

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

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Contents

ROBERTSON-MAGE-WHITE-HARPER-IRELAND

CASE

Part II

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Part II

Table of Contents

1. Motion of December 1963 Plenum re Suspensions.
2. Rescind the Suspensions! -- Statement to the National Committee of the SWP by the five suspended supporters of the Revolutionary Tendency, Lynne Harper, Laurence Ireland, Shane Mage, James Robertson, and Geoffrey White.
3. Letter from Geoffrey White to P.C. dated November 5, 1963.
4. Letter from Laurence Ireland to Farrell Dobbs, Nov. 8, 1963.
5. Letter from Shane Mage to Political Comm., Nov. 10, 1963.
6. Statement on Suspension of Robertson-Tendency Members: Nov. 15, 1963. By Clara Kaye; Dick supports Statement. (Seattle)
7. Letter from Jack Wright to Political Comm., Nov. 29, 1963.
8. Letter and Statement on Suspension to Farrell Dobbs and N.C. Plenum from Tim Wohlforth for the Reorganized Minority Tendency, Nov. 21, 1963.
9. Letter from Conn. Branch to Political Committee, Nov. 30, 1963, plus motion of Conn. Branch Nov. 28, 1963.
10. Letter from Wendell Phillips to National Comm., Nov. 12, 1963.
11. Letter from Lynne Harper to National Comm., Nov. 18, 1963.
12. Statement to the National Committee Plenum from Arne Swabeck, December 5, 1963.
13. Statement to National Committee Plenum from Doug G. and Rosemary S., December 17, 1963.

PLENUM ACTION ON THE ROBERTSON-MAGE-WHITE

HARPER-IRELAND CASE

Motion of Presiding Committee:

The plenum of the National Committee concurs with the characterization of the leaders of the Robertson-Mage-White group as set forth in the Political Committee's motion of November 1, 1963, and approves the PC action in suspending five of the group's leaders from membership in the party.

Because of their disloyal conduct, the plenum hereby expels from the party Comrades Robertson, Mage, White, Harper and Ireland.

All material pertinent to the case shall be published forthwith in the internal bulletin for the information of the party membership.

The plenum hereby creates a special commission to prepare a draft codifying in a single document a full reaffirmation of the party's organizational principles as they have been set down in various official party documents at earlier times.

The commission shall be composed of Comrades Cannon, Dobbs, and Warde.

Upon completion the draft document shall be submitted for consideration at a forthcoming plenum of the National Committee.

Adopted by the Plenum
of the National Committee,
December 28, 1963.

RESCIND THE SUSPENSIONS! --

Statement to the National Committee of the Socialist Workers Party by the five suspended supporters of the Revolutionary Tendency, Lynne Harper, Laurence Ireland, Shane Mage, James Robertson, and Geoffrey White.

I. Introduction: the Political Committee Action Against Us.

1. On August 2, 1963, the Political Committee adopted a motion which took up some old accusations of Wohlforth and Philips, paraphrasing them in summary form as (1) "Hostile Attitude Toward the Party," (2) "Double Recruiting," and (3) "Split Perspective." The PC motion concluded by instructing the Control Commission to look "into possible violations of the statutes of the party, especially involving Robertson, Ireland, and Harper." On October 24 after some months of purported investigation the CC reported, exclusively on the basis of written opinions offered by Robertson, Ireland, and Harper internally within their own tendency, that: "In these statements by the Robertson-Mage-White minority their hostile and disloyal attitude toward the party is clearly manifested." The PC in its motion of November 1 found it necessary to expand on the CC's sole conclusion by presenting lurid accusations created out of thin air and giving as sole source "as indicated by the Control Commission's report." The PC went on to suspend from party membership, Comrades Harper, Ireland, Mage, Robertson, and White. Moreover, the suspensions were without specified time limit and were to be with "the same force and effect" as expulsion during the period of suspension.

2. Thus for the first time in the history of the SWP a leadership has taken the punitive action of exclusion from the party of minority supporters on the basis of opinions! This action is rendered even more grave and unprecedented by the fact that the views for which punishment was inflicted were themselves nothing more than personal contributions to a private discussion within a minority tendency!

II. Background: Recent Trends in the Party

3. Through the period of the last two party conventions (1961, 1963) the party has witnessed a systematic and general attrition of representation on the NC of all minority factions or tendencies, dissidents, and other critics. Thus, for example, Bert Deck, the then managing editor of the International Socialist Review and associate of Murry Weiss, was removed from the NC after he offered a slight modification to the PC line on the Cuban Question for the 1961 Convention. In the

same period there has been a systematic denial, compounded by calculatedly hysterical Majority hostility, of the rights of the party membership in branches -- above all in the largest branch, New York -- to express opinions, offer recommendations to leading bodies, or even to discuss new developments or the actions and decisions of the party leadership.

4. A year ago the Majority made an assault on the very right of our minority, and by implication any minority, to exist within the party. A provocative attempt was made by Majority supporters to intrude into a private Minority gathering. As the upshot of our informal protest to party authorities, it was revealed that the incident had taken place at the instigation and under the direction of a Majority PC member. The leadership white-washed this action by adopting a condemnatory motion which accused the Minority of being the guilty party for having held such a private tendency meeting! These events are fully detailed in our document "For the Right of Organized Tendencies to Exist Within the Party!"

5. In connection with the last party convention, the Majority made severe incursions upon party democracy and upon our Party rights:

a) The National Secretary, Dobbs, without offering any reason, refused to print in the bulletin material on the international question which we deemed important to present to the party. In the same pre-convention discussion period the National Secretary likewise deferred printing documentary material on the youth question. Later an opportune legal problem presented itself as an excuse for refusal. A key document in this collection has been kept from the movement since September 1961 by the PC.

b) At the convention itself the Majority refused to give any representation on the National Committee to our minority despite a sufficient numerical as well as clear cut political basis for such representation. Thus the Majority has not only deprived us of our proper voice within the party, but it has also put into question the legitimate authority of the leading party bodies, the NC and PC, by electing them on a restricted basis.

c) In reporting the convention to the public, the Militant article, after identifying James Robertson and Shane Mage among others by name, stated that "They charged that ... the leadership of the SWP were in the process of abandoning Marxism." This cynical abuse of control of the public press by the Majority to identify and isolate inner-party opponents is indeed an abandonment of the method of controversy among Marxists.

6. In a continuous series of incidents over the past two years, the Majority has abused its leading position in the party to hinder, harrass, and immobilize supporters of our tendency. The evident general aim of the Majority has been to make as the penalty for individual comrades becoming oppositionists the paralysis of any political role, either within the party or in broader outside movement. Thus there has accumulated a seemingly endless list of all-too-legitimate grievances on this score. Perhaps the most outrageous and flagrant incident of harrassment was that against Comrade Shirley in removing her from Southern work. Most common has been the regular, rarely overridden refusal to accept into membership contacts brought to the party by the minority. Yet throughout the past several years, and whatever the provocation, our tendency has always counselled and insisted that its supporters abide in a disciplined way by the decisions of the Majority imposed upon the party.

7. The foregoing sections are intended only to sketch the immediately relevant portion of the party's organizational side in the past period. We do not suggest that these are the main characteristics of the party's evolution, even of the organizational aspect. Rather what is described is that part of the party's face shown to the party's minorities, particularly to our own tendency. At the same time as the comrades of the Revolutionary Tendency have responded in a disciplined fashion to developments within the party, we have not failed to form and offer opinions among ourselves and to the whole party as to the meaning, implications, and direction of the course the party has been pursuing in regards to both political revisionism and organizational degeneration. The determination of the more general processes at work in shaping the party was exactly the subject under hot discussion in the tendency when the documents were drafted over which the Majority now raises a scandal in its desire to exclude us from the party. See for example Robertson and Ireland's "The Centrism of the SWP and the Tasks of the Minority" (September 6, 1962) and also the earlier basic tendency statement, "In Defense of a Revolutionary Perspective" (in 1962 SWP Discussion Bulletin Vol. 24, No. 4).

Suffice it to say that the most salient features of the party's overall motion in the last period have been as follows:

a) In General political approach the party has sought after substitutes for a revolutionary working class perspective --notably the surrender of all Marxist responsibility toward the Cuban Revolution through abasement as an uncritical apologist for the Castro regime; repeating this process over Ben Bella's Algeria; negotiating an alliance of convenience and

mutual amnesty with fellow Pabloists internationally ("reunification of the F.I."); and most lately, within the United States in a will-o'-the-wisp chase after Black Nationalism.

b) Yet while the party Majority has eagerly given itself over to enthusiasm for the goals of alien movements, it has resolutely avoided such opportunities as would further involvement and struggle in the party's own right. Thus actual civil rights work, North and South; a serious approach to Progressive Labor or participation in the travel to Cuba committee and its trip; any modest effort at rebuilding the party's contact with the workers, such as plant press sales or Hazard miners work, have all either come at the Minorities' urgings, but vastly too little and too late, or have been refused outright. The proper word for such conduct is abstentionism.

c) It was in the party leadership's instant, instinctive responses in the moments of great crisis or apparent peril -- the Cuban missile crisis last year and the Kennedy assassination this year -- that the party's utter loss of revolutionary compass has been most decisively shown. (See our statement, "Declaration on the Cuban Crisis," later printed in the 1963 D.B. Vol. 24, No. 18).

d) Within the party the shift in equilibrium of forces in the central party leadership through the retirement of Cannon and the elimination of Weiss has intensified the drive by the Dobbs regime to solve all questions by brute organizational force.

As a result of the totality of these underlying considerations the Majority leadership has been driven now to seek the exclusion of our tendency from the party. In essence this is a "punishment" of us for our very tenacity in remaining in the party despite its degeneration and for our intransigence in struggling against that degeneration.

III. The Accusations Against Us.

8) In view of the material already written (listed below) there is by this time little that needs be added as regards the vacuity, irrelevance, or downright falseness of the accusations of statutory violations made against our tendency or its individual supporters.

The party leadership has officially presented its case against our tendency in the following materials: a) letter of National Secretary Dobbs to James Robertson, July 5, 1963; b) PC motion of August 2, 1963, "On the Robertson-Ireland-Harper

Case"; c) "Report of Control Commission on the Robertson Case," October 24, 1963; d) PC Motion of November 1, 1963. The following replies and refutations have been offered by individual tendency supporters: a) letter of Robertson to Dobbs, July 9, 1963; b) letter of Geoffrey White to the PC, November 5, 1963;* d) letter of Shane Mage to the PC, November 10, 1963; and e) letter of Lynne Harper to the NC, November 18, 1963. We urge the National Committee members to familiarize themselves with this correspondence.

9) The accusations of our indiscipline were originally put before the party by the Wohlforth-Philips "Reorganized Minority Tendency" in appendices to their document "Party and Class" (1963 Discussion Bulletin Vol. 24, No. 27). We shortly replied with our "Discipline and Truth" (in D.B. Bulletin Vol. 24, No. 30). In our reply we stated that "Party and Class" lied, and we sought to show why its authors had been led into such action. With documents written earlier within the tendency, which we appended to our reply, we proved that we had been the object of false accusations. Moreover, to even the most superficial observer there is an insoluble contradiction in Wohlforth and Philips' accusations against us. If the charges were true that we were some kind of split-crazed wreckers, then Wohlforth-Philips should have taken far more decisive and prompt action than their act of waiting a year after first revealing within the ~~then~~ common tendency such heinous crimes, then simply repeating the revelations to the party as a whole. But if the charges were not true, they should never have been made in the first place. Instead they went ahead to publicize their accusations and then deprecate them by declaring them to be no valid basis for organizational action against us by the party leadership!

Nonetheless, it is to the credit of the Wohlforth-Philips group that they have now come forward, first, in disassociating themselves from their earlier accusation that we had a split orientation. This had been the key point in all of Wohlforth's other charges. Secondly, it is to their credit that they oppose organizational action against us, thereby implicitly declaring that their own old accusations had been without real, actionable substance, but were rather their own interpretations.

10. It would be an enormous and pointless task to seek to pin down and dispose of very many of the irrelevancies or wild distortions in the charges which the PC and CC have levelled against us; e.g., the abusive nonsense about "double" recruitment or the childishness of proposing to expel us because we are alleged to have a "split perspective." Indeed the core of the case against us collapses immediately upon examination

*c) letter of Laurence Ireland to Dobbs, November 8, 1963;

because it depends upon one false equation, to wit: party members, even if organizationally loyal and disciplined (as we are), can be "really" loyal only if in the course of carrying out party decisions, they agree with the leadership.

No matter from what side the Dobbsian interpretations given in the PC and CC material are approached, it always turns out that to the central leaders, "loyalty" to the party means loyalty to the leaders. Because our acceptances of discipline justifies and is justified by our inner-party struggle against the leadership policies, our carrying out of party decisions is dismissed as "cynical" and presumably then defective because it lacks sincerity. Thus, many of the "quotations," even in their selected and trimmed form, offered of the views of tendency supporters can have as their only purpose making the point that we don't believe in or agree with the party's changing policies and direction of recent years, nor do we respect the initiators and directors of those changes, either.

It is elementary, but no longer obvious in the SWP, to note that discipline has meaning especially when there is disagreement. Democratic-centralism is most fully called upon to regulate differences and mobilize the entire party for carrying out arrived-at decisions when there are sharp and deep-going divisions. To exclude from the party those who have sharp and deep differences, those who believe that the policies and course of the Majority leadership are part of a profound degeneration, is to amply prove the existence of that degeneration.

11. For our part, we have and do declare that our political loyalty lies exclusively with the Trotskyist program. It is as a derivative of this prime consideration that our tendency has always sought to abide fully by the discipline of the party, despite the rapidly advancing disease of degeneration in the party. It is in this sense and no other that the much-quoted phrase in the Robertson-Ireland document was advanced about avoiding "mistaken concepts of loyalty to a diseased shell." We would be peculiar people indeed should we find our loyalty resting with the cancer growing within the party! This should have been evident to any honest reader of the materials in question, for otherwise many other statements in these inner-tendency documents would be in flat contradiction and would reduce the entire set of opinions to a meaningless jumble. Notable in this connection is the statement in Comrade Harper's draft "Orientation of the Party Minority in Youth Work" that "we must act as disciplined SWP members at all times." Again, in Comrade Ireland's "What the Discussion is Really About," is found: "But since our perspective is one of remaining in

the SWP, we can hardly afford to violate 'party discipline or party statutes.'" (Incidentally, this latter document had been turned over to the Control Commission by Comrade Ireland to remove any possible ambiguities about his opinions on actionable subjects. However, the CC in its "Report ..." gave no acknowledgement of the receipt or very existence of this document, much less any mention of its contents!). Finally to put this whole point another way, if the SWP has become centrist in character as we stated in our main resolution to the last party convention, "Toward Rebirth of the Fourth International" (that "... the centrist tendency is also prevalent among certain groups which originally opposed the Pablo faction."), then some organizational conclusions reasonably follow that justify our acting as disciplined party members despite the party's centrist politics. Further, it necessarily follows that such a conclusion is no more or less incompatible with party membership than is holding the political analysis which led to it.

IV. What Our Expulsion Would Mean For The Party.

12. It may be that sections of the National Committee have not thought through the international implications of expelling our tendency from the SWP. Within the limitations of the Voorhis Act, the American party has been a prime mover in the recent reunification with the Pabloist forces of the International Secretariat. In an effort to draw into the unity as many of the scattered and divided groupings as possible, big promises were made to those opposed to the basis of the unification to convince them to come along anyhow. For example Dobbs and Hansen wrote in the article "Reunification of the Fourth International" (Fall, 1963, International Socialist Review) as follows:

"Groupings with much deeper differences than opposing views over who was right in a past dispute can coexist and collaborate in the same revolutionary-socialist organization under the rules of democratic centralism."

and

"The course now being followed by Healy and Posadas and their followers is much to be regretted. Under the democratic centralism which governs the Fourth International, they could have maintained their political views within the organization and sought to win a majority."

Even more recently the United Secretariat of the Fourth International itself declared in its statement of November 18, 1963, in reply to the Healy-Lambert grouping, that:

"The fact remains, however, that they /British and French 'International Committee' sections/ have demonstratively refused to unite in a common organization in which they would be in a minority. They demonstratively refused to accept the majority decision of the International Committee forces on reunification. They demonstratively refused in advance to abide by majority decision of the world Trotskyist movement on reunification."

and

"As for our position, we stand as before for reunification -- on the basis of the principled program adopted at the Reunification Congress -- of all forces that consider themselves to be revolutionary socialists."

13. Our tendency opposed the projected unity move. Indeed the tendency itself was born in opposition to the political course which underlay the projected unification. We stated our opposition and proposed an entirely different political basis for reuniting the world movement in our 1963 draft international resolution, "Toward Rebirth of the Fourth International." We also made it crystal clear in advance that should the pro-Pabloist unification win a majority and go into effect, then the dissident and opposing minority internationally who shared our general outlook should go through the experience of the falsely-based unity attempt. We stated our willingness "demonstratively" to accept the reunification in the entire concluding section of our recent international resolution which states:

"(10) Reunification of the Trotskyist movement on the centrist basis of Pablism in any of its variants would be a step away from, not toward, the genuine rebirth of the Fourth International. If, however, the majority of the presently existing Trotskyist groups insists on going through with such a 'reunification,' the revolutionary tendency of the world movement should not turn its back on these cadres. On the contrary: it would be vitally necessary to go through this experience with them. The revolutionary tendency would enter a 'reunified' movement as a minority faction, with a perspective of winning a majority to ~~the~~ program of workers' democracy. The Fourth International will not be reborn through adaptation to Pabloite revisionism: only by political and theoretical struggle against all forms of centrism can the world party of the socialist revolution finally be established."

And we ourselves have more than fully met the conditions set forth by Dobbs-Hansen and by the Unified Secretariat. On top of abiding by discipline and accepting decisions, we have resisted abuse, disloyalty, calculated incitement, and outright provocation by the American leadership to force us to leave "voluntarily." Our tendency is therefore virtually unique in its ability to be the living test of the genuineness of the claimed democratic-centralist based and inclusive reunification. Several things will be clear should we be thrown out for holding opinions by no means more critical of the U.S. and international Pabloist leaderships than views held by others who have been publically and repeatedly invited to join in the unification. If we are excluded, then the true scope of the unity as an act of bad faith and deliberate fraud by its instigators will be definitely shown to all Trotskyists.

In a very practical and concrete way, the SWP-NC by its action towards us at its December 1963 Plenum will go far in making final for this period both the shape of its own relations with the world movement as well as those of its international allies.

14) Are all sections of the National Committee prepared to take responsibility for the kind of developing internal life which our exclusion would formalize? We are by no means the only people in the party who believe that the SWP is degenerating apace or that the Dobbs regime is a disaster for the party. If these views become proscribed through the awful example of our expulsion, then such opinions would be driven into a fetid underground existence. Inevitably there would be a multiplication of the symptoms of organizational degeneracy -- the flaring up of intensely hate-filled quarrels on the permitted secondary questions, cliquist plots, hysterical reactions by a leadership fighting dimly seen enemies. Such an atmosphere could only accelerate the rightward motion of the party's cadres and train the newer members in a caricature of Marxist party life.

These are some of the general considerations which have always kept the Trotskyists from proscribing opinions within the party, however obnoxious they may be to the leadership, or of expelling the holders of such views. Moreover, in the specific case before the NC action against our tendency will not achieve its desired aim of turning the party into a docile machine. Others will continue as oppositionists within the party, and we will press our struggle from outside for readmission and for acceptance of our political viewpoint. It is within the province of the NC to prevent the demoralization and splintering of the party being brought on by a bureaucratically

heavy-handed leadership.

15. For the NC to intervene to return the party to the revolutionary organizational practices of the past is to hold open the possibility of a revolutionary future for the SWP. If the NC permits the destruction of our party membership, it thereby acquiesces to the destruction of any chance for a reversal of the rightward, revisionist course of the party because those who opposed it would be excluded. By eliminating the content of party democracy, the degeneration of the party becomes irreversible. This need not be!

The SWP Majority reflects no implacable bureaucratic social layer. Its loss of a proletarian, revolutionary perspective, its eager search for substitutes and short cuts -- idealizing the radical petty bourgeois leaderships: the Castros, Ben Bellas, Malcolm X's -- is not some inevitable automatic reflex based upon a position of privilege. Rather despair and ensuing degeneration have come through prolonged isolation, persecution, weakness, and aging.

The NC stands now at a last cross road, at which it yet has open a conscious choice. Sections of the party leadership may have already gone much further in political revision or bureaucratic organizational practice than they ever intended. Although it would be idle to deny that it is very late, there is still a choice; the party does not have to, is not predestined to, continue down the road it is travelling at full speed. To repeat: to halt now is to leave open the way back so the party might again have a revolutionary future.

V. Conclusion: Rescind the Suspensions!

16. In the normal course of seeking to rectify a mistake or an injustice within the party, one would normally turn readily to the NC as a resort, but under the extraordinary circumstances in which the central party leadership has plunged the party with the NC's acquiescence to date, we must offer a reservation. Presumably we are expected to appeal the disciplinary action of the PC against us. But how can we appeal against what has not been the finding of any trial; how can we appeal against accusations which have no relation to any alleged intended violation of the rules of democratic-centralism?

17. Despite the outrageous position in which we would be placed in appealing to the NC from a non-existent trial, we are prepared to send a representative to appear before the NC at its coming plenum to present our case and to answer questions the plenum may wish to put to us. Because of the grave defects

in the present situation we do not turn to the NC with an appeal but with the demand: RESTORE PARTY DEMOCRACY! RESCIND OUR SUSPENSIONS!

18. Finally, we call upon all party members, branches, individual NC members, and political tendencies in the party to present letters and statements to the NC calling for the lifting of the suspensions and restoration of our party rights as a vital interest of the party itself!

December 10, 1963.

#

For NC and CC Information

(Copy)

November 5, 1963

To the Political Committee of
The Socialist Workers' Party

Dear Comrades:

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

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

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

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

sense which the document uses it, not in the sense the PC abuses it into, a minority would have to cease recruiting to the party altogether.

As for the "loyalty to a diseased shell" passage of which much is made, the basis for this statement is merely the concept which is, I trust, held by all comrades of a Marxist as opposed to a religious persuasion, namely, that the party is a means, and not an end in itself.

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

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

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

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

but as a merit.

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

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

Comradely,
/signed/
Geoffrey W. White

For NC and CC Information:

(copy)

8 November 1963

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

Dear Comrade Dobbs:

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

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

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

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

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

It is true, of course, that discussion always provokes feelings which remain for some time. Political life is full of difficulties -- personalities clash -- they widen their dissensions -- they get in each other's hair. These differences must be overcome by common experience, by education of the rank and file, by the leadership proving it is right. Discipline is built by education, not only by statutes. Organisational measures should be resorted to only in extreme cases. It was the elastic life within it which allowed the Bolshevik Party to build its discipline. Even after the conquest of power, Bukharin and other members of the party voted against the government in the Central Executive on important questions, such as the German peace, and in so doing lined themselves with those Social Revolutionists who soon attempted armed insurrection against the Soviet state. But Bukharin was not expelled. Lenin said, in effect: "We will tolerate a certain lack of discipline. We will demonstrate to them that we are right. Tomorrow they will learn that our policy is correct, and they will not break discipline so quickly." By this I do not advise the dissenting comrades to imitate the arrogance of Bukharin. Rather do I recommend that the leadership learns from the patience and tact of Lenin. (L.D. Trotsky, In the Middle of the Road, pp. 29-30. Some emphases added.)

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

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

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

Leninist greetings.
/signed/
Laurence Ireland

(Copy)

New York, New York
10 November, 1963

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

Dear Comrades,

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

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

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

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

C. The "evidence" presented by the Control Commission for its charge of subversive thoughts is drawn entirely from two internal discussion documents of the opposition dating from mid-1962: a series of fragments wrenched from their real context and strung together with dots in the fashion of the best schools of falsification. But this mendacious presentation is the smallest fault in the whole frame-up. The Control Commission concludes its "findings" with this declaration: "In these statements by the Robertson-Mage-White minority their hostile and disloyal attitude toward the party is clearly manifested." THIS IS A CONSCIOUS, DELIBERATE, BARE-FACED LIE. The Control Commission knew perfectly well that the documents

signed by Robertson, Ireland, and Harper were personal discussion contributions and had never been adopted, in whole or in part, by the "Robertson-Mage-White minority."

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

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

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

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

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

Fraternally,
/signed/
Shane Mage

For N.C. and C.C. Information

(Copy)

Statement on Suspension of Robertson-Tendency Members: November 15, 1963. By Clara Kaye; Dick supports this statement.

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

7. The "double recruitment" charge is puzzling. A minority often recruits a person to the party and not to itself at the same time. This may or may not materialize later. But a minority may recruit a person to both, simultaneously, or almost so. The charge of disloyalty would only make sense if someone were recruited only to the faction and not to the party, or out of the party and into the faction. This is exactly what the Goldman-Morrow faction did, as well as some other factions in the past. But this is not the charge in this case.
8. The one Robertson tendency member in Seattle (recruited in New York) is an active and reliable branch member and youth organizer. His behavior would belie the almost wholesale charge of Robertson-tendency disloyalty. Is there concrete evidence in other branches of disloyal behavior, selective activity, contempt for the party, etc.? In lieu of this type of real evidence, the Control Commission has given us only an indignant expose of two unutterably ignorant and pretentious documents by two minority members; but since when has individual stupidity, privately or publicly expressed, been grounds for suspension? This is, indeed, an impossible precedent.
9. Such primitive fervor against a generally young and sincerely revolutionary tendency, their own factionalism notwithstanding, is unnecessary and ultimately degrading. The present explanation of the suspension is entirely unconvincing.

For NC and CC Information

(Copy)

Seattle, Wash.
Nov. 29, 1963

Political Committee
Socialist Workers Party,

Dear Comrades:

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

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

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

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

of divergent views, discussion, study and activity this is impossible.

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

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

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

Comradely,
/signed/
Jack Wright

For NC and CC Information

(Copy)

New York 25, New York

November 21, 1963

Farrell Dobbs
National Secretary
Socialist Workers Party
116 University Place
New York 3, New York

Dear Farrell,

Enclosed is a statement to the National Committee on the recent suspension by the Political Committee of five members of the Robertson group.

We request that it be immediately circulated to National Committee members so that they will have a chance to give it careful consideration in preparation for the forthcoming National Committee Plenum.

We would appreciate being informed on what action, if any, the National Committee takes on our statement.

Fraternally,

/s/ Tim Wohlforth

Tim Wohlforth
For the Reorganized Minority
Tendency

For NC and CC Information

(Copy)

STATEMENT TO NATIONAL COMMITTEE ON ROBERTSON GROUP SUSPENSIONS

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

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

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

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

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

-- Reorganized Minority
Tendency

submitted 11/21/63

(For N.C. & C.C. Information)

(Copy)

Connecticut

November 30, 1963

Political Committee
New York, New York

Dear Comrades:

This will call your attention to a motion regarding the suspension of the Robertson leaders passed here recently. A copy of the relevant minutes is enclosed.

Comradely yours,

/s/ Dave

* * *

Excerpt from Connecticut Branch Minutes of November 28, 1963

7. Robertson group question: Resolution by Bill: "New Haven branch protests the suspension of the Robertson group. There is no evidence that any trial of these comrades was held. There is insufficient evidence that disloyal contacts were made with outside groups or that violations of party discipline took place. The charges all revolve around statements made in internal discussion. We request the P.C. to reconsider the suspension. If there is evidence of overt acts of violation of party discipline the comrades should be brought to trial." Vote: 5 for - 1 opposed.

(copy)

November 12, 1963

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

Dear Comrades:

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

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

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

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

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

It is admittedly difficult to maintain a revolutionary

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

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

Comradely,
/signed/
Wendell Phillips

For NC and CC Information

(Copy)

New York, New York

November 18, 1963

National Committee
Socialist Workers Party

Dear Comrades:

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

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

parts of the document in greater detail. But the Control Commission was not interested in this, or in the obvious intent of the document as a whole, in their search for an individual tidbit which might sound unsavory out of context. In my whole document they were only able to find one! And even then the Secretariat in its motion felt it necessary to change the words of this sentence which were that we should seek to work "where we are relitively free from the hindrance of large majority fractions..." to "seeking to work as free lancers in areas where they are unhindered by the presence of comrades loyal to the party."

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

One final word, on the Control Commission investigation itself. This investigation could in no sense of the word be termed impartial, or hardly even an "investigation". The two comrades conducting the investigation were Comrades Chester and Tabor. The former is the wife of a leading majority member of the National Committee and both have been years-long supporters of the central party leadership, incapable of distinguishing between loyalty to this leadership (a leadership and line we openly state we wish to replace) and loyalty to the party. If this is not sufficient to establish the pre-biased nature of the investigating body, there is also the fact that Comrade Chester remarked to Comrade Harry T. nearly a year ago (months before the investigation) that we were disloyal! The investigators assumed from the beginning

that we were guilty and even obviously thought that we also knew we were "guilty", and the bulk of the investigation itself consisted of attempts to trap us into admitting that we were guilty on one or another point. This is why I say the procedure could scarcely be termed an "investigation". In addition, sadly enough, the complete lack of understanding of the party's organizational principles and statutes by the comrades conducting the investigation is revealed in their report itself. This report was incompetent even from the point of view of the needs of the party leadership and has placed them in the embarrassing position of having to go beyond the findings of the Commission (to twist the thoughts and attitudes cited in the report into "methods" and "practices") in their final attempt to get rid of us (after having failed to drive us from the party in 2½ years of ever-increasing organizational provocation and harrassment.).

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

Fraternally,
/signed/
Lynne Harper

For N.C. and C.C. Information

(Copy)

TO THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE PLENUM

DECEMBER 27-29 1963

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

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

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

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

I submit this protest in all earnestness to the National Committee, hoping for favorable action. In connection with

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

December 5, 1963

Arne Swabeck

December 17, 1963

December 1963 Plenum
National Committee
Socialist Workers Party

We came into the party during the McCarthy witch-hunt period. Our struggles in our trade unions and in civil liberties organizations against the injustices of those days contributed to the social consciousness that led us to the SWP and into the general revolutionary struggle. Some eight years later we find ourselves struggling in the party against the same kind of practices that helped to propel us into the party in the first place.

We carry no brief for the Robertson-Mage-White tendency. Politically we characterize them as petty-bourgeois. We regard them as fundamentally incorrect on the questions of China, Cuba and the Negro struggle. We have opposed them polemically many times in both floor and literary debates. And we do not condone the opinions expressed in the Robertson-Ireland document of September 6, 1962. (It is the thoughts and opinions in this document that constitute the main basis for the so-called disloyalty charges against the tendency.) It would be very easy, therefore, to find excuses and justifications for removing them from the party. But our concern for the principles of socialist democracy and for the future viability of our party will not allow us such opportunistic indulgence.

The Swaback tendency has been called "Stalinist" by leaders of the party and leaders of the youth. Yet here are we alleged "Stalinists" struggling against the same techniques used by Stalin against Trotsky and the Left Opposition. Only now they are being used in the name of Trotskyism against political opponents in the Trotskyist movement.

The leadership of our party accuses a minority tendency of a hostile attitude, a split perspective, and double recruiting. All three really fall under the category of perspectives and attitudes, for the charge of double recruiting was not substantiated by actual evidence either in the PC charges or in Comrade Dobbs' presentation to the New York branch. They are "suspended" as disloyal not for any specific acts but for "attitude" and "perspective" -- that is, for thoughts and ideas. This is the technique of thought control.

Thought control techniques and concepts have been used throughout history as one of the main weapons against the revolutionary progression of society. To the extent that the SWP leadership uses the counter-revolutionary weapon of thought control against its political opponents, to that extent it will cease being revolutionary. Before their conviction and jailing under the Smith Act, suppose Comrade Dobbs and Comrade Cannon had used within the party concepts of thought control similar to those the PC is now using against the Robertson-Mage-White minority. Would they not have been in a compromising position? (Unjust expulsion from the revolutionary party is tantamount to a jail sentence to anyone who regards himself as a genuine revolutionary.)

The charges of split perspective, hostile attitude and double recruiting (unsubstantiated) taken together form the basis for the party's charge of disloyalty. None of these is alone sufficient to support the charge. They are dependent on each other. Therefore, the party leadership just fuse the three to give them weight in lieu of any acts of disloyalty. This is a familiar technique.

Hostile attitude and split perspective are abstract ideas, not actions. Double recruiting, on the other hand, is concrete; it is an action. Therefore, it must be examined separately.

Double recruiting, as an accusation implying disloyalty, appears to have a factional motivation, because if logically extended and rigidly applied such a concept would restrict party membership to people in complete agreement with all of the party's current majority positions.

Take the members and sympathizers of Uhuru in Detroit as an example. They have been described by one of their spokesmen as Mau-Mau Maoists who use as basic texts the writings of Mao Tse-tung. If they joined the party they would quite naturally be members of the Swaback tendency, irrespective of whether they joined the party on the basis of the party's line on the Negro movement. But what if the Swaback tendency were instrumental in recruiting such people? Is the Swaback tendency to be charged with disloyalty for "double-recruiting" and expelled from the party? Will prospective black revolutionaries whom the Swaback tendency might recruit be refused admittance to membership if they share the Swaback position on China? Obviously if such a course were adopted the party would be committing hari-kari.

Is the Seattle branch, which in the main supports the Kirk resolution, to be expelled by the use of such criteria as has been used against the Robertson-Mage-White group if their

members should recruit people supporting the Kirk position, as would be almost unavoidable in the circumstances? And what about the Milwaukee branch? It supports the Freedom Now resolution, but most of its members also support the Swabeck position on China. If they should recruit Negro militants with a predilection for the Swabeck position on China, are they to be "suspended" and the prospective members rebuffed?

The party is suicidally impaling itself on the horns of a self-defeating dilemma. Comrades, isn't the party small enough after 35 years without further reducing its potential by the introduction of these undemocratic strictures?

In order to purge out dissent, the party leadership is touching all the well-known bases used both by the bourgeoisie and by Stalinism. It is with a horrible fascination and deep indignation that we watch this process unfold in the SWP.

By such compromising acts and unprincipled tactics the SWP discredits itself and the entire Trotskyist movement, and forfeits any right to lead the masses in the name of and toward the revolutionary conquering of power for socialist democracy.

We protest the suspension of the Robertson-Mage-White tendency by the Political Committee and request the National Committee at its Plenum to reverse this decision.

Comradely,

/s/ Doug G.

/s/ Rosemary S.

NOTE: This communication represents the personal views of the writers. We have not consulted with the Swabeck tendency, of which we are a part, as to agreement or disagreement on its contents. We opposed the "suspension" of the minority in the discussion following Comrade Dobbs' presentation of the PC position at a New York branch meeting.