

# Bulletin

of the WORKERS PARTY

## CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
BALANCE SHEET OF NEGOTIATIONS FOR UNITY BETWEEN WORKERS PARTY AND SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY - By Max Shachtman .....	1
RESOLUTION OF EUROPEAN SECRETARIAT .....	18
REPLY OF SWP MINORITY TO RESOLUTION OF EUROPEAN SECRETARIAT .....	19
STATEMENT OF POLITICAL COMM. OF WF ON EUROPEAN SECRETARIAT RESOLUTION ...	24
LETTER FROM M. SHACHTMAN TO ALBERT GOLDMAN (November 3, 1945) .....	30
LETTER FROM M. SHACHTMAN TO ALBERT GOLDMAN (January 10, 1946) .....	36
LETTER OF SWP MINORITY TO MAJORITY .....	41
RESOLUTION ON INTERNAL SITUATION (Answer of Majority to Minority Letter)	43
RESIGNATION OF JEFFRIES-LYONS FROM SWP MINORITY AND REPLY OF A. GOLDMAN...	45

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886

**BALANCE SHEET OF THE NEGOTIATIONS FOR UNITY  
BETWEEN THE WORKERS PARTY AND THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY**

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The Workers Party and the Socialist Workers Party represent two tendencies in the Trotskyist movement. The political and organizational differences between these two tendencies were sufficiently deep as early as 1939-1940 to produce a split in the then united SWP and the formation of the Workers Party as an independent organization. In the more than five years of the independent existence of the WP, the differences which produced the 1940 split were not only further deepened but were, in addition, supplemented by other political differences that developed on a number of questions, including questions of tactics and questions of theory. Just how far-reaching these differences are and to what extent the already visible implications of these differences will materialize in the form of an unbridgeable gulf between the two tendencies, cannot now be foretold. In fact, it would be a political mistake to anticipate arbitrarily, let alone to deepen artificially all the implications of the differences between the two tendencies, for that would preclude the possibility of the actual struggle intervening to moderate these differences or to reduce them to nuances and different degrees of emphasis.

However, regardless of what the future evolution of these differences may be, the fact remains that the differences as they exist today are clear enough indication that the Fourth International, both here and abroad, contains within its ranks two distinct tendencies. The problem created by the existence of these two tendencies cannot be properly resolved unless one additional point is understood. It is necessary to bear in mind that with all the differences dividing the two tendencies, both of them nevertheless stand formally upon the fundamental and general program of Marxism and the Fourth International. To put it another way, what divides the WP from the SWP is not at all of the same nature, scope or depth as that which divides both of us from the social-democracy or traditional centrist movements on the one side and Stalinist totalitarianism on the other. Unless this important point is understood, the comrades may very well grasp the reasons why we exist as an independent organization, but they will be unable to grasp the fact that unity between the WP and SWP is possible and that membership of the WP in the Fourth International, as it exists today, is likewise possible.

**Impossibility of Permanent Coexistence**

Ever since the formation of the Workers Party, we have been aware of the fact that the coexistence of two organizations like the WP and SWP for a long period of time is impossible. This is demonstrated by the whole history of the working class movement. In the eyes, not of the advanced party member, but of the average worker, and even the average worker militant, the program and activities of the two parties appear to be identical, or, if not identical, at least so similar that they do not see any

basis for the existence of two separate organizations. Working class militants quite rightly oppose splits and divisions in the movement. If they support or justify a split, it is only under conditions where there are overwhelming and above all very clear and easily explainable reasons for it. What may be sufficient reason to the political, highly developed party member is not always sufficient reason for the serious worker militant. And it is, after all, to these worker militants that the party must appeal.

The history of the movement has shown that under such circumstances one of four developments is absolutely inevitable:

(1) On the basis of the differences that exist between them, which are not sufficiently deep or wide or clear to justify a split in the eyes of the broader masses, the two groups fight each other to death. They render each other sterile; they are incapable of functioning in the class struggle; they reduce each other to impotent, bitterly-antagonistic sects.

(2) In the course of events the differences which at first appeared superficial prove to be profound and irreconcilable. The class struggle widens these differences, what was implicit in them becomes explicit, an unbridgeable gulf is created between them, one appears as the unmistakable revolutionary group, the other appears as the unmistakable reformist group. In that case, the division is justified in the eyes of all and the problem reduces itself simply to the old problem of the struggle between revolution and reform, Marxism and revisionism.

(3) In the third case the differences do not deepen so rapidly and so clearly but, nevertheless, in practice, in the class struggle, one organization demonstrates its superiority over the other organization and becomes recognized as the authoritative representative of a given current in the labor movement; that is, one succeeds in liquidating the other politically and eventually organizationally.

(4) After a period of division, a new situation develops which requires that the two groups unite once more into one. In that case, the two tendencies exist inside of one organization and there is, so to speak, a comradely and peaceful struggle for the dominance of one tendency over the other inside of a single party. Under conditions of unity, the two tendencies may either fuse politically, that is to say, the differences may be harmonized on the basis of new events or an objective reconsideration of the questions in dispute, or one tendency proves so eminently superior that it acquires the unmistakable ideological and organizational dominance in the party and leaves its stamp upon it.

#### Alternative Courses of Action

The last two developments in particular, especially as they refer to the case of the Workers Party and the Socialist Workers

Party, were dealt with in outline form in the document submitted to the Detroit Active Workers Conference by the National Committee and re-submitted for the discussion of the membership in the coming pre-convention period. In this document specific reference was made to the two alternatives; either we defeat the Cannonite tendency politically under conditions of struggle between two independent organizations (or they defeat us!) or we defeat the Cannonite tendency politically under conditions of co-existence in a united party. The choice between the two is, of course, not a matter of principle; neither can it be made arbitrarily, that is to say, purely on the basis of what we ourselves want. The choice is dictated not only by the interests of our tendency but by tactical considerations and above all by the changing requirements of the class struggle.

Even after the Workers Party was formed as an independent organization, we did not exclude the possibility of a reunification of the two groups at some future date. Naturally, no political organization can exist for long which has as its main point in its program unity with another organization. A political organization justifies its existence primarily upon the basis of its own program and activities. During the war, any talk of unity between the WP and SWP would have been empty phrasemongering. We are not for unity at all costs. We are not for unity as a pious, demagogical device. In general, we speak of unity not only when it is necessary in the abstract but when it is a concrete possibility. Besides, the war period was one in which our party had to hammer out and did hammer out, far more clearly than was the case at the time of its foundation, its own theoretical position and its own political line on a number of questions in controversy, and its own concept of the character and functioning of the revolutionary Marxist party. These are the positions which distinguish our party not only in the labor movement as a whole but in the Trotskyist movement in particular. The sum total of them is what constitutes us as a distinctive tendency.

#### Problems Posed by End of the War

However, the end of the war once more posed the question of the relationship between the WP and SWP. If it is borne in mind that the objective situation is continually changing, it should be clear that the relationship between political parties and political adversaries can rarely be considered as fixed once for all. If this is true in general it is certainly true in the particular case of two parties like the WP and SWP.

The question of our relationships was posed again at the end of the war for the following reasons:

(1) We demonstrated in the course of the war, to the satisfaction of all objective comrades in the International, that notwithstanding the gloomy predictions of our political and or-

ganizational degeneration, we not only maintained ourselves intact and even grew, but proved to be unflaggingly loyal to the principles of revolutionary internationalism. This could not but exert a sobering influence upon comrades who had been carried away in their estimate of us during the original faction fight against us.

(2) A crisis developed, and is still unfolding, in the ranks of the Fourth International in general and in the SWP in particular. In the latter the crisis took the form of a new political and organizational schism resulting in the formation and development of the minority group led by Comrades Goldman and Morrow, that is, by two of the most authoritative and responsible leaders of the SWP. Moreover, this group developed an increasingly sympathetic attitude towards the WP which, at a certain stage of the fight, was formalized in a proposal that the WP and SWP be reunified.

(3) The SWP itself, under the pressure of our criticism and of events, found itself obliged to modify its position on the Russian question, if not in our full sense then at least in the direction of our position. However haltingly, however contradictorily, however inadequately, the SWP nevertheless adopted the formal position which declared that the slogan of "unconditional defense of the Soviet Union" was henceforth to be retired to the background, or had receded into the background. As is known, the question of "unconditional defense of Russia" in the war was the principal, if not the only, political question which precipitated the split in 1940.

#### Consultations With Other Comrades

These circumstances necessitated on our part, as responsible political people, a reconsideration of the question of the relations between the two parties. This reconsideration took place in the form of numerous discussions among the leading comrades of our party, as well as in the form of discussions with the comrades of the German section (IKD) with whom we had previously decided to establish a political bloc in the Fourth International. These discussions were also held with the leading representatives of the Minority in the SWP even before they presented their formal proposal to the SWP Political Committee for unity with the WP. In addition, we consulted with other leading comrades of the Fourth International who found themselves in the United States and in the course of these consultations established the most fraternal relationships with them. Throughout our course in this question, we sought to achieve the maximum possible agreement with all of these comrades. If, at times, we did not find it possible to go as far or as fast as we ourselves wished, it was in almost every case due to our deferring to the opinions of these comrades with whom we sought to act in concert. In reviewing the course that we followed on this question, it should be established here that what sometimes appeared as hesitation,

or dilatoriness, or even contradiction in our policy or action was for the most part only a reflection of the hesitations or contradictions of the comrades with whom we collaborated and to whom we yielded in many cases in the interests of a harmonious line toward the SWP.

### The Kind of Party We Have Built

Upon the basis of these discussions and consultations, comrade Shachtman was authorized to say in an article written in April, 1945, in The New International, which reviewed the five years of the existence of the Workers Party, that there was only one primary reason for the continued division of the Trotskyist movement in the U.S.:

"It might be said that the kind of party we have built up is our richest possession. In itself, it does not guarantee against making political mistakes, including serious ones. But it makes possible a speedy correction\* without the convulsive crises to which bureaucratized parties are doomed whenever a serious difference of opinion forces its way past the lid.

"From this standpoint, it might be added in passing, the big obstacle to the union of the two Trotskyist organizations in this country is not so much the political differences that exist. Although some of these differences are greater than they were five years ago, others have become less acute. In any event, people with even greater political differences could live and work side by side in a single party provided it were a normal party. It is no secret, for example, that in our own party close cooperation is possible between comrades who, on some questions, have greater differences between themselves than our party as a whole has, on other questions, with the SWP. The principal obstacle (as this writer sees it) lies precisely in the sterile, bureaucratic regime which the Cannonites have imposed upon and continue to maintain in the SWP, a regime which the new minority in the SWP rightly describes as Stalinist in its trend. Unity is a precious thing. The kind of party that would result from unity is, however, far more important. Our comrades are not disposed for a minute to trade off what they have built up for any regime that smacks of Cannonism."

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\*(insert) of such mistakes if they are made, a correction

These paragraphs were the first public pronouncement on our part, since the 1940 split, for the reopening of the question of unity. At the same time, it indicated the basic terms upon which, in our view, the unity could be consummated.

Almost immediately after the appearance of this article, the SWP Minority presented the SWP Political Committee with a formal resolution calling for the opening of negotiations with the WP for the purpose of reestablishing unity of the two organizations. What followed the presentation of this resolution is now public knowledge. It is summarized here again so that we have a rounded account of what took place.

The Cannonite majority refused to vote on the resolution of the minority, either for or against, on the ground that a decision on such a question had to be taken by a plenum. This reason was only a pretext to cover up an intransigent hostility to the idea of unity. That was sufficiently clear at the time and subsequent events have only corroborated it.

#### The Two Reactions to Unity: Theirs and Ours

In the first place, while such a question should, it goes without saying, be decided by a National Committee and eventually by a convention, the elementary duty of a Political Committee is to give the National Committee and the membership and the convention a guiding line, a recommendation on the course to be followed. This is common and proper practice.

In the second place, in the ranks of the party itself, Cannon took, from the very beginning, the line of inciting and poisoning the membership against the idea of unity. In one of his early debates with Goldman before the New York membership, Cannon, in polemizing violently against the idea of unity, coined the winged phrase, "We must deepen the split." Regardless of all of the maneuvers, statements, resolutions and actions taken by Cannon and the SWP majority subsequently, the course indicated by Cannon's phrase at the membership meeting debate has been consistently followed by the Cannonites -- not to make unity possible, not even to explore seriously the possibilities of unity between the two organizations, but "to deepen the split."

Our policy was a radically different one. After a thorough-going discussion in the Political Committee, we adopted by unanimous vote a motion to approve the opening of negotiations with the SWP for unity. At the plenary meeting of the National Committee in Detroit on the eve of the Active Workers Conference, the position of the PC was unanimously endorsed by all the members of its parent committee. A formal resolution was adopted in favor of unity and the reasons were given for this position. We do not wish to convey to the membership the idea that this resolution was voted for by every member of the National Committee with equal enthusiasm, or that every comrade had exactly the same reasons for his affirmative vote. This

question, however, will be dealt with later on and will, of course, be subject to final review at our coming national convention. But the fact remains that the resolution was adopted unanimously and was therefore binding not only upon every member of the National Committee but on the party as a whole which was, by virtue of this vote, committed to the resolution.

### The Dodges of the SWP

The resolution was immediately communicated to the National Secretary of the SWP with a request that it be considered immediately, that action be taken upon it, and that we be notified accordingly. Confronted with such a categorical resolution, the SWP majority was literally compelled to take a step in a direction directly opposite to the one they had been travelling up to that moment. This step, however, did not prove to be a real advance. Contrary to the old adage which advises a step backward in order to be better able to leap forward, the Cannonites took a "step forward" in order the better to be able to leap backward. With a promptitude that was surprising in light of their previous position to have no dealings with us, not only for the purpose of unity but even for united front actions, the Cannonites invited us to a joint meeting at which the question of unity would be discussed. The results of this meeting, and the one that followed it - no further meetings between us were held - are already familiar to all comrades. Only two points require emphasis here: One was the repeated declaration by the Cannonite negotiators that they would not and could not commit themselves one way or the other on the question of unity; that they were meeting with us solely for the purpose of exploring the question; that their only interest at the time was whether or not the unity "would work"; that a decision could only be taken at their forthcoming plenum. The second point was their repeated declarations that there was no point in discussing the political differences inasmuch as, in Cannon's own words, the political differences between us had to be considered as "frozen". To our numerous attempts to elicit from the SWP representatives a declaration, one way or the other, as to whether the known political differences between the two tendencies were compatible with membership in a single revolutionary party, their only reply was that this is an abstract question which cannot be answered in the abstract but must be dealt with concretely, namely, "will it work?"

### Is Fusion Really Workable?

As for the "workability" of the fusion, we, without solicitation or pressure of any kind from the Cannonites, voluntarily proposed from the very beginning a number of concessions on our part, the like of which would be hard to find in the history of the movement. We declared: "You are the numerical majority and therefore from the very beginning we recognize that in the united party you will have the majority of the leadership and



the control of the press. The policies of the party will be your policies, particularly in the controversial questions. We will abide by your discipline. We will give up our paper and our magazine and our public activities. We will give up our separate role in the trade unions and submit to your policies in this work, as in the work in all other fields. We will give up all those things that go to make up an independent party as distinguished from a tendency operating inside of a broader party. Naturally, we will retain our point of view and the right to advance it and fight for it inside of the united party." We added without diplomacy or equivocation, that our experience with the Cannonite group in the past, now supplemented by the experience of the Minority in the SWP, had deprived us of confidence that the Cannonite majority in the united party would freely assure us of our democratic rights as a minority. Consequently, we had to reserve the right to publish inside of the united party - that is, for internal and not external consumption - a tendency bulletin of our own, of an educational character, which would put forth our own views on all questions in controversy.

The last point the Cannonite representatives promptly raised as an obstacle to the unity. More accurately, they said that this was not a "good sign" for the unity. Cannon went so far as to say that the unity could not be accomplished either by our insistence on a bulletin of our own or by their rejection of this demand; but neither he nor the other representatives gave, during the two meetings we held with them, any indication of how that unity could be accomplished. We asked repeatedly, "What 'signs' do you comrades want? What concrete proposals do you have to make on the unity? How do you propose to bring it about? On what basis?" None of these questions received an answer, no matter how hard or often we pressed them.

#### The Question of a Tendency Bulletin

After the first negotiating session, our PC once more considered the question and reiterated its demand for an internal tendency bulletin in the united party as well as its proposals to make all of the concessions listed above. The second negotiating session brought us not one step further than the first. The negotiations ended with the understanding that we would wait until the plenum of the National Committee of the SWP.

The plenum of the SWP adopted a resolution which has already been made public (The New International, November, 1945). As a reading of it shows, and as the Minority so correctly said in its statement on the resolution, it was designed for no other purpose than to prevent unity. It was designed, furthermore, to bolster up all the antagonisms and prejudices which had been so sedulously instilled in the membership of the SWP for five years. However, the resolution had to take into account at least to some degree the growing sympathy in the International for the unification of the two Trotskyist groups in the United States. In

order to ward off the growing pressure upon the SWP for unity, the resolution ended with the proposition to probe the political differences to the end before deciding the question of unity. That this proposition was hypocritical through and through should be obvious even to a child. Even before the SWP plenum, comrade Natalia, in a letter to the SWP leadership, disposed of this proposition with a single contemptuous phrase that it merits. What are these political differences that have to be probed? Aren't the political differences already known? Haven't they been debated off and on in the press of the SWP as well as of the WP? If the nature of these differences is unknown, against what were the Cannonites polemizing in the past five years in their polemical attacks upon us? Presumably these attacks were directed at our political position. Presumably, therefore, the Cannonites know what our political position is and have known it all along. We, for our part, consider that we are perfectly clear on their political position. What is there to probe? What is the purpose of the probing? To establish that there are political differences? That is perfectly well known and not only acknowledged but insisted upon by both sides. To establish what these political differences actually are? That is equally well known, not only here but throughout the International revolutionary movement. In a word, the proposition made sense only as a hypocritical attempt to stall off unity, to oppose unity, in order to avoid saying so openly and honestly.

#### The Nature of the Revolutionary Party

Another aspect of this question is even more sinister. It relates not so much to the nature of the political differences as to two different concepts of the revolutionary party. We are not for an all-inclusive party in the Norman Thomas (i.e. centrist) sense. But we are for an all-inclusive party in the revolutionary Marxist sense, in the Bolshevik sense, in the Trotskyist sense. That is to say, we are for a party which allows for the existence of different tendencies within the general framework of revolutionary Marxism. The Bolshevik Party, throughout the period when it was a Bolshevik party, was distinguished, among other things, by precisely this feature. That is also a feature of our Workers Party as its practice has shown. It was against the attempt, successful in the end, to destroy this feature of Bolshevism that we carried on a bitter, decade-long struggle against Stalinism. At the very height of the fight between us and the Cannonites, Trotsky took special pains to emphasize that not only were the views, even of Burnham, compatible with membership in the party, but that it would be criminal to "split with" comrades holding these views.

The proposition "to probe the differences to the end" can have only one of two meanings in the light of this. One is that the differences are not known and have to be established and clearly delineated. That is obviously not the case. Two is that once the nature of these differences is established, it is

also established that they cannot co-exist in a single revolutionary party. That, in actuality, is the Cannonite point of view. And that is the concept of the monolithic party first injected into the Communist International by Zinoviev and finally carried to its projected extreme under Stalinism.

Every revolutionist must understand that in a certain sense the difference of opinion on the character of the revolutionary party as manifested in this question is more important, and certainly not less important, than the differences of opinion between us and the Cannonites on such questions as the character of the Russian state, the role of the national question in the class struggle today, trade union tactics and the like. It is well to add, right at this point, that if this is not clearly understood, a one-sided and therefore an erroneous conclusion will be drawn about the nature of the struggle conducted by the Minority inside the SWP.

#### Our Concession on the Bulletin

Any doubts that may have existed about the monolithic conception of the party that the Cannonites entertain were dispelled by another move which we undertook in agreement with the Minority. The initiative for this move came from the comrades of the Minority themselves. They proposed, first to us, that we even go to the extent of withdrawing the demand which they considered no less legitimate than we did, for an internal bulletin. They made this proposal in order to deprive Cannon of the slightest legitimate or, more accurately, apparently legitimate reason for opposing or delaying unity. Many of us were reluctant to take this step especially because we considered that Cannon had recorded himself clearly already. However, the comrades of the Minority pressed for this move very firmly, pointing out that it was no less important to convince doubters and even opponents throughout the International than to convince ourselves. The comrades of the Minority proved to be right. They addressed a formal communication to our party making this proposition, and they sent a copy to the SWP. We sent a formal reply to the Minority, with a copy to the SWP, stating that in the interests of unification and for the purpose of removing all conceivable obstacles to it, real or apparent, the WP was willing to withdraw its demand for an internal tendency bulletin of its own in the united party, and to confine itself to using the regular party discussion bulletin, provided there was joint recognition that any minority in the united party would have the right to issue such a bulletin. That is to say, we were ready to abandon the exercise of that right provided the right itself, traditionally recognized in the revolutionary Marxist and Bolshevik movement, were acknowledged by the Cannonite leadership.

After the receipt of this letter by the SWP, the Minority proposed in their PC that in view of the withdrawal of the WP demand for an internal bulletin, the negotiations be resumed. The reply of the Cannonite majority proved to the hilt that the

obstacle to the unity was in no sense our demand for an internal bulletin, that the only obstacle was the monolithic conception of the party held by the Cannonites, their refusal to entertain the idea of having in the party a group of trained, experienced and developed revolutionists whose opinions on a number of theoretical and political questions differed from those of the Cannonites and who would be prepared to resist a bureaucratic regime not only firmly but effectively.

Instead of welcoming the initiative of the Minority, which was aimed at facilitating the unification through the withdrawal of our demand, the Cannonites redoubled their attacks upon the Minority and published in the columns of their paper and their magazine some of the most vicious and disloyal attacks upon the WP they had ever made.

For us this was conclusive proof that desirable as unification might be in the interests of the revolutionary working-class movements of this country and abroad, unification was now excluded as a practical possibility. Unification of two tendencies or two organizations requires agreement as to the need and desirability of such unity. No agreement is possible with the Cannonites, at least for the next period. This too must be understood by every comrade so that the work of the party in the coming period can be properly oriented. Even if, for one reason or another, we find it necessary to exchange more communications with the SWP on this matter in the immediate future or even to sit down to discuss with their representatives, we cannot permit ourselves the slightest illusion. The Cannonites have committed themselves against the possibility of unity.

Our record is clear and unmistakable. We must do everything to make it and its meaning known to every militant worker and throughout the Fourth International. But we can no longer orient seriously toward the possibility of unity with the SWP in the next period.

Two questions remain to be discussed here.. But before discussing them, it is necessary to bring the record up to date.

Having failed to bring the SWP one step closer to unity, we addressed ourselves to the European Secretariat of the Fourth International. In this communication we set forth the facts and our conclusions. This important document need not be appended to this balance sheet inasmuch as it has already been sent out to all the members of the party. It should be added that the Minority also communicated officially with the European Executive and the European Secretariat, as well as with all of the sections of the Fourth International, setting forth its point of view and its conclusions, and appealing to the comrades of the International to intervene in the American situation, not in any bureaucratic, arbitrary or organizational way, but in the form of an expression of opinion favorable to the idea of unity which would serve to bring to bear the pressure of the public opinion.

of the International upon the leadership of the SWP.

### The Reactions of the Sections Abroad

So far as we know, not one single section of the International has formally expressed itself against the unity. Those sections that have expressed themselves have been sympathetic to the idea, with greater or lesser degree of firmness. The German section (IKD) has not only taken an official position in favor of the unity but has written officially to the International Pre-Conference in favor of the proposals made by our Party in its letter to the European Executive. The Irish section has adopted a resolution in favor of unity which has already been printed in LABOR ACTION. The English section has adopted a resolution in favor of the unity. Unofficially, the leader of the Italian section, Comrade Nicola, just before his recent tragic death, expressed himself in writing in favor of the unification in the United States. The comrades of the minority group of the French section are in favor of the unity. So are the comrades of some of the other European sections. The leader of the Spanish group in Mexico and, if we have been informed correctly, the group itself have expressed themselves formally in favor of the unity. Informally, in her writings to the SWP, Comrade Natalia has taken an exceedingly firm and categorical position in favor of the unity, severely attacking the arguments against it put forward by the Cannonites.

However, the European Secretariat has adopted a resolution to be presented to the International Pre-Conference, which endorses, in effect, the position of the Cannonites and which is undoubtedly one of the most monstrous documents ever to be sent in the history of the Trotskyist movement. It is appended to this report for your information. Likewise appended is the reply to this resolution by the Minority of the SWP and the statement which our Political Committee has issued on it. The statements of the Minority group and of our Party on this resolution should obviate the need of commenting upon it here.

### The Position of the SWP Minority on Unity

As for the Minority group in the SWP, even before the resolution of the European Secretariat was received in this country, it presented a declaration to the majority of the Political Committee of the SWP which said, in substance, that the Minority, in spite of everything that has happened up to now, is determined to exhaust the very, very last possibility of bringing the Cannonites to a position of unity. It therefore proposes that the unity negotiations be reopened. For the reasons which it adduced in this letter, it declares that it is prepared to remain inside of the SWP, provided that the Majority gives concrete indications that it intends to move toward unity with the WP. If the Majority fails to give such indications, the Minority intends to leave the SWP and join the WP. Here, too, comment can

be obviated by reference to other documents which are appended: they include the letters of Comrade Shachtman to Comrade Goldman, the letter of the SWP Minority to the Majority of the Political Committee of the SWP, and the reply of the Majority of the Political Committee of the SWP to the letter of the Minority. The next step of the Minority, following the reply given it by the Majority of the SWP Political Committee, will undoubtedly be taken soon.

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### On Sincerity and Maneuvers

Reference was made above to two remaining points:

One is, were unity negotiations a "maneuver" on the part of the WP or did we mean it "sincerely". Let us not get lost in words and their meanings. If "maneuver" is given its common and vulgar interpretation, namely, a sordid, cheap, underhand trick of some kind or a proposal not seriously meant, we did not engage in a maneuver during the course of these negotiations. If "maneuver" is understood politically, however, as an action or a series of actions designed to reach a political goal, designed to demonstrate in practice what is hard to demonstrate by abstract argument, or designed to prevent an opponent from carrying through a policy harmful to the interests of the working class or the revolutionary movement and to force him, on the contrary, to follow a policy which advances the working class and the revolutionary movement, then we have no hesitation in saying that we engaged in a maneuver. In what sense, concretely?

We have been of the opinion for six years that the split in the Trotskyist movement in the United States was due not to us but to the bureaucratic and politically reactionary position of the Cannonite faction. We understood very well in 1940 that Cannon was determined to separate from us, that he was no longer willing to tolerate inside of one party a group of comrades who so effectively combated his political views and his bureaucratic regime. The split in 1940 was inevitable, and it was our bounden duty at that time to prepare ourselves for it and to be prepared for it in a practical, political and organizational way so as not to be taken by surprise by some bureaucratic decision. The bureaucratic decision was made by the Cannonites. Following the convention they introduced a motion which does not have its like in the history of the revolutionary movement. We were "suspended" from the party and deprived of all party rights - that is to say, we were in effect expelled - not for any action that we took, not even for any discipline that we were alleged to have violated, but purely and solely because we failed to vote for a trick motion of Cannon in the Political Committee which "pledged" all members to abide by the convention decisions. We were expelled from the party solely for the crime of abstaining on this motion. We were prepared for

this miserable device and that is why soon after expulsion we were able to appear as an independent organization with its own paper, LABOR ACTION, and its own review, THE NEW INTERNATIONAL.

However, what has always been clear to us and many of our sympathizers has not been clear to all. In these negotiations we therefore had one more, and a very excellent, opportunity to demonstrate who is responsible for the split in the Trotskyist movement in this country. As has been said, this is now demonstrated to the hilt.

But that was not the only nor even the main purpose of our course in the negotiations. No objective comrade can fail to see the negative side of unification between us and the Cannonites if it were to take place. However, it is likewise true that no objective comrade can fail to see the great advantages of unification for the Trotskyist movement in particular and the working class movement as a whole. From the beginning we were aware of both sides of the question. It is no secret that some comrades, in the leading bodies as well as in the ranks, laid far greater stress on one side of the question than on the other. That is perfectly natural and normal and proper. However, all comrades were agreed that our party must follow a course in these negotiations which would not leave the slightest suspicion in the minds of any responsible person that the WP, with all of its apprehensions, put so much as a pebble in the road of unity. That is why, insofar as it is generally possible to speak of "sincerity" in politics or, rather, to test it, our course was entirely sincere.

If anybody, Cannonite or anyone else, should have the courage to suggest that all we were engaged in was a maneuver in the vulgar sense, that we were not "really in favor of" unity, it is only necessary to refer to the unequivocal record. If our proposals were a "maneuver" in that sense, all that the Cannonites needed to do to blow our maneuver to smithereens and to expose us as politically dishonest was .... to accept our proposals.

#### We Unhinged the Door Entirely

If they had the slightest desire or intention to unite the two groups, we not only left the door wide open for unity - we unhinged the door entirely. We did not propose to liquidate the SWP; we did not even propose parity. As a matter of fact, we made absolutely no demands upon the Cannonites except that they recognize the fact that we have differences with them and that we have the right to advance our point of view in any controversy. They made no proposals, they made no concessions. We, on the other hand, offered to dissolve our party completely. We recognized that the united party would be under their control in every respect. We pledged ourselves to abide by discipline. We did not even demand in 1945 what we demanded in 1940, namely, a public paper of our own. We even surrendered, as indicated above, our

demand for an internal bulletin of our own. We were ready to liquidate LABOR ACTION and THE NEW INTERNATIONAL. So far as the "workability" of the unity is concerned, in the sense in which the Cannonites raised it, namely, from the standpoint of their alleged fears that there would be unity on Monday and a split on Tuesday, it is only necessary to point out that nobody but a pack of errant fools or the most irresponsible people that ever cursed the labor movement would be prepared to dissolve their own organization, give up any semblance of an independent press and actually fuse with another organization on one day only to split again on the next day. Even if there were such people and they planned such a course, the execution of it could only discredit them irrevocably. The only ones who could possibly gain from such a "trick" would be the Cannonites. No! No matter what the angle from which you examine the negotiations, the conclusion is inescapable that we were for unity and were prepared to consummate it in spite of the apprehensions which we so justifiably felt and that the Cannonites from the very beginning and up to this date were irreconcilably hostile to the idea.

#### Our Criticism of the SWP Minority

The second and final point relates to the course followed by the "minority of the SWP". Many criticisms have been made of it on the grounds of inconsistency, hesitancy, unsureness, and "unpoliticalness". The German comrades have been especially severe in their criticisms of the Minority on the last named grounds.

We, ourselves, have on more than one occasion expressed ourselves in a comradely and fraternal way to the comrades of the Minority in criticism of their course, even while giving full recognition to the fact that they were at all times confronted with a difficult and even tortuous problem. We believed that the struggle of the Minority would have been more effective and fruitful if almost from the very beginning they had coupled their fight for unity with a fight for the political position which they held on questions in dispute in the SWP and in the International. It must be acknowledged here that the Minority faced a great difficulty in this respect inasmuch as there was not full agreement among the leading comrades of the Minority on the political questions. We for our part, of course, never attempted to impose our own political views upon the Minority in any ultimatum sense. But we did point out, especially to those comrades who had a clear and correct political position - a position analogous to or identical with ours on a number of controversial questions - that it was not only their right but their duty to formulate their political views into a political platform and conduct a fight in the SWP around that platform. We did not succeed in convincing the comrades in question of the correctness and necessity of such a course. In our opinion, this was a serious error on the part of the Minority comrades, and especially on the part of those who had an elaborated political position on such questions as Stalinist imperialism, the Russian question in



general and the national question in Europe and Asia. The result was a corresponding political weakening of the struggle against the Cannonite bureaucracy, not only with respect to its false political line but also with respect to its line against unity.

Another deplorable result was the repeated appearance of a tendency toward stagnation in the Minority and even disintegration. This did not assume the proportions that it easily might have assumed. Nevertheless, two small groups have in effect separated themselves from the main body of the Minority. One is a small group of two or three comrades in New York who have constituted themselves into a separate group with the intention of carrying on a struggle against Cannon's political line inside the SWP. These comrades tend to follow the leadership of the IKD comrades in the fight. Another is a small group of excellent comrades in Bayonne, New Jersey, who have broken with the Minority following the decision of the group to split from the SWP and join the WP if unity is not accomplished at an early stage. These comrades, while still strongly in favor of unity, are disoriented in many respects and still filled with semi-Cannonite prejudices against the WP. The main body of the Minority group seems to remain intact.

#### The Achievements of the SWP Minority

Yet, from these criticisms it would be utterly false to draw the conclusion that the Minority did not conduct a political struggle but simply what is called an "organizational" struggle. Such a conclusion is like falling into a familiar Cannonite trap. First of all, it should be borne in mind that the Minority was constituted formally as a group for the purpose of fighting for the unity of the two parties. That was its avowed aim. It was not formed for the purpose of working out a political platform against Cannon or anyone else. We did not for one moment share the criticism that the Minority should have established itself as a separate group for the purpose of discussing and working out political differences with Cannon, or with anyone else. Comrades come together in a group or faction inside of a party only after political differences have developed and these comrades find that they have a common point of view and a situation which necessitated the formation of a group for the purpose of advancing that point of view. A group is not formed, rather, it should not be formed in order to develop or work out "political differences." Our view must be clearly distinguished from this criticism. Our criticism is directed particularly at those comrades who had already developed different political views in the course of the normal life of the party but who failed to present them systematically to the Minority group, popularize them there and to orient the group along those lines in order to present these views in common to the SWP as a whole. The fight for unity, to which the group formally confined itself, was a political fight, particularly in the circumstances of the SWP today. The fight for unity in the SWP was not over

some "organizational" question but, in essence, a fight over the political concept of the character and functioning of the revolutionary Marxist party. Cannon and his friends have one concept, we and the "minority" have another concept. We want to build up a Bolshevik party based on democratic centralism, Cannon wants to establish a politically and theoretically sterile, monolithic party. It is this, more than anything else, that has brought the Minority ever farther from Cannonism and closer to the W.P.

We do not wish for a single moment or in the slightest degree to minimize the tremendous importance of the theoretical and political differences that divide us from the Cannonites, or, for that matter, that still divide us from many and even all of the comrades of the SWP Minority. But if, tomorrow morning, the Cannonites were, for example, to abandon completely their slogan "Unconditional defense of the Soviet Union", we would still be faced with the insurmountable barrier between us which is constituted by their conception of a bureaucratized, monolithic party. On the other hand, with the comrades of the Minority, even if the political and theoretical differences between us are many, our common concept of the kind of party that revolutionary Marxists must build makes it possible to hammer out our theoretical and political differences, to oppose them or maintain them under conditions and in an atmosphere free of the corrosive, strangulating, deadening hand of bureaucratic conservatism - that is, Cannonism.

It is for this reason that we and the "minority" have been brought progressively closer together and, we are confident, the "minority" will shortly find itself united with us in the ranks of the Workers Party.

February 15, 1946.

Max Shachtman

## RESOLUTION OF THE EUROPEAN SECRETARIAT

Having taken under consideration the exchange of documents between the SWP and the WP with a view to their eventual unification, the E.S. on the whole approves the position adopted by the Plenum of the National Committee of the SWP, October 1945.

The E.S. takes note of the fact that since the 1940 split and throughout the war the WP has been consolidated on such political positions as the question of the USSR, the defense of China and India, the national question in Europe, the existence and role of the Fourth International during the war, as well as the conception of the internal regime and of the functioning of the revolutionary party -- political positions which can very well be considered as programmatic differences that may render problematic the possibility of these two tendencies coexisting and working efficiently in common within the same organization.

The argument that the termination of the war has acted by and large to diminish the practical importance of most of these differences can acquire any weight only after the two organizations have engaged in a deep-going discussion on their respective concrete conceptions of the actual national and international policy as well as the regime and the internal functioning of the party in the United States and the International.

The European Secretariat recommends to the leadership of the SWP that it elaborate jointly with the WP leadership a list of questions to be discussed; that it organize and pursue this discussion in order to make clear just what degree of agreement actually exists between the two organizations. It is after such an examination that the question of the possible unification of the two organizations can be re-examined anew.

January, 1946.

Resolution unanimously approved by the E.S.

REPLY OF SWP MINORITY TO RESOLUTION  
OF EUROPEAN SECRETARIAT

February 12, 1946.

Dear comrades:

We hope that our representative will have arrived in time to take part in your deliberations. In any event, however, we want you to have before you in writing our answer to the ES resolution of January 1946 on SWP-WP unity.

First of all it is astonishing to note that the ES resolution, without any attempt to answer the arguments of the various sections in favor of unity, merely proclaims in Olympian fashion its solidarity with the SWP plenum resolution which evaded answering the question of unity. If the ES represented the unanimous or well-nigh unanimous sentiment of the International it might be justified in passing over the arguments of those who favor unity. But we do not know of a single section which has adopted the same position as the SWP, much less a single section which has decided against unity. On the other hand, in addition to the voluminous writings of the SWP minority, there are the pro-unity resolutions of the RCP of Britain, the RSP of Ireland, the Spanish Group in Mexico, the letter of Comrade N., the letter of the National Secretary of the PCC of Italy, the well-known pro-unity views of the leadership of the BLP of India. In the face of this situation the ES was obligated to indicate at least briefly its answers to the arguments of those who favor unity, but instead it has simply taken sides in a resolution of four short paragraphs.

The ES resolution is absurdly in error when it states that the differences between the SWP and the WP "can very well be considered as programmatic differences." Only the Russian question can at all justly be termed a programmatic difference. But in any event the readiness of the ES to so characterize the differences indicates that it presumably knows quite well what the differences are. But then it goes on to repeat the SWP plenum resolution's formula that the two parties must go through "a deepgoing discussion on their respective concrete conceptions of the actual national and international policy" etc. before it can be decided if unity is possible. To any thinking person it should be obvious that there is a crying contradiction between (1) the ES statements indicating it knows what the differences are and (2) the ES statement that the question of unity cannot be decided until after a "deepgoing discussion" of the differences. What has happened is that in adopting Comrade Cannon's line on unity, the ES has had to adopt this absurd contradiction as part of it.

We remind you that when we first introduced our resolution

for unity and proposed to send a negotiating committee to discuss unity with the WP, Comrade Cannon answered: "We don't need to send a committee to meet them in order to find the answer to these questions... As to their policy in general and their attitude toward us in particular, we don't need to inquire about that either. It is clearly revealed in their press for anyone who is interested to read." Our answer to Comrade Cannon was that we were not proposing to discuss theoretical, political, tactical questions with the WP since we could favor unity precisely because we, like everyone in the leading cadres of the Fourth, already know the position of the WP on these questions. But it was necessary then to determine whether the WP would accept unity and subordinate itself to the majority in the united party. Once the WP did so -- as it did -- there was no further need for discussion with the WP before taking a position on unity.

The first attitude of the majority leaders was, then, opposition to unity precisely on the basis of their knowledge of the WP. At that point they rightly took the position that any leader of a party should take, namely, that he has been following the press of the WP and knows its position on various questions and can determine his attitude to the WP on the basis of this knowledge.

But at the October plenum the majority made a sudden, unexplained shift. From knowing everything about the WP and therefore not seeing any use in discussion, the majority switched to asserting that the unity question could only be answered "after the most thoroughgoing discussion and probing of all differences to the bottom." We of the minority branded this shift as a fraud designed to prevent unity; a fraud necessitated by the fact that the majority leaders could not openly admit that their opposition to unity flows from their unwillingness to unite with Trotskyists who have differences with them. Wittingly or not, the ES has become a party to this fraud by its endorsement of the SWP plenum resolution which perpetrated it.

Four months have now passed since the October plenum. What has the majority done about "probing all differences to the bottom"? It has held no meetings with the WP leaders nor written any letters to the WP to organize the discussion. Precisely in opposition to the idea of organizing the discussion jointly with the WP, the Political Committee at its October 16 meeting adopted the following motion of Comrade Cannon: "Implementation of Plenum resolution. That we begin the discussion by a series of articles in the magazine outlining our position on all the questions in dispute between us and the WP, together with our criticism of their position on the points of difference." This motion has remained a dead letter. Not a single article has appeared in the magazine which could conceivably be described as "probing the differences to the bottom." All you will find in the Fourth International are two or three

side-wipes at the WP at the tail end of some editorial. And these, both in letter and spirit, violate the majority's pretense that it is still weighing the question of unity; they speak of the WP in terms applicable only to an enemy and anti-Trotskyist party. In short, there has been no discussion of the differences between the WP and the SWP.

Despite our disagreement with the whole concept of a discussion of the differences prior to a decision in favor of unity we were ready to abide by the majority decision if the discussion should actually take place. Hence, as against Comrade Cannon's motion of October 16, we really sought to implement the plenum resolution, by the following counter-motions at that same Political Committee meeting:

1. That the Political Committee prepare a list of the questions to be discussed and the order in which they were to be dealt with in the magazine. Without such a plan of work, obviously the so-called "probing" might drag on endlessly. But the Political Committee voted down our motion for such a plan of work.

2. The plenum had voted down our proposal for a joint discussion bulletin with the WP. The majority said it would write in Fourth International and the WP could answer in the New International. However, it was obvious that not one SWP member in ten would see the articles in the New International. We therefore made a motion that the Political Committee make available to SWP members through party channels those issues of New International containing replies to the SWP articles. This motion too the Political Committee voted down.

3. The plenum had rejected our proposal for joint SWP-WP membership meetings as part of the discussion. We therefore proposed an alternative: that as each subject is scheduled for "probing" we invite a representative of the WP to address our membership on it, and vice-versa. This motion too the Political Committee voted down.

4. A large part of the majority argument for its plenum decision had been based on the alleged non-Bolshevik ideas of the WP on the organization question. We therefore made a motion to publish in the Internal Bulletin the principal organizational documents of the WP referred to in the majority arguments. This motion too the Political Committee voted down.

This left the ostensibly projected discussion between the parties without any joint arrangements for the discussion, without a list of questions to be discussed, without a schedule of the order in which they were to be discussed, without putting into the hands of the SWP membership materials indispensable to the discussion. So what was left of the discussion? Nothing.

Had the majority leaders openly opposed unity, we could have

had an honest and profitable discussion which would have served to educate the whole movement. Had the majority leaders undertaken in good faith a discussion with the WP, it could have served to educate the movement. The majority, however, did neither of these things, so that it became impossible either to discuss the merits of unity or the differences with the WP.

This impasse compelled us to the decision to leave the party unless in the coming weeks we can see any sign that we can reasonably consider as a move on the part of the majority toward resuming unity negotiations. We communicated this decision to the majority in a letter dated January 26, a copy of which we enclose.

Since then we have received the ES resolution and have been informed by the majority leaders that they accept "the specific recommendations" of that resolution. We have given careful consideration to the one aspect in which the ES resolution does appear to differ from the SWP plenum resolution. The latter, as we have already explained, rejected all our proposals for approaching the WP to organize the discussion - joint discussions, joint discussion bulletins, joint membership meetings, etc. On the other hand the ES resolution recommends to the SWP "that it elaborate jointly with the WP leadership a programmed of questions to discuss; that it organize and pursue this discussion in order to make clear just what degree of agreement actually exists between the two organizations."

We take it that the ES means that the SWP and WP leadership jointly prepare the questions to discuss, jointly organize, jointly pursue the discussion. If so, the ES is now proposing essentially the same types of joint agreements for expediting the discussion that we proposed four months ago.

If the SWP majority leaders were to agree to such a plan of work, we would consider it a step toward unity. For we are confident that any real discussion of the differences between the two parties would only serve to demonstrate the correctness of unity. On one decisive condition: that the SWP majority leadership, in its meetings and arrangements with the WP, show serious signs of a desire to "organize and pursue this discussion." In a word, that the SWP majority does not merely send a representative to go through the formal motions of negotiating for a joint list of the questions to be discussed. The distinction between sending a negotiator and actually negotiating such a list is a very familiar one to all of us, and we are sure that there will be no difference of opinion between most of you and ourselves concerning whether or not the SWP majority is actually negotiating or not.

We shall therefore await the results of the negotiations between the SWP and the WP for organizing the discussion. If, however, the SWP majority leaders fail actually to carry out the ES resolution's proposal that the SWP leadership "elaborate jointly with the WP leadership" the questions to be discussed, we shall carry out our decision to leave the party and join the

WP.

We know that the WP, which favors unity, will make every effort to expedite the discussion. It cannot succeed in doing so, however, unless the SWP majority leaders make clear, as they have not yet done, what they mean by the formulas of their plenum resolution, particularly:

1. "Probing the differences to the bottom." Does this mean that there are differences or aspects of differences which are unclear to them? In that case they must specify what is clear to them and what is not. For example on the Russian question: what is it they do not know about the WP position? Merely to put down on a piece of paper, "The Russian Question," may seem to be literally complying with the ES proposal to prepare a list of questions to be discussed, but obviously serves no serious purpose of clarification.

2. "Programmatic agreement...It is clear that such a basis for unification does not exist in the present instance." Does this mean that there can be no unity unless during the discussion the WP abandons one or more of its so-called programmatic differences? In that case there is no point to discussing at all, since everyone knows the WP will maintain its political positions. But if the SWP majority does not require the WP to abandon any of its political positions as a precondition for unity, then they should be ready to state in advance that the political differences are compatible with membership in one party. The political differences would still have to be discussed but only to educate the membership after a decision for unity. The discussion preceding a decision on unity should, in all logic, be limited to the only questions which remain relevant to unity, namely the specific organizational guarantees demanded by the SWP majority to assure the unity of the united party. Until the SWP majority leaders answer the question whether the political differences are compatible with membership in one party, and until they answer it in the affirmative, it is pointless to ask the WP leaders for organizational guarantees that they will abide by party discipline.

We hope that the SWP majority leaders, in formally accepting the ES proposal for organizing the discussion jointly with the WP, will employ it for actually proceeding to a reconsideration of their previous course. Their past conduct permits us no optimism in this question, but we are ready to exhaust every last possibility for unity.

We ask you to give to the arguments for unity the consideration which the ES, if we are to judge from its resolution, did not give. Your decision in this instance will inevitably constitute a major precedent for the future. On every continent today the question of uniting Trotskyist groups into a single section in one country is posed. As we have stated in our previous letters, we do not ask you to order the SWP to unite with the WP. It would not be desirable to force unity. Without



wholehearted acceptance by a majority of the party membership, the unity would not be long-lasting. What we ask is that you recommend and urge unity. Such an expression of the public opinion of the International may go far to open the eyes of the best elements who have blindly accepted the SWP plenum resolution.

With our warmest comradely greetings,

ALBERT GOLDMAN  
FELIX MORROW  
for the SWP Minority

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STATEMENT OF THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE OF THE  
WORKERS PARTY ON THE RESOLUTION ADOPTED BY THE EUROPEAN SECRETARIAT  
JANUARY 1946, ON THE SITUATION IN THE U.S.

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To All Delegates To The International Pre-Conference:

To All Sections of the Fourth International:

The Political Committee of the Workers Party wishes to state its opinion on the resolution adopted by the European Secretariat in January 1946, dealing with the unity negotiations between the WP and the SWP in the United States. The leadership of the International and of all the sections and, for that matter, every member has the right to demand of the Workers Party a frank and unambiguous expression of its views on the question of unity. This we have given not only in numerous articles in the public press but in resolutions formally adopted by our National Committee, in the exchange of correspondence with the SWP and the Minority of the SWP and most recently in our communication to the European Executive Committee. The January 1946 resolution of the European Secretariat affords us an opportunity to reiterate our views.

The resolution of the European Secretariat is a shocking document, which does violence to the program, to the tradition and to the best interests of the Fourth International. We deem it necessary to appeal to the delegates to the International Pre-Conference and to all of the sections to reject this resolution. The reason for this appeal is indicated by all we have written and done in the past several months on the question of the unification of the WP and the SWP. It can be restated here briefly:

I

The Secretariat "recommends to the leadership of the SWP that it elaborate jointly with the WP leadership a list of questions to be discussed" etc. We want to emphasize right at the outset, so that there can be no possible misunderstanding, that we are and have always been for the most thoroughgoing discussion with the SWP on all theoretical and political questions that are in dispute between us. We welcome such a discussion, whether it is conducted in accordance with "a list" or not. We shall participate in it, to the best of our ability, in order to make clear, again, just what our position is on the questions in dispute and just wherein we differ with the positions of the SWP. As in previous discussions conducted in the press of the two organizations, this new one will once more make clear not only wherein we differ but also the framework of our agreement.

But if such a discussion is all that the resolution of the ES means, namely, a public discussion between two political organizations - whether arranged jointly or not - it means nothing more than has been taking place for the past six years. In other words, such a debate obviously need have no more relationship to the question of unity today than it has had in the past six years during which it was carried out. In other words, the ES proposes to do nothing and change nothing in the discussions that have been carried on through the public press of the two organizations since the split in 1940. The decision adopted by the Political Committee of the SWP for the purpose of "implementing" the resolution of the European Secretariat shows that this and nothing else is precisely the meaning that is given to the resolution.

II

What is the responsibility of the ES in the situation that has developed in the United States? To give instructions? Obviously not. But it has the duty of expressing an opinion on the desirability, possibility and permissibility of a fusion of the two organizations in this country. We regretfully establish that the ES has completely evaded this responsibility. We do not deny for a moment that there are many comrades in the Fourth International who are not informed, or not sufficiently informed, of the nature and extent of the differences between the WP on the one side and the SWP and other sections of the International on the other side. We remain at the disposal of these comrades and are always prepared to elucidate our position to them. However, the ES cannot claim to number itself among these comrades any more than the leadership of the SWP can make this claim.

For six years the leadership of the SWP has attacked our point of view on controversial questions, as is its full right, in innumerable articles in the press and speeches from the platform. Is it possible to assume that these attacks upon our position were made by the SWP without a clear and adequate know-

ledge of what our position is? Is it not perfectly clear to all comrades that these attacks could not have been made without their authors having a clear idea of "just what degree of agreement actually exists between the two organizations" (to quote from the resolution of the ES) as well as just what degree of disagreement exists between us?

We repeat that undoubtedly there are many comrades in the International who require another discussion between the SWP and the WP before they can express an opinion on the question of unity. But what will such a discussion bring to the SWP leadership or, for that matter, to our Workers Party that both of us do not already know? That is the question. Is the ES unable to express an opinion on the question of unity in the United States because it, the ES, does not know "just what degree of agreement actually exists between the two organizations", because it does not know just what the nature and extent of the differences are? Under no circumstances can we make this assumption. In its own resolution of January 1946 the "ES takes note of the fact that \* \* \* the WP has been consolidated on such political positions as the question of the USSR, the defense of China and India, the national question in Europe, the existence and role of the Fourth International during the war, as well as the conception of the internal regime and of the functioning of the revolutionary party \* \* \*." We must therefore assume that the ES too knows what our position is on the questions in dispute. Yet it evades its responsibility in expressing an opinion on whether or not, given the differences that are known to all of the leading comrades, these are compatible with membership in a united section of the Fourth International. Before it can express an opinion on this fundamental question, the ES requires another discussion of our point of view. Toward what end? In order to find out what our point of view is? But it already knows our point of view. What is supposed to be added to the knowledge and information of the European Secretariat by a further discussion? We emphasize again and again that we welcome such a discussion and shall participate in it fully but in such a discussion we will only be able to repeat what we have been saying for the past few years; we will only be able to state once more those positions with which the ES, like the leadership of the SWP is sufficiently acquainted. More than that we shall be unable to contribute to the discussion; more than that the SWP will be unable to contribute to the discussion.

The resolution of the ES is an inexcusable evasion of responsibility. Consciously or not, it is a diplomatic document written about a question where diplomacy is entirely out of place.

### III.

Our conception of the basis for unity has been stated by us so often that it requires no elaborate restatement here. We stand upon the foundation of the principles of revolutionary Marxism and the program of the Fourth International. On those questions where there are differences between us, we hold firmly to

the view that our position, no less than that of the SWP, is compatible with membership in a united revolutionary party and international. We do not demand as a pre-condition for unity that the SWP or the International adopt our position on the Russian question, for example, no more than we would accede to any ultimatum that we abandon our position on the Russian question. To approach the problem of unity in the United States on the basis that complete theoretical and political agreement on all questions is the pre-condition of unity is to give privileged rights to the Zinovievist conception of a monolithic party and a monolithic international. That conception, carried to its conclusion by Stalinism helped destroy the Communist International. We want to resist even the slightest sign of such a conception in the Fourth International. If that is not the conception of the ES and of the other leading comrades of the International - and we prefer to believe that it is not - the resolution of the ES has no meaning. A discussion of those differences that do exist would take place best in the ranks of a united party and in a normal manner in accordance with the practices of democratic centralism.

If the public opinion of the International, which is aware of our political position and our political differences, does not express itself in favor of unification in the United States, the only conclusion that can be drawn is that we are excluded from the Fourth International because of our differences. But if that is so in our case today, it will inevitably be so in the case of other comrades and other groups tomorrow. If we are not included in the International because of our views, the others, tomorrow, will be excluded from the International for their views. If a clear-cut position is not taken with regard to our proposal for unity in the United States today, there is nothing to prevent the exclusion from the International of the IKD, for example, tomorrow - the IKD which has already been excluded de facto by the leadership of the SWP. What applies to the IKD tomorrow may very well apply to other groups the day after - the Spanish group lead by Comrade Munis, the minority in the French party, the minority in the Belgium party, etc.

We ask every comrade of the Fourth International to give the greatest attention and weight to this question:

For years the International Left Opposition, led by Comrade Trotsky, repeatedly demanded of the leadership of the Stalintern that the Trotskyist tendency and movement be restored to full membership and rights in the international. This demand was not a demagogical appeal. It corresponded to our fundamental conception of the party. It was made continuously, up to 1933. In those days we denounced mercilessly the refusal of the leadership of the international to heed the appeal of the International Left Opposition.

You know the deep theoretical and political differences that divided our movement from the leadership of the Stalintern up to 1933. You know also the differences that divide us from the

SWP and from other sections of the Fourth International.. We ask every comrade to answer this question: Are the differences that separate the WP and the SWP, both of which stand upon the basic principles of Marxism and the Fourth International, greater than or even as great as, the differences that divided Trotskyism and Stalinism up to 1933? Do you consider that there was a greater possibility of justification for being in the same united party of the Stalinists of those days than there is, today, for the two tendencies represented by the WP and the SWP being in the same united party of the Fourth International?

These, comrades, are the real questions that are posed before you. There should be no delay in answering them. A false answer can have only disastrous effects for the future of our International.

#### IV.

We wish in this appeal to you to deal with only one more point. We understand that some comrades have been led to conclude that our proposal for unity with the SWP is only a "maneuver". Let those comrades understand fully just what our "maneuver" has been. From the very beginning of the discussion with the SWP on this question, we offered to acknowledge that they would have the majority of the leadership of the united party; to acknowledge that they would have control of the party press and of all the public activities of the party; to acknowledge that, given our democratic rights inside the united party, we would be bound by party discipline in all public activities. We offered to dissolve our party; to give up our independent newspaper, theoretical review and public activities; to give up all independent public activities in the class struggle. We demanded at first only an educational internal bulletin of our own tendency inside of the united party. Upon the urging of the Minority of the SWP which has also sought to remove all obstacles to the unity, real or imaginary, we abandoned even this demand and confined ourselves to proposing a mutual recognition only of the right of a minority to issue such a bulletin for internal use in the party. This is what our "maneuver" has consisted of. We venture to say that never in the history of our movement has a group been prepared to make so many concessions, and concessions of such a nature, for the purpose of achieving unity with another group. If our proposals were nothing but a "maneuver", all that the SWP had to do to explode it was to say: "We accept these conditions and we are for the unification!" If we were engaged only in a maneuver, and if the SWP leadership were in any way serious about the unification we would thereby stand exposed as completely discredited people. But what has actually been discredited is the unworthy maneuvering and unworthy diplomacy of the leadership of the SWP.

\* \* \*

We reiterate to you our request for affiliation made in our preceding letter to the International Pre-Conference. We re-

iterate to you our proposal for the unification of the movement on the basis we have indicated. The accomplishment of the unification requires, among other things, the rejection of the resolution of the European Secretariat. It requires the adoption by the International Pre-Conference and by all the sections of a resolution which will serve to bring to bear the public opinion of the International upon the leadership and membership of the SWP in the United States in such a manner as will really promote the movement for unity here and the establishment of a powerful section of the Fourth International.

With best Party greetings,

POLITICAL COMMITTEE, WORKERS PARTY

Max Shachtman  
National Secretary

LETTER FROM MAX SHACHTMAN TO ALBERT GOLDMAN  
November 3, 1945

Dear Albert:

This is the first opportunity I have had to reply to your letters. However, the delay is not so bad, because in the last few days I have not only had a chance to see quite a number of comrades and discuss with them all the questions connected with the unity problem, but also the chance to give more thought to the problem myself. I think it is a good deal clearer, more concrete, in my mind than before.

Your idea to take advantage of the SWP's Russian Revolution meetings to distribute a special leaflet on the question of unity was a good one. The only trouble is that it has proved to be unfeasible technically. To distribute a little one-page leaflet would be fruitless sniping and would hardly make an impression. To write the kind of leaflet that would have an effect - one giving the details of the situation, of the negotiations, of our point of view, etc. - would require more time than I have had in the past week, and I am afraid that by the time I got around to writing it, having it mimeographed, and sent out to the branches everywhere, we would be closer to the Lenin meetings than to the November 7th meetings. The best substitute under the circumstances is to do what, it appears from a letter I just received from Ferguson, you decided to do in Chicago, that is, make a special distribution of the documents that have already been published in Labor Action and the New International. We will do that in New York as well. Besides, there will be more than one excellent opportunity in the future to bring all the facts before the membership and the sympathizing circle of the SWP. Cannon has not heard the last of this business, but only the first. We will make his ears ring with it before long.

The other idea is even better and above all it is feasible. It can be done immediately. I have discussed it with Felix and with Oscar and both are agreed. It gives us an opportunity to do two things at once: 1) to clear up, once more, the question of our position on the tendency bulletin. There will be no difficulty on that so far as we are concerned. For our part, we had never decided in advance that the morning after the fusion was consummated we would appear with a bulletin of our own. I even made that clear at the very first New York WP membership meeting at which the fusion question was reported on. We informed the SWP negotiators of our demand in order to see how they would react to it, and you know the results. Our monolithists professed themselves to be "shocked" at our proposal. This very profession was enough for us. You will note, by the way, that in our last letter to the SWP, mimeographed copy of which I am enclosing to you, we speak plainly of the failure of the Plenum resolution to deal with the "position of the SWP on the right of a minority in a revolutionary Marxist party to issue a bulletin of its own tendency inside the party." Our reply to your letter on the subject will permit us to reiterate our view again, and to make it as clear as any human being would wish. 2) to establish yourselves more plainly as an "autonomous" group. I agree enthusiastically

with the form in which you make the proposal. That is, the letter should be addressed formally to the WP over the formal signature of the Minority Group, S.W.F., "per" the four NC members, (B,G,M and W). A copy should be sent to the SWP. Our reply should be just as formally addressed to your group, also a copy to the SWP. Naturally, this is not a normal procedure! Let the formalists say and do what they will about it. It will show that the Minority Group is already acting as an autonomous, if not an independent, group and that it considers the clarification of the unity question to be more important than the formal (i.e. in this case, the faction) discipline of the Cannonites. It will also prepare the ground for what I deem to be the indicated next steps.

What are these steps? I believe they are indicated by two documents that have already been written. One, is the statement of the Minority to the Plenum. It starts out with the statement that the Cannon resolution is designed to prevent unity. It ends up with the statement that the responsibility for the breaking off of the unity negotiations will fall entirely on the shoulders of the Cannonites. Nothing could be clearer, so far as the Minority is concerned. Two, is the letter we have just sent to the SWP in reply to its Plenum resolution. You are probably aware of the fact that Cannon sent us the resolution with nothing more than a sentence, in his covering letter, to inform us that the resolution was enclosed - that's all, nothing more!

I am sorry that there didn't appear to be enough time to consult with you about our letter. But I showed the whole text to Felix and Daniel and they agreed with it in its entirety; whereupon, with the approval of our PC, we sent it off. (En passant, it is interesting to note that Johnson voted against the sentence which speaks of the right of any minority in a revolutionary Marxist party to publish a bulletin of its own tendency inside the party! Understand that if you can!) But to resume:

This letter of ours, as is clear, is calculated to give the SWP its final opportunity to clarify its position. I have not the slightest doubt about the contents of its reply. What nobody and nothing was able to do in the past, this last letter of ours will not succeed in doing. Cannon will reply (I am assuming that he answers us) with a repetition of the same old "clever" ambiguities which leave everything where it was before. With this difference: We will not reply in the same old way. We will be unable any longer to allow the Cannonites to maintain the farce. Upon receipt of their reply, we will reply in turn with a last letter. In it, we will establish the following facts: It was the Minority group that initiated the idea of unity; it was the Cannon group which resisted it and condemned it. We of the WP then took up the question of unity and presented entirely reasonable proposals for consummating it. This too was resisted, not frontally this time but in a cowardly and deceptive way. We made every effort to give the Cannonites the opportunity to make their position honorably and honestly clear. Even though they did not take the opportunity, the fact is now patent to all that they are opposed to unity. Their opposition to unity is based



on their conception of the party. It is the conception of monolithism, which is alien to the conception of democratic centralism and therefore to our conception. They are concerned only, or primarily, with the maintenance of the SWP only as a formal name for the Cannon faction; hence their opposition to the unity proposals of the Minority and the WP. We record that the failure of unity rests upon their shoulders and theirs alone. We will notify the radical public and the other groups accordingly, and we will invite the intervention of the other (foreign) groups against the monolithism of the Cannonite faction. To all intents and purposes, the unity negotiations are at an end so far as we are concerned. The SWP may continue till doomsday to take the position that it is "investigating" and "exploring" the unity question at a time when in actuality and in the eyes of all it is sabotaging it. We refuse to be a party to this deception (there has been enough of this kind of "clever" diplomacy and "maneuvering" in the movement to last it for another century.) So far as "political discussions" and "probing to the depth of the differences" is concerned, we are for it. But there is discussion and discussion. We wanted a discussion in order to smooth the road to unity. The Cannonites "want" a "discussion" only as a substitute for unity and as a cloak for their sabotage of unity. We will nevertheless engage in a discussion with them in our press. But such a discussion has nothing to do with the question of unity. It is the kind of political debate that takes place (or should take place) between politically divergent organizations at all times, each defending its views and polemizing against the views of the other. We have had such a discussion with the SWP (if a monologue - which is what it was two times out of three - can be called a discussion) for the past five and a half years and are prepared, if necessary, to continue it for another five and a half years. But no fakes! We will not label such a discussion a "preparation for unity", and contribute to the fraud that by it the SWP is moving toward, or honestly taking up the question of unity.

That (the ideas, not the exact wording) will be our final reply.

Now, what, in my opinion, should the Minority then do? It should issue a formal statement, signed by the leaders of the group, containing the following:

It gives briefly an account of the history of its fight in the SWP. It shows how many times it bent over backward in order to avert the kind of factional fighting that Cannon always seeks to force a serious opposition to engage in.\* It shows how it was even prepared to sign the "peace pact," etc. It shows how it took the initiative in the unity question and tells, frankly, how it worked together with the WP to achieve unity. It tells the story of how the Cannonites sabotaged the unity proceedings and how hypocritically they sabotaged them (along the lines of Felix's excellent remarks at a membership meeting on the "two lines"). It adds that the position of the WP on the question was, in sum, unexceptionable. It concludes with this: The Cannonites have reduced the SWP to a monolithic organization in flagrant opposition to the whole struggle and tradition of Leninism and

\*(insert) It shows how it contented itself with amendments in order to avert a situation such as counter-resolutions always, or often, create.

Trotskyism. The SWP is a faction, the Cannon faction. We, the Minority, are opposed to the root to its conception of the role and the inner relations of a Marxist party. We are leaving the SWP and joining the WP. But we do not for a moment consider our action a "split". We are leaving a faction, a "party" which the Cannonites have reduced to a faction, to a monolithic faction. We are uniting with the WP which has our conception of the role and relations of a Marxian party. Nor do we for a moment consider our action to be based on an "organizational" difference. The question of the concept of the party is not an organizational question, it is a political question. On that political question, there is a gulf between Bolshevism and Menshevism. On that political question, there was and still is the struggle between Trotsky and the Stalinists. On that political question, there is an irreconcilable rift between us, who stand for Trotsky's and Lenin's position, and the Cannonites, who stand somewhere between Zinovievism and Stalinism. We (it is still the Minority speaking) warn everybody against continuing to fall into this clever trap of Cannon's, of Cannon who tries to minimize (to "bagatellize") the vital and overwhelmingly important political question of the Bolshevik conception of the party by referring to it only as an "organizational" question, as if to say that it has nothing to do with politics and that, consequently, political positions and alignments cannot be taken on the basis of it. We do not deny that on some other political questions we agree with the Cannonites and disagree with the WP, just as on other political questions the reverse is true. But we are not taking our action (of joining with the WP) because of these political disagreements we have with the Cannonites. We have taken the position that such political disagreements as we have with the Cannonites (democratic slogans, defense of Russia etc.) and even the political disagreements that the WP has with the SWP, are compatible with membership in a revolutionary party. That has been demonstrated in the past of the movement; it is proved by the political composition of the WP. What these disagreements are incompatible with, is a monolithic party, i.e. the Cannon faction. We posed the question of unity not only because it was desirable and possible (possible, if the Cannonites had acted as genuine Trotskyists and not Zinovievists) but also because the position taken on unity was a test of the position taken on the kind of party we want and we believe necessary. With all our misgivings about the Cannonites, we were prepared to do everything legitimate to help them pass this test and thus give the American movement a new start. But they have not passed the test. They want a monolithic faction, a Zinovievist-Stalinist party. We do not. We unite with those who are for unity; we unite with those who want to build and are building the kind of party that must be built in this country and everywhere else. We do not want to conceal the fact that we have some political differences with the official position of the WP. But these differences can be fully and freely discussed and settled within the WP precisely because it is not based on a monolithic conception but on the conception our movement has always upheld. Etc., etc., etc.

(From the above, you will see that I do not agree with the criticism of the German comrades, or rather, that if I do agree with it, it is not with that part of the criticism that has to do with the policies that must now be followed. To talk about the Minority now working out a "political platform" "of its own".

is, in my opinion, absurd, artificial and downright misleading. If the Minority had a dozen such "political platforms" it would not change the situation and the problem fundamentally. Such a platform would be (1) no argument for breaking from the SWP, inasmuch as we contend that "differences are compatible"; and (2) no argument against joining the WP, unless one has the conception that the SWP enjoys some sort of different status, a different official "quality" from the WP, a conception that falls down with those who contend that the two groups are to be regarded equally as tendencies of the 4th between which everyone is freely entitled to make his choice.)

Such a statement as I outlined means a break, of course; in fact, it says so in so many words. It means a "short" perspective for the Minority. It means not waiting for the convention, etc., etc. I am convinced, however, that it is correct. And for these reasons:

Nothing more can or will happen up to the (unconvoked) convention or after it that can in any way be expected to change the situation or to make it clearer. Cannon has the "perfect" formula for stalling; it is as good tomorrow as it is today. It will not be more invalid, more assailable tomorrow than it is already (or than it will be by the time we have sent our final answer to their reply to our recent letter). All that is required to serve as a basis for a definitive action by the Minority is already at hand; nothing (nothing of importance) can or will be added to it.

Second, and as a consequence, there is nothing you can give to your group as a perspective. You cannot say: We don't join the WP now, but we do join it if... if... if... If what? If Cannon does what? If he "rejects" unity? He will do that in 1950, but not before. If he disallows fraternization with the WP? Why should he? Then what? The only thing you can really do is to "create" a "disciplinary situation." Well, I am not against a ruse in politics. But in this case, it seems to be unnecessary. What is more, it will impress everybody with its artificiality. The "wise" ones will say: That was cooked up; it was just a pretext; why did they need it? I add my voice to theirs: Why? Isn't such a forthright, honorable and honest, politically-correct and politically-unassailable declaration as I suggest above quite sufficient?

Third, if the "split" is dragged out indefinitely, or held up for some unknown date (unknown and unknowable), what will happen meanwhile in the group? It will be heavily threatened by disintegration, for the reasons given in the above two paragraphs. Hold back in order to win Archie? A fine comrade, I'd like to have him. But you can't base a policy on him. My own opinion is that he is as good as lost now; it is too late to win him. All he can do (and does) in the Minority now is to delay it another few weeks or months. You are chasing after a car that is gone. On the other hand, this policy of chasing after a car that is gone will produce (is producing!) the greatest impatience and even demoralization among comrades who are not one whit inferior,

from any standpoint, to Archie. I keep urging patience upon them, but I know that they are at least 95% right. In between Archie and them, is a group of uncertain comrades. To continue the "long" perspective means only (all my experience dictates this conclusion) to keep them uncertain, but not to win them. A man who is fed uncertainty for too long a time will not suddenly change to another diet. I think they can be won, but only if a clear explanation is given to them (your letter to X is a good thing and should be followed up every other day, so to speak, with similar and stronger letters) and only if a militant determination is shown them by the leaders.

Fourth, and along the same line. The "worst" happens, let us say. Cannon will shout himself blue in the face: Look, they split, but we have Archie and Bayonne, the proletarians. Who will pay the slightest attention to this demagogue? Nobody, not even the Cannonites. Why? Because everybody, inside and outside the party, inside and outside the country, will say: Where is this Bayonne? Never heard of it! Who is this Archie? Fine comrade, no doubt, but who is he? Cannon will shout: They only took 38 or 8 people instead of 47! Everyone will laugh at him. Everyone will say: Goldman and Morrow and Williams and Bennett and their followers (if they are five or five hundred!) have broken with Cannon! That's what will stand out in the mind of everybody in New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Mexico City, London, Paris and Rome. And what is more, I am convinced that when the showdown comes, and "those four" act in concert, their followers, confronted with an action, with the unpostponable actual choice, and not merely with a general and vague discussion about perspective, will more likely number 38 instead of 8. If you simply fall into the "split" or are "forced" into it, the number is more likely to be reversed.

Fifth, the "International". What will the other sections say? Will they condemn the "minority" for joining the WP? Politically impossible, unless they are biological idiots. You will write them in detail; you will present your case resolutely. You will show how Cannon flouted the International, how he ignored it, how it never even occurred to him to invoke their aid and counsel in the unity question, how he reduced the IS to a vestpocket nail-file of his own and made impossible the functioning of the elected Executive, the elected Secretariat, or the elected Secretary. Any critic should be asked - belligerently, if you please - why you cannot work for unity just as well as a member of the WP, which has a flawless record on the question, as you could as a member of the Cannon faction party. I think the "International" needs an added jolt about Cannon and Co., something to jerk them up in their seats and make them take notice - and action - against this imposter-in-Marxism. The course I suggest will be just such a necessary jolt.

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\* A last point. In discussion with Felix and Daniel, the question arose of a joint membership discussion (Minority and WP). The more I think of it, the better I like the idea which

(if I remember rightly) Felix was the one to put forward tentatively. It is this: The "minority calls a caucus meeting, inviting all SWP members to attend, and inviting a representative of the WP to come down to address it in order to give his position on the unity question in detail and in order to submit himself to questioning from the audience. Felix should be chairman, to give added "Minority-Group-Autonomy" imprint to the meeting. Why not propose this at the New York caucus meeting? Archie objects? All right, he is asked: Why do you object? You have a number of critical positions on the WP. All right, face its representative with your position and your questions! It will be our meeting! Let Shachtman answer your questions and state his views! If Archie continues to object - vote! If the motion carries, I am invited! The Cannonite ranks are informed and invited to attend. What will Cannon say? That's my last worry! What will he do to the Minority? That should be your last worry. The Minority is, in actuality, an autonomous group, if not fully independent. It acts that way in actuality in its dealings with the WP (and in its actual attitude toward the SWP). Why not do it more and more openly?

I am meeting with Felix, Daniel, Oscar and others this Thursday night. I will put forward these ideas to them and see what they say about them. Meanwhile, I am very anxious of course to hear your reaction. To prepare Felix for Thursday's discussion, I am sending him a copy of this letter.

With warmest personal regards,

M.S.

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LETTER FROM MAX SHACHTMAN TO ALBERT GOLDMAN

January 10, 1946.

Dear Albert:

This afternoon I finished a long session with Felix in which we arrived, I think, at the clearest, firmest and most satisfactory agreement we have ever made. I hope that after Felix and I have presented our conclusions to you, you will give equally firm support to them. I owe you a long letter, but I want this one to get to you as quickly as possible, and I shall therefore make these notes as brief as I can.

We agreed, when you were here, on the issuance of the joint statement at the beginning of the new year or in the middle of this month. The closer we get to the day when the statement should be made public, the greater and clearer are the doubts expressed about it. They are expressed by such a good friend as R., by Felix and - this is not entirely new to you - by myself as well. This afternoon, Felix gave a series of reasons why the policy, so

to speak, of the joint statement is wrong and harmful and they are both cogent and impressive. (1) The Minority has formally committed itself to doing one of two things in the event of a Cannonite prohibition against open collaboration between it and the WP: either it will abide by the Cannonite decision or it will leave the party. The Cannonite PC has adopted such a prohibition. The Minority, by issuing the joint statement with the WP, neither abides by the formal party decision nor does it leave the party. (2) The decision to issue the joint statement is predicated, at least 99%, on the idea that Cannon will follow its publication by taking disciplinary measures against the Minority. Cannon has known for some time, and if he did not know, the Germans and Jeffries made it clear to him, that the Minority prefers to take a series of steps which will oblige him to expel its supporters. What, however, if Cannon is possessed of normal shrewdness and says: "Your joint statement is only one of a series of provocations. I do not intend to accommodate you in your tactics. There will be no suspension or expulsion--at most, a censure. Now, comrades, just what is the next in your series of irresponsible provocations?" In my opinion, that is the greater likelihood. What does the Minority do then? It has to "figure out" some additional steps which will drive Cannon to decisive organizational measures against it. It then becomes clear not only to the entire SWP and to the entire WP and to the entire International, but also to all the radical sympathizers that the course followed by the Minority was one of a series of provocations; that it did not have the courage of its convictions (namely, the conviction that its place is really in the WP - an opinion that everybody attributes, and rightly, to the Minority), and that it sought to place the responsibility for its own political step on the shoulders of Cannon; and that the onus for the inevitable division falls not on the Cannonites but on the transparent maneuverings of the Minority. If, after a series of such open violations of party discipline, Cannon finally decides on a suspension or expulsion, at least half the advantages of the union between the Minority and the WP will go lost in the eyes of the sympathizers, of the SWP members and perhaps, above all, in the eyes of the International. Everyone will say: "Well, say what you will, Cannon couldn't very well act differently. The Minority forced him into it. Etc., etc." I wrote you a few months ago along the same line, as you will recall. Now my opinion is shared by many other comrades, especially as they see the date for the issuance of the statement staring them in the face. Felix feels especially keenly about it. So does R. So does K. So do others. Meanwhile, the group in New York is in a state of complete apathy, disorientation, uncertainty, utter disgust with the SWP, and a growing feeling that the joint statement idea is simply a device - and not too good a device - for a backhanded way of breaking with the Cannonites; they hope it will work and ... fear that it won't work. I add to their feeling the conviction that even if it does "work" it will not redound to our credit.

Alternative? An alternative is absolutely essential. More

and more comrades, at least here in New York, want out and want out badly. This group now includes Felix, and that is most significant and important. I understand this reaction to the full. There is absolutely no party work for these comrades to engage in now. Sniping at Cannon for this or that reason, is no substitute for party work. It does not even make up a real factional fight. There is nothing for the comrades to do in the form of party work. How can they possibly get interested in it when they know that their whole future, beginning tomorrow, or if not tomorrow than a week or a month from now, lies with the WP?

One alternative suggested, by R., is this: the joint statement is not issued. We wait until after the pre-conference abroad. Inasmuch as it can pretty safely be foretold that the resolution on the American question will be less than satisfactory (short of a miracle), the Minority then issues a statement saying, in effect: the European comrades do not understand the situation; their resolution is unsatisfactory; we do not blame them, they simply do not know what is actually taking place here; we find ourselves obliged, consequently, to leave the SWP and to join the WP.

At first, Felix was strongly in favor of this alternative. It did not take too long to show that this alternative is, if anything, a poorer solution of the problem than the "joint statement policy." First of all, it is extremely bad to break with Cannon not on the basis of something that happened or was decided here but on the basis of what was decided by the International, so to speak. Cannon can easily argue, in such a case, that the Minority broke not with him but with the International; that it refused to abide not by his decision and his discipline but by the decision and discipline of the International. And that is how such a step would actually appear on the surface. Secondly, there is absolutely no assurance that the pre-conference will take place on schedule. It has already been postponed once; there is as much reason to believe that it will be postponed again as not. After all, there are good objective grounds for a postponement, all other considerations aside. To date, not a single resolution has been presented, at least not in this country. The delegates will come there cold. Some pre-conference! Besides, there has been an increasingly conciliatory attitude in the sections toward the WP (which is the common future both of us and of you). If you pull out after a decision by the International, which will probably say in so many words that you should remain inside the SWP, it will be construed as an action against the International by you which was prompted by us, which would retard the slow but important improvement in our relations with the other sections.

There is another alternative, one I put forward and which Felix firmly agrees to follow. Immediately, the Minority issues a statement of its own. In it, it says: We have fought for a long time for unity. Here is the record. Cannon is absolutely against it, as the record shows. We and the WP are for it. The WP was ready to go to the most extreme lengths to achieve it. Now we summarize. We acknowledge frankly that there is no imme-

mediate prospect of winning the SWP to the idea, for Cannon has done a good job of poisoning the membership. We are confronted with a choice; one, stay in the SWP and continue a fight. Given the Cannon regime, it can only be a disruptive as well as a futile fight (for the next period). We are not interested in disrupting the SWP, nor do we seek to destroy it. Everything we want is embraced in the word unity. The other choice is joining the WP. That we are hereby doing. We have already declared that we are closer to the WP than to the SWP (i.e., Cannon). The WP's position for unity brings us even more close together. We are revolutionists who do not want for too long to substitute the factional struggle for participation in the class struggle for the purpose of building the Trotskyist movement. We cannot do any effective work along that line as things stand now in the SWP. We can do such work in the WP. If there was only one Trotskyist party, we would absolutely oppose a breakaway. It would split the movement and add confusion. But there is no question of split involved now. We oppose splits (heavy emphasis on this). We are not splitting, however. We are leaving one revolutionary organization in which we cannot function and which stands in the way of unity, and joining another revolutionary organization, which is not one whit less meritorious, and in which we can function. The WP, and we as members of it, will continue as before to fight for union of the two groups. We will work for affiliation to the International and for building it up in this country and abroad.

That's all! Of the three "lines," this is by far the best. First, it is honest and forthright. It tells the truth (which the other proposals do not). It simply avoids the whole formal (and complicated, and hard to explain, and futile to argue) question of national and international discipline. We are not provoking anyone. We are not engaging in small maneuvers. We are not violating discipline. We are simply shifting from one Trotskyist organization to another Trotskyist organization. We are simply going to work in the party in which we can do something effective for the movement. We are not splitting and forming a new movement (this is most important!), we are simply strengthening an already existing section of a common, Fourth-Internationalist movement.

If such a statement is drawn up in dignified language, with no invective against the Cannonites or the SWP - rather in the tone of regret that the SWP did not see fit to take the necessary forward step toward unity - with a minimum of condemnation (not no condemnation, only a minimum!) of the Cannon faction for paralyzing the unification; if the statement is as honest and forthright and undiplomatic and truthful as it can and should be, it will not only be a desirable "innovation" in the movement, but it cannot fail to make an impression on the radical workers and intellectuals, on the sympathizers and others, who are serious and thoughtful.

I am for Felix and you drawing it up immediately, without another moment's delay. Then, put it to the vote of the two groups.



If you and Felix are firmly for it, there is no question of how the vote will go. Those who don't vote for it, will go along, in four cases out of five. Those who don't go along, will come later. Our attitude toward them should be the same as that which you expressed in your letter to Jeffries. The sections will not "go along"? Probably not. But we will still confront them with the demand: Are you for unity, as we still demand? Then say so. If you are not for it, we demand to know why. Give political reasons. If you don't do so, or if your reasons are childish and pouting reasons, we will continue the work of trying to reorient the International movement - we have a lot of patience. In the long run, Cannon cannot win in the International. The whole trend is against him. The worst that can happen is that this trend will be interrupted for a few months by the Minority's statement. But the trend will inexorably be resumed. We must hammer and hammer and hammer on the significant fact that every single International comrade who is here or who has been here is against the Cannonites: they have been on the spot; they have seen; they know.

Such a line will cut right through the German arguments; it will challenge them frontally as they should be challenged. It puts to them the blunt question: Have workers and militants and revolutionists the right - yes or no - to choose the WP as a legitimate Trotskyist organization in place of the SWP? Is the SWP the Trotskyist movement here, or the only one - the one in which all Trotskyists must function? If we cannot join (i.e., choose) the WP instead of the SWP, mustn't we, and you Germans, and for that matter the WPers themselves, tell everybody that the SWP is the organization they must join, come what may? And is it not your own intention, dear friends, to form a faction inside the SWP with the (secretly avowed! secretly avowed to Shachtman!) intention of organizing a "bigger and better split"? I am not in favor of ignoring the Germans (or anyone else in the movement), whether I agree with them or do not agree with them.

There are fifty arguments I could add for the policy I propose, including the urgent need we, of the WP, have of the talents represented by the Minority comrades. The problem, after all, is one of concentrating all efforts on building an honest, fertile, democratic Trotskyist organization in the U.S. But this letter is already too long. Felix agrees and, I repeat, agrees firmly. We are so convinced of its correctness, and so much aware of the importance of your agreement, that we have decided to have Felix leave for Chicago immediately to consult with you and the others. Please listen to him most attentively. He is absolutely on the right track. And, in Cannon's brilliant phrase, now is the time to strike, when the iron is hot. I count heavily on your agreement, on your speedy and vigorous action. We will all gain by it.

With warmest personal regards to you and the other comrades,

Max Shachtman

LETTER OF THE MINORITY FACTION TO  
THE SWP POLITICAL COMMITTEE MAJORITY

January 26, 1946.

Dear Comrades:

It is nearly four months since the October Plenum's refusal to accept unity with the Workers Party. At that time you asserted you were still leaving the door open to unity, once you had "probed the differences to the bottom." In the intervening months, however, it has become plain how right we were when we said that the Plenum decision was designed to prevent unity.

You have not probed the differences. The two or three attacks on the Workers Party in editorials in FOURTH INTERNATIONAL have not analyzed the Workers Party's position on the questions referred to, but have merely hurled false and slanderous charges, such as the accusation that the Workers Party has abandoned the perspective of proletarian revolution which, if you seriously believed it, you need only prove by documentary evidence and no one would dream of unity. Instead of being attempts to analyze the Workers Party's position, your sideswipes at the Workers Party constitute proof of our Plenum statement that your aim was and remains to prevent unity.

You have refused to consider as a step toward unity the Workers Party's abandonment of its demand for a tendency bulletin in the united party. Instead you have condemned the exchange of correspondence between the Workers Party and ourselves which secured this step toward unity, and have served warning upon us that any further steps by us of the same kind would be met with disciplinary action. You have sought thus to place us in the impossible dilemma of abandoning relations with the Workers Party or being expelled.

Likewise you have filed charges against our members for having held socials with the comrades of the Workers Party in New York and Chicago. So that we are to be prohibited not only from maintaining political relations with the Workers Party but also social relations.

You have thus created an atmosphere around us of violators of party discipline because of our political and social fraternization with the comrades of the Workers Party. And then you have used this atmosphere as a further argument against unity, pretending that to permit the Workers Party comrades to enter the party would merely extend further a breakdown of party discipline. You have miseducated the party members so that they greet with raucous laughter the simple truth that unity would solve the whole problem.

Far more important is the catastrophic situation you have

created by insisting on the existence side by side of two Trotskyist parties fighting each other when all the political premises exist for unity. You try to cover up this fact by claiming that the Socialist Workers Party has far outstripped the Workers Party in membership and influence. Even if your claim were true, it is no argument against unity. But it is not true. The indubitable fact is that the 1200 members of the Socialist Workers Party and the 600 members of the Workers Party must compete with each other: duplicating efforts in issuing and distributing an agitation paper and a theoretical organ; duplicating branches in the principal cities; countering each others efforts in the trade unions, in recruiting, etc.

You insist on presenting the advanced workers with this spectacle of disunity among comrades of obviously similar program and agitation. To justify the disunity you are compelled to mis-educate both party members and advanced workers concerning the program of the Workers Party and the correct attitude toward political differences among comrades.

Both the internal and external situations which you have thus created, if continued, would deprive of all meaning and value our remaining the Socialist Workers Party. The internal situation has destroyed quite completely, certainly for a whole period, the possibility of our contributing to the education of the party membership; the hostile atmosphere with which you have surrounded us makes it well-nigh impossible for us to function effectively in the party. The external situation confronts us with the fact that, no matter how we might strive to subordinate ourselves in action to the will of the majority, it would be impossible for us to carry out your line of non-fraternization and war to the death against the Workers Party.

Like ourselves the Workers Party is for unity and the kind of party which unity means. If you persist in your stand against unity it is obvious that we shall be able to work more fruitfully in the Workers Party. To go to the Workers Party would not be a split, certainly not in the usual sense of the term. The Workers Party is a Trotskyist party, just as much so as the Socialist Workers Party. To go to the Workers Party would simply mean to unite the Trotskyist forces which favor unity and which would continue afterward as before the struggle for unity of all the Trotskyists in the United States.

But before we take that step, we want to be sure, not only in our own minds but also before the eyes of all Trotskyists, that we have completely exhausted the possibilities for unity in this period. We therefore address ourselves to you to urge you to reconsider your stand against unity which, if you persist in it, will be a terrible obstacle to the development of the Trotskyist movement in the United States.

If in the coming weeks we can see any sign that we can reasonably consider as a move on your part toward resumption of nego-

tiations for unity with the Workers Party, we shall remain in the Socialist Workers Party in order to work for the cause of unity. If, on the other hand, you give no sign of a desire to reconsider your stand against unity, then our place will be with the Workers Party.

Comradely yours,

Lyla Bennett  
Albert Goldman  
Felix Morrow  
Oscar Williams  
For the Minority

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RESOLUTION ON THE INTERNAL SITUATION  
(Answer of the SWP Political Committee to the January 26, 1946 Letter of the Minority)

Under date of January 26 the minority faction in the National Committee presented the majority with the demand that it change its position "in the coming weeks" on the question of fusion with the Shachtmanites under penalty of withdrawal from the party by the minority. Specifically, they stated: "If in the coming weeks we can see any sign that we can reasonably consider as a move on your part toward resumption of negotiations for unity with the Workers Party, we shall remain in the Socialist Workers Party in order to work for the cause of unity. If, on the other hand, you give no sign of a desire to reconsider your stand against unity, then our place will be with the Workers Party."

The only answer the Political Committee can make to this ultimatum is the following:

1. The course of the Political Committee on the question in dispute is determined by the Resolution of the October Plenum. The Political Committee has neither the desire nor the authority to change the line of this Plenum Resolution. Under date of January 1946 the European Secretariat adopted a resolution on the question of fusion between the Socialist Workers Party and the Workers Party, endorsing the general line of our Plenum Resolution and making specific recommendations for the further consideration and discussion of this question. The Political Committee is in full agreement with the resolution of the European Secretariat and intends to proceed along the line indicated therein.

2. Under date of December 28 the European Secretariat addressed a letter to the party leadership declaring that "There is not at the present time any valid political reason to hang the threat of a split over the American party and thereby over the International as well." The letter of the European Secretariat further appealed to both factions in the leadership "to safe-

guard the unity of the party, to abstain from any measure which might appear bureaucratic, from any threat of expulsion, as well as from any abuse of national and international discipline."

3. The Political Committee fully agrees with the position taken by the European Secretariat in this matter and assures the minority that its democratic rights of free expression will be safeguarded and guaranteed in the future as in the past, and that all their party rights will be respected in the further course of the discussion. At the same time we insist that the minority respect the discipline of the party.

4. We strongly urge the minority to reconsider the position stated in their letter of January 26, to avail themselves of the opportunity to continue the discussion on the question of fusion with the Shachtmanites and other important questions in dispute, and at the same time to respect the principles of democratic centralism and refrain from any further violations of party discipline.

Adopted February 12, 1946.

RESIGNATION OF JEFFRIES-LYONS FROM MINORITY  
 FACTION OF SWP AND  
 REPLY OF ALBERT GOLDMAN

December 16, 1945

TO THE COMRADES OF THE MINORITY FACTION:

With this letter we are forced to resign as members of the Minority faction. We must do so because we are not and cannot be in agreement with the present course of the faction, and because our attempt to change that course has had no success.

The present faction was formed on the basis of a struggle for unity between the WP and the SWP. That the achievement of such a unity of the revolutionary forces in the U.S. remains an urgent necessity goes without saying, and that the sole barrier to its consummation has been Cannon and his group likewise is self-evident. But the present faction is no longer one organized principally on the basis of the struggle for this unity. That unity is still desired by everyone in the faction is obvious, but since the faction comrades in their majority regard unity as highly unlikely for the present (and in this they are correct) they have transformed the immediate aim of the faction from unity of the SWP with the WP to unity of the Minority with the WP. It has been transformed from a faction for unity into a faction for split.

That this is so has been tacitly admitted by Comrade Goldman and the transformation has been embodied in the highly peculiar resolution adopted by the faction at its December 9th meeting, the first part of which reads, "If unity is not achieved, our place is with those who are also for unity (the WP)." What is strange about this resolution is that its second part, following the above, reads: "We shall not walk out of the SWP, but will continue to pursue our independent policy with relation to the WP." Now one might wonder how two such contradictory statements can live happily side by side in the same resolution, how the faction is going to find its "place with those who are also for unity" if it is "not going to walk out of the SWP." Under the fire of the Bayonne comrades and ourselves on exactly this point at the meeting, Comrade Goldman explained how this contradiction was to be resolved: the faction was going to be expelled, and if it was not expelled for what it was planning to do in the immediate future, it would go further - to the point of writing for and distributing LABOR ACTION! In other words the faction would not walk out of the SWP in form, only in actual fact! This expulsion subterfuge is indulged in in the belief that it will somehow look better to the International - a vain hope, for the International is not blind. Why we cannot go along with such a policy of deliberate provocation to expulsion surely needs no explanation.

When we speak of the disintegration of the faction, we mean something very concrete. With everybody and his brother in the

party knowing that a split is going to take place, no one is prepared to listen to the faction's arguments on any subject, and the faction membership for its part makes less and less of an attempt to make itself heard by the party majority. Under these circumstances, those comrades who are opposed to split find little to keep them functioning in the faction. It is consequently faced with defections from all sides.

At the December 9 meeting we presented a resolution aimed at changing the course of the faction. This resolution had as its central theme that political clarification, involving the further development of a political platform for the faction, was the only path for a grouping aspiring to become a separate political tendency to traverse. This orientation, having as its aim a struggle to win over the members of the SWP and the International to certain political ideas as opposed to splitting, was summarily voted down. The faction is now bent on one thing only and that is getting out of the party with the best possible grace. It has exhausted itself as a political grouping and will undoubtedly disintegrate completely once it gets inside the WP. Those comrades inside the faction who are opposed to split will find that they have no other choice but to resign also, unless they want to remain, with the rest of the faction, in a state of suspended animation while the process of walking out or getting expelled goes its slow way.

We, for our part, intend to do what we can to influence the comrades in the SWP in the direction of our political ideas. We retain, needless to repeat, all our estimates as to the political methods of the Cannon leadership. We will do what we can, together with those who remain and share our estimate, to combat those methods, but we will do it on the political plane, with the "organizational" question, so often a boomerang, in its proper subordinate (very subordinate) place. On this basis, we are convinced, we can win the ear of no few thinking comrades in the SWP. That is our place, and that, no matter how difficult, is our job - to join the WP is merely to escape it.

Fraternally,  
DAVE JEFFRIES Steering Committee  
LEO LYONS

\* \* \* \* \*

December 24, 1945.

Dear Dave:

Felix sent me a copy of your statement in which you indicate your reasons for resigning from the faction.

I can assure you that I have nothing against you because of your resignation. So firmly am I convinced that comrades should think things out for themselves and act accordingly that even when I see a young comrade make a ludicrous mistake I admire him

for his independence. Far better to think independently and make ludicrous mistakes than to follow blindly. The former can be cured; the latter becomes a Stalinist disease.

But why did you not take greater care in presenting my position? I do not want to call your presentation a "distortion," although it comes very close to belonging in that category. I feel a little downhearted because I thought that in our faction all the comrades would learn to give the opponent credit for the best possible position and never to take advantage of a bad formulation. I hope you remember this rule in the future. Go out of your way to present the opponent's position in the fairest possible light.

You present my position as if it is a question simply of preferring expulsion rather than walking out of the party. I admit that I gave in to those comrades who were prejudiced against walking out and I do not hesitate to say that an unwillingness to walk out when walking out is correct is a prejudice. I "walked out" of the CIA in 1934 and I am convinced that I was correct. Under the circumstances I saw no value whatever in remaining in the CIA. I wanted to do some work in the SP and subsequent events confirmed my theory that to dally around would be to lose the only opportunity.

In the present situation my main motive in refusing to walk out is to place the decision up to Cannon. We want unity and by our independent activity on behalf of unity we can accomplish two things: first, we show that unity to us is so important that we consider the observance of formally correct party procedure as of quite secondary importance; second, by acting independently on behalf of unity, we make certain to ourselves and everybody else what Cannon's position on unity is. We can state that he is against it and is sabotaging every effort for unity but this is too serious a situation not to exhaust every effort to convince ourselves and those who are interested that Cannon is determined not to have unity.

If Cannon simply does not want unity now (for some reason or other) our independent activity on behalf of unity would not be the cause of expulsions. It is only because he is determined to prevent unity at all costs that he would go the length of expelling us because we fraternize with the WP. If Cannon had the slightest notion in favor of unity he would not expel us for independent activity; he would tell us frankly of the situation and we would be willing to wait for unity.

Our independent activity is not a method to provoke expulsion as you intimate in your statement but is a method to place the whole burden for the split on Cannon. You may not agree with it but do not distort the position. Give all of the factors involved and not only one.

Unfortunately, the motion I introduced at the faction meeting does not contain the explanation I gave above. I had not planned to introduce it and did so only because the nature of



the discussion convinced me that it was necessary to introduce a "fundamental motion." It was hurriedly written and contained the bare outline. But do not forget that I explained the motion in practically the same words as above.

To a question either presented by you or someone else as to what I would do if Cannon did not expel us for our independent activity on behalf of unity, I answered: First, that is not very likely; second, I am perfectly willing to remain in the party acting independently on behalf of unity because in effect it would lead to unity between our faction and the WP as well as unity between our faction and the SWP. I simply drew a logical conclusion from a badly posed question. But that is not my fault. I think Cannon will either expel us for our independent activity or our independent activity will lead to unity of the two parties. I admit that the second is the far less probable.

As for your position that the faction should proceed to formulate a political position on various important political problems, you evidently do not want to answer in your statement the argument given to you that the faction was not formed to grope around for political positions. It was organized to achieve unity. You will learn I hope that one does not form a faction in order to formulate a position on various question. You should always start discussing questions in the party rather than in a faction. You should form a faction only on the basis of a position you have already reached. Otherwise it will look as if you get a clique together and, having nothing to keep you together, find it necessary to start taking a position on various questions.

I do not know from whom you got that idea - which I admit sounds profound to inexperienced comrades. Whoever gave you that idea has a queer notion as to the purpose of a faction. Remember, people join a faction because they agree with some proposition that some comrades have already worked out and do not join a faction in order to work out propositions.

If, because of your decision to submit to Cannon's discipline, you remain in the party and fight for unity and against a monolithic party and also for correct political positions, and if in the years to come you will be able to show that you defeated Cannon on all questions, I shall be the first to recognize that you were correct. For myself, I repeat, if Cannon succeeds in preventing unity I belong to those who have my ideas of the functioning of a party and with whom I agree in the basic political questions.

I shall have nothing but admiration for those comrades of our faction who insist on remaining in the party regardless of what Cannon does in the hope that they can put up a successful fight. I hope the suspicion of some comrades that those who will submit to Cannon's threats will make their peace with Cannon will be proven wholly unjustified.

Comradely yours,  
ALBERT GOLDMAN