

Bulletin

OF THE WORKERS PARTY

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A LETTER TO THE MEMBERSHIP

The publication of Comrade Shachtman's circular, "The Wrong Road," (BULLETIN OF THE WORKERS PARTY, Vol. II, No. 3, April 21, 1947) makes it necessary for the membership to consider seriously the distinction between petty-bourgeois politics and Bolshevik politics.

The hysteria, fear and terror which the Majority leaders have instilled into the members and their dissemination of atrocity stories about the SWP are the very worst preparation for the great tasks ahead. They claim that the SWP is slandering and has slandered them to the SWP membership. At this stage all such matters could have been taken up with the SWP leadership calmly and firmly. The present period should have been used judiciously to review our own past and, above all, to elaborate our contributions to party building. The struggle for unity is only a preparation. The real problems of building the mass revolutionary party begin after unity and demand a period of integration during which mutual confidence is established on all sides. Only Utopians who know nothing of the history of Bolshevism can believe that 2000 will become 20,000 in the class struggle without upheavals, conflicts, factions, groupings, etc. That is the way the proletariat learns, different layers come into action, victories and defeats occur and sharp and sudden changes are necessary. As the class struggle develops, theoretical problems are illuminated, old forces tire, new ones emerge. Instead of preparing the membership for this with the seriousness and foresight of Bolshevik leaders, the Majority leadership has it yelling and screaming about the coming struggle over democratic rights and fearful of the bureaucratized, "semi-Stalinist" party of the SWP, and of the deep machinations in which Cannonite politics reportedly consists. It is a shameful, scandalous, and utterly degrading procedure and weakens the movement at a critical stage in its development.

THE "X" LETTER

Before the first New York membership meeting on unity was held, Comrade Shachtman knew the contents of the "X" letter and reported them to the PC. Johnson and Forest authorized the PC to make the necessary corrections. Shachtman did so in his speech. Comrade Forest asked for and received special time at the meeting in order to give an account of all negotiations, discussions, etc., concerning unity in which Johnson and Forest were involved.

Subsequently, the PC obtained a copy of the "X" letter and decided to broadcast, in diplomatic language, that Cannon was a liar. It wanted to place Johnson and Forest in a position where they would have to take their share in calling Cannon a liar. Just a step ahead was the possibility that both Cannon and Johnson and the Secretary of the CIC would all be calling each other liars and exposing plots and counter-plots.

For the correction of error, Johnson and Forest were ready. But they were determined to lend no encouragement to the policy of discrediting political opponents as a substitute for positive political positions. Hence, when it was first proposed in the PC that the "X" letter be published, Forest, in the absence of Johnson, opposed the publication of the letter. Nevertheless, the PC requested Johnson to write Cannon a letter. Moreover, the next day, this request, along with the "X" letter, was made known to the membership in a way that left us no alternative but to enter into the picture. We did

so in a manner calculated to do the least possible harm to our movement. We sent our letter to Cannon and attached to it our report to the PC and to the membership of our part in the unity negotiations. We are requesting the PC that these enclosures also be published. We gave the PC a copy of the letter and enclosures sent to Cannon. Furthermore, we let it be known that we considered our responsibility discharged and that we would not ask for the letter to be published. If the PC wished to publish, that was its business. If it wished to apprise the members of it and the members demanded publication, that too was its responsibility. The letter is the property of the PC. We wanted no part in keeping the question alive. We have analyses that we shall make public. No one will have to urge us to publish these. They will consist of the rigorous analysis of the development of the WP from 1940 to the present day in which we shall show step by step the political and organizational degeneration which we have fought uninterruptedly for six years.

"BUREAUCRACIES" AND "CLIQUES"

The whole procedure of Shachtman from 1940 to today is to obscure his political vacillations and the unclear policies of his own camp by questions of "genuine party democracy." This is the corruption of our membership. In bourgeois society, every trick is used to prevent the workers seeing the political issues clearly and acting accordingly. Bolshevism, for its life, must do the opposite. We shall do everything at our disposal to make the membership see that the course of the Majority as climaxed in this campaign is the enemy of their collective and individual development as serious revolutionaries. Many of them know no better. They came to the movement wishing to learn. It is time they stopped to look where they are going, to think, to come to conclusions, and to act.

The WP leadership has committed many crimes against our movement. This latest maneuver with the scandal, the waste of time, the diversion of the attention and energies of the members, the possible embitterment of relationships throughout the International, the political degradation involved, could only have been undertaken at this time by desperate politicians as the climax of seven years of political disintegration.

Today, the WP lives according to the following evaluation of contemporary politics: The Stalinist regime is bureaucratic-collectivist, totalitarian. It is ruled by a clique which practices the leader-cult, holds down the backward masses, miseducates them by force and deception and bureaucratically manipulates them. The Stalinist parties are totalitarian parties. They too are cliques which practice the leader-cult, deceive the backward masses and bureaucratically manipulate them. The Fourth International is led by a clique which is in the pocket of X, the leader, who deceives his followers and bureaucratically manipulates them. The SWP is led by a clique which practices the leader-cult, and miseducates and bureaucratically manipulates the membership. The Johnson-Forest Minority is led by a clique which practices the leader-cult, miseducates its backward followers and bureaucratically manipulates them. Implicit, and not always only implicit, in this world-wide analysis is the idea that it is only because they lack power that the Fourth International, the SWP, and the Johnson-Forest Minority have not completed the degeneration which imposes its bureaucratic manipulations on the backward workers by force.

To counteract these "bureaucracies" and "cliques," Shachtman has his "cadre." All types of revolutionaries are welcome. Their rallying cry is not revolutionary activity for which the backward masses are not suitable. It is not the mobilization of the parties for the task of transforming themselves into mass parties. For this the small, insignificant parties are not ready, whatever may be the objective situation. Their rallying cry is "democracy." Their main business is anti-Stalinism, anti-Cannonism, anti-Johnsonism. Their specific political method is exposure of the dishonesty, duplicity and bureaucratic methods of political opponents; by this means to effect the enlightenment of the duped, deluded and backward followers as to the unreliability of their leaders. The organizational force of this political activity is the "cadre," the sole, original contribution of Shachtman to the political ideas of the Fourth International. This, stripped of all decoration, is the special political atmosphere of the WP.

The present campaign against Johnson is merely the climax of a political degeneration which began with the birth of the WP. In 1940, the then SWP Minority accused the SWP of "bureaucratic conservatism." The inference was clear. The WP, by democratic dynamism, would show how to build a party. The WP leaders had the confidence and allegiance of a membership whose efforts, devotion and readiness to oppose the bourgeoisie stand second to none in our movement, when all the circumstances of social origin and specific conditions in the United States are taken into consideration. But the proponents of democratic dynamism have shown themselves to be a colossal failure. They have no perspectives of any kind. In 1940 when they hoped to demonstrate their party-building capacities, they rallied behind a Russian position consisting of all sorts of diverse elements which later divided into the three leading positions in the WP, including that of the WP Minority. The real burden of the attack, however, was the leader-cult, the clique, bureaucratism, duplicity, etc. Now in 1947, when their perspectives of party-building are nil, they place the whole responsibility upon the proletariat and Stalinism. It is impossible to blame "bureaucratic conservatism." Therefore, "bureaucratic conservatism" becomes the "bureaucratic jungle," and for the impressionistic analysis of the Russian state of 1940 is substituted the impressionistic analysis of the Stalinist parties.

Far more than in 1940, the exposure of the cliques, leader-cults, and all the shameful crimes of political opponents has become the means whereby the "cadre" is held together. This is the Bolshevism of the leaders of the Workers Party. It is the last resort of bankruptcy. The WP leadership knows that all its unique contributions to Marxism are doomed. It seeks to save its Russian position, which is being overwhelmed by state capitalism, by narrowing the Russian question down to one of defensism or defeatism. It knows that once there is a unified party within the United States, the bulk of the membership will discard the concepts of retrogressionism, no revolutionary situation without a revolutionary party, removal of the Socialist United States of Europe from the top of the order of the day, etc., etc. Hence, the frantic character of its attempts to smear all its opponents as the primary political campaign in the last few months of its existence.

"The Minority here affirms that any Marxist party which governs its practical politics by the theoretical perspective of bureaucratic collectivism as a 'third alternative' to capitalism or socialism a) repudiates Marxism which is based from top to bottom on the duality of bourgeoisie and proletariat as contenders for mastery in modern society, (b) leads inevitably to tampering with the fundamentals of Bolshevik strategy. The result at the very best can be only the strengthening of bourgeois-democratic illusions in the party and in the masses." ("Statement of the Johnson Minority on the Origin, Character and Perspectives of the Johnson Faction," BULLETIN, Vol. I, No. 16, p. 29)

For years no one has been able to get a word out of Shachtman on the theory of retrogression which dirtied the pages of THE NEW INTERNATIONAL month after month. To this day, Johnson and the party wait in vain for the resolution of the WP on the American question, a new draft of which was submitted to the 1946 Convention on the morning of the day of its adoption. The party waits for a resolution on the Negro question into which is to be incorporated the resolution of Berg. The International waits in vain for some guidance on the jungle that is the theory of bureaucratic collectivism. On all these questions, the leadership has been silent, has been silent for years. A hopeless confusion besets the party as to whether unity is desirable because the objective situation and the radicalization of the masses demand that we mobilize our forces to build the party; or whether unity is necessary in view of the political stagnation in the United States. Silent on all these fundamental questions, the party leadership jumps into its element and sets the stage for its real politics - what Johnson said to Cannon after the plenum had taken its decision. Isn't this the dragging of the party into the mud? Is no voice of protest going to be raised?

Precisely because Shachtman's politics consists of nothing else but exposures of bureaucracy and dishonesty, he must regard any sober statement of political agreement or disagreement as a bending of political line or a capitulation. As a substitute for political positions which can be judged by the vanguard in relation to the proletariat as a whole, he pursues a policy of destroying his opponents by attacking them in subjective terms as bureaucratic, dishonest, and deceptive. As he judges the working class politically always as backward and in terms of defeat, so he carries on his politics within the framework of disillusionment and rejection by the working class of political leadership in general. In the name of democracy, he seeks to rally around himself all who have a distrust of the leadership of the SWP and the International but who have no political position except their grievances and disappointments.

With no political positions which can win decisively in the course of the class struggle, Shachtman can think only in terms of "hunger" for blocs which have an immediate practical value in isolating an opponent. So lightly does he take his own political positions that he cannot even imagine that others would go to the political trouble of undertaking a serious collaboration to struggle against them. When confronted with such a possibility, he does not even bother to deny that he is revisionist. In his terror at being isolated, he can only try to drive a wedge between his political opponents by sowing mutual distrust. For what purpose: So he can win one of them to his own political position? Hardly. His political positions are mentioned only in passing. Rather what he would like

to achieve is the winning of Cannon or the Johnson Minority to his "right way" of making politics, euphemistically called "a high maximum of frankness and mutual understanding." Frankness and mutual understanding on what? Political differences? Hardly. Rather frankness in exposure and counter-exposure of every step in negotiations. The membership must be continuously informed of every disagreement, major or minor, every "confidential" letter, until it devotes all its energies to nothing else but speculations and suspicious probings of motives and intentions and until it regards any judicious and firm leadership as bureaucracy and cliquism, "exclusively at the top." Practical collaboration is necessary in order that the members "will be able to check with each other on 'stories' that are circulating." With such a "right way," the Bolshevik party is to be trained to fight against the bourgeoisie.

In his haste to drive the wedge between the Johnson-Forest Minority and the SWP, and the SWP and the Johnson-Forest Minority, Shachtman divulges to the Johnsonites that "anybody who knows anything about the SWP leadership is aware that it has no use whatsoever for the political tendency represented by Johnson..." At the same time, he challenges the SWP that the deletion from the article on the Social Crisis in the United States and the General Strike "should be offensive" to them. He chooses to quote what we openly chose to delete after unity was seriously proposed. This, as we stated immediately, was our contribution to the climate which should prevail at this stage after seven years of antagonistic separation. He did not choose to quote what we stated as our considered political judgment in our American Resolution of a year ago when unity was not an immediate prospect and even before the SWP elaborated its American Resolution:

"The Socialist Workers Party has had one inestimable advantage over the Workers Party in that in general, and in particular in its treatment of international news, it shows not the faintest trace of retrogression and places itself before the American working class as the Trotskyist party of the socialist revolution at home and abroad. Not only in relation to Europe but in relation to the United States the SWP propaganda is in the full Trotskyist tradition in that it is conscious always of the challenge to the bourgeois order contained in the aggressive actions of the proletariat. The SWP constantly makes the American workers aware of the coming social revolution in the United States."

At the time this proved to Shachtman that we had "capitulated to Cannonism" and that therefore a "cadre" was necessary. The same Shachtman who, in the preconvention period was anxious to prove the capitulation of Johnson to Cannonism, now emerges as the defender of the political differences of Johnson and Forest with Cannon. The role of clarifier of political differences is the one least suited to Shachtman, the perennial muddler of political positions. We do not need your help in this, Comrade Shachtman. Events and politics will influence and decree the relations between the Johnson-Forest Minority, the SWP and the CIC, not your petty-politics. We of the Minority would be guilty of the utmost stupidity if we claimed that we know how the mass revolutionary party will be built in the United States. What we know is that the WP Majority's fundamental premises are wrong and that we have our contribution to make. We do not know who will be on which side and when, what will be the sides, how often they will change. All that is before us now. We of the Minority

will put forward our views at the EFC with Bolshevik vigor, full of confidence, hope and excitement that at last the unified Trotskyist movement in the U.S. will develop in the midst of a radicalized working class, and that its major conflicts and difficulties will take place on the American question under the impact of the greatest social force the world has ever seen - the American proletariat which has at last lifted up its head and is staring the American bourgeoisie in the face, questioning everything it has hitherto accepted.

Shachtman spends a great deal of space on the supposed criminality of the bloc with Cannon against revisionism of the type of the IKD and of Shachtman. Was there ever such hypocrisy and stupidity? First of all, there was no bloc. In our conversation with Cannon we talked about our hostility to bureaucratic collectivism, to the democratic-political revolution, to everything connected with retrogressionism. But if there was a bloc, what then? Doesn't everybody know that Johnson and Forest are the mortal enemies of these concepts? Haven't we published it far and wide? Here it is again. We are the irreconcilable enemy of all this, and in the Movement we shall form a bloc against all this with whom we please, when we please, where we please. We hate it, despise it; we shall stamp upon it wherever we can. All who oppose this are our political allies, all who support this or play with it, are our political enemies. Wherever it is possible to differentiate ourselves from Shachtman and his retrogressionist, defeatist impressionistic politics and his organizational slander campaigns, we shall do so. Trotsky, even after characterizing the then SWP Minority as the petty-bourgeois opposition, fought to retain it within the International. We have fought for unity and will continue to do so because of the necessities of the objective situation in the United States. We have been concerned to get the membership away from Shachtman's corrupting influence into the larger arena of the unified Trotskyist movement. We have felt that it needs this guidance and further opportunity to learn than the Minority could give it.

Unfortunately, the SWP leadership bears its share of responsibility for the influence of the WP Majority over the membership. The SWP is the official section and the majority. From 1940 to today, it has refused to recognize openly that its judgments in 1940 (a) that the WP was afraid of the war, (b) that it was afraid of the tasks of proletarianization, were absolutely false. It allowed the WP, up to the intervention of the CIC, to take all the initiative in regard to unity. It has read the internal bulletins where the WP passionately sought a way out of its failure to build a mass party. It rejoiced at the difficulties, saw only their negative side and hoped for the disintegration of the WP so as to be able to say: "We told you so." All this was only added material for the WP leadership. We are confident that in the unified movement the mischief that the WP leadership has made with the fundamentals of Marxism will be short-lived. They were able to continue it only because they were isolated in the period during the war. We were confident that sooner or later as the Movement once more developed and events began to unroll, the political rubbish which Shachtman had accumulated would be blown to the winds. The SWP leadership would be committing a mistake in regard to the WP if it did not see this barrage of anti-Cannonism, anti-Johnsonism for what it is, the recognition of coming defeat.

WHO HAS MUDDIED UP THE WATERS?

We ask the WP membership the following question: Who has muddied up the waters on unity? Johnson and Forest have given a full account of discussions on unity with the SWP and the representatives of the CIC. But even if they had not, what then? Johnson and Forest went out of their way to tell Cannon that there were suspicions within the WP that the offer of unity on the part of the SWP was a maneuver to win the Johnsonites. We said we did not believe this, but if it were, we would not be a party to it. This, if you please, was after the WP plenum had decided to accept the conditions. (We had deliberately avoided seeing Cannon or the SWP officially before the WP had taken its decision.) Now if when we said this to Cannon, Cannon had asked: "Suppose the WP is carrying out a maneuver, what would you do?" and we had replied: "If the WP is not sincere and is maneuvering, then certainly we shall not collaborate with them on it either," or, more precisely, "We shall split." Even if this had happened, which it did not, we ask, what then? How did this muddy up unity?

The WP leaders assert that they took their decision under no threat. We agreed that their decision had been arrived at because of their position on unity. The X letter was published along with the comments by Shachtman. Wasn't that enough? No. The PC had a weapon in its hands. Look at the result. We repeat: If the waters are muddied, who muddied them? Johnson and Forest have been told in the PC by Gates that he can no longer speak freely in the PC in the presence of Johnson and Forest because of their political orientation. This statement, made by Gates before he went on tour, was protested by Johnson, who, however, said that he would not force the protest. Since Gates' return, he has repeated it unchallenged. So Johnson and Forest are agents of the SWP in the PC who will report the discussions and decisions of the PC of the WP to the SWP. All this is supposed to be Bolshevism and lead to clarification of political issues. When, as it inevitably must, all this comes before the membership, it is supposed to educate and prepare it for a fruitful unity. We have already made the following statement to the PC:

"In the past, Johnson and Forest have always kept the PC and the party fully informed on all questions dealing with negotiations or discussions with the SWP or other representatives of the CIC concerning unity. In our opinion, however, the question in the Committee has now reached a stage where what is at issue is the discrediting of a political opponent and not the advancement of unification or the clarification of the membership of the parties concerned and of the Movement. To the same degree that consistent with political principle we did everything possible in the past to advance the political struggle for the unification of the two parties, so now we do not propose to assist the Committee in diverting the discussion. We would, however, remind the Committee that the relations of Johnson and the Minority as a whole to the Committee and the party have a long history. We are prepared to go into it only, however, when it will have been made plain to all concerned who forced the issue, what purpose it was intended to serve and those who forced it are prepared to bear the full responsibility of the consequences. We are not prepared at this stage to make any statements other than those we have made or protestations of loyalty to this committee. If the Committee is dissatisfied with our statements on the questions at is-

sue, it is in command of a sufficient majority to take whatever steps it pleases."

Finally, we ask the membership to note that in our opinion the shameful politics of the PC had reached a stage where we considered that it was time for the faction all over the country to be personally informed and consulted. Johnson asked for permission to go on tour and it was granted. Johnson and Forest have been in communication. We take note of the fact that unity negotiations are now in the hands of the leadership of the WP, the SWP and the CIC, to be ratified at the EPC. It is inconceivable to us that our movement will make a comedy of these serious matters or that they are nothing more than scraps of paper to be torn up at the slightest opportunity. On that basis, Comrades Johnson and Forest shall take on themselves the responsibility of initiating in the faction

(1) a discussion on the best and most effective means of bringing before the Movement our version and analysis of the recent events and the political organizational course which they represent;

(2) a reconsideration of our previous attitude to the PC and the WP as expressed in our statement to the Convention and in the introduction to the article on the general strike.

The party will be duly informed of our decisions. Until that time we propose to take no notice whatever of rumors, trick questions, publications of our private correspondence, or other political methods of the Majority.

J. R. JOHNSON
F. FOREST

April 28, 1947.

SPEECH OF F. FORST, NEW YORK MEMBERSHIP MEETING OF THE WP, 3/2/47

Comrades, the WP minority which has stood for the unification of the Trotskyist forces in the U.S. from the time when the question was first posed by the SWP Minority, welcomes the prospective unification of the WP and SWP. As the membership is well aware from our resolutions to the last convention, we viewed the question not only in organizational terms but mainly in the context of the needs of the forward-moving American proletariat, whose most advanced section is seeking a revolutionary party. Precisely because we based ourselves on the fact that the developing objective situation will compel unification of the two parties in the U.S., we were able very consciously and very concretely to intervene in the internal situation of both the national and international sections to see that unity does not remain a mere wish. The sequence of events in which the WP Minority intervened (and of which the PC knows) will help the membership understand the present rapidly developing unity negotiations, and it is for this reason that we asked for additional time.

First, on the series of events which occurred last summer when I went to Mexico for personal reasons and took the opportunity to see Natalia. She had, as you know, been for unity and had intervened in the American situation before. However, she felt that she had exhausted her usefulness and could not intervene in the pending SWP convention. She cited the fact that the question had been complicated by the actions of Comrade Goldman who had promised to remain in the SWP until their convention but had joined our Party before then. She was glad that the Johnsonites, on the other hand, behaved in an entirely different manner and did not capitulate to the overtures of the Cannonites. She said that, whereas she could not intervene in the SWP, she meant most decisively to intervene in the preparations for the Extraordinary Congress to see that both the freest possible discussion was held and that participation at the Congress was on the basis of political tendencies in the Fourth. She gave as an example the French party in which there were five different tendencies, all of whom she felt should participate. She thought that the only way to make up for the authority the International lacked since the death of Trotsky, and that was to arrive at a policy on the basis of a full and objective discussion by all the tendencies of all the problems facing the movement.

Second, in the series of events was the arrival last month of a comrade from Europe who met with Comrade Johnson and myself. He told us that he had read all our resolutions and felt that, outside of the Russian question, our line was the same as the general line of the International. He thought that there would be no objection to our being seated at the Extraordinary Congress and none to our entry into the Fourth. On the other hand, he stated that, judging by the feeling of the sections at the time he left, he thought that the WP would not be seated and the prospects of its entry into the Fourth were very small indeed. We informed him that any attempt to exclude the WP would be fought very vigorously by us who considered such an attitude false and leading to dangerous consequences. We would state so openly at the Congress, to which our recently-concluded plenum had recognized our right to appear. We would also fight the SWP's attempt to present its strength in such exaggerated terms as to make it appear that it was already the mass revolutionary party in America.

Finally, we concluded, we would, at the Congress, fight not merely for our Russian position but also for that on the American question and Building the Party, and that we considered both the WP and the SWP as inadequate to the tasks presented by the rapidly developing radicalization of the American working class.

This comrade then took the initiative of arranging a discussion for us with the SWP. We insisted that since our faction was not in existence, we could not consider reorganizing it for the purpose of discussing some formal proposals that they might make; that the SWP had made no political declaration of any kind and the WP minority and we were opposed to negotiations when no declaration was at hand, while all our views were in print and publicly sold. We felt, however, that it would be absurd to continue to avoid any discussion with the SWP, and that we therefore would consent to an informal discussion after we so informed our PC. This we did and they offered no objections.

Comrade Johnson and I then met with Comrades Stein and Breitman. This was reported to the PC, and I wish to read from the report that Comrade Johnson handed in:

"Stein began by informing me that there were certain 'facts' such as the decision of the SWP against unity and the fact that the leading parties in Europe had expressed themselves as in support of the position of the SWP. As far as it is possible to be just to him, I have to say that he gave me the impression that the future was as good as decided. I challenged him very sharply on that, and told him that a conference that would behave as he suggested need not be held at all. He had to admit that individual European branches had not taken a position on unity.

"I asked him why at this point he should intervene in the situation in the WP to the extent of having conversations with me. He said that in the past he hadn't want to embarrass the Johnson Minority, and that they were orienting toward the working class masses and had ignored the WP. He gave me to understand that the problem of the future orientation of the Johnson tendency was my problem. I told him that he was entirely wrong; that the future of the Johnson Minority was in my opinion the problem of the sections in the U.S., and the problem of the whole International; that his saying that it was my problem was part of his whole attitude to the question which in my opinion was false. In my opinion, also, their not intervening in the past discussions in the WP between, e.g., the Johnson, Shachtman and Garrett tendencies was open to implications that he wanted to present the WP to the International as a tendency that was going away from Marxism...

"He asked me what kind of intervention I wanted or suggested. I proposed that the International take up the political positions that would be presented to it and make political characterizations not only to the WP Minority but for the sake of the whole International. This was a necessary political intervention in organizations that claimed to be working together under the same political principles...

"He indicated that the attitude of the SWP would carry great weight with the sections in Europe. I admitted the importance of that but said that if they proposed to draw conclusions as to the incompatibility of bureaucratic collectivism with the Fourth, then the Johnson Minority proposed to oppose that with all its forces."

The suggestion that they made to us that we leave the WP where our sphere of influence was exhausted, and join the SWP with the understanding that all privileges that could reasonably be expected would be granted to us, was rejected by us. They said that they had originally been for unity, but as the negotiations developed they considered it a maneuver on the part of Shachtman, and that the September NI which, they said, raised the question of the necessity of the "destruction of Cannonism" showed clearly that he was not coming in to build the party but to build a faction in the party. We insisted, however, that there is nothing in the record of the SWP that stands up so well as the offer of our party to liquidate the party and the press, and enter the party in which we would be a minority. All therefore that had to be done to expose the "maneuver" of Shachtman was for them to accept that offer. Furthermore, we made it clear that our resolutions state unmistakably that we are for the unification of the two parties, not for splits from one Trotskyist group to another. We had opposed the Goldman split and we would surely not engage in such actions.

Shortly after this discussion, the SWP accepted the party's proposal for a joint picket line in front of the French consulate protesting the Viet Nam massacre.

The week of the City Convention a representative of the Committee arrived and tried to reach us but as both Comrade Johnson and I were attending our convention, they had not succeeded. However, at the end of it, an SWP member finally located us in a restaurant and told us that the comrade in question was at Cannon's house. We said that we would be glad to meet him but not at Cannon's house, or in the presence of SWP members with whom we would discuss only after we had discussed with the representative. The message was relayed and the representative came over to my house. He informed us that he had already met with Comrade Shachtman who personally had agreed to the proposal to participate in the Extraordinary Congress on the condition that we would abide by its decisions and that it would lead to the unification of the forces in the U.S., and that Shachtman had invited him to present his views to the PC as a whole. He said that he felt that the plenum which the SWP was convoking would also come out for unity. We expressed our satisfaction with that development and made clear our loyalty to the Fourth and our refusal to accept any ultimatum from the SWP as if it were the whole of the Fourth.

Only two more facts need to be added to this report. At our plenum it became clear that some of the comrades thought that this was just a maneuver on the part of the Cannonites to get the Johnsonites over. It was stated by Comrade Garrett that if Comrade Cannon was merely building a bridge for the Johnsonites, he may not be willing to play. We stated that we felt that the unity proposals are being entered into honestly. We were not afraid to go into the SWP alone. But this was not a political question. The political question was that the needs of the movement demand a unified Trotskyist movement and that and not individual splits is what we fight for.

A few days after the plenum we met Comrade Cannon (Stein, Clark and Gordon were also present) and informed him of the fear on the part of some comrades who had thought he was only playing for the Johnsonites. We made it clear that if the unity negotiations were only a maneuver, we would be no party to it. Cannon stated more em-

phatically that he was for unification of both parties, that he felt that the plenum of the SWP which was to meet that weekend would so express itself, and in fact that so far as the SWP was concerned, the actual date of unification was up to the WP.

We have reported every step to the PC and informed the Committee that we believed the Minority was able to exercise an influence upon the International for unity, and that we intended to begin such an international campaign, and also to initiate discussion wherever possible with sympathetic leaders of the SWP. We never at any time thought that unity was off for some historic period, but that it was still on the order of the day. Fortunately, we had proved more correct than we thought.

Now that it is so near, it is indeed peculiar. comrades that there is developing in our party who was the champions of unity, a group of comrades who wish to fight against unity, and more or less on the same basis that the Cannonites fought it - political incompatibility, now called "desirability". It is said the WP Minority are for unity because their line approximates closer to the International; if that were the case, we could have entered the SWP long ago. The WP Minority has been for unity because the first necessity to make the American revolution is the building of a mass revolutionary party. This can best be begun by the unification of the Trotskyist forces in the U.S. This will also serve the greatest blow to the Stalinists who are our biggest competitors for the working class moving toward a revolutionary party. We stated a year ago in the American resolution:

" The only serious barrier to unity, the problem of the harmonious functioning of two organizations with different political views, is in the last analysis to be solved by the proletariat. Both organizations recognize in theory and practice that the success of the Fourth International is rooted in the maintenance of closest contact with the proletariat. The safeguard for the maintenance of unity against irresponsible factionalism in both parties is the growth of the revolutionary party in correspondence with the opportunities and responsibilities which will be presented to it by the march of the American proletariat toward the social revolution."

* * *

REPORT OF JOHNSON TO PC of MEETING WITH STEIN - 1/24/47

I went with Freddie to the discussion with members of the SWP under circumstances which the PC knows. The two members of the SWP who came were Stein and Breitman and I think that what took place at this discussion was of sufficient importance to warrant a rather extended report. This is a preliminary report for the record and for some recommendations which I propose to make for the Committee afterwards.

Stein began by informing me that there were certain "facts" such as the decision of the SWP against unity and the fact that the leading parties in Europe had expressed themselves as in support of the position of the SWP. As far as it is possible to be just to him I have to say that he gave me the impression that the future was as good as decided. I challenged him very sharply on that and told him that a conference that would behave as he suggested need not be held

at all. He had to admit that individual European branches had not taken a position on unity. I asked him why at this point he should intervene in the situation in the WP to the extent of having conversations with me. He said that in the past he hadn't wanted to embarrass the Johnson minority, that they were orienting towards the working class masses and had ignored the WP. He gave me to understand that the problem of the future orientation of the Johnson tendency was my problem. I told him that he was entirely wrong; that the future of the Johnson Minority was in my opinion the problem of the sections in the United States; and the problem of the whole International; that his saying that it was my problem was part of his whole attitude to the question which in my opinion was false. In my opinion also their not intervening in the past discussions in the WP between, e.g., the Johnson, Shachtman and Garrett tendencies was open to implication that he wanted to present the WP to the International as a tendency that was going away from Marxism. I indicated also that that would appear that this was the wish of the SWP leaders. He opposed that with some vigor. I told him that when he said that it was my position it was an indication of the attitude of the SWP and that the idea of his not wanting to embarrass the Johnson minority did not go down well with me. His statement was not a political statement.

He asked me what kind of intervention I wanted or suggested. I proposed that the International take up the political positions that would be presented to it and make political characterizations not only to the WP minority but for the sake of the whole International. This was a necessary political intervention in organizations that claimed to be working together under the same political principles.

Breitman rebuked him for saying that the course of the minority in the WP was its own business.

He indicated that the attitude of the SWP would carry great weight with the sections in Europe. I admitted the importance of that but said that if they proposed to draw conclusions as to the compatibility of bureaucratic collectivism with the 4th then the Johnson minority proposed to oppose that with all its forces. If there were 15 or 20 comrades in Greece or Holland who held the views of the WP majority would it be the opinion of the SWP that these comrades were to be expelled? That I would oppose. As far as I can remember to that also they had no serious reply.

He told me that the number of persons they took in every month equalled the minority that left. I said that I couldn't accept that as being a complete statement of the case. The minority was a distinct tendency in the 4th with its own contribution.

I asked him how would he ask the minority in the WP to characterize the WP if it had to leave. When you propose to leave a party you have to say what kind of party it is. In my opinion there are two kinds of parties. One which is like the SP, that is, a party which the bourgeoisie uses against the proletariat, and the revolutionary party which the proletariat uses. You will never get me to say that the WP is a party which the bourgeoisie can use against the proletariat. Do you propose that the minority characterize the WP as an enemy organization? An organization to be destroyed? These are questions which the conference will have to take up. He had nothing to say.

The remaining point was of some importance. He stated and Breitman corroborated it, as having heard that the SWP leadership considered the question of unity favorably at the beginning. They wanted to find a road. I have a particular reason for raising this because I once reported to the Committee that I met Rose Karsner and Stein by accident and found them sympathetic to the idea of unity. I then reminded them of this but they went on to say that from the attitude of the WP in attempting to strengthen its cadres and I think they said particularly the September NI which raised the necessity for the "destruction of Cannonism" they felt that what the WP wanted was a fusion for carrying on its struggle against Cannonism and not a fusion of two parties for the purpose of carrying on the class struggle and building the party in the United States.

The answer to that was very simple but I didn't make it. I told him that in my opinion the majority of the membership of the WP would have been very receptive to any such conception of the unity. They are extremely interested more than anything else in building the party and most of their activities have been concentrated on that to such an extent that the minority accuses the membership of being somewhat depoliticalized. I told him in my personal opinion that when Shachtman began he believed that there was no possibility of any unity on the part of Cannon but that the instant he saw that Cannon was prepared to make some efforts he was sincerely ready to enter into negotiations.

I told him that my approach to the question was different from Max's. He and I agreed that there had been a lot of suspicion on both sides which poisoned the atmosphere. I took care that the discussion should end on that note. He said that if I should like to see him again I knew how to get hold of him.

I left them in no doubt whatever that such "proposals" as they made would not be considered at all by me. I emphasized their whole political conception of the lack of unity and the political differences with them was what would be listened very seriously to at the International Conference. The discussion was friendly. The present document is a summary only and is the result of questions and answers back and forth in which both Freddie and Breitman participated. I don't think I said anything I should not have said. It was understood that this was not a record discussion. At the end I told them that these things should not go to the rank and file, that such questions were only for the leadership. I made very clear to them that the minority not only didn't think much of the organizational strength of the SWP but disagreed with their conception of the US situation and intended to say so very loudly to the International.

I should like to make clear that I expressed myself very freely as to my opposition to the course carried out by Goldman, Morrow and the SWP minority and that we were not going to do anything of the kind. Also I made it clear that the faction no longer existed and that we were guided by our previous policy which was very clear on this question.

TWO LINES IN THE UNITY

By Max Shachtman

* * *

Our party is concerned with two things in the pursuit of its course of unity with the SWP.

The first is to achieve the supremacy of the political tendency we represent in the American movement and in the International because we believe that it best represents the needs of the proletarian struggle for socialism. The interests of our tendency correspond with those needs of the proletariat which will be served by the establishment of a united revolutionary party.

The second is the establishment of the united party in such a way, on such a basis as not only enables the disputing tendencies to coexist freely to the benefit of the party as a whole, but as assures complete freedom of development and freedom of expression for all tendencies; that is, the establishment of those conditions in the united party that will permit any political tendency to work for its supremacy in a responsible and democratic way.

Unity based on any considerations which exclude or contradict these two could not be solid, could not be fruitful, and could be of no interest to us. We are for unity not because we are vulgar unity-shouters. We are for it because we are revolutionary Marxists distinguished by a well-defined and well-known political line.

These considerations have dictated our course in the unity negotiations from the very beginning, two years ago. Like our political line in general, our course in the unity has also been well-defined and well-known. If the party membership as a whole supported this course, it was not on the basis of ignorance, backward prejudice, gossip, misrepresentation, whispers in the dark or anything of the sort. It supported it, as it still does, on the basis of conceptions explicitly put forward and repeated in numerous documents and on the basis of all the necessary information, likewise set down in numerous documents where it could be checked and verified at every moment.

Political documentation and factual information - all of the relevant documentation and information that all participants in a discussion have to contribute - that is of the essence of genuine party democracy because it is indispensable to a democratic, informed and intelligent discussion and decision by the membership. Without it, party democracy is a hollow form, empty of genuine content. Trotsky knew what he was doing when he hammered this into the heads of people time and time again. Our strength in the unity negotiations lies in no small degree in the rigor with which we have observed this practice.

Everything in the open - every relevant thing! Our line on every disputed political question set forth openly - where both supporter and opponent can see it and deal with it. Our line on unity set forth openly and openly counterposed to other lines - so that both supporter and opponent can see it, can verify and check it, can intelligently vote for it or against it. In both cases, the advantages to us are obvious. In both cases the advantages to the other

side, our opponents, should be obvious. If we write down our political views, both in expository form and in polemical criticism of the views of others, they know - and only in this way can they know - just what the political differences are, just what political tendency they are uniting with (the converse is, of course, true for our side as well). The same holds for all concerned if we set forth openly our views on how the unity should take place, on what the united party should be like, on how we propose to act in the united party, etc.

This is the course we have followed without alteration because no one has yet shown us a better one. Johnson is now trying to persuade us that there is a better one. I consider the course he proposes to be what I called it in my last article, the wrong road. In that article, the two related aspects of his course are dealt with at sufficient length. After reading Johnson's reply, "A Letter to the Membership," I do not find it is necessary to change a line of what I wrote. I need only propose that the reader of Johnson's Letter read my article again. If additional confirmation is required, Johnson's latest document supplies it in abundance.

I contend simply that the right road to unity is not the self-suppression or concealment of our political views on the disputed questions which are of such vital importance to the movement, the artificial dilution of our political views, or the bending of our political line to conform with that of the SWP. Only a cynical bureaucrat would think of demanding that of a political opponent and only a worthless capitulator would grant that demand.

I said that Johnson is capitulating or preparing to capitulate to the SWP, that he is making, that he has made or is trying to make an unprincipled bloc with the SWP against us, that he is suppressing or bending his political line to accommodate it to that of the SWP. That charge is confirmed in Johnson's Letter, which also confirms the analysis and predications we made as far back as the last national convention.

For a political person, it is enough to read Johnson's accusation that I am in "haste to drive the wedge between the Johnson-Forest Minority and the SWP." There is no need "to drive a wedge" between two politically separate forces - a wedge can be driven only between what is united. Even for an unpolitical person it is enough to read that although "there was no bloc," "we are the irreconcilable enemy of all this" (that is, the WP's political line and the political line of the IKD) "and in the Movement we shall form a bloc against all this with whom we please, when we please, where we please. We hate it, despise it; we shall stamp upon it wherever we can. All who oppose this are our political allies, all who support this or play with it, are our political enemies."

Has Johnson the "right" to form a bloc with the SWP leadership against us? He has. Nobody proposes to prohibit him the exercise of this "right." In return for this, all I ask is my own right to examine this bloc from the standpoint of political principle and the right to say, if that is my conclusion, that this bloc is unprincipled and represents a political capitulation. And I would also like the right to say it without having any demagogue incite inexperienced or feeble-minded people to cry out that I am thereby making a personal attack on Johnson or anyone else in whose personality I am not vitally interested.

In his Letter, Johnson seems to feel the need of going out of his way to corroborate my charge of capitulation. I say once more: not every bloc is unprincipled, not every bloc represents a capitulation of one side to the other. Far from it. That is true only of those blocs in which one side, without political explanation and justification, abandons the positions it has held up to yesterday or "adjusts" these positions to those of the partner in the bloc.

Johnson has already done this on the Russian question which he considered, yesterday, to be "central to the development of the Fourth International," and which he is now so obviously pushing into the background. (He now writes that the party's "major conflicts and difficulties will take place on the American question." More will be said about this wretched way of posing the question on another occasion.)

On the "American question," he has already found it expedient to suppress an utterly restrained and unobjectionable criticism of the SWP as his "contribution to the climate that should prevail at this stage after seven years of antagonistic separation," from which we can conclude that the less we say and the more inconspicuous we make ourselves, the greater will be our contribution to the "unity climate." If the self-suppression of one's political position or criticism makes the sun shine beneficently, the suppression of all our views should keep it shining in perpetuity - shining over the political graves we would deserve to occupy.

By the same token, Johnson has also capitulated, that is, abandoned his political position, on the kind of party which up to yesterday all of us believed the revolutionary party should be, namely, among other things, one in which political views, criticisms, and disputes can be expressed freely and responsibly without fear of precipitating "crises." Now in his Letter, Johnson, with one sweep, brushes aside his whole past high estimate of the party he helped to found and to lead for seven years. I repeat: his high estimate, precisely because of the well-known criticisms he has voiced against the party's line. Yesterday he wrote among a hundred other statements of the same kind that "the WP in the U.S. confounded the baseless and slanderous predictions of the SWP that their differences which lead to the 1940 split represented for the WP the road back to social patriotism and capitulation to the bourgeoisie." Yesterday our party "was the only political party in the U.S. which issued a manifesto against the imperialist war when the U.S. entered it in 1941." Yesterday our party "distinguished itself as the only party in the Fourth International which clearly and consistently warned the masses well in advance against the dangers of Stalinism and the Red Army." Such statements in Johnson's past documents can be found by the bushel.

Contrast this with the sober, restrained, serene, carefully-weighed and mature characterization of our party in his Letter. Now we are the party of "petty bourgeois politics." Our procedure is "shameful, scandalous and utterly degrading." Again, "The WP leadership has committed many crimes against your movement. This latest maneuver with the scandal, the waste of time, the diversion of the attention and energies of the members, the possible embitterment of relationships throughout the Movement, the political degradation involved, could only have been undertaken at this time by desperate politicians as the climax of seven years of political disintegration."

We have shown ourselves to be "a colossal failure," we have "no perspectives of any kind." Our "politics consists of nothing else but exposures of bureaucracy and dishonesty" (which makes us political gangsters, since political gangsterism is defined in our movement as participation in politics with no political line of one's own. "Fortunately" for us, Johnson has called others "political gangsters" before this - and with just as much cause...).

Johnson is the only one in or around the International in all the years of our existence who ever permitted himself to characterize our party in such language.

What precipitated this radical change in Johnson's estimate of our party, which he requires to give a semblance of justification for his bloc against us, his capitulation? Does his radical change result from some equally radical change in the theories, policies or activities of the party in recent times? That is the first question that any serious person would ask himself. And every serious person knows the answer. Our position today is not different in any important respect from what it was yesterday. The views for which we are attacked so recklessly were not adopted last night. They have been the position of the party for years - in the case of some questions, like unity, for a couple of years; in other cases for four years; in still other cases for six years. That is common knowledge. The "monstrosity" of our position could not have dawned on Johnson only yesterday. It is not, therefore, our program or our political conduct that produced this outburst. It is perfectly obvious that there is another reason for it. What that simple reason is, is inadvertently revealed by Johnson himself.

He writes, "We have been concerned to get the membership away from Shachtman's corrupting influence into the larger arena of the unified Trotskyist movement. We have felt that it needs this guidance and further opportunity to learn than the Minority could give it." There it is, in two clear sentences.

We are ready to learn from anyone. But what our party has to learn of revolutionary Marxism from the leadership of the SWP and the International - is a separate point. We have discussed this point for years and we will continue to discuss it. But right here, another point is involved, and Johnson has cleared it up. In one sentence, he acknowledges not only his failure to win the party to his point of view, but the abandonment of any perspective for his faction in our party. For more than six years he has had ample freedom and opportunity to present his views throughout the ranks of the party, to defend them, to counterpose them to ours. No restrictions or handicaps were ever placed upon him or his comrades. We did not even always wait for him to take the initiative; on more than one occasion it was we who invited him to put his views before the party. On every point in dispute he received a political answer, not in secret caucus meetings or secret caucus documents, but in open discussion. At no stage of the dispute did the party leadership employ the method so notorious in the movement - organizational measures to prevent or confuse and obscure political debate (in the only two cases that I can recall offhand that the party had to take organizational measures against Johnson's supporters, it was done with Johnson's support). The results of this absolutely fair-and-square discussion is that Johnson has been unable to recruit to the faction he formed almost immediately after the founding of the party a single experienced com-

rade, a single comrade with a serious training in the old Communist or Trotskyist movement. That is the net result of his experience in our party. That is all he sees. That and that alone accounts for his political turn.

According to his Letter, the leadership has won and maintained the support of the membership not by political means but by petty gossip, slander, "atrocious stories," and the like. Only if we had the biggest idiot in the world in our party would Johnson find one person to take this charge seriously. We act politically and our political positions are taken and defended in public. It is not a bad example for anyone in our movement to follow. I consider it such a good example that I propose it to Johnson:

Let him take the secret faction bulletins which he has issued for months only to his own reliable supporters - a disgraceful "conspiratorial" procedure which is without parallel in our movement - and make them available to the party as a whole! Let the whole party membership see who disseminates juicy little tid-bits and gossip and trivia in a political dispute! Let the whole party membership see the arguments used by Johnson to keep people in his faction! Let those behind whose backs he safely makes his accusations see these accusations, so that they can deal with them as they deserve to be dealt with! Let the whole membership see how Johnson tries to impose his own capitulation upon his entire faction! Let the whole membership see not only which comrades are resisting this capitulation, but how, and above all why, they are resisting it! Let the whole membership see the real reason why Johnson has recently taken the haughty position that he will not discuss "organizational" questions in the party, and see just why he prefers to carry out his "organizational" plans in the dark!

We are totally disinterested in any of Johnson's "caucus secrets." But the party is interested in the political evolution of the Johnson group. If it is called upon to judge this evolution, it must have both the political material we provide in the open and the political material that Johnson so carefully conceals.

Our party, and all the parties that stand upon the principles of revolutionary Marxism, are now deep in the discussion of questions upon whose answer literally depends the fate of the International for the whole next period. The development up to now, the discussion up to now, has produced two main lines, two main tendencies which are crystallizing in the international Marxist movement. In both these tendencies there are differences of opinion, differences of emphasis, and "sub-trends;" and, in addition, there are several groupings and sub-groupings outside both. But of main tendencies there are only two. Condensed characterizations are often dangerous, as is known. But if the character of the two main tendencies were to be condensed they would, in my opinion, be condensed in this way: one seeks objectively to reduce the revolutionary Marxist movement to the position of left wing of Stalinism; the other seeks to make the revolutionary Marxist movement the left wing of the proletariat. It is between these two main trends that the international movement must make its fundamental choice. It can judge the groupings and sub-groupings in the movement only in the light of this choice that it must make. Any other formulations of the basic problems of the international movement is either putting the same thing into different words, or else it is trivial nonsense or intolerable confusionism.

Every grouping in the movement has the right to proclaim its basic choice and to align itself accordingly. Just so, every comrade in the International has the right to pronounce political judgment on the choice made by the groupings. Right and duty coincide here. But this duty cannot be discharged as it should be if there is double-dealing, duplicity, concealment, super-diplomacy, self-suppression or suppression by others. It can only be done by the method we have scrupulously followed - open, honest and full development of political positions, presentation of political positions, confrontation of political positions. It is a method to be recommended not only to Johnson but to the movement all over the world.

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EXCHANGE OF CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN WP AND SWP

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April 30, 1947

James P. Cannon, National Secretary
Socialist Workers Party
116 University Place
New York, New York

Dear Comrade:

In the communication to all locals and branches of the Socialist Workers Party sent out by Comrade Warde in the name of the Secretariat on April 17, 1947, he writes: "Labor Action, however, printed the Joint Statement with a preface attached herewith which gave a misleading version of the events preceding the unity negotiations, thus vitiating, and in effect, repudiating the Joint Statement."

As we told you at the last meeting of the two sub-committees, we did not consider that the publication of the Joint Statement precluded the publication of any introductory comment by each organization, or that the comment we made and to which you take exception was in any conflict either with the Statement or with the facts. In view of the fact that the communication of Comrade Warde speaks of Labor Action's preface as "vitiating, and in effect, repudiating the Joint Statement" - a point of view which we in no way share - a clarification of your view on the matter seems to be necessary.

I would therefore like to know from you whether or not the statement in Comrade Warde's communication is held literally as the opinion of the SWP Committee, that is, whether or not it considers that the Joint Statement has been repudiated and that the signatories are no longer governed by it. Our party continues to adhere to the Statement, its commitments and propositions. If that is no longer the case with the SWP, what effect does your Committee consider that the invalidation of the Joint Statement has upon the decision in favor of unity between the two parties?

I await an early reply from you so that I may communicate it to our Committee.

Fraternally yours,

Max Shachtman

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May 15, 1947.

Max Shachtman, National Chairman
Workers Party
4 Court Square
Long Island City 1, N. Y.

Dear Comrade:

In your letter of April 30, 1947 you refer to the circular sent out to the branches of the SWP by the party Secretariat under date of

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April 17, and request a "clarification" of our point of view. In reply we wish to inform you that this circular letter is and was designed to be self-explanatory -- a recital of facts for the information of our membership in its consideration of the question of unification.

That part of the circular to which you refer dealt exclusively with actions taken by the Workers Party which we deem to be violations of the spirit of the Joint Statement. It neither stated nor implied any change of position on our part and could not do so. Your question as to our present attitude therefore seems to us to be superfluous.

Our position on the question of unification has been precisely laid down in the resolution of the February Plenum of the National Committee of the SWP, a copy of which was sent to you. All our subsequent actions, including the signing of the Joint Statement, have been consistent with this resolution and must continue to be so, unless or until the position is changed by another Plenum of the National Committee -- which up to the present time has not been scheduled - or by a decision of the party membership, which now has the whole question under discussion. The Political Committee has not proposed the withdrawal of the Plenum resolution or the repudiation of any action we have taken consistent with it.

We take note of your assertion that the WP "continues to adhere to the Statement, its commitments and propositions."

Yours fraternally,

James P. Cannon
National Secretary

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SPEECHES ON UNITY QUESTION BY TWO SWP LEADERS

* * *

We are reprinting for the information of all readers the speeches made by M. Stein and J. P. Cannon at the meeting of the Political Committee of the SWP May 6, 1947, in the course of a "Discussion of the Present Stage of Unity Negotiations between the SWP and the WP."

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Remarks by M. Stein

We must now review the unity proposal as it was presented to the Plenum in the light of what has transpired since that time. This applies especially to the motivation we originally gave for the unity proposal. Our motivation at the Plenum, and prior to the Plenum in the Martin letter, was based on the premise that Shachtman and the WP had changed their attitude toward the Movement.

Once we accepted this premise, we concluded that we must give the Shachtmanites every possible chance to reintegrate themselves in the movement. Even when we spoke of their "capitulation," we interpreted this in the best sense, that is, as a turn toward the Movement from which they split seven years ago. When they decided to accept the terms for participation in the Extraordinary Party Convention we interpreted this as an important step in our direction and were prepared to greet this development and extend to them a helping hand. That was the motivation for the Plenum resolution.

Since then the Shachtmanites have done their best to convince us that we acted on the basis of a misunderstanding. We judged the WP leaders and their attitude toward unity by their signed statement and by impressions gained in conversations or reported conversations. This served to obscure our knowledge of these men and their politics, based on long experience. We then read into their statement of February 10 a change of line, which was not there in reality.

We must now purge ourselves, so to speak, of the illusion we had about the Shachtmanites changing for the better. Such illusions can lead only to bitter disillusionment when the truth becomes known, as it has become known. There is a lot of disillusionment in the party today with the unity proposal, and a strong opposition is rising up against it. There is a realization that the motivation we gave for the unity proposal has not been proved correct. Everything the WP has done since the appearance of the joint public statement has served to sober up the party on this score.

Had we broached the question of unity with the WP correctly, we would have oriented ourselves upon the following factors: The failure of the WP to emerge as a viable force after seven years of struggle against us as party against party; the isolation of the WP, its stagnation, its lack of perspective, and the internal conflict of irreconcilable tendencies within it. Then we would have posed the question as to whether this situation warranted on our part an offer of unity to the WP.

They tried a unity maneuver against us which lasted for some time but which came to smash against the firmness of our party. They

tried this through the disloyal minority inside our own party and the fraudulent "unity" campaign in their public press. Their object was to create either a split in our party or to effect a "unification" which would lead to a bitter factional fight and a bigger split. There was not a trace of good faith in their approach to the question. This is equally true, it is now clear, of their present attitude to the new unity proposal.

Once their original "unity" maneuver was smashed, the question was posed whether or not it is advantageous for us to accept unity with them, with the object of removing them as a rival party and in this way facilitating the building of the revolutionary party. Had we posed the question in this way, I am not sure what the answer of the Plenum would have been. But I know that I for one would have favored such a move. I would not of course have proposed concentrating the party's activities on such a unity effort. In reality, there would be no need for it, since we can easily take it in our stride.

But it is profitless now to speculate on this aspect of the question. The task now is to reorient ourselves along practical and political lines. We must acknowledge openly before the party that we made a mistake in attributing to the WP a political change in the direction of the Movement which they did not really make. The Shachtmanites remain Shachtmanites. The WP remains essentially what it had been. Shachtman's demagogic agitation about the Martin letter, the hostility with which he met it, only serves to demonstrate this all the clearer. Shachtman is now out to demonstrate that he did not "capitulate," that he remains true to his revisionist program, to his Menshevik concept of an all-inclusive party. If anything, he has revealed himself as in no way different from the right-wing in his party. As far as I am able to judge, he is now heading the right wing.

After we acknowledge our mistaken appraisal, we should orient the party along the lines of a correct approach to the question of unity. What do I mean specifically? Proceeding from the general proposition that we are committed to unity by the Plenum resolution and that we do not in the least retract from it, we proceed to present this problem of unity to the party and the outside world as it really stacks up. We have to purge the whole unity proposition of all false concepts and illusions.

First, we have to go back to the split of 1940. That split revealed a revolt of the petty-bourgeois opposition inside the SWP against our program and against our organization methods. The petty-bourgeois minority could not submit to the discipline of the proletarian majority of the party. That was the meaning of the split. We must recapitulate this once more.

Then followed the seven years war of party against party. During that time the WP tried to demonstrate that, once they had liberated themselves from what they called the "conservative bureaucracy of the Cannon clique" in the SWP, they would build a party by their own "dynamic" methods. What have they accomplished? They ended up with a smaller group than they started with. Even though they started out with forces numerically almost equal to ours, they quickly demonstrated that they could not build a party either with their politics or organization methods, or with their "dynamism."

Then they, together with Goldman and Morrow, made a "unity" pro-

posal. This proposal was falsely motivated from the beginning. They said that once we had relegated the defense of the Soviet Union to the background, a unity proposal became realistic. We have never answered this point publicly but we should do it now. This was a completely false premise from the beginning. The defense of the Soviet Union was placed in the background by objective circumstances and can be placed in the foreground by other objective circumstances. Our alleged change of position on the Russian question is no basis for unification of the two parties. This is a false motivation, and we must say so.

We posed the question correctly two years ago. We said that the only firm basis for unification is political agreement, and failing that, the subordination of the minority to the majority. They have advanced the theory that through collaboration of the two parties in practical day to day work the ability of the members to get along with each other will be tested, and that this will establish a firm basis for lasting unity. This is another false concept we must reject.

The only firm basis for unity is programmatic agreement, and not the personal compatibility or incompatibility of individuals with each other. The Bolshevik party is based on program; agreement on program is the cement that holds it together. Failing that, there must be subordination of the minority to the majority; not formal, hypocritical subordination, but the real thing in the Bolshevik meaning of party discipline. Because of the peculiar nature of this proposed unification, there must be all the more emphasis on this point.

We must open up a clarifying discussion along these lines. We must also discuss their Menshevik concept of the all-inclusive party and counterpose to it our own concept of a party. We are for the homogeneous party, a party based on one -- and only one -- program. Our unity resolution is not meant as a concession to the concept of the all-inclusive party, as they have mistakenly represented it, but as a party of our irreconcilable struggle against it. Our unity proposal does not signify the slightest conciliationism toward Shachtmanism on the question of organization, or on any other question.

Their jitteriness and nervousness; the present campaign they have undertaken to solidify their ranks -- that is, to harden them for a faction fight in the event of unification; the polemical articles they write in such hostile tones; the open forums and classes they hold against our views -- indicate that they are afraid of the prospect of living in a proletarian party and subordinating themselves to the proletarian majority of the party. We must explain that too.

They are now engaged in an "enlightenment" campaign to poison and prejudice their members against us. While they are speaking of collaboration to wipe out hostility, they are actually creating a wall of hostility between the membership of the WP and ourselves. They are attempting to poison their membership against our political line, our organizational concepts and our leadership.

We must expose the whole fraud that is part and parcel of Shachtman's approach to unity, while we purge ourselves of illusions on this question. What will we accomplish by this? I don't attempt to predict the end result. But the very least we can do is speak the truth, to speak it boldly and pose the question as it really pre-

sents itself. We will thus arm our own party, and that is the most important thing. If, after a period of this kind of clarification, the WP should decide that they still wish to go through with the unification, there will be no illusions or misunderstandings, either on their part or ours, as to the basis on which this unification is taking place.

We will thus be writing down in advance the precise terms of the unification and preparing our party to carry out these terms to the letter. It is possible that the right-wing in the party when confronted with the realization of what unification with us really means, may recoil from it. If they do, that is their business. In any case, if they do so, that will only demonstrate and confirm their fear of living in a proletarian party which imposes a real discipline on its opportunist minority.

On the question of collaboration: We must take just as firm an attitude on this question. We will collaborate, but only on our basis, i.e., wherever they are willing to accept our line. Between now and a possible unification we must have the same kind of approach as if they were already inside the party. The SWP is the party because we have the majority. The WP acknowledges this, and this should be the basis for collaboration.

Our members should not hesitate to discuss this whole question with the WP members, especially their newer people. If these are interested in a genuine unification they must start out by a reexamination of their whole course, the split of 1940 and the seven years since then. The WP leadership is not doing this and we should do it for them. If we do this it will also educate the new members in our own party.

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Remarks by Cannon

I am in agreement with the remarks of Stein and wish only to emphasize a few points. It isn't very pleasant to have to admit a mistake. It is doubly unpleasant to have to admit a mistake that helped to mislead others, especially the Plenum of the National Committee. That, however, is the rather disagreeable position we find ourselves in, myself in particular.

Reviewing the whole fight from the beginning more than seven years ago, I think we were fundamentally correct all the way through, up to and including the last party convention, in our fight against the Shichtmanites, in principle as well as in our strategy and tactics. The line was absolutely right. And none of us had the slightest idea of changing the line that we had carried through, including the line of the convention.

I consider what happened since the convention as a chain of comical errors, which I am sure we can correct without damage to our cause. First came the unexpected decision of the WP to accept the conditions laid down by the Movement for participation in the EPC. We interpreted this action of theirs as a turn in the direction of the Movement, as a capitulation to its terms which they had previously rejected. That is the way we accepted it. That was the basis of our decision at the Plenum. And when in the letter of Martin, which was

sent out with the agreement of other comrades, we spoke of their capitulation, we didn't do it in a derogatory sense, but in an entirely different one.

As we saw it, they had come to the turning point where they would have to go one way or the other, and at the last moment they made a turn to the Movement, accepted its conditions and thereby capitulated to it. And we decided to give them credit for that move, to give them a helping hand. That was the basis of our recommendations to the Plenum, where the unity resolution was adopted.

By that we demonstrated that we are communist politicians and not gang-fighters. In spite of all that had happened, all the personal animosity, all the slander, etc. -- at the moment they took a political turn in the direction of the Movement we were prepared to give them a helping hand, to open the door for them to come into the party and to give them liberal terms. The second thing we demonstrated -- which I am not so proud of -- is that after all our experience with these people, we showed a certain naivete. It is somewhat embarrassing to be obliged to acknowledge that, in this case at least, experience did not bring wisdom; that good nature and good will obscured political judgment. That is a very sticky feeling. I really didn't think that even the Shachtmanites would be stupid enough to think they could play a maneuverist double-game with the EPC.

Everybody at the Plenum had plenty of ground for animosities against these people, whose mistakes have often amounted to crimes against the movement. But the moment the Plenum members saw -- or rather, thought they saw -- that the Shachtmanites were turning toward the Movement, they were willing to have them come into the party and give them good terms. Why, we even gave them better terms than those they agreed to in their meetings with Smith. We gave them credit in advance for carrying out their decision in good faith, and offered to expedite the unity even before the EPC, provided the discussion was finished beforehand.

We followed that up with our meetings with them and the Joint Statement on unity, in which we rounded a few corners to make it easier for them, without, however, violating the instructions of the Plenum. We agreed to present their return to the party in public as a merger of the two organizations, for example, accepting their verbal declarations that they know this means their coming into the SWP, etc.

Then things began to happen. First through an inadvertance, when the Martin letter to the NC members came into their hands. Long experience has taught me that inadvertances never change a fundamental course -- but they often show its real direction. The Martin letter was utilized by them to reveal what their real purposes are, and this has served a useful purpose for us.

Shachtman has made it perfectly clear, in his letter to the membership of the WP and in subsequent actions, that there was a comical misunderstanding on both sides. As he represents the matter, they understood that we had changed our position; that we had sharply reversed the line of the convention, and under the pressure of the Movement had changed our whole approach to the question and accepted their formula for the unification. In other words, that it was we

who had "capitulated."

Shachtman makes it clear that our interpretation of their action in sending the letter to Smith was a misunderstanding on our part, that they meant no capitulation to the Movement. When they deny heatedly, not to say hysterically, that they have "capitulated" -- as though they consider it dishonorable to bow to the rules and discipline of the Movement -- they only reveal that they haven't changed a bit, that they stand exactly where they were before.

The series of events which followed are known to you. At the time they were signing the Joint Agreement that they wouldn't take Weber into their party, they had Weber's article against us in their hands and were preparing to publish it in Labor Action and solidarize themselves with him -- without even notifying us, without mentioning the matter in the Joint Committee. That revealing incident only shows their disposition to abide by the form of an agreement while violating it in spirit and essence. This way of acting is just a little bit too clever to be clever. We will have to bear it in mind and rely more on guarantees than promises in the future.

As you know, we did not publish our Plenum resolution. This was done deliberately, as we explained to them, to give them an opportunity to present the new unity agreement to the public in a Joint Statement with us. We observed the spirit of the agreement by publishing the Joint Statement without comment. They, however, published it with an introduction attempting to justify their "unity" maneuvers in the past. By that they reopened the whole question of the past for discussion. There were two or three other incidents of the same kind. The publication of the Ruth Fischer letter, without notification or consultation, was a crass violation of all normal procedures when two parties are seriously meeting in negotiation for a unification and loyally cooperating to bring it about.

The campaign now raging in the WP against Johnson -- who sincerely stands for unity -- is conducted in a real Burnhamite spirit. The obvious purpose of their campaign against Johnson is to discredit those who take unity seriously and to solidify and harden their people to come into our party fighting, with the perspective of another split. That is their idea. Outside of the single thing we noted -- their acceptance of the conditions of the Movement, which we took too seriously at face value -- there is nothing whatever to show any change of attitude on their part, either politically or organizationally. And even that letter has since been repudiated in essence by Shachtman. In his circular letter to the WP membership he refers to their disciplinary pledge to the EPC as a "formality" and said that unless "unity is achieved," they would regard their commitment "as a mere scrap of paper."

So, in a political sense we are right back where we were at the time of the convention. We have not changed our position. They have not changed. Goldman writes an article in the latest issue of their magazine with his usual compound of misrepresentation, greasy hypocrisy and double-talk designed to trick and trap the unwary. As for "unity" he blandly explains that by coming into the SWP they will change the character of our party. He doesn't know how wrong he is. They continue all the old denunciations of our party in the old tone. Their object, obviously, is to poison and harden their people to formally accept the conditions of discipline until they get set in

the SWP. Then would follow the next stage: the fight to break up the party as we have built it, and convert it into a Shachtmanite party, a windbag's paradise, with permanent discussion, driving out the workers and diverting us from our basic task of recruiting new workers and training them for the Bolshevik struggle against capitalism.

Such is the reality from which we must proceed. I agree with Stein that we should begin a political offensive against the Shachtmanites within the formula of the unity proposal. We don't need to withdraw our unity proposal. What we need to do is interpret it and apply it in the light of the new developments. We are still willing for them to come in and accept our line. But we must explain what we mean by that, so that there can be no more misunderstandings on either side. We do not withdraw our unity resolution, but just simply slow the tempo of its application. We should forget about this good-will offer we made to them of a quick unification to do them a favor. Take our time. The members are discussing it. Let them take their time and discuss it thoroughly. Discuss it in the press.

I personally am quite sure now that there can be no unification before the Extraordinary Party Convention. Our Plenum resolution distinctly specified that their disciplinary obligation to the EPC must be "carried out in good faith." Let us wait and see what they do with the "scrap of paper" they signed. After that, if they still want unification -- I personally am pretty sure they will revolt against the decisions of the Extraordinary Party Convention despite their signed pledge -- we should have a special convention to decide the question. No more joint statements; from now on decisions to be made by our conventions and plenums, precisely formulated and closing the door on any double interpretations, and telling them: take it or leave it. That is the form, I think, for the further developments on the unification proposal.

We have the inestimable advantage of a homogeneous party which has been built and unified in struggle. We have a leadership united in its entirety on the fundamental questions, and in its attitude toward Shachtmanism from a political point of view. So we don't need to have any great fears about big differences of opinion. What differences of opinion we had prior to the Plenum were not fundamental at all. It was the question of how best we were going to serve our program. These differences are not like those we had with Goldman and Morrow. That is why the opposition to the unity in the first place didn't impress us as a hostile opposition. Nothing more was involved than the question of whether our method or theirs was best calculated to serve the program to which we all subscribe. I don't doubt that even these tactical differences will easily be eliminated in the further course of developments -- if we avoid any more unnecessary "misunderstandings" and dispense with excessive good nature in scrutinizing any more "scraps of paper" which the Shachtmanites may sign.

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THERE WAS NO REAL GROUND FOR MISUNDERSTANDING

* * *

The SWP leaders now argue that they adopted their position in favor of unity "on the basis of a misunderstanding." To the SWP we can say: There was never any real basis for misunderstanding, on your part, in any case. The position of the Workers Party on the unity question was made clear at every stage. It did not change at any stage. It was substantially the same in the past two months as it was in the past two years. If the SWP Plenum of February 1947 adopted its position in favor of unity on the basis of a misunderstanding, all that needs to be said at the moment is that we made every effort possible and necessary to prevent any misunderstanding.

To demonstrate this, it is only necessary to quote from the well kept minutes of the Political Committee of our party where the first discussion on unity, as proposed by the CIC of the EPC, took place (February 3, 1947) and from the minutes of the National Committee Plenum called to discuss the same subject two days later. About the speeches excerpted from these minutes, which we reprint below, three things should be noted:

1. It was substantially on the basis of the line of these speeches that the Plenum took its position on unity.

2. These speeches were made in the presence of Comrade Smith, the representative of the CIC.

3. The SWP Plenum of February 1947 adopted its resolution on the unity question on the basis of the position taken by our Plenum and the report presented to the SWP by Comrade Smith. What that report was based on appears clearly from the following speeches.

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Remarks of Shachtman (PC Meeting, February 3, 1947):

I would like to say a few words about this. We have no official position on this proposal from the CIC. I think we could arrive at one pretty quickly. We should have an expression of the PC first and then as early as possible have a plenum of the NC to express its opinion. All we have had so far - I got the details on this in discussion with Smith on Saturday and Johnson on Sunday and the rest of us this afternoon when we held an informal discussion. I don't know how the comrades would actually vote, how the comrades would vote if the matter were raised for formal decision and I certainly don't know about the comrades on the NC. But I am inclined to think that we would be favorably disposed to the proposition. I want to be perfectly frank and have Smith take note of this and communicate it to all friends in the Movement who are interested in the matter. I personally find the request, if not completely unprecedented, then certainly most unusual. I don't recall in the movement, either in the Comintern in the old days or in our own movement a similar proposal or a similar condition to participation placed before an organization under similar conditions. This is not a play on words - a similar proposal made under similar conditions. Usually, whether it is written down in the statutes or in a document or not, it is understood, every organization, whether it is affiliated to a move-

ment or not affiliated to a movement, has to decide after a conference whether it accepts the decisions adopted by that conference. To be called upon to give commitments and guarantees in advance that these decisions will be adopted I find, I must say frankly, unusual. As I seem to recall it, even in the CI which had a tremendous authority, which I regret to say this body does not yet have, which had an infinitely solid base than we have or could have - that even there it was always arranged for a party conference of the sections to take place after the conference in order to decide its attitude toward the decisions of that conference. That was when the body was highly centralized - which could be there only because of the enormous authority it had already established throughout the world. Implicit in that arrangement was a section accepts the decisions or it does not. Usually, of course, they accepted. I still think usually they were right.

Here for the first time we are called upon to commit ourselves in advance to accepting decisions of a body in whose deliberations we will participate, to be sure, but not as a section - unofficially so to speak. That is all.

There is a precedent for it - it is referred to in our letter to the CIC - the famous emergency conference held in New York and you all remember the tragic results of that conference and the demand it made on us at that time also to commit ourselves in advance. Smith assures us, and I am ready to take his assurance at face value, that this conference will be altogether different than the emergency conference. It will be properly prepared, democratically prepared and we will participate in it as equals with all sections. That already makes a tremendous difference. If I for one am ready to make such an engagement, that is, that I am ready to accept the decisions, whatever they may be, of the EPC, I do it with the clear understanding, again, I find it unusual and in my opinion unjustified and even a dangerous precedent. In spite of all that, I want to repeat, I am disposed to agree to that condition and I think most of the comrades will also be. With that understanding - and if they accept, I am sure they will do it not because of this condition but in spite of this condition.

But it seems to me that that is not all there is to it. The SWP Minority took the initiative to try to establish unity. Without any hesitation whatsoever, immediately upon hearing their resolution for unity, our NC Plenum, as you know, in Detroit, unanimously supported this initiative. In our very first document we said virtually everything that we continued to say later on. We subtracted practically nothing in the year and a half. In the year and a half of the fight for unity, we added nothing, we subtracted nothing.

Now, we have a little experience to go by - not all very good. Each side, the SWP and ourselves, accused the other side of maneuvering but the fact remains that we made a series of practical proposals for unity - the SWP nowhere at no time made any proposals for unity. The SWP nowhere at no time so much as said unity is desirable. The SWP ended this period brusquely with the adoption of a declaration at their national convention, without one minute's discussion, against unity - the first time they ever made a statement one way or the other on the question - against unity except for Morrow and his friends who were thereupon expelled, and in which three new criteria for membership in the Movement were set down for the exclusive purpose of keep-

ing the WP out of the Movement. Now, I would like to ignore that whole year and a half. I would prefer that it had not happened - at least the way it did happen - but I don't see how we can ignore it. We have to take it into account.

Taking it into account does not mean, in my opinion, that we say unity is impossible. No, unity is still possible and desirable. But affiliation, formal affiliation by us in the Movement would not have the desirable results in my opinion, unless it were inseparably connected with unity between the SWP and the WP, given the conditions that the CIC demands that we accept. Under other conditions and in my opinion under more correct conditions than the CIC proposes, given the Movement and its strength and authority, affiliation to the Movement would be unconditionally desirable for our party. But, I repeat, given the conditions that the CIC puts, and I don't want to debate them, I am ready to accept them but given, I repeat, these conditions, affiliation with the Movement can be seriously considered by us and can be profitably accomplished only if it is inseparably connected with unity with the SWP by our party.

Now, what do I mean concretely by that? This: There is a democratic discussion - 6, 8, 10, 12 months. Our documents get to all sections. That is good enough. We come to the EPC, we continue the discussion there and let us say, as is quite likely, our point of view does not carry, at least not on all questions that concern us most particularly. The EPC adopts a program and resolutions with which we don't agree, with which we have political differences. We have made a commitment that we will accept the discipline of the EPC, politically and organizationally. If there is no unity immediately after the EPC, the SWP would adopt the program and the political positions of the EPC. Where it differed it would change its policy and adopt the line of the EPC. We, having given a commitment to that effect, after the EPC our party would change its public position - we are not required to change our actual position. But our public program would thereafter conform with the EPC - we would have to rewrite it in that sense. If there were no unity immediately, during, or immediately before or after the EPC, we would then have in the U.S. two political parties having identical public programs. I don't think I personally would be willing to give up our program only to affiliate to the Movement and have in the U.S. another party with the same program. Or, to put it a different way, speaking for myself and I think for a number of other comrades, I would be willing to give up my program, the program of the party, publicly only if I were a minority of another party, that is only if there were unity with the SWP. In that case, I am a minority, my party has a political point of view with which I don't agree. I function like a disciplined minority in any revolutionary party. But to have my own party, so to speak, with a program that I can't take responsibility for, that of course is, I think, an impossible situation. That is how it strikes me now.

Now, I am disposed, I am inclined to accept the conditions proposed by the CIC, namely, to give this commitment, though unusual and, to put it more frankly, wrong - I am ready to do it in the interests of the movement as a whole. But, accepting those conditions, I think unless I can hear arguments that are meritorious against it, I think I would attach to it a condition to the Movement that this commitment on our part is valid only if the SWP agrees to an acceptable unification or if the CIC or the EPC succeeded in prevailing up-

on the SWP and, if you wish, upon the WP to achieve such unification not later than immediately after the EPC. I wouldn't like to see our party caught in a ridiculous jam. The EPC ends, we rewrite our whole program in line with the policies and resolutions of the EPC, then we come to the SWP - all right, let us unite tomorrow morning, years pass since the new situation was created by the proposal of the CIC, and then on one ground or another, the unity is postponed a week, a month, six months, a year. We go around with our own party and the SWP goes around with its party - and we have identical programs. That is not worth living for.

Perhaps this is preposterous - I want to hope so. Smith tells me that there are two views in the SWP now. I am not interested in who holds the view, how strong it is. One is for unity, the other is against unity. Good. It is recent but it is good. If there are signs immediately after the SWP Plenum of a turn away from the position and attitude they have adopted for the past year and a half, and which is consecrated in their PC statement, I repeat what Smith said, what they said yesterday is not important, what they say today is important. If they indicate that the unity is on the way, then everything I said would be meaningless and I would be glad of it. They could on their side demand that we show serious signs that we are for unity. All right, we will try to give those signs if they are asked for. But if not, I think it would be necessary for us to attach a condition to our commitment. Two parties, both calling themselves Trotskyist, with different programs, you can call that good or bad, but it can be understood. Two parties, both calling themselves Trotskyists and both having the same program, that will be too much even for a smart person. The Cannonites would have nothing to gain by that, we would have nothing to gain by it and the CIC would have nothing to gain by it. I say again, so as not to be misunderstood, everything I say may be utterly groundless and unjustified. Good. I will be very, very glad to find that out. But it is no use being a fool. We have seen what we have seen for a year and a half and we have every reason for these apprehensions. We have to see something else and in that sense, if I may say so, it is not correct that everything depends on us. What is really required of us is a reiteration of our past condition. Something else is required from the SWP and that is not up to us.

Remarks of Shachtman (NC Plenum, February 5, 1947):

....Further, my attitude on the conditions of the CIC were stated at the P.C. meeting and stated even more thoroughly by Goldman. Of course, I subscribe to what he says on that score. The comrades have their reasons for it and their reasons are not the same that animated the SWP leaders and their behavior. They are genuinely and in the best sense of the words, bureaucratically interested in uniting the groups. And if that animates them, all right, I can't be as violently opposed to it as I might be. Still I am for saying it and not hiding it. If, however, we write simply that letter, namely: Dear comrades of the CIC, we accept your conditions - then we run all the serious risks about which Goldman and other comrades before him spoke. We lend ourselves to a maneuver. There are people who said we were maneuvering in the unity in the past year and a half. But I do not believe it. As we said, there has been enough maneuvering. Everything can be pretty plain now. This letter makes a maneuver impossible, I think. This letter commits us to the conditions of the call only on the basis of the as-

sumption of the condition that we spoke of in the PC the other night, namely, if they are for unity - the SWP. We have not sent the letter, it goes only after there is a resolution by the SWP for unity. Who can possibly take exception to it in the SWP? It takes it for granted that there is going to be unity, so to speak.

They can't say when they see such a letter, they are putting conditions - they want to evade. I don't see how they can say that, even the most narrow-minded of them. All they then have to do is to agree to Smith's proposition. This in turn strengthens the hand of Smith. This letter can be sent out, so to speak, the minute you adopt your resolution for unity. If the resolution that they adopt is clever - that is, two damned clever, and I think we will be able to judge, the letter doesn't go out. If it is more or less genuine, if it is a real commitment, if it represents a real change from the line up to and following their convention, the letter goes out. We accomplish our purpose, the CIC accomplishes its purpose, the Cannonites, if they are for unity, they accomplish their purpose and in a way which disposes of any possible genuine suspicions of our intentions that anyone of them may entertain.

At the same time - final point - suppose something is screwed up, suppose somebody is trying some super-clever maneuver. In a word or two that I had with Goldman, he made the following point: We give our commitment, we make an undertaking, bona fide, earnestly made, sincerely made. If we find out as late as five minutes to 12 that we are being rooked, that this was one of those super-clever tricks, that it wasn't meant on the other side, then my party is worth to me a helluva lot more than my word, especially if my word was extracted from me by false pretenses, and I announce to the whole world that I tear it up as a scrap of paper.

I am saying this in advance especially because Smith is here. I don't mean that he has any plan of a trick, but if there should be anybody in the world, not even in the U.S., say in New Zealand, who confronts us at 5 minutes before 12 with the real denouement, a real trick, I take the commitment and I tear it up. However that may be, that sounds to me like a reasonable compromise. For me it is a compromise because I can't work up a great passion for the condition set by the CIC. I hope my apprehensions about it in the future as a precedent never materialize, but for the sake of continuing what we tried to get for the past year and a half and in the hope that it really can be gotten, I am for it.

I still have to say another word. I have got to express here formally what I have expressed here every five minutes informally. It is entirely possible, of course, that my bewilderment, and that is what it is, is due to my factional misunderstanding of the Cannonites from the very beginning or to my incapacity to understand the phenomenon - either or both is possible. I have said this to all the comrades. I have said this to Smith. I will be damned if I understand what has happened in the SWP overnight. A comrade can very well say, "What is the difference?" If it has actually happened, what is the difference? I am assuming now that the undertaking by Smith at the PC that he can get, that he assures us that there will be such a resolution and that it will be acceptable to us, I am assuming that that happens -- and I say I can't understand it. I am a great man for precedents but I will be damned if I can remember in the history of the movement, at least in the last two or three cen-

turies; a case where up to Monday night you had the most savage, irresponsible, untransversable, untransformable, unsubmergeable opposition to even considering unity, it is adopted unanimously in a football stadium atmosphere, they all but tear down the posts, and then, Tuesday morning, they are ready for unity - all they want is a little thing: that we will abide by discipline, which we said a year and a half ago. I have to learn politics now from the beginning. There is only one possibility and that is the original explanation by Johnson: the working class will exert its class pressure and force the unity. Now that is probably what happened.

Remarks of Goldman (NC Plenum, February 5, 1947):

....I am trying to formulate a principle which we should adopt to give the PC some leeway. The principle should be (1) we continue our negotiations on the line of accepting unity and working for unity on the line of collaboration to test out the feasibility of unity; (2) with reference to the proposal from the CIC, our general line should be - we answer them that we welcome their intervention on behalf of unity, that for the sake of unity we are willing to accept a commitment with which we are not at all in agreement, that we attempt to collaborate with the SWP, that we accept their proposal with this understanding, that in accepting this proposal we are at liberty at any time at all to withdraw from it if we see that unity is not possible and not feasible.

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The basic motions finally formulated by Goldman, on the basis of his final remarks quoted above, were adopted at the end of the Plenum by an overwhelming majority which included, by the way, Johnson. No representations other than those recorded above were ever made by us on this question to the party membership, to the CIC, to the SWP, or to anyone else.

Any commitments we have made in the past remain unaltered in every respect. This refers, of course, to commitments actually made by our party, and not to commitments that others may have dreamed up for us. Likewise, our position on unity remains unaltered in every respect. This too refers to the position actually taken by our party and not to any position which others may have attributed to us and for which we cannot reasonably be expected to bear any responsibility.

It is obvious that the declarations of the two SWP leaders require an ample and formal statement on the subject by the leadership of our party, and there is no doubt that such a statement will be forthcoming immediately. Meanwhile, we can repeat to the SWP: There was no real basis for your misunderstanding.

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