

14 Charles Lane  
New York, N.Y. 10014

December 17, 1977

TO ORGANIZERS AND NATIONAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Dear Comrades,

Enclosed is a letter from Jack Barnes to Nathan Karp, national secretary of the Socialist Labor Party. The letter spells out some guidelines for our contact with the SLP. Our adherence to these guidelines will be an important precondition to the development of the kind of political discussion we hope to have with the SLP.

A key section of the letter points out the one-sided and thus incorrect appreciation we had of the way changes were developing in the SLP. It underlines the fact that we are not interested in seeking out and establishing contact with "oppositionist" elements in the SLP.

Collaboration between the SWP and SLP, and discussion of the potential convergence in our views, must develop on a party-to-party basis, through the SLP's elected leadership.

A forthcoming issue of the Party Organizer will contain a more complete report on the evolution of the views of the SLP. Comrades should also be encouraged to become familiar with the views of the SLP by subscribing to its newspaper, the Weekly People. Subscriptions can be obtained for \$4 a year by writing to the Weekly People, 914 Industrial Avenue, Palo Alto, California 94303.

Comradely,



Syd Stapleton

for the Political Committee

(TYPED ON LETTERHEAD)

December 14, 1977

Nathan Karp  
Socialist Labor Party  
914 Industrial Avenue  
Palo Alto, Calif. 94303

Dear Comrade Karp,

As you know from the visit Syd Stapleton and Nat Weinstein paid to you in September, we have been following the SLP's views through the Weekly People and in conversations with the SLP members we meet in various actions. We find a growing convergence in the views of our two organizations on a number of important political questions. Growing contact between our parties on a local level, through work to overturn the Bakke decision, for example, has underlined the reality of this convergence.

I'm sending this letter to outline some steps I think can help us explore that convergence, and I want to clear up some misunderstandings that may have been generated by our initial reactions to the changes taking place in the SLP.

First, on the misunderstandings: As of our August convention, and for some time after, we were operating on some false assumptions about the discussion taking place in the SLP. We simply did not realize the extent to which the entire SLP, including its elected national leadership, was involved in rethinking the SLP's attitudes on key political and strategic questions.

This was reflected in remarks Larry Seigle made with regard to the SLP in his report to our convention on our fusion with the RMC. Seigle referred to "a group of activists" and "tendencies" and "young people" as being responsible for changes in the SLP. We now know this was a mistaken impression.

We are not interested in raiding the SLP--by recruiting individual SLP members to the SWP or by winning some SLP "tendency" away from the SLP.

We do think the apparent growth of areas of agreement between our two parties is a very hopeful sign for the socialist movement. What we would like to see is some form of discussion that would allow both parties to determine to what degree we have differences on important questions, what differences may be primarily terminological, and which are differences of historical evaluation not centrally relevant to the main questions facing the American working class and its allies.

Of course, the elected leadership of the SLP will have the most informed opinion on the pace at which such discussions might fruitfully develop and the form they should take.

To expedite the exchange of views, we would like to send you several letters over the next couple of months outlining key positions of the SWP on a range of topics. The purpose of these letters is to help you reach tentative conclusions on the degree to which there is a convergence in our views. These letters will be sent to you personally, and the decision on what level in the SLP you circulate them is completely up to you. For our part, we will limit circulation of the letters to the elected SWP leadership.

We will also send you copies of all communications sent out by our Political Committee and national office which bear on our relations with the SLP. We want to do this to let you see what we tell our members about our approach to the SLP. We would be very interested to hear any reaction you may have to any of these letters. To keep you informed of other internal SWP material, we will send you all our internal bulletins as they are published.

In the meantime, the SWP, on both the local and national level, will avoid putting pressure on sections of the SLP by proposing formal joint SLP/SWP functions, or by trying to recruit members of the SLP to the SWP.

We do think, however, that SLP and SWP members should attend each other's educational activities and other public functions and read each other's literature. This will be important to the education of both memberships.

It also seems clear that local SWP and SLP organizations will more and more find themselves working together in coalitions and broader groups. I hope we will have a chance for such joint work, for example, in building the April 15 March on Washington called by the National Committee to Overturn the Bakke Decision in defense of affirmative action programs.

Our local units will find it natural to cooperate in such areas, and I'm sure neither of us want to put any sectarian obstacles in the way of such collaboration. I think we should encourage it, in fact, while leaving the scope and character to local leading bodies in the light of concrete circumstances.

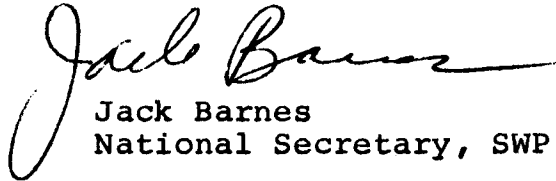
The SWP has no intention of trying to force such collaboration with an ulterior motive in mind. We think it is simply a result of the contact between two Marxist organizations working to advance the movements in this country against exploitation and oppression and in defense of democratic rights. Should it be possible for us to arrive at a common approach to the problems facing American workers, and a common strategy for the

achievement of socialism, we would be taking a historic step forward for the socialist movement in this country. We would be establishing the basis for a transformation of the SWP and the SLP into a common party. And we would strike a deadly blow at the charge made by liberals and reformists (Stalinist or Social Democratic) that irreconcilable opponents of capitalism are nothing more than sectarians who are unable to rise above the narrow preoccupations of ideological cliques.

Steps forward along this line would be a tremendous demonstration of the strengths of our two parties--and one I hope we can make.

I don't think either of us can know now where this process will lead. But I think we have a responsibility to the workers movement not to let divisions stand because of old habits of thought or because of differences that may not have much meaning for the tasks facing socialists now and in the future.

Comradely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jack Barnes". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

Jack Barnes  
National Secretary, SWP

P.S. I'm enclosing two documents on our organizational structure and principles that I thought it might be helpful for you to have. Also enclosed is a catalog listing various discussion and information bulletins we have published in the past. We would be happy to send you any that seem of particular interest.