to think." By what standard? By virtue of the fact that they have been unable to unlearn everything, have become habituated to the party habit (having maintained a "party" all these seven years) in their own literary, journalistic, clever and talkative, let alone factional, way? I think that Cannon pointed to far higher standards in "The Struggle for a Proletarian Party," that contribution to Marxism which in itself would have justified the discussion of 1939-40 according to Trotsky. It is simple arithmetic but still incomprehensible to me that the addition of some 400 house-broken centrists, even granting the many fine comrades that presumably will turn up from their midst, can serve our goal of 10,000 new worker recruits. Experience has it that the Shachtman-type drives them away; and remember that we are no longer recruiting experienced, shock-proof, advanced workers, that we are having our troubles as it is.

With measured respect for the decisive importance of leadership in the revolutionary movement, it should be stated that some will find it at least difficult to "give a serious thought to the leaders...without prejudice and discrimination..." when the reality is that they of the WP merely play the role of leaders in their capacity as sociological barometers.

The prophetic wisdom of Albert Goldman cannot be ignored. Not that he saw more clearly than we the advantages of unity, for to him the disadvantages become its positive side; but in his consoling promise "we'll be back" he must have sensed, because of and in spite of his free intuitions, that unity would have another inning. In his construal of the traditions of our own co-thinker's "Bolshevik history," and out of an appreciation for the present social composition and level of important sections among the co-thinkers as well as our relations to them, Goldman opined that a final decision on unity rested with them. Whether or not he was willing to bury the co-thinkers or thumbed his nose at its authority is immaterial here; what matters is that he and others knew that in view of forceful, if necessary, efforts by the co-thinkers to unify, i.e. build other sections, it would be no simple task to educate the co-thinkers to an appreciation of the American tasks as the SWP majority understands them, and which were so earnestly advanced by the events culminating in the split of 1939-40.

Of fundamental determining importance in Cannon's recommendation for unity is the statement of our general responsibility:

"At the same time, the unification would be a powerful blow against the centrifugal tendencies among our co-thinkers and aid the leadership in the task of unification and concentration. This would create the possibility for the first time of introducing a serious discipline to regulate and control the irresponsible individuals and groups who have been running wild up till now."

Is not this idea the significant product of the visit of Ted and Smith? More than that, when it is explained that this obligation is weighted by the knowledge that substantial petty-bourgeois sections of the French and English parties could not understand our rejection of the "unconditional" capitulation of the WP, is it not the decisive consideration? Yes, it is probably true that the orthodox Marxist tendency is assured of a firm majority among our co-thinkers; but this condition only emphasizes that unity is necessitated by considerations of solidifying the co-thinkers, and not because it is a boon for us or mops up centrism in the United States.

A question might logically be raised: If it is true that the unification is a risky undertaking for us, is it not obligatory to launch a struggle designed to educate the lagging sections among the co-thinkers to an understanding of the necessities confronting us? It is not a simple question; for in this matter, given the tempo of world developments and the catastrophic events looming ahead, time is of the essence. Before anything else is possible, it is evident that the solidification and strengthening of the co-thinkers is an obligatory first step, an absolute prerequisite, providing of course that the orthodox Marxist tendency is assured of a firm majority.

Moreover, lest anyone conclude that these criticisms reflect a disintegration of confidence in the American Trotskyist leadership, to this I agree and it can be put down as final that: if the SWP does not relish an internal struggle with the WP centrists, it does not fear one. Bolshevik history has demonstrated that a qualified leadership is capable of summarily disposing of any threat; and it can be surmised that, despite the waste of energies, the casualties, and the lost opportunities, the SWP in such an event will issue forth intact. It should be added that struggle is a necessary part of life, and concomitantly that factions are therefore not at an end in our party. It is after all the sectarians who preclude the ever new crises that arise and are inescapable when one participates in the living processes of history. They therewith, of course, arrange the permanent crisis of their very existence.

Let us recall that when the Convention expeditiously expelled Morrow and Jeffries, one of that faction threatened that the co-thinkers would rebel against this action. The English have condemned it. Cannon responded that in such an event we would carry an educational campaign to the co-thinkers. Now it is readily understandable that many among them would comprehend even less a rejection by our Party of the WP capitulation. Therefore, if at

the present time an educational struggle within the co-thinkers is excluded, why is it necessary to believe that the expulsion of Morrow and Jeffries constitutes a disciplinary lesson? If it does assert the seriousness with which the SWP regards the Bolshevik principle of democratic centralism, it is certainly not in evidence that the English majority learned anything from the extraordinary rights and facilities accorded Morrow and Jeffries, prior to their ejection, by a wearied Party at a valuable convention.

The new formula for unity does not alter the reality, the failure of substantial sections of our co-thinkers to correctly appreciate the American tasks; but it does accede to the superior relationship of forces established by the SWP as a result of the serious execution of the proletarian orientation of 1940. That the programmatic line of 1940, hammered out by Cannon and Trotsky and realized in the hegemony of the Cannon, i.e. Bolshevik organizational tendency, assured this superiority, this veritable forced-march to an advanced front, is not particularly clear to anyone other than the SWP and those of the co-thinkers who are in programmatic agreement with us. Least of all is it clear to the WP empiricists.

If the essential centrist core of the WP is consolidated on any one question it is that Connonism, i.e. the organizational concepts, method, and orientation of the SWP as embodied in the present party regime, is a fertile condition for the propagation of Stalinist germs. The WP Bloc is ostensibly resigned to the inevitable degeneration of the American proletarian power. (If it should happen!) But why? Isn't it always possible to pose the question of organizational democracy in the knowledge that "border incidents" are always available when required. And the issue of democracy is the most confusing and difficult to understand for the unskilled party worker. It presents special difficulties for the leadership as well. Ample evidence for this contention was provided by the Goldman sliver-group in their campaign to systematically undermine the combat discipline of the Party; they inflicted a sizeable laceration for a mere sliver. But it was necessary that the whole matter be thoroughly clarified before the co-thinkers as a condition of its resolution. Will it be of any consequence to the petty-bourgeois rascals that Cannon did admit them without "prejudice and discrimination?"

In truth to faithfully execute the terms of capitulation (of the WP) serious problems in Party democracy are posed, inevitably. Under obligation to secure the progress of the Party on the basis of the present programmatic and organizational hegemony of the SWP of today, we are faced with the task of fracturing beyond repair the consortium of political traders in the WP. Such a task requires unprecedented measures: in effect policing without prejudice and discrimination. Surely the immediate desperation of the WP, manifest in the "capitulation," is no guarantee of peace in the absence of an unhesitating readiness of the Party to employ stern and timely measures, measures which are not exactly normal in the procedures of Bolshevism. Remembering that even the

emphatic voice of Lenin did not avail against Zinoviev and Kamenev in the crucial moments of revolution, then to people convinced that the normal, necessary procedures of our Party constitute nothing less than Stalinism what will abnormal or special procedures constitute? Stalinism with a vengeance?

Conjunctural shifts in the present political alignments subsequent to the unification cannot be absolutely excluded. This possibility would make all the more difficult an effort to control an inopportune dispute, provided a majority is in no mood for a discussion dear to the petty-bourgeois heart. Again, given the development of an extraordinary authority in the majority leadership, there must be assurance that loyal differences originating from indigenous sources will be accorded the respect essential to effective Party democracy. Can it be expected that such differences will be without benefit of support from the unprincipled combinationists? Likewise is it possible that they should in any political sense be deprived of such support? Briefly, all the contradictions in employing the principle of democratic centralism to a heterogeneous or inclusive party break out like the strawberry itch; and the problem is additionally touchy since the petty-bourgeois will not be scratched.

It will become apparent that upon the probably abrupt termination of the "honeymoon" there is no guarantee of anything. All the more so is this true since I am convinced that our Party and its leadership is neither academic or frivolous in its respect for party democracy.

If logic rather than social pressure and organizational expedients were the determining influence in the politics of these barometric souls, and some kindred spirits who even now on occasion drift into our Party, albeit under favorable conditions, the conclusive destruction of the certainly discredited and infinitely weaker centrist bloc of 1939-40 were assured. But no such luck. Those to whom a principle here, a program there, and a bushel of tactics all around are a part of the day's trading, the turbulent world crisis with its sharp turns and fluctuating moods offers many bright opportunities for them to regain their sense of dignity and independence. And this will be particularly so in the States where the heterogeneity of society expresses itself in the manifold gradations, economic and cultural, the historically separated layers, and generally uneven development of the proletariat itself. Remarkable is it that in that country which is most culturally retarded, where the proletariat is least politically developed, Trotskyism is able to implant one of its best equipped and organizationally capable sections!

At this moment, under pressure of a still slow radicalization of the American working class, new "left" but ultimately centrist tendencies appear from the Stalinist quarter. And are we not perhaps a little naive to believe that this marriage (SWP-WP) will not embrace in the germ, as one of its future offspring, a new centrist group in the U.S., or material for such?



It has been understood in our movement that the appearance of new centrist formations and fractions is inevitable, that their inevitability lies in the very nature of historical maturation of the class struggle, that their existence reflects the vacillation of the petty-bourgeoisie, the immaturity of the working class and sections of its vanguard. Moreover the general cultural backwardness of some states in the epoch of capitalist crises gives rise to ephemeral centrist currents of the AWP type. Revisionist currents of the centrist variety, travelling away from Marxism under pressure of defeats, have arisen among our co-thinkers out of their failure to properly estimate the nature and tempo of economic, social, and political disintegration under the conditions of war and fascism in the epoch of imperialist death agony. They write-off the struggle for the proletarian dictatorship as simultaneously out-dated and premature. It is the condition of general mass resurgence on a world scale and the imminence of new revolutionary battles that damages the immediate possibilities of the centrists. Illustrative in this respect are the wild flip-flops of Shachtman on the Italian question, coincident with each ebb and resurgence, with each turn of the class struggle. And Shachtman is not through!

It must be added to complete the history that the life and growth of centrist formations is contingent upon the vigilance, skill, and flexibility with which the Bolshevik Party understands and maneuvers against them. It can be confessed, seemingly to the detriment of this very criticism, that to date the SWP and its leadership has proven itself astute, effective!

To boil the question down in summary: From purely national considerations the apparently unavoidable fusion of the two parties is more of a minus than a plus. The National Committee tends to exaggerate the depth and extent of the WP capitulation. But against this consideration the task of solidifying the co-thinkers makes obligatory the unification, given the present conditions of its existence and the level of important sections within the Movement. The record of the WP leadership and history of centrism assures the outbreak of new struggles within the united party, and without a protracted honeymoon. The guarantees will be difficult to redeem and will be found stymied in the democratic red-tape; the organizational question will be re-opened on a new plane. The habits and composition of the WP will raise anew the problems of proletarianization, may well overweight the still small SWP with the innumerable petty-bourgeois vices. And the goal of 10,000 new worker recruits may at the next post-unity convention become the forte of the petty-bourgeois skeptics against Trotskyism.

To abstain from narcotic self-elation, to discard the idealist illusions of a reformed WP leadership in a profoundly penitent party, to face soberly the unbidding reality, and to place the question on its proper foundations were a far wiser course. In that way can we best shoulder the burden of a conqueror in a foreign land; in that way will we wisely take our positions, with the eyes of our entire army wide open.

Milwaukee, Wisconsin  
April 13, 1947