

TAPLIN ✓

# SWP

# discussion bulletin



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## POLITICAL ORGANIZATION AND ORGANIZATIONAL POLITICS

by A. Phillips

The "Draft Resolution on the Organizational Character of the SWP", drafted by the Majority for consideration at the forthcoming convention, is a classic example of the attempt to substitute organizational questions for political problems. It is an attempt to divert and discourage attention from a political line which cannot be defended as such. It is, furthermore, an attempt to smuggle in a drastic change of political line, which, as much as it might be welcomed, cannot be taken seriously when introduced in such a fashion.

The majority tries to present its recent organizational measures, and others which it proposes (although it remains studiously vague on just what "steps be taken now") as if they were merely an extension of the traditional Trotskyist method of analysis and application in the organizational field. They are, on the contrary, in fundamental conflict with our tradition and practice.

### Principles and Practice

We are told that "the organizational structure and practices of a Marxist party are not immutable. They are derived from the major tasks to be accomplished at a given stage of the class struggle." This is indisputable. But if the majority thinks it has gotten hold of a blank check with the use of such phraseology with which it can avoid a discussion of underlying principles of Bolshevik organization, it is mistaken.

When the SWP was formed in 1938, we are informed by the majority that the great emphasis was then laid on the democratic aspect of democratic centralism. This emphasis, however, had nothing to do with the "given stage of the class struggle", with the immediate needs of the Party at that given conjuncture. It was, on the contrary, the statement of underlying organizational principles which were deeply and inextricably related to its whole political line. It was the organizational counterpart of the Transitional Program.

The degeneration of the October Revolution made it a political imperative, which retains its urgent validity to this day, to explain to the world working class in general and the American working class in particular, that the political structure of the Soviet Union, symmetrically parallel with fascism, was the very opposite of socialism. We established as our task to explain that the crimes against the working class committed in the name of democratic centralism, of leninism, were a mockery of its genuine class meaning. To the comrades new to the movement we must say - It is not only necessary to understand Vietnam - we cannot forget Hungary.

Because of all parties, only for us does the revolution, and the society which follows represent the greatest democratic surge in the history of mankind; because it is an explosion from below by the masses led by the industrial proletariat; because its chief weapons are understanding and conviction; therefore, we, as a matter of principle, must lay our emphasis on the democratic aspect of centralism.

It can in a certain sense be said that our virtual isolation from the industrial proletariat, our empirical pre-occupation with the existing movements among the peasantry and petty-bourgeois groupings on a world scale, have made dull and abstract our awareness of the tremendous importance of proletarian democracy not only prior to the revolution in the process of mobilizing the working class, but in the very process of erecting the new workers state. Cannon's magnificent pamphlet on Democracy and Socialism has been put on the back shelf of the libraries and the bookstores. It has become remote and unreal to us, internally and externally. Only in an infrequent academic essay in our magazine, reprinted from abroad and provoked by developments in the economy of the Soviet Union, does the subject arise at all.

To be sure, there are periods in which temporary adjustments on the side of centralism have to be made. But they are definable, and not difficult to recognize. They fall into two general categories -- periods of defeat of the working class and reaction, and periods of revolution.

In the first category are periods in which the state, bourgeois, fascist, or as the case may be, stalinist, threatens the physical elimination of the party cadres by murder, imprisonment, or any combination of the two. Almost inevitably there is generated within the party in such a period the pressure of alien class forces and the Party must take steps to protect itself. We have never yet in the United States lived within a fully developed climate of this type, although our European and formerly our Russian comrades knew it full well.

But we have to a lesser degree lived through an approach to such a climate at least twice in our history. Once was on the eve of World War II and its concomitant internal development in the Burnham-Schachtman split; the second time was the McCarthy period with its Pablo-Cochran combination.

No one in the party to our knowledge, at least, is seriously proposing that we are fast approaching such a period and that it is necessary to prepare the Party for what is an almost semi-legal existence. It should be noted, moreover, that the previous climate was marked by either quiescence or retreat by all segments of the mass movement. And yet the majority has carried through and is proposing measures of a much more draconic nature than were ever contemplated in the previous internal developments.

In the second category are periods in which temporary adjustments on the side of centralism are necessary in the directly military phase of the insurrection, of the struggle for power.

While we have never had such an experience, Lenin's party did; and it is far from unimportant to note that when Zinoviev and Kamenev publicly exposed and denounced the insurrectional plans of the Bolsheviks, they were not only not expelled from the party, but not even from the Central Committee, though, needless to say, no one condoned their action.

Surely no one will argue that we are in a similar situation today - and yet the majority has taken steps, and proposed still others far more severe than those taken by the Bolsheviks.

### Past and Present

Let us be more concrete. In 1940 the Party, with the aid of Trotsky, carefully analyzed the political line of Burnham-Schachtman, exposed it as an attack on the proletarian method and orientation of the Party, showed how the pressures of the war situation generated a petty-bourgeois opposition, and denied its demand for a public organ. Up to the very end Trotsky, however, fought against a split, opposed any proposal to expel Burnham, and insisted that even a petty-bourgeois opposition could be won over by the proletarian line. He was even willing to seriously consider for a time a public continuation of the discussion.

But the Robertson and Wohlforth minorities made no such demand in 1963.

In 1953, even though belatedly, the Party analyzed the political line of Pablo and the IS internationally; the line of Cochran in the United States; exposed it as yet another attack upon the proletarian perspective and method; showed how the pressures of McCarthyism in the objective situation and the temporary failure of the working class in the advanced industrial countries to move had generated a petty-bourgeois pessimism and despair - and denied the demand of the minority for what it called sufficient representation on leading committees to effectively paralyze the ability of the Party to act.

But the Robertson and Wohlforth minorities made no such demand, had no such aim in 1963. As a matter of fact, it was no secret in either 1940 or 1953 that the minorities wanted out. It was likewise no secret that in 1963 the minority wanted to remain within the Party.

Far more important, however, is the fact that in the disputes beginning in 1962, it was the MINORITY which carefully analyzed the political line of

the majority. It was the MINORITY which demonstrated in every area the continued erosion of the proletarian method of analysis and orientation within the majority. It was the MINORITY which analyzed the existing objective situation and showed how it had eaten away at the confidence of the majority in the revolutionary capacity of the working class on a world scale, and in the United States.

The majority responded, with invective, slander, removal of minority representation from the National Committee, and finally, expulsion. In the current resolution, instead of describing the objective situation and then relating it to the political line of the minority, the majority takes a different course. It limits itself to stating that "Towards the end of the fifties an unusually protracted internal discussion began, centered on the Chinese question, Negro struggle, Cuban question, and reunification of the world movement."

It must at this point be noted that the Chinese question had no relevance to the expelled minorities. If anything, they were more in agreement with the majority than with the Swabeck group. But if something irrelevant was added, the majority resolution also omitted to mention the major area of difference, the minority analysis of the theoretical and practical erosion of the proletarian method and orientation within the majority.

More important, it completely ignores the source of the dispute. What were the objective social conditions leading to it? How did the political line of the minority reflect these objective conditions? These decisive methodological questions, which the majority correctly raises with regard to 1940 and 1953, are strangely missing from its treatment of 1963.

#### "Ideological Homogeneity"

The majority could not then or now answer the minority in a political fashion. It had, therefore, to substitute an organizational attack. The inevitable attack by both Schactman and Cochran on the "regime" of the party is paralleled by the attack by the majority faction on the character of the factional "regime" of the minority. It attempts to excuse the expulsions for "disloyal thoughts" on the basis of primitive rhetoric like: "The need for an ideologically homogeneous" organization "flows from the perspective and actuality of deepening social crisis and sharpening class conflict."

Just what is "ideological homogeneity"? We are told that "the party strives for political homogeneity in the sense that admission to its ranks requires fundamental agreement with its program and principles." And what are they? "The Socialist Workers Party as a revolutionary workers party, is based on the doctrines of scientific socialism as embodied in the principle

works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky as incorporated in the basic documents of the first four congresses of the Communist International; and as embodied in the Transitional Program, the American Theses and other programmatic documents of the Trotskyist movement."

But the minority based its differences with the majority on the Negro struggle, on Cuba, on reunification of the world movement, and on the proletarian orientation precisely on the programmatic and principled documents referred to above. One must ask - is it possible to differ with the majority on China, or on Algeria, or on Ghana, or on its attitude towards the Socialist Labor League and still belong to an "ideologically homogeneous" party? Are differences on any or all of these questions equivalent to harboring disloyal and non-homogeneous thoughts? Is it disloyal and non-homogeneous to differ on the organizational question?

#### "Organizational Homogeneity"

We still don't know what the majority means by "ideological homogeneity". How about "organizational homogeneity"? We are duly informed by the majority that "The right to organize tendencies and factions is safeguarded." Our first task is to try to determine just what is meant by "tendencies and factions". The key paragraphs follow:

"A relatively homogeneous party should be able to resolve episodic differences without resort to factionalism. Even when comrades have differences of a serious nature over one or another aspect of party policy it does not follow that they should rush to form a faction. Objectivity requires that they do no more than form an ideological tendency which confines its activities to a principled collective effort to argue for a change in the given policy; and the tendency should present its views openly before the whole party in a responsible and disciplined manner.

"A tight-knit faction, however, is qualitatively different from an ideological tendency. It tends in effect to become a party within the party, with its own program and its own discipline. Such a formation cannot be justified politically unless its organizers consider their differences so fundamental that they must conduct a showdown fight for control of the party, and it entails the possibility and danger of a split."

If this is how the majority views a faction, then its proclaimed right to form tendencies and factions can only be an empty phrase. Its definition of a faction is lifted almost bodily from the charges upon which the Robertson group was expelled from the Party. The majority speaks of the dangers and possibilities of a split. What it really means is the dangers and possibilities of expulsion. What is really meant is that factions will not be tolerated in the SWP.



The crucial phrase which peeps out coyly from the mess of verbiage is "a showdown fight for control of the Party". One must first inquire if the leadership really believes that its position was endangered by the handful of comrades which constituted the Robertson and Wohlforth minorities taken separately or together? And what if they did constitute such a threat? Would this then constitute a justification for the panic ridden course followed by the majority? Not in our tradition.

We are all for the americanization of bolshevism. But the phrase "show-down fight" brings to mind the gunslingers of the early west who faced each other in duels to the death at high noon. A political struggle is conceived of differently in our movement and in the Bolshevik Party of pre-stalinist days. In the dispute with Burnham-Schactman which took place in a period far more fraught with danger for the continued life of the Party, a dispute in which the differences were undoubtedly of a class nature, we took a different line. Trotsky advised the majority leadership that it should be prepared, if defeated in the political struggle, to live as a minority within the Party. If you are right, he told them, if you have confidence in your political line, then events will bear you out and you will again become the majority. This is our tradition, established in periods of much greater travail for the party than the present one. This, and not "splits" and "show-down" fights, and expulsions.

If we look again at the text of the above quoted paragraph, it will be noted that the majority faction slurs over any distinction between a "faction" and "factionalism". It moves from one to the other quickly, as if the two were inevitably one. On the other hand, it attempts to establish a hard clear line between factions and ideological tendencies. Such a sharp line does not exist in reality. Serious comrades do not form ideological tendencies on episodic differences. Quite the contrary. Ideological tendencies are generally formed on the most fundamental differences which need not even be reflected in differences of an immediately political character. Tendencies become factions when these fundamental differences actually become differences on concrete strategic and tactical programs. When the differences do not express themselves in immediate conclusions, then the tendency has in effect a practical agreement, a practical bloc with the majority. Likewise, if the differences become immediate, then a tendency may find that it is in agreement on political conclusions with another faction, perhaps a split off from the majority. The "ideological homogeneity" aimed at by the Party, is, and in the first instance must be, directed precisely at the most fundamental, the most long range differences, i. e. the differences which form the basis for ideological tendencies. In identifying tendencies, factions, and splits, what the majority is really saying, therefore, is that you have the right to form tendencies and factions just so long as the right is not utilized.

At best what is being attempted is the establishment of organizational guarantees against a power struggle within the Party and against the

possibilities of splits. This cannot be done. Only the positive effects of the class struggle, combined with a correct political line, can offer such a guarantee. The organizational road which the majority is proposing has a history of disaster.

Our movement has always recognized that if the decision within the Soviet CP to place a temporary ban on factions was necessary in the teeth of starvation and in the face of the armies of the counter revolution, it was a sad necessity. We have always understood that this action made it considerably easier for Stalin to destroy the opposition. Our movement, for this and related reasons, has always jealously defended the right of minorities to form factions.

It would not appear, at least on the surface, that the SWP in 1965 faces a situation similar to that which confronted the Bolsheviks in 1920. And yet, in fact, the majority is proposing to abolish the right to form factions. A "leninist" party, we are told, must be "ideologically homogeneous", although we still don't know quite what that means. An "ideologically homogeneous" party doesn't, per majority definition, need factions to resolve its differences. The majority has the right, indeed the obligation, to defend the "leninist" character of the party. The formation of factions is an attack upon the "leninist" character of the party. Ergo, the leadership would actually be remiss if it did not expell those who form a faction. Ergo, first the Robertson and then the Wohlforth minorities were expelled.

But the strangest part of this "draft resolution" is yet to come.

#### What Is To Be Done?

One question remains - what does the majority propose for the future, and how does it justify its proposals?

"Conditions" we are told, "both external and in the internal development of the party, demand that steps be taken now towards knitting the party together, towards tightening up its activities and centralizing its organization structure."

Search as you may through the 24 pages preceding this momentous declaration, no motivating explanation will be found as to what conditions exist within the Party today making further steps necessary. Knitting the party together? But surely with the expulsion of the Robertson and Wohlforth minorities the major task was accomplished. Or are there a few odds and ends left over to be cleaned out? But surely a few remnants do not require a major organizational resolution, the first one for many years? But surely such a major resolution should at least hint at what has to be done, to whom,



and why. Centralize the organizational structure? But surely a leadership with enough central authority to carry through expulsions on a basis "unique" and unprecedented in the history of the world Trotskyist movement and the Bolshevik Party before it, doesn't need further centralization.

What about external conditions? What about the objective situation? Somewhat further along in the draft we note with interest the following:

"To achieve power, the revolutionary party must be deeply rooted among the workers, it must be composed predominantly of workers and enjoy the respect and confidence of the workers.

"To transform the SWP into a proletarian party of action, particularly in the present period of reaction, (our emphasis) it is not enough to continue propagandistic activities in the hope that by an automatic process workers will flock to the banner of the party. It is necessary, on the contrary, to make a concerted, determined and systematic effort, consciously directed by the leading committees of the Party, to spread out into all sectors of mass movement-civil rights organizations which are becoming radicalized and in which workers predominate; labor organizations within industry and among the unemployed; campuses where an increasing number of students are turning towards socialist ideas."

Viewed as a statement of orientation, we of the minority can only applaud, though it is difficult to reconcile this statement of our tasks with the very opposite line enunciated in the official political resolution. But we must look a little more closely when this new line is presented as the rationale of the organizational overhaul. The only possible explanation for the attempt by the majority to define the present period as one of "reaction" is that it is thereby trying to establish some sort of similarity between the objective situation today and that which existed at the time of the Schachtman split, and the Pablo-Cochran affair. It would thus seem to appear that since stern organizational measures were required at that time to defend the party against alien class influences from within, and the state apparatus from without, it is likewise so today. But even if it were true that such a similarity existed, the majority would still have to justify concretely any further draconic measures. It would still have to show just how and why the centralist aspect has to be still further emphasized to a point without precedent in the history of the revolutionary movement. Is it, today, in order to defend itself against alien class influences and against the State?

The fact, however, is that there is absolutely no similarity between the - objective situation today and that which existed during the previously mentioned periods. The eruption of the civil rights movement, and the peace movement, along with their all-important tendency to merge is enough to

differentiate sharply between what exists and a period of reaction. The majority itself destroys this contention in the very paragraph in which it is presented. You just don't establish perspectives for intervention in every aspect of the mass movement, and of transforming the Party from a primarily propaganda group into a proletarian party of action in a period of reaction.

Perhaps the majority does see a major internal characteristic of the Party today as an obstacle to carrying through the projected transformation in its character, if it is serious about it. And that obstacle lies in the political line which the youth activists have been taught; i. e. the political line of the majority which the minority has been combatting and for just that reason. But if this is so, then what is necessary is political re-education, not organizational "tightening up." But if this is so, if the organizational proposals of the majority are not simply intended to get rid of what is left of the minority in the name of ideological homogeneity, are not simply intended to discourage or destroy future minorities, then why isn't this change spelled out in its political documents where it belongs? If the turn is of so sharp a character as to require drastic organizational measures, surely this should be made clear in its political line, and not smuggled in at the end of an organizational resolution.

Unless, of course, the majority is afraid of admitting so soon after the last convention, so soon after the expulsions, that the minority was right at least on the American question. The minority, those expelled and those on the chopping block, were and are fighting for exactly the line which the majority seems to be advancing - intervention into the mass movement, at least in this resolution, if not in the political resolution. Moreover, the class character of the civil rights organizations in which it is proposed that we become active, is for the first time given any attention. This was the root of the difference between the minority and the majority on the theoretical aspects of the Negro struggle.

Thus, if the new line (?) is to be taken seriously, then what the majority is doing is to seemingly accept the basic approach of the minority on the American question, but at the same time using the minority's very struggle for this approach as the basis for the previous expulsions and the proposed new "steps". There is a historic precedent for this type of procedure, but it did not arise from the Trotskyist movement.

### New Steps

There does, however, exist a certain hint as to the contemplated new "steps". Recently in the Detroit branch, Philips, a member of the minority not yet expelled, although removed from the NC for "disloyalty", was brought up on charges, invited to leave the party because of "fundamental differences

with the program and principles", censured, and threatened with future expulsion after formal convention adoption of the new course. The circumstances immediately surrounding this action was his request that he be relieved of participation in a Sub Drive for the paper in the period immediately prior to the pre-convention discussion, because he would be engaged in helping to draft resolutions. The additional reason for the request was because he was involved in an election campaign in his union. The request was turned down, in part because the comrades did not believe that work in the union constituted "real party work".

Since nowhere in the history of the Party has any member of a minority received similar treatment, and since nowhere in the Party today has a member of the majority faction been subjected to these "standards" for membership, it would appear that the steps contemplated by the majority involve dual standards of membership, one for the majority, another for an active political minority.

The supreme irony of the situation lies in the fact that the line for which the minority has been struggling, and which is supposed to be, at least in Detroit, in fundamental disagreement with the party program and principles, appears, at least on the American scene, to be the one which the majority is now proposing. It is, of course, difficult under the circumstances to take either the political line of the majority, or its proposed organizational substitute, very seriously.

Yet the youth, in the Detroit area at least, seem to take the organizational proposals seriously. They do not, in their majority, believe that it is intended as a weapon against a political minority. They are being taught, not through party discussions and documents but by the majority acting in a factional manner, that the internal need for tightening up derives from the fact that there has been an influx of primarily petty-bourgeois youth and that these organizational steps are the means of proletarianizing them.

If this is so, then we insist that this is a political problem, not an organizational one. Internal party discipline must flow from a political line in harmony and developing alongside the discipline of work in the mass movement, up to and including the discipline of punching a time card in on time.

Organizational short cuts and substitutes for a political line and understanding will compound the problem, not solve it. We have another recent and classic example of the fate of undertakings and even organizations which attempt this type of substitutism.

## Organizational Adventurism

One of the major items on the agenda of the last convention, and of the plenum which preceded it, was the question of the reunification of the world movement, in order to take advantage of the undoubtedly magnificent opportunities which "the given stage of the class struggle" afforded on an international scale.

We of the minority warned that it was necessary, prior to unification, to fully explore the areas of agreement and disagreement, while undertaking joint activity. We held that important, even basic differences remained, that the so-called majority was homogeneous neither on a national nor an international scale even though there appeared to be agreement on the two "big" questions, the acid test of Cuba, and the need for immediate reunification.

Within this majority in our own movement were elements like Weiss and his followers who have since by and large left the movement, or dropped into complete inactivity. (We have not heard of any expulsions of that group.) Swabeck and his people who have broken completely with the majority on the question of China; and sections like the Seattle branch which has split from the majority bloc on the basis of the American question.

On an international level, the ill-advised organizational adventure has led to disaster. The vast majority of the forces around the IS at the time of the last convention have split away in all directions. The big majority of the Ceylonese party has deserted to the nationalist petty-bourgeoisie; Pablo is uncertainly awaiting the next Algeria so that he and his group can once more offer their advice to the government, with or without portfolio. The Posadas group went its own way almost simultaneously with the commitment by the SWP to unity at any political cost.

We repeat: what was needed, and is still needed in the International movement and in the SWP is not splits, not expulsions, but fraternal discussion of political ideas which badly need clarification, along with joint activity in those areas where there is common agreement on the tasks. A way must be found to re-establish fraternal relations with the SLL and the other Trotskyist forces.

Stalin followed the course of expelling the opposition, and then seemingly adopting its line. If anything, this speeded up the process of degeneration of the Bolshevik Party. Examples of the futile nature of organizational substitutism abound. What is necessary is to learn from them, even to the extent of openly admitting political mistakes.

Difficult as it may still be in this period, what is above all necessary to teach the youth is to absorb in their bones a real and concrete confidence in

the revolutionary capacity of the American working class. Only this way will they take seriously the injunction to "spread out into all sectors of the mass movement." If this course is meant seriously, it must be taken as a task of re-education of the first magnitude. There are no organizational short-cuts. If it is meant seriously, then the majority must reconsider its previous expulsions. If it is meant seriously, then we of the minority will join in the task with all the energy and the talent which we may possess.

Comrades of the majority, leading comrades of the older generation: We appeal to you to reconsider your course before it is too late. Neither you nor we will be here forever. The great tasks, the heavy historic responsibilities of the SWP remain ahead. The political education of a whole layer of youth is in your hands. Be careful of the heritage you leave them.

July 22, 1965

ECONOMICS AND POLITICS

By L. Marcus

The political positions represented in the draft resolution, The Coming American Socialist Revolution, are the present stage of development of a political line first introduced by L. Marcus to leading SWP bodies in 1957-58. The starting point of that line was and remains that the 1957-58 recession represented a turning-point in post-war imperialist development, portending a probable general crisis for the middle or late 'sixties. In applying this economic analysis to social and political questions Marcus has followed the line of method presented by comrade Trotsky in several places, as in "The Curve of Capitalist Development" (FI, May, 1941).

Now -- in the middle 'sixties! -- with the beginning of a new U.S. recession evident in March, 1965, with the imperialist financial organs filled with the issue of an impending general crisis, the Marcus economic analysis has been fully confirmed by ensuing events. The Marcus positions on social and political perspectives have been confirmed in much the same way, virtually to the same extent,

What is actually proven is the effectiveness of Marxism as a science, Marxist method. Again, history has demonstrated that the active practice of Marxist science is the only means for comprehending the current reality, the exclusive basis for revolutionary political programs and activities.

Yet, in "Report and Recommendations on Economic Discussion" (SWP Internal Bulletin, Vol. 25, No. 5), we encounter the worst sort of revisionism, both respecting Marxist economics and the method by which Marxists expose the interconnection of economics and politics. It is absolutely clear, for example, that the authors and sponsors of the PC's "economic resolution" know absolutely nothing about Marx's conception of the general crisis of capitalism.

The political responsibility for this revisionism does not lie with the inexperienced young comrades on the "Economic Subcommittee." These young comrades might become very good Marxists, provided that they rid themselves of the ignorant method of the academic classroom. The political responsibility for this revisionism lies with the Political Committee. That Committee, apparently incompetent to say anything itself on urgent questions of the day, resorts to borrowing the "freshman exercise books" of youth still steeped in bourgeois economics as a substitute for Marxist analysis.

The issue is not confined to errors of fact and conclusion of inexperienced students. More important is the complete anti-Marxist political proposal:

". . . 3. That a literary discussion on economics be opened after the convention. Any party member would be entitled to submit contributions to the bulletins concerned with this particular discussion, provided, in the opinion

of the Secretariat, they are relevant and restricted to the economic issues under consideration.+ (emphasis added)

On such terms not a single "economic" writing of Karl Marx could be published!

Since this very evidence suffices to demonstrate that neither the Political Committee nor the Subcommittee includes dialecticians, it is necessary for us to address our attention to the kind of "facts" those empiricists might possibly comprehend. On such grounds, it is neither necessary nor feasible to explore here the general interpenetration of economics and politics. We can confine our remarks to matters of this immediate period of imperialist decline.

### How Politics Determine Economics and Vice Versa

It was, and remains, a central thesis of the conception. "The Epoch of Imperialist Decay," that capitalism can no longer survive excepting through increasing subsidies and regulations of the bourgeois state. These are the only means by which even the "impregnable" U.S. economy has forestalled the deepest depression years before this. One need only refer, for example, to the so-called "built-in stabilizers" -- in which our party's leadership apparently places so much confidence. The needs of imperialist finance thus determine all of the important policies of the bourgeois state, and the policies of that bourgeois state determine the course of imperialist economic development -- within the laws of capitalism.

In general, developments in the dynamic (economic) basis of society represent the new form of tasks submitted for solution in the social and political superstructure (Trotsky, op.cit.). In particular declines in the rate of profit, threatening international liquidity crises, etc., are the causes which prompt imperialists to war, to new attacks on the working class, etc. Such attacks on other nations (eg. Viet Nam) or on the working class (e.g. anti-labor Labour Government in Britain), are, of course, not ends in themselves. They are conscious attempts by the financiers--through their state apparatus--to find particular solutions to existing and threatened economic crises. These all take the general form of struggles to seize some new source of surplus value, to find new "markets" for expanded reproduction, either to solve an immediate crisis (fire-fighting stop-gaps) or to establish the material, social, political basis for a whole new period of imperialist prosperity in the "main centers" of industrial development.

Thus, to analyze the economic situation is to foresee the issues which determine the policies of the bourgeois state -- to determine the necessary combat lines and character of new stages of the class struggle. To attempt to project the economic future, it is necessary to consider the class struggle at every step, to show that the bourgeois state is compelled to follow a narrow choice of alternative policies which must accordingly produce this or that result in the economy. Therefore, a discussion of economics "restricted to economic issues" can only be empty claptrap.



## The War In Viet Nam

The present economic predicament of imperialism has gone into the domain of politics in a clear way in Viet Nam. When one considers the inflationary consequences of war economy, when one also considers that the U.S. is already facing an inflationary crisis of international liquidity, the progress toward a "super-Korea" in Southeast Asia cannot involve anything less than a life-and-death issue of survival of imperialism as a whole. It cannot be, in sum, a war which the U.S. imperialists will give up because of mere student "pressure."

The PC and Subcommittee write: "The major political task at the forthcoming convention is to mobilize our own forces for energetic intervention in the spreading anti-war movement. We can conduct this campaign and other party activities on the basis of our present estimate of the economic conjuncture." (Emphasis added.)

What "estimate"? Three paragraphs before, the PC and Subcommittee write: ". . . so much remains to be explored and understood in this complicated field that" the Subcommittee "cannot yet present conclusions which are solidly buttressed by adequate and accurate data." In short, the Political Committee has no estimate!

In the words of William McChesney Martin: "Could there be worse confusion?"

## Lessons of Permanent Revolution

The "Theory of Permanent Revolution" has two lessons for us. First, it plainly represents a particular theoretical accomplishment -- on which the Bolshevik revolution was based! Secondly, it exemplifies the way in which a revolutionary leadership (e.g. Trotsky) qualifies itself to lead a revolution: to enter the domain of the most intensive theoretical study and discussion, the only means by which a leadership can develop comprehension of its epoch and develop programs appropriate to the revolutionary tasks of that epoch. Trotsky's life as exemplified in his development of the "Theory of Permanent Revolution," Lenin studying Hegel in the library (while not selling Militants), is the road to competence to lead, the first prerequisite of leadership: to know what you are doing.

To propose to enter and lead a struggle on so serious and sharp a confrontation as the Viet Nam war, but without a conjunctural analysis, is to follow the route of those Bolsheviks such as Stalin, who, but for Lenin and Trotsky, would have let the October Revolution go by default. And many of those Bolsheviks were far superior in political quality to our present variously jaded and ingenu leadership.

If our leadership had not been politically burned-out, had remembered the lessons of October, Marcus' proven analysis of the current situation would have been made party property years ago. This point has special force considering that Marcus has not introduced anything new to Marxist practice. The

rich confirmation of the Marcus analysis is only a fresh confirmation of Marx's method. The fact that such a richly confirmed analysis should have been more or less unique to Marcus for so long simply demonstrates the failure of this leadership to develop any number of real Marxists from its ranks.

The potential human material to remedy this shortcoming exists, particularly, in my opinion, among some of the members of the Subcommittee. However, neither they nor any other promising youth will develop as effective Marxists unless their road to leading positions in our party is that prescribed by Trotsky: the first step to leadership is not the number of Militants sold (any police agent can meet that standard better than most revolutionaries), but an internal revolution.

The development of these youth in this way would amount to an 180-degree turn in party practices. Under present arrangements many of these talented youth are being systematically corrupted; in a few instances I can virtually graph the progress of their moral, political decay. Because of their misplaced faith in titular leaders, because of their petit-bourgeois tendency for sycophancy toward titular leaders, they are easily persuaded -- on grounds of "organizational loyalty" -- to commit unprincipled acts. As being becomes consciousness, their accumulated complicity in the political and organizational crimes of the leadership becomes their own complete moral degradation.

While some of the present leaders of the SWP might play an important, even courageous, secondary role in building a revolutionary movement in this country, in their present positions they represent, in aggregate, a counterrevolutionary force, a source of continuing corruption of young radicals drawn to our ranks, and a font of demoralization of the older cadre elements about them. The first step toward the American Socialist Revolution is to reconstitute our leadership at all costs; any politically principled tactic to accomplish this is not only correct but imperative.

Such a transformation of the leadership must be brought about by a return to the abandoned practice (1961-63 Conventions) of principled political majorities. Principled politics for us begins with the American Question, a revolutionary perspective for the U.S.A., itself based on a scientific analysis of the interpenetration of economics and politics in the current situation.

-- July 27, 1965

MEMO ON OUR USE OF THE TERM "STALINISM"

The time has come, I believe, to reexamine our use of the term "Stalinism" in light of today's changing conditions.

The term was coined and defined by Trotsky as part of his analysis of the degeneration and bureaucratization of the Russian Communist Party. In past periods we used it both as a political and scientific designation whose meaning was quite precise. Before World War II it meant the following:

1) Bureaucratic rule under the control of the arch-bureaucrat Stalin, who demanded absolute obedience to the bureaucratic edict.

2) No democratic discussion or decision by the ranks -- only discussion on how to carry out orders from above. Slander campaigns and ostracism against any who questioned, disagreed or even remained silent.

3) Police state control over all spheres of life. Harsh persecutions of any dissidence.

4) Strict Russian control over the national parties. Leaders and policies were changed by Moscow without any recourse by the parties affected.

5) One international line based on the requirements of the Russian bureaucracy, at the expense of other Communist Parties -- even to the point of their dissolution in some cases.

Since the end of the Second World War, beginning with the Tito-Stalin conflict and culminating in the Sino-Soviet dispute we have seen the progressive breakdown of monolithic Stalinism into different and often sharply conflicting tendencies, each maintaining many aspects of the Stalinist heritage but altering or dropping others.

There is no longer one Stalinist international line but two, or three if we include the Yugoslav policies in that category. Each national party has to choose among them or split into tendencies -- pro-Russian, pro-Chinese or independent. The motion is toward each national party making its own decisions on the basis of its narrow national interests. The original concept of "Socialism in one country" has now been converted into "separate paths to Socialism."

The content of the term "Stalinism" varies with each party. For example, the international line of the Chinese on relations with imperialism is to the left of the Russians, but the Russians have carried out a greater degree of de-Stalinization in their internal life. The Yugoslavs have the greater degree of internal democratic expression (though their one party rule from above, one candidate for each post, etc., are in the Stalinist tradition) while in international affairs they collaborate with imperialism more than does any other workers state.

The trend, clearly, is toward greater independence of the national parties and sharper conflict between the policies of the various Communist parties.

What happens to our original criteria for Stalinism under these circumstances? Can we say there are two or three Stalinist political lines -- two or three blocs with different lines and all Stalinist? How do we differentiate between them?

The Soviet Union can no longer exert its old power to enforce its will on other parties as it once did. As the crisis of Stalinism strikes deeper this hold will become still weaker, the independence of various smaller parties greater. Economic pressure, negotiations and deals will then replace the former arbitrary orders by the larger parties. Roumania's growing independence is a good case in point. It is a new phenomenon to see a smaller party declare its independence while neatly balancing between the Russian and Chinese giants.

Inside the national parties bureaucratic rule is still the norm, but even this is being gradually undermined. In the Soviet Union the bureaucracy is forced to grant minor concessions to opposing viewpoints and indications are that under pressure of the masses it will be driven to grant more. Dissident views are being expressed in many C.P.'s, varying from country to country, and the general trend is toward greater freedom of expression.

In the capitalist countries opposition views are mounting inside the C.P.'s resulting in some cases in splits, in others in different wings contending for leadership. The Italian C.P. has three wings, a right a center and a left and even Trotskyist views find expression inside the party. With the ability to maintain a tight bureaucratic grip broken, the Stalinist bureaucratic methods of control come closer to resembling those of the Social Democrats, the distinctive Stalinist characteristic being their adherence to one or the other of the blocs of C.P.'s.

Thus all the old criteria of Stalinism are undergoing change, and the term has lost its former precision. It becomes necessary to adapt our terminology to reflect these changes more accurately. However, I can think of no other term that is so graphic, has such full historical meaning, as "Stalinism." Perhaps the addition of a descriptive adjective would help us sharpen the meaning -- "Russian Stalinism," "Chinese Stalinism" "Yugoslav Stalinism" etc. When speaking of the carryovers from the past, "Stalinist heritage" or "Stalinist hangover" might be appropriate.

The most effective terminology will have to be worked out in practice. What is important is that our designations keep up with the changes as accurately as possible. As the interrelations between the workers states and national C.P.'s becomes more complex, and they will, the greater becomes the need to sharpen our terminology to distinguish between them.

It will be the function of the international discussion to assess the changes resulting from the growing crisis of Stalinism, explore its ramifications and consider appropriate forms of intervention. This memo is presented as a contribution to that discussion.

Robert Chester  
July 20, 1965

SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT  
(Some Comments on the Freedom Now Party)

By George Breitman

The experiences of the Freedom Now Party in Michigan in 1964, both positive and negative, provide many valuable lessons for black militants, SWP members and others. After the 1964 election, some of these lessons were discussed in The Militant (Nov. 23 and Dec. 21, 1964); I intend to discuss them further in the paper and elsewhere, and I hope others will do the same. But I hope they will not do it the way A. Phillips does in "The Negro Revolution, the American Revolution and the SWP," a collection of factionally-motivated distortions and confusions that cannot enlighten anybody about the history and problems of the FNP. What follows is not the kind of analysis I have undertaken and will undertake elsewhere, but a refutation of some of Phillips' misrepresentations for the benefit of members outside of Michigan who are not as well acquainted with the facts as the members here.

\* \* \* \*

According to Phillips, "The sum total of the contribution of our party...was to express doubt to the FNP people that they would be able to get sufficient signatures to get on the ballot." This incredible statement is a tipoff to the quality of Phillips' "analysis." Anybody who would say that will say anything. The truth, the last thing Phillips is concerned with, is that party and youth members in the FNP played active and responsible roles, and that the party and youth as organizations rendered valuable support to the FNP. This was understood and appreciated by most of the active FNP members, and publicly acknowledged by FNP leaders. If the FNP was able to make greater headway in Michigan than elsewhere, one reason (not the only one, of course) was the active, intelligent and responsible conduct of most party and youth members. So much for the "sum total" of our party's contribution in a situation where there was initially a good deal of suspicion against members of an "outside, white-dominated" political party.

To properly discuss and explain every item touched in hit-and-run fashion by Phillips would take too much space. But I will try, using this "doubts" business as an example, to show something of the complexity of the situation that Phillips distort

The first FNP meeting in Michigan was a public rally in mid-October, 1963; it was organized by the three or four active adherents the FNP then had. Three days before the rally, people who were to become key leaders of the FNP (including Rev. Cleage) insisted that a petition campaign (for 1964) must be launched at the rally. Along with this developed a tendency, which we thought could prove harmful, to hinge the whole fate of the FNP on its ability to get on the ballot in 1964. "If not, what's the use of talking about a new party?"

Our people questioned the wisdom of launching the petition campaign at the rally. At that time the FNP did not exist as an organization. Less than ten people had indicated a willingness to join. Even these had never met or chosen a leadership. The FNP did not yet have a program, a committee to run a petition campaign, a publication, a headquarters or any money.

Under these circumstances our people thought it best to broach the idea of a petition campaign at the rally, but not to launch it there; to sign up members at the rally, and then call a membership meeting where the members would elect a provisional leadership, have a discussion on the character of a petition campaign, take a vote on whether or not to petition, and organize a petition campaign if the sentiment was favorable. Knowing how difficult it is to build a party from scratch, we thought that things like getting on the ballot immediately were subordinate to the recruitment and education of a cadre and the development of a perspective and program.

But since the others felt very strongly that a petition campaign should be launched at the first rally, our people deferred to them and went to great effort to have petitions ready for the rally, where they were passed out in great numbers and never seen again. The real petition campaign did not begin until later.

This is the episode Phillips is referring to. When you know the facts, the whole point of it is different from what he makes it out to be. Our people were not inactive skeptics but responsible participants in a new and difficult experience.

\* \* \* \*

After the FNP was certified for the ballot in May, 1964, a bitter internal struggle broke out, paralyzing the organization for almost four months, and creating the danger that it might fall apart before a state convention met in September to nominate candidates. Describing this crisis in the Nov. 23



Militant, I attributed it to "inexperience, impatience, personality clashes and uncertainty over what kind of structure and program the party should have...if programmatic differences were the underlying cause of this particular struggle, they remained obscure and were never clearly expressed by anyone. Instead the dispute took the form of opposition versus support to the FNP leadership centered around Rev. Cleage."

I also explained how this situation had been contributed to by the way in which the party had been created and by the way program, perspectives, education, constitution, relations between members and leaders, recruiting, etc., had all been subordinated to the petition campaign during the first six months of the FNP's existence. Eventually the membership gave its support to the Cleage leadership and the two groups came together at the state convention for the election campaign that followed, with both sides voting for a platform that we considered too vague and general. But precious time had been lost, and this was one of the factors in the way in which the campaign was run and in the relatively low vote.

Phillips' contribution: "History will not ignore the fact that our movement and our press...fought against an indigenous group within the FNP which was groping (for what Phillips calls a correct class course)...It did this in favor of an undisturbed liaison with the Reverend Cleage." Later he says, "Instead of encouraging this need (for a class program), the SWP's line was to oppose the development of a program and a total social goal." History will ignore this so-called fact, because there's not a particle of truth in it.

Phillips again: "not only did we fail to recruit to the SWP, but we lost 3 precious and capable Negro comrades to boot. One of the comrades consciously left the party because she disagreed with what we were doing in the FNP and wanted to confront the group there with the necessity for a social and economic program, as well as the conception of a party dedicated to daily struggle, not only to yearly elections." Again, it is hard to find the grain of truth that is supposed to be concealed in most erroneous statements.

The facts are as follows: The policy decided on by SWP members was not to side with either group in the factional struggle mentioned above. Try as they did, they could not find any question of principle or program involved in the fight, which was damaging to the movement as a whole, and premature at best. Our people tried to reduce the bitterness inside the party and to turn it to its real and pressing internal and external tasks. They

therefore continued to work with members of both factions and never fought against any "indigenous group" (whatever that means) "in favor of an undisturbed liaison" with anybody. All this is well known not only in the Detroit SWP but in the FNP.

It is also untrue that we did not recruit. We not only recruited during that period, but made many friends for the SWP, who became supporters of DeBerry in the campaign. It is true that in the period between our 1963 convention and now the SWP lost two Negro members and the youth lost two. We also lost a number of white members. We also recruited a number of black and white members, so that at present we have more Negro comrades than at any time since the Cochranite split in 1953. Of the two Negro members we lost, the loss of only one had anything to do with the FNP -- the member described with such sympathetic tenderness, but complete inaccuracy, by Phillips.

This member came to Detroit from New York because she had been unable to function properly there. She had never belonged to any Negro organization in her life. She left our party for the following reason: She was one of the most active instigators of the factional fight, doing everything she could to deepen and embitter it, especially along personal lines. Her comrades took this up with her, and after discussion with them she agreed, at least verbally, that an internal fight was premature and should not be encouraged by our people. But in short order she began violating this policy and resumed her personal vendetta against the FNP leadership, thus bringing discredit on the SWP. She was then told that this could not continue; that if she wanted to continue her vendetta in opposition to SWP policy, she would not be able to do so as an SWP member; and that she had better abide by SWP policy or depart from its ranks. She at once submitted her resignation, and sent the branch a letter, a copy of which was sent to the National Office.

Her letter had absolutely nothing in it such as Phillips has invented. Insofar as it was political, it began by saying that the SWP "stands for and supports first, foremost and always integration," a policy with which of course she disagreed. Of the internal FNP situation she wrote, "To have adhered to the SWP discipline and abstained from it (the internal struggle) would have in effect meant abstention from the FNP as a whole." She added, "I have been on my way out of the party for some time now, although before I left New York I could not analyze the reason." The first act of this "precious and capable" person after leaving the SWP was to travel to Chicago to try to induce an SWP member to leave our party and join "the black underground."

A few words about Rev. Cleage: He is not a Marxist, of course. But he represents, even after the backward step he took in leaving the FNP, the most militant and radical wing of the Negro movement in Detroit. He spoke out against the government's policy at the height of the missile crisis over Cuba. He broke with the Democratic Party and helped form the FNP. He personally endorsed DeBerry's candidacy. He spoke out early against U.S. intervention in Vietnam. Cleage is someone whom Phillips is incapable of discussing objectively. It doesn't matter to Phillips that Cleage's policy is generally militant: Phillips feels much more at home with the secondary UAW Negro bureaucrats who are 100 per cent for the government's foreign policy and the Democratic Party -- because they are "working class," you see, and Cleage isn't. It is true that Cleage is one of those who "reject the concept that Black-White unity is the key to victory." Cleage believes (as Malcolm X did) that the first key is black unity. In our conception this is true too, and that is why we can work with Cleage in many fields without violation of any principle.

On "the demand of the Cleages for crossing a picket line which was attempting organization in an unorganized area": This is a reference to Cleage's sister-in-law, writing in the Cleage paper, Illustrated News. The AFL-CIO teachers union and the local branch of the NEA were engaged in a fight over bargaining rights with the Board of Education. She attacked both groups for ignoring the needs of Negro teachers and school segregation, proposed that Negro teachers draw up a list of demands on the teachers union before the representation election, and, presuming that such a list of demands would be ignored too, urged Negro teachers to vote for neither group in the election and to "cross their picket lines on the day of the strike." (There was no strike.) This was wrong, of course, although there was merit in her idea of Negro teachers putting pressure on the union for satisfaction of their demands before the election. Phillips wanted us to launch a big attack on the Cleages because of this. Instead, The Militant ran an article by Evelyn Sell presenting the correct policy on the election, while pointing out the weaknesses of the union in relation to the Negro teachers.

\* \* \* \*

We come next to the reasons for the low FNP vote. I attempted to present the political and organizational, internal and external reasons in my articles last year. Phillips disagrees. The reasons he gives in his document are not as clearly presented as they were in his remarks at the Detroit branch discussion July 17, 1965, so I will quote from the latter:

"The reason that they were demoralized, the reason for the low vote is...because it (the FNP) was not able to work out a socialist, if you please, a class, approach...The Negro masses said to the FNP, 'When you say blacks to power, this is not enough.' Only the blind and idiots can fail to see it, this is not enough. They are asking, they are begging, they are demanding in the Negro movement that a program that responds to their social and economic and political needs be worked out...What the Negro movement says today is that Freedom Now and blacks to power is not enough." (Transcribed from a tape recording.)

If this means anything, it means that the FNP got a low vote and its members got demoralized because the Negro masses felt the FNP was not radical enough, did not go far enough with a radical social and class program. The only thing that can be said for this analysis is that it is -- original.

The truth is different and simpler. The main reason that the Negro masses did not vote for the FNP in 1964 was that they did not yet want to break with the Democratic Party. The FNP could have been ten times as radical as it was, it could have had a good platform instead of a vague and general one, and the vote would not have been much different -- unfortunately -- because they were determined to elect the Democrats as an answer to the Goldwater white backlash. If this were not so, then a far larger number of Negroes would have voted for the SWP, which did have a class approach, a socialist program, etc.

The low FNP vote was the result of many factors, which I shall not repeat from The Militant, and not the result of just one factor, the weakness of program. The demoralization inside the FNP that followed the election also cannot be explained purely by the weakness of program. Properly viewed, four or five thousand votes for a new party operating against immense political and organizational obstacles was not an achievement to be ashamed of; those voters could serve as the base for strengthening the party and preparing for the future.

But many of the FNP leaders and members had unrealistic expectations about what could be done at the polls the first time -- a conception that our people had warned against. For them, a high vote the first time was a life-or-death matter (just as getting on the ballot right away had been). For them a high vote was the way to build the party -- members would flock in after it got a high vote, became the balance of power, etc. Our idea here too was different, stressing political and educational clarification, year-round recruiting and training of cadres, etc.

The problems of a new party are far more complex than Phillips makes them out to be. Those who undertake to build an independent black party had better understand in advance that the difficult problems they will face cannot be solved merely by advocating a better class approach than the FNP did, or by intoning the magic words "black-white unity."

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Finally a few words on the relation between "independence" and "program." Phillips separates the two, much too schematically, when he says the FNP foundered on the rock of "mistaking political action, however independent, for a program," and when he asserts "the slogan of independent black political action is too abstract and meaningless to receive any kind of response."

To us, "independence" and "program" are intimately and dialectically connected. While mere independence, by itself, is of course not the full answer to the needs of the Negroes, workers and students, it represents a tremendous step forward -- a first step which is indispensable, without which no progress is possible. Furthermore, while independence is not a full program, it is itself programmatic, a part of program, the first and indispensable part of program and the first and indispensable step toward full program.

Isn't that what we've been hammering away at for decades -- that independence is the greatest and most urgent need of the unions, the Negroes, all mass movements? Wouldn't the whole situation in the United States be radically transformed if the unions, Negroes and other mass movements would "merely" assert their independence of the government and the Democratic Party -- if they went "only" as far as the FNP did in 1964? Wouldn't we say that such an assertion of independence represented a very basic shift in their program, even if the rest of their program suffered various weaknesses? If the labor and other mass movements ran candidates of their own against those of the capitalist parties, wouldn't their mere running be a real part of a new program?

No, it is a misleading simplification to attribute the low FNP vote and the subsequent sharp decline in FNP membership to the idea that "the slogan of independent black political action is too abstract and meaningless to receive any kind of response." It would be truer to say (although this would be a simplification too) that the idea was so new and so bold that it shocked the mass of the Negroes; and that the FNP did not

have the time or the resources to convince large numbers of the need for independence, especially in the midst of the anti-Goldwater hurricane. The fault of the FNP leaders and members who withdrew after the election was not that they believed in independence, but that they did not believe in it enough -- that they lacked the long perspective and political patience, and were unable or unwilling to give their pioneer experiment the time for a full and fair test.

Detroit, Michigan  
July 26, 1965

## THE PHILIPS SCHOOL OF BOLSHEVISM

By Bob Himmel

To make a detailed criticism of A. Philips' peculiar ideas about Leninism would require more time, effort and space than they deserve. His contention that the party majority cannot "answer the minority in a political fashion," and uses organizational questions as a smokescreen to "divert and discourage attention from a political line which cannot be defended as such," shouldn't even merit comment -- except for the fact that many new comrades might not be aware of the facts.

We have been debating "political line" with Philips and other seemingly permanent minorities at least as far back as 1961 (with Philips a good bit longer.) From 1961 through 1963 more than 60 separate discussion bulletins were published by the party. All minority viewpoints properly took full advantage of these bulletins to express their ideas at great length. Two national conventions were held during this same period. Votes were taken on all disputed political questions. And the results indicate that the majority had no difficulty defending its positions before the party as a whole.

His second claim that the draft resolution is, at the same time, "an attempt to smuggle in a drastic change of political line," must be regarded either as an example of willful dishonesty or political schizophrenia -- on the part of Philips, not the majority.

Although members will find little if any educational value in Philips' documents, nevertheless some of his ideas, and his own personal record in the party, can in part provide a useful illustration of the present need for a resolution clarifying and reaffirming the organizational character of the party.

### DEMOCRACY AND CENTRALISM

"The degeneration of the October Revolution," says Philips, "made it a political imperative, which retains its urgent validity to this day, to explain to the world working class in general, and the American working class in particular, that the political structure of the Soviet Union, symmetrically parallel with fascism, was the very opposite of socialism. We established as our task to explain that the crimes against the working class committed in the name of democratic centralism, of leninism, were a mockery of its genuine class meaning...."



"Because of all parties, only for us does the revolution, and the society which follows represent the greatest democratic surge in the history of mankind; because it is an explosion from below by the masses led by the industrial proletariat; because its chief weapons are understanding and conviction; therefore we, as a matter of principle, must lay our emphasis on the democratic aspect of centralism." What a confused mess!

It is obvious to any revolutionary doing political work in the United States that "our task" is not to explain to "the American working class in particular, that the political structure of the Soviet Union...(etc.) was the very opposite of socialism." Great God! Is this what Philips has been doing while pursuing his "proletarian orientation" all these years?

Our task, if this is unclear to anyone, is to build an organization capable of leading the American workers in a successful struggle against the capitalist class and its entire state apparatus. We gather and train the forces for this task by tireless propaganda work for socialism and active participation in mass movements against all aspects of capitalism. In the course of doing these things we also explain and educate around important related political questions like "the degeneration of the October Revolution."

But to elevate this "task" to the priority Philips accords it would put us on a par with the multitude of social democratic grouplets that base their existence on "explaining" how the Soviet Union is the "very opposite of socialism." This field is already overcrowded. We want none of it.

We would also point out that the American revolution will require a "chief weapon" far beyond "understanding and conviction." It seems strange to have to inform Philips that "understanding and conviction" are utterly impotent against an entrenched capitalist class in a modern industrial country like the United States without a combat party based on the model of Lenin's Bolsheviks. (Philips has apparently forgotten what he learned in the Healy school and has reverted to his earlier training under the tutelage of Johnson.)

The organizational principles of a Leninist combat party commonly go under the name of Democratic Centralism. These principles, representing a unity of opposites, were not sucked out of Lenin's thumb. They constitute the theoretical acquisition of rich experience combined with profound Marxist understanding. And like other parts of Marxist theory, Lenin's

contributions in this area have been further developed, tested and incorporated into the traditions of the Socialist Workers Party.

In applying any conception containing contradictory elements, the concrete forms undergo changes in differing situations. The specific relationship between democracy and centralism, the amount of emphasis given each at a particular time, varies with the internal and external needs of the party in a given period. It is utter nonsense to claim, immutably, that "we, as a matter of principle, must lay our emphasis on the democratic aspect of centralism" (my emphasis).

"To be sure," Philips concedes, "there are periods in which temporary adjustments on the side of centralism have to be made." When? First in "periods in which the state, bourgeois, fascist, or as the case may be, stalinist, threatens the physical elimination of the party cadres by murder, imprisonment, or any combination of the two." Second, "in the directly military phase of the insurrection, of the struggle for power."

Since Philips sagely recognizes that neither of these conditions prevail at the present -- why the need for a resolution on the organizational character of the party? What possible need could there be for "knitting together the party" when we face neither fascism nor military insurrection? Obviously it must be a trick to place a road block in the path of Philips and others just as they are about to overwhelm the party by arguments the majority can't answer "in a political fashion."

#### WHY THE RESOLUTION?

As compelling as this logic is, there is at least one other variant that might be considered; one additional condition that would explain the need for such a resolution at this time.

Our party has survived probably the most protracted period of reaction any revolutionary organization has ever had to face. We are now beginning to emerge from this virtually complete isolation with a major section of our basic cadre still intact, still full of revolutionary optimism, responsive to new developments and opportunities and capable of attracting the best of the newly radicalized youth to our banner.

But the past period has not been without its costs. Faced by ever dwindling numbers, the party tried to adjust up and down the line to minimize our losses. Demands on members became nominal at best (there wasn't all that much opportunity for fruitful activity anyway). People were carried on the

books for months on end who didn't contribute financially to the party, didn't attend meetings, didn't pay dues, didn't in any way act like members, in the hope of slowing down the attrition, preventing demoralization and "waiting out" the lean years. Also the activists of the previous period got a bit older, slowed down physically and in other ways too. This didn't help matters either. The normal succession of generations was disrupted by the falling off of recruitment, and the two generations between the present party leadership and the youth now coming to the movement are virtually unrepresented in our ranks.

As though this weren't enough, the party's isolation turned it inward. We became a haven for windbags who felt no obligation to the revolutionary party except to offer advice in a continuous barrage of documents, proclamations and manifestos. Activity? No, they haven't the time for that. But they can sure talk, and they can sure write -- especially wordy material for internal consumption. Those comrades who remember the Fifties might find a striking parallel with the "Dog Days of the Left Opposition," so graphically described by Cannon.

Robertson and Wohlforth merely marked the end of this period and the transition to a different period -- one marked by internal growth and the expansion of external opportunities. Unfortunately their poor schooling rendered them incapable of making that transition.

What has characterized the past stage of party development was not so much the emphasis we placed on democracy. This is not changing. Rather, it was the de-emphasis of centralism for the reasons just cited. This imbalance is something we can no longer afford. And this, in our opinion, is the reason for the resolution on the organizational character of the party. To put an end to uncontrolled windbagism, to help reorient those of the older cadres who still suffer from the inertia of the past period, to provide a framework in which young comrades coming to our movement can absorb our best traditions of commitment, loyalty and discipline.

There is nothing in the National Committee's draft resolution that prevents, or in any way inhibits, the right of minority points of view from being fully presented and argued before the party. Let nobody be deceived by this spurious accusation!

## WHAT PHILIPS IS REALLY TALKING ABOUT

Philips uses his own experience with the Detroit Branch as an illustration of the "contemplated new 'steps'" implied by the resolution. Unfortunately his regard for factual truth is about on a par with his political judgment.

"Recently," he explains, "Philips, a member of the minority not yet expelled...was brought up on charges, invited to leave the party because of 'fundamental differences with the program and principles,' censured, and threatened with future expulsion after formal convention adoption of the new course. The circumstances immediately surrounding this action was his request that he be relieved of participation in a Sub Drive for the paper in the period immediately prior to the pre-convention discussion, because he would be engaged in helping to draft resolutions. The additional reason for the request was because he was involved in an election campaign in his union. The request was turned down, in part because the comrades did not believe that work in the union constituted 'real party work.'"

He continues. "Since nowhere in the history of the party has any member of a minority received similar treatment, and since nowhere in the party today has a member of the majority faction been subjected to these 'standards' for membership, it would appear that the steps contemplated by the majority involve dual standards of membership, one for the majority, another for an active political minority."

Now this story of Philips' unfair persecution would be truly touching -- if it contained one iota of truth. The real story, however, is quite different.

For more than two years Philips has piled up a record of consistent non-participation in all party-building activities, sub drives, election campaigns, etc. During the same period the Detroit Branch, largely resulting from an influx of active young people and greater opportunities, consciously attempted to raise the level of branch participation and responsibility. A number of members (not minority supporters) who couldn't meet the new demands were transferred to sympathizer status, generally by complete agreement with the comrades involved.

Philips was told repeatedly, both in private and before the branch, that we expected better participation from him in party activities. Through 1963 and 1964 we took no action against Philips, although there were plenty of opportunities to do so. This was a conscious decision by the branch leadership. In 1963, because we were in a pre-convention period and didn't want to confuse the political questions by introducing secondary issues. In 1964, because Philips' apparent failure

to follow the road of Robertson and Wohlforth gave us some hope that he might be re-evaluating his past course.

At the end of 1964 Philips was again warned before the entire branch that his extended inactivity could no longer be tolerated. (See point #9, appendix #1, Statement of charges against A. Philips) In February, 1965 Philips made his request "that he be relieved of participation in a Sub Drive...." This request was turned down, both by the executive committee and the branch as a whole. Philips neglects to mention several facts in connection with this action however.

First, the motivation for the refusal -- his previous unexcused inactivity. Second, that the branch leadership was fully prepared to make allowance for Philips' other obligations during the sub campaign and expected less from him than from others. Third, that Philips stated publicly before the branch that he would abide by the ruling after the proposal was brought to a vote.

His claim that the request for an excuse from the sub drive was "in part because the comrades did not believe that work in the union constituted 'real party work'" is phony to the core. We don't, it is true, consider his work in the union as real party work. For a fuller treatment on this question read Tom Kerry's article "What Makes Philips Run?" (Discussion Bulletin, Vol. 24, No. 23, June, 1963). Nothing about Philips "union work" has changed since then except for the worse. It is a calculated slander for Philips to suggest that we believe activity in the trade unions conducted in accord with the line of the party is not real party work.

Despite his assurances to the branch, Philips did not attend a single one of the nine branch mobilizations during the Spring, 1965 sub campaign. Neither did he make any effort to sell subs in his shop, where he presumably is very influential because of his "union work."

At the end of the campaign the branch leadership felt it had no alternative but to call Philips before the executive committee and file formal charges. Was he expelled? No. He was merely censured and warned again to change his course. In regard to his assertions that he was "invited to leave the party ...and threatened with expulsion after formal convention adoption of the new course," that "dual standards of membership" are proposed, etc. -- let the record speak for itself. (See appendix #2, extract from minutes, Detroit executive committee, June 22, 1965, and appendix #3, motion of Detroit executive committee, adopted by Detroit branch, June 27, 1965.)

It has become perfectly clear what Philips really means when he talks about the party "as a matter of principle" placing "our emphasis on the democratic aspect of centralism." He means the right of someone to belong to the party, while exempting himself from all party-building work, carrying out a line in the unions diametrically opposed to that of the party, and pursuing a constant year-in and year-out factional attack on virtually every position the party holds. This kind of "democracy" we can do without.

What apparently never occurs to Philips, with all his stated apprehensions about future action against him, is how easy it would be to completely disarm his opponents of the majority. If he would only be a disciplined member, participate loyally in branch activity, work under the direction of the party and in line with party policy -- all the while holding on to his political differences and presenting them during pre-convention periods -- how utterly helpless we would be! We have suggested this course to him. If he chooses not to take it, that's up to him.

#### IS THE RESOLUTION AIMED AGAINST THE YOUTH?

Philips claims the youth, "in the Detroit area at least," are taught that "these organizational steps are the means of proletarianizing them." The implication that youth are being taught that the resolution is needed because of the "influx of primarily petty bourgeois youth" is typical of Philips' distortions of reality.

The youth of Detroit are taught the need to build a party in the tradition of Lenin. They learn, from Lenin, Cannon and others who have made significant contributions, that such a party consists of a disciplined, centralized cadre of professional revolutionists, steeped in revolutionary theory and principles, and whose lives are completely dedicated to revolutionary activity.

In his pioneer work, "What Is To Be Done," Lenin directed his attention to many of the problems encountered in transforming the available human material, both from working class and petty bourgeois backgrounds, into hardened, trained professional revolutionists. He made no concession whatever to the notion of any automatic virtues being bestowed on someone simply because he happened to be a worker. He stressed again and again in his polemics against the Economists the limiting factor of "pure and simple" trade union consciousness which means "the ideological subordination of the workers to the bourgeoisie." He underlined the "ideal" for the worker-revolutionary, not a "trade union secretary but a tribune of the

people" (emphasis in the original).

At the same time Lenin introduced the necessity of instilling concepts of "factory discipline" among the intellectuals coming to the movement, whose whole mode of existence encourages casual dabbling and individualistic personal vanity. The category of professional revolutionist was, for Lenin, a synthesis that transcended and obliterated any previous class identifications.

But it is the very opposite of the truth to suggest today that there is any major problem with the youth joining the Socialist Workers Party. Quite the contrary. By Philips' own admission, the youth not only take the resolution "seriously," but in fact greet it with a great deal of enthusiasm.

Those young people who have joined our movement in the recent period, join it because they have been led to expect that the SWP is a serious Leninist party and because they have made a genuine commitment to the revolutionary struggle. They join, moreover, not in a period like the Thirties, when the relative respectability of radicalism brought scores of petty bourgeois dilettantes to our party, who fled at the first sign of adverse social pressure. Our youth today come to us despite the present social pressure, in a direct struggle against it. And, we should add, when they come into the party they expect to find that we practice what we preach.

In point of fact, it is the youth who have been pushing hardest for the restoration of Leninist norms in the SWP. As far back as 1963, Tom Kerry, speaking at the December, 1963 plenum of the national committee, pointed out that criticism of the present state of affairs in the party "is voiced largely by the youth. The youth resent the fact that they're being called upon to carry a double burden...the same comrades are called upon to assume the major burden in carrying out the activity of both youth and party tasks. That's too much to ask." (Internal Information Bulletin, April, 1964 00 II) We heartily concur.

The best contrast between the kind of party desired by Philips and other professional "democrats" and the kind conceived of by the overwhelming majority of the SWP, especially its youth, is presented by Lenin in his often quoted footnote on the Second Congress of the Russian Party contained in "One Step Forward, Two Steps Back."

"I cannot help recalling," Lenin says, "a conversation I happened to have at the Congress with one of the Center delegates. 'How oppressive the atmosphere is at our Congress,' he



complained. 'This bitter fighting, this agitation one against the other, this biting controversy, this uncomradely attitude.' 'What a splendid thing our Congress is,' I replied, 'A free and open struggle. Opinions have been stated. The shades have been revealed. The groups have taken shape. Hands have been raised. A decision has been taken. A stage has been passed. Forward! That's the stuff for me. That's life. That's not like the tedious word chopping of your intellectuals, which stops not because the question has been settled, but because they are too tired to talk any more.' The comrade of the Center stared at me in perplexity and shrugged his shoulders. We were talking two different languages."

August 1, 1965

(Appendices to "The Philips School of Bolshevism)

APPENDIX I

Statement of Charges Against A. Philips

June 18, 1965

Dear Comrade Philips:

You are hereby notified that charges have been brought against you for violation of Article III, Section 1 of the SWP Constitution. This section requires that a member "accepts the program of the Party and agrees to submit to its discipline and engages actively in its work . . ."

Article VIII, Section 3 of the Constitution stipulates that: "Charges against any member shall be made in writing and the accused member shall be furnished with a copy in advance of the trial. Charges shall be filed and heard in the branch to which the member belongs, or in a higher body which may decide to act directly in the case. Charges filed before the Branch shall be considered by the Branch Executive Committee (or a subcommittee elected by it) at a meeting to which the accused member is summoned. The Branch Executive Committee shall submit a recommendation to be acted upon by the membership of the branch. . . ."

In accordance with the above section, a meeting of the Branch Executive Committee has been scheduled for 8:00 P.M., Tuesday, June 22, 1965, to consider the charges. The basis for the charges are as follows:

1. On February 18, 1965, the Branch Executive Committee held a discussion, with you present, regarding your consistent unwillingness to participate in branch activity over the previous two year period. It was made clear to you that the Executive Committee was of the opinion that this inactivity was motivated by your political differences with the majority of the party and could not be tolerated in the future.

2. A request by you that you "be excused from branch assignments for the next period because of time problems and responsibility in pre-convention discussion" was rejected by the Executive Committee in light of your past record.

3. Your appeal of the Executive Committee action was heard by the Detroit Branch at its meeting of February 21, 1965. The branch voted to uphold the position of the Executive Committee and you were specifically told that you were expected to participate in the Subscription Campaign scheduled from March through June, 1965. Note was taken of your "special circumstances" and some allowance was to be made for these. After the vote you made a statement pledging to abide by the decision of the branch despite your disagreement with it.

4. Despite your statement, you did not participate in a

(Appendices . . . 2.)

single one of the nine branch mobilizations held during the campaign. Neither did you sell a single subscription in your shop or anywhere else during the campaign. Nor did you even go through the formality of notifying the Campaign Director or otherwise seek to explain or excuse your absences.

5. Previous to the branch motion of February 21, 1965, your inactivity and willful refusal to participate in branch campaigns had been called to your attention on several occasions.

6. As late as December, 1962, you were one of the national winners in a competition for new readers. Prior to that time you were always one of the leading branch activists in subscription campaigns, petition campaigns and other party building work.

7. During the years 1963 and 1964, however, the branch undertook two major subscription campaigns (Sept.-Nov., 1963, and June-Aug., 1964), two renewal campaigns (Jan.-May, 1963, and Jan.-March, 1964), a petition campaign to put the SWP on the 1964 state ballot (June-Aug., 1963) and an election campaign from May through early November, 1964. In all of these activities your participation was zero. To this must now be added a renewal campaign (Jan.-Feb., 1965) and the previously mentioned subscription campaign of March through June, 1965.

8. Nor can your record in other respects be ignored either--your frequent unexcused and unexplained absences from branch meetings and educationals (except during pre-convention periods), your almost total lack of support to the forum, your persistent unwillingness to engage in proper consultation about your trade union activities, your often belligerent and uncomradely manner toward other members.

9. In its report on branch perspectives, voted for by the branch on November 29, 1964, the Executive Committee took note "of the general improvement in the level of activity, largely as a result of conscious efforts by the branch to tighten up on membership standards. We propose that this process be continued. In some cases we have tended to make exceptions, tolerating inactivity where this question might become confused with discussion of political differences. We want to make it clear that we consider inactivity over a substantial period without sufficient cause incompatible with membership in the SWP. We recommend to the incoming Executive Committee that they undertake an immediate review of branch participation and take appropriate action where indicated..."

10. During the discussion of the Executive Committee report it was spelled out, in response to a direct question from you, that we regarded you as the primary offender in this regard. We told you that the Executive Committee had made a conscious decision earlier in the year to take no action against you because you had deep political differences with the party and we wanted to debate these questions without giving you an opportunity to confuse the political discussion

(Appendices . . . 3.)

with complaints about organizational persecution because of your ideas. We also told you that if such considerations had any validity in the past, they would not have in the future.

11. It seems clear from the record of the past two and a half years that you are unwilling to carry out the minimum obligations of membership, despite repeated warnings and despite assurances by you that you would act in accord with branch decisions. Under the circumstances there is no alternative but to consider the question of disciplinary action.

If it is not possible for you to appear before the Executive Committee at the time scheduled, let the organizer know what times are more convenient and we can either reschedule the meeting or designate a subcommittee if a mutually convenient time cannot be worked out with the entire committee.

Comradely,  
/S/ Bob Himmel

copies: Branch E.C.  
N.C. members  
National office

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## APPENDIX 2

### Extract From Detroit E. C. Minutes, June 22, 1965

(Regarding Philips' claim that he was "invited to leave the party . . ." and subjected to standards not applied to the majority.)

Bob H.-- "Until now if a comrade did not want to be an active member we talked it over and through mutual agreement transferred such a comrade to sympathizer status. We have spoken to Comrade Philips about his inactivity. He indicated that he wanted to remain in the party but, at the same time, refused to be active.

"It is hard to understand why someone who is in disagreement with just about everything the party does, pursues a course in the unions with which the party disagrees, and refuses to be active in party work, wants to remain in the party. It seems to me that such a person would be better off outside the party. He wouldn't have to be responsible for our policies and we wouldn't have to consider disciplinary action because we wouldn't be responsible for him.

"If Comrade Philips wants to stay in the party, we have the right to set standards and apply them impartially. I doubt if any case can be made by Comrade Philips for the claim that demands have been made of him that have not been made on members of the majority. In 1963 we dropped seven members for inactivity. We specifically chose not to take action against Philips' inactivity only because of his minority views. This is a matter of record. If anything, we have discriminated in his favor."

APPENDIX 3

Motion of Detroit Executive Committee Adopted by Detroit  
Branch on June 27, 1965

Motion: The Executive Committee finds A.P.'s reply unsatisfactory and upholds the charges against him. While we believe it is our right to take more severe action and, in general, maintain the right to exclude from the party members who refuse to engage in party activity, we take note of the following special circumstances in this case:

1. The forthcoming national convention of the party will fully discuss and act on the question of the organizational character of the party.

2. A. P. is a member of a minority tendency and it is important to avoid any misunderstanding, since this is a pre-convention period, that could give the mistaken impression that action against him is the result of his political views.

We therefore recommend a motion of censure be passed by the branch. We also state that if Comrade Philips continues to refuse participation in general branch activity it is our intention to take further action in the future.

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