

February 11, 1957

TO ALL BRANCHES:

Re: Socialist Unity  
Fund Drive

Dear Comrades:

Under separate cover you will receive multiple copies of a document entitled: "Memorandum on our Perspective and Orientation in the Matter of Socialist Unity." This was adopted at the meeting of the Political Committee of February 4th.

This document supersedes all previous statements on the question of socialist unity and this position taken by the PC indicates the manner in which it proposes to proceed in this matter. It is a fully rounded position and comes after long discussions in the Political Committee. We know the comrades have been waiting for a considerable period for some rounded expression from the committee. Here it is.

The memorandum is sent out to the membership in order to facilitate a discussion in the ranks on the entire problem of socialist unity and regroupment. As such, it is part of the pre-convention discussion, and its general line will be incorporated in the pre-convention document on the American question, .i.e., the Situation in the United States and the Tasks of the Organization.

We ask, of course, that the branches keep us informed of the progress of the discussion so that the PC may be in a position to be fully acquainted with the views of the membership.

The Fund Drive will be formally opened at the time you receive this circular. We trust that all your preparations have been made well in advance and that with the 15th you will be in a position to send in your first contributions. Let us put this drive over as expeditiously as possible so that we may be able to go ahead with our pre-convention discussion without too much attention required in raising the quotas which ought to be done as swiftly as we can.

Fraternally yours,

Albert Gates

1075

MEMORANDUM ON OUR PERSPECTIVE  
AND ORIENTATION IN THE MATTER  
OF SOCIALIST UNITY

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Our orientation in the problem of socialist unity must be rooted in our relationship to the development of the working classes. The unification of the AFL and CIO has brought the American working class to its highest point in strength and made it the most numerous and powerful social movement in the country. The unification has been achieved without the surrender of any of the basic principles that distinguished the progressive section from the conservative section, but indeed with the formal acceptance of these principles by the latter and in the increasing real acceptance of them by the labor movement as a whole. The unification of the labor movement in this way is an historic turning-point for the American working class. At the same time, an historic turning-point is being recorded by another section of the working people, the Negroes in the South, in the irreversible movement for equality that embraces virtually all of them. Not only are the two movements historically linked but, despite the insignificant organizational ties between them at present, they are already linked politically and socially in the significance and consequence of their development.

Both developments are of decisive importance for the further of a genuine, effective socialist movement in this country. For a wide variety of reasons, both of them have unfolded without the socialist movement being strengthened thereby and without the socialist movement or any section of it having any influence upon them. Yet, socialism cannot become a serious movement in this country until its main foundations rest securely in the organized labor and Negro movements and struggles. In its present fragmented and disoriented form, socialism is in no position to lay these foundations. It is important to add: regardless of its form and orientation, socialism will not be in a position to lay these foundations until the objective conditions engender a new wave of massive class struggles and radicalization among the workers.

Objectively, all the discussions, ferment and reconsiderations now manifest in all the sections of the socialist, Stalinist and intermediate groups, even though precipitated apparently by the outbreak of the crisis in the Stalinist world abroad, boil down to resolving the problem of how to achieve or restore the union of socialist (or pseudo socialist) ideas and the labor movement from the standpoint of each of the groups and tendencies involved. So it is the case, as it necessarily must be, with the ISL. Our decisions must facilitate, not in some unrealizable ideal or abstract sense but in the sense of the maximum possible under the concrete circumstances, the advancement of our ideas of democratic socialism in the ranks of labor and Negro movements, and the corresponding growth of a socialist movement based upon these broad mass movements and exercising an increasing influence among them. Any decision taken in the matter of socialist unity, or in relations with other groups, must serve this objective. Any decision, no matter what success it seems to yield of a temporary or isolated nature, but which conflicts with this objective, which does not serve it, or which is not conceived and carried on in a way which is consciously subordinated to the attainment of the objective, is wrong.

We recognize that the bulk of the radical movement, including the socialist radical movement, in the past twenty years has been under the ideological, political and most often the organizational leadership of the Stalinist Party. This movement, which helped identify socialism with the theories and practices of Stalinism, and of the Stalinist regimes, in the minds of the public, and above all in the minds of the working class, ended by producing an immense antagonism to Stalinism and, correspondingly, to socialism, in the working class. The Stalinist leadership of this movement is now practically dead. The ideology of Stalinism among the residue of this movement has been severely shaken by the Stalinist crisis. It is not, however, as dead as is the leadership of the Stalinist party, but remains to one degree or another. Indeed, the extent to which this ideology dominates the political thinking of various intermediate groups (ex-Stalinist, ex-Progressive Party, ex-Trotskyist) and their supporters, or the extent to which they have freed themselves, formally or actually, from this ideology, determines in large measure the contribution they are able to make to effective socialist regroupment. In turn, the extent to which it is possible to create or build an effective socialist regrouping as an alternative pole of attraction to that constituted by Stalinism, will determine in large measure the degree to which these groups shake off the remnants of the ideology of Stalinism. From the foregoing follow these conclusions

1. If a regroupment took place essentially through the unification of all the above-indicated groups into a new, united movement, excluding only the Stalinist leadership, it would result certainly in excluding all or the great bulk of those who, without accepting all the policies that distinguish the ISL, are committed to democratic socialism and are hostile to supporters, including critical supporters, of Stalinism in the name of socialism. Such a new coalesced movement would carry the stamp, not so much by formal decision as by its predominant composition, of a re-formed and modified pro-Stalinist movement. We do not see how such a coalition could play a genuinely positive role in the growth of a socialist movement as we conceive of it. Neither is it in the interest of the further progress in the right direction of those who are to one degree or another moving away from Stalinism. It would tend to half such ideological and political progress and thereby contribute to nullifying the effectiveness of those who have a contribution to make to the growth of the socialist movement. Our contact, discussion or collaboration with these groups and individuals must therefore aim at persuading them not to yield to any tendency toward such a coalition, at persuading them of the negative character of such a direction of their efforts, and at turning their attention and efforts in the direction of concrete alternatives. While we seek friendly contact and discussion, free from violent polemics, with such groups and individuals, we must decline sponsorship and responsibility for any organization or "semi-organization" which associates us with any group that has not declared plainly, whatever its estimate of the social nature or course of development of the Stalinist countries, that it is hostile to and independent of the totalitarian regimes that rule them, and supports all genuinely democratic movements and struggles against these regimes. Inasmuch as all the groups involved in any possible unification, have to one degree or other condemned the attack of Stalinism upon the Hungarian people, and expressed support for the democratic and socialist struggle of these people against the Hungarian and Russian Stalinist regimes, our proposal for such a general direction declaration on

their part cannot reasonably be objected to as an attempt by us to impose an ultimatum upon them.

2. For us to declare that collaboration with other groups requires their acceptance of all our theoretical positions, including our position on the nature of Stalinism and of Stalinist society, or that such acceptance is required for coexistence in one socialist organization, would be wrong and ultimatic and contrary to our conception of the socialist unification that is now required. We make no such declaration and we reject it when made by anyone else. We regard the theoretical differences on the Russian question, on Stalinism, which were the main cause of the splits in the past, as "frozen" for the present as regards the groups now discussing unity. We do not refrain from advancing our own theoretical position, but we do not make it, or the position of any other tendency, the pre-condition for unity. The pre-condition for unity is acceptance of the general principles of democratic socialism, agreement upon a democratic life for the united organization and support of the democratic struggle against the totalitarian regime. This does not encompass the full position of the ISL, to those tendency we reserve the democratic right of advocacy in a responsible and not disruptive way in a united socialist organization, which is the right of any other tendency as well. This viewpoint indicates that we do not regard or put forward the ISL as the basis of the reunification of the socialist movement, but do consider it as an indispensable element of the unity and as a tendency in it enjoying full equality with all others.

3. The ISL is in favor of unity with the Socialist Party because it can become the framework for such a unification and make a tremendous contribution toward its advancement. If the SP neglects the opportunity at hand it will drastically reduce the prospects for its growth in the immediate period ahead and in the future as well. The orientation of the ISL is based upon doing its best to help realize the former possibility. The ISL decides firmly in favor of unity with the Socialist Party as it is at present constituted and without posing any conditions of an organizational or political kind save those that are incontestable for all members enjoying equality of rights and duties. The ISL has neither the intention nor the desire to unite with the Socialist Party in order to "caputre" it, for even if this were possible such a "victory" would not only be meaningless but, what is worse, it would defeat the very objective of converting the SP from its present position of isolation and weakness to an effective, influential, broad democratic socialist movement in the best traditions of the Debs period. Without for a moment abandoning our right to present our own views on the policies and tactics of the socialist movement, we favor the exercise of this elementary right in such a way as to serve the aim of building the Socialist Party, of bringing into it new and numerous elements from the labor movement, the Negro movement, the student youth, the intellectuals and professional people, and not in such a way as to sterilize the party by making it a vanishing battleground for hard-and-fast factions or sects. Without for a moment abandoning our support of the principles and practices of democratic socialism as the basis for a reunited and healthy socialist movement, but rather by insisting upon these principles, we aim to build a socialist party which successfully takes up the challenge offered by the existence of great numbers of radicals who have already broken with Stalinism or are in the course of doing so, and seek a vigorous

1078

socialist organization which rejects sectarianism and aims at becoming a living movement. It is precisely in this sense that the Socialist Party has the possibility of displacing the Stalinist Party as the leader and spokesman for the radical and progressive movements, not only and not even so much those of the past period but the new ones that are sure to develop.

Individual radicals formerly under the influence of Stalinism may be recruited to a revolutionary sect. But the bulk of those who are still ready to work for socialism can be attracted only to an organization which is a serious political movement or which has the possibility of being developed into such a movement. From this point of view, too, the ISL favors unity with the SP as the organization which it is possible to build up as a serious pole of attraction to all radicals of yesterday, today and tomorrow, which offers a significant alternative to Stalinism in the struggle against capitalism and imperialism. If the SP takes advantage of the real possibilities that are arising before our eyes it will be able to become just such a pole of attraction. Meanwhile, in discussions with the various so-called "pro-Soviet" elements in and outside the CP we emphasize above all our minimum political platform for democratic socialist regroupment and present and defend the ISL's proposal that it unite with the SP. We strongly urge that the SP enter into all the current debates and discussions on regroupment.

4. Our aim with regard to the Socialist Party must serve in turn our wider long range aim with regard to the labor movement, as the most important of the mass movements in the country. The present period is a long interlude between the last radicalization wave and the one to come. In such a period it is not possible to think in terms of a genuinely powerful socialist movement numbering many tens of thousands and influencing many hundreds of thousands and more. But it is possible and necessary to utilize to the maximum all the possibilities now at hand to consolidate during this interlude the kind of socialist movement that will be best able to assist the working class in its further economic and political progress and be assisted in turn by the most conscious elements from its ranks who join and build the socialist wing of the labor movement.

The ISL has no grandiloquent illusions about the immediate possibilities for a powerful socialist movement. It is however anxious to do all in its power to utilize present concrete possibilities, no matter how modest, in conscious preparation for the much greater possibilities of the future. It is also in this sense that the ISL is prepared to unite with the Socialist Party and to pursue a course of building it up that will best advance the cause and influence of socialism in the labor movement, now and later. It is in the same sense that we refuse to support any movement which equivocates on the key question of the Stalinist regimes, for, among other reasons, it is precisely the identification of Stalinism with socialism in the minds of the American working class that has militated so strongly against the progress of socialism in this country.

CONVENTION SCHEDULEJuly 5

10 AM 1. Convention opened by Shachtman, Nat'l Chairman  
 Elections of Committee and rules  
 Presiding Committee  
 Credentials Committee  
 Resolutions Committee  
 Secretaries of Convention

10:30 2. International Question:  
 A. Resolution: the Revolution against  
 Stalinism.  
 Draper, Reporter  
  
 Report 40 mins.  
 Discussion 1½ hrs.  
 Summary 20 mins.

1:00 Lunch  
 2:00 PM

B. International Resolution:  
 Report: 35 mins. Gates N.C. Reporter  
 On amendments: Draper, Reporter 20 mins.  
 Discussion: 2 hrs.  
 Summaries: Reporter: 20 mins.  
 : Amend. Reporter: 10 mins.

5:30 3. American Question:

A. Unity and Regroupment:  
 PC Reporter 45 Mins. Shachtman  
 Minority 45 mins. Maskell

7:00 Supper  
 8:00 PM

Discussion 2 hrs.

July 6

10:00-12:00 Continued Discussion on Unity 2 hrs.  
 Summaries: Min. 30 mins.  
 Maj. 30 mins.

1:00 Lunch  
 2:00 PM

B. Socialists and the Labor Movement  
 PC Reporter 35 mins. Hall  
 Min. " 35 " Draper  
 Discussion 2½ hrs.  
 Summaries: Min. 25 mins.  
 Maj. 25 mins.

7:00 PM Supper

(continued Page 2 )

1080

CONVENTION SCHEDULE (cont.)

July 6

8:00 PM 4. ISL

A. Organization: Gates, Reporter

B. Press: PC Report, Shachtman  
Minority Reporter, Haskell

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July 7

1000 AM 5. Greetings from YSL

6. Election of National Committee

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CREDENTIAL

BRANCH \_\_\_\_\_

DELEGATE \_\_\_\_\_

ALTERNATE \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNED \_\_\_\_\_

## ON CHANGES IN OUR PRESS

BY Gordon Haskell

Proposals for changes in our publication set-up have been discussed by every recent convention of the ISL. As we approach this convention, there is at least one significant difference in the discussion. In contrast to the past, this time every functionary and member of the PC agrees that some change is inevitable.

It is not necessary for us to go into the reason for this in detail. For years the ISL has performed an incredible feat in getting out a weekly tabloid and a quarterly magazine with the financial resources at its disposal. Now everyone recognizes that it is impossible to continue to do this. Although I venture to say that no organization with similar resources in America has succeeded in maintaining such a press schedule over a sustained period, it is clear to all that we can continue to do so no longer.

Before we discuss the alternatives open to us, it is desirable to say a few words about what our press has cost us. Since there is only a certain amount of money available to us, our decision to pour every available penny into the press has meant that all other aspects of our functioning as a national organization have had to be restricted accordingly. In the first instance, this has cost us a functioning national office which corresponds to the needs of the organization. Unless one has ample, competent unpaid labor with which to staff a national office, one has to pay to staff it. Since we were not lucky enough to have such labor, our national office has had to limp along with what spare time efforts various comrades in New York could devote to it. The results are too well known to every branch in the country to require elaboration here.

But now, even if the membership were to decide that we could continue to get along with the kind of national office we have had, or lacked, in the interest of maintaining our press at its present level, this cannot be done.

So we all have to face it. Some degree of retrenchment is necessary. This is especially hard to take today, when we all feel that opportunities will open for us in the period ahead which we have lacked for some time. But when an organization has over-extended itself too long, it cannot always choose the most appropriate moment at which to reduce its functioning to levels more in keeping with its actual resources.

It is quite understandable that when comrades are faced with the need to retrench, they try to find a way to make as little of a change as possible. Instead of taking the opportunity to assess the real position, needs and capabilities of the organization afresh, such comrades approach the problem from the point of view of "rocking the boat" as little as possible. It is from this approach, in my opinion, which the idea stems that if we have to cut back, we simply get out the present LABOR ACTION every other week, instead of weekly, and continue with the quarterly NEW INTERNATIONAL.

I do not deny that such a set-up is possible for us. I do not deny that with such a set-up, it is even conceivable that we could strengthen considerably the functioning of the national office, though its maintenance over a period of time would be questionable. What I wish to strongly urge, however, is that such a set-up would not be the most desirable for the ISL at the present time.



First let me dispose of a couple of questions which may arise in comrades' minds. Everyone is agreed that at this point we could not save the weekly LA by discontinuing the NI. Further, analysis of printing costs shows that it would not be feasible for us to put out a decent bi-weekly magazine, even if we discarded the NI. It is just possible that we might be able to get out a somewhat expanded bi-weekly LA, say a ten or twelve pager, if we dropped NI. Such a publication would suffer, however, from all the disadvantages of putting out a magazine in newspaper format which were raised at the time of the last convention.

In my opinion, our press needs at the present time would best be served by concentrating all our financial and journalistic resources on a monthly magazine of roughly the size and format of the American Socialist, but with at least 32 pages per issue.

The possibilities of such a magazine, for us, should be fairly clear to every comrade. In it, we could combine the theoretical and analytical material which now appears in the NI with the most worthwhile material which appears in LA. Actually the quality of the magazine could be superior in some ways to anything we have gotten out in the recent past, because a concentration of our writing talent on one organ would eliminate the off-the-cuff quickly material of necessarily low quality which has appeared in our press along with the high-quality articles, simply because space had to be filled. Further, there is no reason why such a publication would have to be ponderous or dull. With a month to plan each issue, with all our writers to call on for material, with editorial choice replacing editorial necessity, we could put out a magazine with very high journalistic political standards.

However difficult it may be to swallow the necessity for a retrenchment of our press at this particular time, the fact is that if we consider our situation and prospects, it would not be an unmitigated disaster. For the period ahead it is clear that even though organizational advances are possible for us, our chief role in the ferment which now exists among all radicals in America is an ideological one. That is where our strength and our possibilities lie. And from this point of view a concentration of our press into one publication which can pack the maximum wallop, so to speak, could do more for us than many comrades imagine.

In contrast, a set up in which we get out a bi-weekly LABOR ACTION and a quarterly NI would leave us with a press which is pretty much like it has been for the past few years, except that we lose the advantages of weekly publication, and replace them with...no other advantage. The bi-weekly could be no better than our present weekly. It would have to be gotten out by a part-time editor. In addition, it would suffer from all the disadvantages inherent in bi-weekly publication. Such a newspaper cannot be current in the sense of a weekly, and at the same time it cannot be more of a magazine than LA is already. Since its rhythm, so to speak, cannot correspond to the rhythm of a functioning organization, it can serve the "house organ" functions of the weekly only very poorly. (announcement of forthcoming meetings; reporting on meetings and other events of interest to the readership, etc.) Since bi-weekly LA plus NI would continue to strain our financial and journalistic resources to the utmost, no serious improvement in quality can be expected.

Now, it is clear that in and of itself, a monthly magazine as the sole publication of an organization such as ours presents certain problems. It cannot at all fulfill the "house organ" functions mentioned above. It would have to be supplemented by a regular weekly or bi-weekly organizational-political newsletter which would serve those and other functions. With a monthly magazine, such a newsletter would be entirely feasible, within our means, and is a necessary part of the pro-

posal. Further, such a newsletter would not simply stand by itself, but would be a product of a functioning national office which would also be guaranteed by the release of money and manpower involved in retrenching to a monthly publication.

This needs to be stressed, once again, because it is, or should be, a vital consideration in the minds of all of us who are thinking about how best to carry on the work of the ISL in the period ahead. In reaching their conclusions about the whole problem of our press and our future functioning, the comrades in the branches should consider this also: how much would a really efficiently functioning national office mean to you? How much would it mean to you to get prompt replies to communications and questions from New York; to be informed promptly and fully of all important developments and decisions there?

Now, I would not seek to prove that it is impossible that this can be done with a bi-weekly LA plus NI. We will do everything possible to improve the situation, and concrete proposals and steps are being taken to seek to improve it in any event. But all I can confidently assert is this: The bi-weekly plus quarterly means that we will continue to be straining and over-straining just to get out our press. In the past this has meant that in such circumstances whenever anything had to be let go, it was some function or functionary of the national office which went down the drain under the implied slogan "the press at any cost." If we decide to continue with a press which will be over-inflated for our circumstances, I see no reason to really expect different results in the future.

There are at least two other aspects of our work in the past which have been sacrificed to our over-extended press. This is the possibility of getting out pamphlets, and our international relations. Both have gone by the board for one essential reason: since every nerve and brain-cell at the center had to be strained to get out our press, there was nothing left over for pamphlets and the systematic development of contacts and propagation of our views abroad.

Every comrade who has anything to do with people who are finding out about our organization and its views for the first time knows how terribly handicapped we are by the lack of adequate, current pamphlets. The annual pamphlet-issues of LA have been an excellent stop-gap in this field, but no more than that. If we still give some of our old pamphlets to new people to read, it is simply out of habit, and often because we have not read them ourselves for so many years that we don't realize how out-dated, from the point of view of our present politics, they have become.

Here again, comrades must weigh and decide. There is really no reason why, given a concentration of our publication on a monthly magazine, we could not get out a limited number of absolutely essential pamphlets in the next period. I would not be so foolhardy as to promise that they would actually be gotten out. But one thing is certain, the chief obstacle to their coming out in the past would be greatly reduced.

The same is true of our international relations. Right now we have a number of requests from foreign publications for articles on our point of view. Some of these requests are years old. They have not been filled for one chief reason; the comrades willing and able to write such articles have been so involved in writing for or getting out our press that they simply did not have the time to divert to this important work. This also was the reason for the collapse of the promising international newsletter which a couple of comrades started some time ago.

Now, it is obviously impossible to discuss this whole question intelligently without reference to the question of unity which will be before the convention. I will attempt to discuss it not so much from my own point of view on unity, as from an objective assessment of the possible implications of our decision for any unity perspective.

Since a retrenchment to a single monthly publication is more drastic than retrenchment to a bi-weekly plus quarterly, there is an understandable feeling that it might give such an impression of weakness on our part that unity with us would seem less desirable to some elements in the SP-SDF who now incline toward it.

I would not pretend to be privy to the thought-processes of the membership or leadership of the SP-SDF on this question. All I can say is this: I do not think anyone on our side is trying to kid the SP-SDF about the masses in our organization. Those who have actually discussed the matter with our people have a pretty accurate picture of the quantity and quality of our membership. Before unity on anyone's basis can possibly be achieved, this picture is bound to get much clearer, just as our knowledge of the quantity and quality of the membership of the SP-SDF is bound to get clearer. Thus it cannot and should not be a question of our deciding what we should or should not do with regard to our press and our general organizational set-up from the point of view of creating any kind of an inflated picture for the SP-SDF.

But I will go further than this. Since the proposal for a single monthly publication would make possible, in my opinion, the solid functioning of our national office, the regular issuance of an organizational-political newsletter, the appearance of pamphlets, I am confident that it will improve the external appearance of our organization just as it will improve its internal functioning. This will be so for anyone but the most casual observer immediately, and SP-SDFers seriously concerned with unity with us would not be casual observers.

Now, a final word. Since relations between the branches and the center have become so tenuous in recent times, I cannot pretend to have a real "feel" for the problems of the organization as a whole. I know pretty well how Labor Action has been used, or has not been used by all branches during the past three years. I know pretty well what it has meant to the IOL, who will be the chief sufferers from any retrenchment from the point of view of their week-to-week activities. But the comrades in each branch should think seriously, and not just from habit, just how they would be affected by the two proposals for our press: a bi-weekly plus quarterly, or a single monthly magazine, plus newsletter.

I will be as interested to hear from them, before or at the convention on this question as I hope they are to get the benefit of my experience and opinions from the national office. If they are of the opinion that from the point of view of their local experience and opportunities it is unthinkable for us to retrench to a single monthly magazine no matter what other benefits of such a retrenchment might be, if we have any possibility of putting out a bi-weekly and quarterly, that will be good enough for us. That should not be good enough for anyone, I think, is an approach to the question of our press which regards it in isolation from the problems of the functioning of the organization as a whole, and especially from the point of view of surface appearances ("it wouldn't look good") rather than from that of the basic needs of the organization.

1957

AGAINST THE DRAFT RESOLUTION  
OF THE PC MAJORITY

The bringing of socialism to the American working class remains the problem of our epoch. Any new regroupment of socialists must learn to overcome the isolation of socialism from the American workers. This is especially true now that the breakup of the Communist Party has offered socialists a golden opportunity to break out of isolation that has gripped us for so many years.

The Draft Resolution on the American Situation, which attempts to tell socialists how to function in the labor movement under the new conditions resulting from the breakup of the CP, is full of opportunist and abstentionist errors. It guarantees the disappearance of any tendency that supports it. It continues two fundamental and fatal errors. These are: its conception of how socialists function in the labor movement in a concrete way; and its line on political action.

The Resolution says, "Socialist unionists do not aim to graft some special credo of their own on the labor movement..." That is to say, socialists do not have their own line to counterpose to that of the trade union bureaucracy. They can, of course (as the Resolution says--if not actually then in effect), sit in some ivory tower while workers struggle against speedup, layoffs, etc., but they mustn't "impose" their "credo" on these struggles. Rather, they must behave as "loyal" trade unionists. We don't attempt to "capture" any unions...

THE REAL MEANING OF "LOYALISM"

Now the author of this section may object that this is an unfair statement of his position. But whether he understands it or not, his line is one of abstaining from the day-to-day struggles of the working class, promising the trade union bureaucracy that we will not challenge it even on a local level. Else, why does the author speak of "not capturing any unions"? Every man, woman & child knows that the ISL or any socialist tendency in the U.S. can only dream of capturing any union today. Then why does the author have to speak about socialists capturing unions? He means in practice, and in reality, socialists will not challenge union bureaucrats on a local scale. This is his conception of "loyal" trade unionism. (It corresponds perfectly with the bureaucrats' own conception of trade union "loyalty".) He means, as he himself has practiced for years, abstention from the day-to-day struggles--on any kind of critical basis--under the formula "There is nothing to do". The section of the ISL he leads has done nothing for years to "impose" any "credo" on the New York labor movement, despite some valuable opportunities for socialist participation in important sections of New York and New Jersey labor. This abstentionism in practice speaks louder than all the resolutions or protests the author can draft.

The conception that one can build a socialist or left-wing tendency in the labor movement, on a non-critical and "loyalist" basis, is an opportunist one. The only way a left wing can be built is by an all-out participation of socialists in the labor movement on a critical basis. This does not, of course, urge any kind of utopian or wild-man sort of participation. But it does mean

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1086

that every organized unit of socialism, whatever the form may be, has as its primary task the participation in and influencing of that section of the labor movement nearest to it.

Because the Communist Party in the middle 1930's learned to do this in the CIO upsurge, they grew vigorously to control of the UAW, UE and many other important unions. Mainly from this all-out participation they grew from 10,000 to 100,000. Because the (then united) Trotskyist movement could not, due to its petty-bourgeois habits, accomplish the same sort of concentration, it failed to grow, and declined instead.

#### STRENGTHS & WEAKNESSES OF THE AMERICAN CP

The connection of the Communist Party to the Russian Stalinist regime was not (as one sometimes hears said) an advantage which facilitated the growth of the Stalinists in the American labor movement. On the contrary, the political zig-zagging dictated from Russia embarrassed the Stalinists and constantly threatened to isolate them. If the Stalinists had not had to bear the albatross around their necks of defending every policy of Russia, they would not so easily have lost control of the UAW, and had their powerful UE liquidated.

Reuther rose to power on the basis of his criticism of the scab policy of the Stalinists during World War II. Likewise the Stalinists were forced out of the rest of their labor strongholds, especially in the CIO, due to their political support of the Stalinist regime during the Cold War. The final blows were the Khrushchev revelations and the Hungarian Revolution.

The important thing in the discussion of the Stalinist influence in the labor movement is to understand that the Stalinists gave concrete, day-to-day leadership, wherever they were; did not abstain from any of the struggles of the workers. They threw into the labor movement the cream of their very talented and courageous cadres, and succeeded only because there were no genuine socialists opposing them. Where militant and socialist opposition existed, the Stalinists had much harder sledding. The record is open for anyone who is interested in learning how the Stalinists made such gains.

The only time that the Trotskyist sections made any progress in the labor movement was during the war period, when under the prodding of Trotsky and others they both made efforts to participate. Whatever we have today is basically the result of that activity. When the heavy petty-bourgeois weight succeeded after the war in first toning down and then destroying this perspective, the isolation of our tendency from the labor movement became complete.

#### ABSTENTIONISM IN PRACTICE

It is a fact that the largest center of the movement, the NY section, has no perspective whatever of seriously attempting this work. Rather, one receives all sorts of reasons why this work shouldn't be done. Whenever an important part of a movement which calls itself socialist makes no organized attempts to concern itself with the concrete tasks of participation in the labor movement, that is abstentionism, and a form of adaptation to American life. The fact that leading members of the PC honestly believe that there is nothing for us to do in the labor movement only underlines the problem. The socialist movement will not benefit from any radicalization of the American workers, if it is not up to its neck in the labor movement.

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1087

All kinds of illusions exist in the ISL as to how we will win the working class to socialism. Some people honestly believe that to concentrate in the trade unions is ruinous. They believe the students or any other arena of activity is more important. They obviously believe in some sort of "spontaneity" theory. It runs like this: There will be a radicalization, and the workers will then seek us out in the universities, professions and agencies. Nothing could be farther from the truth. There can be no effective socialist organization without the labor movement. And it is equally true that there can be no effective socialist participation in the labor movement without socialist branch political leadership. They are inseparably bound up with one another. Because this correct dialectical conception was abandoned to one degree or another by all non-Stalinist socialists, the isolation of socialism from the labor movement was guaranteed.

The SWP did it by following a sectarian political line which isolated it from the labor movement. During the war they refused to participate in the fight against the no-strike pledge on the ground that it was "adventurism". They lost out further when they characterized the Routhier GM strike program as an "illusion". The anti-Stalinist workers' opposition in the UE was to them merely a gang of red-baiters and ACTU'ers, etc. They are guaranteed to find a good sectarian explanation for being on the sidelines while the workers are struggling.

The ISL, while adopting correct political lines on many important questions, slowly abandoned over the years any political and organizational direction to its work. The PC rarely discusses work of this nature. The PC members of the Labor Committee cannot find time in order to function on that body. A general collapse of the leadership has taken place on this whole question. This accounts, not surprisingly, for a great deal of the hopelessness that exists today on this subject.

The leadership will tell you that the objective situation militates against any union perspective, but one thing is sure: From a state of collapse and paralysis can come, not solutions, but only complete demoralization. Given a political leadership with any kind of morale on this question, some modest but necessary and important steps can be taken to make socialism truly a part of the labor movement.

OPPORTUNISM IN PRINCIPLE

The Draft Resolution's line on political action in the trade unions is an opportunist one, very appropriate to a Dubinsky or to the Daily Forward school of "socialism". They too will (or at least would until recently) tell you that they are socialists, but that they do not want to go against the policy of the official union movement. Comrade Shachtman will object that we are different because the resolution still calls for a labor party, while some right-wing social democrats do not. Even this is only an apparent distinction, since Dubinsky, Rose, etc., have for years maintained a sort of labor party in N.Y.

The fact is that no real pressure exists on us from the ranks to abandon the policy of running or supporting socialists against candidates like Stevenson. This pressure on us simply does not exist. There is, however, a very real pressure on us on this question in the labor movement. That pressure

comes from the "progressive" trade union barocrats on our ranks—they don't like our support to a socialist opposition. They would like very much to use some of our people to organize their political action for them, but they first want socialists to "get wise to themselves and stop acting so pure".

That does not mean that socialists cannot participate within PAC, etc. They should and they must help build labor's political activities, even on its pro-Democratic basis. But for us to abandon the kind of a socialist education we can make with militants who are growing close to us, around an election campaign, is a way of making us more reliable and loyal to "progressive" trade union barocrats. To them, we become more "responsible" and "sensible". Socialists who fall into the pitfall of being so "sensible" simply propel themselves from being close to the ranks of the militants, to being part of the bureaucracy. The whole proposal has to be seen in the light of a concerted pressure on our few remaining leading cadres in the labor movement to become part of the "progressive" wing of the labor bureaucracy. When seen in this light, the draft resolution's proposal not to oppose the official labor movement's candidate, "like Stevenson", is not a result of any protests from below, but constitutes giving in to pressures from above.

To be sure, someone can say, there are some workers who resent our opposition to Stevenson. This may be true, but by and large the ranks, while supporting a Stevenson, do not do so in the way they support a picket line. By and large, they support a Stevenson with a feeling of apathy. Most militants who are growing closer to us respect us for our socialist convictions. As a matter of fact, whatever general standing and worth for socialism that the Socialist Party has today in the labor movement was gained, in the main, by electoral opposition to capitalist candidates. The S.P. has been the traditional vehicle for workers protest against capitalism. We now propose to enter the S.P. and then deprive it of its most influential avenue to the American workers. Even the present S.P.-S.D.F. just refused to buy this proposition; thus the P.C. majority's proposal is to the right of those right-wing Social Democrats.

#### CLARITY REQUIRED

In the past, it has been difficult to discuss these questions of participation in the labor movement because of the general malaise that existed in the movement. But now, the growing movement for socialist regroupment has again stimulated interest in the basic problem of winning the American workers to socialism. No socialist movement that does not occupy itself with a thorough discussion of this problem can grow. Only when we learn how to bring fresh new working class elements and the best of the Stalinist dissidents to us will socialism grow to a significant force.

## A POINT OF VIEW

by J. Mo. Bride

I suppose, now that the issue of unity with the S.P.-S.D.F. as a prerequisite to Socialist Unity in the U.S., has reached the point where delegates to the convention have been elected and the various branches of the league have taken their stand, either for or against the resolution of the P.C. majority, it is too late to do much more than express a point of view on the subject, with the hope that your opinion will be made known to the rest of the members of the league.

I am in favor of Socialist Regroupment for I realize that the divisions that exist in the movement today make it practically impossible for the movement to achieve any measure of political success in the U.S.

Despite this fact, I do not believe the majority's resolution will accomplish this aim for a variety of reasons.

I would like to point out that first of all since the S.P.-S.D.F. has not issued an invitation to the ISL to unite with them as an organization, either through its press or its national committee, a vote on our part to take such action is comparable to an overanxious maid buying her wedding trousseau before she has even met a suitor.

The next point I would like to bring to the attention of our comrades is the fact that, to date, I have neither read of nor heard of just what the S.P.-S.D.F. as an organization, thinks of the proposition of the need for a Socialist Regroupment.

Of course I can recall, and so probably can some of the other comrades of the League, what the S.P.-S.D.F. had to say, regarding the acceptance into their party as members, people who had been followers of Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin. They were opposed to accepting such persons.

Now if the majority of the PC of the ISL really believes that unity between the ISL and the S.P.-S.D.F. will attract such vast hordes of former C.P. members and supporters into seeking membership in the new united group, how do they propose to overcome the aversion of their S.P.-S.D.F. comrades to such persons as members without causing a major split in the proposed newly united group?



On the question of the advisability of seeking unity with the S.P.-S.D.F. without any previous discussion between them and the League regarding the many points where both groups differ, I cannot buy Shachtman's opinion that these differences don't really matter today.

For the life of me, I cannot see how we, of the League, can exist in any group, without trying to establish our ideas on how a political party should function. Or on the kind of a program such a party should have, or the kind of press it should have. It seems to me that unless we can reach a working agreement with the S.P.-S.D.F. in advance of unity, an agreement where by we can at any time oppose anything that we feel is unacceptable to our concepts of a socialist political party, without being branded as being either disloyal to the S.P.-S.D.F. or disrupters of party harmony.

Shachtman says first of all, there is no time for such a preliminary discussion, secondly there is no need for such a pre-unity understanding.

In the first instance he claims that there are thousands upon thousands of socialist minded people in the U.S. who have become disorganized by the role of the C.P. in Hungary.

He says if we wait too long these people will drift away, into political oblivion or worse still, into one of the capitalist political parties. Or even more horrifying, will form many more smaller sects.

Actually what Shachtman is referring to as socially minded people are in fact, the former C.P. members and party-liners. Who, by his own statement, have had no time for the SP, the SWP, the ISL or any other socialist sect in the U.S.

Let me say at this point, that to me, these people were never socially minded people. In their youth, perhaps, they were Marxist and over the years they became hypnotized by Stalin's successes to such a point that they had lost all concepts of the real aims of Socialism.

I cannot see where the outrages perpetrated by the C.P. directed Russian Army upon the Hungarian people were any more shameful than the former actions of the Russian C.P. in East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia and even in Russia itself.

Is it not more logical to conclude that in the U.S. the action of the Eisenhower Administration, through Brownell's vigorous enforcement of the Smith Act, has much more to do with the desertation of these thousands upon thousands of former C.P. members and followers than any act of the C.P. Russian controlled Red Army?

If this evaluation of these thousands and thousands of former C.P.ers is true and if these people are, as some of our leading comrades have contended, a well trained revolutionary Socialist cadre then to my mind, the possibility of these people drifting into political oblivion or any other direction is nil.

But rather, if this is a true evaluation of these people, and supposing that the proposed unity program is consummated and we succeed in changing the attitude of the original S.P.-S.D.F. comrades toward the former C.P. members can you not visualize with what alacrity they will embrace the idea of Socialist Regroupment.

What a haven this would furnish them, and how long would it take them to pervert the new Socialist Party into an instrument of Communism, a la Russian?

Shahtman says there is no need for preunity discussion with the S.P.-S.D.F. on any point of policy as the S.P.-S.D.F. has no real policy or program.

Shahtman also says we ask for no concessions or conditions, only the right to all the duties and responsibilities of any other member.

Shahtman also says all we ask for is democratic socialism both within the proposed united parties and that all who desire to unite in the new regroupment will be only required to support democratic socialism both here and in Russia and China.

Again Shahtman says, we propose to put into the deep freeze all political differences among all sects that join the new group. "We are not purist," he says, "we are practical politicians." "We are not interested in purity. We are interested in building a new socialist political party."

In fact, Shahtman, as usual, says many things, and usually, in a very convincing manner. But, if one stops to think about the things Shahtman says one can't help but conclude that what Shahtman says so earnestly and convincingly is not always necessarily so.

When the question was put to Shahtman that after unity had been achieved, how would it be possible for us to function within the new group without causing the former S.P.-S.D.F. to resent our opinions and our pressures to make the new group go in the direction we wanted it to go.

He reminded us that we are a young, dynamic, well trained political group who, by our attendance at every meeting and willingness to work to build the party, will act upon the older more passive S.P.-S.D.F. comrades more or less as an opportunity to relax and spend more time on their personal life, with the feeling that the work of the party is in good hands.

While I agree with Max, that this is a true picture, but just picture how much more active and aggressive the former C.P. recruits will be. Remember the fable of the Arab and the camel.

What do I mean by this outline of my opinion of the supposed former C.P. members and their cohorts?

No doubt Shahtman, and some of our other league comrades may feel that I am unduly suspicious, and perhaps I am, but my suspicions are not only well grounded, but have been fostered both by the history of the C.P. internationally and the attitude of Shahtman and other leading comrades in the past.

-4-

I can recall, only too well, Shaohman's report on how the C.P. with its various front organizations engineered the capture of the Labor-Farmer movement in the middle west.

Then again Fenwick's statement in Philadelphia on June 1st when he told of talking to former leading C.P. members both in France and in the U.S. he stated that those whom he had talked to had broken with the party in some instances, but had no political concepts of their own, possessing bureaucratic minds that could only function when directed by some central authority or who broke with the party only on the surface, to protect their jobs or academic standing.

Again I can recall back in '44 or '45 when a comrade advocated a united front with the C.P. in the shipyard workers union, Shaohman and other leading comrades at that time, pointed out that the C.P. could not be trusted.

This present split, that is supposed to exist in the C.P., could not this too, be just another maneuver on the part of the C.P.? A maneuver to lull the American Worker into the belief that the old C.P. is dead?

As part of the maneuver, would it not be wise for them to try to create the impression, by seeking every opportunity to appear before the public as friendly opponents of the other socialist sects, that there is no real difference between them and the average democratic socialist?

Does it not seem odd to you comrades, that if such a violent three-way split exists in the C.P. it was still possible for the C.P. to set up a National Committee composed of leading comrades of the three warring factions?

I would like to raise one more point that it seems to me might have a great deal to do with the success or failure of any Socialist Regroupment move. That is the two recent decisions by the Supreme Court. What effect will they have on the thinking of the members of the various sects we are seeking to unite?

I realize of course, that properly handled, they could be used to great advantage in recruiting new members to a revitalized socialist movement.

On the other hand, is it impossible for us to conceive, that all the other parties or sects, as you prefer, may feel that this action gives them a new lease on life, and thereby eliminates the need for Socialist Regroupment?

Now, I'll try to boil all this down to a few words of summation as to why I am opposed to the majority resolution on unity. Without a clear understanding between us and the S.P.-S.D.F. arrived at beforehand, on just how far we can go in opposing their concepts on Party Program, which includes everything from the question of War to Socialist Regroupment I believe unity won't last.

Until the S.P.-S.D.F. raises the question of unity with us, I believe we should hold off making it a part of our official program. In the event of such unity I think we should go mighty slow in trying to recruit either former C.P. members or accepting any faction of the present C.P.

And last but not least, I think we should hold in abeyance, all moves toward Socialist Regroupment until what the reaction is among the Radical Sects including the C.P. to the recent Supreme Court decisions.

AMENDMENT TO RESOLUTION ON PERSPECTIVES FOR AMERICAN SOCIALISM, PART I  
(See Forum, June 1)

By Ray Walsh and D. Keier

To follow, in para 2 on page 7, the sentence ending "to win its most important political demands." Thus it would replace and substitute for all that follows this sentence, from "But at the same time..." through the rest of page 7 and including all but the last paragraph on page 8.

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Yet in doing so the socialist does not wish to put himself in the position of alienating those advanced workers who having recognized the importance of political action and of labor's increased political consciousness have accepted, temporarily, the policy of campaigning for labor endorsed candidates of the bourgeois parties through their PACs, etc.

This poses a problem for every socialist, and particularly for those active in the labor movement: how to best propagandize for socialism and more immediately for a labor party at a time when the better and more advanced unionists, who are not yet socialists, are campaigning for the labor endorsed candidates. In these circumstances we feel that the propaganda advantages of running socialist candidates against such labor endorsed candidates must be carefully weighed against the possible alienation of those more advanced currents within the union, so that it will not appear that the small socialist movement is pitting itself against the present class movement of labor in politics during election time. In today's climate the minor propaganda advantages offered by running candidates is too often more than cancelled out by antagonisms and difficulties created among labor militants loyal to the union and its official policy. However, let us emphasize before going on that we are not suggesting that in such circumstances we or any other socialists should support bourgeois candidates or should not make clear its opposition to the policy of supporting such candidates and parties; what we are examining here is when under what circumstances we would favor running socialist candidates, which question flows not from any attempt to facilitate support to bourgeois candidates but solely from an examination of the tactical advantages to be gained or lost from such a campaign.

Thus, the ISL does not, as a general rule, expect that the socialist movement, reunited or not, can or should orient towards running candidates in such elections with general socialist propaganda or "party building" purposes in mind. This in no way means that (1) there are not circumstances and areas in which the running of socialist candidates, where either there exists no lib-lab type candidates or such lib-lab endorsed candidates are so obviously of the most corrupt and backward sort, cannot serve as a fruitful means of propaganda and as a source of useful party activity without incurring any of the above-mentioned dangers, or (2) that there are not circumstances when strong progressive currents of dissatisfaction and revolt against the present policy arises within the labor movement where the running of such independent candidates cannot help to serve as a means of aiding and supporting such currents, even when opposed by the dominant, official policy of labor. The socialist movement must always keep both these type of "exceptions" in mind, as they undoubtedly will and can occur, especially on a local scale, in the immediate future.

Our position on this question does not proceed from any general principles about the proper relationship between the socialist movement and the trade unions, but rather from an analysis of the circumstances which prevail today and which we expect will prevail in the immediate future. The key consideration is not that

socialists should not counterpose themselves to the official policy of labor, but that socialist electoral activity should be based primarily on considerations arising out of the real trends in the working class, and not merely for the purpose of socialist propaganda regardless of such trends or the absence of them and regardless of the effect of such a socialist campaign on encouraging or discouraging such trends and of alienating and driving away the more militant unionists.

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Amendments to Section 1 of Socialist Perspectives in the U.S. (as amended by  
the PC meeting July 2)

on page 4, following "...socialist consciousness" at the end of the 4th paragraph:

However, a repudiation of sectarian and irresponsible criticisms of the labor movement is not to be confused with either apologies, rationalizations or pretended unawareness of the social conservatism and timidity of the labor leadership. The record of the labor leadership in the anti-McCarthy struggle, in the fight for civil rights and during the Hungarian revolution has been less than poor. We have criticized the labor leadership for such failures in the past and we do not propose to abandon or tone down this criticism so long as the labor leadership fails to live up to its responsibilities on such vital national and international problems.

on page 5, in paragraph beginning "While there..."

In sentence beginning "Yet socialists..." substitute "responsible participants" for "loyal supporters" and delete the rest of the paragraph.

on page 6, in paragraph "Socialism must come...."

delete the last sentence beginning with "At the same time....."

on page 6:

delete the last paragraph on page.