

VANGUARD newsletter

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82

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Labor Bureaucrat-Stalinist Conferences Serve Liberal Capitalists



Wurf



Woodcock



Bridges

An Answer to VANGUARD NEWSLETTER by "Masas" and Our Reply

**Reflections on Leaving
the Socialist Workers Party**

**The Spartacist League:
"Revolutionary" Trade Union Posturing**

Contents: Labor Bureaucrat-Stalinist Conferences
 Serve the Liberal Capitalists
 --St. Louis - Bureaucrats and
 Revisionists Maneuver
 --Chicago - Stalinists Strong-Arm
 for McGovern p. 86

The Workers League Takes Over
 "Public Meeting" 93

Who Called the Cops?
 --CRFC's Challenge to the Spartacist
 and Workers Leagues 95

An Answer to VANGUARD NEWSLETTER by "Masas"
 and Our Reply 96

A Worker Resigns from the SWP 101

Reflections on Leaving the Socialist
 Workers Party 101

The Spartacist League: "Revolutionary"
 Trade Union Posturing - Part IV 107

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The fifth installment of our series, "Fundamentals of Capitalist Crises" will appear in our September issue.

LABOR BUREAUCRAT-STALINIST CONFERENCES SERVE THE LIBERAL CAPITALISTS

✓Cdes. Henry A. Platsky and David Fender of VANGUARD NEWSLETTER and Cde. Malcolm Kaufman of Socialist Forum represented the Committee for Rank and File Caucuses (CRFC) at the Labor for Peace conference in St. Louis and at the Emergency Election Conference in Chicago.

✓The former was organized by assorted liberal and "left" labor bureaucrats, the latter by Trade Unionists for Action and Democracy dominated by the US Communist Party (CP).

✓Cde. Platsky was, for several years, a member of Youth Against War and Fascism (YAWF) and the Workers World Party (WWP). He was a central figure in the attempt to organize a faction in the WWP to oppose the

stultifying bureaucratic regime of Sam Marcy and Vincent Copeland, to reexamine its adaptationist policies to Stalinism--first, the Soviet and then the Chinese variants--to the Bonapartist leaders of under-developed countries and to the several petty-bourgeois radical movements, e.g., the feminists, Black Panthers and "Gay Liberation."

✓Having arrived at political agreement with the perspectives and program of VANGUARD NEWSLETTER, Cde. Platsky joined it after resigning from the NY Revolutionary Committee which he had helped form after leaving the WWP. He is presently functioning as organizer for the NY VANGUARD NEWSLETTER Committee.✓

St. Louis: Bureaucrats and Revisionists Maneuver by Henry A. Platsky

As VANGUARD NEWSLETTER predicted in June, the Labor for Peace conference reflected the hopes of the liberal wing of the labor bureaucracy to "tie the American workers to the domestic and international policies of the 'soft' wing" of the ruling class.

The conference was attended by some 900 delegates--that is, the "official" representatives of unions --together with two or three hundred "observers," many of them legitimate rank-and-file union members who were allowed to neither vote nor speak at the conference without "delegate" status. As David Livingston, Secretary-Treasurer of the Distributive Workers of America made clear in his report on the "Structure of Labor for Peace," this procedure to ensure total reign by the labor bureaucracy would be followed in the new Labor for Peace organization!

The conference itself was devoted, for the most part, to speeches from the likes of Jerry Wurf, International President of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), Emil Masey, Secretary-Treasurer of the United Auto Workers (UAW), Frank Rosenblum, Secretary-Treasurer of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers (ACW) and others of this liberal bureaucratic orientation. These speakers generally wrapped themselves in the American flag, proclaiming their interest in "peace" to be firmly in the interests of "America." Literature gratuitously handed out to all attending the conference by the organizers cited in detail the various assurances by NLF and North Vietnamese leaders that the capitalist system in South Vietnam would be left intact. The proceedings had the definite air of a McGovern campaign rally. Without openly endorsing any candidate in particular, the bureaucrats made it clear that "dumping Nixon" was a priority for Labor for Peace. Outstanding McGovern supporters Mrs. Martin Luther King and Alaskan Sen. Mike Gravel were the two guest speakers at the conference. This should hardly come as a surprise to the readers of VANGUARD NEWSLETTER.

Of great interest to us is the

response of the various radical tendencies, especially those claiming to have a proletarian orientation, to this event. Only the Committee for Rank and File Caucuses (CRFC), supported by VANGUARD NEWSLETTER and Socialist Forum, came prepared with a program designed to expose the nature of the conference and to provide whatever rank-and-file working class elements there were with a concrete strategy to combat the bureaucrats' phony "peace" politics. The failure of every tendency to either find agreement with our proposals or to provide a viable alternative proves their inability to provide the type of leadership necessary to build a revolutionary working class party.

CRFC sent an open invitation to practically all radical tendencies to work with us in organizing a principled, united intervention at the conference. Our invitation, needless to say, went unanswered. At the conference itself, only the Independent Socialists (IS) and the Workers League (WL) had come with alternative proposals of any kind. The WL as expected directed its intervention solely to the question of the labor party. Sellers of the WL's "Bulletin" super-aggressively hawked its latest issue which proclaimed in bold headlines on the front page the rather unstartling news that the Minnesota AFL-CIO had threatened to run its own statewide candidates. But this threat had nothing to do with any labor party sentiment amongst the rank-and-file of Minnesota's working class. Under its misleading headline, the article referred to a statement by the top state bureaucrats that they were unhappy with the results of the Minnesota Democratic state convention, mostly for reactionary reasons, e.g., the convention adopted resolutions decrying marijuana laws and restric-

tions on homosexuals, and that they wanted a platform more directed towards "labor." They mean by this of course, a program which will help the bureaucrats to continue to tie the workers more efficiently to the capitalist state and its political machinery. One would think that the "Marxists" of the WL would understand and expose the cynical maneuvers of the labor bureaucracy. However, armed to the teeth with Wohlforth's method, the WL sees every bureaucratic maneuver to the left as a "Workers' Victory" and, of course, every subsequent maneuver to the right as a "Great Betrayal!!" This is why one can read in the very same issue of the "Bulletin" (July 3) that "the conference Labor for Peace was a struggle between those forces in the labor movement moving towards a labor party, expressed consciously by the WL, against the labor bureaucrats led by Emil Mazey..., David Livingston ..., Harry Bridges..., " and then read an article uncritically reporting the call for a labor party by Albert Fitzgerald, United Electrical Workers union president. The WL doesn't even bother to mention that Fitzgerald was one of those who lent his presence to the cause of the Mazey's, et. al, in St. Louis. Come Fitzgerald's shift to the right and he too will find himself on the list of betrayers.

As usual, the WL's representatives would have nothing to do with any other tendency at the conference, not even to entering the same room to defend their positions. Following the tradition of their ideological predecessors in the Stalinist movement, they prefer not to defend the indefensible.

The unsavory amalgam of a tendency which is IS, on the contrary, was perfectly willing to argue its program in the open arena, and in fact, did so in a "rank-and-file meeting" called on the first day of the conference in St. Louis, ostensibly to plan a united front against the bureaucrats. This meeting was attended, in the main, by those elements in the student radical movement that had "found" their way into

"labor," usually via the AFSCME, teachers unions, or similar white collar, semi-professional unions.

The IS was thus able to operate in its own element. It supported the "radical" demand that the bureaucrats call a one-day general strike against the war. To make this demand even more unpalatable to anyone serious about fighting the bureaucrats, a date was attached to the demand. This "set the date" type proposal was thought to be very militant by its originators in that it "pressured" the bureaucrats to achieve this goal of a general strike. Unable to meet these demands, IS argued, the bureaucrats would expose themselves to the rank-and-file as not being serious about "fighting against the war." As does the WL, the IS sees its role as proving to the rank-and-file of labor that it can outmaneuver the bureaucrats in the process of maneuvering with them. In a similar manner, the petty-bourgeois radicals have operated on campus: outmaneuvering campus administrations with ever-so "radical" demands which prove ever-so effective in winning over the hearts of irate students. And in fact, this set of demands was originated by members of a Madison, Wisconsin "union" of part-time student employees!!

The IS betrays its fundamental confusion and disorientation. Without a correct strategy or program, the IS can only bank on making the bureaucrats look bad in order to gain support among the workers. It will, no doubt, have a modest success with this approach to the extent that the working class, which is increasingly seeking alternatives to the bankrupt system that exploits them, is not under the leadership of a revolutionary vanguard party. But this is the historic role of a centrist party, a party incapable of leading struggles. In order to lead struggles, the IS must go to the workers with the truth. It must explain to the workers why the bureaucrats are maneuvering to the left and whose class interests these maneuvers serve.

Within this "rank-and-file" meet-

ing, the comrades representing the CRFC opposed the opportunist IS-supported demands with its own set of proposals distributed to all of those attending the conference. These proposals (reprinted in their entirety in the June issue of VANGUARD NEWSLETTER under the heading, "Rank and File Program to End the War,") called on the St. Louis and Chicago conferences to:

- "1) Condemn any labor union or labor leader endorsing a candidate of any of the pro-capitalist war parties.
 - 2) Condemn any labor leader who is sitting, has sat or who has in any way offered to cooperate with the bosses government's payboards....
 - 3) Call for the building of an independent workers' party based on the rank-and-file in all shops....
 - 4) Build for a general strike of labor by organizing strike committees in the shops to stop all production and services until the war against the Indochinese workers and peasants is ended...."
- (original emphasis)

While the IS-supported proposal did have a statement opposing all Democratic or Republican candidates, any mention of building an independent labor or workers' party as an alternative was omitted from the final draft of the "rank-and-file" proposal. Moreover, the difference between our call for the building of a general strike and the IS proposal should be clear.

The CRFC's program at every point counterposed the organization of the rank-and-file to the bureaucrats in the struggle against the war. We refused to foster illusions in the bureaucrats among the rank-and-file workers. Revolutionists must be intransigent in clearly distinguishing between the kind of leadership the bureaucrats provide and the kind of leadership a revolutionary party gives. It is by making this distinction that we in VANGUARD NEWSLETTER will win workers to our banner.

The IS, unable to break from its centrist petty-bourgeois intellectual orientation--it has been histori-

cally unable to break from it as far back as its former existence as the Workers Party, Max Shachtman's "league of retreat"--wants to expose the bureaucrats a little at a time so as not to upset its rather unstable constituency. It is the ideal counterpart to the WL. Both seek to make gains within the labor movement by presenting an opportunist program deliberately designed to avoid exposing the real nature of the labor bureaucracy. The inevitable results can be seen by the fate that befell these tendencies at the St. Louis conference. Both the IS and WL had somehow managed to have a few members or sympathizers register as delegates. At various times, spokespeople for these tendencies managed to get the floor to present their demand (a one-day strike in the former case, the labor party in the latter). On the floor, these opportunists adamantly refused to denounce the "labor lieutenants of capital." Instead, they tried to "reason" with the bureaucrats, explaining that one or the other proposal was in the interest of labor. IS spokespeople even "adjusted" to the point of dropping other proposals to which the "rank-and-file" meeting had agreed and spoke solely on the question of the one-day strike.

The bureaucrats easily managed to maneuver out of a commitment to both proposals while, at the same time, claiming sympathy for their contents. Harry Bridges of the West Coast longshoreman's union, for example, as a "responsible" labor leader informed the conference that he could not call or endorse a one-day strike without first consulting the rank-and-file of his union. This will, no doubt, come as a surprise to rank-and-file longshoremen who had nothing whatsoever to say about the back to work order given by Bridges and company when the Nixon Administration moved to break their strike earlier this year. Thus, a real opportunity to present a program which would have advanced class and revolutionary consciousness in the unions to several hundred unionists was aborted by the wavering and oppor-

tunism of the centrist tendencies.

A bit to the left of the IS and WL stands the Spartacist League (SL). This tendency tries to cover up its inability to participate in the struggles of the working class under a blanket of ritualistic and formally correct slogans. The SL came to St. Louis armed with a leaflet correctly exposing the conference and its purpose. Its leaflet, however, was designed to win points with, and SL cadre in, the radical intelligensia. The leaflet inveighed against the CP, WL, etc. but offered nothing to the workers at the St. Louis conference. When the question arose within the "rank-and-file" meeting of supporting either the CRFC's or the Madison proposals as the basis for further discussion or amendment, the SL abstained, neither speaking nor voting for either proposal!

After the vote had been taken, the SL, spoke once and claimed formal agreement with the CRFC's four-point proposal as against the Madison proposal except on the "principled" question of...of building caucuses in the unions on the program of the "party" linked by the "vanguard party." When this statement met with laughter, the SL delegation walked out of the room, ending their first and only "struggle" at the conference.

The SL betrays not only its complete inability to understand the function of a union caucus as oppos-

ed to the function of a party fraction within a caucus, but also the fact that it really has no serious strategic perspective to offer the workers. An organization which claims to have the only program to lead the workers in struggle and then when confronted with the situation wherein it must transform that program into a viable, immediate strategy can only offer its own maximal program, betrays itself as an idle intellectual sect, not seriously interested in involving itself in the day-to-day struggles to win our class to a revolutionary program.

Finally, there is the role of assorted petty-bourgeois oriented tendencies which have discovered that the Marxist term "exploitation" can be used interchangeably with the broader term "oppression" in bestowing upon petty-bourgeois radical movements, a role equal to that of the working class in the revolution. The Socialist Workers Party and the Workers World Party, for example, had delegates at the conference. However, they never said one word or distributed literature describing their attitude towards the conference--an open confession of political bankruptcy.

The opportunist and unprincipled nature of the various radical tendencies was additionally illuminated in their further adventures later in St. Louis and at the Chicago conference.

Chicago: Stalinists Strong-Arm for McGovern by David Fender

The reformist line of the Communist Party (CP) is presently hinged on the building of "people's movements" and "anti-monopoly coalitions" which are designed to pressure and hold the bourgeois politicians in check.

Without these pressure groups, according to the CP line, "you cannot trust bourgeois politicians."

The CP's own presidential campaign is in no sense an attempt to provide the working class with an alternative to the bourgeois candidates. It is, rather, a gimmick, not just to give the CP a left cover but to organize these pressure groups as on-going organizations in an attempt to make such liberal bourgeois politicians like McGovern

"more responsive" to the people not only during the election campaigns (when the truck is "pretty far" up the hill) but also between campaigns (when the truck rolls "right back to where we started from"). It is in this way--by giving the bourgeois liberals their support, even if backhandedly--that the CP sees making politics "more meaningful" as explained by Gus Hall, the CP's general secretary and candidate for president.

The People's Coalition for Peace and Justice and the Trade Unionists for Action and Democracy (TUAD) are two such coalitions which are controlled by the CP. And controlled they are, as can be seen from the recent Emergency Election Conference of TUAD held in Chicago July 1 & 2.

In spite of all the references in the CP's rhetoric about independent rank-and-file action, the Stalinists proved yet again at the TUAD conference that they have no interest in any rank-and-file initiative toward the real independence of the working class, and that any such initiative will be met by some of the most bureaucratic maneuvers, equal to anything the trade-union bureaucracy itself could come up with.

The Stalinists, after all, have had plenty of practice--over 40 years! In the CP, there has not been a semblance of democracy since Stalin purged Trotsky and the left opposition. Stalin and his henchmen were able to usurp the leadership of the Bolshevik party due to the backwardness of the new Soviet state, compounded by the weakened position of the working class following the civil war and the temporary setback of the socialist revolution in the rest of the world--especially in Germany. Stalin personified the bureaucratic growth in the Soviet Union which turned the first workers' state into what we call a degenerated workers' state. The degenerated workers' state, like the trade unions in the US, is controlled by a self-seeking bureaucracy whose main concern is to protect its own privileged interest above all.

Under Stalin's leadership the Communist parties around the world were transformed to fit the needs of the Stalinist clique in the Soviet Union. The needs of the proletariat in each country were subordinated to the narrow interests of the Soviet despots. Revolutionary working class politics were replaced with class-collaborationist politics in order to avoid any political upheavals which might endanger its own privileged bureaucratic positions. This means, of

course, nipping in the bud any and all initiatives from the rank and file. It is for this reason that the Stalinists have the most sordid record of gangsterism of any tendency in the labor movement, an example of which they aptly displayed at the TUAD conference.

The CP's major concern at this conference seemed to be the National Caucus of Labor Committees (NCLC) of Lyn Marcus who had mobilized a major share of his forces for an intervention. While the NCLC's political orientation is objectively a reformist one--refusing to work in the trade union and substituting instead the building (especially among welfare recipients) of multi-class "strike support coalitions"--the NCLC, nevertheless, does not support bourgeois candidates like the CP. For this reason the CP attempted to bar this tendency from the outset of the conference. At the registration desks, names were checked against a list of known NCLC supporters compiled by the CP. Those found to be on the list as well as those connected with welfare unions plus anybody else who indicated in any way that they might oppose the CP's class-collaborationist line, were told that the delegation from their state was challenging their credentials. They were then promptly hustled into a small adjoining room--guarded by some hefty CP strongarms--where a credentials committee meeting was supposed to be held. In this way the CP tried to weed out dissidents and hold them as if in jail. Most of those so entrapped were, after some period of time, forced to exit by a small window in order to escape following a melee at the door. One can well imagine from this incident what the Stalinists would do if they had state power, and what they have done where they have usurped state power.

In spite of the CP's best efforts, about half of the large NCLC contingent managed to get into the conference undetected. A floor fight soon broke out over the question of exclusion during the discussion on the proposed set of rules.

The chairman recognized two for and two against. Those "against," it so happened, were supporters of the Workers League who, instead of addressing themselves to the principled question of the CP's exclusion in general, pleaded a case only for a few of their own members who had been denied admission by merely asserting that their comrades had been excluded because they advocated the formation of a labor party. With this as an introduction, they launched into a speech for the labor party which was promptly ruled out of order by the Chair. A vote was taken, and the rules were adopted.

The next item, the agenda, was adopted without discussion contrary to the rules which specifically stated that:

"In any debate on a procedural motion, the Chair will recognize two speakers for and two against the motion."

The chairman then proceeded and ignored the clamour of about a hundred delegates for a point of order. After a series of attempts to be recognized, the NCLC supporters marched to the front and passively allowed themselves to be physically ejected by the CP goons in spite of the fact that the NCLC probably outnumbered them.

Such unilateral tactics on the part of the NCLC made it impossible for anybody else, sympathetic to a struggle against the exclusion, to play a role in preventing the NCLC's ejection from the conference. Only a united front effort can protect the rights of all working class tendencies against the arbitrariness of those who utilize undemocratic and hooligan measures in the workers' movement such as the trade union bureaucracy, the CP and the Workers League.

The NCLC should have taken the initiative toward a united front in the case of the TUAD conference since they had plenty of warning that the CP would attempt to exclude them. The CP had already opened a malicious slander campaign, charging the members of NCLC with being "po-

lice" and "CIA agents," had evicted them from a public meeting "open to debate and discussion from all ideological points of view," as well as physically attacked, in an unprovoked assault, two of their members--putting one in the hospital--for leafleting outside the US Communist Party Center for Marxist Education in New York City.

VANGUARD NEWSLETTER repeats its principled position of being ready to bloc with any working class tendency in a struggle against arbitrariness and hooliganism in the workers' movement. It is in this spirit the VANGUARD NEWSLETTER joined with Socialist Forum, the Spartacist League, NCLC and others in picketing the conference. It seems the Socialist Workers Party did not solidarize itself with this demonstration in spite of the fact that some of its own supporters were excluded. The Workers League, as well, in consistency with its own arbitrariness and hooliganism toward other working class tendencies (see VANGUARD NEWSLETTER Vol. 4, No. 3 and page 93 in this issue) refused to participate in the protest against the CP's exclusion and even crossed en masse a large picket line in order to attend the conference on the second day. This display of solidarity with the CP's actions is even more despicable in as much as the Workers League attempts to pass itself off as Trotskyist--a tendency that from its inception was deeply involved in the struggle for workers' democracy. The Workers League and the CP alike cannot defend their ideas against those of other tendencies, and therefore, have no choice but to deal with their opponents in an organizational manner.

It must be noted that this second conference of TUAD was about one fourth the size of its founding conference (does one really have to go to a TUAD conference to build support for McGovern?). Nor will the future conferences of TUAD show any real growth since the Stalinist-gangster tactics of the CP expose it for what it is--not an independent organ of the rank-and-file, but

rather a CP front group designed to support "progressive" trade-union bureaucrats and bourgeois liberals like McGovern. Needless to say, a real independent rank-and-file movement will sweep such

frauds in the labor movement into the dust bin of history where they belong, and it is with this end in mind that VANGUARD NEWSLETTER helped initiate and participates in the Committee for Rank and File Caucuses.

THE WORKERS LEAGUE TAKES OVER A "PUBLIC" MEETING by Jim Hays

The role of the Workers League (WL) as a bureaucratic left centrist formation with aspirations to serve as attorney to the "left" labor bureaucracy was made abundantly clear at the two-day Labor for Peace conference and even clearer on June 25th at St. Louis University.

About twenty people who had attended the conference showed up for what was advertized as a public meeting called by the UAW Local 25 rank-and-file committee to be followed by a period of discussion. However, they soon discovered that the meeting had been taken over by a WL goon squad which sought to physically bar all WL political opponents in the workers' movement.

The previous day, Nat Mosley, chairman of the UAW caucus had personally invited representatives of VANGUARD NEWSLETTER, the IS, SL and SWP to attend the meeting and take part in the discussion. In fact, the St. Louis VANGUARD NEWSLETTER Committee and a number of other St. Louis socialist groups had taken part in three planning sessions with the rank-and-file auto workers to build the June 25th meeting. At these sessions, the WL was sharply attacked by Black auto workers for "ignoring the racial problems" at the GM plant and for trying to bureaucratically impose an endorsement of the SWP presidential ticket on the caucus. The worker who had demanded a struggle against racism was also ordered barred from the June 25th meeting and from all other caucus meetings by the WL!

When it became clear that the hooligan tactics of the WL could not stop the demand that the practice of workers' democracy be followed at the meeting, a WL representative called in the university administration and the campus police. The WL was prevented from using the police only because of their neutralization when the university administration learned that the room had been re-

served for a public meeting.

This is not the first time the Healyites have attempted to use the bourgeois state against their opponents in the labor movement. In 1966, the Socialist Labour League threatened suit in a royal court against Ernie Tate, an adherent of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, for slander after he had been beaten up for selling a pamphlet outside one of its meetings.

Most, if not all, of the auto workers in the UAW Local 25 caucus have now broken publicly with the WL. Mosley and other rank-and-file auto workers pointedly boycotted the St. Louis University meeting after learning that the WL was seeking to transform it into a propaganda show for itself in order to create a few puppets who would parrot their revisionist line in the auto industry. Black auto workers refused to enter the meeting after another auto worker from Detroit was barred because of his membership in IS. They have all declared their renewed determination to continue to build rank-and-file caucuses which will meet the real needs of the working class.

Faced with the threat of having its centrist program exposed by trade unionists who had attended the Labor for Peace conference, the WL transferred "its" shrunken meeting to a member's apartment.

The WL's campaign in the UAW has suffered a fiasco because the rank-and-file auto workers would not accept the WL's bureaucratic practices, its failure to seriously implement its "fight racism" slogan in the General Motors Assembly Division (GMAD) or its openly expressed de-

sire for a Woodcock or some other labor-faker to head the labor party. Mosley has publicly accused the WL of being "reformist."

The St. Louis University meeting was a fitting climax to the WL opportunist and unprincipled behavior at the Labor for Peace Conference.

Despite the claims of the WL that "the conference marked a new step forward in the struggle for a break with the Democrats," Harold Gibbons, the conference host, and Jerry Wurf of AFSCME, a major conference sponsor, have now endorsed McGovern. Only a week before the conference, Busch Brewery in St. Louis told the Teamsters union that over 200 of its members would be laid off as part of an attrition plan. Yet, Gibbons failed to pose any program to fight unemployment or the pay board.

Each delegate who entered Council Plaza was greeted by a "Bulletin" salesman or woman shouting "Brother, this is truly an historic occasion, the Minneapolis Labor Council has declared for a Labor Party!"

The Minnesota call for a "third party" as well as the mutterings about a labor party by bureaucrats like UAW Paul Schrade or pro-Stalinist UE president Fitzgerald must be viewed with great caution by rank-and-file workers. Firstly, they must be seen as attempts to apply pressure to the Democratic Party, often in behalf of the policies of the "hard" wing of the ruling class, just as McGovern threatened to support a third party in the interests of the "soft" wing if he didn't get the nomination at Miami.

But even if the Minnesota labor-fakers move toward a third party, there are great dangers in a party created by the labor aristocracy, which revolutionary Marxists are required to expose and fight against. Although we will, of course, work within such a labor party, we cannot be jubilant, as is the "Bulletin," over the desire of a Minneapolis Labor Council delegate for a Canadian New Democratic Party (NDP) to help in the construction of a sell-out social Democratic party in the US. In fact, the most recent issue of the newspaper of the Workers

League of Canada was forced to admit that the NDP is currently conducting a witchhunt against even the mild socialist opposition contained in the Waffle caucus.

In appealing for the National Farmers Organization to take part in the formation of a third party, the Minnesota trade union officials are returning to the reactionary utopian populist traditions of Robert LaFollette and Governor Olson. It seems that the WL is now attempting to repeat the error of John Pepper and the Foster-Cannon faction of the CP which went hog-wild for a two-class "Farmer-Labor party" in 1922-24. As Leon Trotsky describes it:

"The representative of the Comintern, Pepper, in order to set the 'auxiliary mass'--the American farmers--into motion at an accelerated tempo, drew the young and weak American Communist Party onto the senseless and infamous adventure of creating a 'Farmer-Labor party' around LaFollette in order to overthrow quickly American capitalism." (p. 120, The Third International After Lenin)

As the middle class disorientation and hysteria of Wohlforth's followers becomes more apparent, they are forced to resort to the worst features of Stalinist gangsterism and slander. Every tendency in the labor and socialist movements must let them know that this type of behavior will not be tolerated in the future.

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WHO CALLED THE COPS?

CRFC's Challenge to the Spartacist and Workers Leagues

James Robertson, National Secretary
Spartacist League

10 July 1972

Dear Comrade:

On Sunday, July 2nd, members of your organization distributed copies of a leaflet at Packinghouse Center in Chicago, site of the Emergency Election Conference of the Trade Unionists for Action and Democracy.

The leaflet was entitled "CP/TUAD Prepares Betrayal with Mass Exclusion!" and made the following charges and inferences against the Committee for Rank and File Caucuses,

"...While the CP needs no advice on how to carry out the Stalinist methods of exclusion, at the Labor for Peace Conference last week the Stalinophobic WL cowardly excluded all other tendencies from their allegedly 'public' meeting. Demonstrating further non-proletarian means of struggle, and a complete misunderstanding of the Leninist theory of the state, the WL and CRFC called the cops on each other, the WL to guard their meeting, the CRFC to open it up.

" Some groups and militants, frustrated by bureaucratic treachery or simply seeking a quick road to power themselves, use the capitalist cops or courts to enforce 'democracy' within the labor movement. This is an equally grave error. The working class must make and enforce its own decisions; using the police against any legitimate part of the labor movement undermines the independence of the movement as a whole and promotes government interference."

We find these accusations to be a misrepresentation of fact. The leaflet is apparently making reference to Comrade David Fender and his brief exchange with a local member of the St. Louis WL organization and an individual who was presumably the director of the student union at St. Louis University. This exchange followed the failure of the WL to allow members of other politi-

cal organizations to enter a supposedly public meeting on problems in the auto industry being held on the afternoon of June 25th at the student union. The conversation with the director was initiated by the WL member who was obviously intent upon having what the WL saw as "undesirables" removed from the building. Comrade Fender entered the conversation only when it became clear what the WLER had in mind and only with the intention of defusing the situation and keeping both the director and the campus security guards, who were observing the exchange, out of the affair altogether.

The position of the CRFC and its component organizations on the question of police and bourgeois legal interference in the workers' movement is the same as that of the SL. We are quite aware of the role played by the courts and police in class rule society. They are nothing less than a weapon wielded by the capitalist class against the workers and their organizations. It is therefore crucial to keep the workers' movement free of compromising entanglements with these forces. We think you will find that the record of the organizations participating in CRFC bears out these beliefs.

The SL seems to be using the same tactic as the WL which attacked you (along with VNL/VANGUARD NEWSLETTER) in the "Bulletin" of 3 July for committing the very same transgressions of which you accuse us. In both cases we find these accusations to be transparent subterfuges designed to avoid direct dealing with the political positions of the tendencies involved.

Because we believe that the charges you have raised against us are of the most serious nature, we would like to see worker-militants have the opportunity to hear all sides of the question. We, therefore, are willing to answer your charges in a public forum--time and date to be set at your convenience. If you

Tim Wohlforth, National Secretary
Workers League

Dear Comrade:

We read in the "Bulletin" of 3 July the article entitled "Workers League Holds Auto Meeting," which dealt, among other things, with your exclusion of other political tendencies from a supposedly public meeting scheduled for 25 June at St. Louis University.

In addition to your exclusionist acts, which constituted a flagrant violation of workers' democracy, the WL accuses a component organization of the CRFC of "calling in of the campus guards at St. Louis University to enforce the 'right' of these centrists to enter the meeting." This is a complete fabrication. It was the Workers League who approached the director of the Student Union with the specific intention of having us removed from the building and it was a member of the CRFC and VANGUARD NEWSLETTER who entered the exchange between the WL and the director with the specific purpose of keeping both the director and the campus security guards out of the incident.

The CRFC and its participating organizations, recognizing full well the role of police in capitalist

still stand by the charges raised in your leaflet, we presume the SL will accept our challenge. We shall also request the WL to participate in the same forum.

Fraternally,
Malcolm L. Kaufman, Sec'y.-Treas.

18 July 1972

society, never make it a practice of calling that force against another section of the working class movement with which it holds differences. We seek to establish a labor movement independent of the state, not one reliant on its coercive arms.

Since you have made these public charges against us we presume, considering their gravity, that you are ready to defend them before worker-militants. We therefore propose a public forum at which both your charges and policy of exclusionism would be discussed. We are amenable to suggestions regarding time and place. We have also extended the same challenge to the Spartacist League which raised similar charges against our organization.

For worker's democracy,
Malcolm L. Kaufman, Sec'y.-Treas.

AN ANSWER TO VANGUARD NEWSLETTER BY "MASAS" (translated by Earl Owens)

As a member of VANGUARD NEWSLETTER Cde. Owens continues a struggle of many years duration for the cause of Trotskyism.

After eleven years of membership in the SWP, he was expelled with other supporters of the "Reorganized Minority Tendency" under Wohlforth's leadership in 1964 for attempting to open a discussion on Ceylon. The Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP) of Ceylon, then affiliated to the United Secretariat of the Fourth

International, had, at that time, joined the bourgeois coalition government under Mrs. Bandaranaike.

Cde. Owens was even more bureaucratically and hastily expelled from the Workers League, which he had helped found, for daring to raise questions concerning the ultimistic attitudes of its leadership towards the working class. This lack of internal democracy matches the Workers League's hooliganism toward other tendencies.

1. It is true, of course, that the working class has no fatherland-- this can be read in the "Communist Manifesto" written more than a hundred years ago.

But the comrades of VANGUARD NEWSLETTER forget that Trotsky taught whereas the imperialist nation is synonymous with reaction and oppression, the national frontiers of the underdeveloped countries defended against the imperialist centers still play a progressive role. Your letter mixes up general formulations which are correct with concrete estimations which are mistaken because you do not start with the recognition of the enormous difference between the imperialist center and those nations who are subject to it. This can be very dangerous for a revolutionary from the Yankee imperialist center. When we defend Bolivia against Yankee rapacity, we are fulfilling a revolutionary role. Clearly, the revolution in our country will strengthen the world revolutionary movement. But what weakens us is when American "Trotskyists" want to apply mechanically to Latin America schemas read in the classics.

2. Unfortunately, VANGUARD NEWSLETTER repeats the absurd accusations of the ultra-left and the Pabloite renegades, common go-betweens for the counterrevolution, when you maintain that we are sowing illusions about governments of a bourgeois or petty bourgeois order. But it is now decades since the POR wrote of the perspective of a workers' government, arising out of the limitations and inability of the bourgeois governments to complete bourgeois tasks. This can be read and thus you should set right your false accusations. But this does not mean that at all times the party irresponsibly should raise the slogan of taking power, no matter what the conditions are, which seems to be the position of the ultra-left. The problem arises in raising the working class forward to this task so that it can genuinely complete it. The struggle against revisionism, against Stalinism and the ultra-left are for this purpose, as is also the tactic of the Anti-Imperial-

ist Front led by the proletariat.

3. The analysis you make of the Popular Assembly is false. This Bolivian Soviet was different from the Russian Soviet of 1905 and the beginning of 1917 in one concrete aspect: the political leadership was assured, that is, through its party. This was because it was formed with a clear program that showed it was marching towards socialism and a workers' government. All your other thoughts in this regard have no basis.

4. Are you a political party? We are. This should make clear that our basic concern is to achieve the ideological and organizational independence of the working class from bourgeois tendencies and others.

In Bolivia one is not dealing with the united front of the proletariat but of the anti-imperialist front, because the sharpest problem is national oppression by the USA. In this struggle the appropriate tactic is the anti-imperialist front. And to prevent its miscarriage through the work of bourgeois leaders, we designed it to be revolutionary and to be led by the proletariat. It is not true that the Front which the POR forms a part of includes parties which call themselves Marxist, but have their roots in nationalism. We do not mix our flags, nor do we kneel before others. We make others kneel-- those not proletarian--before our revolutionary strategy.

5. Have you read the writings of Trotsky on Spain in 1931? Not his works about the United States. Following what he says we hold that in the present conditions (oppression of the country by a military dictatorship and destruction of all democratic rights), it is correct to begin from the struggle for the rule of law, of the right of association, etc., combining it with the struggle for modest social economic demands. To remain within the democratic framework? Of course not, but in order to mobilize the

masses, to help them transform their passive resistance into active resistance and thereby bring us closer to the taking of power.

6. If you are revolutionaries, you are obligated to vigorously assist the movement of national lib-

OUR REPLY

Dear Comrades,

Our duty to defend "underdeveloped countries...against the imperialist centers" and to assist the Bolivian revolution is an integral part of our struggle as American Trotskyists to construct an American section of an international working class vanguard party capable of overthrowing world capitalism in the epoch of imperialism.

It is from this perspective that we have criticized the line of the POR and the Frente Anti-Imperialista. We by no means disdain your martyrs who, subjectively at least, fought and died for the ideas of Trotskyism. Nor can we ignore the comrades inside Bolivia today involved in a life and death struggle in the underground.

We are not apologists for any political group--justifiers and nationalizers have no place in the Trotskyist movement. We do not doubt that, subjectively, you want to make a socialist revolution in Bolivia. What we see lacking, however, in your documents, in "MASAS" and in your action is any conception of the crisis of leadership within the working class. Lora writes in his book Bolivia, De La Asamblea Popular al Golpe del 21 de Agosto:

"The forces in struggle: proletariat and right-wing military... ignored the President of the Republic and limited themselves to preparing for the great encounter between themselves...Torres was more of a phantom than a reality....Soon the masses took the initiative and fought to utilize Torres against the fascist right."

But how did you intervene in this process? Did you not also believe that Torres could be utilized? If, as you point out, "...the political leadership [of the Asamblea Popular] was assured...through its party [The

eration that is taking place in Bolivia under the leadership of the working class. We repeat: we must support the Anti-Imperialist Front. To do otherwise, would be to end up in the counter-revolution through the slide of the ultra-left.

POR], "then it bears a heavy, but not the only, responsibility for the defeat of the 21st of August. Your empiricism led you to bow before the moods of the masses and not to lead the march "towards socialism and a workers' government." It is too simplistic to blame defeat on a lack of guns. More important was the lack of a clear revolutionary alternative--lacking this, with or without weapons, defeat is inevitable. There is no political "guarantee" of anything because you arranged that the working class would have a majority in the Asamblea Popular. A majority of the working class must be won for the socialist revolution, but this is why it has to have its own independent organs of struggle. The task of the revolutionary party is not, as you seem to believe, to urge the working class on to complete the historical process or to function as mere advisers to the class. As such, even in spite of yourselves, you become advisers to the CP and the PRIN, Lechin's party, in order to pressure them to the left. The task of the party is to struggle against simple trade-union consciousness, to struggle against every vestige of reformism which may be expressed, as in Bolivia, in verbal adherence to "socialism" and to lead the class to power rather than simply merging with the class. Lechin, Torres, and the CP must be destroyed politically. Can you use the Frente Anti-Imperialista

to do this? We say you cannot and that in the Frente Anti-Imperialista you become indistinguishable from them.

Even though empirically you may be more active than any other tendency, political passivity in relation to the historic process can only lead to a separation of theory from practice. In an interview given by Guillermo Lora to Ruben Vasquez Diaz in 1967, during Che Guevara's guerrilla campaign in Bolivia, this separation of theory and practice becomes quite clear. Lora states:

"Guerrillas without the working class are nothing. The POR supports unconditionally the guerrillas because it is a logical consequence of the present situation in Bolivia, but we don't believe it is the only way of combating the present regime....The guerrillas are not our idea and, as a consequence we don't want to dominate them or dictate to them in any way. And our help and support is completely without limits...."

Here we have the essence of "passive radicalism" which has characterized the history of the POR. We do not doubt the POR did everything it could to assist the guerrillas. But the POR refused to "dominate or dictate," that is, provide an alternative leadership to Guevara. To let the revisionists "do their thing" is the worst kind of historical passivity. It was, of course, correct to support the guerrillas against the ruling class but also to struggle against their revisionist leadership in order to subordinate them to the strategy of working class revolution. Lora was abstractly correct in not committing the POR to guerrilla warfare. At the same time, it is clear from the interview that politically he caved in to Guevara's fait accompli.

For Lenin, the tasks of revolutionaries are:

"...the elucidation of the tasks of revolution as distinct from the tasks of reform, the elucidation

of revolutionary tactics as distinct from reformist tactics, the elucidation of the role of the proletariat in the abolition of the system..." (Proletarian Revolution and Renegade Kautsky)

Instead of clarifying, you muddle these questions. The Frente Anti-Imperialista, according to your Comrade Escobar writing in "Politica Obrera," has a perspective of:

"...the establishment of a workers' government supported by other oppressed classes in order to complete the democratic tasks of a transitory nature that will lead toward socialist tasks."

The Frente Anti-Imperialista, Escobar claims, is different from a united front in an advanced country which will form a workers' government to "...fulfill directly socialist tasks." This is the theory of stages, pure and simple--the theory of Menshevism, not Trotskyism.

Another leader of the POR, Carlos in a letter to this writer states:

"We do not have an imperialist bourgeoisie but a national one interested in fulfilling the democratic tasks. When we deal with a struggle against imperialism...there is no reason not to form a front with the national bourgeoisie."

Russia was also an under-developed country in 1917. Yet the Bolsheviks did not propose an Anti-Imperialist Front which would take power and then, in proper stages, fulfill the democratic tasks and then the socialist tasks. You cannot carry out the democratic tasks, let alone take power, on an abstract program of democracy that stands above the class struggle. Trotsky was quite clear on this point. As he stated "On the South African Theses":

"The Bolshevik Party defended the right of the oppressed nations to self-determination with the methods of proletarian class struggle, entirely rejecting the

charlatan 'anti-imperialist' blocs with the numerous petty-bourgeois 'national' parties of czarist Russia...

"The Bolsheviks have always mercilessly unmasked these parties, as well as the Russian Social Revolutionaries, their vacillations and adventurism, but especially their ideological lie of being above the class struggle. Lenin did not stop his intransigent criticism even when circumstances forced upon him this or that episodic, strictly practical, agreement with them.

"There could be no question of any permanent alliance with them under the banner of 'anti-czarism.' Only thanks to this irreconcilable class policy was Bolshevism able to succeed in the time of the revolution to throw aside the Mensheviks, the Social Revolutionaries, the national petty-bourgeois parties and gather around the proletariat the masses of the peasantry and the oppressed nationalities." (Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1934-35, p. 251-2.)

Can you square your own political activity with this cornerstone of Trotsky's writings?

You carry out a polemical struggle against the "ultra-left," but do not struggle against the CP, Lechin, Torres or the "anti-imperialist" bourgeoisie which they represent.

The last refuge of imperialism is "anti-imperialist" movements led by its unconscious and conscious agents. In Argentina, the PSIN-FIP (a left-wing Peronist group) has proposed the formation of a "National Anti-Imperialist Front." Its program calls for raising "the banners of socialism and a workers and peoples government." The newspaper, "Politica Obrera," correctly points out that nowhere do the Peronists mention the dictatorship of the proletariat and that, in fact, they represent the interests of a section of the industrial bourgeoisie. In many under-developed nations there are sophisticated sections of the bourgeoisie who will "agree" with the

basic idea of socialism--as long as it comes about after they're dead. In the meantime they are quite willing to become simple "'anti-imperialist' forces" and cooperate with reformists and centrists (such as Allende) to carry out such bourgeois tasks as creating an internal market and limited agrarian reform. The silence of the POR on the question of the left-Peronist front is very significant.

Where do you stand on the question of class struggle as the weapon for national liberation and on the dictatorship of the proletariat? You write often of "the leadership of the proletariat" but not of the supremacy of the proletariat over the other classes. Are General Torres and your other allies in the Frente Anti-Imperialista in favor of the class struggle approach and do they support the dictatorship of the proletariat? If so, they must clearly agitate for the destruction of the bourgeois army. If not, they must be fought. You, evidently, cannot criticize the Peronists in Argentina for proposing what you actually do yourselves in Bolivia.

There are, no doubt, many things we in VANGUARD NEWSLETTER can learn from your struggles. The American working class is largely ignorant of the working class in Latin America. We, revolutionaries in the heartland of imperialism, will support unconditionally and materially every struggle for national liberation. But in order to win in this final epoch of capitalism, it must be combined with the struggle for the socialist revolution. Let us analyze, criticize, and struggle so that in Bolivia and the United States we do not condemn the working class to repeat the tragic defeats of the past.

Earl Owens for
VANGUARD NEWSLETTER

In response to Wohlforth's attacks in the "Bulletin," our next issue will begin publishing the Communist Tendency's historical document.

A WORKER RESIGNS FROM THE SWP

To the Oakland-Berkeley Branch Organizer

July 10, 1972

Last December I entered the Socialist Workers Party because through reading the "Militant" and the "ISR" [International Socialist Review] I became convinced that Trotsky along with Lenin knew how to correctly apply the Marxist methods. I still feel that way.

Today I'm even more of a confirmed Marxist than when I entered the party.

I also entered the party (on the majority program) because the comrade who recruited me had a healthy attitude towards workers and trade-union work. In other words he was giving me a good impression of the party without breaking discipline.

Once I was in the party, I began to have my doubts. The perspective from inside the party is quite different than the outside view.

True--I erroneously accepted the party's position of not concentrating it's full force on the trade union movement and that the political consciousness was not yet there.

I was astounded to find out that the branch was not the least bit interested in trade-union work. It was not interested in me as a worker nor my trade-union activities. The branch didn't even have a trade-union fraction. That is where you started to lose me.

The party sold me on Trotsky, and Trotsky sold me on the idea that only the industrial proletariat has the power for overthrowing the state.

I learned from him that a revolutionary party must stay with the workers, under any conditions, even under the oppressive weight of fascism.

This is not Russia of 1917 or China of 1949. This is imperialist United States of 1972 and it's going to be a lot tougher.

If the ruling class in this country gets desperate enough to use fascism, don't expect the workers to automatically rise up and kick the fascists in their asses. **THE WORKERS MUST BE TRAINED AND LED BY A REVOLUTIONARY TROTSKYIST PARTY, YEARS IN ADVANCE, or they will not be ready.**

As I've learned from the Socialist Workers Party's mistakes, my disagreements with the party have increased.

I agree most closely with the VANGUARD NEWSLETTER. After careful consideration, I've decided to resign from the Socialist Workers Party and aid the VANGUARD NEWSLETTER in carrying out its program.

There is not Trotskyist party which is capable of leading a class struggle in this country--yet.

Sincerely, M.H.

REFLECTIONS ON LEAVING THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY by Ed di Tullio

The Revolutionary Party

Do the memberships of organizations like the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) still include some who are in reality loyal, not to the so-called "Fourth Internationals" of the epigones they formally support, but to the Fourth International of Trotsky?

It is not very likely. That International proclaimed the program of proletarian revolution, alone remaining true to its class and its revolutionary heritage; it raised an unstained banner out of the ashes of the historic defeats of the 1920's and 1930's for new generations of revolutionary workers to rally to; and it was permeated by the intel-

lectual integrity, political clarity and revolutionary experience of Marxism. But do any still remain in the SWP who have at least the possibility of finding their way to Marxism --or back to Marxism, in the case of some of the older comrades, and of overcoming the supine centrism which betrays the Fourth International and which has been making trim-

mers in stead of revolutionists out of them? If there are, they could perhaps begin as I did and ask themselves, "What is required in order to create a truly revolutionary party?" for it will soon lead them to the roots of their confusion.

Even the choice of words in that question may bother comrades educated in the SWP--"created?" Revolutionists speak at times of "building" a party, for a stable organization is of course necessary, despite the conservatizing routine and bureaucratic tendencies attendant on any organizational form--and which must be overcome at critical moments in the life of a revolutionary party, as Trotsky explained in Lessons of October. In that aspect a revolutionary party is "built." But it cannot be first and foremost an organizational apparatus, as dullards who owe their political education to centrist "leaders" of right and left varieties thoughtlessly assume.

Trotsky wrote in In Defense of Marxism:

"In order to create a revolutionary party, a granite theoretical base is necessary, a scientific program, a consistency in political thinking and firm organizational principles."

Contrast that with the SWP's narrow view of "party building" as the touchstone of Leninist practice; with the SWP leaders pathetic heartfelt conviction that, despite appearances, they must represent the continuity of revolutionary leadership because through all adversity they built the SWP up to its present numerical strength, "brick by brick," in Cde. Novack's phrase; with the SWP's exhilaration when it counts its new "recruits" at the conventions; and with the SWP's continual babbling about the "need" for a "mass" party! Contrast the SWP's preoccupation with its organizational "framework," and the Marxist insistence, instead, on organizational "principles!" Trotsky explained in The Only Road:

"The revolutionary party begins with an idea, a program, which is aimed against the most powerful apparatus of class society. It is not the cadre which creates the idea, but the idea that creates the cadre."

The organizational concerns of centrism contradict Marxism, mis-educate potential revolutionists, and work against the formation of a truly revolutionary party. No apparatus can defeat the bourgeoisie and the Stalinist bureaucracies, no matter how many workers adhere to it. It is the parties that put their trust in their organization and not in the ideas and program of Marxism who will be crushed, or who will capitulate to save themselves when the revolutionary period comes. It is "Marxist criticism," Trotsky continues, that "is stronger than any and every apparatus."

Reformist and centrist parties, not revolutionary parties, make organization paramount. The master class in the last analysis determines the direction of their politics; they construct their parties on the framework of bourgeois legality already erected for them; they are concerned with fitting into society as currently constituted in ways that are "possible." Reformist parties thus make their way by the opportuneness of the patchwork they propose. Centrist parties like the SWP exist by similar patchwork, plus memories of revolutionary days long gone, and promises to the gullible of revolutionary action some time in the distant future. Unwilling to absolutely reject the theoretical possibility that events might after all compel them to believe the time ripe to adopt a revolutionary posture, someday, the centrists also accompany their promises with occasional declamations against possibilism, drawing their arguments from Marxism, in order to distinguish themselves from open reformists.

A revolutionary party can in no way be like that. Under any and all conditions, in whatever country and whatever the tempo of the class struggle, revolutionary Marxism at

all times has one specific task in the epoch of the death agony of capitalism that is the essential determinant of every tactic and all practice: leading the workers in insurrection at the revolutionary moment to the seizure of power for the socialist reconstruction of society. A party that prepares itself with that sole purpose in mind has the possibility of proving itself truly revolutionary in the actual shock of revolution. Centrist parties may be capable of "taking part in mass movements," "doing trade union work," and even on occasion of adopting formally correct political positions, but fail in singleness of aim on the decisive point: relating everything to the task of preparing to take the leadership of the workers when they have arms in their hands.

A party shows that it intends to prove equal to this task only if it selects its cadre and especially its leading staff "in the light of revolutionary action," as we learn from the Lessons of October. We learn that the party must view "moments of direct struggle," "revolutionary commotions" and "unpostponable and acute questions" in pre-revolutionary periods as "opportunities for the testing of the leading party members." How difficult it is to make potential revolutionists who are under the influence of centrist leaderships understand that "failing this criterion, the rest is worthless!" Yet the basic lesson of October is precisely that:

"...the entire preparatory work is of value only to the extent that it renders the party and above all its leading organs capable of determining the moment for an insurrection, and of assuming the leadership of it. For the task of the communist party is the conquest of power for the purpose of reconstructing society."

Right and Left Centrism

The right centrist SWP leadership tends to maintain a strict silence when confronted with these ideas,

avoiding discussion both in the party meeting and in private, for they are not ready to come out openly against Marxism and their own revolutionary past. They keep secret their doubts about the validity today of the "Transitional Program" of the Fourth International adopted in 1938. In particular, they hide their doubt, if not disbelief, that the world revolution will succeed either under the leadership of the Fourth International or at all. They would not dream of expressing their doubts out loud, except perhaps among themselves. But the doubts emerge in the form, for example, of their illusions in "world-wide radicalizations" that they are "confident" will develop "objectively" to the point where "the workers will get a shot at power," with hardly a word about the quality of the proletarian leadership required for the task of winning victory in the world revolution, or identification of that leadership with the Fourth International. Their naive hope in the Cuban revolution was the emergence of the same self-doubt in still another form. One reason the right centrists can afford to answer Marxism with considered silence within the SWP is that they are fairly sure of the continued support of the mass of young comrades in the party, who were recruited from petty bourgeois movements, are sent back into the same movements after they have joined the party, and who respond favorably to the "careers" and sense of belonging still in the power of the SWP leadership to grant.

The left centrist "leaders" of the opposition within the SWP also try to maintain the same silence at party meetings as the party leadership. They, however, tend to speak up in private in order to keep the young comrades they try to attract from considering Marxist positions on their merits and who, thereby, might develop political independence and hostility towards left as well as right centrism. "Marxism cannot be applied mechanically", the left centrists say, providing a left cover for the SWP leadership. "Given

the present mentality of the masses, there is no social foundation for the kind of party these wild adventurers are demanding"--it is "unrealistic," "purist," "sectarian," and "getting ahead of oneself" to try to make "strictures" out of what Lenin and Trotsky said in different times. But the truth is the opposite of what the centrists say.

It is the Marxists who base themselves on a secure social foundation, and precisely centrism that has no independent social support whatever. As Trotsky explained it in What Next?:

"Both Marxism and reformism have a solid social support underlying them. Marxism expresses the historical interests of the proletariat. Reformism speaks for the privileged position of proletarian bureaucracy and aristocracy within the capitalist state. Centrism, as we have known it in the past, did not and could not have an independent social foundation."

The right centrists are much less nervous and more sure of themselves than the left centrists in the SWP, because they have consciously turned away from the social support of Marxism toward that of reformism. The SWP leadership exploits the petty bourgeois milieu at present to accumulate human and material resources from that source, which they hope to sell to sections of the labor aristocracy and its bureaucrats later on, along with their own services as experienced politicians. The left centrists are just inept, and do not understand. They drift aimlessly between the two main tendencies in the labor movement, Marxism and reformism, unable to decide between one or the other. Hence their propensity for unprincipled organizational combinations and their reliance on personal ties: these serve both as substitutes and cover for the political bankruptcy.

The leadership of the left centrist opposition in the SWP organized the "proletarian orientation" tendency on the basis of a tactical proposal to orient the SWP almost

exclusively toward the trade unions--on the same pacifist, feminist and nationalist program as the SWP leadership; and with the same trade union policy, as opposed to a Bolshevik policy. They are therefore not "left" because they are "closer" to Marxism, but because they do not move towards reformism as openly. They nevertheless drift in the same direction the SWP leadership swims; towards the labor aristocracy. The SWP leadership saw this. Hence its patience with its left centrist opposition, in contrast to its need to rid itself of its Marxists and its expulsion of the Communist Tendency.

The influence of the left centrist "leaders" has by now lost much of its effect on a few of the comrades who honestly thought they were fighting for a "proletarian orientation." But that does not mean that these few have transcended their past experience and will automatically turn towards Marxism. Their minds have been cluttered up with all kinds of nonsense--it took two or three months for these comrades to understand even the ABC's of Leninist principles of organization, e.g., the right of organized dissent in a revolutionary party! They merely see the political ambivalence and the unprincipled and high-handed organizational practices of their former leaders; they still maintain their pathetic desire for recognition by and dependence on the party; they are unable to stand on their own feet and need to search even for some other party, anything already constructed with a "tolerable" program, if not in the United States then across the sea, in case the SWP leadership's patience turns to scorn.

The polemics of the past year within the SWP have resulted in a growing recognition of the SWP's theoretical confusion, revisions of Marxism, avoidance of class analysis, and fear of principled politics; and also of its crass opportunism, which has led to the self-corrupting tailing of one or another variety of petty-bourgeois revolutionism, and even to a tender regard for occasional penitent liberalism. There has also

been an erosion of the pedestrian but rosy optimism that discovers "objective processes" making the SWP bigger and bigger through radicalizations that just go on getting deeper and deeper. Certainly the reenforcement of bureaucratic tendencies and deepening conservatism of the SWP is becoming more obvious, but it is difficult to develop clear views in centrist organizations, for the function of centrism, as Trotsky pointed out, is precisely to blur all sharp distinctions and to muddy the crystal clarity required for principled proletarian politics.

Unless these comrades determine to base themselves squarely on Marxism and, in the absence of first hand revolutionary experience of their own, specifically on the distillation of revolutionary experience and the theoretical conquests of the creative Marxists, they will always be at sea. Periods of self-confidence will always be followed by demoralization. They should have learned this during the past year. Brashly confident, they attempted to beard the SWP leadership from what they considered unassailable ground: the SWP must "go to the workers!" They found that, far from being an alternative to the SWP leadership, which had some experience in the labor movement, they in actuality relied on it to take the concrete steps, but that they themselves had not the foggiest idea how to proceed, and had no answer when the SWP said, "yes, in time, but this is not the time." Thus even if they realize that the SWP leadership in surviving the reaction after World War II kept only a shell of Trotskyism alive, and even if they suspect that the workers will need the kernel not the shell, they begin to wonder whether the shell after all is not better than nothing, and that maybe only a shell is really possible in American conditions. What can be done when the workers are politically backward? This is really a big stumbling block for these comrades, but needlessly so. Trotsky's intervention on just this question in his Discussions on the "Transitional Program" with leaders of the SWP holds good today and may

clarify a comrade or two. Trotsky said,

"It is a fact that the American working class has a petty bourgeois spirit, lacks revolutionary solidarity, is used to a high standard of life, and the mentality of the American working class corresponds not to the realities of today but to memories of yesterday....What can a revolutionary party do in this situation? In the first line give a clear honest picture of the objective situation, of the historic tasks which flow from this situation irrespective as to whether or not the workers are today ripe for this. Our tasks don't depend on the mentality of the workers. The task is to develop the mentality of the workers....we cannot give any guarantees that they will accept our program...we can only take the responsibility for ourselves. We must tell the workers the truth.... even if this working class doesn't sufficiently mobilize its mind and strength at present for the socialist revolution--even in the worst case, if this working class falls victim to fascism, the best elements will say, 'We were warned by this party; it was a good party!' And a great tradition will remain in the working class."

There is hardly a question relating to revolutionary politics that centrism cannot manage to obscure. Here there is time only to indicate a few that contribute to the confusion of comrades in the SWP specifically. If these comrades will read Cde Fender's speech to the last SWP convention, published in the VANGUARD NEWSLETTER, the manner in which the SWP obfuscates the organizational principles of the democratic-centralist international of Trotsky will be unraveled for them: the SWP practices the same "Trotskyism in one country" comrade Healy in England is accused of. That same speech will also help dispel their confusion concerning transitional demands: the SWP elevates the cult of democratic slogans in order to avoid advancing transi-

tional demands without appearing to do so, in effect abandoning the "Transitional Program" by not applying it in practice.

The Terminology of Centrism

There is also the concept of "critical support," which has proven very effective in disguising the unprincipled politics of the SWP from its own membership. Lately it has been used most often in chasing after petty-bourgeois formations like La Raza Unida Party. It is palmed off as a Leninist "tactic." If one pretends to be busy applying Leninist tactics in petty-bourgeois formations like La Raza Unida, which in itself is not unprincipled, it then becomes easier to brush off as "getting ahead of themselves" any who insist on finding a way to the proletarian vanguard of the super-exploited and oppressed minorities. The SWP means by the term simply "support," but with a role for themselves. The concept of "critical support" is a cover for an inability to skillfully advance an independent proletarian policy. But what is an independent policy? That is the real mystery to the comrades in the SWP. Let them ask, for example, whether the Bolsheviks gave Kerensky "critical support" even against Kornilov, whose success would have been a victory for the counter revolution. The Bolsheviks did not. They merely decided that Kornilov had to be fought first and that they would not overthrow Kerensky just then. So they concluded an agreement with Kerensky against Kornilov. But they considered it unprincipled to support Kerensky, never withheld their criticisms, fought Kornilov under their own banner, and won support for Bolshevism against Kerensky by the independent character of their fight against Kornilov. That was an independent policy.

There is another way the centrists manage to keep themselves free of the Bolshevik taint: they always distinguish between "principled" and "tactical" questions, though it should be clear that strategy, not

"principle" is counterposed to tactics. It is a convenient method of effectively disposing of arguments that are based on principle, that is, on Marxism--on the theoretical, programmatic, and practical knowledge acquired in the past by the revolutionary proletariat. The SWP simply assures its dupes that principles have no decisive bearing, the question at hand is purely "tactical" and the best thing is to rely on the leadership's "know-how" in such matters. It is just another disguise for unprincipled political practice.

It will be useful to recall what Trotsky had to say about strategy and tactics in Lessons of October:

"By tactics, in politics, we understand, using the analogy of military science, the art of conducting isolated operations. By strategy, we understand the art of conquest, i.e., the seizure of power....In the epoch of the Second International we confined ourselves solely to the conception of social democratic tactics....parliamentary tactics, trade union tactics, municipal tactics, cooperative tactics, and so on. But the question of combining all forces and resources--all sorts of troops--to obtain victory over the enemy was really never raised...as the practical task of the struggle for power....It was only the 1905 revolution that first posed, after a long interval, the fundamental or strategical questions of proletarian struggle.... The great epoch of revolutionary strategy began in 1917....The questions of the trade union movement, of parliamentary activity, and so on, do not disappear, but they now become invested with a new meaning as subordinate methods of a combined struggle for power. Tactics are subordinated to strategy."

Can the SWP centrists finally recognize themselves? Their orientation is not to a period of capitalist crisis, but as if this were still the epoch of the Second Inter-

national, hence their Social Democratic tactics. For them "the great epoch of revolutionary strategy" which began "in 1917," when tactics became "subordinate methods of a combined struggle for power," has ended and will not resume in any foreseeable future. Anyone who attempts to introduce the ideas and policies of Bolshevism and of the "Transitional Program" into gatherings of these comrades will therefore be received as if he or she had just dropped in from another planet. They reject Bolshevism--precisely because, in Trotsky's words:

"Bolshevism is not a doctrine (i.e., not merely a doctrine) but a system of revolutionary training

for the proletarian upheaval."

The SWP will therefore prove neutre, deadweight or an obstacle in the coming revolution, just as the Mensheviks were because they too could not foresee a proletarian upheaval and a proletarian revolution. Like the Mensheviks, the SWP will turn out to be the unwitting servant of the master class and its lieutenants in the labor movement, and risk becoming even their conscious agents. The revolutionists who still remain in the SWP will have to follow the example of those who adhered to the Mensheviks, who, when the actual shock of revolution finally clarified them, left the opportunists and joined the Bolsheviks.

THE SPARTACIST LEAGUE: "Revolutionary" Trade Union Posturing - Part IV

As we stated in our May issue, the implementation of Turner's "Memorandum on the Negro Struggle" was a particularly illuminating demonstration of the petty-bourgeois student-radical focus of the Spartacist League (SL) and a "related myopia toward the workers" which it continues to demonstrate by its opposition to the Committee for Rank and File Caucuses (CRFC).

The logic of its orientation to the radical milieu, openly declared in the 1968 faction fight, forced the majority to take up a struggle against the position long held by revolutionary Marxists that the special oppression of the Black and Spanish-speaking peoples takes the form in the work-place of super-exploitation.

In opposition to everything which the creative Marxists had written to call attention to a phenomenon by which the ruling class improves its rate of profit by paying less than the "living wage," less than the "average means of subsistence," to the "pariahs," to the workers of especially oppressed minorities and to their women workers in particular as well as to women in general, the Robertson-Seymour majority contended that the super-exploitation of Black and Spanish-speaking workers was only a figment of Turner's imagination.

Thus, in his document "Super-exploitation and All That" (Spartacist League Split), in denying that Black workers are "super-exploited in the technical sense," Joseph Seymour,

as spokesman for the SL majority also felt constrained to attack the "Turner hypothesis" as follows:

"...if black and white workers do in fact, have the same rate of exploitation, actions which increased the relative wages of poorly paid black workers would result in the rate of exploitation of highly paid white workers being greater than that of blacks."

Irony itself is disarmed by this sample of the scholastic school of SL "Marxist" political economy!

At the last NY local meeting which the opposition was to attend, Robertson finally declared that he too had come to believe with Seymour that Black and other minorities were not super-exploited.

Lo and behold! Eight months later, a local SL leaflet entitled "Mike Klonsky and Brother Stalin" was re-issued by its national office, prefaced by an official statement of approbation, which recognized the existence of "Black and other super-exploited minorities!" We appropri-

ately greeted the SL leaflet in our July, 1969, issue as a "grotesque exhibition of unalloyed opportunism." The reason for the SL's flip-flop, as we then also pointed out was that:

"Unfortunately for the SL, shortly after our ouster, every organization on the left, with the exception of the WL (Workers League), began to trumpet its discovery of super-exploitation to the heavens."

The SL has since avoided the use of the embarrassing term, "super-exploitation," in its printed material. However, it is our understanding that Robertson has recently informed contacts who may have read either the SL's "abridged" edition of the factional exchanges and/or our own pamphlet Spartacist League Split, that the SL organization simply "does not agree" with Seymour on the issue of super-exploitation! The SL leaders thus clearly demonstrate that they share the same contempt for honest political accounting with which they have loudly, justly and often charged the WL.

The petty-bourgeois quality of the SL has been amply demonstrated by its trade union theory and practice over the years, of which its opposition to CRFC is only a component part.

In December, 1971, "Workers Vanguard" carried the SL's considered judgment that "the merger of the AFL and CIO in 1955 was a reactionary development..." Following as it did the "Cold War" and the ouster of the Stalinist-led bureaucracy, the merger was, no doubt, motivated in large part by narrow and essentially reactionary bureaucratic interests. But Marxists, "scientific socialists," do not assess a merger of trade unions as reactionary or progressive on the basis of bureaucratic motivation alone, but take into prime consideration more fundamental class criteria based on objective factors.

The SL theoreticians forget that in order to secure their union base of power, the "labor lieutenants" of the bourgeoisie must also respond to the pressure of the membership for the maintenance and, in "good" times especially, for improvement

of their living standards. The "lieutenants" must, in other words, not only resist the "excessive" demands of the workers, but also of the bourgeoisie!

Negotiations for the AFL-CIO merger began in 1954, the year of the post-Korean War recession, and under conditions of an anti-labor offensive by the ruling class. In 1954, 17 states had already passed "right to work" laws outlawing the closed union shop with other states ready to follow suit. In these circumstances, the labor unity achieved must be seen, objectively, as a progressive development in spite of the reactionary misleadership.

The leaders of the SL are unable to comprehend that which is now becoming clear to any serious trade unionist: the necessity of uniting the working class in its existing organizations in the process and as an integral part of the process of struggle against the bosses, their state and their "labor lieutenants." It would seem that the metaphysicians who head the SL actually oppose such a unity unless and until the bureaucrats offer guarantees of greater union democracy or are no longer able to dictate the terms of unity. But this means postponing the struggle for unity to the eve of the socialist revolution!

On a very similar basis, the SL also opposed the formation of CRFC. As against our conception that the working class vanguard party is built in the process of struggle for rank-and-file caucuses, the SL insists that "first" the party is built; only "then" can caucuses be given consideration. Of course! The objective requirements of the working class are "small potatoes" compared to the narrow organizational outlook of a student-oriented personality cult, which is, evidently, what the SL understands by the "party".

Its trade union metaphysics originated, significantly, in the Social Services Employees Union (SSEU), at that time independent. The welfare caseworkers who belong to it are recruited from non-

specializing college graduates. Until quite recently, the SL found work in the SSEU quite congenial as, in effect, an extension of the college campus. In 1968-69, it unsuccessfully opposed the affiliation of the, at that time, approximately 9,000 caseworkers to the 130,000 membered Council 37, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), AFL-CIO, with a high proportion of Black and Spanish-speaking workers. According to the SL, affiliation would have undermined the more radical character of the isolated SSEU, then in contract negotiations with NYC. The nature of the welfare casework occupation has made it particularly vulnerable to the threat by the Lindsay Administration, now being carried out, to eliminate thousands of these jobs, and to replace the professional caseworkers by lower-paid clerical workers. The sell-out contract subsequently negotiated by the ineffectual and narrow bureaucratic Morgenstern leadership is seen by the SL trade union theoreticians, not as the fruit of the SSEU's isolation, weakness and vulnerability to attack, especially in a period of economic downturn, but rather of its affiliation as Local SSEU-371 to bureaucrat Gotbaum's Council 37 and, thereby, also to the welfare clerks Local 1549 with a high proportion of Black and Spanish-speaking workers.

Appropriately enough for an organization which had resisted a turn to the most exploited layers of the working class, the SL had virtually ignored the thousands of poorly-paid clerical workers employed alongside the higher paid welfare caseworkers in NYC's welfare centers. It would seem that--unlike the situation with the radicalized post-campus caseworkers--concentration among the clerical minority workers would have been a waste of the SL's time. These are, after all, the workers who Robertson had discovered are without a "Weltanschauung," a worldview, and who, therefore, cannot be won to "revolutionary" politics, at least of the SL's brand. Also appropriately and a measure of the

seriousness with which it performs trade union work, when the SL found that it had more important "fish to fry" on campus, it unilaterally and without a word of warning declared the Militant Caucus which it had established jointly with its Socialist Forum allies in the SSEU to be disbanded!

The SL insists that the CRFC united front organized on a two-point class program: the fight against state control of the unions and for an independent workers party based on the rank and file, is opportunistic. CRFC, it seems, does not require workers' organizations and worker militants to subscribe to the whole "Transitional Program" as the basis for joining it and is not, moreover, under the "leadership" (read control) of the "vanguard party" (read SL).

It is, of course, necessary for a revolutionary Marxist organization to fight for its entire program. The necessity lies in the fact that the program is not an article of faith which its members are called upon to "witness", but represents the immediate and historic interests of the working class in the present objective conditions. The working class vanguard party can play a decisive role in the historical process, but only if it has carefully analyzed and correctly related to objective factors. As Trotsky has often pointed out, the psychology of the working class, its level of consciousness and subjective moods, e.g., readiness for struggle, indecision, apathy, is an objective factor for the party as the subjective factor in history.

It is above all necessary for serious revolutionists to recognize that no working class vanguard party worthy of the name presently exists and that it must and can only be constructed in and as part of the struggles of the working class.

Tactics are subordinate to strategy and cannot be in opposition to it in any respect. As Trotsky points out in The Third International After Lenin,

"By the conception of tactics is understood the system of measures

that serves a single current task or a single branch of the class struggle. Revolutionary strategy on the contrary embraces a combined system of actions which by their association, consistency and growth must lead the proletariat to the conquest of power."

CRFC is a tactic which enables working class organizations and militants to unite their forces in the trade unions and win new forces outside them by transcending craft and industrial boundaries, by uniting the organized and unorganized, the employed and unemployed, the working class and other oppressed masses under the leadership of the working class for the task of beating back the current ruling class anti-labor offensive.

At the same time, all component organizations of CRFC have full freedom to raise their entire program--provided only that it does not conflict with the basic CRFC program--and to convince the rank-and-file that their program should become the program of the individual caucuses and of CRFC as a whole. VANGUARD NEWSLETTER intends to fight for its full transitional program within a broad-based rank-and-file movement and, in this process, build the revolutionary Marxist, Leninist and Trotskyist vanguard party.

Sectarian ultimatums to workers to first accept the full program of the socialist organization before they can unite their ranks in struggle for immediate and fundamental class needs cannot build the party, can only isolate the revolutionists from the working class and impede the growth of the party. The SL's tactical orientation stamps it as an organization which is not in the least serious about acquiring roots in the working class and is primarily concerned with a working class posture with which to impress students.

VANGUARD NEWSLETTER helped found CRFC as a tactic which is integral to its strategy for the "conquest of power." This strategy, in turn, is not derived from a myopic concentration on our own national "turf," but rather from an understanding that a

world crisis of capitalism is now maturing. American and world capitalist economy is enmeshed in increasingly sharp and insoluble contradictions which--whatever temporary stabilizations and even improvements may yet take place--can only lead to its catastrophic decline and, with it, to an exacerbation of intra-imperialist rivalries and, also, of the fundamental contradiction between the capitalist and non-capitalist sectors of world economy. Lenin's strategic characterization of the imperialist epoch, which began with the turn of the century, as an epoch of wars and revolutions and Trotsky's "Transitional Program" reassert their vital importance for the strategy and tactics of the revolutionary Marxists against the impressionists of all schools, including so-called "Trotskyists."

It is on the basis of this perspective that we see the network of rank-and-file caucuses, which CRFC was designed to promote, as becoming, at a revolutionary moment and under the leadership of the working class Leninist and Trotskyist vanguard party which has been constructed in the process, the factory committees--"dual power" in the work place--and workers' councils, leading behind them the councils of all the oppressed--"dual power" in the country--which can then proceed to the "conquest of power."

Neither the SL nor any other so-called "Trotskyist" organization has been able to present anything resembling a coherent and integral revolutionary strategy and tactics to our knowledge. Since rejecting a turn to the working class in 1968, the SL has only been concerned to dazzle the student-radical milieu with bits and pieces of "orthodox" Marxism. The bankruptcy of its trade union line becomes more apparent even to its own members. It is for this reason that the SL leadership finds it increasingly necessary to try to cover its theoretical and political nakedness by a greater resort to slander and personal venom against CRFC and VANGUARD NEWSLETTER.