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CONTENTS

ON PARTY BUILDING by Dick Garza, Lower Manhattan Branch, New York Local	2
CRITICAL REMARKS ON "FOR A PROLETARIAN ORIENTATION" DOCUMENT AND SOME REAL TRADE UNION OPPORTUNITIES by Rachel Towne, Upper West Side Branch, New York local	3
ON BEING AND CONSCIOUSNESS by Jon Britton Brooklyn Branch, New York Local	4
SOME COMMENTS ON THE PROLETARIAN ORIENTATION DOCUMENT by Nat London, Lower Manhattan Branch, New York Local	6
THE FEMINIST MOVEMENT AND THE SHORTER WORK WEEK by Mary F. Walter, Denver Branch	7
PARTY BUILDING AND TRADE UNION WORK by Milton Alvin, Los Angeles Branch	8
COMBINED REVOLUTION AND THE NEED FOR A WOMEN'S PARTY by Marc Bender, Philadelphia Branch	13
THE FALSIFICATION OF MANDEL'S "NEO-CAPITALISM" BY THE AUTHORS OF "FOR A PROLETARIAN ORIENTATION" by Gary Sommer, Oakland-Berkeley Branch	15
TWO STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL by Fred Feldman, Oakland-Berkeley Branch	16
PRODUCTIVE AND UNPRODUCTIVE LABOR—ANSWER TO AN "ECONOMIC THEORY" by Stephanie Coontz, Lower Manhattan Branch, New York Local	18
WHAT IS THE BASIS OF THE PROLETARIAN ORIENTATION TENDENCY? by Nelson Blackstock, Oakland-Berkeley Branch	21

ON PARTY BUILDING
By Dick Garza, Lower Manhattan Branch, New York Local

The question I would like to address myself to is the building of the revolutionary party. That's what all the quotes in the entire "For A Proletarian Orientation" document are driving at, and that is a very serious question.

First we should understand what role a resolution plays. A resolution is not a document forever. It tries to guide the party for a specific period of time, based on the circumstances and how we understand what is going on. The comrades in the Proletarian Orientation grouping grant the party leadership that we still have a correct program; they say we just don't know how to apply it. And they go back as far as 1957 to point out how wrong we have been. They should have gone back to 1928 and 1929. In the voluminous reading these comrades have done—which is all to the good—they leave out some very important points about how the party was formed.

When our party was formed we did not have an orientation to the trade union movement. In a book which I recommend, *The History of American Trotskyism*, Lecture 5, Comrade Cannon points out that the fate of every political group, whether it is to live and grow, or degenerate and die, is decided by the way in which it answers two decisive questions. Aside from the question of program which the comrades in the Proletarian Orientation tendency eventually feel we're alright on, Cannon discusses another point. He says, "On the other hand, if the group misunderstands the tasks set for it by the conditions of the day, if it does not know how to answer the most important of all questions in politics—that is, the question of what to do next—then the group, no matter what its merits may otherwise be, can wear itself out in misdirected efforts and futile activities and come to grief."

We try to make clear in the NC Draft Political Resolution that the Socialist Workers Party *is not yet a party*. We have said that time and time again. We are about ten times bigger than the pioneer Trotskyists that formed the movement in 1928. They had about a hundred; we don't have a thousand. That is not a party, not to our way of thinking. That's why most of our tasks are still propaganda tasks. We're very careful to weigh the actions we enter into, because we recognize the slimness of our resources and the few members that we have. Then, *despite* that, we pull off real miracles.

The question of how to approach the mass movement

is not new to our movement. It comes up time and time again. Cannon discusses Weisbord, who came to the early Communist League of America with the revelation that Trotskyists must not be a propaganda circle, but must go directly into mass work. Of course, Weisbord had to apply that policy to the twenty-five or thirty Trotskyists who existed in New York at that time. He was impatient to jump into mass work over the head of the Communist Party. Our tactic at that time was *not* to go directly to the mass movement. There was something else we had to do first. And that was to go to the *radicalized* workers, to the *leadership*, to the *vanguard*, of the working class. That was the task we set for ourselves in 1928, because we understood we could not jump over the heads of these advanced workers.

Now what is the situation today? For this small propaganda group that we're trying to build into the party that can lead the fight to abolish American capitalism, our problem is still to win that vanguard. That's our one and only job. That vanguard is not only carrying a book in a CIO or AF of L union. That vanguard is also engaged in all the struggles that are going on today. Consequently, we have set forward as the task of the party for this coming period to continue to work to build a mass party by intervening in those struggles.

There are a couple of other things I would like to take up in this brief commentary on the Proletarian Orientation document. The Proletarian Orientation tendency is worried that students feel all powerful. Their experience in this must be very old. Anyone that has been on the campuses after the May events has had to face the reality that most of the students that participated in those events, *recognized* that they could not overthrow the system. The students do recognize that they don't have that power. And that has been a problem, because some of them have become demoralized. Our problem is not that the students on the campuses have an over-exaggerated idea of what their social power is. Our problem is to point out to them that they do have a lot of power, and that they have to organize to use it. In my opinion, our job on the campuses is yet to really begin. When we have fractions of twenty-five, thirty, forty, and fifty on different campuses, *then* I will say, well, we've done a pretty good job there. But we're far from it now.

July 6, 1971

CRITICAL REMARKS ON "FOR A PROLETARIAN ORIENTATION"
DOCUMENT AND SOME REAL TRADE UNION OPPORTUNITIES
by Rachel Towne, Upper West Side Branch, New York Local

My impression of the *For a Proletarian Orientation* document is that, if we logically followed it, the party would be weakened, or even reduced to a point of practical non-existence, to such a point that when there is a radicalization of workers as workers, the party would not be in a position to provide the necessary leadership. Because of this, I couldn't possibly support such a document.

What Phil Passen said in the Upper West Side branch debate was in basic contradiction to what he had co-authored in the document. I don't see how he can project seriously what he said in the debate with what he has on paper. People who say that they agree with "various aspects" of the *For a Proletarian Orientation* document and are going to support it are making a fundamental error. The *F.P.O.* document is diametrically counterposed to the N. C. political resolution and you'd have to either be for it, and what it says on paper, in black-and-white, because that's what their ideas are, or you have to vote against it.

Another deficiency, and one of the major deficiencies of the *F.P.O.* document is that it doesn't deal with the trade union movement as it is today, although it advocates the party begin massive entry into the trade unions. The *F.P.O.* document deals with the trade union movement as they feel it existed in the 1930s. But that was over 30 years ago, and in the meantime, a great deal has happened in the country, including in the composition of the working class and the composition of the American people. Any strategy for dealing with the labor movement as well as the working class has to be based on reality. It has to be based on what's actually going on in the labor movement and among working people today. For instance, the *F.P.O.* document doesn't deal at all with the whole concept of public workers, with the tremendous organization and the tremendous movement that has taken place in the last ten years among public employees. This is where you find most of the union organization in this period, this is where you find most of the strikes. These things indicate tremendous movement among this sector of the population.

Public employees are in very high percentage Third World, a very high percentage women workers and a high percentage semi-skilled and unskilled, blue-collar workers. But this is not a section of the labor movement that the *F.P.O.* document and its supporters feel has political or economic weight. I think the facts do not back that up. Public employees are a very large and growing sector of the work force. This is a long-term national trend that is backed up by numerous studies as well as statistics from the Labor Department.

The stereotype of the typical employee as a "white collar clerk" who is basically a paper pusher is not accurate. Public employees now include transit workers, postal workers, sanitation workers, firemen and numerous other occupations that provide vital services. Their tremendous political weight can be seen in the recent strikes by transit workers, postal workers and so on in which major disruption in the functioning of the country or city have occurred. The recent strike by a few thousand city workers in New York tied up the city for two days. Almost all traffic in and out was halted.

Another important aspect of public unions is that they are centered in urban areas. I think we are all aware of the tremendous urban crisis in all cities in the country that is generated in large part by the war in Vietnam. And I think that this crisis plus the growing understanding that it is caused largely by the war, is causing an acceleration of developing consciousness among working people today. I think that we all agree that most working people are opposed to the war and that more of them are coming into the organized antiwar movement. We saw this on April 24th. There were not only more union members there than at any previous demonstration to date, but there were more working people who did not come with their unions as well as unorganized workers. I know from the N. Y. area, NYPAC estimates from figures on transportation that there were approximately ten thousand union members who came as part of union contingents. There were also thousands and thousands more who came as individuals.

There are opportunities for reaching union members and working people today that have not existed in the recent period, but I don't see how *For a Proletarian Orientation* provides any real suggestions on reaching them. I think that one of the best ways we can reach working people today is on the question of the war. We should think in terms of helping establish viable Trade Union task forces around the Peace Action Coalitions around the country. Within the party we should think in terms of having work or trade union fractions or trade union sub-committees of the antiwar fractions in the branches that would deal with antiwar work in the unions and job situations. Comrades who are in a position to participate in this work in terms of the needs of the branch and the opportunities on their jobs should be encouraged to do so. They should work closely with the branch antiwar director as well as the branch leadership. This work should be coordinated with the trade union task forces.

July 16, 1971

ON BEING AND CONSCIOUSNESS
by Jon Britton, Brooklyn Branch, New York Local

The authors of *For a Proletarian Orientation* advance two basically different motivations as to why the SWP has to make a major turn toward trade-union work at this time and toward sending a large section of our membership into the factories.

One of these motivations takes as its starting point the orthodox Marxist conception that the industrial workers will be the decisive force in overturning capitalist rule, and therefore we must have the perspective of building a party that is proletarian in composition. This we all agree on.

Where differences have developed is around the question of how the SWP can work toward that goal through its activities and interventions at the present conjuncture. The answer to that question can only be obtained by making a concrete analysis of the present political conjuncture, of the current radicalization as compared to past radicalizations, of the mass anticapitalist struggles as they are developing *in reality*. The theoretical and methodological acquisitions of our movement from the past and the key lessons of practical experience in the class struggle, past and present, must also be applied to such an analysis. The party leadership has made this analysis and the results are contained in the NC draft political resolution.

The authors of *For a Proletarian Orientation* approach this question on a quite different basis. In place of a concrete analysis of the radicalization, they give us abstract formulas interspersed with long quotations torn out of historical context. Their document, which purports to demonstrate the necessity of the party making a major turn toward the union movement, lacks an analysis of the trade-union movement as it exists today, an assessment of the party's actual work in the union in the past period, or even an orientation to guide the party's intervention in that arena. Their new contribution, *The Meaning of a Proletarian Orientation*, is equally lacking in this regard.

From the standpoint of providing some idea of what real opportunities exist for the party in the union movement, these documents have little to offer. It would appear that Gregorich *et al* view such "practical" considerations as distinctly secondary if not irrelevant to their "proletarian orientation."

For a Proletarian Orientation contains another motivation in support of a turn to the factories, however, which the authors appear to take more seriously. The party must take it more seriously too, because it is based on a fundamentally wrong conception of how class consciousness develops and how a propaganda group aspiring to become a revolutionary party proletarianizes its membership.

On page 6 of *For a Proletarian Orientation*, the authors state that "for Marxists it is the *role* of a particular stratum plays in production that determines that stratum's class outlook." (Emphasis added.) This statement is highly simplistic at best. Actually, there is no direct, cause-and-effect relation between "role in production" and "class outlook." Furthermore the *ideological content* of a proletarian class outlook originated historically in social layers other than the working class.

The authors attempt to deduce their simplistic conception of the determinants of class consciousness from the ele-

mentary materialist proposition that being determines consciousness. To this end, they quote Marx's famous statement from the *Critique of Political Economy*: "The mode of production in material life determines the general character of the social, political and spiritual processes of life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence but, on the contrary, their social existence that determines their consciousness." (*FPO*, p. 3)

Gregorich *et al* then state the following: "In other words, the social being of a person determines his class consciousness. His consciousness, in turn, determines his actions. The class composition of the vanguard party must be a working-class composition not only because the working class must free itself but also because the composition of the party, in the long run, influences the party's program." (*FPO*, p. 3)

Since, as we have seen, Gregorich *et al* believe that "social being" is essentially identical with "role . . . in production," it follows that the consciousness of an individual member of the revolutionary party is largely determined by his or her role in production. Applying this false conception to the Socialist Workers Party, the authors conclude: "The party today is predominantly petty bourgeois in composition and mentality. It is composed in its majority of comrades recruited from the campus arena." (Emphasis added.)

(Parenthetically, it doesn't necessarily follow that because most of the party's members were recruited from the campus, the party's composition is predominantly petty bourgeois. As a matter of fact, the party is primarily composed of nonindustrial workers. The minority's error here is that they view student and worker as two mutually exclusive categories which under no circumstances can be transformed into one another. Gregorich *et al* to the contrary, many students are being transformed into workers these days. And there are transformations in the opposite direction too.)

The argument is airtight from the standpoint of formal logic. A proletarian "being" produces a proletarian class consciousness; a petty bourgeois "being" produces a petty bourgeois consciousness (mentality). The minority concludes that in order for the party to save itself from a further degeneration, it must send a major section of its "petty bourgeois" members into the factories to "proletarianize" themselves: "Every comrade should be considered for this work. The leading bodies of the party should choose which comrades to send into the factories. They must also give *general encouragement* to all comrades to enter. Comrades should be *discouraged* from entering *white collar fields*. . . Except in special cases, comrades engaged in this work should consider *trade-union work* their *primary* field of activity." (*FPO*, p. 32, emphasis added)

This new proletarian "being" into which our comrades will have been thrust, their new "role in production," will by some miraculous process save their petty bourgeois souls for the revolution and thereby save the party from an otherwise inevitable degeneration.

This conception of how being determines consciousness and *what being* produces proletarian class consciousness has nothing in common with Marxism, but has a great deal in common with the ideas of the Economists of Russia

that Lenin polemicized against in *What is to be Done?* ". . . the fundamental error that all the Economists commit," Lenin wrote, "is their conviction that it is possible to develop the class political consciousness of the workers from within, so to speak, their economic struggle. . . ."

"Class consciousness can be brought to the workers only from without, that is, only from outside of the sphere of relations between workers and employers. The sphere from which alone it is possible to obtain this knowledge is the sphere of relationships between all the classes and strata and the state and the government, the sphere of the interrelations between all the classes." (*What is to be Done?* p. 130, Lenin's emphasis.)

For Lenin then, the "being" that is necessary to produce proletarian class consciousness is not the narrow, restricted sphere of the industrial worker in the factory, not his or her "role in production," but the realm of politics, of political struggle.

This is not to say that the worker's role in production or his or her involvement in militant trade-union struggles around wages and working conditions play no part in the development of class consciousness. But it is to say that these factors by themselves are insufficient to enable the mass of workers to break through the pervasive influence of bourgeois ideology, drummed into their heads from early childhood by family, school, church, mass media, etc. Lenin agrees: "The spontaneous working-class movement by itself is able to create (and inevitably creates) only trade unionism, and working-class trade unionist politics are precisely working-class bourgeois politics." (*What is to be Done*, p. 156, emphasis added.)

Having a proletarian relation to production and being involved in trade-union politics does not even guarantee against the political degeneration of politicized workers, of Trotskyist workers. Under certain conditions, when the class struggle is at a low ebb, revolutionaries who are too deeply "rooted" in the factory and in the unions, and insufficiently rooted in the party, can become conservatized, demoralized and *deproletarianized politically*. This is shown by our own party history. Read for instance Cannon's speech "Trade Unionists and Revolutionists" in *Defending the Revolutionary Party and Its Perspectives* (SWP Educational Bulletin). The Cochran wing of the minority faction that challenged the party leadership in 1952-53 was, composition-wise, almost 100 percent proletarian.

The minority's simplistic theory of class consciousness is also contradicted by the fact that it was the bourgeois intelligentsia (not working-class, not petty bourgeois even, but bourgeois) that first developed the ideas of scientific

socialism. How would Gregorich *et al* explain this amazing (for a formal thinker) contradiction? Did Marx spend any time at the point of production? Did Lenin? I presume Engels spent some time there, but he was a capitalist!

Of course, the economic "being" of the intermediate layers of capitalist society does not automatically and spontaneously produce socialist consciousness any more than the economic "being" of the industrial worker does. The "being" necessary to produce proletarian class consciousness most essentially involves one's relation to politics, in particular proletarian politics, which necessarily relates to all classes and strata of capitalist society. More specifically—and this cannot be overemphasized—it requires conscious, collective, practical activity aimed at transforming capitalist society, i.e., active participation in a revolutionary party which is intervening in or relating to the political struggles of all oppressed strata in capitalist society, which has assimilated the key lessons of past class struggles, and which has the perspective of actually leading a socialist revolution.

At this time, what is key for our worker comrades to fully develop their class consciousness is *not* exclusively their experiences in the plant or in the office but what they see, hear and do politically outside it as well. This includes such things as participating in our election campaigns, forums, interventions in the antiwar, women's liberation, and other mass movements, socialist summer schools, branch and executive committee meetings, informal discussions with other comrades, etc.

We do not send student comrades or any other comrades into factories and trade unions simply to raise their consciousness or to artificially improve the class composition of the party. Such a policy would be disastrous. In the absence of meaningful opportunities for party building work, long-term "rooting" in the factories would inevitably demoralize and *deproletarianize* such comrades. And worse, the party's work in other areas, where big opportunities do exist, would be severely weakened.

In conclusion, the "being" we have to create for the purpose of proletarianizing our membership, for the purpose of creating as many professional revolutionaries as possible, at the fastest pace possible, whatever their class backgrounds, is the "being" of the Socialist Workers Party functioning on the basis of Leninist norms, intervening in and recruiting out of the political struggles of all the oppressed, including the industrial workers as that becomes possible, and relating to the current radicalization along the lines projected in the N. C. draft political resolution.

July 9, 1971

SOME COMMENTS ON THE PROLETARIAN ORIENTATION DOCUMENT

by Nat London, Lower Manhattan Branch, New York Local

One of the questions that the comrades in the Gregorich *et al* grouping pose is where do you draw the line between the proletariat and the petty-bourgeoisie, and how do you draw this line. They made a very important theoretical error in their answer. They take the terms "intelligentsia," they quote from Mandel, they quote from Trotsky about the "new middle class," they talk about the college graduates and white collar workers—all are lumped together as the "non-productive workers" and characterized as petty-bourgeois.

How non-productive workers or workers, who think they're proletarian, can be petty-bourgeois, I'm not quite sure, but the Proletarian Orientation Tendency claims that the way they derive this is the Marxist concept that classes derive from one's "role in production." Nothing could be farther from the truth. Marx says that classes stem from different relationships to the *means* of production. It is not a question of role in production. Peasants' role in production is that they produce, the same as industrial workers, but they're not proletarians. Their relationship to production is different. These relationships are characterized in their legal expression as *property* relationships. The proletarian is property-less; he or she does not control the means of production. That's the character of a proletarian, and that's the definition of a proletarian. The Proletarian Orientation Tendency ignores this definition.

The Proletarian Orientation Tendency deals with the questions of professionals and intellectuals. In regard to this, it is important and instructive to look at things like Marx's Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations, for instance, where Marx deals with how these different classes became proletarianized. The Proletarian Orientation Tendency says the petty-bourgeoisie is proletarianized because it is forced into working at the point of production. Their view is incorrect. The guilds in medieval times, for instance, were composed of people who worked and produced, but they were still petty-bourgeois. Why? Because they controlled the means of production. In fact, they had a legal monopoly and it was a crime to learn to be a skilled worker in a particular craft because they had a royal charter that said only the people who belonged to this guild could practice this craft. They owned not only the means of productions, Marx points out, but they also owned the skill, the craft, and the knowledge. All these things went together and gave them control of the means of production. As they lost these things, they became proletarians, they changed into a new type of class.

Something similar is happening to college graduates. College education was originally a passport to the petty-bourgeoisie, because it gave you a monopoly that no one else could challenge in terms of all the different professional occupations. That's no longer true today. There is, for instance, a reserve army of unemployed college graduates. You can't have that in the petty-bourgeoisie. This is a new layer of the working class, who have secured a college education. The National Committee Draft Political Resolution does *not* say, as the Proletarian Orientation Tendency document implies, that the party feels

that this new layer of the working class has replaced the "old" layer of the working class. The party welcomes this as a new addition to the working class, but it is not our position that the "old" working class is dead. The party still sees that sector as central.

The Proletarian Orientation document rejects this new layer when they talk about pulling comrades out of white collar fields, as they do in their conclusions, and getting them jobs in industry. They claim that we've adapted to this "petty-bourgeois milieu" and abandoned the working class, which they identify solely with the industrial trade unions. They confuse trade unions with working class.

Trade unions are not the only kind of working class organizations. In Russia, in fact, there were four different types of working class organizations that the Bolsheviks were involved in—the parties, the soviets, the trade unions, and the factory committees. In fact, the factory committees and the trade unions were hostile rivals of each other, and the Bolsheviks consistently sided with the factory committees *against* the trade unions, because the trade unions were not that significant a force in Russia at the time. The Bolsheviks did not make their turn to the trade unions until *after* the revolution in January, 1918, at the Trade Union Congress, when they felt that they needed more organized structure, because the counter-revolution was growing.

In every country workers are going to form all kinds of different organizations. We're going to have to choose how we're going to be involved, which particular unions, which particular industries—all kinds of questions of this nature. We're going to investigate each and every one of these. Working class uprisings in the past, for instance, also produced cooperative movements. We don't want to be involved today in that because it's not fruitful.

But, we want to be involved in those types of working class organizations that are involved in struggle, which are not limited to trade unions. La Raza Unida is one such organization, for instance. It's something that we predicted only in the last few years. It could not have been predicted 50 years ago, or 100 years ago.

What is the party's position? I think the National Committee Draft Political Resolution is clear, and the discussion is clear. We think the American revolution will be a working class revolution, combined with a nationalist uprising of national minorities for self-determination. When we say working class revolution, we mean exactly that. We don't say working class revolution and mean something else. We say working class revolution—that's workers organized as workers, conscious of themselves as workers, combined with national minorities, organized in their own organizations, all moving to take power.

On the question of colonization. We're not opposed to colonization, as a tactic. But, we are opposed to it as some broad strategy for party-building. In past periods colonization hasn't been very fruitful. It is not always the best type of tactic to work out. For instance, not all workers will move at once. Some workers will move and provide openings for us before others.

We're willing to colonize even today. But the Proletarian

Orientation Tendency has got to prove, if they think they have a situation, that it is a real one. One that offers opportunities and possibilities for recruitment that are equal to what we have today. If they have a real oppor-

tunity, and there *are* places where we have had real opportunities, they've got to prove it. The party has not turned its back to these opportunities if they're real.

July 15, 1971

THE FEMINIST MOVEMENT AND THE SHORTER WORK WEEK

by Mary F. Walter, Denver Branch

In the Political Committee Draft Resolution "Toward a Mass Feminist Movement," it is stated that ". . . the abortion fight is the issue which is attracting the largest numbers of women and the greatest enthusiasm." At the present time this is true, partly because we have recognized the potential in this issue and have helped build demands around it.

But the potential for building large mass actions and public support for some of our demands leading to economic independence for women also exists and the possibilities in this area should be probed now and utilized if the time seems right.

The principle issue which is ripe and could be utilized to build a feminist movement equal in power to the abortion movement is that based on the demand for 30 hours work with 40 hours pay. Almost every working woman is enthusiastic about this idea, including those who think it is a little out of reach. Women are the ones who generally have to come home after a days work and take care of the house, the children, the husband, and the meals. Men generally are not so concerned with shorter working hours. However, if a mass women's movement around fewer working hours with the same pay could be built, the men would begin to think of such a possibility for themselves. It might well be the back road to having this demand picked up by the working class as a whole.

This is particularly important at this moment in history, since many industrialists are pushing the four day work week with no reduction in hours at their workers, and the workers generally seem to think this is great. We should start getting the idea across that far from being great,

this process is incorrect from the working class standpoint and should be fought. The best way to publicize this concept would be for thousands of women to be out in the streets demanding 30 hours work with 40 hours pay. We could, where feasible, tie this demand in with spreading the work around among more persons, an equally important concept to 30 for 40 because of increasing unemployment, and particularly so among women, whose jobs tend to be among the first to go. Black women, many of whom have their doubts about the abortion issue but who have no doubts about their resentment over miserable pay for miserable jobs or over no jobs at all, might find this an appealing issue.

And finally, a 30 for 40 movement would place the ruling class in a much greater dilemma than that resulting from the abortion movement, for abortion reform can be carried out without much strain on the system, but the demand for 30 hours work with 40 hours pay coming at a time when the economy is under ever-increasing pressures would be an extremely difficult demand to meet.

Because of all these factors, the general line of the draft resolution on the feminist movement should be amended to include 1) the projection of a conscious effort on the part of comrades to feel out the feminist movement *vis a vis* stressing the demands outlined above; and 2), if such a probe indicates the time is right, to begin to build a mass movement of women around the demand of 30 hours work—40 hours pay, or some appropriate more up to date variation of this concept, giving such a movement equal importance to the abortion movement.

July 13, 1971

PARTY BUILDING AND TRADE UNION WORK

By Milton Alvin, Los Angeles Branch

(The following contribution is based on my presentation and summary to the Los Angeles Branch July 11, 1971, in debate with Lauren Charous representing the Proletarian Orientation Tendency.)

The document "For a Proletarian Orientation," signed by Comrades Gregorich, Massey, McCann and Passen, is presented to the party as a resolution, in opposition to the Political Resolution which is presented in the name of the National Committee. These will, therefore, be voted up or down by the forthcoming convention.

In defending the Political Resolution of the National Committee, which is entitled "Perspectives and Lessons of the New Radicalization," I want first of all to summarize, very briefly, what is in it and what perspectives it holds out to us. For convenience sake I will refer to the document of the National Committee as the NC Political Resolution and the document of the four comrades as the Proletarian Resolution. But I want to make it clear that this is for convenience only; I do not at all believe that the latter document is really a "proletarian" resolution as we shall see.

The Political Resolution describes the nature of the present radicalization: it is now some years since it began with certain events in the Black Liberation struggle and from there spread to the anti-war movement, the struggles of other minorities, the youth, women, gays, and so on. This radicalization dominates present day American politics of dissent from and opposition to establishment politics and influences this political development more than any other single factor. We have already gone rather deeply into this radicalization, not only trying to understand its many facets but comparing it to the other two major radicalizations in modern American history, the early years of this century and the one of the 1930's.

One of the lessons learned long ago by our movement is that the road to the masses is through the vanguard and that trying to jump over the vanguard or going around it is a futile exercise and leads nowhere. In Cannon's books you can read the record of Albert Weisbord, who was for going directly to the masses and by-passing the vanguard which in those days was in the Communist Party. Similarly, the Oehler tendency in our movement wanted to ignore first the Muste-ites and then the radicalizing youth of the Socialist Party, both of these representing vanguard elements in the mid-1930's. Fortunately, our party did not follow these sectarian prescriptions and, as a result, removed two important obstacles to the growth of the revolutionary movement in this country, the American Workers Party and the Socialist Party, as well as increasing our numbers.

If the Trotskyists and ex-Trotskyists in Spain had done as we did, and as they were urged to do by Trotsky himself, they could have won to their ranks many thousands of Socialist youth who were rapidly becoming revolutionary and looking for better associations than their parent organization, the Socialist Party, provided. Unfortunately, they took the wrong road in this case and made no effort to join with this promising and developing tendency. This S. P. youth was the Spanish vanguard in the 1930's. As a result, the Communist Party of Spain,

at that time smaller in size and less influential than the POUM, the party closest to us, stepped into the situation, won over this youth and for the first time the Communist Party appeared on the scene as a sizable force in the Spanish events. You can put this down as one of the main causes for the defeat of the Spanish Revolution and at the same time draw the lesson that it is important for us to know where the vanguard is at any particular stage of development.

For example, those who saw fascism in America, as the Black Panthers did a couple of years ago, were mistaken in their basic outlook and to that extent disoriented themselves from the real struggle and its actual development. It is also interesting to note here, just as a note, that they were helped in this by those champions of confusion, political derangement and unabashed dishonesty, the Stalinists. The lesson to be learned here is that it is necessary to understand just what is taking place on the political arena and to act accordingly. It is inevitable that a party that fails to do so will disorient itself and wear itself out.

This is what we are discussing here today: reality, reality in politics. It should also be noted that our view of the current radicalization is that it is a swing within the general confines of the historical epoch in which we live, that is, the period of wars and revolutions, as Lenin called it, and the Death Agony of Capitalism, as Trotsky designated it in 1938.

The NC Political Resolution does not rule out, in fact it looks forward to the radicalization of workers' organizations who will at some future stage join the others we have mentioned. But it is important to keep two things in mind in this respect: (1) That many workers have already been included in the radicalization through those organizations that are a part of it; (2) It is not necessarily the unions that we presently have, the AFL-CIO and some others, that will eventually be the workers' organizations that take part in the radicalization.

On the first point it is or should be clear that there are a huge number of workers who support the struggles of oppressed minorities, who support the antiwar movement, who are themselves part of the young generation, many are not long out of schools, who are women ready to fight for their rights and who are gays and others already in the radicalization.

On the second point the biggest mistake we can make in regard to work among the workers as such is to make a fetish out of the present unions. The radicals of the 1930's did not make that mistake. When the workers rose up to form the CIO, a new and unknown organization, they turned their backs on the well known existing AFL and flocked to the new union by the millions, that is, after learning the AFL was of no help to them. Fetishism in politics, especially organizational fetishism, is a disease, a malignancy often associated with abstentionism and sectarianism.

We should not take an attitude towards the unions of our times along the lines of excluding other formations that may appear. There is no guarantee that these unions will become the arena for radicalization and revolutionary activities. We hope they will, we will try to convert them to radicalizing ideas, as we are doing to the extent of our capacities at this time.

We do not advise turning our backs on the unions. On the contrary, it is advisable from every standpoint to try to win them over to correct politics. Those who formed the CIO first tried to win over the AFL, and to get help from it. It was only after he failed to get the AFL to organize along industrial and not craft lines that John L. Lewis formed the CIO. The workers joined the CIO only after many attempts to get help from the AFL who came into one strike situation after another, chopped up the workers into the various crafts and lost the strikes. We do not and cannot take the position that the AFL-CIO, the UAW, the Teamsters and some others and they alone will always and under all circumstances represent the working class of this country.

If one was restricted to understanding our views by reading only the Proletarian Resolution, it would be easy to arrive at the conclusion that the party's policy is to concentrate on other areas to such a great extent that we have almost no workers in unions in our party. This is not the case and the authors of the Proletarian Resolution could have started with the fact that we have hundreds who are union members, not "the few comrades" mentioned in their document on page 9. That should not be taken to mean that these comrades are busy organizing big left-wing factional battles in their unions, but it should also not be taken to mean that we are turning our backs on union organizations.

The same authors should have noticed that recently the party brought a leading comrade, Frank Lovell, from Detroit to the center in New York for the specific purpose of putting our work in the union field on a higher plane, by watching it more closely, writing about it in our press more often and intervening wherever possible. He is in charge of our union work nationally. We thought so much of this move that Comrade Lovell was elected to the Political Committee so that the day-to-day party leadership could have his participation on a full time basis. Modest as our union membership may appear and our practical steps such as the one with Comrade Lovell I hardly think this adds up to neglect of the unions, or as the Proletarian Resolution charges, that we have altered the basic outlook of our party.

However, it would be missing the point if we confined our argument to mere numbers of unionists, or whether we should send this many or that many into industries and unions right now. This is a question of tactics, but before tactical questions can even be discussed, to say nothing about making decisions on them, it is necessary to decide what the nature of the period is through which we are passing right now.

In this respect the Proletarian Resolution was a complete disappointment to me; I read it and re-read it and could find nothing in it that even tries to come to grips with this question. This is an error in politics, the attempt to decide tactical questions prior to making the larger decision on the nature of the political period.

Let me give just one example. When the Second World War finally involved the United States in 1941 we began the process of withdrawing our unionists from left-wing

factional activities in their unions. We did not pull them out of the unions; in fact we sent more people in, but we followed the policy of not fighting for control of unions during this period. We stopped forming and helping to form left-wing groups. Instructed by the past we know that in the early stages of a war the administration is strongest and its opponents weakest. We took steps to protect our people from victimization. There is a tendency for most people to support the government in a war crisis at first, and as a result, a certain isolation of others, especially revolutionary forces. We were isolated but we could not help it.

This policy was correct and led later to good results. When the nature of the period changed, in 1943-44, our members were able to engage in various activities that for the preceding period could not be fruitful. I cite this example, really two examples, to show how policy must flow from the nature of the period and that other considerations, particularly abstract conceptions, can mislead the party.

But, the authors of the Proletarian Resolution will protest, we are not arguing about tactics of one kind or another, we are saying the party has abandoned its proletarian orientation and that is not a tactical question but one of principle. They do not put it quite like that, a question of principle, but they do not call their difference over policy a tactical one either. The whole thrust of their document, especially the many and endless quotations from Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky, Cannon, Dobbs, Kerry, Hansen, Breitman, Barnes, Waters, Seigle, Evans and Lovell, I hope I haven't omitted anyone, as well as quotations from documents of years gone by, indicate not a tactical difference but a principled one.

I must confess that reading all these quotations from the founders of scientific socialism through its most successful practitioners to the leaders of our own party I was impressed by the sheer quantity involved, to say nothing of the high quality. I must also confess that I could find nothing to disagree with in these quotations. As far as I know all the ideas quoted apply, generally speaking, or they did apply at one time or another. However, the problem only begins here. Do they apply to the questions we are discussing now?

One quotation that does apply, that has largely universal application, so to speak, is completely misunderstood by the authors of the Proletarian Resolution. It is from Marx and it reads as follows: "The mode of production in material life determines the general character of the social, political, and spiritual processes of life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence but, on the contrary, their social existence that determines their consciousness." (Critique of Political Economy, pp. 11-12) This appears on page 3 of the bulletin that contains the Proletarian Resolution.

If we take this literally, as the Proletarian Resolution does, then we must eliminate from the ranks of Socialist revolutionaries just about all the most prominent leaders and teachers of the movement beginning with Marx himself. Marx, the founder of our movement, was not a proletarian and never tried to pass himself off as one. I doubt that he was ever inside a factory to say nothing about being a union member.

Engels was not only not a proletarian or factory worker, he was an employer, a factory owner. Neither Lenin nor Trotsky were proletarians, factory workers or unionists and neither was the overwhelming majority of the leaders

of the Russian Revolution.

It has been pointed out by the most authoritative leaders of our movement, beginning with Marx himself, that the ideas of Socialism are first brought into the workers' movements by petty bourgeois, educated people and do not come out of the consciousness of the workers themselves because they are workers. This being the case (I must confess that I was startled to learn that we have literate people in our party, able to put out a lengthy document, that do not know this) how can we account for the fact that consciousness of the most outstanding leaders of our movement did not derive from their social existence? If we take the quotation from Marx literally, we must conclude that his social existence was petty bourgeois and that, ipso facto, his consciousness must be petty bourgeois.

This kind of reasoning has the advantage, if one can call it that, of eliminating the necessity to think, and to think out ideas scientifically. All we have to do is determine the social existence and it will automatically give us the kind of consciousness that comes from it. That is what the Proletarian Resolution does in the area of the party's proletarian orientation.

The Proletarian Orientation resolution tells us that during the period 1957 to 1964 the party made a tactical turn towards the petty bourgeoisie and made it to such an extent that it became the primary orientation. Quoting Trotsky, they claim that it is possible for a mere tactical turn to result in this way. The possibility is, of course there, and we do not deny it.

However, it is necessary to provide some political justification for deciding that our party has actually made such a change in orientation. The document only deals with organizational-tactical policies and not with political programs. In the Soviet Union of the late 1920's many of Trotsky's associates in the struggle against Stalinism capitulated after Stalin broke with Bukharin, and moved towards the left taking over parts of Trotsky's program such as the 5-year plan. The capitulators reasoned that they were making only a tactical shift and that the politics of the new situation were all right in principle or moving in that direction. What they did not see was that their change, in this case, derailed their entire program in favor of another, a false program politically.

Another example, from our own experience, can be used from the results of the struggle against the petty bourgeois opposition of 1939-1940. They looked upon their position of not giving defense to the Soviet Union when the Second World War broke out as a tactic. They promised and even threatened to defend the Soviet Union, if it was attacked by the imperialists. To them, the early stages of the war did not look like an imperialist attack and so they preferred to remain neutral. However, when the alignments in the war changed and Hitler tore up his pact with Stalin and invaded the Soviet Union, the former petty bourgeois opposition, now organized as the Workers Party, found other reasons not to defend the Soviet Union. They changed their program and their theory.

The lesson of these examples is this: If the authors of the Proletarian Resolution want us to believe that we have changed our orientation fundamentally from one class, the workers, to another, the petty bourgeoisie, we want to know what theoretical, programmatic and political changes have taken place to prove this. In the examples I cited you can find such changes. We are not satisfied

with the complaint that we are giving all our attention organizationally to students, women, minorities, and so on, we want to know just where we have altered our program and changed our principles to go with this new orientation.

We want an answer to this question, primarily for the reason that a change in orientation from one class to another would not make any sense, and in fact cannot be made without a programmatic change suited to it.

I can promise you in advance that we will not get a satisfactory answer to this question. The reason is that we have not changed our theory, our program and our politics and anyone reading our press or watching our activities can be convinced of this very easily.

The four authors have noticed that the party's composition is over-weighted on the student, or petty bourgeois, side and they have concluded that because we are not urging these members to enter the factories and unions *en masse*, we have given up the proletarian orientation. The implication is that if we did take our members out of other activities and if we sent them into the unions, where the social existence is healthier than elsewhere, this would pretty much guarantee that everything would be all right thereafter. I hope you will permit me to express serious doubts about this proposition.

Our Proletarian Resolution authors have given us a good many quotations in their document, in fact too many, but they have left out some that would not bolster their case. Among these is the idea, absolutely incontestable, that the unions are presently controlled by bureaucratic regimes that do not welcome ideas other than their own, who are hostile to any opponents, that there is virtually no organized opposition to these bureaucrats and that with very few exceptions, there are no opportunities to do fruitful work in the unions AT THIS TIME, as well as for some time past. I emphasize AT THIS TIME because we know from past experience that this can change and we hope it will change soon. We are watching the situation, as I indicated earlier, and we are prepared to take the proper steps when the change occurs.

But it would be a terrible mistake to take such steps now when conditions are unfavorable in this field and to act as though we were in the mid-1930's or in the 1945-46 upsurge of the workers.

Here is where we come to the over-all error in the document. The quotations they have given us to bolster their case do not fit the present situation; they were written under circumstances different from those we are passing through at this time and they simply do not apply. That is, some of them fall into this category. Others, that fall into the category of universal ideas are interpreted far too rigidly by the Proletarian Resolution who leave no room for unexpected developments and new opportunities.

The Proletarian Resolution offers us politics by universal prescription, by rules that are good for all occasions and that can be applied under all circumstances. This reduces politics to a joke. If all one has to do is memorize the universal truths and maxims and put them on the table on all occasions, then if I may paraphrase Trotsky, any sectarian idiot can pass himself off as a master strategist. This is not our kind of politics. We try to deal with the real world as it is before us, keeping in mind our class struggle methods and principles.

It is necessary to learn to think, as Trotsky advised us. NO!!! as he urged us back in the 1930's when he

wrote a special article with that title, "Learn to Think," directed against those who would have used rigid formulas to solve living problems.

Our party tried to do just that. In the mid-1930's the party had to make a difficult decision, to enter the Socialist Party and make contact with the radicalizing youth there, a petty bourgeois youth if you please, or to remain an independent party. This was a harder decision to make than the one we face today. There were great opportunities in the unions then, 1936, when the CIO still had before it its main growth.

The decision was to enter the Socialist Party and the results were favorable, as I mentioned earlier. The entry was made on Trotsky's initiative and with his approval. I would like to ask and I demand an answer from the authors of the Proletarian Resolution what they think of the S.P. entry now, after 35 years have gone by and after they have accumulated the wisdom of political strategists, keeping in mind that the S.P. was by no means bursting at the seams with proletarians, it was petty bourgeois in every respect.

The Proletarian Resolution advises the party to send members into the unions. They say, "Every comrade should be considered for this work." (Page 32) But they do not tell us what these comrades will do in the unions. They do not point to any specific opportunities. It is of no use to us to repeat general propositions that the party should be of proletarian composition or that the unions are sometimes the arena of great battles.

The document tells us we must plan ahead, to foresee, but that is, to give it the best interpretation, a bit vague. Are there opportunities for us to tie up with left-wing groups in the unions now? Which unions? What kind of groups and what is their direction? The document is silent on these matters. It only foresees," but in the process sees nothing.

We do not see such groups in the unions NOW and we have the problem of where our forces should be disposed NOW, not a year from now, 5 years or 10 years. It is a terrible mistake in politics to act in accordance with what one would like to have rather than with what actually exists.

Just think where we would be today, if we had followed the prescriptions of the Proletarian Resolution. We would not have gone to the campuses because, you see, the social composition there is unfavorable. We would not have much, if anything, of a youth organization because what we do have came from the campuses and not from the factories. We would have no antiwar movement to speak of in this country because there also the social composition is middle class and student for the most part and without us I do not think there would be much of an antiwar movement.

We would not be very much concerned with the womens liberation movement because most of that is also of unfavorable social composition. We cannot be in all places and doing everything at one time. If we were concentrating on the unions, we would be forced to neglect other fields. In short, if we were to take the course outlined by the authors of the Proletarian Resolution, we would soon work ourselves down to the political and organizational level of the Wohlforth group, the Progressive Labor Party or some similar sectarian outfit.

This is the real meaning of their document and the only perspective it can hold forth to us today and in the immediate future. We say to them, "You have labored and

brought forth a mouse; no thanks."

We will continue along the road that has built our movement and we will continue on this course until we see a better one. When that comes, we will take the necessary steps in accord with whatever changes there are. Please don't rush us. We don't yet see that the grass is greener elsewhere, especially in the unions right now.

To build a genuine revolutionary party in the United States it is necessary to gather in our ranks the vanguard of that revolution to come, or at least, the decisive section of the vanguard. We are convinced to the marrow of our bones that this is absolutely necessary and that it will be impossible to build the kind of party we need unless we can bring into our party whoever happens to make up this vanguard when the revolutionary crisis comes.

It is impossible to predict just who will make up this vanguard, to predict concretely. What is possible and what we have done and propose continuing to do is to work among vanguard elements wherever and whenever they appear. When vanguard elements arise among the workers, in the unions or such organizations as may be formed in the future out of the ranks of the workers, we hereby pledge, we promise and we even guarantee that we will be there. We will try to win over these workers and become influential among them.

It is quite unnecessary to convince us of how important the working class is to the coming American revolution. We know that and we know that without the workers there will be no revolution. But we also know that there are other factors in the revolution and other elements as I have tried to describe.

The very character of our revolution in which there are large oppressed minorities, women, gays and others who still must win their democratic rights and who will in the long run unite with the proletarian struggle for socialism, this factor in itself justifies our course and condemns the one-sidedness and unrealistic course outlined by the so-called "For a Proletarian Orientation" document.

* * *

Comrade Lauren kept referring to "The G. I. Movement," as part of the working class that we should get into. However, I understand that this is part of the antiwar movement and that all the classes are represented among the G. I.s and not just the workers.

He charged that we abstain from the Black and Chicano struggles, also parts of the working class, implying that all we have to do is join these struggles, as they take place on the job, and we can recruit there. I wish it was as easy as he thinks. However, anyone who has taken a look at what has happened to these struggles, beginning about 15 years ago, will understand that it is far from easy to recruit in these areas. The growth of nationalism in the Black and Chicano communities, while progressive, has made it difficult for us to recruit.

We are asked if we still support the Transitional Program of 1938. We do, in one way, and we do not in another. Trotsky advised us not to take this program as a finished document for all time but to add to it and delete from it as required by actual conditions. This is what we have done. We have taken out certain outlived slogans, such as free universal education to age 16, and added other entire programs such as the Transitional Program for the Youth and the Black liberation struggle. Without doubt the women comrades in our party who

are leading the work in the Womens Liberation Movement are thinking in terms of a transitional program in this field, something that is needed now.

Comrade Lauren quoted Cannon to the effect that those who aspire to be leaders in our movement must come and live in the labor movement, mere visiting will be discouraged. But he did not tell us in what context this was written so I will fill in the gap. It was written about Burnham who was a college professor during the day, teaching philosophy and came to a Political Committee meeting one evening a week, wrote an occasional article for the press and sometimes spoke at a public meeting. Cannon and others tried to get Burnham, a talented individual, to drop the college professor business and come and work full time in the party. We do consider our party to be a part of the labor movement. Burnham could not take this step. He wanted to have the best of both worlds, to have a foot in each camp. How Comrade Lauren can compare the experience with Burnham with the young comrades we have now, who came from the campus but who left it with both feet to become professional full-time party leaders, comrades like Jack Barnes, Mary-Alice Waters and Barry Sheppard and others, is a mystery. It would be better if these comrades were compared to Daniel de Leon, a college professor who, when he made up his mind to join the socialist movement, slammed the door on the bourgeois world and never looked back. Cannon explains this, too.

As I predicted in my presentation we got no answer to the question about whether or not the 1936 entry into the Socialist Party was correct. We got no answer to the important question of changes that have taken place in our program to go with the change in class orientation. And we got no answer to whether or not the Proletarian Orientation group takes responsibility for Tom Cagle whose contributions to the Internal Bulletin sound like the ravings of enemies of the party. Cagle supports the views of the Proletarian Orientation tendency.

One thing that stands out very clearly, perhaps more so than any other, is that the Proletarian Resolution authors and their supporters who have expressed themselves in the bulletin have very little or no experience in unions. Despite all their urgings upon the party to get into the unions and to struggle for our program there, this factor of inexperience stands out very strikingly. I cannot help but come to the conclusion that these comrades have never tried to get support for our ideas in unions under circumstances such as we live under today.

The way they write one would think that all that is required is for our members to show up at union meetings, explain what should be done and make a motion to that effect, and the workers, seeing the light, will rally to our support.

Some of the supporters of the Proletarian Orientation document have listed a number of areas in which we are active now and explained just how the ideas we hold in these areas can and should be presented in the unions. For the edification of people who may be inclined to think that getting unions to support our programs, or gaining sizable support from the workers' ranks is easy to do, I must explain in some detail just what things are like in the union field.

First of all, most union locals, even those who have a membership running into the thousands, hold regular monthly meetings attended by a few dozen members. These

are the union officials, union politicians of various kinds and sometimes a sprinkling of radicals, as a rule. I have attended many such meetings in my time, in a union of 10,000 members. Only 30 to 40 would come to the regular meeting.

But if a new contract was to be discussed, a large hall would have to be rented and several thousand would come. At the small regular meetings the right wing officials always had a majority and it would have been futile to try to pass some progressive motion or other, it would not have meant anything.

On the other hand, when there is something doing, I mentioned only contract renewal, and it looked like a fight was brewing with the company, then attendance would go up. I am told by responsible unionists that this situation that I have experienced myself has not changed with the passage of the years.

Struggles in the unions used to be carried out by organized groupings in the locals and when possible, by national factions. I doubt that there is anyone in this country with anywhere near as much experience as we have had in organizing and participating in such developments. In my time I have participated in factional left-wing activities in the United Steel Workers, United Auto Workers and United Rubber Workers directly and have advised and helped comrades in numerous other unions. I do not at all mean to blow my own horn or pat myself on the back when I say that if there is one thing that comrades with my background know and know thoroughly it is how to conduct fights in the unions. We were brought up on that, weaned on it.

I might also mention that this experience has given us some indication of when to organize such fights and when not to. I submit that this is something that cannot be learned from books and not even from internal bulletins.

But one does not have to be a master strategist in the literal sense to know that there is not much if any left-wing union factional activity going on right now, and to send our people into the unions right now would not produce any.

But, the authors of the Proletarian Resolution will protest, we do not expect our relatively few forces to organize big struggles for power in the unions right now; they say we must be among the workers when they're ready for such struggles. That means, if I understand their views and I think I do, that we should salt away our members in the unions, among the workers against the day that they will get into motion, as they did in France in May-June 1968.

However, we have gone through the experience of salting away our members in unions. We used to have strong fractions in Auto and Steel, for example, here in Los Angeles. Now after the passage of years and no action in these areas, we have two people left in these fractions, the rest were worn out and demoralized. That is what salting away resulted in for us. There is also the experience with the trade unionists of the Cochran faction who were demoralized right in the heart of the unions.

I invite you to imagine what a sterile sect we would become if we followed this advice. Our branch meetings, our press, everything would reflect not the gainful activity that has brought us many new members in recent

years but the sterility of inactivity. You won't get any one very much inspired or excited about being salted away somewhere against the future, no one knows how far away. Our whole movement would have to reflect not the many fields in which we are now intervening but the silent and tomb-like existence of comrades buried in organizations that are quiet now. I doubt that our party will go for this orientation, even with a "proletarian" adjective thrown in.

One thing is certain. The process of building a revolutionary party in this, the richest country in the world and for that reason the most difficult, is complex and does not lend itself to any simple prescriptions. The tendency to find easy prescriptions is the very thing we must

avoid.

The variety and complexity of the real political world stand as a challenge to us, to our theory, our program and our day-to-day activity. We long ago accepted this challenge and we do not now, after all that has gone into the building of our movement, withdraw from the struggle. We understand that it is necessary to think, not just once in a while, on anniversary occasions or before conventions but all the time, all the time.

That is why we reject as firmly as we know how the rigid and sterile prescriptions offered in the document "For a Proletarian Orientation" and support as the reality of the present time the general line of the N. C. resolution, "Perspectives and Lessons of the New Radicalization."

COMBINED REVOLUTION AND THE NEED FOR A WOMEN'S PARTY

by Marc Bedner, Philadelphia Branch

When we say that the coming revolution will be a combined revolution, we are generally talking about the nationalist struggle. The usual characterization of the combined character is summed up in the following excerpt from Comrade Barnes' speech at Oberlin:

"The coming American revolution is going to be a combined revolution: a revolution by the oppressed nationalities for self-determination, and a working-class revolution to establish a socialist society that will eliminate all the dehumanizing evils of class society. They will both occur, or neither will occur. The national question, the question that was supposed to have been solved by the bourgeois revolution, has become a central and permanent part of the current radicalization, and it will be so in the American socialist revolution to come. It is therefore a central and permanent feature of concern to the American revolutionary socialist party." (*ISR*, April 1971, p. 12)

A complete characterization of the combined revolution would include also the struggle for women's liberation. Can women's liberation be achieved without a socialist revolution? Can the construction of "a socialist society that will eliminate the dehumanizing evils of class society" be undertaken without ending the oppression of women?

The concept of combined revolution is a specific application of the theory of permanent revolution. Classically, this theory explains the combination of the tasks of the bourgeois national revolution with those of the socialist revolution. In our analysis of the Black liberation struggle, we have extended the theory to cover the struggle of an oppressed nationality within an advanced country. Yet Trotsky did not limit his theory to the national question: "The theory of the permanent revolution signifies that the complete and genuine solution of their tasks of achieving *democracy and national emancipation* is conceivable only through the dictatorship of the proletariat." (*Permanent Revolution*, p. 152, 1965 ed.; emphasis in original) The women's liberation movement raises key democratic demands, such as the right to control one's body, which have not been granted by the American bourgeois revolutions.

The struggles of oppressed groups in this country in the 1930s were inextricably tied to the labor movement. Women and Blacks sought to have their demands taken up by the trade unions. When they recognized the need for organized independent political action, the different oppressed groups joined the struggle for a labor party.

The current radicalization, however, is not merely a

combination of different struggles. It is a combination of movements independent not only of the ruling class, but also of each other. There is neither a mass labor party nor a mass revolutionary socialist party which can adequately advance the struggles of the oppressed on its own.

Not all the movements which have arisen during the current radicalization require political parties to advance their struggle. Movements for essentially democratic demands, such as ending an unpopular war or repealing anti-abortion laws, are best built through single-issue coalitions. An attempt to create a program for a political party divides these movements, and results in a middle-class party whose program cannot be supported by revolutionists.

Oppressed nationalities and women, on the other hand, must adopt clear political programs to win their liberation. And in contrast to democratic demands, the complete liberation of women cannot be granted by a ruling class which intends to remain in power.

As Leninists, we recognize that a political party is necessary to successfully struggle against a powerful ruling class. In some instances, the revolutionary party develops sufficiently to serve itself as the chief vehicle for the struggles of all oppressed groups. In other cases, we advocate the formation of independent parties, which can be supported in principle by revolutionists when based on an oppressed group in struggle against its oppressors.

When we saw in the 1930s that our party was not large enough to lead mass struggles alone, we called for the formation of an independent labor party. When the Black nationalist movement raised the question in the 1960s of an independent organization, we pointed out that it could best organize itself through its own political party. Since the women's liberation movement in this period cannot turn to any existing mass party to carry out its struggle, a mass, independent women's party is needed.

It would obviously be absurd for us to go to women's liberation meetings and shout *a la* Wohlforth: "Build a women's party now!" But there are advantages, both for our party and for the women's liberation movement, to beginning now to propagandize for the formation of a women's party, as we do for labor and Black parties.

First, it is necessary for us to have a public position on an independent women's party. With the position we have now, one might imagine the following interview with an SWP candidate:

REPORTER: You have explained the need for an inde-

pendent Black political party, and you say that the women's liberation movement cannot rely on the Democratic and Republican parties. Do you feel that women also need their own party?

CANDIDATE: No comment. (Or some evasive answer such as: We support unconditionally the women's liberation movement.)

Second, our calling for a women's party would actually hasten its formation. We are a significant sector of the women's liberation movement, holding leadership positions in many organizations. Our literature in this field is widely recognized and respected. We have more influence now in the women's movement than we had in the Black movement when we first called for a Black party.

An independent political party would clearly show the need for women to break from the Democratic and Republican parties. Whether or not the party decided to challenge the capitalists in the electoral arena, a party based on mass action would show women the way to win their liberation. A party controlled by women which actively fights for their liberation would be a clear alternative to the organization advocated by the CP and others to support women Democrats. A political party would allow the women's movement to determine for itself the strategy needed to win complete liberation.

The PC draft resolution includes the nucleus of a transitional program for women's liberation (pp. 9-11). Revolutionary socialists in a women's party would fight to have this program taken up. In addition to a strategy for the women's movement itself, this program includes positions on the war, national oppression (particularly in the areas of education and prisons), inflation, and other key issues which any serious political party must deal with.

Of course, there is no guarantee that a women's party would actually take up this program. It is possible that for a period of time the party would have a basically reformist program. We are under no obligation to support any particular women's party. Yet we should keep in mind that it is often useful for us to critically support an independent party in order to emphasize the need for independent political action. On the question of an independent women's party's choosing a woman Democrat as its candidate (as distinct from the question of an organization set

up to support women Democrats), the following remarks by Trotsky on Black political action should be considered:

"It is a question of another organization for which we are not responsible, just as they are not responsible for us. If this organization puts up a certain candidate, and we find as a party that we must put up our own candidate in opposition, we have the full right to do so. If we are weak and cannot get the organization to choose a revolutionist, and they choose a Negro Democrat, we might even withdraw our candidate with a concrete declaration that we abstain from fighting, not the Democrat, but the Negro. We consider that the Negro's candidacy as opposed to the white's candidacy, even if both are of the same party, is an important factor in the struggle of Negroes for their equality; and in this case we can critically support them. I believe that it can be done in certain instances." (*Leon Trotsky on Black Nationalism*, p. 48)

As the radicalization deepens, however, the likelihood of reformism dominating an independent political party is decreased. Just as the women's liberation movement has pressured Raza Unida to take up feminist demands, nationalist parties would pressure a women's party to take up nationalist demands. As our own party grows, we will be able to exert a greater influence on other parties.

In considering our line for the next period, it is necessary to understand the differences between the PC draft and the resolution entitled "Toward a Mass Feminist Party." Unfortunately, the PC draft resolution is silent on the question of a women's party. In order to facilitate a fruitful discussion, the PC should make its position clear on the following questions:

1. Is the struggle for women's liberation an independent component of the combined revolution, with as great a revolutionary potential as the struggles of oppressed nationalities?

2. Is an independent women's party *ipso facto* a party which revolutionists can in principle support, as are labor parties, parties of oppressed nationalities, and parties of working-class tendencies?

3. Would the formation of a mass, independent women's party advance or retard the struggle for women's liberation?

July 14, 1971

THE FALSIFICATION OF MANDEL'S "NEO-CAPITALISM"
BY THE AUTHORS OF "FOR A PROLETARIAN ORIENTATION"
By Gary Sommer, Oakland-Berkeley Branch

There is one main point that I want to address myself in this present discussion. It pertains to the minority's attitude and understanding of Comrade Mandel's analysis of the present stage of capitalism today. To deal with this point, is crucial, because to my mind, it is the sole explanation given by the minority to explain why the Party has its current "petty-bourgeois" orientation.

Now, just what does the minority say about Comrade Mandel's theory and analysis of capitalism today and what are its logical conclusions or implications?

"Based on this general analysis, Marxists have always sought to build revolutionary parties based on the workers involved in basic production and distribution. With the recognition of the changes in certain sections of the working class brought about by urbanization, this should suffice as definition basic to the call for a proletarian orientation. However, in the last several years Comrade Ernest Mandel has developed a theory which challenges these basic Marxist definitions. And the SWP leadership has neither criticized Mandel's assertions nor analyzed the implications these assertions have for the strategy of the revolutionary party. In fact, our party has been following the logic of Mandel's position without admitting it."

"It is Mandel's opinion that '... starting either with the great depression of 1929-32 or with the second world war, capitalism entered into a third stage in its development . . . ' ("Workers Under Neo-Capitalism," *ISR*, Nov.-Dec., 1968, p. 2) Mandel calls this new period 'neo-capitalism' and says that it has been characterized by 'the massive reintroduction of intellectual labor into the process of production. . . .' ("The Leninist Theory of Organization: Its Relevance for Today," *ISR*, Dec., 1970, p. 41) Mandel then says: "Thus a process is underway of proletarianization of intellectual labor. Proletarianization does not mean primarily (or in some circumstances at all) limited consumption or a low standard of living, but increasing alienation, increasing subordination of labor to demands that no longer have any correspondence to the special talents or fulfillment of the inner needs of men." ("The Role of the Universities in the West," *Intercontinental Press*, Nov. 2, 1970, p. 941. Mandel's emphasis) (Quoted from "For A Proletarian Orientation" pp. 5-6.)

The logical conclusions that the minority draws from this interpretation is summarized by the following:

"The inevitable logic of Mandel's position is that the party today must orient toward this layer of intelligentsia. We maintain that while the party must try to win recruits anywhere it can, it is incorrect to assign anything more than secondary importance to any layer but the industrial proletariat. Of course, if dream merchants are considered "industrial labor," then the proletarian orientation becomes a farce." (Quoted from "For a Proletarian Orientation" p. 7.)

So you see comrades, it is *this theory* of "neo-capitalism" as interpreted by the minority that is responsible for the Party's "petty-bourgeois" orientation. It's not the Party's program that's responsible, and it's really not the Party's composition either; it is the theory of "neo-capitalism" that has put us on the wrong road — that has carried us along by the tides of the "petty-bourgeois currents."

Now let's see what Comrade Mandel really means when he speaks of "Neo-capitalism." The following quotes are taken directly from Mandel, this time in context.

"I do not care very much for the term "neo-capitalism" which is ambiguous, to say the least. Some European politicians and sociologists speak about "neo-capitalism" in the sense that society has shed some of the basic characteristics of capitalism. I deny this most categorically, and therefore attach to the term "neo-capitalism" the opposite connotation: a society which has all the basic elements of classical capitalism.

"Nevertheless I am quite convinced that starting either with the great depression of 1929-32 or with the second world war, capitalism entered into a third stage in its development, which is as different from monopoly capitalism or imperialism described by Lenin, Hilferding and others as monopoly capitalism was different from classical 19th century laissez-faire capitalism. We have to give this child a name; all other names proposed seem even less acceptable than "neo-capitalism." "State monopoly capitalism," the term used in the Soviet Union and the "official" Communist parties, is very misleading because it implies a degree of independence of the state which, to my mind, does not at all correspond to present-day reality. *On the contrary, I would say that today the state is a much more direct instrument for guaranteeing monopoly surplus profits to the strongest private monopolies than it ever was in the past.*" ("Workers Under Neo-Capitalism," *On the Revolutionary Potential Of The Working Class*, pp. 6-7. emphasis added.)

"To the extent that the bourgeoisie itself is no longer confident that the automatic mechanics of capitalist economy will sustain its rule, another force must intervene for any long-term salvation of the system, and this force is the state. *Neo-capitalism is a capitalism whose pre-eminent characteristic is the growth of intervention by the state into economic life.*" (*An Introduction To Marxist Economic Theory*, Ernest Mandel, p. 56, emphasis added.)

So the basic characteristic of neo-capitalism is *not* the "massive reintroduction of intellectual labor in the process of production . . ." as the minority would have us believe, but the intervention of the capitalist state to guarantee surplus profits for the giant capitalist monopolies.

When Mandel talks about the reintroduction of intellectual labor into the process of production he said, and I quote from the source given by the minority, only this time I'll complete the sentence in the context it was written.

"The massive reintroduction of intellectual labor into the process of production brought about by the *third industrial revolution*, which was foreseen by Marx and whose foundations were already laid in the second industrial revolution, has created the prerequisite for a much broader layer of the scientific intelligentsia to regain the awareness of alienation which it had lost through its removal from the process of direct production of surplus value and its transformation into a direct or indirect consumer of surplus value. ("The Leninist Theory of Organization: Its Relevance for Today," *ISR*, Dec., 1970, p. 41. emphasis added.)

So the reintroduction of intellectual labor was brought

about by the *third industrial revolution*, not by "neo-capitalism" as defined by Mandel.

Nowhere, at any time, in any of the sources quoted by the minority, does Mandel say directly or even imply that the "technical intelligentsia" or students are the crucial sectors of the working-class population that will make the revolution. What Comrade Mandel does say or imply are a number of things, especially pertaining to the students: 1) Students will not always remain students; 2) Revolutionary students can introduce revolutionary ideas into the working-class; 3) Students can give the first impulse to revolutionary action; 4) Students need to have an organization which enables them to remain integrated with other revolutionary elements. They need a revolutionary organization to avoid losing their revolutionary consciousness; and 5) Although the social weight of students has increased over the past 50 years—by the very fact the universities had to open their doors to working-class youth—their power is limited and students cannot get a real social transformation going unless they are linked up with a stronger social force such as the working-class.

So just as statistics can be taken from various sources to prove a point, so can selected quotes, especially if they are taken from a variety of sources, each used in a different context of an over-all topic.

The minority's interpretation of Mandel's theory of neo-

capitalism raises some important questions that need to be answered. If those who support "For A Proletarian Orientation" disagree with Comrade Mandel's theory of "neo-capitalism" no matter how you interpret it—what then is your analysis of the process capitalism is undergoing today? and what then is your analysis of the present social movements. Calling them "petty-bourgeois" is *no* substitute for a well thought-out thorough analysis. As a revolutionary *it is your obligation* and as a Marxist *it is your duty* to present your own theory, not just your ideology.

I believe that Mandel has a *valid theory* and that those of the minority opinion have an *ideology*. Marx distinguished between theory and ideology. *Theory* is a scientific analysis or reproduction of social reality. *Ideology* is a false or partially false interpretation of that reality.

In order to get a clearer understanding of why the supporters of "For A Proletarian Orientation" take the position they do, I feel that they have to present more than just a "document" on the Party's "orientation" because the differences that have been expressed throughout all the documents under discussion in this Branch go much deeper—it goes directly to the heart from which *all* our activities flow and that heart is *our theory*.

July 19, 1971

TWO STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

by Fred Feldman, Oakland/Berkeley Branch

The Oakland/Berkeley branch recently concluded an extended discussion of Comrade Hansen's article, "In Defense of the Leninist Strategy of Party Building." The discussion revealed that many, if not all, supporters of the "For A Proletarian Orientation" counter-Political Resolution, believe that their proposed strategy of immediate, large-scale industrial colonization, with trade union work as the central arena of party work, should be applied by the Fourth International as a whole. They counterposed their proposals to the "Worldwide Youth Radicalization and the Tasks of the Fourth International." They viewed the strategy put forward in that document as an adaptation to the petty bourgeoisie. Comrades Bill Massey, Ralph Levitt and Alan Wald were particularly forceful in expressing this viewpoint.

At the same time FAPO comrades adopted the contradictory stance of "critical support" to Hansen's polemic in favor of the party building strategy expressed in the youth radicalization resolution presented at the 1969 World Congress. The SWP agreed with the political ideas this resolution expressed. The supporters of the FAPO resolution apparently felt that by applying the tactic of critical support to Hansen's polemic, they were freed from the responsibility of presenting the party as a whole with their counter-analysis of the youth radicalization and a counter-strategy for building the Fourth International.

Tom Cagle is the only supporter of the "Proletarian Orientation" resolution in the Oakland/Berkeley branch who has attempted to make such a counter analysis. His views closely parallel those of the sectarian Socialist Labour League of England and its co-thinkers.

The problem facing the Fourth International from its inception has been to gather and consolidate substantial cadres and build revolutionary parties. In the early years, this effort consisted largely of salvaging cadres from the

historic disasters caused by Stalinism. Today, Trotskyists find themselves with the chance to recruit from mass movements independent of the Stalinists and Social Democrats. Thousands of potential Bolsheviks, drawn into struggle by their desire to combat one or another evil of capitalism, are active builders of these movements. They are untrained and uncorrupted by Stalinism, uncorroded by skepticism, cynicism and pessimism. They have not been demoralized by decades of defeat.

The movements they build (antiwar movement, national struggles, feminist movement, defense of democratic rights, anticolonial struggles) strike at root contradictions of the capitalist system. The fact that these movements do not, in many cases, involve the great mass of industrial workers does not give the movements a petty bourgeois class nature. They are typified by militant mass actions around key issues of the class struggle. They are capable of involving decisive social forces. They open the road to the socialist revolution.

Our central task in this new upsurge remains unchanged: to recruit and consolidate cadres and parties around our program. Without that cadre, we cannot win the leadership of the masses in a revolutionary upsurge. Throughout this period, the transitional approach has been our tool for participating in the anticapitalist ferment to win the most conscious activists and augment our forces.

Our problem has not been to find a way to get around this radicalized layer so as to win directly the leadership of the less politicalized working masses. We know that is impossible. Our problem is not to develop a strategy for taking power in the immediate future. The aim of an international discussion in 1971 is not to predict where the strategic location for our forces for the seizure of state power will be and then plug our cadre in there. The transitional program is not today a tool for

launching a campaign to win the leadership of trade unions all over the world. It is a tool for solving the crisis of leadership, for winning hegemony in the conscious vanguard, for building large revolutionary parties. We are concerned with building our small parties out of the great opportunities that we find in the radicalization that exists. Our concern is to reach those who are in political struggle and are reaching anticapitalist conclusions.

Those who support the "Proletarian Orientation" resolution have a different view of the tasks of the International. This is evident in their treatment of the May-June events in France. They write (FAPO, p16), "The reason the workers did not win in France in 1968 was because they gave allegiance to the Communist Party. They gave this allegiance mainly through their trade unions. The corollary to this is that we, the Bolsheviks, were not in the trade unions to fight for the allegiance of the workers. The May-June events in France confirm the necessity of the vanguard party being rooted in the working class." In the branch discussion, minority comrades criticized the work of our French co-thinkers. They felt that by orienting toward the youth radicalization centered in the campuses instead of colonizing the factories, our French co-thinkers missed a chance to lead a socialist revolution.

The fact is that by building the movements for democratic rights, against the war and for the "red university," the French Trotskyists built a revolutionary youth organization capable of winning the leadership of mass actions which shook the whole society and brought the working class itself into motion. We don't think they failed because they didn't take state power in 1968. We think their work in May-June was successful because it laid the groundwork for initiating a party and brought us into contact with groups of vanguard workers.

Suppose the tiny band of French Trotskyists that existed when the current radicalization began had oriented toward the Stalinist dominated unions instead of the campus based movements that were breaking free from Stalinist control. Would they have built a cadre when workers were not ready to consider our program or leadership? Would they have recruited more workers? No. The influence of our co-thinkers on the workers upsurge in May-June would have been reduced by "rooting" their tiny cadre in the relatively quiescent labor movement. We would have appeared before the radicalizing workers, not as leaders of anticapitalist mass actions which were politically awakening them, but as a carping, ineffectual sect in the unions, nipping at the heels of the Stalinist bureaucrats. The roots our co-thinkers have developed among the radicalized French workers are based in large part on their successes in recruiting cadre and winning leadership in campus based movements.

The strategy for party building which the SWP supports is, in its broad outlines, the same strategy which we use to build the party here. We aim to win young cadres by deep intervention into the mass movements which bring them into the class struggle. In many countries, such as

the US, this means focusing much of the attention of small forces on the campuses, which are the driving force and provide the greatest concentration of dedicated activists in many of these struggles.

We oppose any tendency to adapt to the mistakes (such as ultraleftism or sectarianism) which newly radicalizing youth will inevitably make when revolutionary socialism is not a mass trend. We equally oppose any retreat from the battle to win these youth because of their supposedly petty bourgeois tendency to seriously consider ideas other than our own. The danger of adaptation for a revolutionary party is very real. It exists whenever revolutionaries relate to other social layers that are not yet convinced of our program—whether women, students, Chicanos, or auto workers. The only way to avoid this danger is to retire from politics. The danger of adaptation must be handled by political discussion and clarification, not by organizational sure-cures that cut across party building. Party building is best served by building anticapitalist mass movements and participating in the debates that young rebels in the US, Latin America and elsewhere carry out, proposing and putting into action our mass action, party building strategy.

This is the line we propose. This is the *line* of the Hansen documents. The polemic against Maitan is not the line—it is argumentation to support this line. If you don't support this line, I don't see how you can give support—"critical" or otherwise—to the party's views on the international movement. There is nothing in common between this approach and that proposed by Comrades Massey, Levitt, Wald *et al* of carrying out the line of the Gregorich resolution internationally.

Their error is symmetrical with that made by Maitan, except that they replace the continental strategy of rural guerilla warfare with the international strategy of industrial colonization. Both draw back from the Leninist strategy of party building, the hard work of convincing the radicalizing layers of the correctness of our program. Both take refuge in organizational-tactical panaceas as a substitute. Both believe the key task is not party building but to determine, based on historic precedents, the strategic location of our forces for the seizure of state power, and move them there *now*.

The Gregorich tendency adds the theory that by retreating from the more radicalized layers to layers less touched by the ideas and actions of the mass struggles, we can preserve our program from the pressure of our capitalist milieu. The opposite is the case, of course.

Both Maitan and the Gregorich tendency take tactical proposals, raise them to the level of strategies and seek to impose them on the International. In both cases, the strategies, if consistently carried out, would postpone the task of building the party in today's radicalization and threaten whole sections with isolation and ruin in the face of unprecedented opportunities. Maitan and the so-called "Proletarian Orientation Tendency" both adapt to moods and tendencies that exist in the current radicalization; Livio to ultraleftism; the Gregorich minority to sectarianism.

July 13, 1971

PRODUCTIVE AND UNPRODUCTIVE LABOR—
ANSWER TO AN "ECONOMIC THEORY"
by Stephanie Coontz, Lower Manhattan Branch, New York Local

The leaders of the *For a Proletarian Orientation* tendency have decided that the party either has already succumbed or is on the verge of succumbing—depending on which of them is speaking—to "petty bourgeois" pressures and that the party must therefore make a "turn" to the unions of the industrial working class. They do not motivate their conclusions by pointing to any aspects of the party's program which capitulate to the petit bourgeoisie. Nor do they justify their recommendations by applying the methods of dialectical materialism to the current situation in America. Instead they attempt to show that Marxian economic theory *requires* a certain tactical approach to the labor movement at all times.

Other comrades have challenged the recommendations of Gregorich *et al* by taking up an analysis of the current radicalization, and I do not propose to do so here. Rather, I would like to examine some of the assumptions and methodology of the very convenient "theory" these comrades have put forward.

The central economic error of Gregorich *et al* is a total misunderstanding of the concept of productive labor, coupled with a number of misconceptions about the class structure of capitalist society and its evolution over time. Before we deal with this, however, let us simply enumerate a few examples of the anti-Marxist methodology which characterizes the Gregorich document.

This is not a scholastic exercise. These comrades contend that the party has abandoned the central tenets of Marxism. It is their thesis that Marxist economic theory leads automatically to their conclusions. If we can show that they developed this thesis in a way that has nothing in common with Marxism, that should not be irrelevant to the discussion.

Misunderstanding of Fundamental Marxist Concepts

On the first page of the document the authors comment that "it is elementary materialism to observe that being determines consciousness." They then go on to conclude that "the social being of a person determines his class consciousness." This is not "elementary materialism;" in fact, it is hardly materialism at all.

In the first place, no Marxist would attempt to explain the particular by the general. To say, as Marx does, that people's "social existence determines their consciousness" is very different from trying to explain one individual's consciousness by his or her social being. Any attempt to do so leads straight into the vulgar materialism against which Marxists have polemicized so often.

This is no petty criticism. From this misinterpretation of dialectical materialism flows the Gregorich *et al* document's totally mechanistic view that we can "proletarianize" our party simply by putting our individual members into factories, thereby transforming their social being.

In the second place, the comrades declare that a person's social being determines "his class consciousness." Yet this was the very concept Marx and Engels attacked when they argued that the workers needed the scientific socialism carried by some intellectuals to go beyond Ludditism. If their concept is true, then there is no need for a vanguard party. We should abandon party building and dissolve ourselves into the factories to follow the lead of the

"class conscious" workers—whose revolutionary zeal would no doubt be in direct proportion to the length of time they had spent in the factories.

Another serious weakness in the document is the fuzzy conception of the term *petit bourgeoisie*. The classical definition of the term—that the *petit bourgeoisie* comprises the self employed and the small proprietors—is used interchangeably with concepts like the "new middle class" and "intermediary classes."

Gregorich *et al* never burden us with a scientific definition of the term as they use it. The only concrete examples which they advance of *petit bourgeois* things are psychological, and in fact they often verge on a psychological definition. "Students," they assert, "by virtue of their suspension between classes and the values and attitudes their situation produces, are a *petit bourgeois* layer."

They then go on to state: "The question of exactly where the line is drawn between the working class and the *petit bourgeoisie* is an important theoretical problem." One can well see how, in the context of their fuzzy conception of the term, the setting of a demarcation line between workers and *petit bourgeoisie* is indeed a problem. Perhaps in the future Gregorich *et al* will collaborate with a psychiatric research team and favor us with a treatise on "the causes and cures of *petit bourgeois* disorders among individuals suspended between classes."

Yet another misconception of Marxist theory is to be found in the document's rejection of Marx's theory of increasing proletarianization. "What Marx meant when he spoke of the proletarianization of the *petit bourgeoisie*," the authors explain, "was the absorption of that section into the productive process at the point of production. This is not happening today."

While I would be the last to argue that everything Marx wrote is above criticism or correction, I do think it's fair to demand that people read Marx before they correct him. If it's not too complicated, let us simply assume that Marx meant exactly what he said; that the progress of capitalism throws more and more of the *petit bourgeoisie* into the ranks of the proletariat, where they become wage earners with nothing to sell but their own labor power.

In fact, it is precisely this prediction of Marx which even the most zealous proponents of bourgeois ideology are forced to admit has come true. In 1800, 87% of the free labor force was self-employed. By 1957, only 14% of the labor force was self-employed. And the percentage continues to shrink.

Meaningless Rhetoric

The document also abounds with empty formulas and generalizations. For instance, the authors of the document take a fundamental tenet of Marxism, that it is the system of production, not distribution, from whence stems the contradictions of capitalism, and come up with a concept called "the point of production." They never define the term. What is the point of production—the point at which the sardine enters the can? Does this mean that if we can only find the exact point of production for each industry and organize there, we'd be home free?

Concepts like "the point of production" play right into the putsch approach to politics, that we should quit fiddling

around with all these mass movements and concentrate on finding the key section that can "shut it down." If only we could recruit all the drawbridge operators in New York City . . .

Another example. The document blithely informs us that, "lacking an independent relation to the means of production, these non-productive workers constitute a socially unstable layer."

What in the world is an "independent relation to the means of production"? Workers depend upon being paid to operate the means of production which the capitalists own. Capitalists depend upon a class which does not own the means of production and must sell its labor power. It is an exceptional person who has an "independent relation to the means of production"—one who does not need to eat.

Just to list one more "minor error." The authors of *For a Proletarian Orientation* attribute part of their contempt for the "technical intelligentsia" to the fact that the work of this group "is never reflected in any way in actual commodities." Do the comrades imply that a commodity must be a lump of matter that can be held in one's hands? If so, they have missed Marx's definition of a commodity. A commodity may be either a material product or a service. If we write off service workers as "non-productive" (or petit bourgeois?), we are cutting out of the revolution a large and volatile section of the American population, and in particular, great numbers of third world workers. *Productive Versus Unproductive Labor*

Now let us turn to the central contention of the Gregorich document, which is worth quoting in full. The document states that workers can be distinguished from one another by "the manner in which they are exploited. The basic division in the working class is between productive and non-productive workers. The productive workers are those who are exploited at the point of production and thus produce surplus value."

"The remainder of the work force is comprised of non-productive workers. Except for government workers, who are paid from the wages of the working class as a whole, the non-productive workers are paid out of the surplus value created by the productive workers."

"Because of their dependence on the amount of surplus value available to the capitalists, these workers [non-productive workers] are basically economically competitive with the productive workers."

In other words, the contention is that the productive workers have a unique consciousness because of the manner in which they are exploited. Not only do non-productive workers lack this potentially revolutionary consciousness, but in fact they have a basic antagonism with the productive workers, having an interest in the increased extraction of surplus value from the productive workers.

This is quite a remarkable contention. If it is true, then the party faces a formidable task indeed. For not only must we arraign ourselves against the most powerful and best organized ruling class in history, but we must also do battle with the non-productive workers, who, as Marx predicted and the document admits, are growing at a faster rate than the productive workers.

As Marx pointed out, "the extraordinary productiveness of modern industry . . . allows of the unproductive employment of a larger and larger part of the working class." (*Capital*, Vol. I, p. 487) In fact, "the capitalist

increases the number of these labourers, whenever he has more value and profits to realize." (*Capital*, Vol III, p. 354) So we can only admire the courage of those comrades who wish to go up against these millions of non-productive workers with a group which is continually shrinking in size.

Nevertheless, while it may be courageous to declare that we can take on both the capitalists and the non-productive workers, perhaps it isn't necessary. To point out that non-productive workers are paid from the surplus value created by the productive workers is not the same as saying that the non-productive workers have an interest in increasing the exploitation of the productive workers. One could as reasonably argue that since all workers are consumers and since the price of goods may fall if wages are driven down, all workers wish the wages of the workers in all other industries to be driven down.

In point of fact, *all* workers are forced to compete with all other workers for jobs. There are many social, political and economic divisions within the working class—and they are of decisive political importance to us—but they do not significantly affect the basic common interest of the entire working class. The overriding economic fact is that the wages of non-productive workers are determined by the same forces as those of productive workers. Their basic interests are therefore the same, and their basic interests are opposed to those of the capitalists.

That is the striking fact about capitalism. It divides the world into two basic classes, those who own the means of production (the capitalists or bourgeoisie) and those who own only their own labor power, which they must sell in order to survive (the workers or proletariat). That is the fundamental point of *Capital*, which Gregorich *et al* seem to have missed.

Certainly there are divisions in the working class. There are strata, layers, what have you. Bourgeois sociologists have devised means of discovering the most minute differences in living room furnishings, status, income, etc. But for all the differences in wages, prestige, types of labor, and so forth, the overwhelming majority of the population have to sell their labor power. They are workers. As workers, they have certain interests in common. None of them benefits from the war in Vietnam and not even the most highly paid, as the Boeing engineers have discovered, is immune from unemployment.

There are, as I have said, many politically important divisions within the working class. There are divisions between Black and white, male and female, skilled and unskilled, organized and unorganized. These divisions affect the consciousness of the workers. But the differences between productive and unproductive workers, which Gregorich *et al* put at the center of their analysis, do not constitute such a division.

The whole concept of productive labor has nothing whatever to do with the question of what sectors of the working class are politically the most revolutionary. It is totally irrelevant to the tactical discussion of where to organize when. Among other things, the concept of productive labor is a valuable tool for analyzing scientifically the real wealth in capitalist society, as opposed to the double counting that occurs with concepts like Gross National Product.

"Only bourgeois thickheadedness, which regards the capitalist forms of production as its absolute forms—hence

as eternal, natural forms of production—can confuse the question as to what is productive labour from the standpoint of capital with the question as to what labour is productive in general . . . Only labour which is directly transformed into capital is productive." (*Theories of Surplus Value*, I, pp. 380-1)

Marx's approach to productive labor was functional. Does the activity of the worker, whether it is in the production of goods or of services, lead to the creation of surplus value for the capitalist class as a whole? If it does, then it is productive labor. If it is an expense which must be paid for out of the surplus value of the capitalist class, then it is unproductive.

Thus any labor which is an expense, a deduction from total surplus value, is unproductive. This is true even if the labor is necessary to realize the surplus value. It may be a necessary expense, but it is still an expense. For instance, labor involved in guarding, storing, advertising, bookkeeping, etc. is unproductive. Warehousemen as well as public relations officers are unproductive workers—despite the fact that they have rather different revolutionary potentials.

We might see surplus value as a reservoir for the capitalist class. Anything that takes away from the reservoir without giving an equivalent back is a drain on the surplus value of the capitalist class as a whole, and the labor involved in that, even if it is profitable for the individual capitalist, is socially unproductive.

This then is the sole criterion of Marx's definition of productive and unproductive labor. Productive labor is "labour which is exchanged directly against capital." Unproductive labor is "labour that is not exchanged against capital, but directly against revenue, that is, against wages or profits." (*Theories of Surplus Value*, I, p. 153)

"An actor, for example, or even a clown, according to this definition is a productive worker, if he works in the employ of a capitalist to whom he returns more labour than he receives from him in the form of wages; while a jobbing tailor who comes to the capitalist's house and patches his trousers for him, producing a mere use-value for him, is an unproductive worker. The labour of the former is exchanged against capital, that of the latter against revenue. The former produces a surplus value' in the latter, revenue is consumed." (*Theories of Surplus Value*, I, p. 153)

Marx's definition of productive labor, then, has absolutely nothing to do with the "point of production." Nor does it have anything to do with the separation of manual and mental labor. Gregorich *et al* wax quite eloquent in their contempt for Mandel's assertion that intellectual labor produces surplus value. They are so sure of themselves on this point that it is again worth quoting them in full:

Surplus value is produced at the point of production. The intelligentsia described by Comrade Mandel do not work at the point of production. Comrade Mandel say that the designer of a machine or tool is indispensable to the production of surplus value, but that was just as much the case in Marx's time as it is now, and Marx did not say that such engineers or inventors produced surplus value.

(For A Proletarian Orientation, *SWP Discussion Bulletin*, Vol 29, No 2, p. 6)

Let's just check out what Marx did say:

It is indeed the characteristic feature of the capitalist mode of production that it separates the various kinds of labour from each other, therefore also mental and manual labour . . . and distributes them among different people. This however does not prevent the material product from being the *common product* of these persons . . . any more than on the other hand it prevents or in any way alters the relation of each one of these persons to capital being that of wage-labourer and in this pre-eminent sense being that of a *productive labourer*. All these persons are not only directly engaged in the production of material wealth, but they exchange their labour *directly* for money as capital, and consequently directly reproduce, in addition to their wages, a surplus-value for the capitalist." *Theories of Surplus Value*, I, p. 399

Or again. "Included among these productive workers, of course, are all those who contribute in one way or another to the production of the commodity, from the actual operative to the manager or engineer (as distinct from the capitalist)". *ibid*, p. 152

Marx was quite clear that productive labor is not defined by and limited to physical work. In fact, he states: *The same kind of labour may be productive or unproductive.* For example Milton, who wrote *Paradise Lost* for five pounds, was an *unproductive labourer*. On the other hand, the writer who turns out stuff for his publisher factory style, is a *productive labourer* . . . A singer who sings a song for her own account is an *unproductive labourer*. But the same singer commissioned by an entrepreneur to sing in order to make money for him is a *productive labourer*: for she produces capital. (*Theories of Surplus Value*, I, p. 389)

The point of all this is simple. The concept of productive labour is entirely unrelated to the character of the labor or to any consciousness which may flow from the character of labor. As Marx put it, the concept "takes no account whatever of the *content of labour*, and is entirely independent of that content." (*Surplus Value*, I, p. 397)

For instance, Marx points out in *Capital* that the transportation of commodities is actually a continuation of the process of the production in the sphere of circulation. Therefore labor involved in the transport of commodities adds value to the commodities and is productive.

However, Marx also points out that the transportation of *people* is *not* productive labor. Can we only reach out to these transportation workers when they are carrying commodities? Must we hastily change the subject when people get on the train and our transportation workers once again become a "socially unstable layer," "economically competitive with the productive workers"?

Presumably it is clear from the foregoing that the authors of *For a Proletarian Orientation* share a false concept of productive labor. Were we to carry their criteria to their logical conclusion, we would organize the clowns in the Barnum and Bailey circus, yet avoid unproductive warehouse workers like the plague. We would rally around us the writers of pulp fiction and spurn the obviously phoney radicalization of the social service employees. And what on earth would we do with the unprincipled bloc of the International Longshoremen and Warehouse Workers Union, which combines both productive and unproductive workers in one organization?

It is clear that the "theory" advanced by Gregorich

et al is nothing more than a conglomeration of errors and misinterpretations, studded with out-of-context quotes and cemented by phrasemongering about proletarians and points of production.

A few questions arise at this point. Why did these comrades bother to graft this "theory" onto their recommendations to the party? Even when we clear away the gobbledygook about productive labor and the "petty bourgeoisie," this does not mean that the party should not focus in on particular sections of the working class. Even when we recognize that the overwhelming majority of Americans—service workers, "white collar" workers, the "technical intelligentsia," as well as the assembly line workers—are part of the proletariat, this does not mean there are no strategic centers in the working class. Why didn't the comrades simply say that since the industrial proletariat is centrally important to the American revolution we should now enter the following sectors of the industrial proletariat? Why did they fool around revising *Capital* when they could just have laid out a series of tactical prescriptions for the consideration of the party?

The answer to these questions is very revealing. Were Gregorich *et al* to attempt this seemingly easier course they would be compelled to admit that the party has not given up its proletarian orientation—as is abundantly

clear in its program and practice, as reaffirmed by the National Committee Political Resolution. They would be forced to realize that the question facing us is simply: What concrete program do we have to involve the industrial proletariat in the current radicalization—a radicalization which is already profoundly affecting the consciousness of millions of workers, even though it has not yet reflected itself within the union movement except in the most elementary way? The comrades of the Gregorich document would then have to analyze the conjunctural situation in the US today, revealing the origins and thrust of each component of the current radicalization, showing how the party should orient toward each at this time, cataloguing the concrete gains that could be made in such and such an area, etc.

Rather than do this, the authors of *For a Proletarian Orientation* have attempted to construct a theory which saves them the trouble of such an analysis, which can be mechanically applied to the Russia of 1917, the United States of 1971, and the Africa of 1980. As a result, their theory and their recommendations to the party must suffer the same fate which Engels pronounced of Feuerbach's theory of morals: "It is designed to suit all periods, all peoples and all conditions, and precisely for that reason it is never and nowhere applicable."

July 15, 1971

WHAT IS THE BASIS OF THE PROLETARIAN ORIENTATION TENDENCY?

by Nelson Blackstock, Oakland-Berkeley Branch

I have just received the "Declaration of Proletarian Orientation Tendency." After reading this statement, as well as the three documents on which the comrades intend to base their tendency, I wish to raise what I consider to be a serious problem. There is an important discrepancy between the written programmatic material which they have put before the entire party and the oral report which their designated representative presented to the Oakland-Berkeley branch.

The question of the Middle East was not taken up in any of the writings of the Proletarian Orientation Tendency. In neither their declaration of tendency nor in any of the documents upon which their tendency is to be based is there the slightest elaboration of the position of this tendency on Israel and the Arab revolution. Yet, in his report to this branch, it was on this question that Comrade Levitt, speaking as the representative of the authors of *For A Proletarian Orientation*, leveled his most serious charges at the party.

I'll quote the pertinent remarks of Comrade Levitt:

"One of the biggest of these warning signs is what you just discussed, and I was unable to be here on the question of the Middle East and the party's attitude towards it. Our party, the Socialist Workers Party and the Fourth International was born and steered in the struggle of, the theory of, and practice of permanent revolution on the one hand against the two-stage Stalinist-Menshevik theory of class collaboration and betrayal on the other. And nothing epitomized this

more than the call for the victory of the bourgeois revolution such as the call for a democratic secular state in Palestine. You can leave the secular out. The secular means that there will be no state religion. It's the call for a democratic state. Our role in the past was always to warn the comrades, these comrades particularly in the Arab world, warn them, alert them to the dangers of adopting any aspect, any trace of the two-stage theory of Menshevism-Stalinism. We are not even warning these comrades. We accept that slogan and embrace it and say that it is the key to the victory in the Middle East. It's not, comrades. It's a petty bourgeois utopia. The simple lessons and outlines of the whole theory of permanent revolution argue eloquently against this.

We're not for the democratic, secular revolution in the Middle East. It can't be achieved. Those demands and aims of the bourgeois-democratic revolution can only be achieved by the socialist revolution. That is the whole learning, the essence and content of the theory of permanent revolution and that's a dangerous mistake to make because it strikes at the heart of what we as Trotskyists stood and have always stood for and should stand for."

Those are strong words. The grave nature of this accusation goes far beyond anything on which the Gregorich tendency is now basing itself. The differences raised so far in the written discussion pale by comparison.

The Marxist movement never faced anything quite

like the current women's liberation movement or the student struggles of today. Certainly the gay liberation movement is a new and unexpected phenomenon. Trotsky never had to grapple with this problem in his lifetime. It is therefore not unusual that some questions and differences would arise as the party attempts to come to grips with this new radicalization and the many unfamiliar questions it has raised.

On the other hand the question of Menshevism and Stalinism has long been settled. There can be absolutely no question about the two-stage theory of revolution. Menshevism was definitively discredited in 1917, over fifty years ago. The theory of permanent revolution is one of the very cornerstones of our movement, that divides Trotskyism from Stalinism. If Comrade Levitt's charge were true, it would indeed indicate a process of deep degeneration of the SWP.

It is impossible that these are merely the views of a single individual, Comrade Levitt. Some of the supporters of the Proletarian Orientation Tendency expressed similar views under the discussion on my report on the National Committee Draft Resolution on Israel and the Arab Revolution. But the Tendency as a whole can't be held responsible for every single view of all its supporters. The discussion in this branch has revealed that comrades who are supporting the Gregorich tendency seem to do so for a variety of different reasons. Some seem to endorse it solely because they feel that we should do more GI or Third World work or organize our trade union work more efficiently. On the other hand, Comrade Cagle, who finds it possible to support the Gregorich tendency, holds political positions that are indistinguishable from those of the sectarian Workers League and the Socialist Labor League.

But Ralph Levitt is not merely one of the variegated supporters of the Proletarian Orientation Tendency. He was put before the branch as the official reporter of the *For A Proletarian Orientation* document.

Comrades Bill Massey and Lauren Charous, both authors of documents on which the Tendency is based, are members of the Oakland/Berkeley branch. Either could have given the report. Neither have differed with Comrade Levitt's remarks. Therefore, one can only conclude that the leadership of the Gregorich tendency thinks that the party has now abandoned the theory of permanent revolution.

Why hasn't the party as a whole been informed of this view of the Gregorich tendency? As a member of the Oakland-Berkeley Branch I have only heard the reporter for the *For A Proletarian Orientation* document in this branch. What other new positions that are not now in writing have the reporters for the Gregorich tendency put forth in other branches around the country?

The comrades of the "proletarian tendency" must be reminded of our proletarian norms. They never tire of claiming that they are the guardians of the traditions of the party. Certainly, they must know that traditionally Marxists have proceeded from more fundamental questions to subsidiary problems, from basic international questions to questions having only national importance. That is how Trotsky did it. The permanent revolution is the key to the socialist revolution in the underdeveloped countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America. It is relevant to struggles of oppressed nationalities elsewhere, including in the Soviet Union and the United States. If the

comrades of the Proletarian Orientation Tendency believe that the Socialist Workers Party is abandoning that theory, then they have the duty to alert the entire party. The questions around which they have formed their tendency are entirely secondary to this question.

The National Committee Draft Resolution on Israel and the Arab Revolution has been out since the very beginning of the discussion. The comrades of the Proletarian Orientation Tendency have had plenty of time to read it and collect their thoughts on it. We should have something in writing by now. The National Committee resolution lays out very clearly the principled bases for our support to the demand for a democratic, secular Palestine.

The call for a democratic secular Palestine is a demand aimed at eliminating the specific oppression which the Palestinian people suffer under the Zionist Israeli State. The Palestinian Arabs are second class citizens and do not enjoy many of the most basic democratic rights available to all Israeli-Jews. Their basic demands are democratic demands, such as the demand for land reform of national independence; i.e. demands that were won by the masses in the classical bourgeois revolutions of Europe. In the epoch of imperialism such demands can only be won through the socialist revolution.

The demand for a democratic, secular Palestine has absolutely nothing in common with the Menshevik call for a "democratic" revolution in Russia, or the Stalinist position of a "two-stage" revolution in the underdeveloped countries. The Mensheviks and later the Stalinists explicitly identified the struggle for democratic demands with a bourgeois revolution and counterposed this to the socialist revolution. Thus they looked to the national bourgeoisie, rather than the working class, as the leader of the revolution.

This is not at all the case with the demand for a democratic, secular Palestine. The party does not counterpose this to a workers state. In fact, a democratic, secular Palestine can be attained only through the establishment of a workers state, as is explicitly stated in the National Committee Draft Resolution on Israel and the Arab Revolution. As Trotskyists, understanding the theory of permanent revolution, we realize that this democratic demand can only be fully realized through the victory of the socialist revolution.

The Gregorich minority must give the party a clearer idea of where they want to go, where they want to take the party. They have yet to give us an analysis of the radicalization. Yet, they give us many conclusions drawn schematically from the past. Comrade Cagle, at least, has given the party some kind of analysis, such as it is. The party leadership has given us a thoroughgoing analysis flowing logically and consistently out of our accumulated learning over the years. From this the National Committee Draft Political Resolution draws its conclusion. Where does the Gregorich tendency stand on the analysis of the period put forward in the National Committee Draft Political Resolution and the one put forward by their supporter, Comrade Cagle? How do they account for the similarity of their conclusions, similar enough to allow Comrade Cagle to support their tendency, if they have a different analysis of the current period?

There is another matter which Comrade Levitt dis-

cussed in the same report, which could be implied or inferred from the documents of the Proletarian Orientation Tendency, but which Comrade Levitt spelled out in a manner which should be brought to the attention of the party as a whole. This is what he said:

"The Socialist Workers Party has entered upon a deep-going process of the petty-bourgeoisification of the party. That is, the overwhelming majority of our ranks are from petty bourgeois backgrounds. Their political day-to-day work is in the milieu of the campus, and most important, are in the process of adopting a petty-bourgeois orientation to the tasks of party building and making revolutionary social change.

"This development is highlighted and underscored by an insight into the current party leadership, and many of the leading cadres and much of the membership of the party as well. We are here, of course, when I say the leading, the leaders of the party, I'm discussing the young leadership, since they have become the directors of the national office and the National Committee, both in numbers and in actual role. But we don't lose sight of the fact that the older leaders of the Dobbs-Kerry generation, who themselves were steeled in union and labor struggles, are now decades removed from the plants; and that the middle generation of the party, a representative of which is Comrade DeBerry, has by and large, by and large, been graduated into skilled job categories or out of the class altogether.

"The young leadership of the party is a petty-bourgeois grouping; petty-bourgeois in training and orientation—I want to discuss this for a moment, because it's a real fact of our party life. We don't raise this question in order to snipe or hurl accusations, we're discussing it because it's a real, an important fact of the life of the party. The young leaders are petty-bourgeois in background and origin, that's clear. These comrades — I have every intention of naming them, since they have names—comrades like Comrades Barnes, Sheppard, Camejo, Waters, Jones, Seigle, Horowitz, Britton, Jenness, Wulp, Stapleton, Benson, Myers, Stone, so on, a whole leading cadre of the party—these comrades are from privileged middle-class comfortable families trained at bourgeois academic institutions which you're familiar with. This is not decisive. We don't judge revolutionaries purely by their class background, although it is a factor of some significance and always has been so in the party.

"Secondly and more importantly their lives since joining the movement have been outside the ranks

of the labor movement. They have primarily worked as party functionaries and in the student radical milieu. A few, still in their early thirties, have spent the totality of their adult lives, the totality, on the payroll of the Socialist Workers Party for as long as a decade. No experience in the unions, no contact with the life and realities of the class, no time in any industrial job, no familiarity with the young workers, Black, white and Brown, of their own generation. Once again, this is not decisive. Other revolutionaries have had similar experiences.

"However, these comrades breathe and live the air of the student perspective. They are opposed to the party participating in the struggles of any section of the class. They embrace, and they use the words often and constantly, they embrace those various social struggles of petty-bourgeois derivation. They believe in the students as the epicenter of the world revolution and radicalization. Petty bourgeois in origin, in training and experience, and in their view of social struggle. This, this combination of factors comrades is decisive. It is decisive. There are no other indicators in our party, in our party life, of their petty-bourgeois character. They will not announce themselves, as no sane political person would, as petty bourgeois, or put a label on their forehead. If politics were that easy and simple we would just hand out blueprints, and everything would be accounted for.

"But this is no accident. The class derivation and perspective of the leadership closely approximates the general development of our party as a whole. Why, then, don't most comrades see it, as we the supporters of the minority document do? Because it is a process, and it is very difficult to see a process while in it and part of it. This is the virtue, the leading virtue, of the authors and supporters of the Proletarian Orientation document. We can see the process for what it is, alert the party to the inevitable dangers of this process, and offer a concrete outline of the ways for the party to reorient and overcome the present danger of total petty-bourgeoisification which will effect our program. We will repeat this many times. It is a process which confronts us, and this is the key to it."

This view raises serious questions about the party itself, not only the leadership. If all layers of the leadership are petty bourgeoisified, how is it that the membership has gone along with this? What hope is there for the party?

July 13, 1971