John Barzman
Chicago

April 19, 1976

Dear Comrades,

Enclosed find a letter to the Political Committee and a copy of a letter which I have sent to the United Secretariat. I have received the mailing you havessent on the Hedda Garza press conference and thank you for sending it.

Comradely,

John Barzman

John Barzman
Chicago

APR 21 1976

April 18, 1976

To: Political Committee, SWP
New York

Dear Comrades,

In the course of two recent phone conversations with Comrade Barry, I was informed of a regrettable decision of the party leadership. I was informed that those IT comrades who had previously been members of the SWP and would presently be recommended for readmission would have to submit to an additional three months of provisional membership. I believe this decision is an unnecessarily rigid application of the basically sound policy on new membership adopted by the recent plenum. Further, it is a decision which will foster the image of the party as being vindictive towards former members who had political disagreements with the majority line of the party, a development which will be detrimental to the interests of the party. Finally, this decision represents a violation of the recommendations of the IEC 1975 and 1976 on the IT. The opinion of the world movement should supersede the considerations which led to the adoption of the new policy on membership which excluded any provisions for exceptional cases. Let me explain.

Recently, Comrade Jana P. was readmitted to the party as a provisional member. Cde Jeff B. was told he would probably be recommended for the same status in a couple of weeks. This stands in contrast to the case of IT comrades who had been members of the SWP previously and who were readmitted up to this date. These comrades have been readmitted as full members. Cde Barry informed me that henceforth all IT comrades would be readmitted only after a three month provisonal membership period.

Cde Barry explained that the party had decided at its recent plenum that all new members should be offered a provisional membership period and that there should be no exception to this rule. The motivation for refusing to make any exception was as follows. It was felt that any exception to the rule would be resented by other provisional members. It would give them the mistaken impression that they are somewhat slower or less fit to be in the party. Such exceptions would therefore undermine the basic purpose of the rule which was to make it as easy as possible for prospective members to accept to become full members.

This, in my opinion is a basically sound policy. It allows prospective members to find out first hand what the party is and to dispel any apprehensions they might have. However, as every rule, it has exceptions I believe that the rule should be amended to state that: "In the cases of comrades being readmitted to the party, exceptions to the above rule may be advisable". I believe provisonal members would be perfectly capable to discern the difference between themselves and other comrades who have already made up their mind and proven themselves, and who are obviously a special case. Provisional members would naturally understand that the party has a different policy for a different problem In fact, provisional members might be surprised that a uniform policy is adopted for divergent cases and approve a discerning policy. Such exceptions would therefore not subvert the purpose of the new policy.

The case of comrades of the IT who were previously in the SWP and who are coming up for a recommendation on readmission is clearly a case where such an exception should be made. These comrades have a good knowledge of the SWP and its program. They have maintained a record of continuous revolutionary activity since the day they originally joined the SWP. Having functioned in the SWP, they understand and are committed to a lifetime activity in a democratic centralist organization. If they were in need of being retested by the party the prolonged period of collaboration which has been asked of them should have already fulfilled that requirement. Had they any further questions about the party, that period also gave them ample opportunity to get them answered. All members of the SWP and provisional members could easily understand the reason for making an exception.

Making an exception to the new rule on provisional membership would be beneficial for the party for another reason. It would clearly establish the party's commitment to a policy of bending over backwards to allow loyal comrades who have political differences with the party majority to function as full members of the party, a policy of bending over backwards to avoid organizational wrangles with dissidents, and a policy of decreasing factional tensions in the F.I. It would dispel any notion that the party is acting vindictively toward IT comrades, that it is seeking unnecessary humiliations of dissidents. It would contribute to the party's record as the most democratic organization on the left in the USA, a reputation which is essential to the building of the revolutionary party.

Finally, whether you accept or reject my above arguments, you should be swayed by our obligation as Trotskyists to accept the opinion of the world Trotskyist movement, and to educate the cadre of the party in the spirit of meeting one's internationalist obligations. Both the spirit and the letter of the IEC recommendations of 1975 and 1976 on the immediate reintegration of IT comrades clearly require that you accept the IT comrades as full members. These recommendations should supersede any other considerations. As of now, I have not heard any argument that would indicate that you do not accept these recommendations of the IEC as reflecting the considered opinion of our world movement as it is expressed through the democratically elected leadership bodies of the F.I.

I must admit that I am at a loss in explaining your failure to see the potency of the last argument since only a week ago you invoked the authority and opinion of the IEC on the reintegration of the IT comrades to justify our common estimation of the meaning of the Hedda Garza press conference. It almost seems as if you still choose to use the IEC opinion only when it suits a particular purpose of yours -- one which is at odds with the interests of the party and the F.I. -- and not when it does not coincide with that purpose of yours. For a long time now, I have been saying that we should move away from the line of thought which claims that two wrongs make a right. In my opinion, neither the SWP nor the IT comrades who rejected the collaboration with the SWP have implemented the IEC recommendations. But I do not see why I should join with you in condemning the latter while abstaining from condemning the former. It is high time that a show of good will be made to break the deadly dynamic of factional responses. I urge you to make an effort in that direction.

Comradely, John Barzman John Barzman

John Barzman
Chicago, Illinois

APR 21 1976

April 13, 1976

To: United Secretariat, Fourth International
Brussels

Dear Comrades,

This letter is meant as a further explanation of the statement to which I appended my name, along with that of Cde Jo Hansen, and the SWP Political Committee. I believe this clarification is necessary since the statement as it stands now may give an unbalanced view of the fashion in which the IEC recommendations of 1975 and 1976 are being implemented, or rather not implemented by a number of the parties involved in the matter.

I would like to clarify my opinion on two issues raised by the Hedda Garza press conference. The first concerns the obligation of the F.I. to help the SWP dispel any mistaken notion that might have emerged from the press conference as to the SWP or any other body being in violation of the Voorhis Act. It was the responsibility of the F.I. to dissuade anyone from making any pronouncements on issues pertaining to relations between the F.I. and Trotskyists in the United States unless these had been previously approved by the only organized form of Trotskyism recognized as such by the F.I. in the United States, namely the SWP. Failing to do so, it was the responsibility of the F.I. to insure that any mistaken statement would be countered by a denial from the SWP and FI. The F.I. has no section and no members in the United States.

The second issue concerns a possible modification of the status of those who organized the press conference, in the eyes of the F.I. The recent IEC motion extended the period during which the F.I. viewed certain expelled IT comrades as members of the F.I. if it were not for the Voorhis Act, despite the fact that these comrades had not maintained a consistent collaborative attitude towards the SWP as called for by the 1975 IEC recommendations. In my opinion, the basis for this decision was that it was difficult to assess the willingness of these comrades to implement the IEC recommendations in view of the SWP's parallel failure to abide by the 1975 IEC recommendations. The comrades were thus given a second chance. The question now is: have they rejected this second chance? The answer must unfortunately be yes, and the United Secretariat must recognize this fact and terminate the period in which the F.I. viewed these comrades as members if it were not for the Voorhis Act.

This must be recognized even though the SWP leadership has persisted in disregarding both the 1975 and 1976 IEC recommendations in the period since the most recent IEC. The difference is that whereas in the period prior to the 1976 IEC we were confronted with a situation in which the SWP was not implementing the IEC recommendations but in which the SWP could not really produce any clear open act of hostility

by the comrades involved, we are now confronted with a period in which the SWP has maintained its uncollaborative attitude towards these comrades but in which these comrades have taken a step which can only be considered as a hostile act towards the SWP. I believe that we should not pursue a policy whereby two wrongs would make a right. There has to be some limit on the FI's willingness to look upon at-large members as members of the F.I, some obligations which they have to fulfill to retain that status, regardless of the attitude of the SWP.

Having said this, I must point out that the basis on which I propose that the United Secretariat take this action does not seem to be the same as the basis on which the comrades of the SWP PC, and Cde Jo Hansen are proposing to take it. This has been made obvious to me in the course of a recent dispute over the reintegration of the remaining IT applicants. I attach my letter to the SWP Political Committee on the matter. Since the February IEC recommendations of this year, which clearly and unambiguously called for the SWP to reintegrate all IT comrades with standing applications, the SWP has not reintegrated any other IT comrade. A few days ago, the first comrade was approached, but she was told that she would only be admitted as a provisional member for a period of three months, and only then, i.e. three months from now would the Political Committee be asked to approve her readmission to the SWP. Now other remaining IT applicants have been told that they too would be given a preliminary period of provisional membership before the final readmission. This policy is being followed despite the experience of the comrades with the criteria of democratic centralist organizations, despite their clear commitment to consistent revolutionary activity, despite their long period of collaboration with the SWP, and despite their continued loyalty to the Fourth International. This can only be seen as a vindictive factional act, an attempt to demoralize these comrades by humiliations in the eyes of their comrades. It is clear that the SWP leadership is continuing the same policy of reducing its dissidents by attrition which the recent IEC condemned. The reference to the IEC recommendations in the statement on the Hedda Garza cannot be attributed to any intention on the SWP leadership's part to see the IEC recommendations implemented. It is a pure reference of convenience.

I would therefore ask that the United Secretariat minutes which include the Statement jointly submitted by the SWP PC, Jo Hansen, and myself, include the following explanation of my vote:

"In voting for this statement I must clarify the following points:

-the basic reason for the uncollaborative or even hostile attitude of the comrades involved originates in the SWP leadership's factional treatment of the IT and its refusal to abide by the IEC recommendations of 1975 and 1976.

-nonetheless, we must condemn factional responses to factional acts and demand of our "exceptional", "would be ", at-large members certain minimum standards of disciplined conduct and responsible behavior.

-I stand for the application of the IEC recommendations not only to those comrades who have resorted to unfriendly acts towards the SWP, but also to those who have consistently collaborated with the SWP and should have been -- but have not -- immediately reinstated with the

status of full members. Only such an even-handed policy can dispel the impression of a one-sided factional brandishing of the IEC recommendations. "

Comradely,

John Barzman

cc: SWP PC