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A CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEBATE ON INDOCHINA.
THE SWP'S ROLE IN THE ANTIWAR MOVEMENT

by Geoff Mirelowitz, Brooklyn Branch, New York Local

In the course of the present discussion leading up to the next world congress of the Fourth International, several leading comrades in the world movement have raised serious criticisms of the work carried out by the Socialist Workers Party and the Young Socialist Alliance in defense of the Vietnamese revolution. Primarily these criticisms revolve around our orientation towards building a mass action antiwar movement in the United States.

Comrade Germain in his document entitled "In Defence of Leninism: In Defence of the Fourth International" says, "... we wonder whether e.g. in the mass antiwar movement, which the SWP has helped to organize in such an exemplary way, it wouldn't have been necessary to combine a general united front approach toward mobilizing the maximum number of people for an immediate and unconditional withdrawal of U.S. troops from Vietnam, with a more specific propaganda directed to a more limited vanguard . . . which, incidentally would have helped recruitment among vanguard elements too." (IIDB Vol. X, No. 4, emphasis in the original.)

Comrade C. Howard, a central leader of the International Marxist Group, goes much further. In a report given to a meeting of the IMG National Committee, January 25-26, 1973, Comrade Howard says, among other things:

"In our opinion its [the SWP's] primary thrust should have been to attempt to win over the *leftists* to revolutionary Marxist positions. (It would be totally incorrect to imagine that the Weathermen development was inevitable. In our view it was an impatient response to the political weakness of the antiwar movement.) This would have strengthened the antiwar movement. Why? Because without doubt the SWP was the largest organized force on the extreme left to participate in the mass mobilizations. A correct political orientation on its part would have drawn to its ranks the best politically conscious militants within the antiwar movement and would have projected the movement on a broader anti-imperialist trajectory. . . .

"If large sections of the antiwar movement did not ascend from a simple antiwar consciousness, part of the blame has to be laid fairly and squarely with the comrades of the SWP. Thus their inability to politically educate the antiwar movement (except in a wrong and totally negative way against the 'ultralefts') meant that after the heaviest bombing of the war in December 1972, NPAC was incapable of an immediate and emergency mobilisation." (SWP Internal Information Bulletin No. 3 in 1973, emphasis in the original.)

Finally, the most thorough and serious criticism comes from Comrade Sterne in his document entitled, "The Debate on Indochina" (IIDB, Vol. X, No. 7).

This is a wide-ranging document which covers many sides of the debate on Vietnam from the character of the Vietnamese leadership, to the nature of the January 27 Paris accords, to the orientation of the organizations of the world Trotskyist movement towards building the anti-

war movement in the United States, in Europe and throughout the world. I do not intend to take up every point raised by Comrade Sterne in his contribution. He raises many points in which his position is at odds with the established positions of Trotskyism, in my opinion. However, I would like to concentrate on a section of his document in which he criticizes the orientation of the SWP and the YSA towards the antiwar movement, entitled, "Four Criticisms of the SWP."

Let me briefly recapitulate the four criticisms raised by Comrade Sterne.

The first criticism is that the SWP advocated what Sterne calls the extension of our "NPAC policy" to the entire world movement.

In his second criticism Comrade Sterne argues, "The slogan 'Out Now!' not only became the main slogan but *virtually the only one*." (Emphasis in original.) Furthermore, he says of the other demands raised by NPAC relating to the nature of the Thieu regime, political prisoners in South Vietnam, etc., "This theme was *present* in the activity of NPAC but was completely *overshadowed*." (Emphasis in original.)

The third criticism is that the SWP and the YSA aligned their activity completely with NPAC and carried out no independent political campaign of socialist explanation about the events in Indochina. "This" says Sterne about the SWP, "has generally led it to present the Indochinese revolution more as a mere struggle for self-determination than a social revolution, a permanent revolution."

The fourth criticism has two sides. On the one hand Sterne writes of the SWP, "It did not advance more radical *slogans of its own*, and more particularly it has not advanced a slogan of open solidarity with the *Indochinese revolution*." He then goes on to say, "Finally it has not initiated activities of its own based on its slogans that would have enabled it to draw in part of the more advanced layers of the antiwar movement. . . ."

The Strategy We Advocated

Comrade Sterne claims that we advocated an "NPAC policy" for the entire world movement. What we advocated was, and for that matter still is, the general strategy of building united front coalitions that could organize mass antiwar actions on a consistent basis. In other words, we favored an application of the general strategy of the united front developed by Lenin and Trotsky with modifications to adapt it to the concrete realities of today.

We did think that all the sections and sympathizing groups of the International should attempt to carry out work in defense of the Vietnamese revolution. We did favor a general approach for the entire world movement that consisted of three basic parts.

First, we thought antiwar work should be done consistently. In some of the European sections following the May '68 events in France and the October '68 antiwar demonstration of 100,000 in England, Vietnam work

was given a low priority for over two years. We opposed this.

Second, we favored an application of the general united front approach described above.

Third, we favored an orientation towards the masses, an orientation of trying to build the antiwar actions in such a way as to involve the largest possible number of people in action against the war policies of U. S. imperialism.

In arguing for this basic orientation we specifically had to argue against the kind of thinking put forward by Comrade Germain in the political report to the December 1969 meeting of the IEC. In explaining why the antiwar movement outside the U. S. could not reach and involve the masses Comrade Germain said, "But in the rest of the world . . . the antiwar movement in these countries is not a product of the immediate needs and demands of the broad masses, but a result of a process of *political radicalization* of the vanguard. For French revolutionists, Italian revolutionists, German revolutionists, there does not exist any possibility of making an immediate direct contribution to the victory of the South Vietnamese revolution, except by making an immediate victorious socialist revolution in their own country. For them, the key question is therefore one of inserting themselves in the general trend of political radicalization, and contributing to the maturing and political clarification of the vanguard." (International Information Bulletin No. 1 in 1971, emphasis in original.)

We disagreed with this. We argued that in France, Italy, Germany and other countries, antiwar actions *would* make "an immediate, direct contribution" to the struggle of the Vietnamese, right now, before the "victorious socialist revolution" in these countries. We said that the key question, all over the world, was attempting to mobilize the largest possible mass actions in defense of the Vietnamese revolution.

However, we did not attempt to "impose an NPAC policy" on the world movement, in the sense of mechanically applying tactics used in the U. S. to other countries. What we did say was that tactics in each country should be aimed at building the antiwar movement to be as broad and massive as possible in the given situations in different countries.

Some Factual Errors and Distortions

Some of the criticisms raised by Comrade Sterne are either factually incorrect or a complete distortion of what the SWP and the YSA actually did.

Comrade Sterne says that we did not carry out an independent campaign of socialist explanation of the events in Indochina, and explain the dynamic of the permanent revolution there. That charge is simply false. Throughout the course of the revolution in Indochina the Socialist Workers Party has put forward a consistent socialist analysis every week in the pages of *The Militant*, *International Socialist Review*, and other publications. We have consistently explained the permanent revolution in Vietnam, that the struggle is both a struggle for national liberation against imperialism, for the completion of the democratic tasks such as land reform, and for socialism. We have explained that the struggle cannot succeed without overthrowing capitalism and establishing a workers state.

Anyone reading the pages of *The Militant* could not possibly draw any conclusion other than this: The Socialist Workers Party stands completely behind the victory of the Vietnamese revolution and in support of the struggle of the Vietnamese masses for national and social liberation. Nothing about *The Militant's* coverage was neutral. It has been a consistent socialist analysis that continues today and will continue until the complete victory of the Indochinese revolution.

In the course of analyzing the struggle in Vietnam and putting forward our socialist position, we in the SWP have had to polemicize with the Stalinists and others who claimed that the Vietnamese revolution would be a two-stage revolution. For example, these forces claimed that the Paris accords represented the victory of the first stage of the Vietnamese struggle. We had to polemicize against this view. In opposition to it we explained once again in the pages of *The Militant*, of the *International Socialist Review* and of the *Young Socialist*, the dynamic of the permanent revolution in Vietnam.

This campaign of socialist explanation has permeated the work of the SWP and the YSA for many years. In addition to our regular publications we have published several pamphlets on Vietnam. At the inception of the antiwar movement we sold over 20,000 copies of "War and Revolution in Vietnam." Recently, "The Meaning of the Vietnam Accords" has been published. For many years our election campaigns have all addressed themselves to the struggle in Vietnam as the central issue. In the past as well as recently we have conducted tours of leading spokespeople of the SWP and the YSA speaking on the struggle in Vietnam.

The Nature of the "Out Now" Demand

In the other criticisms raised by Comrade Sterne there are several substantive political differences over how to build a mass action movement in defense of the Vietnamese. One of these differences is over the nature of the demand that we raised in the United States. Although Comrade Sterne does not reject the "Out Now" demand completely, he obviously feels that it is inadequate. He says, in criticizing our approach, that the SWP "did not advance more radical *slogans of its own* . . ." (emphasis in original).

Perhaps it would be worthwhile to review the SWP's analysis of the "Out Now" demand in order to answer Comrade Sterne's criticisms.

In the antiwar movement in the U. S. it is definitely correct to say that the SWP and the YSA raised "Out Now" as the central demand that should be raised by the antiwar movement, *and as the central demand supported by revolutionary socialists* in concretizing opposition to the imperialists' war here in the U. S. What are the reasons for this?

First, the "Out Now" demand is a principled demand that recognizes the right of the Vietnamese to self-determination. It is clearly aimed directly at the imperialists in Washington.

Comrade Sterne is correct when he says that we fought for "Out Now" to be the central demand of the movement. One reason we favored it as the central demand is because it keeps the fire on imperialism.

Comrade Sterne is also correct when he says in re-

ferring to the political prisoners in the South, "It is the U.S. however, that in the last analysis bears the responsibility for their fate." That is exactly the point of the centrality of the "Out Now" demand. It points the finger of responsibility clearly at the imperialists in Washington in such a way that the masses in the United States can easily understand, and therefore act. That is why, while raising other demands such as "release the political prisoners," this was done in the framework of the centrality of the "Out Now" demand.

Second, the "Out Now" demand is not a neutral demand. It clearly and unequivocally places all the blame exactly where it belongs: at the doorstep of the imperialists. It completely rejects the idea that the North Vietnamese workers state or the liberation fighters in the South bear any of the blame. Its thrust is in defense of the Vietnamese revolution.

Third, the "Out Now" demand is completely defeatist in relation to U.S. imperialism. In so many words it says that the U.S. government should give up its attempt to dominate Indochina in any way. Certainly there can be no question that if the "Out Now" demand was met (and it has obviously not been met), that that would be a defeat for U.S. imperialism.

Finally, the "Out Now" demand was capable of mobilizing masses of people in action against U.S. imperialism. We are revolutionary politicians. We do not formulate our slogans according to some abstract schema. In building a movement against imperialist war we attempt to tailor our demands so that they are directed against imperialism and so that they can mobilize people in action against imperialism. The "Out Now" demand did this. The fact that hundreds of thousands of people are not demonstrating today against continued U.S. involvement in Vietnam is not due to some weakness of the "Out Now" demand but is rather due to the objective situation that can not be overcome through changing the demand.

During the course of the antiwar movement we in the SWP have been involved in many debates over which demand the movement should raise. Many of the ultra-lefts in this country insisted that we should raise some other "more radical" demand rather than, or along with "Out Now." We rejected that proposal. Other demands, such as "Victory to the NLF," would not have had the same radicalizing effect as "Out Now." The "Out Now" demand did have a radicalizing effect precisely because it was capable of bringing people into action against imperialism.

"Victory to the NLF" expressed a correct sentiment. However, it could not mobilize masses of American people against the government's war policies, and thus would not actually help the Vietnamese the way the "Out Now" demand did.

We supported the "Out Now" demand because it was effective and principled. We supported it as the demand of the broad coalition and we supported it as the demand of the revolutionary party and youth organization. "Out Now" is the slogan of the SWP and the YSA just as during World War I "Peace" was Lenin's slogan.

During World War I Lenin and the Bolsheviks had a defeatist position in relation to the imperialist war being waged by Czarist Russia and later by Kerensky. In speaking to the masses of Russian workers and peas-

ants Lenin concretized that defeatist position in the slogan of "Peace." "Bread, Peace and Land" were some of the key demands of the Bolsheviks at that time.

Lenin of course knew that it was not enough to simply have the correct political position of defeatism. He recognized that it was necessary to communicate that position in such a way that the masses could easily understand it and therefore *be mobilized in action*. In order to mobilize the Russian masses it was necessary to translate the political positions of the Bolsheviks into demands and slogans that were understandable to the masses. "Peace" was such a slogan, at that time under those conditions.

Just as the Bolsheviks had a complete program for the Russian revolution, the SWP also has a complete program for overthrowing imperialism and establishing socialism in colonial countries such as Vietnam as well as in the U.S. However, we do not raise our entire program as an agitational demand. Just as "Peace" was an appropriate and correct demand for the revolutionary party to raise in mobilizing the masses in 1917, "Out Now" is such a demand at this time.

What Kind of Actions Should We Have Organized?

In addition to questioning the demand supported by the SWP to mobilize masses against the imperialist war, Comrade Sterne also charges that the SWP has carried out no independent activities to draw in the "advanced layers." What is really behind this charge?

What Comrade Sterne presumably is getting at, is that the SWP and the YSA should have been building "Support the NLF" contingents or independent "Support the NLF" actions. For example, to take an instance which would be the most favorable from Sterne's point of view, the contingent of 10,000 people on November 15, 1969, who split off from a demonstration of several hundred thousand and rushed the Justice Department armed with NLF flags. This presumably is the kind of action that Comrade Sterne, and other leaders of the Mandel-Maitan-Frank tendency think that the SWP and the YSA should have organized.

Had we adopted this orientation we would have made a serious political error that would have affected the entire development of the mass action antiwar movement in the United States. Had we put the efforts of the SWP and the YSA into building these contingents *there would have been no mass demonstrations to build contingents in!* Comrades Sterne and Germain do not seem to grasp this basic fact. They think that we could have combined these two approaches. The two are mutually exclusive.

Anyone who is familiar with the history of the American antiwar movement knows that it was the intervention of the SWP and the YSA which kept the movement on the track of building mass actions. Comrades Sterne and Germain admit this in their documents. But this was done through a *fierce struggle* against those who attempted to foist "Victory to the NLF" or other "more advanced" slogans on the antiwar movement, or attempted to divert it in other ways.

It was no accident that those who supported the ultra-left "Victory to the NLF" actions also opposed building mass demonstrations for "Out Now." Comrade Sterne's idea of presumably building both "Victory to the NLF"

actions as well as mass demonstrations is wrong. We opposed building these kinds of actions whether they were separate from or "contingents" in mass mobilizations against the war. In either form they were of no value in building a mass antiwar movement—they were obstacles to doing that.

These actions or contingents had no effect other than to tend to isolate the antiwar movement from the masses of Americans. They were of no value at all in drawing in the millions of working people, Blacks, Chicanos, and others that the antiwar movement was trying to reach. They were not even of any value in drawing in American students.

Had we adopted the orientation suggested by Comrade Sterne and others there would have been no November 15, no May events, no April 24, no April 22 as we knew them, as nonexclusive mass actions independent of the capitalist parties. There would have been no consistent mass action movement had it not been for the intervention of the American Trotskyists fighting to build and maintain such a movement.

How to Involve the Advanced Layers and Who Are They to Begin With

Despite the fact that we rejected the orientation suggested by Comrade Sterne and others of the Mandel-Maitan-Frank tendency, we did involve the most politically advanced elements in the antiwar movement and, Comrade Germain's tactical advice notwithstanding, we also recruited many of these people to the YSA and the SWP.

It is necessary to start by determining who makes up these "advanced layers" as Sterne refers to them. Apparently, what we in the SWP have understood to be the advanced layers of the antiwar movement and the advanced layers that Comrade Sterne is presumably referring to, are two different things.

As far as we're concerned, the advanced layers of the antiwar movement have been those activists who worked consistently to build mass demonstrations to defend the Vietnamese revolution. These activists, who numbered in the thousands, in their overwhelming majority were for the victory of the Vietnamese liberation fighters. They were no less radical or revolutionary than the advanced layers that presumably Comrade Sterne refers to, those who split from mass actions and waved NLF flags.

However, the advanced layers that built April 24, that built April 22, that were the real leadership of the May events, these real advanced layers understood that the most effective way to defend the Vietnamese revolution was to build a mass action movement that could work to draw in the masses of Americans who had the power to reverse the imperialists' war policies. These advanced layers were those who wanted to involve the masses in antiwar actions.

But who does Comrade Sterne see as the advanced layers? Presumably, he sees the ultralefts who had to be fought tooth and nail every step of the way in the fight to maintain the antiwar movement. He sees the ultralefts who disrupted mass demonstrations, attempted to seize the speaking platforms and who then split off from these mass actions when their attempts were repulsed by the marshalls who were organized by the action coalitions

which built the demonstrations. He sees the ultralefts who, as has been clearly proven by the Watergate revelations, as often as not were infiltrated and sometimes led by agents-provocateurs. We have had some experience with these people. They were not in the vanguard. They were the rearguard. They were obstacles to building the antiwar movement.

However, we even involved the advanced layers that Sterne is talking about. By fighting against these ultralefts in a consistent and uncompromising way and working to build the mass actions which they opposed, we even brought these "advanced layers" into many mass actions, albeit kicking and screaming. We involved the advanced layers that Sterne sees by fighting them politically, not by adapting to their incorrect ideas.

We also recruited from among the real advanced layers. Over half of the present membership of the SWP and the YSA came from the advanced layers that were made up of the most consistent fighters against the war. We also recruited many people from among the advanced layers that Sterne is talking about, people who initially disagreed with our strategy for building the antiwar movement.

We recruited these advanced layers, of both types, by winning them to our antiwar perspectives and to our revolutionary socialist program. Not by bending our program or our line in the antiwar movement to their "concerns" and incorrect ideas. We do not have one program for the masses and another program for the advanced layers. We have one program. It is oriented towards the masses and based on their needs. On the basis of that program we win the most advanced elements to our organization and train them in the Leninist method of reaching the masses. The intervention of the SWP and the YSA in the antiwar movement has been an exemplary example of how to do that.

Did We Tailend or Did We Lead?

Comrade Sterne concludes his section of criticisms of the SWP with the following paragraph: "Finally, while the SWP took a leading role in animating the antiwar movement, it has remained *politically* in its wake, incapable of meeting the needs of the advanced layers of the movement." (Emphasis in original.)

Comrade Sterne evidently has difficulty in distinguishing between the head and the other end of the antiwar movement. The Socialist Workers Party and the Young Socialist Alliance have consistently been in the leadership of the left wing of the antiwar movement. At every step of the way from the inception of the antiwar movement we have been in the leadership of those fighting to maintain the movement as an independent, mass action movement built around a principled demand. This was a fight that continued throughout the course of the antiwar movement. All along the way our strategy was challenged by one opponent after another. All of them at times reflected one or another of the arguments raised by Comrade Sterne.

We had to fight against those who, from the left, claimed that the antiwar movement's demands and actions weren't radical enough. Against these forces we argued that the antiwar movement was objectively anti-imperialist and in the interests of the masses of Vietnamese and the masses

of Americans, and that to be effective it had to involve masses of people.

At other times we had to fight against those who, from the right, insisted that the movement should call for "Sign Now" or should support the 7-point negotiating position of the PRG. (Often these were the same forces who had claimed that the antiwar movement was not radical enough.) Against these forces we argued that U.S. imperialism has no right to negotiate anything in Indochina and that the antiwar movement has an obligation to point that out and fight for that concept.

We also fought against those who wanted to turn the movement into a vehicle of support for some Democratic Party politician, who wanted the movement out of the streets and into the "mainstream" of capitalist politics. We fought against those who wanted to substitute small individual acts of civil disobedience for mass actions. We fought against those who said the movement could never involve GIs. The list could go on and on listing the different battles we waged with political opponents of every variety to maintain the antiwar movement as a mass action movement that could attempt to involve the masses of American people.

We were not left politically in the wake of the movement, we were in the leadership of the movement. We did not tailend the movement. Tailending would have meant doing what Comrade Sterne suggests we should have, adapting our position to his "advanced layers." This we refused to do. We fought the "vanguard" that Sterne orients toward every step of the way and the history of the antiwar movement bears out the correctness of our strategy.

We maintained our principled political position because we had bigger game in mind than Comrade Sterne evidently had. We built the antiwar movement in the way we did because we wanted to involve the masses, the millions of American working people with the power to end the war. That's what the SWP was out to accomplish in the antiwar movement. Not to simply "win over the leftists" as Comrade Howard suggests (although we did that too as a result of orienting towards the masses).

We were able to help organize some very large actions involving hundreds of thousands of people although we did not yet accomplish our ultimate goal of involving masses of American workers. However, this prospect of tens of millions of American people joining the antiwar actions is part of what hamstringing the ruling class.

Almost all of the actions the antiwar movement organized were basically vanguard actions. Even the May events of 1970, which were mass actions of American students and did begin to involve other forces, were only a taste of what we were out to accomplish. Because of the change in the course of the war, due to the monstrous betrayal of Moscow and Peking, we did not get a chance to accomplish that goal. However, we think that it was possible. We think that it could have happened. However, the only way it could have happened was through the correct political intervention of revolutionary socialists.

In the end this is what the difference with Comrade Sterne is all about. We were out to build a mass antiwar movement. Comrade Sterne and the other leaders of the Mandel-Maitan-Frank tendency seem to be oriented in another direction.

June 27, 1973

AN INITIAL EVALUATION OF THE "BREAKTHROUGH" STRATEGY

by Jim Rousey, San Francisco Branch

At the present the Fourth International is faced with two roads to choose from, one of which holds great potential for seriously expanding the influence of cadres of the Fourth International over the class struggle on a world scale; while the other holds a possibility of sending comrades on a divergence from Trotskyism of historic proportions and seriously weakening the possibility for the proletariat to seize power. The first is expressed in the strategy of constructing Leninist parties by use of the transitional method. The second finds expression in various "get-rich-quick" schemes, most notably the strategy of guerrilla warfare and the turn to the "new mass vanguard." The present policies of the European sections of the Fourth International and the majority of the International Executive Committee tend overwhelm-

ingly toward the second direction.

Origins of the Strategy

The tendency toward the "breakthrough" solution to the historical problems of European Trotskyism, which is faced with the task of overcoming the mass Communist parties' hegemony in the European working class, was first expressed in Livio Maitan's "An Insufficient Document" where he explained: "But it is only by successes or revolutionary struggles at the head of a mass movement in one or several countries that we will be able to surmount our difficulties and present contradictions." (International Information Bulletin, *Discussion on Latin America*, page 15.) We were thus presented with the idea that all that world Trotskyism needed to solve its world

problems and its organizational difficulties was to break out of its isolation by successes in "one or several countries." We were even informed that "It is a question more precisely of determining in what countries we have the best chance of a breakthrough and *subordinating everything* to the elementary necessity for a success in these countries, and even, if necessary in a single country. The rest will come later." (*Ibid.*, p. 15, emphasis added.) But why was *this* method necessary? According to Comrade Maitan, "The explanation must be sought in the following direction: on the one hand certain present movements which are being unleashed, by their very scope go beyond the present possibilities of our restricted organizations; on the other hand—and above all—these new movements, which are breaking through or passing over every 'traditional' organizational framework and in which the militants often display a tendency to consider us, too, as a part of the 'traditional' left, exercise a powerful attraction in circles where formerly we were alone or almost alone in speaking a revolutionary language." (*Ibid.*, p. 15.) We are thus urged to place all our efforts behind a breakthrough in Latin America, or to be more specific, Bolivia, not on the basis of great opportunities in the chosen area, but rather because of the political backwardness of certain elements in the new youth radicalization in their identification of Leninism and Trotskyism with Stalinism, and the fact they have had some influence in areas where we have previously done work! This seems at best to be a most fragile logic on which to launch the Fourth International into what is to be a major turn. This must be characterized as a major turn, for it is not in the traditions of Trotskyism to pick one country seemingly at random as the best place for a breakthrough. Had the proponents of this method followed their own logic at the 8th World Congress they most assuredly would not have chosen France as the area where we would make a breakthrough and play a leading role in a mass youth movement which triggered a general strike!

Breaking Through in Latin America

The breakthrough strategy has had a terrible cost in Latin America. No one would deny that the application of the line has had a cost far out of proportion to any gains. Both the Bolivian and Argentine sections have suffered heavy casualties and both are now operating clandestinely with all of the danger and massive amount of time committed to security that that implies. Yet that is not the limit of the damage this has done to the Fourth International. Leaving aside the fact that the cadres of the Fourth International have sacrificed valuable openings in fields other than guerrilla warfare by following this strategy, we come to the political positions held and the tactics employed by the Argentine section, the PRT, and their effect on the rest of the International. This has contributed to a severe disorientation of many comrades on a series of questions including isolated terrorism and Stalinism.

The present tactics of the PRT are an adaptation to isolated terrorism as their political line is to Stalinism. Yet the members of the International are treated to a defense of the first and silence on the second by leading members of the International. That the PRT's tactics are an adaptation to isolated terrorism, which is nothing

more than the other side of the coin to liberalism, is amply illustrated by their recent "exemplary action" against Coca-Cola. We were treated to the sight of a section of the Fourth International demanding one million dollars from the company, not to swell the coffers of the International or to put out a revolutionary press (though that would be no excuse for this type of action) but rather as a gift to charity! That a section would be engaged in activities such as this is reprehensible, but that the majority of the International Executive Committee would not only *not condemn, but approve* terrorist actions and attempt to justify them on the basis of out-of-context and poorly translated quotations from Lenin indicates a severe adaptation to ultraleftism. Yet even this pales in comparison to the incredible lack of comment on the PRT's political degeneration.

The PRT has embraced an entire series of Stalinist parties and ideas. They view *these* parties and not the International as the way forward. To quote from their Memorandum on the International: "It is necessary to reiterate, so as to leave no room for error, exaggerations or false illusions, the realistic point of view I upheld at the congress, *that we do not believe in the possibility of the fourth International becoming converted into the international revolutionary party*, the need of which we uphold. We believe that this is now historically impossible, and that the role of the International, granting the favorable supposition that it becomes converted into a proletarian revolutionary organization, should be to seek to construct a *new Revolutionary International* modeled after the Leninist Third International and *based on the Vietnamese, Chinese, Cuban, Korean and Albanian parties*." (Resolutions of the Fifth Congress of the PRT, International Internal Discussion Bulletin, Volume X, No. 5, p. 25, emphasis added.) Even comrades with differences on the Stalinist nature of the Vietnamese and Chinese leaderships can hardly deny the Stalinist character of either the Albanian CP or the Korean CP. This position of the PRT is well known to the IEC, but, remarkably, the evaluation of Argentina passed by the IEC in December, "The Political Crisis and Perspectives for Revolutionary Struggle in Argentina," with full knowledge of the documents of the Fifth Congress of the PRT which are mentioned in the text (page 19), restricts itself to this comment: "These positions mean that the Argentine comrades have very clear and serious differences with conceptions of the International. It is an urgent task for the section to develop an indepth discussion with the International on these questions. This is required, on the one hand, by the necessity of making our movement homogeneous and, on the other, by the needs of developing the party and a correct orientation in the struggle the comrades are engaged in in Argentina. From this standpoint grave errors have been committed. Immediately after the Ninth Congress a discussion should have been initiated with the comrades of the PRT on all the political and theoretical differences. Subsequently, we should not have limited ourselves to publicizing the courageous actions of the ERP without at the same time raising the problems that existed." (International Internal Discussion Bulletin, Volume X, No. 6, p. 20.) Are these comrades so desperate for a breakthrough that they consider unnecessary an extended comment on the fact that a sec-

tion of the International views *Stalinism* in any guise as the road to revolution? Also the PRT Memorandum, unlike the IEC analysis, does not believe that there can be a differentiation between their theory and actions. "It [the PRT] is publicly asserting our adherence to the theory of the permanent revolution and the Trotskyist analysis of the Soviet bureaucracy, as well as *our enthusiastic approval of the theory of revolutionary war developed by Mao Tse-tung, Giap, etc.*" (Memorandum, p. 25, emphasis added.) They don't try to get along with misquoting Lenin, but fervently embrace the authorities from whom they developed their theories on "exemplary action." There is in addition the question of deliberate misrepresentation of the positions of the PRT by comrades of the Mandel-Maitan-Frank tendency.

Both the IEC analysis and Comrade Germain's document "In Defence of Leninism: In Defence of the Fourth International" distort the position of the PRT. The IEC document, when listing the differences that the PRT has with the International, include "the concept of the struggle against the bureaucracy in the degenerated workers' states" (p. 20). This is prevarication plain and simple for, as can be observed from the PRT Memorandum, they do not believe that Korea, Vietnam, Albania, and China are *degenerated* workers states but rather are "revolutionary workers states" (Memorandum, p. 24, emphasis added). The PRT does not intend to struggle against the Chinese bureaucracy; they want to join it in a new International. In a similar vein Comrade Germain informs us in his document "In Defence of Leninism . . ." that "The comrades of the PRT correctly understand that the Fourth International today is only the initial nucleus of the future revolutionary mass International." (International Internal Discussion Bulletin, Volume X, No. 4, p. 18.) But this is exactly what they *don't* believe. To requote: "we do not believe in the possibility of the Fourth International becoming converted into the international revolutionary party." The PRT is willing to acknowledge its politics even if Comrade Germain is not. Germain also reassures us that "the adaptation to Maoism [by the PRT] is retreating under the pressure of events." (*Ibid.*, p. 18.) This is obviously untrue; if anything it is increasing. If this type of dishonesty and the resultant disorientation of comrades is added to the price the Latin American comrades have paid for following the line of the 9th World Congress, the price of this "breakthrough" is becoming prohibitive.

The European Application

The Draft Theses on "The Building of Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe" (International Internal Discussion Bulletin, Vol. X, No. 3) reflects the same logic. Starting from a conclusion that there are "four" or five years before the decisive battles are fought" (p. 14) and rejecting the possibility of "mass organic growth by huge influxes of members" (p. 18), it proceeds to the conclusion that "the central task for revolutionary Marxists . . . is to win hegemony within the new mass vanguard" (p. 13, their emphasis). The theses projects shaping the vanguard and "making it an adequate instrument for regenerating the organized workers' movement" (p. 14). Leaving aside the question of exactly how the comrades determined that the decisive battles will occur in four or five years, we are still left with two questions: first, what or-

ganizational form is necessary for the shaping of the vanguard; and second, what political program is it to project?

The central consideration with regard to the vanguard is its extreme heterogeneity. Starting from this recognition, we note that the vanguard contains within it non-Leninist forces who lack an appreciation of the necessity of the Leninist party either from inexperience or mistraining in the political arena. This diversity of the vanguard dictates that in order to make it "an adequate instrument," an organizational form distinctly different from either the party or a democratic-centralist youth group is necessary. This form is the Red Circle which, as has been pointed out, lacks many of the advantages of a democratic-centralist youth group, but entails minimal organizational responsibility from its adherents. It also implies a minimal political level.

The Draft Theses makes many projections about the relationship between the party and the vanguard. It speaks of shaping it, crystalizing it, directing it, winning hegemony within it, everything in fact but recruiting it. Both this implication of external direction and the rejection of the possibility of mass recruitment is a clear statement of major political differences between the present sentiments of the vanguard and the program of Trotskyism. We do not direct from a distance people we can recruit. We are therefore faced with the problem of what political program the vanguard will project; and what program we will project to the vanguard. While the Draft Theses inveighs against adapting to the backwardness of the vanguard, it at the same time speaks of "organizing national political campaigns on carefully chosen issues that correspond to the concerns of the vanguard" (p. 24). These must of necessity be geared to the lowest common denominator as required by the heterogeneous nature of the vanguard. This means in turn that the vanguard will be presenting the politics of the party to the masses in a most minimal and diluted form. This, linked with the low political and organizational level of potential recruits who lack the experience to be gained in a democratic-centralist youth group, would be enough alone to cast considerable doubt on the value of this orientation. The major danger, however, lies in *political* adaptation to the backwardness of this layer. As this strategy has been carried out by the European sections since the last world congress, even though it has not been previously codified in a unified document, we can turn to the policies of the European sections to see if there is any indication of such adaptation.

In her document, "A Criticism of the United Secretariat Majority Draft Resolution on the 'Building of Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe' — An Initial Contribution to the Discussion" (International Internal Discussion Bulletin, Vol. X, No. 3), Mary-Alice Waters lists several adaptations made by the Draft Theses to the ultraleft and backward nature of a section of the "new mass vanguard." These included the following points: the European sections' record on Vietnam solidarity work, their record on the defense of the Irish revolution, and the "dialectics of minority violence." While not proposing to recapitulate her document on these points, they should be dealt with briefly. On Vietnam, we find after a promising start in organizing mass demonstrations, that the European sections turned away from this course because, as the IMG put it, "the youth vanguard had matured and is no longer

prepared to be limited to single issue campaigns." ("A Criticism of the Draft Resolution," p. 9.) Within the European sections we had the concomitant growth of an attitude that, as Comrade Germain put it, "For French revolutionists, Italian revolutionists, German revolutionists, there does not exist any possibility of making an immediate contribution to the victorious socialist revolution in their own country." (*Ibid.*, p. 8.) Similar attitudes were manifested by the IMG toward work around the Irish defense work in their comments on a demonstration of 20,000 around the demand for the withdrawal of British troops from Ireland when they said, "But this demand on its own is unfortunately ambiguous: It can very easily be taken up and transformed into a 'Bring the boys home' campaign based on liberal issues with only a negative impact." (*Ibid.*, p. 11.) On the "dialectics of minority violence" comrades were treated to Comrade Bensaid's defense of kidnapping as a tactic: "If the kidnapping expresses a genuine anger, if it is not presented as an end in itself, a pure revolt, but rather as a means of breaking up a passivity and resignation of the masses by beginning to overthrow its hierarchical idols, then kidnapping can be a correct initiative the workers ought to defend and even in certain cases promote." (*Ibid.*, p. 24.) This position derives more from Mao Tse-tung's "from a tiny spark can spring a great prairie fire" school of individual terrorism than the method of the Transitional Program. There are three other aspects of the adaptation to ultraleftism that have to be dealt with: the Sterne-Walter resolution on Vietnam; the nature of the debate in the European sections on the Social Democracy; and the attitude toward electoral participation manifest in the Draft Theses.

The Sterne-Walter resolution on Vietnam (International Internal Discussion Bulletin, Vol. X, No. 6) is symptomatic of the adaptation to ultraleftism. After refusing to characterize the concessions forced on the Vietnamese as a defeat, it proceeds to equate the Vietnamese CP's plan for a coalition government with the bourgeoisie as a function of dual power! To quote: "If both the proletariat and the bourgeoisie retain their arms, then the 'government' or structure of 'national coalition' can only be an expression of dual power." (*Ibid.*, p. 22.) This is buttressed by examples from Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, and China. Given that such a situation may indeed go either on to further armed confrontation or backward into a disarming of the revolutionary movement, we do not commonly feel it necessary to justify this divergence from the road of revolution whether or not "the bourgeois ministers are hostages of the proletarian state." (*Ibid.*, p. 22.) Further, we have traditionally refrained from campaigns to pressure the bourgeoisie into accepting a popular front government. Yet the European sections participated in the "Sign the Seven Points" campaign. The seven points not only demanded a popular front government but also imposed conditions on the Vietnamese and was thus a denial of their right of self-determination. Finally, the document expresses extreme optimism about the future role of the Vietnamese CP. To quote: "Finally, the relationship between the CP and the South Vietnamese mass movement is not simply a function of the CP's political authority, but also of the unusual pressure of the revolutionary masses on a party which in its practical

orientation has broken with Stalinism's classical Menshevik line in the colonial and semicolonial countries and which is independent of the Moscow and Peking bureaucracies." (*Ibid.*, p. 23, emphasis added.) It was, we will assume, some time after it slaughtered the Vietnamese Trotskyists, but was it after the sellout at Geneva when it swapped the armed struggle for a promised election? Was it after the Paris Peace Conference where it traded the armed struggle for a role in the *bourgeois* government? When did it break free, and when, also, did it become so independent of the Moscow and Peking bureaucracies, upon whose aid its very existence depends and who pressured it into both the "peace" conferences? The apologies in the document for the maneuvers of the Vietnamese CP are not part of the theoretical traditions of Trotskyism, but rather represent an ultraleft vacillation under the pressures of ultraleft "vanguard" elements both inside and out of the Fourth International.

There are similar adaptations evident in the debate on the Social Democracy.

The present discussion in the Ligue Communiste on the class nature of the Social Democracy is a case in point. While we do not think of the theoretical acquisitions of our movement as sacred text, immutable and finished, we believe that what have been crucial points of debate previously can not be declared now unimportant unless obviously outmoded by the objective situation. This is especially true of the class nature of the Social Democracy. While many young radicals regard the parties of the Social Democracy as bourgeois parties, we must realize that they have a mass influence among the working class. We thus cannot so easily pass over the question, especially with regard to the question of critical support which, as a tactic, allows us opportunities to intervene among the workers who follow the Social Democracy. However, we obviously cannot support a bourgeois party in any fashion—critical or otherwise. The decision, as reported at the SWP plenum, by the majority of the members of the Ligue Communiste in a membership poll that the class nature of the Social Democracy is unimportant is, therefore, a most grave one. This is especially true since the Ligue gave them critical support in the last election. This in turn brings in the question of support to the Union of the Left which contained bourgeois elements, the Radicals. These were bourgeois elements even if they might have been "prisoners of the proletarian parties." The logic of this line poses great dangers and constitutes a major divergence from the traditions of Trotskyism without any attempt at a theoretical justification for the position held. The Draft Theses on building revolutionary parties also makes a serious tactical error of the same nature with regard to electoral work.

The Draft Theses contains several "elliptical and synthetic" formulations on the tasks in Europe in the next period. One of these is in regard to policy toward electoral intervention. To quote: "The common ground in the orientation of the Social Democrats and the CPs, namely the electoralist and parliamentary road—is being increasingly challenged objectively by the broad mass, who are rediscovering direct, extraparliamentary action, as the main instrument for defending their interests, even if they continue to vote for the traditional parties." (*Ibid.*,

p. 12.) This would tend to indicate the necessity for a propaganda intervention in the electoral arena to further this process in addition to our direct intervention in the struggle of the masses. However, is this the position of the Draft Theses? To quote: "Using propaganda for the slogan of a workers government—including in its concrete form of government by the workers' organizations, as can be appropriate during particular moments of the political conjuncture—to project primarily the idea of a *government resulting from mass struggles and actions*. The use of this slogan in a more electoral sense must be strictly limited to specific circumstances depending on particular conjunctures." (*Ibid.*, p. 18, their emphasis.) But this is exactly what must not be done. If, as stated, the bulk of the class in Europe has electoral illusions, then one of the arenas in which these illusions must be confronted is the electoral one. It retards the struggle if the use of the slogan "for a government resulting from mass struggles and actions" is strictly limited to "specific circumstances depending on particular conjunctures." The attitude that electoral intervention must be limited in this fashion points toward a major misunderstanding of the use of electoral campaigns. It lays the basis for ultimatic demands such as those which have characterized the work of the IMG, the British section.

The IMG Shows the Way

While the sectarian nature of the actions and slogans of the IMG are well documented elsewhere, it would not be superfluous to review some of their actions. Their ultra-left adaptation to the "vanguard" has cut across their attempts to defend the Vietnamese revolution. The slogan advanced by the IMG of "Support the PRG" seriously handicaps their ability to help mobilize the masses; and it is doubtful that the IMG claims to have mobilized the masses since they moved away from the slogan of immediate withdrawal which brought 100,000 people into the streets of London in October 1968. This method was extended to their Irish solidarity work which produced the sad spectacle of a section of the Fourth International in the role of a commentator as 20,000 marched in the streets demanding the withdrawal of the British. The IMG opinion that the demand of withdrawal was "unfortunately ambiguous" is answered by the Transitional Program. To quote from the section on "The Struggle Against Imperialism and War": "Using these considerations as its point of departure, the Fourth International supports every, even if insufficient demand, if it can draw the masses to a certain extent into active politics, awaken their criticism and strengthen their control over the machinations of the bourgeoisie." Unless it is the contention of the IMG that masses engaged in extraparliamentary mass action are not drawn into active politics; that their criticism has not been awakened (in which case what are they doing in the street?); nor that their control over the machinations of the bourgeoisie have been strengthened; then where is the support from the section of the Fourth International? Similarly by their bureaucratic maneuvers in the women's liberation movement, the IMG has imposed an artificial barrier to further work in that area. But the critical question is what is the theory behind the actions of the IMG.

In the "Report of the Fact-Finding Commission of the United Secretariat on the Situation Within the International Marxist Group, British Section of the Fourth International," there is a document which clears up the question of exactly how the present leadership of the IMG views the Transitional Program. This document by A. Jones is entitled "On the 'Theory' of Democratic and Transitional Demands and Other Stupidities" (Commission Report, Document M-38, p. 144). In it we learn that "In other words a mass movement of the working class on a transitional slogan is not possible outside a revolutionary situation." (*Ibid.*, p. 146.) Since both the demand "for the 18-year-old vote" and "for a sliding scale of hours and wages" are included in the Transitional Program and that these could both entail a mass mobilization of the class without going over into a revolutionary situation, there seems to be a dichotomy between Trotsky's interpretation of the function of a transitional slogan and that of the IMG leadership. Perhaps this flows from the IMG leadership's misunderstanding of the fact that transitional demands are a method of mobilizing the class to act in their own interests and ahead of their own consciousness. When the masses of workers demonstrate for a sliding scale of hours and wages, they do not do so because they are conscious of the fact that it strikes a blow against capitalism; they do it because they believe that they are underpaid. They have acted ahead of their own consciousness. Thus, indeed, while "a transitional demand is one which poses the question of state power" (*Ibid.*, p. 146), it does not require that the masses of workers understand they are posing the question of which class shall rule when they march for a sliding scale of hours and wages. Therefore, it is entirely possible to raise and win transitional demands without a revolutionary situation. The basic confusion here is the belief that to make a revolution requires that the masses be conscious revolutionaries. The Russian masses in a period of a few months went through: an absolute monarchy (the czar); a regency (Grand Duke Mikhail); a bourgeois government of bankers (Miliukov); a compromise government of Social Democrats and capitalists (Tereshchenko et al.); a "socialist" government of renegades from the class struggle (Kerensky); and then, finally, a Bolshevik government. The Russian masses overturned each of these in turn not because they were conscious revolutionaries (if they were, it might be interesting to speculate why they wasted all that time), but rather because each government in turn could not meet their basic needs: land, bread, and peace. The masses acted not because they preferred to undergo the turmoil of a revolution, but because they could see *no other way out*. The IMG leadership's confusion on this point is critical for, if they follow their own logic, they will be completely separated from the dynamic of the class struggle.

Return to the Road

It is time to make an evaluation of the strategy of "breakthrough." There have been major difficulties. The sections in Argentina and Bolivia have been decimated. The British section is involved in a turn away from the transitional method. The cadres of the Fourth International have been miseducated on the Transitional Pro-

gram, terrorism, Stalinism, the nature and role of the Vietnamese CP, and the role of electoral work in the strategy of Leninist party building, among other things. The parties of the International have sacrificed openings in fields that did not correspond to the "breakthrough" method. The final and telling criticism is simply that *nowhere did the parties of the International, by following this strategy, achieve the breakthrough desired*. In conclusion, a quote from Comrade Peng Shu-tse's "Return to the Road of Trotskyism" (International Information Bulletin, *Discussion on Latin America*, p. 34) is highly applicable.

"Replacing the Transitional Program with the strategy

of guerrilla warfare, neglecting the most serious work in the working class and its traditional class struggle organizations, i.e., the trade unions, and continuing to adapt ourselves to different petty-bourgeois currents and leaderships, cannot only not build an International but will lead our movement into a blind alley. The above represents a deviation from Trotskyism, and it is the most urgent task and duty of the coming world congress to consider seriously these questions by taking a formal stand on them in order to return to the road of Trotskyism."

June 28, 1973

CORRESPONDENCE ON THE "REGULAR-NAME" QUESTION by Geb, San Francisco Branch

SWP National Office

Dear Comrades,

Early this spring the San Francisco branch sales director reported to *The Militant* that I sold 216 copies of one issue and 190 of the next. We all expected this to be reported, since both weeks' totals were higher than anything in *The Militant Gets Around* column in a long time. Our sales director was told *The Militant* would not print the name "Geb."

I guess the San Francisco branch exec was surprised at this refusal; I know they talked about it, and the branch organizer, Fred Stanton, wrote a letter to *The Militant* asking why this was. His letter wasn't answered. When he went to New York for this recent plenum, he asked *The Militant* business office why they had a policy against printing the name "Geb," and why they didn't answer his letter about it. Comrade Sharon of the business office told him that it was a national office decision, not a *Militant* business office decision, so that's why she wasn't answering his letter.

I have a vague impression as to the reason. Our sales director, Comrade Jon, says that *The Militant* told him over the phone that the reason for refusing to print the name "Geb," was that "Geb" wasn't a "regular" name. Apparently my name would be printed if I agreed to be known under a different, more "regular" name. Apparently the national office feels it would hurt the party to have readers of *The Militant* look through *The Militant Gets Around* column and see an "irregular" name listed as a *Militant* seller.

Please correct me if I am wrong. You are saying that

some healthy independent, maybe even a whole fresh new layer, is going to read *The Militant*, and agree with our feminism and our position on Israel and busing and the Peace Treaty. They will be enthusiastic about our coverage of African Liberation Day and Wounded Knee; they will follow Harry Ring's column and the editorials from week to week. But then, after all this good, they look at *The Militant Gets Around* column and see that someone with the very irregular name of "Geb" sold a bunch of *Militants*, and so immediately they think, "Oh, these Socialist Workers are obviously extremely eccentric! I don't want to have anything to do with them!"

It's hard for me to believe that you really believe this. But the only other possible explanation I can think of, is that this was some sort of factional act towards me. If comrades around the country saw my name listed as selling 216 *Militants* one week and 190 the next, they would be likely to form a favorable opinion of me, and in particular they might come to think of me as a comrade who knows how to get out our politics, someone with a good feel for the radicalization, a good understanding of what people are responding to. The implication of this is that they would listen seriously to my views on how to get out our politics—and some of these views would be at odds with the views of the national office.

Possibly you saw what you felt was a valid excuse for refusing to give me the credit, and so you jumped at the opportunity for somewhat factional reasons. Even so, I would protest such factionalism.

Maybe I completely misunderstand your reasons. If so, I trust you'll clear things up. If the report that *The*

Militant gave the San Francisco sales director, that "Geb" was too irregular, is correct, then I would have to say that you were carrying the fear of seeming "obviously extremely eccentric" too far, beyond reality into paranoia. People really wouldn't be driven away from our movement because of such a microscopic "irregularity."
Since the San Francisco branch didn't (and still doesn't)

understand this policy, I assume comrades in other cities are also likely not to. For that reason I request that this letter be printed in the pre-convention discussion bulletin, along with your answer to it. Thank you.

Comradely,
s/Geb
May 23, 1973

LETTER FROM BARRY SHEPPARD TO ROBERT GEBERT

14 Charles Lane
New York, N. Y. 10014
June 28, 1973

SAN FRANCISCO
Robert Gebert

received a report from the San Francisco sales director on the fact that you had sold a large number of papers during the two weeks you refer to, and had wanted to utilize this in the column. But they were informed that you had instructed that under no conditions was this item to be reported unless your nickname alone was used in the article.

Dear Comrade Gebert,

This is in reply to your letter concerning the use of your nickname, "Geb," in *The Militant Gets Around* column.

Since it is not *Militant* style to use nicknames alone, the column was prepared without reference to this item.

The comrades responsible for writing the column had

Comradely,
s/Barry Sheppard

THE PLENUM REPORT ON GAY LIBERATION: THIRTEEN BASIC QUESTIONS

by Sudie, Los Angeles Branch; and Geb, San Francisco Branch

"Working class consciousness cannot be genuinely political consciousness unless the workers are trained to respond to all cases of tyranny, oppression, violence and abuse, no matter what class is affected." The revolutionary party should be "a tribune of the people, able to react to every manifestation of tyranny and oppression, no matter where it takes place, no matter what stratum or class of people it affects. . . ."

— V. I. Lenin, *What Is To Be Done?* (Italics added.)

* * *

The gay liberation report adopted by the SWP National Committee plenum this past April, raises a whole number of questions which comrades must be able to answer before they can make any intelligent decision about that report. These questions deal with theories about gays and gayness, the role of the gay liberation movement in the revolutionary process, concrete practical problems of SWP relations with the movement, and questions of internal procedure.

We have put together this list of thirteen such questions, in the clearest way we could, hoping that some of the comrades who voted for the plenum report in April will put a similar effort into answering them.

* * *

THEORIES ABOUT GAYS AND GAYNESS

ONE: AMBIGUITY ON GAY-IS-GOOD

"While we reject with contempt all forms of bourgeois prejudice against gay people, including quack psychological 'theories' labelling gays as mentally ill—prejudices echoed by the Stalinists—the party does not and should not take a stand on the nature or value of homosexuality." ("Memorandum on the Gay Liberation Movement," SWP Discussion Bulletin, Vol. 31, No. 3, May 1973, p. 7; all other references will be to the same article unless otherwise mentioned; all italics are added).

That's how this section was printed in the internal bulletin. It was substantially changed from the way the report was actually given to the plenum. When Comrade Barry Sheppard originally presented this report to the plenum, this is what he said:

"Reaffirming this position implies that the party should not adopt a position that 'goes beyond' that approved by the 1971 convention. That is, the party should not take a stand on the nature or value of homosexuality." (From mimeograph copy of his report, given to NC members and branch organizers.)

During the discussion of this report at the plenum, some comrade or comrades insisted on the need for the SWP to reject the "mental illness" theory. This was not a new

idea; it had been a center of controversy in the 1972 literary discussion. It's too bad that Comrade Barry had still favored "leaving aside" this question, but it's really good that the National Committee did manage to take this long-awaited step. This clearly "goes beyond" what the 1971 convention approved, and in the right direction.

But there is a contradiction. The plenum report still claims that "the party does not and should not take a stand on the nature or value of homosexuality." By rejecting the "mental illness" theory, the plenum obviously *did* take exactly that kind of stand—didn't it?

The gay liberation movement from its birth, was a big change from the old gay rights movement, especially because of the universal acceptance within the gay liberation movement of the concept that "Gay Is Good" and of "Gay Pride." The question comes up (and it will keep coming up until it is answered): *what does the party think of "Gay Is Good" and "Gay Pride"?* By officially refusing to "take a stand on the nature or value of homosexuality," the plenum thus refused to accept these basics of gay liberation.

We assume that the whole party agrees that gayness is not a sin, or a "crime against nature," either. We aren't sure what questions about gays and gayness are left unanswered anymore, now that the National Committee (unconsciously) decided to "take a stand" (but we are sure that such questions only need to be asked, and the gay comrades will be very able to answer them). As Comrade Art Maglin asks (No. 9, p. 3): "Since the [plenum] document rejects all prejudice against gay people, how come it doesn't reject the notion that gay is bad?"

QUESTION: If there is doubt as to whether "Gay Is Good," what are some examples of things that might conceivably be "bad" about it? The National Committee has rejected the idea that gayness is a "mental illness." Is gayness maybe a "physical illness"? Maybe gayness is a "social illness"? Aren't these just antigay prejudices, too?

TWO: THE PLENUM'S VIEW THAT GAYNESS IS UNUSUAL

A second way in which the National Committee plenum decided to "take a stand on the nature . . . of homosexuality" without realizing it, was in accepting the idea that gayness is unusual, that gay people are uncommon:

"The gay liberation movement directly relates to a relatively narrow sector of the population. . . . The gay liberation movement does not have the potential mass of either the women's movement or the movements of the major oppressed nationalities. . ." (p. 9).

In saying that the sector of society that the "gay liberation movement directly relates to" is "relatively narrow," the National Committee is saying that only a "relatively narrow" sector of society is gay. The second part of this quote suggests that gays are *not even a significant minority*. In basing their conclusions on this view that gays are

very uncommon, the National Committee is unconsciously accepting a bourgeois, antigay prejudice, a prejudice which has been very thoroughly disproved and rejected by science.

The main authority today on this subject is the studies of Dr. Kinsey and his coworkers, who had thorough interviews with fifteen thousand Americans of both sexes (*Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* and *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*). They found that nearly forty percent of the US population had conscious physical and erotic attraction to some of the same sex. That's not a "narrow sector."

Twenty-five percent of the American adult population has had a gay experience, to the point of orgasm. That's more than all the oppressed nationalities put together. It's not a "narrow sector."

These statistics of Dr. Kinsey's are not controversial. Science has accepted the Kinsey report virtually unchallenged, as one of the most historical of contributions to science. Most authorities now would agree that the same survey done today, a generation later, would register a significant increase in the gay statistics, because of the greater breakdown of traditional morals.

If Kinsey is too new-fangled for some comrades, then the SWP could conceivably decide not to take a position on whether gays are a "narrow sector" or not; but it is shocking for the National Committee to actually accept the completely disproved prejudice that gays are unusual.

This was a big step, backward from 1970, when the Political Committee said: "The fact that homosexuality of one kind or another is widespread in the population, that it cuts through all geographical and class layers, has been established" (from the memorandum on the anti-gay membership policy, 1970, reprinted in bulletin No. 3 this year, p. 12, emphasis added).

Why does the Political Committee now deny this?

Gays are branded as Queer, Odd, Unusual. But there is nothing about gay people or gayness, that in any way is Queer or Odd or Unusual.

QUESTION: Is the National Committee aware of the implications of calling gay people unusual? Does the plenum's abstentionist position depend on accepting the theory that gays are a "narrow sector"? How does this fit in with the work of Dr. Kinsey? Why was the 1970 position reversed?

THREE: HOW MANY UNCONSCIOUS OR REPRESSED GAYS ARE THERE?

A third way in which the National Committee plenum decided to "take a stand on the nature of homosexuality" without realizing it, was in deciding that there aren't any significant number of unconscious gays, and that average people don't have any significant unconscious gayness in them.

The gay liberation movement directly relates to anyone who has a significant amount of gay feelings in them, even if these feelings are unconscious. Unconscious and repressed gays are not a "narrow sector."

Little children are trained by the family. Females are trained to be timid; males trained to be bold. Children are trained to pray, to use the toilet, to brush their teeth, to look before crossing the street, to salute the flag. Children are also trained not to play with their food or their

genitals, not to play with matches — and not to be gay.

Freud drew attention to the fact of this training, and its result, unconscious and repressed gayness. All his evidence led him to conclude that human beings are born bisexual, and gayness just repressed into unconsciousness by most people. Freud then decided that such repression was a good thing, rather than decide that being gay was okay.

Dr. Kinsey concluded from his evidence that being gay "is an expression of capacities that are basic in the human animal," which would be part of the average person's life if there were no rules against it. One proof of the existence of unconscious gays, is that every day there are some more of them who become conscious gays; it happens to every type of person at every age of life. Many gay liberationists say that everyone is gay, whether conscious or repressed, active or inactive, exclusive gay or bisexual.

The plenum report restricts gay liberation to a "narrow sector," which means that the average person doesn't have any significant tendencies towards gayness, and that the percentage which has significant tendencies towards gayness is tiny. One alternative the plenum could have chosen would have been to not take a position on the question of unconscious gays — which would leave open the question of whether the gay liberation movement "directly relates" to only a "narrow sector," or to a large sector, or even to everyone.

QUESTION: Did the plenum decide that there isn't any significant number of repressed gays? Did the plenum decide that gay liberation doesn't "directly relate" to repressed gays? Or is there some better justification for saying that "the gay liberation movement directly relates to a relatively narrow sector of the population"?

FOUR: THE NUMBER OF GAYS IN THE FUTURE

In the same passage that we quoted in section two above, the plenum unconsciously takes a fourth position on the nature of gayness, by implicitly stating that the number of consciously gay people will not increase in the foreseeable future. The plenum states that the "potential mass" of the gay liberation movement is very narrow, which clearly assumes that there won't be any significant growth of the gay population.

The National Committee ruled out the existence of any significant number of unconscious gays, so this implicitly rules out the possibility of significant numbers of unconscious gays becoming conscious gays. But what about the generations that haven't even been born yet?

Children are now being born into a world in which bourgeois society is being shaken all over by a growing radicalization. The whole family ideology is being challenged by the feminist movement in a way that is reaching the minds of the masses. And the gay liberation movement in particular is beginning to bring masses of people to start reconsidering their views about gays. The gay liberation movement is beginning to win some important concrete victories for gay rights, and to win significant, favorable coverage in the mass media. Among others, the singers and musicians who are cultural leaders of the younger generation in many cases are now openly gay — from Joan Baez, to Mick Jagger, to Alice Cooper.

Assuming these trends continue, isn't it possible that

the rigid training of children not to be gay will gradually become less and less rigid? Isn't it possible that this could result in a significant increase in the gay population?

The reason why modern class society oppresses gay people is to suppress gayness, to keep people from being or becoming gay. When victories are won against gay oppression, *isn't it possible that it might be harder for the ruling class to suppress gayness and keep people from being gay?* Even anti-gay Freud admits: "Where inversion [gayness] is not regarded as a crime, it will be found that it answers fully to the sexual inclinations of no small number of people" (*Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*).

Possibly, the idea that the gay population might increase if it were allowed to is just too alarming, too controversial for the SWP to accept in 1973. In that case, the SWP might just not take a position on the question of whether the gay population might ever increase. But the plenum took a firm position on this subject—a position that the gay movement has very little "potential mass" for the future, that the gay population *won't* grow.

QUESTION: How does this position of the National Committee fit in with the policy of not taking a position on such questions? Wouldn't it be better to leave the question of the "potential mass" open?

FIVE: REJECTING THE GAY-IS-BETTER THEORY

A fifth way in which the National Committee has taken a stand on the nature or value of gayness is by rejecting two examples of the common view within the gay liberation movement that gay in some way is better than straight. The plenum report presents two (somewhat distorted) examples of this view, in order to reject them:

"we should reject the idea . . . that homosexuality is more progressive than heterosexuality because it involves sexual relations that fall outside the family system, and therefore leads to liberation from that system" (p. 8).

"a small and ultraleft section of the women's movement . . . asserts that to be a 'true feminist' a woman should be a lesbian or at least not live with a man . . ." (p. 10).

The idea being expressed in the first quote is the idea that a gay life-style represents a break from bourgeois culture, a life-style which is more human and less sexist than the bourgeois family life-style is. This view advocates people becoming conscious of their gayness, and expressing it actively, in one form or another—so as to be able to get more enjoyment out of life, as well as to be able to learn from the experience that bourgeois society forbids. The political conclusion could be drawn that active gay experiences have important social and political implications, and can tend to help radicalize people. This certainly would be "progressive."

The second quote deals with the special implications of the Gay-Is-Better view for members of the oppressed sex. The point is not who is a "true feminist." The idea is that every woman, including experienced, active feminists, is capable of developing her feminism further. Feminists often feel held back by their various involvements with men, especially on a "personal" level. If a woman wants to develop herself, and especially her feminist consciousness, she will want to keep her mind open to possible changes in her personal life, and to the experiences that her sisters report—which will include the question

of the role of men in her life.

Both of these quotes deal with ways of carrying political ideas to personal conclusions. There's nothing wrong with that; that's what we ask people to do when we ask them to join our movement.

Both of these ways of drawing personal conclusions from political positions may well be controversial within the SWP. It isn't really necessary for the SWP at this point to take any position at all on such questions. It would have been much better if the plenum report had just not brought these questions up, or at least not tried to decide them. What is to be gained by it?

The plenum report doesn't say whether heterosex might be "more progressive"; it just says that gayness is *not*. The plenum rejects the Gay-Is-Better view, but doesn't reject the Straight-Is-Better view.

The report also suggests that lesbians are harassing "straight" women in the feminist movement. It defends the "straight" women against the Gay-Is-Better propaganda of the gays. Nowhere in the plenum report does the plenum defend lesbians in any way against anti-gay women in the feminist movement. This is reversing the criminal and the victim.

QUESTION: If the National Committee really believes that "the party does not and should not take a stand on the nature or value of homosexuality," then why does it twice reject the Gay-Is-Better view?

HISTORICAL ROLE OF GAY LIBERATION

SIX: LIMITED TO DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS?

"The issue [that the gay liberation movement raises] is essentially limited to the struggle for the democratic rights of this sector" (p. 9).

The plenum report is not too clear about what this "essentially limited" means. But in the context of the 1972 literary discussion, this clearly means democratic rights in the narrowest sense. This is the "civil liberties approach" to gay liberation, which various comrades have called insufficient. It confuses the gay liberation movement with the gay rights movement.

The struggle for simple democratic rights for gays is in itself a struggle with very revolutionary implications. But the gay liberation movement goes beyond the gay rights movement by demanding from society an end to all anti-gay mythology and prejudice. Gay liberation demands more than toleration of gays. It demands that society "take a stand on the nature or value" of gayness. For thousands of years our society has taken the stand that gay is bad. *Gay liberation demands that society take the stand that gay is good.*

The liberation of gay people, and the liberation of the gay potential within the human race, requires the overthrow of the "traditional sexual morality, which is the emotional and ideological glue helping hold the nuclear family together" (as Comrade Barry Sheppard described it in his first article in 1972). This is the goal of gay liberation. Gay liberation must reeducate society, in the spirit of gay pride. To say that gay liberation is essentially limited to democratic rights is as wrong as saying the same thing about women's liberation, Black liberation, etc.

The Political Committee motion of May 25, 1971, of "unconditional" support to the struggles of homosexuals for full democratic rights, including full civil and human rights," by going beyond civil rights to include human rights, makes a reference to the idea popularized by Malcolm X. Malcolm used the demand for "human rights" for Black people, in order to express the idea that "civil rights" wasn't enough. If the SWP had told him that the Black struggle was "essentially limited to the struggle for the democratic rights of this sector," he would have reacted negatively, to say the least. He would have interpreted this as an insult to Black people and to the Black movement.

QUESTION: What is the purpose of claiming that gay liberation is essentially limited to democratic rights? What is the purpose of blurring the difference between the gay rights movement and the gay liberation movement?

SEVEN: THE FAMILY

Much of the plenum report is taken directly from Comrade Barry's articles in the literary discussion last year. In his first '72 article, he based himself on an analysis of the relation between gay oppression and the nuclear family, in which gay oppression is a product (actually a "by-product") of the family:

"the prejudice against homosexual acts and gay people is a by-product of the traditional sexual morality, which is the emotional and ideological glue helping hold the nuclear family together." (DB Vol. 30, No. 1 p. 4.)

This formulation of Barry's was really terrific. It explained *why* the ruling class oppresses gays—to help reinforce the "traditional sexual morality, which is the emotional and ideological glue helping hold the nuclear family together." Another thing that follows is that the effect of victories for gay liberation would be to help unglue the family structure. Therefore, gay liberation is a struggle against the bourgeois family structure.

This analysis of gay oppression, for reasons which aren't clear, was left out of Barry's 1973 plenum report. The plenum report, which was designed to make the big decision about SWP orientation to gay liberation, doesn't have anything in it to suggest any kind of link between gay oppression and the family. This is such a basic fact about gay oppression that it needs to be the basis of any discussion.

But the plenum report even goes so far as to deny that gay oppression flows from the family, and that gay liberation challenges the family.

It does this first by claiming that gay liberation is essentially limited to the struggle for democratic rights—which leaves out the struggle against the family structure, and the sexual morality which helps glue the family together.

Then it does it even more clearly:

"The women's movement . . . because of the role of the family as a pillar of class society and the character of the economic exploitation of women, raises class demands. The gay liberation movement is much narrower in the scope of its demands." (p. 9).

This passage explicitly credits the feminist movement as being a challenge to the family, and explicitly says that gay liberation is "much narrower," and *isn't* a challenge to the family.

The plenum report does not explain why Barry changed from his 1972 position that the gay question is a part of the family question, to his 1973 position that the gay question is "much narrower" than that.

QUESTION: If gay oppression isn't a product of the family, then what is it a product of? If gay liberation doesn't challenge the family, then what does it challenge?

EIGHT: PERIPHERAL TO CLASS STRUGGLE?

"In our long-term strategic priorities, the gay liberation movement is much more peripheral to the central issues of the class struggle than either the women's movement or the movements of the oppressed nationalities" (p. 9).

This statement from the National Committee's report seems to go against the general approach of Marxism. Marxists believe that no political struggle of our day could possibly be "peripheral" to the class struggle. The ruling class oppresses gays because it's in their class interest to oppress gays. On the other hand, gay liberation is in the class interest of the working class. Where does the "periphery" fit in?

The ecology struggle, the feminist struggle, the movement to lower the voting age, the antiwar movement, the movement to legalize marijuana, the struggle for democratic election laws, the movement to repeal laws against prostitution, the movement for Black liberation, the housewives-consumers movement, the prisoners' rights movement—all of them are directly tied up with the class struggle. To speak of political struggles as being "peripheral" or irrelevant to the class struggle is to abandon one of the most valuable principles of Marxism. No political struggle in our world is even a tiny bit peripheral to the class struggle—and certainly not "much more peripheral!"

(The plenum report follows by saying "It would be a mistake to place equal emphasis upon the struggle of women or Blacks, and that of gay people," because of its supposed peripheral nature. The plenum report makes this an unqualified statement, good for all time, no matter what. But what if there is a temporary lull in the feminist and Black movements, a temporary shortage of opportunities for us—and at the same time an upsurge in the gay movement? Does our emphasis on a given movement depend on the concrete situation, or an abstract measure of how peripheral it is? It is very dangerous to play the game of which movement is more important; that just sets one oppressed group up in competition with the other. Every revolutionary movement is important enough that we should take advantage of every opportunity we can, to support it actively.)

Let's get a more graphic idea of what it means to say that "the gay liberation movement is much more peripheral to the central issues of the class struggle." Let's look at a list of issues which have already been raised by the gay liberation movement. Are these issues in any way "peripheral to the central issues of the class struggle?"

(1) SEXISM: this is what both gay liberation and women's liberation are struggling against, as an ideology and as an actual system.

(2) NUCLEAR FAMILY: Source of sexism. Why does it exist? Is it natural? Is it necessary? Is it desirable?—that's what gays are asking.

(3) INHERITANCE, PRIVATE PROPERTY: "It is evident that the official morality has its origins in . . . a

socio-economic institution—monogamous matrimony—which was instituted so that private property could be maintained and transmitted in accordance with normal, unchallengeable lines" (from the *Gay Manifesto* of the Homosexual Liberation Front of Argentina).

(4) **BOURGEOIS SEXUAL MORALITY:** this anti-gay ideology "is the emotional and ideological glue helping hold the nuclear family together."

(5) **RIGID, FORCED SEX-ROLES:** a main way of oppressing women and corrupting men. A real woman, a real man, etc.

(6) **FEMALE CONTROL OF REPRODUCTION:** Women must have the right to make love without necessarily making babies. Also, known lesbians are now legally denied the right to child-custody, even of their own offspring.

(7) **SEXIST WARS:** too many men have killed and died in order to prove their manhood. Too many antiwar activists have been gay-baited.

(8) **SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE:** the state has no business enforcing the morals of the Bible.

(9) **SCIENCE VS. SUPERSTITION:** From Copernicus to Galileo to Darwin to Kinsey to Masters and Johnson, this struggle is old, but far from over.

(10) **PSYCHIATRIC OPPRESSION:** these fakers oppress not only gays, but also women—and even political prisoners, as in the USSR. Younger therapists are now renouncing this tradition.

(11) **RIGHTS OF YOUTH:** to keep them from going "astray," young gays are allowed even fewer rights by parents, by schools, by unequal laws.

(12) **POLICE BRUTALITY:** a real problem for Blacks, Browns, Native Americans, striking workers, young people, hippies, demonstrators—and gays.

(13) **INVASION OF PRIVACY:** the abortion laws were thrown out by the courts, as "invasion of privacy"; Watergate shows how relevant this issue is, and not only for gays.

(14) **LEGISLATION OF MORALITY:** laws against "sodomy," laws discriminating against lesbian mothers, laws forbidding or limiting abortion or contraceptives, laws against prostitutes, laws discriminating against "illegitimate" children or unmarried couples, etc., are all laws enforcing the morality of the ruling class.

(15) **CRIMES-WITHOUT-VICTIMS:** laws against victimless crimes range from morality laws (especially aimed at gays) to laws against marijuana, "desecrating" the flag, or joining the Fourth International.

(16) **CENSORSHIP:** in trying to speak to high school classes, or in trying to answer t.v. and radio editorials, gay liberationists face the same problem as socialists.

(17) **BEING WRITTEN OUT OF HISTORY:** This is a problem that women, oppressed nationalities, workers and gay people all have in common.

(18) **RIGHT TO ORGANIZE:** the struggles for campus recognition rights in colleges and high schools are another problem which gays and socialists have in common.

(19) **ENTRAPMENT:** what police provocateurs do in radical groups, plainclothes vice-squad cops do to women suspected of prostitution, and to gays.

(20) **RIGHT TO CONTROL YOUR OWN LIFE:** Quebeoics who want to speak French at work, workers who want better conditions, feminists, and gay liberationists, all have this need in common.

(21) **HOUSING DISCRIMINATION:** another link between gays and oppressed nationalities and others. Why should some capitalist have the right to deny you a place to live?

(22) **JOB DISCRIMINATION:** against gays, women, Third World people, the old, the young, the uneducated, the ex-con, etc. Why should some capitalist have the right to deny you a job?

(23) **UNEMPLOYMENT:** those discriminated against are the ones hardest hit by unemployment. But why should unemployment even exist?

(24) **LENINISM VS. STALINISM:** the historical record. It's the same record for gays, for workers, for women, for oppressed nationalities, etc.

(25) **DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS IN THE WORKERS STATES:** from Cuba to China to the USSR, this is a central issue of the gay movement and a central issue of the class struggle as a whole.

It is obvious that the National Committee did not think through the implications of saying that gay liberation is peripheral to the central issues of the class struggle; every SWPer will agree that these 25 issues are central to the class struggle, won't they?

It really seems as if the National Committee ignored the 1972 literary discussion, and ignored the gay comrades especially.

QUESTION: Where does this "peripheral" theory come from? If gay comrades had proportional representation on the National Committee, would this non-Marxist statement have been adopted?

PRACTICAL PROBLEMS THE SWP MUST DEAL WITH

NINE: FEDERALISM AND HALFWAYISM

There are a number of serious, practical problems that have formed a pattern in the two years of the present SWP policy. Since the plenum advocates continuing this policy, we should take these problems seriously.

One problem is that different branches tend to get involved with the movement to very different degrees, depending on the individual views of organizers and exec members. Some branches have reputations for being more involved, others have the opposite reputation.

Sometimes there are bitter struggles within a branch. For instance, the San Francisco branch a year ago had a very bitter struggle over whether to have a forum related to gay liberation—something which many other branches took for granted. This struggle was very disrupting and demoralizing to the branch. Fear of another such struggle causes comrades to be afraid to make concrete proposals like that again.

Disagreements within branches are natural in a democratic organization. But the present policy, by sitting on the fence between joining the movement and rejecting it, encourages comrades in the branches to try to get their branch to go all they way in whichever direction they prefer.

This is why comrades on both sides of the issue have protested that the present policy works out as a federalist policy of branch-by-branch decisions. Theoretically, the

present policy isn't supposed to be federalist, but in practice that's how it works out. This may even be an inevitable result of trying to compromise halfway between the two opposed lines.

Also, when a very favorable situation arises we tend not to be able to take any advantage of it. In at least two cases, we recruited established leaders of lesbian feminist groups—but our present policy did not make it possible for them to work as SWPers in their groups, and they are now inactive or relatively inactive in the gay movement.

In Los Angeles this April, a national lesbian conference was called by the group in which one of our comrades had been playing a leading role. The branch decided to avoid serious involvement in building and planning it, since the party couldn't present any proposals (since we don't have any), and so the party wouldn't want any sort of responsibility for it. The conference organizers, who are generally fairly close to us, politically and are prominent in the lesbian movement, drew up a concrete action plan and passed it out at the conference.

The conference drew 1200-1500 lesbian feminists—one of the largest conferences in the feminist movement ever. The conference organizers were badly red-baited at the conference, along with severe red-baiting of the SWP; it made it impossible for the organizers to even make any real proposals to the body. The comrades had a literature table and sold *The Militant*, but refused to speak to the conference, even to defend the party against specific attacks, even when the conference organizers were looking to us to say something.

The Militant issue we sold there had exactly zero coverage of the gay movement or gay-related questions, beyond a very brief letter to the editor, even though *The Militant* had known for weeks to expect a conference of a thousand or more.

The SWP came out of the conference discredited—we didn't even defend ourselves. Our contacts in the movement were demoralized to see in action the orientation which the plenum proposes to continue.

QUESTION: *Is the National Committee proposing that we close our eyes to these concrete problems of our present policy? How long does the National Committee expect to be able to continue the balancing act between comrades who enthusiastically support gay liberation, and comrades who have plain contempt for gay liberation?*

TEN: ALL-FEMALE FUNCTIONS AND THE IMAGINARY LESBIAN MENACE

"all-women functions organized by the party . . . must be organized in such a way that they do not project an image that the function is in reality restricted to lesbians. This can drive away many women who feel uncomfortable in such an atmosphere" (p. 10).

The fact that the plenum report contains this warning shows that the National Committee believes that this has been a real problem in the past, or at least is a threat to become a real problem. How might this ever happen? How might a function which was designed to be for women, end up having an image of being restricted to lesbians?

It is our feeling that this problem is *imaginary*. The

plenum report gives no examples we can see from. We've never heard of such a thing. Unless possibly the report is talking about women dancing together at parties? But if hetero couples can dance at mixed parties without making gays "feel uncomfortable," why should there be any restrictions on gay couples doing the same?

It's true that "many women" and men "feel uncomfortable" anywhere that gays are allowed to do the same things that straights do. Some of them will even imagine an "image" before them, that the function is in reality restricted to gays. What concretely should we do to avoid projecting such an image? Keep the gays in the back room?

The plenum report has switched the criminal and the victim. It is straights who oppress gays and make gays "feel uncomfortable"! It is straights who "drive away many" lesbians "who feel uncomfortable in such an atmosphere"! It is straights who organize functions which claim to be for everyone, but are "in reality restricted to" straights!

Has the National Committee ever passed a report which expressed even one word of concern for making sure that gays can feel comfortable around the SWP?

When the National Committee militantly protects straight people against a completely imaginary lesbian menace, and doesn't do the same to protect gays from the very real straight menace, then we have to do a little thinking. Where does this come from?

In section five above, we described how the plenum report tries to defend straight feminists against the lesbian propaganda of some gay feminists—attempts to "recruit" to lesbianism. There was no corresponding effort by the plenum report to protect the gays against the continual attempts to "recruit" to straightness; that gays must put up with. In both these cases, the National Committee presents a picture of a lesbian menace.

This is what many folks call "lesbian-baiting."

QUESTION: *Was the all-women functions "problem" completely imaginary? Out of fifty National Committee members and alternates, there are zero (open) lesbians—is this somehow connected? Was any lesbian even consulted, in any way, on the lesbian-menace question?*

ELEVEN: GAY APPEARANCES

The plenum report on gay liberation reaffirms the anti-transvestism policy without explaining how this relates to gay liberation. The relation should have been explained.

The reason we raised the question last year was that we felt that to continue the policy while involving ourselves in the gay movement would prove very embarrassing to the party, since transvestists play an important role in gay life, and since antitransvestist prejudices are very closely related to anti-gay prejudices. The plenum report obviously sees a different connection, but it doesn't say what.

Until two and a half years ago, the SWP had an unspoken but firm policy banning gays from being members, a policy which was based, among other things, on the stated theory that gays "usually" go through periods of being "obsessed," and gay members would be a threat to try to turn the SWP into a "therapeutic organization" (this theory is stated in those words by the Political Committee, in the November '70 memorandum which is re-

printed in the same bulletin as the plenum report). Now the ban is only on certain very gay appearances.

The plenum report gives the impression of banning very gay appearances for males, but allowing equally gay appearances for females (the plenum report only mentions males). This seems to be because the National Committee has a respect for women's rights, but doesn't have any similar respect for gay rights.

The justification that the plenum reports gives is that allowing transvestism in the party would set up a barrier to recruiting those masses of people who are *"justifiably suspicious of people that are obviously extremely eccentric"* (p. 10).

Actually, transvestists aren't "obviously extremely eccentric." Transvestism is actually fairly common; most transvestists are very ordinary people. The idea that transvestists are unusual, like the idea that gays are unusual, is a bourgeois prejudice—it is bourgeois repression forcing gays and transvestists into the closet that makes both of them *appear* very unusual when they come out into public view.

Even if transvestists were very unusual, that wouldn't justify labelling them "eccentric." They certainly aren't "obviously" eccentric or even unusual; they just *appear* that way, when seen from a certain narrow perspective, the perspective of traditional bourgeois culture.

The problem is not people being "suspicious" of transvestists, but rather people being *oppressive* towards transvestists. This oppression includes reactionary laws, brutality, social discrimination, etc.—so many of the same problems that gays have, for so many of the same reasons.

And the National Committee cannot be allowed to get away with saying that the masses "justifiably" have this attitude!

When you add this to the fact that the plenum report doesn't say a single word in defense of transvestists, even to defend them against the bourgeois state—it adds up to something very close to concession to bourgeois ideology.

QUESTION: *Why does the plenum report say that the "masses" are "justifiably suspicious of people that are obviously extremely eccentric," when actually the problem is that bourgeois society is unjustifiably oppressive toward anyone who appears to break in any way with the traditional bourgeois family structure and sex-role stereotypes?*

* * *

ON INTERNAL PROCEDURE

TWELVE: THE IMAGE OF AN UNPRINCIPLED BLOC?

An unprincipled bloc generally is a combination for organizational purposes which conceals or obscures political differences on the question at issue in order to get a false "unity." The principle involved is that political differences must be openly clarified, and not covered up, when an issue is debated.

The plenum report was approved unanimously by the National Committee (there was one abstention by a member of the advisory committee, who felt the report went too far, and two yes votes from comrades who stated that they had reservations and felt it didn't go far enough,

as we understand).

Last year, Comrade Barry Sheppard presented a middle view on gay liberation to open up the literary discussion. Another National Committee member, Comrade Nat Weinstein, responded with a very serious criticism of Barry's position—he went so far as to conclude that the SWP should "cleanly put an end to this chapter of the party's development."

Where Nat was much more hostile to gay liberation than Barry had been, another National Committee member, Comrade Harry Ring, then wrote an article which called Barry's position "insufficient"—Harry was much more friendly to gay liberation. In response to Comrade Nat, Comrade Harry even went so far as to say:

"I think the only way we can hope to deal effectively with the problem of antigay prejudice among workers and others, is by first divesting ourselves of that same prejudice."

So in 1972 there were clearly at least two, maybe three, very different positions on gay liberation within the National Committee. It is hard to believe that those differences could have disappeared so soon.

It seems that the plenum report was written with the goal of getting a unanimous vote from the plenum. This required obscuring the very real differences within the National Committee.

This is presumably why there is such a contradictory position on the "mental illness" theory. To satisfy Nat, the plenum officially refuses to "take a stand on the nature or value of homosexuality." To satisfy Harry, it claims to "reject with contempt all forms of bourgeois prejudice against gay people, including . . . as mentally ill." By adopting both of these opposite positions on the same question, the plenum makes itself appear very suspicious.

Maybe Barry changed his view that gay oppression is a "by-product of the traditional sexual morality, which is the . . . glue helping hold the family together," even though this was his basic theoretical position—changed this view to its opposite, in order to get Nat's vote.

In last year's literary discussion, Barry never said that gay liberation was "peripheral to the central issues of the class struggle." Did he add this to get Nat's vote?

The reason for ignoring the concrete problems of the present policy, the federalism and the halfwayism, may also be in order to maintain a superficial image of "unity" in the national leadership.

It isn't clear why the National Committee wants so much to be able to present a unanimous face to the membership. But it is clear that the plenum went way out of its way to present that face.

The plenum report seems clearly to be designed to fog over the very real differences that exist within the national leadership, to obscure the political positions and the differences, rather than clarify them. The National Committee apparently wants to keep the differences to itself, to avoid a polarization of the ranks of the party even at the cost of blurring the issues.

Sometimes the National Committee will try to postpone resolving differences on a new question to avoid a rushed decision. But this discussion is two and a half or three years old. This is the second convention to deal with it (or not deal with it), plus a special three and a half month literary discussion in '72. Now it is time for the differences

to be clarified and decided by the ranks.

It has been suggested that the plenum may have wanted to keep the discussion of gay liberation quiet for fear of looking bad within the International. That certainly wouldn't be correct; that would be dishonesty.

QUESTION: Is the plenum holding back important, relevant differences for organizational purposes? Isn't that very similar to an unprincipled combination? Isn't that setting a bad example? Doesn't that show contempt for the ranks of the movement?

THIRTEEN: A SEPARATE CONVENTION AGENDA POINT

"Since we project no national campaign of the party at the present time in the gay liberation movement, there is no need to have a separate point on the convention agenda on this question" (p. 10).

By ending with those words, the plenum report suggests just throwing any gay liberation discussion in with everything else. Having a separate time for a certain question makes it much easier to concentrate discussion on that question. Gay liberation requires such a discussion.

There are serious differences on even the most basic questions that gay liberation raises, even within the National Committee. (When was the last time that three full members of the National Committee presented three very different positions, very critical of each other, in a general party discussion?) These same differences are even sharper in the ranks of the party, where the polarization is already very developed. Many gay comrades in particular are very unsatisfied with the plenum report and even consider it insulting. According to Comrade Art Maglin's article, the plenum report on gay liberation was considered so controversial in his branch that the branch accepted the exec's proposal not to have that report presented to the branch.

When the 1971 convention called for a special literary discussion on gay liberation, it recognized that the question was new and important, and required very full and separate treatment.

When that literary discussion occurred in 1972, it showed how deep the differences were, and how many comrades had views to express on the question. Special literary discussions are very unusual, but this one drew an especially great interest from the comrades (it drew an incomparably greater amount of interest than the special literary discussion on women's liberation in 1970). It is obvious that the discussion is far from finished.

Whatever decision the convention makes, it's clear that many comrades will be very disappointed. If the discussion has been satisfactory, this disappointment will be kept to a minimum. If the discussion is inadequate, then the disappointed comrades will feel bitter and resentful. It would be harmful to the party to have any such unnecessary resentments.

We think it is fair to say that the youngest comrades tend by far to be the most favorable to gay liberation, and the most dissatisfied with the sort of approach that the plenum report put forward (while, on the other hand, the comrades with the most conservative views on this question tend to be concentrated in the older layers in most cases). So it is entirely possible that resentments over inadequate discussion would create or worsen tensions along generational lines. One of the worst things

that could happen to the party would be anything which tended to alienate the youth.

True, the plenum didn't call for any national campaign of the party in the movement at the present time (or any future time). But it is still possible that the convention will in some form make a decision which goes further in that direction than the plenum report did (after all, the report which was actually adopted by the plenum went much further than the report which was originally presented to the plenum, thanks to the addition of the rejecting of the "mental illness" theory).

And regardless of what decision the convention makes, gay liberation is clearly one of the main controversies facing the SWP in 1973. So far it is the only question we face this year that has divided the National Committee, that has required a special three and a half month literary discussion, that poses new questions which just aren't dealt with in the basic textbooks of Marxism, etc.

It might also be suggested here that the reason for deemphasizing gay liberation at the convention is to avoid giving a bad impression to Trotskyists in other countries. We hope that's not the reason. We should have nothing to hide.

The actual agenda of the convention, of course, is chosen by the convention itself, and not the National Committee; the plenum is only making a recommendation. It is realistic to hope that the convention will be more sensitive.

QUESTION: Aren't the gay liberation movement, and the differences we have on it, important enough to deserve special attention?

* * *

CONCLUSIONS

Gay oppression is based on modern class society's "stand on the nature or value of homosexuality." Gay liberation is based on the opposite "stand." When the question of gay liberation is raised, all tendencies are forced to take their own stand — either consciously, or unconsciously.

Unconsciously, the plenum took stands on the number of people who are gay, the amount of unconscious gayness in the population, and the number of people who will be gay in the future. These stands were stands which either have been disproved by Kinsey and other scientists, or at best are just conjectures.

The plenum also took a stand against two forms of the Gay-Is-Better view. Barry's original report didn't take any stand against *any* of the Straight-Is-Better views. This was so untenable, that he came to agree that the SWP should begin to reject the "mental illness" variety. This is going in the right direction. This is the direction the SWP will inevitably go, no matter how hard any comrades try to resist.

Gay liberation is based on gay pride, on the conviction that Gay Is Good. It is impossible to support gay liberation, while at the same time refusing to support its basic principles.

Revolutionaries take the following stand on the nature or value of being gay: the myth of the inferiority of gay people and gay love is a reactionary myth which helps to confuse and divide the oppressed masses and prop up the old social structure. This myth takes many forms, every one of which is reactionary.

There was a time when many revolutionary socialists believed in the inferiority of gay people. To the extent that "revolutionary socialists" still insist on the possibility that gays might somehow be inferior, to that extent that show that they are not so socialist, and not so revolutionary.

The positions that the plenum took, that gay liberation raises only the issue of gay democratic rights (and not also the issue of "the nature or value of homosexuality"), that gay liberation does not challenge the bourgeois family, and that gay liberation is "peripheral to the central issues of the class struggle"—these positions are downright embarrassing. Made public, they would bring the SWP hostility from the movement and its sympathizers. These positions cannot stand up under close, serious examination. They are an indication of the meaning of the general line the plenum passed. They are the logical conclusion of continuing to abstain from the movement.

The practical problems of the past two years, will certainly continue until they are recognized and dealt with. The present disruption of the party, the dissent and the bitterness, will continue as well—until a real choice is made between the totally divergent and conflicting positions that comrades hold.

So long as the national leadership defends against an imaginary lesbian menace, it is not only gays who are affected, but women as well, and lesbians above all.

So long as the position that the masses are "justifiably suspicious of people that are obviously extremely eccentric," including transvestists—so long as this position is party policy, the SWP is showing just how far removed it is from the movement, and from the oppressed.

So long as the National Committee continues to fog over its differences rather than clarify the issues, the issues will be fogged over and not clarified in the party as a whole—and the SWP will suffer.

Even a separate convention agenda point, with a lengthy discussion, wouldn't be likely to be enough to overcome our differences—but it could help a lot. Without it, tensions will build up in an unhealthy way. This will hurt the party.

The plenum report has raised a whole number of serious questions. We have put some effort into making our questions as clear and concrete as possible, to make them easy to understand fully, and easy to answer. We hope that any comrades who continue to defend the plenum report will answer these questions in an equally clear and concrete way.

* * *

APPENDIX

SOME TYPICAL BOURGEOIS ANTI-GAY PREJUDICES

The plenum report, in rejecting "all forms of bourgeois prejudice against gay people," only gives the example of the "mentally ill" theory. Beyond that, the plenum tried not to "take a stand on the nature or value of homosexuality," although it unconsciously took several such stands, including some which are examples of anti-gay prejudices. So it becomes clear that we need a more full discussion about anti-gay prejudice, so that we can know it when we see it, and also so that the National Committee

can understand what we mean when we say that Gay Is Good. Toward that end, here is a list of some of the most common anti-gay prejudices.

(1) IMMORAL: The SWP of course rejects bourgeois morality. But some comrades feel that gays violate proletarian morality. In Bulletin No. 9 of 1972, Comrade Derrell Myers defends "the proletarian family" and "the heterosexuality of the working class" against gay liberation (p. 23). He answers attacks on Castro's anti-gay policies, saying "the prudishness of the Cubans is a reaction to the sexual liberty of their former oppressors." He tells us that, in general, anti-gay prejudice "appears to have been a by-product of a reaction against all forms of sexual promiscuity, prostitution, and abuse, that was the custom and privilege of the ruling class" (p. 21). He asks us to "distinguish between the reactionary and false prudery of the Pope and Richard Nixon, and the sexual morality of the masses" (p. 22), which by implication is "progressive and sincere prudery." For Derrell the persecution of gays by Stalin and Castro are just overreactions, but the support by the masses for these policies is fully understandable in Derrell's mind.

(2) VERY FEW, UNUSUAL, ODD, QUEER, ABNORMAL: These are the implications of the statement by the plenum report that gays are a "relatively narrow sector." It's hard to believe that the SWP NC would say something so out of touch with scientific knowledge, but anti-gay prejudice is very powerful.

(3) MENTALLY ILL, UNSTABLE—The November 1970 Political Committee memorandum about the anti-gay membership policy claimed that "a homosexual usually goes through personal, sexual crises in which she or he becomes obsessed" with sex. ". . . they [gay comrades] often tried . . . to change the character of the party into some form of therapeutic organization which would help solve the personal problems of the individual homosexual." That's Jack Barnes speaking—read it in Bulletin No. 3 of 1973, pp. 10-11. This year's plenum rejected such "quack psychological 'theories' labelling gays as mentally ill." Right on.

(4) PHYSICALLY ILL, DEFORMED: The plenum didn't take a position on this. Two reasons for rejecting this antigay theory: one, there are no grounds for saying that gayness is any kind of illness; two, gayness isn't even a physical condition—many scientists have looked for a physical difference between gays and straights, and haven't yet found any. One reason why gay liberation considers the word "homosexual" an insult is that it is a medical word, like claustrophobia or influenza—and gayness is not a medical question.

(5) SOCIAL ILLNESS: This is the position of Engels in *Origin of the Family*, later expanded upon by Stalin and Reich. Two reasons to reject this view: one, gayness isn't any kind of illness; two, gayness exists in every kind of society, not just the "sick" societies.

(6) PATHETIC, UNHAPPY: This theory is one of the main reasons why people don't want to be gay, and so they refuse to recognize their gayness, they try to keep their children from becoming gay, etc. In rejecting the medical word "homosexual" gay liberation chooses the word "gay" instead, in order to express how wrong this prejudice is. "Gay" expresses a new consciousness. Gay

is happy.

(7) SECURITY RISKS: Gays aren't allowed to work for the government since they are supposedly easy victims of extortion. Such extortion is usually based on the threat to report the gays to the bosses and get them fired—if gays were allowed to hold those jobs, the basis for the extortion would disappear. The November 1970 Political Committee report mentioned above also explains the ban on gays in the SWP with a similar security-risk logic. The danger of extortion of gay SWPers was no doubt imaginary as a whole, but if it ever existed, it was mostly the result of gay SWPers being afraid that the party would find out they were gay and informally kick them out. "Security" is the universal rationalization.

(8) EXHIBITIONISTS: In the 1971 convention discussion, Comrade Hedda Garza gave an alarmed report of an alleged public orgy in the gay contingent of an antiwar rally. We don't know whether Hedda's report was accurate, but such reports are usually either exaggerated or totally imaginary. Being used to oppression, gays usually are far more private about their activities than straights are. Yet the National Committee chose the gay liberation report to tell us that "Sexual activities, whether heterosexual or homosexual, have no place at party socials." Another imaginary problem?

(9) MAKES STRAIGHTS UNCOMFORTABLE: The existence of gays makes some straights uncomfortable; that's one reason why they keep us in the closet. But this is a problem the straights will have to work out themselves. The plenum report's concern with the imaginary lesbian menace at all-female functions is an example.

(10) EXOTIC: In his 1972 discussion article, Nat Weinstein said we shouldn't get too close to gay liberation because it would give us an "exotic image." The 1973 plenum report also feared an "exotic image" associated with transvestists. "Exotic" is a code-word for "queer."

(11) PETTY-BOURGEOIS: The Kinsey study showed that gays are in all classes, with some indications of a greater percentage in lower classes. The Stalinists still maintain the myth that gayness is petty-bourgeois, however, with the sympathy of the Workers League and similar groups. This is the basis for such claims as the claim that the gay question is peripheral to the working class, that gays have no social weight, etc. The plenum report suggests a similar logic, too.

(12) DIRTY: This view isn't scientifically meaningful, but it has a strong emotional logic. Why does Nat Weinstein conclude by asking that we "cleanly put an end to this chapter?"

(13) UNNATURAL, OR POSSIBLY UNNATURAL: They call it a "crime against nature." They really mean "crime against God." "Unnatural" is a code-word for "the work of the devil." Some people think that gayness is possibly unnatural, possibly existing just in special circumstances. This is still a part of the general attempt to portray the nuclear family as "natural." In the face of overwhelming empirical evidence, this is shown to be a wish and not a theory.

(14) MIGHT "WITHER AWAY" UNDER SOCIALISM? Before taking this possibility seriously, we'd have to know why gayness might "wither away." Because it's a mental illness? Because it's a physical illness? Because it's sinful? Only time will tell us for sure what the future holds, but there's a lot more sense to the position of Freud and Kin-

sey that a future which includes more freedom to be gay will also include more gays.

(15) EXCLUSIVENESS: Gays are often seen as "homosexuals," in the exclusive sense, and people are taught that you're either exclusively one or exclusively the other. But actually, most gays can and do go both ways. It is straights who deserve more to be called exclusive.

(16) SUBSTITUTE: Gay relations are often seen as a substitute for straight ones—where a woman is too unattractive to get a man, where hangups dating back to childhood make you unable to relate to the other sex, where the other sex just isn't available (as one comrade argued in the 1972 discussion), etc. But *gayness is the ability to love someone of the same sex*—which includes people who have the ability to go either way.

(17) IMMATURITY: The Freudian theory is that gayness is natural and normal during childhood, but maturity requires repressing it into unconsciousness. Freud is wrong to think of repression and unconsciousness as "mature" and desirable. Freud also considered the clitoral orgasm to be a similar "immaturity"—a "mature" woman is supposed to depend on vaginal orgasm as produced by penetration by the penis. In both cases, "scientific" theory is invented to conform with bourgeois morals.

(18) SCIENTIFICALLY CONTROVERSIAL: The theory of the primitive matriarchy, the feminist view of the clitoral orgasm, and Marxist economic theory are all as controversial among scientists in the field as the gay liberation position that Gay Is Good. But on each of these questions it is easy to see which side is reactionary and which side is revolutionary; it is easy to see which side has the empirical evidence, and which side has prejudices instead.

(19) IMPRACTICAL: Gay relationships are seen as less practical because they supposedly are less suited for reproduction. Related to this is the theory that gays are bad parents (which is why their children are taken from them and also why they can't adopt children). Also related is the plenum's view (p. 8) that gay relations "in no way replace the social functions" of the family, and that "the patriarchal family, and the ideology and morality that buttress it, will wither away only" long after the revolution, when society takes over these social functions. But the family ideology and morality have *already* withered away to a significant extent. Lots of people *already* live in alternative set-ups. Gay living groups are perfectly capable of taking out the garbage, "caring for the young and old," etc. The Marxist position is not that we will begin to get rid of the family after the revolution; rather, Marx insisted that capitalism *already* destroys the family among the masses of the oppressed, here and now (see the *Manifesto*, or see Engels' *Origins of the Family*).

(20) INCOMPLETE, SHALLOW: The anti-gay bigots who call gay relationships incomplete and shallow have a pretty bad record themselves. Their only basis is the idea that two people have to have biological children in order to have a complete love.

(21) BRIEF, UNSTABLE RELATIONSHIPS: Most straight couples who stay together any great time do it because of the rigid requirements of marriage and family, and not because of any lasting love. Straight men are as much oriented to "one night stands," including with prostitutes, as anyone else.

(22) "NOT ME! I'M NOT GAY!" There have been enough people who have said this who have later "come out," that others should think twice before saying it. No one is too straight to become gay. No one is too old. It can happen to anyone, at anytime. It's just a question of a potential coming to the surface.

The frustrations we have felt with the National Committee plenum report have made it very difficult for us to control the tone of our discussion. There are so many ways in which the plenum report reflects the nearly 100 percent straight composition of the National Committee, that it is easy to lose the perspective that the report was written and passed by revolutionaries who are just a bit out of touch with gay oppression and gay liberation. It

is so easy to feel that the comrades in question are straights with backward attitudes towards gays. It is so easy to associate them with our oppressors. It is so easy to remember when this same National Committee (27 out of 28 members are the same people), as recently as the end of 1970, made us hide, made us pass for straight in order to be in the party. It is so easy to ask why gay comrades are virtually excluded, virtually unrepresented, on the National Committee.

In such conditions, it's pretty much inevitable that dissident gay comrades will be under pressure to show some of the same contempt for the National Committee that the National Committee has shown for us. In writing this article we have tried to restrain ourselves and avoid expressing any hostility beyond political hostility to the ideas contained in the plenum report. Where we seem to go overboard, we can only ask that comrades bear with us.

June 19, 1973

THE ARGENTINE GAY MANIFESTO

by Sudie, Los Angeles Branch

In the summer of 1971, a group of revolutionary minded gays came together in Buenos Aires, to form the Homosexual Liberation Front of Argentina (I don't know how accurate this translation is, regarding the common distinctions between "homosexual" and "gay," etc.). They drew up a manifesto which was reprinted in the US by the New York Latin gay publication, *Afuera*, and then translated into English and printed in the *Gay Sunshine* dated October-November 1972.

Their main immediate goal has been to educate the revolutionary left in Argentina about gay oppression and gay liberation, and to win the support of the left. In this respect, they are very similar to the group called *Red Butterfly* which worked in the 1969-1970 period in the US, to a large extent around the goal of educating the left in the US, especially the SWP (some of their members joined the YSA and SWP in 1971, after the membership policy change allowing known gays to be members).

In a Catholic country like Argentina, reactionary morality may even be stronger than in the United States. The feminist movement is certainly much less developed in Argentina than here. And until very recently, the country was ruled by an open military dictatorship known for extremely brutal repression. So things haven't been easy for Argentine gay liberationists.

But even under the military dictatorship, the group reached a membership of fifty in Buenos Aires, according to the PST compañera who recently toured here. When

the HLF approached our cothinkers in the PST and asked for political support for their gay liberation campaign, the PST gave them that support, though as yet the PST has not tried to develop a full theory on the subject. Now that some sort of bourgeois democracy exists in Argentina, it's very possible that the gay liberation movement there will be able to take some big steps forward.

Following this introduction is a condensation of the Argentine Gay Manifesto. I think comrades should read it in order to get an idea of the international character of gay liberation, and the ideas which gay liberation is based on, whether in Los Angeles or in Buenos Aires.

I especially want to call attention to four basic ideas in the Manifesto:

First is the orientation to the "movements for national and social liberation." The HLF understands how much the fate of gay liberation depends on having the real support of the revolutionary left.

Second is the especially close identification with, and solidarity toward, the women's liberation movement. While all liberation movements are linked in so many ways, the links between gay liberation and female liberation are especially close, since they are both struggles against the sexist oppression that comes from the family.

Third is the understanding of the roots of gay oppression. The 1972 SWP literary discussion showed that our comrades don't all share the same understanding of why capitalism oppresses gays and suppresses gayness. The

Argentine Gay Manifesto shows us that, all over the world, the left wing of the gay liberation movement is based on the understanding that the oppression of gays is a product of "monogamous matrimony, which was instituted so that private property could be maintained and transmitted." Since private property is the root of gay oppression, gay liberation requires its abolition. And the abolition of private property is in no way "peripheral to the central issues of the class struggle!"

Fourth is the understanding that "A profound social revolution is not possible without the liquidation of the moral standards of a class society." This fact, and its implications for the revolutionary movement now, is the sort of thing that the workerist and economist left tendencies can't understand—from the Workers League to the International Socialists, and even including some sections of the SWP.

I've condensed the Manifesto to save space. All the italics are my own emphasis.

* * *

GAY MANIFESTO

In August, 1971, a group of gay men and women in Buenos Aires, decided to form the Homosexual Liberation Front. The movement recognizes as its antecedents the analogous homosexual organizations in Europe and the United States, maintaining fraternal relations with some of them, as well as the Argentine publication *Nuestro Mundo*, which was first published in September, 1969.

The source of political inspiration of the Front is its integration with the movements for national and social liberation which function in Argentina. *Its goal is to get these movements to incorporate in their program and strategy the demands of the sexual revolution, without which the liberation of mankind will be incomplete.* . . .

We believe that eroticism is a fundamental instrument of freedom. . . . *A profound social revolution is not possible without the liquidation of the moral standards of a class society.*

We understand that *in a repressive society and a world structured, on the basis of the oppression of one class by another, of one sex by the other, or some states by others, the abolition of anti-homosexual taboos would be an illusory victory.*

The anti-homosexual society is a society which is anti-sexual and anti-erotic, forcing its people in the name of

morality to experience with guilt most of the pleasures which human beings pursue. . . . The liberation of the homosexual is then *profoundly linked to the process of liberation which will end other forms of oppression, ending the misery, anguish and dehumanization experienced by human beings because of the current economic structure and cultural superstructure.*

The Homosexual Liberation Front is determined to put an end to the silence and the falsehood which surround the subject of homosexuality. We will strive to end the marginality in which we live. . . . the distance, the lack of communication, and the contempt with which we are usually treated. . . .

We must have a dialogue to do away with the *prejudice, ignorance and fear that the ruling classes have built over the ages.* Male and female, masculine and feminine—these categories can no longer be dogmatically accepted in order to satisfy the exploiters of the day. And the dialogue will not be fruitful without ideological equality, that is, without removing the infamous stain which marks the homosexual. It must be understood that the homosexual has the right to live out his or her eroticism as seems best to him or her.

It is evident that the official morality has its origins in . . . monogamous matrimony, which was instituted so that private property could be maintained and transmitted in accordance with normal, unchallengeable lines.

It is essential that we clear up *the myths about sex that have arisen in the name of the conservation of private property.* . . .

The HLF seeks to regularly communicate its objectives and principles of the movement and urges homosexuals of both sexes to organize groups in which to discuss and spread the goals of the movement. Homosexual liberation is part of the sexual revolution which must co-exist with the social revolution sweeping the contemporary world. This is the fundamental contribution, along with the growth of consciousness, which the Front hopes to give to the current process of our society.

The movement has adopted a pink triangle as its emblem. This symbol was used in Nazi concentration camps to distinguish the homosexual prisoners. . . .

What is at issue is the right of each individual to live without fear, to have freedom of choice, to be able to control his or her own body, labor and knowledge.

(*Afuera* can be reached at Box 410, NY, NY 10011. *Gay Sunshine* is at Box 40397, SF, CA 94140. I don't have an address yet for the HLF itself. — S. T.)

June 25, 1973

THE BRITISH TROTSKYISTS ON GAY LIBERATION

by Sudie, Los Angeles Branch

(Introduction: The following are some of the more interesting excerpts from the article on gay liberation that was printed in the January 20, 1973, issue of the Red Mole, the paper of our British cothinkers in the International Marxist Group. I found this article especially interesting, because there are some important ways that this article gives stronger support to gay liberation than what the SWP plenum report advocates, or anything that has been in The Militant in a couple of years, if ever.

(First, the article emphasizes that gay liberation challenges the family; this is one of the most elementary things to understand about gay liberation. The plenum report calls gay liberation "much narrower" than that.

(Second, the Red Mole article recognizes that gayness will become more common as anti-gay prejudices and the various concrete penalties for being gay, are broken down and removed. This is the view of Kinsey, Freud, and most any other authority in the field, from the most pro-gay to the most anti-gay. By comparison, the plenum report calls gays "a relatively narrow sector," even in terms of future potential.

(Third, the Red Mole article is very aware of the previous weakness and very imperfect record of the revolutionary left concerning gay liberation. The SWP plenum report completely ignores this very important reality.

(Fourth, the Red Mole article has a general tone of total defense of gay liberation, and in particular it stresses how important gay liberation is. It's necessary to stress this, because of the tendency of opponents and halfway supporters of gay liberation, to call gay liberation unimportant. Much of the SWP plenum report, for example, is devoted to telling us that gay liberation is relatively unimportant.

(Since this Red Mole article was signed and not an official editorial, it may not be a 100 percent reflection of the views of the IMG; I don't know about this. The article was given a lot of space and prominent display, so it would figure that the editorial board at least gave it serious thought before printing it.

(There are some things in the article that I'm not too comfortable with, or don't understand; but I certainly think the article is a good start. Especially, I think the article takes gay liberation more seriously than The Militant has been doing or than the plenum report does.

(I hope that comrades understand that my enthusiasm for the Red Mole article on gay liberation doesn't necessarily mean that I agree with the Red Mole on other questions. I do consider gay liberation to be an important test for revolutionaries. To whatever extent this article reflects where the IMG is at, I'd consider it grounds for a lot of optimism. Of course, neither the International Majority Tendency nor the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency has taken any kind of stand on gay liberation, so there's no real way at present that the gay liberation question can decide between those tendencies.

(I've condensed the article for space, and I've added all the italics, to show the parts that I consider the most interesting. — S. T.)

* * *

GAY LIBERATION AND THE LEFT

by Rosalind Davis

At its 1972 conference, the IMG unanimously passed a resolution supporting the Gay Liberation Movement (GLM) while reserving the right to criticize its politics. *Very rarely on the left does any analysis of the meaning of being gay in capitalist society appear, and most gay people have looked to the libertarian "underground" press for support. But links between the revolutionary left, the labour movement, and the GLM are beneficial to all three.*

We are using the term gay people to mean those who want to relate sexually to members of their own sex (lesbians, homosexuals), and those who identify with the other sex, either by changing sex by means of surgery, etc. (transsexuals), or by dressing in the clothes of the other sex (transvestists).

Homosexuality and transsexualism are almost universally defined in "respectable" society and in the medical profession as a "problem". Once such a definition is accepted, then the way is open for endless pseudo-scientific studies explaining its "origins" in terms of biology, chromosomes, early socialization and so on. The gay person is labelled as a "case" and investigated if possible with a view to "curing" her/him. Such labelling in fact represents an attempt to isolate gay people as far as possible, and creates deep feeling of guilt in many. Even many so-called revolutionaries accept this definition, only transferring the problems to capitalist society, which "distorts" people's sexual orientations, so that some become fixated on members of the same sex. For such people, the socialist revolution will eliminate homosexuality along with prostitution.

For a revolutionary marxist, gay people do not present a problem in themselves. The problem lies in explaining why they are treated as they are and how they can change that situation. Since we do not accept that sex was instituted by the Divine (or Society) in order that children might be produced, or that women are in their natural state only when in a subordinate relationship to men or vice versa, there is absolutely no reason why people shouldn't relate sexually to people of the same sex if they want to, any more than they should not relate to people of the other sex. Such a position demystifies endless prejudices and "learned" tomes, and it is one of the positive gains of the GLM to have forcefully presented this analysis. *Far from "withering away", homosexuality will become much more common in a socialist society, as the mystifications and prejudices surrounding sexual relationships are removed. . . .*

If homosexuality in itself is not a "problem", why then are homosexuals universally oppressed in bourgeois society . . . ? Why do many people, among them militant workers who are otherwise anti-capitalist, feel an unease and confusion in regard to gay people . . . ?

No ruling group exists for long by means of naked force alone. The continued existence of class rule depends on mystifying the population as to the true central source of their oppression—the system of productive relations

which extracts the wealth from those who produce and transfers it to those who own. On the one hand it is necessary to have institutions and symbols which are regarded as right and good by the oppressed so they may think the whole worthwhile. On the other, it is necessary to have groups of people who are identifiable in some way as different so that people's frustrations can if necessary be turned against them. The family is one such important institution, gay people one such group.

Whether or not they see themselves as revolutionaries or even reformers, as by no means all do, *gay people who actually practice their homosexuality threaten the ideology of the family*. Through the family, new generations of workers are produced, ruling class ideas are passed on, women are subordinated, isolated and divided from productive workers. So control over the family is very important for the ruling class and its state. By necessity gay people must make a clear divorce between sexuality and reproduction. By bourgeois legality they are forced to divide sexuality and marriage. By their very oppression their relationships tend to be fragile and transient, challenging the mythology of permanence sanctified in the marriage ceremony. Gay people around the Gay Liberation Front (GLF) have also consciously come to challenge and reject something of the dominance/subordination, activity/passivity, male/female ideas about behavior appropriate to each sex, *ideas which help greatly to maintain the subordination of women in capitalist society*. In all of these ways, *the uncontested public activity of gay people is a threat*.

Gay people are also useful symbols of "moral decadence" in capitalism. All ills we feel can be attributed to permissiveness, moral laxity, Jews, Blacks, Gays, etc. and the persecution of the minority and in some cases their actual extermination (as in fascist Germany) can be a means of deflecting social tensions from their real source—

the exploitative nature of the system itself.

The oppression of gay people is therefore both necessary and useful within the existing system, and for that reason it becomes clear that there is only one way for gay people to remove their oppression, and that is by linking up with all other oppressed groups, and centrally the working class, whose exploitation underlies every other, in order to overthrow the system itself. . . .

. . . it cannot be said that Gay Liberation represents a coherent political movement anymore than the Women's Liberation movement does ["coherent" seems to be meant here, in an organizational sense—Geb]. But this in no way makes its existence as an autonomous movement less significant. Firstly, *the left has consistently underemphasized and neglected the analysis of revolutionary positions in relation to family and sexual relationships*. GLF is forcing us to make good this lack and providing some of the ideas to do it. Secondly the GLF is exposing the reactionary nature of the psychiatric profession and the repressive legal system, sometimes in quite dramatic ways. Thirdly the more politicized members are moving out to challenge bourgeois ideology within sections of the working class. But above all, if the gay movement does not continue to go forward, the reactionary tendencies . . . will move onto the offensive against gay people, and possibly begin to link up with the fascist/racist movements into a really dangerous diversionary threat.

Thus we need the gay liberation movement. Gay people also need the political support of the revolutionary left and the wider labour movement, for an introverted gay movement cannot resist serious attacks by the state. It is the job of revolutionaries, especially gay revolutionaries, to intervene in GLF for a broader revolutionary perspective, away from introversion and gay nationalism, reformism and utopianism to an interventionist policy.

June 25, 1973

OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE SOCIALIST WORKERS
PARTY IN THE GAY LIBERATION MOVEMENT:
In Support of the Contribution, "For An Intervention Into
the Gay Liberation Struggle," by Thorstad and Green

by Sandy Knoll, Detroit Branch

Introduction

The Memorandum on the Gay Liberation Movement, adopted at the National Committee plenum, draws several conclusions regarding the long-range potential of the gay liberation movement: "directly relates to a relatively narrow sector," "does not have the potential mass of either the women's movement or the movements of the major oppressed nationalities," and "is much more peripheral to the central issues of the class struggle" than the movements previously mentioned. This analysis leaves us with little hope that the gay liberation movement can be of long-term significance in organizing the overthrow of the capitalist class, and therefore should be of little concern to the revolutionary party today.

It relegates any party activity around the movement to a very low priority in our overall work and concretely amounts to abstention from the movement.

Any serious attempt to discuss openings for SWP intervention in the gay liberation movement must be preceded by an assertion of the value of this social movement in the process of organizing the socialist revolution.

Gay Liberation and the Current Radicalization

George Breitman, at the 1970 Socialist Activists and Educational Conference, offered the following characterization of the present radicalization:

"The present radicalization in the United States, which has not yet reached its peak, is as genuine and authentic a radicalization as any this country has experienced in the twentieth century; in addition, it is the biggest, the deepest, the broadest, and therefore the *most threatening for the ruling class* [emphasis added], and the most promising for revolutionaries."

Breitman zeroes in on the broadness of this radicalization, which is one reason that it's the most threatening yet. Among other things:

"The beginning of the breakup of the authority of American capitalism can be seen in changing attitudes to morals, in reevaluations of sexual norms. . . ."

At the same conference, Jack Barnes noted an extremely important aspect of this radicalization.

"The fifth point, and in a way this may be the most important—at least it is one we should take special care to absorb, for it differentiates us from every other tendency that claims to be socialist or radical—is that there will be no reversal of this radicalization before the working masses of this country have had a chance to take power away from the American capitalist rulers."

I'd like to take a brief look at the other two radicalizations of this century to better understand why this radicalization is the one that will not be deflected until the question of power is posed.

The radicalization of the Debsian period was spurred on by the necessity of U.S. capitalism to industrialize at an unprecedented rate in order to vastly expand

production and assume first place among the capitalist powers.

By luring hopeful immigrants to this country and packing them into crowded urban centers, the capitalist class was able to create a large army of labor to build its industrial empire.

The inhuman sweatshop conditions that these workers slaved under and the inhuman living conditions they endured, powered the radicalization of the years of Debs and the Socialist Party.

It involved attempts at industrial unionism (IWW), the formation of the American Communist Party, and the victory of women fighting for the franchise.

However, this radicalization was limited by the narrow scope of its demands and was defeated in the reaction of the early '20s.

The radicalization of the '30s drew its impetus from the conditions resulting from the Great Depression. The ferment began among a thin layer of students and intellectuals, and by the early years of the '30s, was beginning to touch the working class.

The first major political movement was the drive to organize the unorganized into trade unions. Later on, efforts were made to bring the unemployed into motion around their own demands.

The radicalization was obstructed by the development of Stalinist hegemony. The Stalinists attempted to limit the scope of demands being raised and tried to channel the social movements into support of the government's war preparations after Hitler invaded the Soviet Union. The almost unanimous support for World War II stifled the remnants of the radicalization.

While certain achievements were won for the working class, such as the organization of the CIO, the radicalization as a whole failed to present a severe enough challenge to the capitalist system.

The current radicalization began with the '60s and the civil rights movement. The next 13 years saw challenges to every structure, myth and institution that capitalism had erected to ensure the longevity of its rule.

The dynamic and the power of this radicalization lies in its ability to expose the most sacred and time-worn foundations of this system. It lies in the militancy of sectors of the oppressed, previously quiescent and unwilling to take action; it lies in the deep alienation felt by millions who no longer have confidence in the ability of this system to meet their most basic needs.

Why is the role of the gay liberation movement an important one in this development? It is a product of this period, a collection of angry individuals who have joined together to move against the restrictions imposed upon them.

In so doing, the movement adds a dimension to this radicalization lacking in the two previous radicalizations, and herein lies the significance of gay liberation to the

coming revolution.

The movement defies the right of the government to regulate the personal lives of individuals and to impose their own definition of "normal" sexuality on every member of the population, to the extent of imposing harsh penalties on those who deviate.

It exposes the hypocrisy of a capitalist morality that says it's alright to murder a Vietnamese child, but loving a person of the same sex is a criminal act. The gay liberation movement has implications that reach far beyond the millions of homosexuals in this country. It seeks to erode the tight grasp that capitalist authority holds on the population and implies the necessity of a different society, where human energy, sexuality, and creativity are not harnessed to the needs of the ruling class.

A LOOK AT THE MOVEMENT: OPPORTUNITIES FOR OUR PARTY

The openings and opportunities for our party in the gay liberation movement are enormous. The purpose of this section is to add to what comrades already know about the movement (Christopher Street actions, Intro 475, participation in Democratic Party convention, etc.). A brief sketch should suffice to indicate its present breadth and potential growth.

Gay Liberation is International

Gay liberation groups are organizing all over the world. Most that I've run across have an expressed anticapitalist orientation and grew out of the left movements in various countries. A major aim of their activity is winning the support of socialist and trade-union organizations and pushing for favorable positions on gay liberation in the programs of these organizations.

The Gay Liberation Front of London, begun in 1970, is one of the best established and best organized groups abroad. Its weekly meetings are over 100. It has helped to form other groups in England, such as Camden GLF. The activities of both groups include educational leafleting at public places, political action organized through special interest political action groups, and consciousness raising.

A group was recently formed at Harrow, a prestigious boys' school in northern London in response to police harassment of gays.

The GLF of London publishes *Gay International News*, a monthly publication aimed at establishing communication between organizations in different countries.

Clandestine gay groups operate in Mexico and Argentina. They are the Homosexual Liberation Front of Mexico and the Homosexual Liberation Front of Argentina. Laws in both countries prohibit them from functioning openly. According to *Afeura*, a paper put out by Latin gays in New York, the goal of the HLF of Argentina is to integrate "with the movements for national and social liberation which function in Argentina," "to get those movements to incorporate in their program and strategy the demands of the sexual revolution, without which the liberation of mankind will be incomplete."

A gay festival was held in Stockholm last summer. It featured public debates, plays, leaflets, and dances. It culminated in a march and demonstration at the end of the week.

In France, the Front Homosexuel d'Action Revolutionnaire was born in the wake of the May-June '68 events.

The United Front for Revolutionary Homosexuals in Italy has groups in Rome, Milan, and Turin. Active members in the Rome and Turin groups are 30 and 20 respectively. The Turin group has a monthly paper of 36 pages. All work with women's liberation and socialist groups. There is no central office because of police repression. All news is spread by telephone and word of mouth.

The Belgian group is Student Investigation and Solidarity on Homophilia and Homosexuality. It's active in Brussels, Liege, and Louvain. It was begun two years ago and is centered on the campuses. Their approach is two-fold: (1) personal—helping individuals to "come out"; and (2) public—reaching out beyond the campus to involve community gays in political action.

In Canada, Vancouver GAA is among the most active of the organizations. Like the New York GAA, they organize projects to change anti-gay laws, confront sexist officials, and put pressure on various individuals and institutions. An example was the picketing of an apartment building where the owner wouldn't allow gays to move in.

Groups also exist in Holland, Thailand, and Malta.

Campus Groups

The National Student Association set up a National Gay Student Center in Washington, D.C., to act as a clearinghouse for information regarding campus gay groups. Most gay organizations have to wage a fight for their right to recognition. The Center prints a newsletter that details these and other problems to spur the development of campus action. Some groups who have been denied recognition have taken their case to the courts. For example, groups at Sacramento State University, the University of Oklahoma at Norman, and the University of Kentucky at Lexington, all won the right to organize on campus.

Groups now exist on almost every major campus in the country. Among the latest are the Duke Gay Alliance in Durham, North Carolina; Homophile Awareness League at West Virginia University in Morgantown; Gay Student Union at the University of Virginia; at Montgomery College in Rockville, Maryland; and the University of Bridgeport in Bridgeport, Connecticut.

Gay Studies

Gay studies courses are presently taught at the University of Nebraska, the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, Boston University, Kent State University, California State at Longbeach, California State at Northridge, and California State at Sacramento.

The program at Sacramento State is the largest. It includes courses on the Image of the Homosexual in Literature and Lesbianism in America.

Gays in the Professions

Discrimination against gays in the professions, especially in the teaching and library professions, has sparked organized protests. After the well-known case of Mike McConnell, turned down for a position at the University of Minnesota library because of his homosexuality, the American Library Association Task Force on Gay Lib-

eration was formed. Besides defending members of the profession fired for sexual orientation, they've compiled a bibliography of gay literature.

Several instances of discrimination and firing on account of sexual orientation have been experienced by teachers. There is nothing new about having "sexually deviant" teachers removed from contact with impressionable students. What is new is the willingness of these teachers to fight back. Peggy Burton, gay high school teacher in Turner, Oregon, was fired in October 1971. She refused to quietly accept the dismissal and, instead, sued the Board of Education.

John Gish, a New Jersey teacher, was elected president of New Jersey GAA. He initiated a campaign against a New Jersey law that allows school districts to force teachers suspected of homosexuality to take psychiatric examinations. He also founded the Gay Teacher's Caucus of the National Education Association which, immediately upon its inception, submitted a gay rights proposal to the 1972 convention of the Association.

Regional Organizing

There has been a widespread tendency in the movement to organize on a state or regionwide level. I want to deal most extensively with the Michigan organization, which is the one with which I'm the most familiar.

At the end of last year, gays from all the southern states, with the exception of Louisiana, Texas, and South Carolina, met in Athens, Georgia, with the purpose of forming a southern gay coalition.

The Gay Students Council of Southern California is composed of faculty, students, and community people from 17 campuses. Each campus sends two representatives to the Council of Representatives, the policy-making body, which elects the Executive Board.

The Council held a conference in November at Claremont College. Some workshops offered were the Coming-Out Experience, Gays in the Arts, Organizing Student and Faculty Groups.

In October, 200 gays met in Pittsburgh for the first statewide gay conference. It was sponsored by eight organizations and called to prepare a gay rights platform. Workshops discussed Employment of Gays, Rights of Gay Minors, and Religion and the Church. The conference established the Pennsylvania Federation of Gays.

The Michigan Gay Confederation was formed on March 4, 1972, at a meeting in East Lansing. Previously, groups had existed all around the state and organized independently. The most active were the Gay Liberation Front of East Lansing and Detroit Gay Activists.

An important action of the East Lansing group was a campaign to ban discrimination in city jobs. In October 1971 they submitted two proposed changes in personnel rules to the City Council.

The Council accepted the proposals but it became clear

in the next few months that they weren't receiving serious consideration. Protests and a debate at the February 7, 1972, meeting of the Council culminated in a decision to reform the rules and a victory for Lansing gays.

The most important activities in Detroit have centered around repeal of the Accosting and Soliciting Ordinance. Petition drives and picket lines have characterized the struggle.

The Michigan Gay Coalition (MGC) was formed out of a decision to organize a statewide week of gay pride activities in 1972. Michigan's first gay pride march was a big success. 300-500 turned out despite pouring rain.

A meeting of the MGC was held on September 16 to discuss further actions. It was attended by 60 people from 12 organizations. Out of the meeting came a call for a demonstration on October 28 in Lansing to call for defeat of the Traxler Bill, a bill that was supposed to reform Michigan's penal code; while restrictions on some homosexual acts were reduced, penalties for accosting and soliciting remained.

The meeting also took a position on the elections. The necessity of independent action was affirmed and non-reliance on the Democratic and Republican parties. They voted to give no support to candidates of these parties due to their bad record on gay rights.

MGC is presently organizing a week of gay pride activities, scheduled for June 26-July 1, culminating in a march and rally to demand repeal of all anti-gay laws.

A General Summation

The gay movement is politically heterogenous. While activists from New York GAA oriented toward the Democratic Party before the November elections, others rejected this approach and posed building their own movement rather than subordinating their fight to the Democratic campaigns. Still others urged a vote for the SWP candidates.

Like the social movements we are presently involved in, the gay movement has had ups and downs. Organizations have been initiated and have flourished, others have died out. The general thrust of the movement has been to broaden geographically and to encompass different sections of the population.

The movement has reared its head in those institutions and organizations most adamant about maintaining the status quo on sexual orientation. It has shown its readiness to meet the enemy on any battlefield and its immense field of activity in the years of its existence are testimony to its persistence.

All indications are that the gay movement is here to stay and will continue to present openings for our party. I support an intervention into the movement along the lines laid out in the document "For an Intervention into the Gay Liberation Struggle," by David Thorstad and Kendall Green. A decision to implement this decision can only serve to build the party.

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