

January 29, 1972

Joe Henry
Organizer
Brooklyn Branch, Socialist Workers' Party
136 Lawrence Street
Brooklyn, New York

Dear Comrade Henry:

We are currently members of the SWP branch in Brooklyn. Together, we represent well over thirty years of militant work in the American revolutionary movement and more than twenty inside the Socialist Workers' Party. Some of us joined the party during the McCarthy period and worked, loyally and consistently, to build both the SWP and its youth organization, the YSA, meeting with considerable success in both areas, in the face of the vicious repression of that period. Our activities in the party, and in the Chicano, anti-war, women's liberation and Puerto Rican movement, as well as the activities around international political prisoners' defense, have, we feel, proven both our seriousness and our worth as revolutionaries.

Some time ago, each of us, in his or her own way, became convinced that there was visible in the party a growing political infirmity, manifested by its increasingly petty-bourgeois composition, its equally petty-bourgeois composition, its tail-ending and sectarianism in the mass movements in which it was intervening. Apparently, the feeling was coming to other comrades, some of them the most accomplished, proven and prestigious cadre in the party. During the last convention, four comrades wrote a document called "For a Proletarian Orientation", expressing a dismay at the party's orientation, trying to analyze it and calling for its correction. Still, considering the party revolutionary, though threatened by its own leadership and their orientation, each of us supported and defended this document. It was our mutual support of this opposition resolution which brought us together and we subsequently contributed to the opposition campaign by speaking, defending and presenting the minority position in New York and even writing our own educational, though supportive, document, "The Proletarian Orientation and the Method of Marxism".

Of course, the opposition was defeated. We were slandered, our views were distorted and our political activity was strongly attacked. These injustices aside, the majority of the party was clearly in basic disagreement with our position. But we still felt a victory: the issues were out, the discussion was opened and, perhaps, we could now expect some rectifying of the party leadership's attitude toward various areas of work, although its orientation, ratified as it was, would undoubtedly stay the same. Many came back from the convention hoping that we could work in the areas which were obviously important.

We were wrong, about the party leadership and the party's character. The wage-price freeze, met by considerable resistance in the working class (offering opportunities for some national intervention) found the party hesitant, even immobilized. It did

not know how to go to the class...instead it organized militant sales at the gate: alot of sales but no real work done. The Puerto Rican movement in New York grow, around issues like the case of Carlos Feliciano, but the party remained frozen...few articles in the Militant, no interventions, no recruitment, not even discussion. The anti-war movement, the women's movement, in which the party had done such fine work, were floudering and weakening, crying out for new outreaches, a new orientation but the party's political antenna were indrawn, unable to pick up the message. Most of all, our own desires to intervene in these movements, to do real revolutionary work, to bring our ideas to growing mass movements and to build those movements, using those ideas, were met with hostility and stifled. It became obvious that a revolutionary who wanted to do real revolutionary work could no longer do so in the SWP.

Our principles as revolutionaries do not allow us to refrain any longer from working in these struggles. We have again come together to express a point of view which we have independently arrived at, but which we must express as a unit. The Socialist Workers' Party is no longer a revolutionary organization. It has become centrist, reorienting its politics in both the women's and anti-war movements, to court the support of liberal politicians and remaining unable to formulate perspectives for work in Third World and workers' struggles. It has repeatedly betrayed its program and has even stooped to changing the basic spirit of that program. Work in it has become, for us, impossible. We are left with little choice.

We are asking that our resignation from the party be accepted by our branch in Brooklyn and that it be recorded by the National office. It has been a difficult decision for some of us to make, but there is no option. We restate our belief in the inevitable victory of the working class, our belief in the power and correctness of Marxism and our decision to continue working for a socialist revolution in this country and in the world. We will each decide how we can work toward this end and take action on that decision. This is a resignation from the party, but not from the revolution. We call on all our comrades in the SWP to make this same decision... to decide how their work can best be accomplished, whether inside the party or on other fronts...and to act with our decisiveness. We reaffirm our desire for a unification of socialist tendencies in this country, including the revolutionary sections of the SWP and will work toward this end. That the leadership has stood in the way of these goals is a comment on their revolutionary character and a fact that will, forever characterize their personal history.

Fraternally,

Mary Jane Hodgett, Norman Hodgett
Liz Mestres, Pepe Mestres

cc: SWP National Office