

# BULLETIN

## WORKERS PARTY

NO 8

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APRIL 1941

## THE WORK OF THE MARCH PLENUM

On March 22nd, 23rd and 24th, 1941, the National Committee of the Workers Party held its second National Plenum since the Party's foundation. The Plenum required a day beyond the original schedule in order to complete the entire agenda. The gathering was one of the most fruitful in the history of the revolutionary movement in United States and betokens real possibilities for the swifter advancement of our Party in the coming period.

The Agenda, though covering many questions, was disposed of adequately. The Agenda of the Plenum was as follows:

1. Report on the resolution on the Political Situation and the Tasks of the Party; comrade Shachtman, reporter.
2. Report on the state and work of the Party and on the Press. Reporter, Harry Allen.
  - a. Supplementary report on Press by Billings.
  - b. Report of the Finance Department by Demby.
3. Report on Negro Work, by Mann.
4. Report on Educational Work by Gates.
5. Report on Refugee Work by Elsie Dinsmore.
6. International Report by Henry Judd.
6. Report on Trade Union work by Coolidge.
7. Report on Youth by Nevins.
8. Reports on Russian Question - by any committee member presenting a resolution on the question.

In addition, time was provided for special reports or appeals by, or in connection with the Sherman group, Dwight Macdonald, Local Akron.

### POLITICAL REPORT

The resolution on the Political Situation has been published in Labor Action. After a full discussion, the resolution was adopted unanimously, together with some of the amendments proposed in the discussion.

Amendments and discussion on the Political Resolution concerned themselves with the slogan of the Labor Party; the slogan of 30-30 and the sliding scale of wages; and particularly the question of our attitude toward the Communist Party - more precisely, toward the Communist workers in the Unions. The tenor of the brief remarks on the Labor Party slogan were toward a greater amplification of the trends for or against the development of a Labor Party movement in this period, although there was also an expression of opinion for a change of the position of the Party on this question. In a few instances, proposals or suggestions from the floor were referred to the Political Committee for possible recasting or revision of the final draft of the Political Resolution in line with the proposals from the floor. The Political resolution served as the guide in the discussion of all other questions before the Plenum, even as the Political Resolution is the base for the Program of Action and the other specific activities and proposals in all fields of work. Com-

rade Shachtman reported for the Political Committee on the Political resolution.

The second point on the agenda was a detailed report on the past work of the Party nationally, and the status of our organization and press (Labor Action and The New International) today. Comrade Harry Allen reported for the committee. In this report attention was drawn to the Program of Action of the August, 1940 Plenum, and the extent to which the Program had been carried out in life. In the period between the August and March Plenums, the main objectives of the Program of Action were accomplished.

1. Particularly, the task of maintaining Labor Action as a weekly.
2. The greatly increased Proletarianization of the Party; development of specific industrial concentration points.
3. The organization of the Party's propaganda and agitation work around the anti-war program.
4. The development of National and regional tours (even beyond the program): National Tours by Shachtman and Coolidge; the tours by Henry Judd to the Orient and one comrade to the Latin American countries.

The Organization Report made clear that the social composition of the Party had changed greatly toward that of a membership in the factories and mills.

Serious work had been carried on in various localities in the Negro Areas, but a greater central direction was required,

The Educational activities, so far as the Center was concerned, had been spasmodic. The development of the educational work in a systematic, centralized manner was an important requirement for the next period.

#### THE PARTY'S WORK

The Party had developed unusually well, considering the circumstances of a pre-war and war development. The losses had been trivial and the Party had carried on its anti-war struggle actively. The struggle against the stream, however, was only beginning, as would be shown in the future in the endeavors to carry through the anti-war agitation of the Party among the masses. In the next period, as the new Program of Action makes clear, it is imperative to spread our press more widely, particularly Labor Action, with the objective of at least doubling our circulation in the immediate period ahead.

Extention and maintenance of the New International at 32 pages is also an important task for the future.

Colonization of our forces, particularly in Lynn and Detroit, and also, if possible, in Cleveland and Pittsburgh was decided upon by the Plenum.

The third National Tour organized by the Workers Party; namely, comrade Shachtman's tour (already under way) is one of the significant anti-war and organizational efforts of the Party for the next period.

The discussion on all aspects of the organization and press report and on the Program of Action made it amply clear that the leading members understood the necessity for the development of the local work also around the agitational and propaganda slogans contained in the Political Resolution. Public meetings, (city or neighborhood) for instance, instead of being organized around all our general slogans and program, should be organized concretely around one or two of the transitional slogans. Likewise, this was understood as required in any local literature that might be issued.

The issuance of pamphlets, which the organization had failed to get out in the past period, was regarded as an indispensable need for the coming period. The pamphlets required, in the opinion of all, were not only popular agitational literature, but also fundamental material on the principles and programmatic position of the revolutionary socialist movement. Hence the Program of Action calls for a series of pamphlets of a varied nature and scope.

In the discussion of the specific localities, it was emphasized that a colonization of qualified comrades was necessary in Lynn, Massachusetts, in order to lay stronger political foundations for our movement. There, trade union work of a varied kind is being carried on intensively and extensively, but the comrades are not able to devote the necessary time to the building of our Party, without which the value of the unquestioned large amount of mass work would tend to become nullified.

In view of the significance of Detroit in the industrial and political situation, the Plenum agreed that a concentration of people to build a unit in Detroit was indispensable. Additional support through qualified comrades was required in Cleveland, and the Party is to endeavor to find the necessary persons. This is likewise the case in Pittsburgh in order to lay sound foundations for a Party unit.

Despite the difficulties today in recruiting new forces into the Party, it was demonstrated, by the number of members who had been recruited into the Party in recent months, that recruitment of new elements was possible if systematic effort was carried on with potential members.

Several cities had made considerable progress in strengthening and consolidating the organization and extending of activities. Local New York stood out in the systematic distribution of Labor Action at Brewster Air Craft. Likewise the Labor Action School and the Forum had been very successful. Local New York's program of action for the next period calls for increasing the number of factories where Labor Action is to be regularly distributed. This is a very large order, but the City Organization nevertheless has made this its goal. Negro work has also been planned with greater care and hope for more results.

The Los Angeles organization particularly made forward steps in integrating a large number of members into basic industry, with the consequent development of more and serious industrial activity; it has also carried on consistent educational work. The St. Louis or-

ganization, besides conducting its local work, has been responsible for the wide distribution of our literature, papers, leaflets, etc.-- among the share-croppers in Southeast Missouri. Local Philadelphia, with two branches, has carried on consistent, rounded activity. Its forum, covered mainly by local speakers, has been a success. Distribution of Labor Action at an important factory has been carried through very effectively. Union contact there has been established. Several new members were recruited in the past period. Local Philadelphia is confident of even better developments and activities. In Buffalo a Branch of the Party has been slowly but steadily built up till there are now eight members, nearly all of whom are active in two basic industries. The organization and development of the Buffalo unit has been one of the very good aspects of the past period.

This covers a few of the highlights on the organization side. The organization report by comrade Allen was supplemented by additional reports on Labor Action and The New International by Billings, and a report on finances by Demby. Excerpts from the financial report are included in this bulletin, and speak for themselves. Serious efforts at stabilizing the income and expense of the organization have been made. The Party is more aware than before that financial difficulties are followed by organizational and political difficulties as well. While a good share of the membership is doing its utmost for the maintenance of the press and organization, there are still many members who do not carry out their financial obligations to the organization to the extent that is both possible and necessary.

#### THE PRESS

Comrade Billings' report concerned itself with the problem of increasing the circulation of Labor Action. In recent months the circulation of Labor Action increased steadily, largely because of factory distributions and contact work. The experiences in this work made it clear that it is entirely possible to double the circulation of Labor Action in the coming period. The largest number of Labor Action so far published was 7500 copies of the Negro number, and on two or three occasions 6000 copies for special factory and strike distributions. In recent weeks, 4,000 -4,500 copies have become average runs. But it must be remembered, also, that the issues have been run according to orders placed, and this indicated both a stabilization of and system for circulation. A circulation of 8,000 to 9,000 is the goal of the Plenum for the next period.

The future of the New International is tied up with the ability of the members to increase the circulation by several hundred copies in the coming weeks. The Plenum decided to ratify the proposal of the Political Committee to increase the size of the magazine from 16 to 32 pages. This will make possible the issuance of the kind of rounded magazine that is necessary. Unquestionably, a large financial undertaking which can, however, be resolved in the main by increasing the circulation by many hundred copies.

The magazine was criticized from several aspects, but it was generally recognized that a 16 page magazine has so many limitations that it was impossible to get out the kind of magazine necessary from a political and theoretical standpoint. With a 32 page magazine, however, everyone expressed confidence that an outstanding theoretical organ of Marxism would now be forthcoming.

FLOOR DISCUSSION THOROUGH

The discussion from the floor was precise and to the point on the various problems, and specifically on what the Program of Action proposed for adoption by the Plenum. There was discussion as to the manner in which the transitional slogans of the Political resolution could be put actively into life by the various Branches and localities. Ways and means are indicated in the Program itself on this point. The discussion on the organization and press reports lasted almost three hours.

One of the points in the organization report concerned itself with the internal situation in Akron. There the Party has two Branches- the Debs and Trotsky Branches. The Debs Branch, in the last two or three months, began to develop activities, particularly in the distribution of Labor Action and in the Negro field. The Trotsky Branch has consistently carried on activity in the various field<sup>s</sup> without fanfare. The prospects for unusual growth of the Akron organization are bright, provided an outworn internal situation is finally resolved. The August, 1940, Plenum decided, upon the insistence of the Debs Branch members, to divide local Akron into two separate Branches, the Debs Branch members expressing the view that this would be the best way to resolve past difficulties. Although the August Plenum had grave doubts about the wisdom of this step, it decided to permit the experiment for a limited period. The March Plenum reviewed the Akron situation and arrived at the decision that another measure was necessary to resolve the situation which hinders the development of Party work to the extent that is entirely possible. The Plenum therefore unanimously decided that the present two branches shall be reorganized into two new mixed branches. The Trotsky Branch in advance, declared its acceptance of any decision of the Political Committee or Plenum in its attempts to resolve the Akron situation.

Both Branches have been advised of the decision of the Plenum, and informed to effect the reorganization by April 10th. Prospects for very good development of all kinds of activities in Akron are bright, but depend in a good measure upon the results of the proposed reorganization.

On the Negro work, comrade Mann reported. Here the problem rests on the organization of a better functioning National Negro department, together with the cooperation of the locals. Several cities - Chicago New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, Los Angeles and others - carry on Negro work to a greater or lesser extent. Chicago particularly has been active among Negro masses. But the locals have not been functioning sufficiently under the direction of a National Negro Department, and the locals on their part, have not sent in, regularly, information as to their work and policy. The Plenum took steps toward the establishment of a stronger Negro Department. This has now become feasible because of the availability of personnel now to function in this field of work. Comrades expressed the view that a National gathering of Negro members of the organization, and other comrades largely involved in the Negro work, was desirable. Such a conference can possibly be consummated in a reasonably early time; and then, both policy and matters of organization - such as relate, for instance, to the creation of broad (non-party) local Negro organizations - can be settled more completely. The Plenum also voted to initiate a discussion on the Negro Question in a Negro Department Bulletin. This discussion shall consist of an exchange of experiences of Branches doing Negro work, followed by a discussion on a Programmatic position on the Negro Question.

Also, in respect to the organization of broad, non-party Negro organizations, the Plenum voted that such efforts be made in one or two specific localities, under the direction of the National Negro Department and the Political Committee, for the purpose of experiment.

Elsie Dinsmore reported on the progress of the work on behalf of Refugees. Considerable work had been undertaken and accomplished. Several hundred dollars were raised to aid refugees in many ways, and, also, through the work of the committee, visas had been obtained for a great many refugees in the various European countries. The proposals submitted by Comrade Dinsmore on behalf of the Refugee Committee for the advancement of this work were accepted by the Plenum. Among these recommendations were proposals to have, wherever possible, socials or dinners for the benefit of the refugee work on Comrade Shactman's anti-war tour. Also, the Party is to set aside two weeks in which members shall engage in refugee campaign work.

Comrade Gates reported on the Educational work, which, he pointed out, had been carried out sporadically, so far as the National Educational Department was concerned. The main immediate problem is the gathering together of comrades who will be in a position to devote a very large part of their time, if not exclusively, to the Educational work, which becomes more imperative than ever as a vital need of the organization. The Program of Action is explicit on the pamphlets to be issued for public use, and, besides, a program for the issuance of internal educational material was discussed.

In regard to the manner in which our Party was concerned with matters of the Fourth International, a report is given separately in this bulletin. The International Bulletin issued by the Committee for the Fourth International has dealt, among other things, with the trip of Sherman Stanley; the Latin-American tour is not yet completed. The Plenum was informed of the adoption of a manifesto on the World War by the American Committee for the Fourth International. It was decided to publish this manifesto in an early number of Labor Action.

In addition, a report was received from this committee on the state of the Fourth Internationalist movement. The Plenum decided to submit this report to the Internal Bulletin for the information of the membership.

#### APPEALS FROM DECISIONS

In the course of the Plenum, appeals from decisions of the Political Committee were presented and discussed.

Comrade Carter presented an appeal from the decision of the Political Committee in regard to its attitude toward the Sherman group. The statement of position of the Political Committee on this question is being issued separately, and the members can become acquainted in detail with this matter. The New York membership had an opportunity for two membership meetings at the time the Sherman faction openly decided to abandon a revolutionary program and organization and to join the Socialist Party. Comrade Carter's appeal was directed, not against the political position of the Political Committee, with which he is in accord, but on ways and means to deal with the Sherman group. The Political Committee position regards the anti-Marxist, anti-Bolshevik views, and the advocacy thereof, of the Sherman group, as incompatible with membership in the Workers Party. Comrade Carter's position was that if such comrades stood ready to abide by the disci-

pline of the organization, they should be permitted to remain in the organization. The Plenum rejected comrade Carter's appeal and upheld the decision of the Political Committee. (See attached documents).

Comrade Macdonald presented a statement of his views to the Plenum, and the plenum further gave opportunity to him to appear before it to express his divergence from the Party on the manner in which it dealt with him and his work. The Political Committee has largely concerned itself with the problem of comrade Macdonald's relation to and conception of relations with a Bolshevik Party. The Party has at no time taken any organizational or disciplinary measures toward comrade Macdonald, but has put forward its position that the committee has the right and duty to regulate the political actions of any member, as, for instance, one who edits a non-party publication. Recent internal bulletins gave ample data in respect to the yet unresolved difficulties between comrade Macdonald and the Party.

Comrade Shachtman presented the point of view of the Political Committee. The Plenum unanimously affirmed the position of the Political Committee in its dealings with comrade Macdonald. Comrade Carter moved to criticize comrade Johnson for his criticism of Macdonald in the NI. The motion was defeated by the Plenum. By common consent of the Plenum and comrade Macdonald, matters were left standing with the statements of views and clarification, with an effort to be made concretely to clarify or resolve, in the very near future, the matter of comrade Macdonald's work and relations with the organization. The Political Committee is authorized to discuss with comrade Macdonald his work on Partisan Review and in the Party for a solution on a more satisfactory basis.

#### TRADE UNION ACTIVITY

David Coolidge reported on the Trade Union resolution and the union work of the Party. The resolution has been printed in Labor Action, and the comrades will no doubt read and study the resolution. The report brought forth considerable discussion, particularly in those cities that were engaged considerably or to a greater extent than ever before, in trade union work; such as Lym, Los Angeles, New York, Buffalo, Akron and Philadelphia. Discussion developed on the social significance of the strikes now going on in the war industries, and in the strikes that will undoubtedly break in other trades and industries. Emphasis was placed on the imperative requirement for Party members to integrate themselves and to take active part in the Labor movement. Those who have had the opportunity to function in the labor movement and the strike struggles in the recent period, realize more than ever that industrial or trade union activity is the major field of work for the revolutionist, both in the day to day struggles and in the ultimate goal of social revolution.

The Westchester Fraction brought before the Plenum an appeal from the decision of the Political Committee on policy in the teachers union. The position of the Westchester fraction was to reverse the position of the Political Committee; and to give critical support to the National Executive Committee of the union, and to vote "yes" on



the referendum for the expulsion of local 5 from the union. The Plenum unanimously rejected the appeal of the Westchester fraction, and supported the policy of the Political Committee (presented in detail in our press).

The report on the YPSL was given by Nevins, National Secretary of the Yough. Chief interest in his report was concentrated on the proposals being considered by the National Youth committee to send, over a period of time, about 40 members to other cities, there to go into industry and to assist in the formation of YPSL units.

The final point on the agenda concerned itself with reports and discussions on the Russian question. Resolutions or motions on the Russian question were introduced by comrades Max Shachtman, J.R. Johnson, Joe Carter and Frank Demby. Each of them were given reporterial rights. The reports and discussion consumed several hours. No vote was taken on any resolution or motion. It was decided to continue the discussion in an educational manner, together with the presentation of resolutions of the various views. A decision on the official position of the Party, following the discussion, is to be taken at the forthcoming National Convention of the Workers Party.

The Plenum also voted for the convening of the 2nd National convention of the Workers Party some time during 1941, and referred the matter of exact date, procedure and agenda to the incoming Political Committee, for action. A motion was also passed to begin the immediate preparation of the Program, principles and Constitution for adoption at the convention.

The three day plenum formed an important part in the development of the Workers Party toward political and organizational consolidation on Bolshevick foundations.

Every member, from the National Committee through the ranks, must work at his tasks with a resolute will, patiently, over and over again; take his proper place and turn, and "grind out the grain" for the revolutionary movement. Onward and forward!

April 3rd, 1941

Harry Allen

PROGRAM OF ACTION FOR THE WORKERS PARTY  
Plenum March 22nd - 23rd, 1941

The Political resolution of the Workers Party sets forth the main political tasks of the Party. The Program of Action is the concrete application of the political resolution. In the period between now and the next Plenum (or convention), the Party must attempt to reach larger numbers of working people than ever before, to explain our anti-war program and revolutionary socialism.

The immediate objectives of the organization are the following:

**I. LABOR ACTION:** The maintenance of Labor Action as a weekly publication must continue as the major objective.

To double the circulation of our major agitational and propaganda instrument, Labor Action, in the next four months. The following methods, followed systematically, can easily result in the doubling of the paper's sales and distribution:

- A. Each party unit shall increase its present quota of papers - with additional copies at 1¢ per copy for this period, to be distributed as follows:
  1. Wherever possible, select one or more factories for the regular distribution at specific hours, of Labor Action. Regularly carried through, such distributions will bring results. This has already been attested to in various cities.
  2. Union Halls. Select one or more union halls, preferably those of basic industries, for the sale and distribution, each week, of a quantity of Labor Actions. The same halls should be covered regularly. Shifts should not be made because of lack of results, to begin with, at the important union halls.
  3. Unionists. Endeavor to select a group of unionists and try to cover them each week with Labor Action. That is, obtain the names of a group of longshoremen, sailors, auto-workers or other unionists, as the case may be, and endeavor to have them receive Labor Action each week; delivering the paper to their homes, if necessary, or arranging to mail the paper.
  4. Contacts - Neighborhood circulation. House to house or contact work. Every member of the organization, unless specifically absolved for good cause by a higher body, shall be obliged each week to engage in contact or house to house canvassing and distribution of Labor Action. An area shall be selected by each branch, and covered each week by the same members, if possible, with Labor Action.

Contact work, although requiring patience and although the results are meager to start with, is an important activity for every member, particularly now. It is not always possible, at the present time, to conduct work in the public manner desir-

able and other ways must be utilized to reach the broad masses of workers. House to house contact work can be carried on by every single member without difficulties. This is a minimum obligation for each member.

Each branch should select a territory and assign committees of members to visit these specified areas. A Unit of even 8 or 10 members can easily cover from 50 to 100 families per week, whether distributing the papers or engaging in discussion also, if the opportunity affords itself.

In many cities, where some types of public activities are limited by existing conditions, contact work has proved possible and fruitful. In due course, sales will follow and also discussions and possible recruitment.

5. Subscriptions. To work for 300 new subscriptions by the next plenum. Business Management to furnish details.

6. Advantage shall be taken of the Shachtman National Tour to increase the circulation, and particularly the subscription list, of LABOR ACTION. Any person who presents a paid admission to a Shachtman meeting shall, with the additional payment of 20¢ receive a three month subscription to the paper. The special subscription offer of a three month subscription to Labor Action for 25¢ shall continue as at present.

II. EDUCATION: In the following period, the theoretical enlightenment and development of our own membership and sympathizers, are among the highly important tasks of the Party. Courage alone in opposition to the war, although absolutely a prerequisite, will not suffice. A thorough knowledge of our program and principles becomes the necessary foundation in maintaining the organization steadfast in the struggle against the stream; this applies to every member of the organization.

Towards this end, the following specific measures must be carried out:

A. To expand and maintain the New International as a 32 page organ.

B. To increase the circulation of our theoretical organ, the New International, by 500 additional copies before the next plenum. In reality this is a low objective, but 500 additional readers mean at least 500 more persons who can be educated in the basic doctrines of revolutionary socialism.

C. To obtain at least 150 more subscriptions within 60 days after the plenum. The New International Business Management will furnish the details.

D. Pamphlets: The National Education Department shall issue the following pamphlets, 1¢ or otherwise, to meet the educational requirements of our membership and the workers we can reach at this point.

1. A popular pamphlet on the program of the Workers Party for general distribution to the average workers.
2. War and the Working Class - a fundamental pamphlet reviewing the principled and programmatic position of revolutionary socialism on the question of war.
3. The ABC of Marxism - a pamphlet setting forth popularly the fundamental doctrines of Marxism.
4. The Conscript and the War - questions and answers to a Draftee.
5. How to Combat Fascism - a program for workers.
6. A Biographical pamphlet on the work and role of L.D. Trotsky

E. Propaganda Leaflets. The National Office and also the Local organizations or Branches shall make every effort to issue printed or mimeographed leaflets on the issues of the day, particularly related to the elaboration of the Transitional slogans or demands contained in the Political Resolution.

F. In line with the necessity to develop the theoretical knowledge of our members and sympathizers, it is important that in each city there shall be organized the following:

1. One or more classes along the lines of the Labor Action Institute in New York, or as in Los Angeles, Akron, Chicago.
2. Each Branch shall organize a class dealing with current issues and/or the fundamental issues and problems of the movement. Such classes shall be held irrespective of the size of the unit. Outsiders shall be invited.

G. Wherever possible, public forums shall be organized and lectures given regularly, as long as possible.

### III. PUBLIC AGITATION AND PROPAGANDA AGAINST THE WAR:

A. In order to set forth to the workers the position of the Workers Party in opposition to the imperialist war and forthcoming American participation in it, the plenum proposes another National Tour shall be organized immediately following the plenum, with the National Secretary as the speaker. This may be the last great opportunity, before direct and formal American participation in the war, for the Workers Party to state its case against imperialist war to the wide mass of workers.

### IV. COLONIZATION.

A. The intensification of the trade union activities of all our members is more important and significant today than ever before. The opportunities for participation in the labor movement by virtually all our members are open as never before. The National Organization must systematically endeavor to colonize specific cities with the object of building or developing a Party unit, and for more systematic trade union work in the basic industries. What

can be done in the way of changing the social composition of our organization and drawing the members into responsible union activity in the basic industries, has already been shown in the past period; but the direction must be more persistent and conscious in the next period.

As quickly as possible the following cities, in that order, must be strengthened, or an initial basis laid with new forces; sent there, if necessary, by transfer from other cities:

Lynn, Detroit, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Connecticut. (See trade Union Resolution for detailed policy and program.)

#### V. NEGRO WORK:

The next period must call for a further intensification of our Negro work.

A. Recruitment: To aim to recruit 25 additional Negro workers into the Party by the next plenum.

B. The National Negro Department shall issue a popular 1¢ pamphlet on the subject, "The Workers Party and the Negro".

Other concrete proposals related to the Negro Work (such as the matter of a full-time Negro Department Organizer, a Monthly Negro Bulletin, a National Tour under the auspices of the Negro Department, and the problem of the formation of non-partisan Negro groups on a local scale have been referred to the National Negro Department for consideration and final proposals, either at the Plenum itself, or following the Plenum.

#### VI. YPSL AND THE PARTY:

A. The immediate problem of party-youth relations is to achieve a closer working relation between the party and the youth movement, with the particular objective of achieving programmatic and ideological soundness in the Youth movement on the basic principle of Marxism.

B. The Party must assist in the maintenance and extension of The Challenge of Youth as a prerequisite for propaganda and agitation of our movement, particularly on the war question.

#### VII. LABOR DEFENSE AND REFUGEE WORK:

In order to lay a better foundation for the defense, when required, of our own forces, as well as to render systematic aid to labor victims of the class struggle and to the refugees, the plenum proposes:

A. Every branch throughout the country shall assign members to join and function in the Workers Defense League.

B. That each Branch shall assign at least one member who shall be concerned with the promotion of activities and the objective of the refugee committee which we are giving our support to, the Committee for Emergency Aid to Refugees.

VIII. ORGANIZATIONAL MANUEL: An organization manuel shall be prepared for the earlies possible issuance after the Plenum.

IX. FINANCES:

A greater stabilization of our finances, in order to assure the continuation and extension of our press, Labor Action and The New International, and the issuance of other literature, pamphlets and leaflets, is imperative in the immediate months ahead, and for the maintenance and extension of our all-too-small national staff. Toward this end, increased payment of the present 10% Income Tax must be achieved at once.

Additional proposals apropos financial matters will be forthcoming from the National Finance Department.

X. SLOGANS:

The Party in the next period must give especial attention to the propaganda and agitational slogans contained in the political resolution. These slogans are the basis for the practical organization of Party activities. Concretely these slogans should be used as the subject of articles and editorials in the press. Local branches should select the appropriate slogans from the political resolution as the theme for public meetings and local propaganda leaflets. The slogans should be used in planned and organized manner. Both in the press and in the branches they should be the basis for short propaganda and agitational campaigns. Each branch will select the appropriate slogan or slogans to fit the concrete situation in each city.

XI. SUMMARY:

The Plenum is of the opinion that the foregoing proposals of action are not only entirely feasible, but if the entire membership sets itself seriously to the task of executing them, there will be witnessed a solidification on sound principles of the ranks of the organization and an acceleration of the labor and anti-war revolutionary activities of the Party.

EXCERPTS FROM REPORT OF THE NATIONAL FINANCE DEPARTMENT  
PRESENTED TO THE WORKERS PARTY PLENUM  
MARCH 22nd, 23rd, 24th, 1941

The National Finance Department was established on October 1, 1940, following the decision of the last plenum. The more than five months experience with this method of handling finances has proved to be a valuable experience for the Party. While many financial problems still remain unsolved, the main purpose of the establishment of the Department has been in large measure accomplished -- the collecting and expending of money has been systematized and regularized, and the P.C. has been freed of the necessity of taking up financial matters at virtually every meeting. There is no doubt in the minds of those connected with this work that for the first time the Party is now beginning to tackle the problem of finances, which it must be emphasized again and again remain a political problem, in the proper manner.

For the first time in the history of our movement, it can be said that the organization is in a fair way to becoming financially conscious -- that is, conscious of the fact that finances are the sinews of class war. More and more members are taking an interest in the financial problems of the organization and want to do something about it, although, of course, there are to be sure, many members who still think that the Party can be run on air and who don't reveal any interest at all in the financial problems.

One of the outstanding accomplishments is the success of the dues drive. Without doubt, the dues standing is the best in the history of our movement -- and this at a time when there was no faction fight or convention!! From 80% to 90% of the Party is in good dues standing, and there is every indication that the regular paying of dues will become a habit so that those comrades will remain in good dues standing.

The establishment of responsible and capable comrades in the position of branch treasurer has shown very clearly that where such is the case, the branches maintain an excellent financial standing. This is now the case in the majority of branches.

The Income Tax has been established as the main source of income to the Party.

The minimum expenditures of the National Office have been regularly met.

The financial records are kept exactly and are in much better shape.

While our knowledge of the financial resources of the organization is still far from perfect, we do have a fair picture of them. This is due especially to the income tax and the filing of regular reports by most of the branches giving changes in the income status of the members. The importance of this cannot be underestimated for we are clearly in a political period where the overwhelming bulk of our finances comes from our own members.

The major weaknesses, which still remain to be overcome, are as follows:

1. The budget remains unbalanced, to the extent of about \$200 per month. It is a monthly miracle to all members of the Department that so far we have managed to pull through. One of the important reasons for this precarious situation is that expenditures have been added to the budget which were not included in the original budget. What makes this particularly serious, is the fact that having no reserves at all and practically no credit, if any emergency arises, an immediate crisis occurs, which has customarily been solved at the expense of the functionaries.
2. The subsidy to the press is definitely too high. From more than \$500 monthly net subsidy in October, this has been reduced to a monthly net subsidy of about \$350 at the present. The major factor, of course, is the small circulation, which means failure to capitalize on our overhead costs.
3. The average payment on income tax is far too low. A fair sampling of the membership shows that the average tax paid by the employed member, which represents about 70% of the Party, is 5% of the weekly income — not 10% as originally planned. In fact 10% has come to be a maximum. More than 10% is paid in only a few exceptional cases.
4. Certain branches are notoriously delinquent in financial payments. In some cases this is simply due to the absence of a responsible treasurer. In other cases it is due to a bad political situation. In still others, it is due to the fact that the members are relatively indifferent to the financial needs of the Party. These cases have been referred to the P.C.
5. There are still far too many comrades who regard the income tax as their last obligation to the Party, instead of one of the first.
6. From 10% to 25% of the membership neglect their dues obligations. In a very small number of cases this has indicated the parting of the ways between these comrades and the Party. In most cases, however, it is simply due to the bad education and habits received from previous political organizations.
7. For some unexplained reason, there is a general laxness in forwarding initiation fees, so that the record of new members is incomplete.
8. Perhaps the major weakness of the work of the financial department itself is that it is largely a clerical committee. While the keeping of records and correspondence is obviously necessary, the work of the financial department was originally supposed to cover far more than this. One of the main reasons for this situation has been the failure of the P.C. to coordinate the political direction of the Party with the financial department, where such political work involves financial outlay.
9. While certain gestures have been made in the direction of raising money from outside sources, this work still remains to be organized.



10. Inadequate income creates an unhealthy situation where the various departments compete for larger shares of the dole, and where, especially in New York, the city organization competes with the national organization. In general, the imposition of the national income tax has not lightened the burden of the branches, but rather increased it.

11. There are some members at large who are still not paying anything or not paying nearly what they should. No way has been found so far of remedying this situation.

On the basis of our experiences, the National Finance Department makes the following recommendations:

1. The National Finance Department should be continued and strengthened. This means the reorganization of the committee, with the addition of one or two comrades who will devote all their time to this work.
2. The National Finance Department must exercise complete control of all money coming in and going out. No comrade or no department can spend any money not previously authorized in the budget, without approval of the finance department. Unless the financial department is given these complete powers, stabilization of our finances will be absolutely impossible.
3. This involves a great responsibility for the P.C. in coordinating its work with the financial department.
4. As an experiment to raise the additional \$200 a month now needed, about six trustworthy and capable comrades should be selected to devote all their energies to getting well paying jobs so that they can remit about 50% of their income or more to the organization.
5. To reduce the subsidy of the press, the minimum goal must be to double the circulation.
6. The income tax having proven fundamentally successful, it should be incorporated at the next convention into the constitution as a permanent income tax dues system, graduated through three main income levels; up to \$20 a week, \$21 to \$30 a week, and \$31 and over a week. Suggested rates are 5%, 10% and 15%. In a small organization however, great flexibility will have to be used in administering such a system.
7. The cooperation of all members of the N.C. is urgently required to solve the problem of those branches that are notoriously delinquent in meeting their financial obligations. Disciplinary measures are a last resort, but if needed, they must be resorted to.
8. Those branches that do not now have a responsible comrade as treasurer, must immediately obtain one.
9. Each large city must appoint a most responsible comrade to devote all his time to raising money from sympathizers and ex-members. As a start, this should be done at least in New York, Chicago and Los Angeles. These comrades are to become members of the national finance department, working under the supervision of the department.

10. In order to make pamphlets and bulletins a self-liquidating proposition, which will provide a constant fund for the issuance of new pamphlets and bulletins, there should be an assistant business manager, whose work will be to take charge of the business end of pamphlets and bulletins.

11. A member of the financial department should be appointed to the position of membership director, in order to keep an accurate up-to-date record of all new members and of the turnover in membership.

12. In order to link the members at large more closely to the organization, in a financial way, the responsibility for collecting their tax and dues, etc. should be turned over to the organizational secretary.

Submitted for the National Finance  
Department

March 22nd, 1941

REPORT OF AMERICAN COMMITTEE FOR THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

Note: We have received the following statement from the ACFI which we reprint because of its interest to our readers. Ed.

(1) The ACFI was established to replace the now-defunct International Bureau which was elected at the First World Congress of the Fourth International. The function of the ACFI was to handle international tasks and contact work.

(2) Despite the harsh international conditions, the ACFI has fulfilled with success many of their international tasks. The work of the ACFI is strictly limited by circumstances. It does not have a directive character, but is confined to efforts of contact, information, education and communication.

(3) Contact: (a) We are in mail contact with the South American, Canadian, English and South African sections and groups. There is no mail contact with Europe proper, Africa or Asia.

(b) Direct contact has been made by two organized tours - one to Asia; the other to South America.

(4) Education & Information:

(a) The genuine spirit of internationalism has been kept alive through the channels of Branch educational meetings; articles and columns in Labor Action and the NI.

(b) The ACFI issues an International Bulletin - one issue has already appeared; another is in preparation.

(5) Communications: Our public press and bulletins are sent regularly to a minimum of 25 countries in all sections of the world. Many copies are delivered; a certain portion meets an unknown fate.

(6) The ACFI plans (a) to continue its educational and informational work,

(b) to organize a responsible service for international contact work;

(c) to issue the International Bulletin as often as material is available for it;

(d) to concentrate its efforts on the Latin American and Asiatic countries.

(7) In conclusion, it is necessary to recognize that the Fourth International - as an organized, unified movement with a united political program - does not exist. We are instead pushed back to a period in which there is a movement for the Fourth International, divided into clashing tendencies.

The stupid pretense of the Cannon group that it speaks in the name of the Fourth International is disputed by obvious facts (see below) and the realities of the revolutionary world today. No, we must recognize that the Fourth International - disrupted and broken up by the war and the internal crisis of the International - is yet to be rebuilt and resurrected. The convening of a genuinely democratic and representative World Conference - which is the ultimate objective of our international work - is the only possible means of accomplishing the above.

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### FACTS ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL

The following former leaders of the Fourth International have betrayed its principles either by quitting under war pressure, or joining one of the imperialist warring camps:

James Burnham (United States)  
Jean Rous (France)  
Chou du-hsiu (China)  
Pierre Naville (France)  
Diego Rivera (Mexico)

The American Political Dispute: Since the war, 19 different sections and groups (representing 16 different countries) have been heard from in one way or another.

Of these, 11 support the SWP (Cannon group) on the disputed Russian question.

Five (5) support the W.P.

The position of three (3) is as yet unknown.

Seven (7) sections have been unheard from in a year, or longer. These are mainly in the occupied areas of Europe.

Only one (1) section (Canadian) has completely collapsed during the war, so far as is known.

ACFI

## DEFINING A TENDANCY: A Draft Statement

(Note: The undersigned constitute a selected group of collaborators and supporters of this document)

For some time now in the ranks of the YPSL, a growing group of comrades--now organized as a political faction in the league--has been deeply concerned by a set of problems which are crucial to the development of the revolutionary socialist movement. Their ideas have been brought before the league at various times in past months, most recently around the Minority Resolution on Education which was discussed at the last convention of the New York Division. Yet it has not been until recent weeks that these ideas have developed sufficiently to permit a more rounded and general picture of what these comrades have been thinking. We are attempting in this article to present, as clearly as we are able at the present time, a statement of the problems raised by a tendency which we are convinced must extend and deepen its influence in the ranks of revolutionary socialism.

In these days--days of the storm of reaction--it is natural for men to ask questions raised by current failures. Some, beset by problems and finding no way out, abandon their old faiths and retire from political life. Cynicism, disheartenment, disillusion--these, we know, go hand in hand with the victories of alien political tendencies. Yet it must be understood that not all of this is moral cowardice; some of it is, but much also represents the simple inability to find satisfactory answers to burning questions. We, for our own part, have shared the problems of the many who have questioned. We have tried to find the answers, to make the required changes in our old ideas, and to define the positive basis on which we can adhere with confidence to a political movement.

For us, the meaning of the crisis in revolutionary socialism lies in this: Whereas the Leninist movement has been able to set up an adequate set of means for the achievement of the end, revolution--it has been unable to examine its own procedures as they are related to a different end, socialism. While we believe that much of what we criticize need not necessarily hinder the road to power, yet we are firmly persuaded that the acceptance of the major points of this criticism in practice is essential for any organization which seriously desires to participate in the construction of a socialist society. On the other hand, we are just as firmly convinced that the abandonment of these concepts and procedures which we are criticizing here not only will not weaken but on the contrary will strengthen a revolutionary program for the achievement of working class power.

Men will say: your criticism is a criticism of Bolshevism itself. While the bulk of our criticism found its roots in our experience in our own movement as it has existed in recent years, we are not unwilling to accept this characterization. We are opposed to the kind of organization which is characterized by the methodology which we criticize below. Since we believe that this has a serious effect on the behavior of such a party in power, and since we are united in criticism of the Bolshevik regime under Lenin and Trotsky (along the lines of Luxemburg and Souvarine), it is fair to say that our attack is against much of what men have come to know as Bolshevism.

On the other hand, we take a firm stand on revolutionary internationalism as a practical program of means which must be used for the attainment of workers' power and socialism; on these issues our stand is unequivocally with Lenin and Trotsky.

### The Programmatic Character of Our Criticism

Our differences with Bolshevism are not differences as to interpretation or formulation. We differ on the basic question in politics: what to do. The program of a party is not exhausted by the proposals which it makes for mass action. The program consists also of what the party as a party intends in fact to do. This includes long-term strategy such as revolutionary defeatism and also those procedures which make the party the kind of an organization it is. Our differences center above all around the question of the kind of an organization revolutionary socialists should build and around the consequences for the action of Bolshevism in power which derives from the organizational methods of Bolshevism. Our differences are therefore, political, programmatic.

It is well to remember: the program consists also of what the party as a party intends in fact to do. It is important to remember this because the actual program of a party is not always that which is verbally professed. The Stalinists profess to be for the revolution and for socialism; but an objective analysis of their politics in practice convinces us that their actual aims are nothing of the sort. Analogously,--no identification is intended--for the Trotskyist movement to profess that it is for democratic socialism, for this to be (as it undoubtedly is) the subjective aim of the Trotskyist leaders, is not sufficient. An objective analysis of the Bolshevik movement and of its Trotskyist successor, as they have practiced their politics; convinces us that there is a set of procedures which lead not to democratic socialism but on the contrary to some totalitarian form of it.

Our task of criticism is made difficult but not on that account less important because the central issue is one of political attitudes and political habits. These are to some extent intangible, and usually divorced from the experience of the comrades who does not involve himself too deeply in the affairs of the organization. Yet there is little doubt that those who are politically conscious will find no difficulty in grasping the phenomena to which we shall refer. Moreover, there is also a great deal of tangible evidence available, which can be studied and readily checked.

We may state in advance our conclusion with regard to the split from the Socialist Workers Party. Everyone knows, or ought to know, that the split did not take place on the political (Russian) question, but on the organizational question. We contend that on this crucial question the leaders of the Minority (with the exception of Burnham) did not disagree in principle with Cannon. They were against Cannon's totalitarianism, but their actions since the split indicate that they did not break with those procedures which basically characterize Cannonism. These procedures are not essentially different from the general methods of Bolshevism in practice. On that score, Cannon and Trotsky were right.

These questions about Cannonism have never received a satisfactory answer: 1) How was it possible for this reactionary phenomenon to exist and grow strong in the Trotskyist movement for so long a time? Was there not something in the accepted procedure which permitted it to flourish. We think there was, and shall indicate what we think it was below. 2) How was it possible for the Cannonite ranks --which means a good portion of our own had they had a different opinion on the Russian question--to accept so easily the malevolent practices of Trotsky and the Cannon clique during the faction fight? We believe that long years of training in a mode of behavior essentially alien to democracy made the abandonment of even formal democracy an easy path for both the ranks and the leadership.

The organization question was the decisive question and was in fact a political one. Yet it is interesting and important to note in this connection that the Trotskyist movement has never been able to recognize the political importance of organizational questions. Trotsky, already in exile, openly denied that he was waging the fight against Stalin on the organizational question. Further evidence is his blindness to the consequence of condoning the organizational procedures of Cannon, of which he was plainly enough aware. Again, his own refusal to wage a fight against Stalinism until he was in possession of a full-fledged political difference was repeated on a miniature but no less significant scale by Schachtman's refusal to debate the organizational question before he too had a full-fledged political difference on which to hang his hat. This confused the faction fight, which centered around the Russian question, but it did serve one purpose, for Schachtman as earlier for Trotsky; it made it unnecessary to delve too deeply into the why and wherefor of the organizational differences, which raised immediately the question of Bolshevism whenever they were seriously discussed.

#### The Effect of What We Do Today.

If our participation in politics means anything at all, it means this: that what we do, the factors in political life which we can control are of decisive importance. This is a commonplace if we refer to the relation of mass movements to a political party. But it is the thesis of this document that what we do today in terms of the kind of organization which we build and of the effect of that upon the activities of that organization in power is of equally decisive importance.

We must remember that regardless of the high ideals of any given leadership, the party which is trained in the placid acceptance of undemocratic procedures creates the conditions for corruption. When we consider the rise of Stalin we must ask how it was possible for an all but unknown, second-rate leader to use the most vicious practices in mustering his strength against Trotsky, an idol of the masses. What kind of a party was this? In what school were its ranks educated? So too, we must ask the same questions about Cannonism; and tomorrow, given the continued use of these procedures, we will have to ask the same thing of the Workers Party.

If we take out politics seriously, then we must consider the problem of what our organization would do if it rose to power. As a party grows, as it nears power and finally seizes it, the leaders

of the party become the leaders of the institutions of society. If this is the case, then men have a right to ask the party to give an earnest of its intentions. This earnest must be the demonstration by the actions of the party today that tomorrow it will hold fast to its professed ideals. This has long been understood with regard to the mass movement (fighting all the time for worker' rights, etc., as a means of gaining strength) but it has not been understood in relation to the ability of the party and its leadership to develop sufficiently its understanding of and devotion to the habits of a democratic way of life. We believe that what a leadership does inside the party is a portent of what it will do in society as a whole.

It is plain from what we have said already that we have called into question the validity of the usual Trotskyist thesis on the degeneration of the Soviet Union. According to Trotsky's explanation, the prime cause of the degeneration of the Russian Revolution was the economic backwardness of that country. (Other factors, such as the death of Lenin and the "exhaustion" of the revolutionary energy of the masses are taken to be incidental and contributory). When this theory is simplified, as it in practice is, into a determinist view, the degeneration becomes "inevitable" and Trotsky's fight in retrospect would appear silly and futile. If the analysis in terms of economic potential (in accordance with what is considered to be "historical materialism") is considered sufficient, and since the impossibility of constructing socialism in a backward country like Russia has long been a commonplace in the socialist movement, the Bolshevik seizure of power would have to be considered a tragic and monstrous error.

But here Trotsky brings in what he considers to be a saving factor--the failure of the socialist revolution in the industrialized countries of western Europe, especially in Germany in 1923. And according to Trotsky's view, it was the irresponsible maneuverings of Stalin and his bureaucratic clique at the head of the Soviet Government and the Comintern which was responsible for these defeats.

Note well: this last cause was responsible to the conscious control of the Bolshevik party, for the decisions and actions of the party made a decisive difference, determining, as it did, the success or failure of the western European revolution.

It is clear that here Trotsky begs the question. For whence came the power of the Stalinist clique to determine national and international policy, even at so early a date as 1923? If the successful rise of this reactionary bureaucracy is attributed to Russia's economic backwardness, then we are back to the point where we must accept the Menshevik view that Russia was not ripe for a socialist-revolution, and that the Bolshevik revolution was an historic aberration. If, on the other hand, as we assert, the triumph of this bureaucracy was made possible and strengthened by certain theoretical, psychological and organizational defects in the Bolshevik party, then the victory of Thermidor can be attributed (not solely of course, but decisively because subject to control) to the failure of the revolutionists to formulate, test, and carry out correct socialist policy.



A further word on the failures of the revolution in the west. Presumably for a revolution to be successful, it does not have to be carried out simultaneously all over the world. Yet consider: suppose that the German workers had risen to power but that American finance capital had been able to stabilize the capitalist regimes of Britain and France. Germany was a great industrialized country, yet it would be folly to believe that aid from Germany could have with in a few years have provided enough aid to Russia to have offset the backwardness of that country. This is especially true when you consider the rapid rise of the Stalinists to power and their early bureaucratic hold on the International. Again, consider India today. Let us suppose that there were a great revolutionary party there against the background of a situation similar to that which exists in the rest of the world today. The problems of the Indian people can be placed on the road to solution only through a socialist revolution. Should the Indian workers take power? If the same explanation is applied here as was in Russia, then the answer is that they should not, for degeneration would be inevitable.

Let us understand: degeneration is a very serious thing. Socialist totalitarianism is not better but on the contrary is worse than bourgeois democracy. If those are the only alternatives then the political struggle is worth very little indeed. We believe that democratic workingclass power is a third alternative; but the procedures of Bolshevism will not lead us to that.

#### Trotskyism and Stalino-Bolshevism

The gravest danger in the Trotskyist movement is this: fortified by a simplicist formula which makes economic conditions the determining factor, the movement lacks consciousness of the dangers and of the necessity for safeguards. It does not take these problems seriously. Moreover, the Trotskyists have made themselves the prisoners of reaction by setting up indissoluble and slavish bonds to one who participated in the construction of these procedures and their practical applications.

The Trotskyists have made themselves a cover for the one-party dictatorship by defending all of the important actions undertaken under the regime of Lenin and Trotsky. In effect, concealing the Leninist dictatorship from the ranks as well as from the masses, they have constructed a myth about the time of the degeneration. A reading of several of the books listed below demonstrates conclusively that degeneration took place long before the consolidation of the power of the Stalinists. This link between the Trotskyists today and the Bolshevik dictatorship is one of the most serious factors which makes suspect the practical aims of the Trotskyist movement.

Further, the history of the Trotskyists movement itself makes suspect any sharp division between the Stalinist organizational procedures and Bolshevik ones. The Trotskyists who split off from the Communist Party brought with them the habits which that organization had already developed and which they themselves had participated in forming. It is significant that there is little effort made (and little understanding of the necessity for) reeducating recruits to Bolshevism who come from the Stalinist movement. And the fact that the organization remained for so long so easily ignorant

of the effect of these Stalinist roots (mentioned by the Minority in the SWP and already forgotten by the WP) is further evidence that Stalinism organizationally is not so different from Bolshevism. In every critical situation, which is precisely when these problems are important, the Bolshevik leaders use the Stalinist methods.

### The Procedures of Bolshevism

The basic flaw in the structure of Bolshevism, as we see it, is the inadequate relationship established between means and ends. Formal, but not actual, acknowledgment had been made that the selection of the means is limited by the end that is striven for, and that the operation of these means is itself a decisive factor in determining which goal, if any, is to be attained.

Socialism, it has been emphasized again and again, differs from capitalism in that it cannot eventuate through the blind interplay of economic forces. Whereas the rising bourgeoisie could rely on its trad, money and industry to undermine the feudal order, the proletariat must institute socialism as a conscious political act. And in this act the importance of such things as individual will and belief, the social ideas that are entertained, the clear-headedness and far-sightedness of the leadership, the sure understanding of the masses, who make the revolution, of the tasks to be performed--all assume an exaggerated importance. The socialist movement has learned that the tactical blunder of a leader or group of leaders can mean defeat instead of victory. So let us beware of the quasi-Marxian complaints that we over-estimate the role of ideas and of the party, at the expense of the "economic factor".

We have been willing to call our criticism an attack on Bolshevism because we believe that the characteristics to which we refer have become, for most people, decisive characteristics of Bolshevik procedure. Still, there are two points which must be made: 1) there is a difference between Bolshevism as a political program for mass action and Bolshevism as a party and social structure. We accept the basic points of the former; we reject the latter. 2) Bolshevism has not always meant the same thing--there were serious changes in the ideas of Lenin. The contrast of pre-October and post-October ideas is often very striking. We have attempted to define the procedures of Bolshevism as they have worked out in practice. They represent a continuous line from the party of Lenin to that of Cannon and Schachtman.

To repeat: the basic issues revolve around the problem of the spirit in which an organization is built. As Luxemburg said, "It is not the wording of the regulations but the spirit and meaning incorporated into that wording by the active fighters which decides concerning the value of a form of organization."

What are these procedures of Bolshevism? An examination of the history of the Bolshevik movement, including Trotskyism and indeed, the Workers Party, reveals the following:

1. The ultra-centralism of a permanent group of authoritarian leaders. This represents the arrogation of all power in the party, and under conditions of political dominance, in society, to a party secretariat. All decisions of any importance are made by the party

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tops, a procedure which brings with it a decline in initiative, self-confidence and responsibility on the part of the party ranks and the masses. Whereas democratic centralism is a good thing, its limitations are never defined, so that what constitutes a breach of discipline is decided by the permanent leadership. In practice every action of a party member is subject to control and every organ of public expression is considered as a vehicle for the party line. Discipline is a good thing, is necessary, only when the striking power of the party is in fact at stake.

2. A contempt for and lack of understanding of democratic procedures. On the formal plane, that of rights of expression, it is necessary to point to the abrogation of all democratic rights in Russia under Lenin as well as to the Trotskyist movement which also did not and does not hesitate to take this road whenever it is faced with a crisis (usually a factional situation). One of the most vicious arguments in defense of this procedure has been that "we do not make a fetish of democracy" and that the abrogation of democratic rights is a "theoretical possibility and cannot be excluded." This is a formula with which one cannot disagree, but it evades the question of what specific conditions justified these specific actions. In practice, the exception is made the rule and the theoretical possibility is made the norm.

Much is made of Lenin's attempt to fight bureaucracy shortly before his death, and that he was sincere cannot be doubted. What is significant however is this: that he was so schooled in the habits of an undemocratic Bolshevism that he chose the bureaucratic road to reform. Instead of widening party and soviet democracy, he chose to work from the top, thus failing to attack the root of the problem.

One reason for the failure to comprehend sufficiently clearly the importance of democracy, particularly under conditions of political power, has been the use in practice of a crude economic determinism. Because the Bolsheviks believe that somehow, in the last analysis, the economic relations determine the political superstructure, it was possible to ignore the problems of soviet democracy. It was (and is) taken for granted that the institutions of political and economic democracy would necessarily appear with a socialist transformation of property forms. This is a grave matter, since one of the most important safeguards is a thorough consciousness of the problem and its importance.

In its most decisive aspect, democracy is a set of attitudes and habits--a spirit of work, a way of living. This includes a recognition of democracy as participation rather than as a set of formal means for permitting the ranks or opposition groups to let off steam. One important characteristic is the desire for varied expression, the understanding that differences and the comradely pooling of opinions is not a "luxury" but a necessity. It is only when the spirit of democracy and tolerance holds sway that formal rules can be, as it is true that it is sometimes necessary, temporarily abrogated in times of crisis. It is only then that we can trust a party or its leadership to limit democratic rights only when it is absolutely necessary.

Education in the Bolshevik movement is conceived of primarily as a method of "fortifying" the ranks. But the method of fortification which is chosen is the inculcation of devotion to a fixed set of prin-

principles rather than the teaching of the means whereby problems raised by the struggle for power may be solved. The kind of education which seriously contributes to the ability of the ranks to participate is that which thinks in terms of problems to be solved and does not shrink before the questions raised. This, it is true, is sometimes inconvenient since it tends to foster differences but in the long run it is the only road to true democracy. And if differences in the ranks are not treated as heinous crimes representing alien class forces, the inconvenience need not be great at all.

3. A set of totalitarian attitudes. Totalitarianism, like democracy is to a very large extent a matter of attitudes and habits. In Bolshevism, it is evidenced by the inability to accept differences as normal; by the conception of ideas as interrelated apart from logically demonstrable connections--thus the relation between dialectical materialism and the political program, thus the notion that because a man shares one or several ideas with social patriots that therefore he does or must share all or most of them--which is the theoretical justification for the method of amalgam; by the interpretation of differences as manifestations of class forces--justifying any action against an opposition; by the notion of the party as absorbing the whole life of a member and thereby having the right to choose his values for him--justifying expulsion for desertion of a member who wishes to resign (and, it must be remembered, expulsion from a ruling party means a great deal); by the institution of second-class citizenship wherein organizational discrimination is made against opponents, merely because they are opponents.

4. A contempt for the party ranks and the masses. The Bolshevik ultra-centralism is based upon and breeds a lack of confidence in the ability of those beneath to make decisions. The ranks are conceived of as followers and manipulable by sets of leaders. Thus a leader cannot bring his own opinions to the membership; unless he is willing to undertake a factional struggle for power in the organization, he must keep them within the closed circle of leaders. Political discussion of serious differences is limited to formal periods in which an intense factional atmosphere prevails; in such periods the leaders use all the devices of emotional-demoagoric manipulation. This is later justified as "factionally necessary". The work of the leading committees is kept secret from the members and is revealed only in a factional situation, when the emotionally charged atmosphere makes considered judgement well-nigh impossible. This also makes it possible for the leaders to "cover up" for a delinquent member, thus deceiving the ranks in order "not to precipitate a crisis".

This contempt for the ability of those beneath to come to sound judgements themselves is the essential meaning of the substitution of the dictatorship of the party for the dictatorship of the proletariat. The attitude toward the party ranks is carried over to the attitude towards the masses. The central committee of the party makes the decisions for the soviets; the party, which claims to represent the historical interests of the workers, claims thereby the right to drive the workers to what the party considers to be freedom. We must use compulsion, said Lenin, to make the workers efficient. We must impose our will to victory on our exhausted and dispirited following, said Badck after the revolution. The party tops are conceived of as "omnipotent theoretical leaders" who are capable of deciding on all questions

and are granted the power to make these decisions effective. A democratic socialist party will see a breakdown of the separation between the leaders and the ranks; it will limit the spheres over which the party tops have control, and will provide measures for the independent decisions by the directly elected representatives of the workers. This is in no way incompatible with the construction of a disciplined, fighting party.

5. The use of corruptible mechanisms. One of the characteristics of the Bolshevik movement, past and present, has been the use of procedures whose very use creates corruption. Our objection is not based on any abstract conception of right and wrong or any universal moral precepts, but rather an observation of what happens in practice to the people and to the organization which indulges in these procedures. Such procedures have been: the use of "tools"--Lenin's use of Zinoviev and Radek; the conscious use of opportunism and bribery in such cases as the attempt to split the Italian Socialist Party; the breeding of hatred for other working-class parties--which has of course disastrous effects on any attempt to share power in a revolutionary situation; the struggle for leadership in the organization accepted as a matter of "politics"--maneuvering, catering to influences, character assassination, etc.; the use of slander and falsification as accepted political mechanisms--in relation to opposition inside the organization.

The important thing to remember is that while the interests of a struggle for power may often be served by expedients of this character, nevertheless the use of them has a crucial effect on the manner in which that power is wielded. The politics of socialism while involving the politics of power, cannot be merely that.

6. The theory of the "chosen" vanguard. The idea that the party represents the historical interests of the workers has made very easy the identification of the party and the class. Since the party by its very nature is the workers' party, whatever it decides must, at least in the long run, be in the interests of the workers. The party is permitted to decide for the workers. Since the party is run by a small group of professional revolutionists, it is easy to identify the party with the party regime. Thus any attack on the regime becomes an attack on the Party and through that on the workingclass, whose historical interests the party represents. It is a simple step from this to the justification of heresy hunting and the use of all means against an opposition. It is a typical religious concept which has had the same consequences many times before. Moreover, with this conception, it is easy to relinquish democratic procedures, by the simple means of becoming convinced that that too is in the interests of the workers. On this basis, democracy comes to have only a secondary importance. If however, as we believe, the workers must be free to make their own choice at the same time as we attempt to win them to ours, that socialism cannot be attained apart from a free, conscious choice by the masses, then democracy has a primary importance and is not easily relinquished.

7. The depreciation of personal idealism. The exclusive emphasis on the politics of power in the Bolshevik movement has led to a disastrous inability to understand the importance of personal idealism on the part of its members. Men are not educated to moral integrity; they learn "politics", which means dirty politics; they learn how to be hard and cynical; they learn to fight for prestige and leadership and thus

become involved in problems which take them further and further away from a sound socialist idealism. We have seen this eat its way into the moral fibre of even our youngest comrades; and we have seen, worst of all, the placid acceptance of all this as good, "hard" revolutionary politics. But socialism is an ideal which cannot be accomplished unless men choose to do so, unless they are willing to abandon forever the degrading practices which some have borrowed so assiduously from the corrupt and decadent society in which they live. Socialism will be built only by men of good will and sound judgement--not all the appeals to History can change that.

8. The "official" philosophy. The Bolsheviks have considered themselves, as a party, the champions and defenders of the philosophy of Marxism. The philosophical questions are not themselves political, and we take no position on them, but when a set of philosophical principles is treated as if it were political, when it is made the basis of education and discrimination, then that becomes a political question. We believe that in the examination of the means for the achievement of its ends, the party ought not to be restricted to any set of traditional ideas but rather should foster complete freedom in the choice of relevant theories. Further, the defense of the "faith" provides a further condition for heresy-hunting and an age-old weapon to be used against an opposition.

We are for a party of democracy and science. An understanding of the procedures of democracy and those of science represent the twin triumphs of modern thought. The struggle for truth and freedom is inseparable from them. We believe that the rejection of Bolsheviks--openly and clearly--is a necessary condition for the construction of such a party.

We believe that the politics of progress in our time must be revolutionary politics. In the trade unions, in the fight for civil rights, in the struggle against war and fascism--only revolutionary politics can gain the day.

But we must have revolutionary politics for socialism. And only a party which repudiates in practice the procedures which we criticize can in fact be a party of working-class democracy. To combine the two--revolutionary politics and ~~working-class~~ socialist democracy--is the task of these days. We can see no hope beyond that.

Joan Cornell (Nat'l Com)	Bud Gordon (Nat'l Com)
Martin Eden (NY Div. Coun.)	Martin Lewis
Bert Edwards	Hal Mitchell (Baltimore)
Irving Ferry	Philip Sherman (Nat'l Com)

Note: Some reading from the following sources is essential to an understanding of the criticisms made in this document.

Balabanoff, Angelica:	My Life as A Rebel
Berkman, Alexander:	The Russian Rev. and the Communist Party
	The Bolshevik Myth
Gitlow, Benjamin:	I Confess
Goldman, Emma:	My Disillusionment in Russia
Hook, Sidney:	Reason, Social Myths and Democracy
Luxemburg, Rosa:	The Russian Revolution
	Leninism or Marxism
Martov, J:	The State and the Socialist Revolution
Rosenberg, Arthur:	History of Bolshevism

BOLSHEVISM AND DEMOCRACY  
On the Capitulation of the Sherman Group

The working class movement, and its revolutionary vanguard in particular, are passing through the most trying period of their existence. War and reaction have gripped one country after another, and they threaten to destroy all modern civilization. The working class, the only hope of modern society, is either in totalitarian chains or duped, disorientated and dragged by bourgeois-democratic patriotism. The old labor movements, social-democratic and Stalinist, continue with their monstrous crimes, the latter in particular, continue to heap discredit on the very idea of socialism. In the atmosphere thus created it would indeed be astonishing if even the vanguard elements were completely immune from the poisons of disintegration and decay. It was not to be expected by anyone with intelligence or with an historical sense. The last world war, in which the elements of confusion were not half as powerful as they are today, had a terrible effect on all the working class parties and organizations. Even the most conscious and best educated of them suffered to one degree or another, the Bolsheviks not excluded. At the extreme left wing of the International, there were vacillations, and in some cases outright desertion.

Our program today equips us better than any other labor organization in the past to meet the crucial tests we face. But even the best program is not a magic wand that conjures away all differences and problems. It is only a foundation on which to stand. But there must be people willing and able to stand on it. For in addition to the program, there is the organization. And the organization is not only the program but the living human beings who compose it. No program in the world can transform a group of people into unflinching revolutionists overnight. For that, a hundred tests are required, tests of experience, tests of struggle. Far from the least important place in this struggle is occupied by the fight for the defense and the furtherance of the party's program. The recent, brief debate with the "Sherman group" in the YPSL serves to emphasize the importance and the necessity of this fight.

The Sherman group, according to the information we were finally able to gather from it, was formed secretly several months ago. It established connections with the Socialist Party and made all the necessary arrangements for its capitulation to the Thomasites even before it ventured to present our party and youth organization with its "program", issued under the title of "Defining a Tendency: A Draft Statement". Its procedure, on which more will be said further on, is sufficiently characteristic of this group of high-minded and ethical critics of "Bolshevik immorality". If we devote some space to this group it is not because of its own importance—most of its adherents were recent recruits to our movement who never bothered to study or absorb the principles on which it was founded, the history it has behind it, or the tradition it defends—but because it offers an occasion for restating some of our views on the questions it raises.

At the founding convention of our party, we reaffirmed the theoretical, principles and traditional foundations of the Fourth International. There could not be then, any more than there is now, any

misunderstanding about our position. We declared ourselves to be a party of revolutionary Marxism, a party standing on the principles of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky, that is a Bolshevik party. In view of the bitter experience we had just had in the fight against Cannonite bureaucratism, we laid special stress on the importance of party and working-class democracy, pledging ourselves to the widest freedom of discussion and criticism, and to the examination of new problems and the re-examination of old problems in the critical, undogmatic spirit that animated the great revolutionary thinkers after Marx-Lenin, Trotsky, Luxemburg, Mehring and their like.

However, we nowhere indicated or left room for the notion that we are seeking to build an "all-inclusive" party of the type once attempted by Norman Thomas, or the equally pernicious notion that we are primarily a discussion club instead of a party of action. The accumulated wisdom of the movement and its experiences are too vast, the class struggle is too tense, and the time available to us is too short, for serious revolutionists to waste their time on Thomasite utopias or to allow the party so painfully and carefully built up to be converted into a tolerant forum for anti-Marxists and anti-Bolsheviks. The party should be and is prepared to discuss, without dogmatic blinders over its eyes, any of the problems of Marxism, any of the problems of the class struggle, on those occasions most fitting for such discussions. In less than a year of its existence it has already amply demonstrated this. It is even prepared (and well prepared) to debate its program with anti-Marxists and anti-Bolsheviks—but not in the same organization! To those who think it is possible to carry on extended debate of this kind inside our party, we are obliged to say: Through no fault of our own, you are laboring under a misapprehension. Ours is a Marxian-Bolshevik party, not an organization to discuss whether or not it should be a Marxian and Bolshevik party. For such a discussion organization you must seek elsewhere, for you have the wrong address.

The Sherman group showed plainly it had the wrong address when it summed up its views in the following paragraph: "We are for a party of democracy and science. An understanding of the procedures of democracy and those of science represent the twin triumphs of modern thought. The struggle for truth and freedom is inseparable from them. We believe that the rejection of Bolshevism—openly and clearly—is a necessary condition for the construction of such a party."

The pitiable arguments presented for this heroic proposal may claim anything but originality. Indeed, at the end of its statement, the group has the sorry courage to present a bibliography with the note that "some reading from the following sources is essential to an understanding of the criticisms made in this document." The sources include all the pretentious anti-Bolsheviks the authors could think of: Angelica Balabanoff, Alexander Berkman, Emma Goldman, Sidney Hook, Ben Gitlow, Arthur Rosenberg, J. Martov, Boris Souvarine. If Sherman had the impudence to include in this motley crew the name of Rosa Luxemburg, we can console ourselves with the thought that her name will survive even this insult. Why such illustrious authorities on Bolshevism as Alexander Kerensky, Boris Brasol, A.J. Sack, John Spargo, Morris Hillquit and Karl Kautsky were omitted from the list of "sources" is utterly incomprehensible.



But if the arguments lack originality, the occasion should not be missed to treat them briefly here, so that the education, especially of the younger members of the party, may be correspondingly advanced.

Sherman puts forth the hoary theory that Trotskyism and Leninism and Stalinism are essentially the same thing, and that all of them together are equal to totalitarianism. The bold critic does not, however put his full theory forward with the candor it deserves. Rather, he conceals it with that very dissimulation which he attributes to Bolshevism. For Sherman, in particular, believes that just as Stalinism "flows from" Leninism, so Leninism flows from Marxism, and all of them are essentially indistinguishable from Fascism. Like so many of the other modern turncoats from revolutionary socialism, he believes that Lenin was the first Fascist. In his statement, he did not feel that it was expedient to say this--yet. But let us here examine what he did feel it expedient to say, namely, that Bolshevism, which we should reject, is fundamentally totalitarian, anti-democratic, contemptuous of the masses, corrupt and corruptive, and anti-idealistic.

We are not idolators of Bolshevism. Indeed, it is precisely in our movement that we have acquired, under Trotsky's guidance, that critical, historical approach to Bolshevism which is the only possible way in which it can be judged. It is certainly not we, therefore, who need to be taught that not everything that Bolshevism ever said or did was correct and above criticism or reproach. Nor do we need to be taught that there is much in Bolshevism that is specifically Russian, that is, applicable to the specific social relations and political problems of Russia and not applicable in the same way or to the same degree or at all to the situation in which the movement finds itself in other countries. Nor do we need to be taught that Bolshevism is not equivalent to this or that statement by Lenin. Properly understood, Bolshevism is the theory and practice of proletarian world revolution with its roots in the Marxism of Marx's own time and its modern amplification, revision and development in the Marxism of our time, with Leon Trotsky as its ablest brain and sword. Understood this way, we are and will remain Bolsheviks. Understood this way--and it is the only way--Sherman's "criticism" is a rotten collection of Menshevik and counter-revolutionary garbage, time-worn slander, journalistic "debunking" and political cowardice. It is enough to bear the following indisputable historical facts in mind:

1. The origin of Bolshevism as a separate tendency in the working class movement is to be found in Lenin's struggle against "economism". The latter proposed to leave the political struggle against Czarist autocracy, the fight for democracy, to the liberal bourgeoisie and to confine the working class to economic struggles. The "anti-democratic" Lenin, with his "contempt for the masses", insisted that the proletarian masses, leading the peasant masses, must conduct the political struggle against Czarism and for democracy. Lenin and the Bolsheviks did not hesitate to call themselves "consistent democrats".
2. The big fight which preceded the actual split in the Russian social democracy at its London Congress was over the question of the democratic right of self-determination. Precisely because he was a revolutionary socialist, Lenin then, (and throughout his life), defended, even against Rosa Luxemburg, this democratic demand, insisting on its incorporation into the program of the party. And not only on paper. When the Bolsheviks took power, it was under his regime, and under no

other, that this right was actually extended to all peoples and nationalities formerly enslaved by Czarism, the granting of full independence to Finland being the most notable example.

3. Lenin's fight for the reorganization and building of the party, conducted along the lines set forth in his classes "What To Do?" was a fight for a serious working-class party, instead of the one dominated by non-party intellectuals, not subject to party organization discipline and therefore not under the same obligations to the party as the humble rank-and-file worker. Indeed, Lenin's whole political-party life was a continuous struggle for the idea of a mass proletarian party, for a revolution under the hegemony of the proletarian masses. What he fought for, he achieved. His critics? The anarchist achieved the bureaucratic strangling of their movement in Spain by its subordination to the bourgeoisie (that's their democracy, their "faith in the masses"! ). The social-democrats, to whom Sherman has capitulated, achieved the bureaucratization of the labor movement, the conversion of the masses into voting cattle and dues-paying cattle, long before Stalinism was ever heard of, and are at this moment helping imperialist reaction deprive the people of all democratic rights to say nothing of depriving them of their lives in order that one gang of exploiters may rule exclusively a world of slaves. Who, almost alone, is fighting for the masses, for their democratic rights, against totalitarianism of all varieties? The adherents of the party of Lenin.

4. The whole life of Bolshevism was devoted to a relentless and uncompromising struggle for socialism and against the bourgeoisie. Sherman thinks the struggle against bureaucratism is a fight against some independent or abstract evil. Yet, what is bureaucratism if not part of, or a manifestation of, the ideology of the ruling bourgeoisie "Only we are fit to rule; the masses are fit only to be ruled over". This ideology is translated into the life of the working class and its movement and is given material expression by the lieutenants of the bourgeoisie, the labor bureaucracy. "Only we are fit to rule the labor movement; the masses are fit only to pay dues, follow instructions, keep their mouths shut-or open them only to say what we tell them to say." The struggle against the bourgeoisie and its rule is at the same time the struggle against bureaucratism-in all its forms. Does Sherman know anyone or any tendency in the labor movement that carried on this struggle more ably, more scrupulously, more effectively, more determinedly, than Bolshevism?

5. Bolshevism means lies, slander of opponents, frame-ups, blind worship of leadership, totalitarian centralism, according to Sherman and Gitlow and Kerensky. Sherman has simply stood things on their head, for the opposite is true. Bolshevism, from its inception down to the present day, was always the marked victim of lies, slanders, frame-ups and amalgams, and despotic centralism, all employed against it by its enemies who-oddly enough,-always proved to be also the enemies of democracy and of the working class masses. What is the biggest and most monstrous lie of capitalist ideology? What is the most poisonous fountain-head of all suggesting centralism if not the bourgeois state? What is a more hideous frame-up of the peoples throughout the world than the two world wars? than the persecution of the opponents of the war, in each country, as "agents of the enemy?" What is the most pernicious evil in the working class if not the fact of its "blind worship" of the leadership of the bourgeoisie and its labor lieutenants? And who, pray, carried out a more consistent fight against all these-not on paper alone, if you please, but in

actual sacrificing combat- than Bolshevism? And who continues this fight if not the present partisans of Bolshevism? Sherman is able to discover, here and there, a little pimple or a wart on Bolshevism. But being the wretched philistine that he is, or that he became as a result of studying his "sources", he does not even see what is big, outstanding, decisive and deathless in the magnificent history of Bolshevism-its unremitting struggle for and with the masses, for their freedom, for their rule, against all the stupidities, the deceptions, cruelties, crimes, monstrosities, immoralities, despotisms and inequities of modern bourgeois society. And he does not see this because as his action has shown, the struggle of Bolshevism against the bourgeois society appeals to him less than does that reconciliation with this society which is represented by the social democracy he has joined.

6. Lenin's last struggle was against Stalinism. It was he who launched this struggle, and not any of Sherman's "authorities" or his newly-adopted political leaders. It was Trotsky who first took up this struggle openly and carried it on for the rest of his life. (Trotsky's first open fight against Stalinism, it is interesting to note, was over the question of party democracy). To our supercilious philistine this fight was only a trifle, and certainly of no importance compared with his present historical grappling with Bolshevism. Yet, all soviet life and policy for the past twenty years has continued to revolve around the axis of this fight between Trotskyism (Bolshevism) and Stalinism. To Sherman Stalinism is merely a continuation of Leninism. Rising to the pinnacles attained by the perspicacious editorial writers on the bourgeois gutter-press, he believes that if Trotsky were in Stalin's place, so to speak, it wouldn't make any serious difference. Yet, what is Stalinism? It is the bureaucracy's way of adapting itself and its interests to the surrounding capitalist world. How? By the ruthless political and physical destruction of Lenin's world. It does not occur to Sherman and his tutors to reflect: Neither the bourgeois nor the social-reformist world would or could reconcile itself with the Bolshevism of Lenin and Trotsky, or vice-versa. This held true while Lenin and Trotsky were in power, and just as true after Trotsky had been driven from power. The continuity is evident. But just at the time when Stalinism was delivering his most murderous and treacherous blows against the remnants of Leninism in Russia ("Trotskyism"), the world bourgeoisie, including its social-democratic "friends of the masses", reached the period of its closest collaboration with Stalinism, expressed its greatest friendship and even admiration for the regime. But all this, and a thousand other important facts, mean nothing to Sherman. Stalinism and Bolshevism are the same thing, for, somewhere in Stalin's writings or doings he found a comma in the same place it occupies somewhere in Lenin's writings or doings. The real world matters not at all-the similarity of the commas proves everything!

In Sherman's statement, he says rightly, that the basic question in politics is, "What to do. The program of a party is not exhausted by the proposals which it makes for mass action. The program also consists of what the party as a party intends in fact to do." If he had added to this: "what the party has already done", his formula would be fully correct.

Employing this criterion, Bolshevism passes muster with flying colors, not as a demure and spotless angel, to be sure, but as the

only effective, vindicated movement for the achievement of the socialist revolution. But Sherman, who is such a stern and rigorous judge over Bolshevism, does not even think of applying this criterion to, let us say, the "sources" from which he draws his "critical" program-- the Berkman, Goldmans, Balabanoffs, Hooks, Gitlows, Rosenbergs, Souvarines and Martovs. In a separate sentence, we add: even Luxemburg. Why not? Evidently, because our very moral critic has a double standard of morality: to Bolshevism he severely applies (misapplies) one criterion; to the critics of Bolshevism he evidently applies only this criterion: "Are they enemies of Bolshevism?" Once they pass this test, they become "authorities" and "sources".

Nor does Sherman apply his criterion to his own group, or to himself! How could he? Its brief history has not been a very attractive or a promising one. He began by organizing his group secretly months ago, and he drew up his "platform" only months afterward, on the very eve of his farewell-taking. In political language, such a group is known as an unprincipled clique, i.e., an organized political grouping which has no separate, much less avowed, principles or program. He recruited to his group by beginning with a denial at the last N.Y. City Convention of the YPSL that he had any political differences with the party, and ended, when forced into the open, with the statement that "Our differences are therefore political, programmatic". He kept his group secret, with secret meetings, in order to be able to fill the young, inexperienced dupes he recruited with prejudices, falsehoods and slanders, and to keep them from the benefits of an open discussion of his arguments (and thereby, a refutation of them) which a publicly-formed group, with a declared platform, would have made possible. (Sherman is a critic of... Stalin!) This enemy of Bolshevik methods secretly discussed party matters, including the question of forming an anti-party fraction, with an avowed deserter from the party and the revolutionary movement, Burnham-- only his hoped-for leader gave him little comfort! Behind the back of the party, of the YPSL and even his own group membership, he negotiated with the Thomasites for capitulation to the CP. A very unappetizing record!

Also a very unappetizing ending--to join the "party" of Norman Thomas and Co. If there is one labor organization in the U.S. outside of the C.P., which has a thoroughly undemocratic, totalitarian-Fuehrer regime, it is the Thomas organization: What does it matter what the membership wants or decides? What does it matter what even the "National Committee" wants and decided. The social-patriots, the Altmans, Hoans, Porters, Lewises, and Tylers, they do what they please, to be sure. Thomas does what he pleases. Only those few militants left in the party or youth who want a revolutionary socialist policy--only they can't do anything, only they are kept in a vise, only they are ruthlessly disciplined, or framed-up and kicked-out as the Trotskyists were a few years ago. A party without masses, without mass support, without principles, without program-- that is the Socialist Party today, and that is the party to which the "revolutionary" anti-Bolshevik has passed over.

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There are few passages more fully revealing about the Sherman group than his criticism of our movement for its "notion of the party as absorbing the whole life of a member and thereby having the right to choose his values for him". Sherman here said more than he intended saying. Yes, Bolshevism, as a serious organization of the socialist revolution, demands of all its partisans that they devote themselves fully and seriously to the job of fighting for the noblest goal of man. The Thomasites, and all varieties of "socialist" lawyers, doctors, dentists, journalists, carters, petty-trade-union officials, municipal office-holders and the like, have no such "notion" of the party as absorbing the whole life of a member." Not at all! In the S.P. you can be for Socialism-in-Your-Spare-Time and still be an honored and respectable member of society. Your party activity is confined-the party does not "choose your value for you"-to avoid giving offense to respectable citizens, and to bringing your friends to your radio to listen to Norman Thomas broadcast. Once a year, you explain to people why they should vote for Norman Thomas even though you don't agree with his speeches and articles, or even though these speeches and articles don't agree with what the party says, and the rest of the year you carry the illustrious and inexpensive title of "socialist". All through the year, of course, you can make it plain that you, thank god, have nothing in common with Bolshevism.

In the sentence quoted above, we have in a nutshell the reason for the Sherman capitulation, plus the reason why the matter is more important than Sherman and the dozen youth who capitulated with him. At bottom, it was the same reason for the Burnham desertion and the few other defections that we have had.

In this period of extreme difficulties for our movement, of extreme unpopularity of the revolutionary socialist position in the eyes of the bourgeoisie and their bootlickers in the labor movement, the weaklings and cowards take one pretext or another in order to escape the discipline of the revolutionary party. In one case, it may be a conscious process; in another case, it may be unconscious. In any case, it doesn't matter, for we know that the power of human rationalization is infinite, and the objective result is the same.

What does it mean-escape the discipline of the revolutionary party? This discipline is not, primarily, regulated by the statutes of the organization: this you shall do and this you shall not do. It is--if not with the Stalinists, at least with us--primarily and above all the discipline of the party's revolutionary program. It is this program that marks out the frame-work of the party's discipline. It is within this program that we operate--and not outside of it. (That is why our decision that the faction advocacy of anti-Bolshevism by the Shermanites is incompatible with party membership, coincided so exactly with Sherman's earlier decision to the same effect.) The vacillating elements, the elements in whom our principles are not firmly rooted, the weaklings, the timid, the elements without endurance or faith, the elements to whom any battle lost is the whole war lost--all these, in the movement and around the movement as intellectual sympathizers, are, like all the rest of us, under the heaviest pressure from the bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie world. That pressure is not directed against us as individuals or even as a group--for the enemy would not reject aid from us if we offered it. It is directed against our program. It is directed against our Bolshe-

vism, our Marxism, our revolutionary socialist position, our internationalist resistance to their national chauvinism. The difference between the party, on the one side, and the Shermans and Burnhams inside or outside the party on the other side, is that they yield to the pressure, collapse under it, cry out that they have abandoned the unpopular program—we do not and shall not yield.

We know very well that, besides this pressure, there is the factor of the depressing series of defeats suffered for so long by the international working class. We know very well that, in addition, there is a terrible discredit of the very name of socialism by the hideous record of Stalinism. We know very well, finally, that, like ourselves, thousands of serious militants reflect and want to think more and more about the problem of preventing the bureaucratic degeneration of the revolutionary movement; and that deficiencies and blunders in our party militate against its growth and progress. But while these factors weigh most decisively in the defection of the "nameless rank-and-file workers" — they serve only as pretexts in the case of ninety nine out of a hundred Shermans and Burnhams. With these types, all phrasemongering about "Bolshevism-equals-Stalinism" is only a pretext for escaping the control and discipline of the revolutionary socialist program. Burnham himself once explained this eloquently and adequately about other retreaters and deserters, and there is no need of revising that judgement in the case of his latest emulator.

The loss to the S.P. of a dozen or so young comrades is not, in itself, of any great importance. As a symptom of the times, it is very important. Upon our party devolves huge tasks. As we are today, we can only begin to fulfill them. We must however, measure up to them, for unless they are fulfilled by the class whose name we bear, society is doomed. We can measure up to them only if we build up on the foundations we have laid a powerful, invincible mass movement of the working class, matching under the banner of the Fourth International, of the world party of the socialist revolution. But for this, our foundations must be retained and strengthened, and we must resist every effort to undermine and weaken them. These foundations are our program, are our principles, are our hundred-year old tradition of struggle — the program, principles and traditions of Marxism and Bolshevism, the ideas of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky. On them we can and will build and win.

Political Committee  
Schachtman, Secretary