

SPARTACIST LEAGUE SPLIT

NOTES on this copy of "Spartacist League Split"

(Harry Turner's published pamphlet on his expulsion from the Spartacist League (he was "partially and conditionally suspended" on October 28, 1968)

The front cover is light blue, severely yellowed at its edges and going in from the edges a quarter of an inch. That cover is $8 \frac{1}{4} \times 6 \frac{1}{2}$ inches.

The pages themselves, inside, are $8 \frac{1}{4}$ by $6 \frac{1}{4}$ inches. They are printed on both sides.

There is a single $8 \frac{1}{2} \times 11$ (yellowed and frayed at the edges, and folded in half) sheet just inside the front cover, a further introduction to the document, signed by Harry Turner and Hugh Fredricks. This is reproduced 1:1 (100%). There also is a $2 \frac{1}{2} \times 4 \frac{1}{2}$ inch slip of white paper stapled to the inside front cover, at the top left, with Harry Turner's NY City address in the East Village, and instructions on how to get there by subway. This is reproduced 1:1 (100%) in this copy.

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— Riazanov

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SPARTACIST LEAGUE SPLIT

The political positions of a minority within the Spartacist League, prior to its ouster from that organization, are set forth in the enclosed pamphlet.

This minority attempted to transform the SL from a propagandist circle, orientated mainly to student radicals, into an organization which would root itself in the working class and proceed to build a Leninist vanguard party. As this record makes clear, Robertson and his majority were able to retain control of the organization by bureaucratic measures. In so doing, they ensured that the SL would remain a small isolated sect, concerned, in the main, to provide an occasional expression of opinion by the cult leader to the intellectual milieu.

In developing its perspectives for work in the class, the minority attempted to apply the theoretical knowledge and practical experience acquired by its revolutionary predecessors to present reality. The pioneering activity of the early Communist Party in the Trade Union Educational League (TUEL), a transitional organization led by William Z. Foster, the Transitional Program of the Fourth International, and Trotsky's contributions of the Negro question, constituted the most essential elements of its approach, as formulated in the Memorandum on the Negro Struggle.

Whither the Spartacist League. The Internal Struggle Continues and Ideology and Practice represent a defense and further elaboration of the minority's outlook in the heat of factional struggle. In depicting this struggle, the pamphlet reveals the bankruptcy of the SL, its lack of perspective, and its narrow circle character. More importantly, the pamphlet focuses on the problem of building a Leninist party in the most industrially developed country in the world, which is, moreover, divided on racial lines.

The upsurge in militancy of black workers, and the growing number of strikes by, and rank and file actions within the organized labor movement, was viewed by the minority within the context of the sharpening crisis of world capitalism. It recognized that the growing contradictions of the world imperialist system meant increasing attacks on the political rights and the living standards of the working class as a whole. It concluded that opportunities for the building of the Leninist party were increasingly to be found.

The minority understood that the present winning of black workers meant, not only rooting the party in the most exploited sector of the class but also, the acquisition of future leadership for the class as a whole; that a vital stage in the process of building the party was now at hand, with the radicalization of black workers; that the struggle against the special oppression of black workers, within the context of a struggle for the interests of all workers, led to the winning of black and white workers to socialist consciousness; that, conversely, neither black nor white workers could acquire this consciousness without an uncompromising struggle against white chauvinism and its mirror image, black nationalism.

We believe these insights to be increasingly valid today, and necessary to the construction of a party of the Leninist type in the U.S.

We welcome your comments and criticisms.

Harry Turner
Hugh Fredricks

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PREFACE

The basic ideas which stamp the former minority in the Spartacist League as a distinct tendency in the radical movement are embodied in the succeeding documents.

The process of differentiation of our tendency began in 1966, over the question of responding to the strike of New York City Transit workers, a strike which rendered the Condon-Wadlin law a nullity, and forced the ruling-class to seek the alternative of the Taylor Law. Initially, Robertson resisted the SL's intervention through a leaflet, but later on found a basis for supporting it.

The strategic and tactical conceptions concerning the work of revolutionary socialists in the building of a working-class vanguard party, which distinguishes our tendency, began to be formulated in 1965, but its first formal expression was the Memorandum On the Negro Question.

The Basis for the Split

The Memorandum was accepted unanimously by the Political Bureau and Central Committee of the SL. Robertson, who merely desired a token effort, designed to convince student radicals of the "proletarian" character of the SL, began to oppose the Memorandum when it became clear that forces in the New York Local were serious about implementing it. When it became apparent that a serious turn to work in the unions of the most exploited workers would require fundamental changes in the SL itself, in its priorities, its internal life, its press policy, i.e., its entire modus operandi, Robertson moved to eliminate the instrument, the Militant Labor Civil Rights Committee, through which the Memorandum was being applied in New York City, while still hypocritically posing as supporting the Memorandum. At this point, a factional cleavage took place in the organization. Whither the Spartacist League outlines the process of formation and the basis for the factional formations, and typifies the Robertson-Seymour faction as a left-centrist formation resting on the petty-bourgeoisie.

"Minor Differences"

The division of the SL along class lines, into working-class and student orientated factions developed from what initially seemed to be relatively minor organizational changes. To a number of the members of the SL, the resulting hard factional lines, and the contention by the minority that class issues were involved, seemed out of proportion to the initial basis of the dispute, and, therefore, somewhat incomprehensible. But a small fissure on a surface can mask a chasm beneath. Only with its exploration and further development, does it become visible.

So it was with the 1903 split between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks at the Second Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party. (I, of course, do not intend to equate the historic significance of the two splits.) The seemingly minor differences in the wording of resolutions by Lenin and Martov, became the basis of differentiation between the "hards", who would base themselves on the most exploited sections of the working-class, and carry through an uncompromising struggle for the overthrow of capitalism in Russia, and the "softs", who were based on the upper strata of the working-class, and who

would accommodate themselves to the bourgeoisie.

Bureaucratic Manipulation

The Internal Struggle Continues and Ideology and Practice were responses to the attempts by appointed spokesmen for the majority to obscure the issues. The standard recourse of any bureaucracy to an attack on its outlook and performance is a counter-offensive of charges of organizational disloyalty, attempts to divert the attention of the membership to secondary and tertiary questions, and of gingerly and dishonest treatment of those issues which they find impossible to evade. So it was with the Robertson-Seymour faction. We, of course, had to respond to this campaign of misdirection and misrepresentation. In doing so, however, we not only redirected the membership to the real issues, but additionally clarified and delineated our positions.

The minority had geared its tactics to a culmination of the faction fight at a year-end projected conference. However, the premature departure of a section of the minority, seriously weakened our struggle. Whatever hopes we had entertained of displacing the leadership had been dashed. In addition, a number of those members who might have earlier been inclined to consider the minority's positions became inaccessible.

Robertson, taking advantage of the weakened position of the minority, and anxious to prevent its documents from being given consideration at the conference, devised the means for forcing it out of the organization. The resignation statements make clear that the "choice" between signing an unprincipled "dictated statement" and the penalty of a "partial and conditional suspension", was, in reality, a method for the exclusion of the minority from the conference and from the organization.

The Future of the SL

The forced resignation of the minority ensures that the SL, under Robertson, to the extent that it is able to continue to function, will remain on a non-revolutionary path - will continue either as a sectarian circle organized around a dominant personality, and/or will make opportunistic adjustments to "difficult objective circumstances".

The Leninist Party

We believe that a Leninist vanguard party can only be built, in this period, in this country, through the building of transitional organizations in the trade-unions where the most exploited workers, the black and Spanish-speaking workers, are to be found. A transitional program which can unite all workers must have as its fundamental axis the struggle against the special oppression of black and Spanish-speaking workers. Opportunist adaptations to white chauvinism or Black Nationalism are self-defeating, and, in the short run, destructive to the revolutionists themselves.

The black and Spanish-speaking workers are the most revolutionary sector of the class. But, they cannot be won to socialist consciousness, to class consciousness, unless they can experience class solidarity, unless they can see their white class brother fighting against their super-exploitation. Nor will the white worker achieve socialist

consciousness without a struggle against the special oppression of minority workers, without the recognition that his immediate and long-term fundamental interests are directly menaced by the continued special oppression of minority workers.

The post-World War upsurge of world capitalism and the development of deformed workers states, produced incredible theoretical confusion and shattered the world movement of Trotskyism. The sharpening of the contradictions of capitalism in the United States and on a world scale, the beginning of the economic downturn, heralds the beginning of greater clarity. The ebb in the revolutionary socialist movement, as seen by its fractionation into small circles, will, in the coming period, be reversed, as objective circumstances make clear the programmatic basis for its reconstruction. And this demands discussion, debate and a principled unity in action by those who see themselves as revolutionary socialists.

This bulletin is offered in furtherance of this process.

Harry Turner

November 14, 1968

MEMORANDUM ON THE NEGRO STRUGGLE

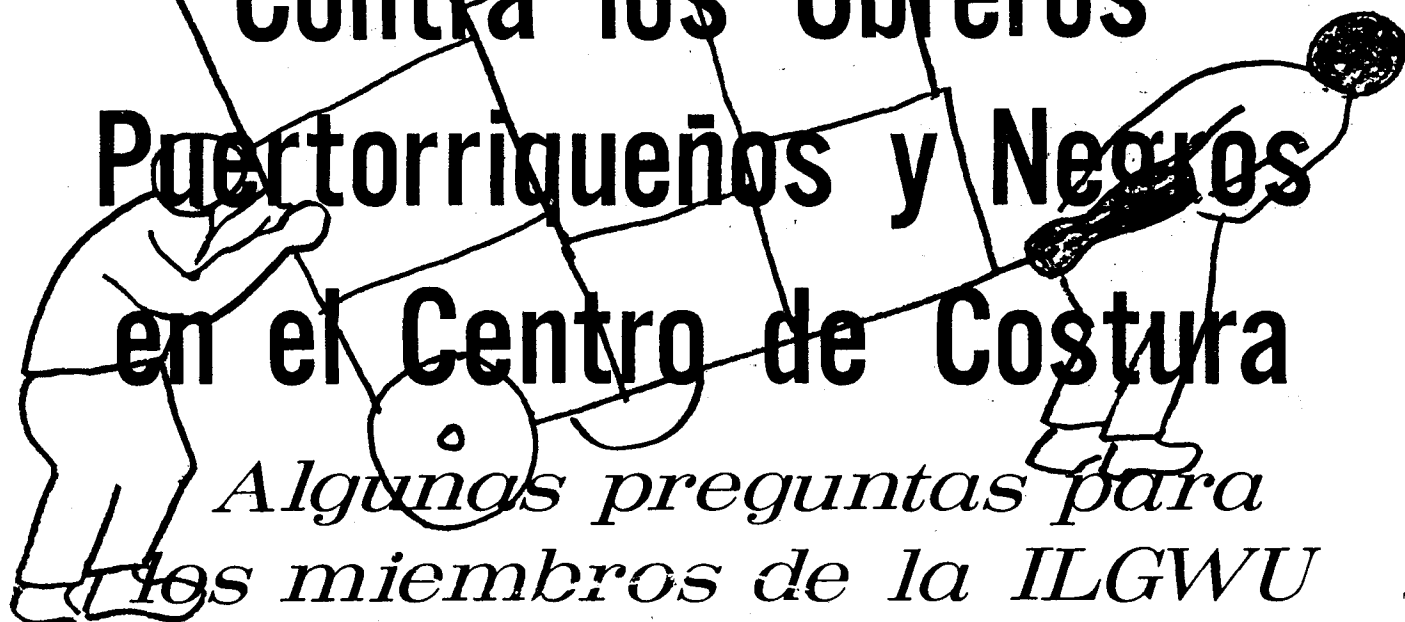
1. The Spartacist League's perspective of winning a predominately black cadre in this period has thus far not been fulfilled. Within the ghetto, black nationalist conceptions could appear as militant, and, perhaps more realistic than a working-class outlook. In this arena, concepts of the "people" or the "poor" receive more ready acceptance than "class" and can be readily translated into support for black bourgeois politicians or black-owned business.
2. The idea that black and white workers can unite in struggle for their class needs, and the special needs of the doubly-oppressed black workers, meets with little response in the ghettos because it seems to contradict the evidence of their senses. In their experience, white workers have been content to allow the segregation of black workers in low-paid jobs to continue, and react to the struggles of the Black people with attitudes ranging from passivity through indifference to outright hostility.
3. A sharp upturn in militant struggles has taken place by the labor movement together with heightened rank and file activity. These struggles have paralleled the rise in militancy in the black ghettos, but have not resulted in increased identification of white and black workers with each other. On the contrary, the growth of black nationalist ideas, and the increase in despairing ghetto outbursts reflect the increased separation felt by black workers.
4. Prospects for achieving the unity of black and white workers against their exploiters are related to the objective necessity of the working class to pass from an economic level of struggle alone to an all-encompassing struggle which includes the political plane. The ruling class is presently planning to outlaw the right to strike in major industries. This poses the immediate need for workers to break with the capitalist parties, and organize an independent party of the working class, i.e., every major strike immediately confronts the state as the open agent of capital, and transforms the economic struggle into a political one. Economic pressures on the workers will increase as US capitalism attempts to counter the falling rate of profit and the downturn in the world capitalist market through further intensification and rationalization of the labor process, and as it attempts to shift the burden of the Vietnam war onto their backs.
5. A transitional organization is needed at the point of production and in the process of labor, where black and white workers come into contact in their class role, to prove in action that unity against the class enemy is possible and necessary, and to make available to the working-class struggle the immense revolutionary potential of the black workers.
6. The concept of the SL that black workers are slated to play an exceptional role in the coming US revolution retains its validity. It can be implemented only as white workers develop the recognition of the identity of the interests of the proletariat. Conversely, insensitivity to the special needs of black workers is but an aspect of the lack of revolutionary consciousness. Concentration on the building of a transitional organization within the working class which would fight for its unity is, therefore, not simply a short-cut into the class, i.e., the recruitment of black-worker cadre, but also the main road to the building of socialist consciousness in the class.

11 September 1967

7. The pioneering attempt to form a Labor Civil Rights Committee in the Summer of 1965 in the ILGWU on the basis of the transitional program is a concrete example of the kind of rank and file caucus needed. The LCRC type of caucus is suited to organization on a shop, union, and interunion, i.e., regional and national basis, and could, therefore, serve to link rank and file struggles throughout the labor movement. Existing rank and file caucuses can adopt this orientation, and immediately begin to work for such a national structure.
8. The LCRC type of caucus would find that the concrete application of the transitional program would vary in specific shops and industries. However, in general, the following programmatic points would be applicable:
 - a. Every overt and covert manifestation of discrimination against black workers by the bosses and the labor bureaucrats would be fought, i.e., work assignments, pay differentials, racial slurs, etc.
 - b. A minimum wage at a decent standard of life. At this time such a minimum would probably be about \$3 per hour. This is an important point particularly to the black workers and other minorities concentrated in the low-paid jobs, and would also serve to expose the so-called progressive labor bureaucrats' basic accommodation to the bosses.
 - c. Upgrading of the black workers and other minorities to the skilled crafts at the employer's expense.
 - d. A sliding scale of wages and hours. This point would enable the caucus to link up three questions.
 - 1) The need to fight for the right of the unemployed to jobs. In the process, ties would be forged with organizations of the unemployed which would also have to be created and which would also be the responsibility of the caucuses. In this connection, the caucuses would also take appropriate steps to reach the unemployed youth, e.g., picketing the state employment services in protest against the \$1.50 minimum wage, e.g., tying in the question of unemployment and discrimination to the struggle against the Vietnam war.
 - 2) The shorter work week would make available skilled jobs for the black workers and help eliminate competition for jobs between black and white workers.
 - 3) The skilled crafts would be more strongly tied to the general struggle of the working class, and the tendency to operate as a distinct aristocracy of labor would be opposed.
 - e. The rank and file caucuses would undertake to organize the unorganized shops in the industry, i.e., those shops which the labor bureaucrats have agreed not to organize (for a consideration), proved unable to organize, or have had no interest in organizing, e.g., small sweatshops where minority workers are most exploited.
 - f. The rank and file caucuses would run candidates in union elections and fight to oust the labor bureaucracy and to achieve rank and file control of the unions.

DISCRIMINACION

Contra los Obreros Puertorriqueños y Negros en el Centro de Costura



*Algunas preguntas para
los miembros de la ILGWU*

- 1 ¿Por qué hay menos de un cuatro por ciento de obreros Negros y puertorriqueños empleados como artesanos diestros (cortadores y planchadores) cuando ellos constituyen más de la mitad de los trabajadores en la industria? ¿Por qué la ILGWU no tiene una cláusula en sus contratos que provéa derechos de igualdad en los empleos, y de ascensos, para todos los obreros Negros y puertorriqueños, como el Distrito 65?
- 2 ¿Por qué son sus salarios de \$60 semanales o menos? ¿Por qué los miembros (empacadores), de la Local 60A, perciben desde \$30 a \$50 menos que los miembros del Distrito 65 y hacen el mismo trabajo? ¿Por qué los sueldos de los artesanos diestros de la industria de vestimentas de mujeres no han sido aumentados como en las demás industrias?
- 3 ¿Por qué los "líderes" de la ILGWU permiten fabricas no organizadas donde solo emplean obreros puertorriqueños y Negros no organizados?
- 4 ¿Por qué se excluye a los obreros puertorriqueños y Negros de posiciones ejecutivas y de liderato en las altas posiciones de la Unión? ¿Por qué la Local 60, que paga salarios altos a los planchadores, y la Local 60A, donde los obreros perciben salarios bajisimos, tienen un solo director?

UN PROGRAMA COMBATIVO

- 1 Un salario mínimo de \$2.00 la hora en todos los contratos de Uniones de Nueva York AHORA, y el equivalente para los obreros que cobran por piezas.
- 2 Ascender a obreros Negros y puertorriqueños a la calidad de artesanos diestros y con el derecho de ingresar a las uniones de obreros diestros.
- 3 La organización de las fábricas no organizadas.
- 4 Reducir la semana de trabajo sin reducción en el sueldo. Aumentar los salarios, no el sobre tiempo. Controlar la ILGWU através de la membresia proletaria.

Deseo saber más sobre el programa y como llevarlo a fin.

NOMBRE

LABOR CIVIL RIGHTS COMMITTEE

WHITHER THE SPARTACIST LEAGUE?

The dispute which erupted in the New York local, over the seemingly minor question of re-allocation of local forces, has since disclosed political differences of the most serious character.

Robertson and Turner Motions

To comrades unacquainted with the basis of the dispute, a first examination of Cde. Robertson's motion and Cde. Turner's substitute and counter-motions might seem to contain no more than differing organizational solutions to the question of assigning available cadre to the varied arenas in which an aspiring Leninist vanguard movement must function. In reality, the priorities expressed in the motions point to fundamental differences in outlook as to the direction and potential of the SL.

Cde. Robertson's motion, amended by him after three local meetings of debate, and which then carried, is as follows:

"The local recommends that the pan-union Militant Labor Civil Rights Committee transform itself into particular civil rights committees and caucuses in the next period. Paralleling this change is the criteria that intra-union civil rights committees and caucuses be restricted to members involved, and that SL non-members of unions be involved only at the fraction level. In particular, MLCRC should continue its present union leaflets through the period of the next contract, while giving main emphasis toward building the superceding caucus in the new union concentration."

Cde. Turner's substitute motion for the first sentence of Cde. Robertson's motion, and counter-motion to the balance, both of which were defeated, are as follows:

"The local recognizes that the present pan-union MLCRC is an interim formation which is eliminated in the process of building CRC's and caucuses in particular trade unions, and by their linkage in a federation which assumes the responsibility for the building of other CRC's in trade unions in which the masses of super-exploited black and Puerto Rican workers are found. The work of comrades in the MLCRC should be closely supervised by the local executive committee which will also ensure that reports of their activities be made regularly to the local.

"All comrades who are capable of contributing to the work of the MLCRC should be involved in its activities, either as members or supporters, in order to implement, as quickly as possible, the directives of the PB and CC on the building of CRC's and caucuses in the trade unions, which will fight for the unity of the working class on the basis of a struggle against the special oppression of the black and Puerto Rican workers.

"The local recognizes, however, that a Leninist organization cannot limit itself to trade union arenas, but must also be involved in other aspects of the class struggle, e.g., anti-war, student, black ghettos, electoral activities, etc., to whatever extent is necessary and possible. For the SL, as yet a propagandist group whose present function is mainly exemplary, the recruitment of cadre as a result of the upsurge in arenas involving the radicalized student milieu is a vital necessity. This local also has the responsibility for helping to maintain the NO₂. Forces presently involved in MLCRC and other trade union activity will, therefore, have to be utilized in pressing struggles in other arenas, when and as necessary."

Implementing the Tactical Turn

In order to understand the approaches underlying the Turner motions, it is necessary to discuss the Memorandum on the Negro Struggle, unanimously adopted by the PB

and by the last plenum of CC (Attachment, PB minutes of 11 September 1967).

The struggle over MLCRC is in reality a struggle over the major tactical turn envisioned in the Memorandum. This turn had not been previously given sufficient critical attention. Although a discussion on the turn did take place in the NY local, disclosing at that time the existence of an unconcealed petty-bourgeois minority tendency in the SL, the polarization into opposing groups, one for and one against the PB motion, made sober and critical evaluation of the aspects and implications of the tactical turn impossible at that time.

In the higher bodies the turn was accepted passively. Few reservations were expressed in the lukewarm discussion which took place on this question. As a result of the failure to thoroughly explore the implications of the Memorandum both the majority in the NY local around Cde. Robertson, and those in the minority, are able to assert that they are in agreement with the Memorandum. Meanwhile Cde. Robertson, by his motion, has acted to eliminate MLCRC in the name of the same tactical turn which the minority sees as a necessary vehicle for its implementation.

Tactical Application

In essence, the Memorandum projects the development of a transitional organization and program in the trade unions to unite black and white workers in a struggle against the super-exploitation of black workers and other minorities. The turn to the trade unions is predicated on the sharp increase in strikes, and in rank and file activity in the working class, and on the heightened militancy of black workers, as a result of sharpening contradictions of US capitalism, nationally and internationally. The turn envisions the linking up of the revolutionary energy of black workers to that of the class as a whole.

Black workers are today generally in advance of white workers, in that they have fewer illusions about the oppressive nature of the "white power structure" and increasingly recognize that their status as a specially oppressed race-color caste cannot be basically altered within the confines of capitalist society, i.e., the need for a fundamental, revolutionary upheaval. It is on this basis that black workers were seen by the SL as playing an exceptional role in the coming US revolution, and the basis for the winning of a predominantly black cadre to the SL.

The reactionary utopian ideas of black nationalism which, while reflecting the anger of the black people also act to immobilize real struggle, and which are least accepted by black workers, are seen as being jettisoned to the extent that white workers rise to the recognition of the needs of the class as a whole, and struggle against all aspects of the special oppression of black workers. In the process of building Labor-Civil Rights caucuses in the unions the black workers in the forefront of the struggle are seen as being won, not only to class, but also to socialist consciousness and, therefore, as recruitable to the SL.

White workers are also seen as being won to socialist consciousness in the process, but, in all likelihood, as lagging behind the black workers in this respect. Of course, students and other radicals would be attracted to the SL, to the extent that it did more than talk prophetically and abstractly about the role of the working class, and showed itself actually capable of working in and influencing the class.

Militant Labor Civil Rights Committee

The Memorandum on the Negro Struggle also projected the need for a movement similar to "the TUEL led by the Communists in the '20's," to bring the SL's understanding of the necessary tactical direction of the class struggle in the US to as wide an audience as possible. It recognized that while the SL, in and by itself, could not be

that movement, it could "begin to agitate for LCRC-type caucuses, and begin to organize them, where possible, on a non-sectarian and non-exclusionary basis."

The SL was, therefore, faced with two questions in the implementation of its line.

1) The SL, like most ostensibly revolutionary organizations, is, with some notable exceptions, largely isolated from the main class organs of the workers, the trade unions, where the black and Spanish-speaking minorities are to be found. It must therefore find the road to these workers, and to the building of caucuses in these unions, which can serve as an example to the rest of the radical movement.

2) In view of the exceptional importance that the SL approach to the trade unions can have for the class struggle in the US at the present time, it must find the vehicle by which it can act to involve other radicals, black militants and students in the building of such caucuses, not simply depending upon its own limited forces.

The vehicle devised by the SL comrades with primary responsibility for the work in New York City was the Militant Labor Civil Rights Committee. This committee was organized with a view to concentrating in a particular union in which a caucus could be most readily built, utilizing whatever forces were available inside that union, sending in whatever forces seemed necessary to augment these original forces, and involving all those outside interested in taking part in the work. As members learned to function successfully in trade unions, and as the particular caucus became viable and able to function without outside support, the rest of the MLCRC membership could turn its attention to other unions. As the caucus in the first union successfully rooted itself among the most exploited workers, the friends, relatives, and contacts of these workers could be expected to come forth with their grievances, as potential forces around which other caucuses could be built in other unions, in a chain-reaction effect. Similarly, as the work progressed, the MLCRC would be able to draw additional outside support from other radical sources.

Eventually, the ad-hoc super-structure of MLCRC would be displaced by a formal federation of caucuses. This new structure could publish a regular newsletter concretely setting forth the transitional programmatic ideas, and broadening the horizons of caucus members to the issues and struggles involving unionists elsewhere. Eventually, it would have to function as a professional operation, with a full-time editor, chairman, and full-time organizers actively promoting the building of similar caucuses.

Theory and Practice

The strategic line and tactical implementation of the SL on the Negro Question is, therefore, quite unique. It neither adapts to black nationalism as do the SWP, the CP, and assorted Maoist organizations, nor does it make a "left" adaptation to the prevailing white chauvinism in the working class as does the Workers League, with its line that a struggle against super-exploitation is "divisive", or as do the Foxites in their New Rank and Filer, in supporting the "right to form black caucuses" in the unions which can then press for "their special demands."

The line is, in fact, a concrete example of the role of theory in illuminating practice. It results from the conscious application of the Transitional Program to present conditions in the US, utilizing past experiences of the SL members in civil rights organizations and the trade unions, and also incorporating ideas stemming from the pioneering efforts of the early communist movement in the US.

Local Application

In New York City, the two most productive areas for the turn to the unions with the most exploited workers were seen to be hospital work and light industry. Two large,

so-called progressive unions were operating in these areas, both of which had high percentages of black and Puerto Rican workers. SL members either were already at work in these unions or readily available for entry.

The hospital arena was chosen inasmuch as it seemed more immediately productive and because a seemingly responsible comrade had been functioning there for several years. A second comrade was persuaded to enter this field. Other comrades interested and felt to be capable of helping to build the MLCRC, and who could be freed from other responsibilities, began meeting with the MLCRC, aiding in the production of the MLCRC Newsletter, and taking responsibility for regular weekly hospital distributions. All other SL members were asked to distribute at hospitals once every two weeks. Cde. Robertson, who was present at early discussions which projected and launched the MLCRC, voiced no objections at that time to the basic strategy and tactics devised. It was only several months later, after the production of three newsletters, each of which had been distributed at a dozen hospitals, and after the defection of the Neumann-Ross-Smith group, that Cde. Robertson announced his bloc with Cde. Seymour opposing the continuation of the MLCRC, and advanced his motion for its phasing-out.

"Organizational" Differences

The current dispute was presented, at first, in organizational garb. Cde. Robertson indicated a concern for a "balanced" approach to activity in the local, and spoke, humorously at first, of the growing "cancer" of MLCRC. He then developed his objection to MLCRC on the basis that it was a "pan-union" operation. According to Cde. Robertson, four levels of organizational activity by radicals take place in their work in trade unions: from the lowest level, the isolated individual, who tries to recruit directly to the party; through the second level, the pan-union organization, which is limited to outside propagandist activities; the third level, the caucus, which poses an alternative leadership; and the highest level, the party, which acts directly on the union with its propaganda. Cde. Robertson concludes from his abstract, mechanical, lifeless, in a word, undialectical schema, that "pan-union" activity is inferior to caucus building, and should be terminated.

As the dispute in the local developed, Cde. Robertson and his supporters accused those opposing the liquidation of MLCRC of having a split perspective, and as being ready to destroy the SL over their "trivial" organizational differences. "The cancer has acquired consciousness," stated Cde. Robertson.

At the present time, Cde. Robertson and his supporters assert, in essence, that the minority is possessed by an "uncontrollable impatience," of having a "frantic Marcyite quality," of posing activities suitable for a mass party of "five thousand," rather than for a "splinter propagandist group," which threatens to "burn out" the organization in "pan-union" forms of activity such as mass leafleting.

The minority has protested that it is concerned with caucus building, not pan-union activities, and that the pan-union MLCRC is only a means toward this end; that the activity of the SL comrades in the trade unions sets an example to others, not only to be attractive to other radicals as an end in itself, but to working class militants, black and white, and that only to the extent that trade unionists presently outside the SL step forward can the involvement of the SL in the trade unions become one of leading masses; that the comrades in MLCRC are fully aware that a Leninist organization must be actively involved in "anti-war work, student, black ghetto and electoral activities, etc., to whatever extent is necessary and possible," that "recruitment of cadre" from the "radicalized student milieu is a vital necessity"; that the local must maintain its responsibilities to the National Office, and that therefore, some forces will have to be re-allocated from the MLCRC work momentarily "when and as necessary." To no avail! The majority in the NY local is, curiously, unable

to hear or comprehend the entirely unambiguous statements of the minority.

The Basis of the Dispute

What was initially posed on organizational grounds by the bloc of Robertson and Seymour, soon disclosed its political essence, and not only in perspectives on the Negro Question and the turn toward trade union work, but in its essential meaning for the present and future course of the SL.

In the course of the dispute, Cde. Robertson has openly taken the following positions:

1) It is "naive to believe" that black workers could be won to the SL "at this time." Workers will join a transitional organization in the unions, and a mass party, but not a "splinter propagandist group." The SL can, therefore, only expect to recruit the atypical black worker, such as the West Indian who, not having personally experienced life-long racist oppression, does not hate whites, the black worker who is alienated from other black workers instead of whites, and the exceptional black worker who can be won for a "Weltanschauung."

2) The basis for membership in the Trotskyist movement is not primarily activity, but rather agreement as to "what happened in Germany in 1923."

Cde. Robertson, it seems, has abandoned dialectics for a metaphysical mode of thought. He simply eliminates process from his outlook. The black worker he conceives of as ready to join the SL is obviously one who has not gone through the school of struggle in the trade unions, and been reached by a transitional organization and program, but comes to the SL by some other route. The black worker in the trade unions, according to Cde. Robertson, can be convinced of the correctness of the ideas of the SL concerning the struggle against special oppression, can acquire class consciousness, can be convinced of the need for political struggle in a labor party, i.e., can acquire confidence in the program and the people who best fight for that program, but cannot, however, be won for the SL because he does not possess a world view. Cde. Robertson's approach completely ignores concrete development. If the black worker has become a partisan of the SL program in the trade unions, he does possess a world view, as yet incomplete, but clearly present. For that matter, the black workers are in advance of white workers precisely because they are being won, increasingly, for the world view, that they are part of the oppressed of the world because they are black, that whites (who own everything) are their enemies, that a fundamental upheaval will have to take place before they acquire freedom. This "Weltanschauung" is, of course, still rudimentary, and has been utilized by the black nationalists in reactionary and self-defeating activities, but it does exist, and can be developed into a Marxist conception.

Cde. Robertson's remark about the black worker of West Indian origin implies that he will not react to the racism in the US, and to the whites who practice it, in the same manner that other black workers do, a position which is essentially false.

Cde. Robertson should reflect more profoundly on the recruitability of the black worker who is alienated from other black workers. Obviously, the psychological make-up of such an individual must be severely distorted by self-loathing. Is not this the kind of individual most likely to be recruited by the ruling-class, to serve it as a policeman in the ghettos and prisons? Can such a psychologically unhealthy individual with no capacity for struggle help win more black workers to the SL?

Furthermore, Cde. Robertson's understanding of the basis for membership in a Trotskyist organization "today" completely separates theory from practice, and if applied consistently would transform Marxism from a materialist "guide to action" into an

"ideology ." On this basis, certainly, students, who are easily at home in the world of ideas, are more likely candidates for membership in a Trotskyist organization than workers, who have to be convinced, in practice, in activity, that ideas correspond to the reality they face, and that those who espouse them are people worthy of their confidence. The latter is, of course, not easily achieved, but this is exactly what the Memorandum supposedly posed as the task before the SL. Cde. Robertson's thinking in this connection seems to contain more than a hint of intellectual elitism, which, by undervaluing the workers, becomes opportunism.

In the words of Trotsky:

"All shades of opportunism are, in the last analysis, reducible to an incorrect valuation of the revolutionary forces and potential of the proletariat."

Nor is the question one of recruiting workers, and black workers, via the trade unions, en masse. Let the SL begin with two or three, convince them that not only do its ideas have merit, and that they are worthy people, but that they, the workers, have a full place in its ranks, in work and in thought. From this beginning much more will come. This is the process by which the Spartacist League can "develop a black Trotskyist cadre," as its document, Red and Black, a Class Struggle Approach to the Negro Struggle, avers to be its goal, a goal which Cde. Robertson has obviously abandoned at this time. The purpose of trade union activity by SL members seems to be for him largely a question of good, elementary political hygiene, necessary to Trotskyists, as well as a showcase for white radicals, and not at all the main question of attempting to set the most oppressed workers into political motion.

For Cde. Robertson, a dichotomy seems to exist between the "splinter propagandist group" and the mass party. The process by which the SL can develop from one to the other has not been elaborated by him in response to the challenge by the minority that he do so. It would seem that, in reality, he does not now see, and has never foreseen, an internal development of this nature for the SL, and, therefore, completely ignores the question.

He has recently reminded the PB of a difference between Cde. Turner and himself which occurred in 1964, when the Spartacist organization was first initiated. What seemed at that point to be merely a terminological difference, without deeper implications, has now to be seen in a new light.

Cde. Robertson took issue with Cde. Turner's conception that the newly formed Spartacist organization was the embryo of the future Leninist vanguard party. He, instead, took the position that Spartacist could be compared to a sperm or ovum, i.e., the haploid precursor to the viable organism. Cde. Robertson, whose even off-hand remarks are noted for their precision, was making a significant distinction between a life-form with a potential for development into the mature adult, and the germ cell which must await an external complement before it can become a separate, living organism with such potential.

At a recent PB meeting, Cde. Robertson, in summarizing his understanding^{of} the positions of the minority for the record, stated that the minority was of the opinion that the SL was the Leninist party already formed, "however embryonic." His statement crudely distorts the minority position, and also indicates, once again, that in this dispute Cde. Robertson prefers mechanical to dialectical thought. Moreover, Cde. Robertson seems to still believe in the conception that prevailed in the seventeenth century, before Leeuwenhoek, that the human embryo begins as a microscopic homunculus with all the organs fully differentiated. He seems to be unaware that the embryo goes through stages of development, from the one-celled, through the blastula, gastrula, and the fetal stages, in all of which quantity is transformed into quality. Another six months of gestation is still needed before the infant is born. At no point can

the developing organism be expected to perform like the adult, but it can realize its potential to become an adult. It can also become deformed or aborted, either because of internal developmental shortcomings, or because of hostile external factors, or by the interaction of both. But what purpose can a germ cell have except that of waiting?

That Cde. Robertson has consistently held and still holds a conception of "external" SL development was also clearly shown by a remark made by him to Cde. Turner at the SL Founding Conference in September 1966, that he could not, at that time, see any other direction for the future expansion of the SL. It would seem, therefore, that Cde. Robertson, as the National Chairman of the SL, has perpetuated an erroneous and limiting self-concept in and for the organization.

Objective and Subjective Factors

It is only in the past year and a half that the serious consequences attendant on this approach have begun to be fully felt by the SL, as a resultant and interaction of positive and negative objective and subjective factors.

The sharp upsurge in labor struggles finds the bulk of the SL membership uninvolved because, as it true for the other ostensibly radical organizations, its cadre is mainly derived from the student milieu.

The equally sharp upsurge in black consciousness and militancy acted to close off the ghettos to white radicals, and, therefore, also to the SL, whose cadre is predominantly white.

The heightening of anti-war activity, under the aegis of the partisans of so-called militant resistance activities to the Vietnam War and the draft, was matched by large, Popular Front-umbrella type demonstrations. The SL, true to its Marxist orientation, refused to adapt to petty-bourgeois radicals attempting either to substitute themselves in Narodnik-like adventurist fashion for the still politically quiescent working class, or seeking to impress the ruling class with numbers at the cost of program and clarity. The SL was therefore able to operate only at the periphery of the anti-war movement, while attempting to direct it toward the working class.

Similarly, within the electoral arena the formation of the Peace and Freedom Party on the West Coast, and its anaemic imitator on the East Coast, by "socialist" opportunists, operating without a socialist or labor party perspective, made it impossible for SL members to enter into it, and, again, found the SL attempting to work on the PFP adherents from the outside.

Under the circumstances, a certain isolation from the currents where struggle is taking place was inevitably thrust on the SL. However, the empiricist, anti-Marxist, "New Leftist," Maoist, and reformist solutions were so manifestly bankrupt, even before the aborted French Revolution, that the basic Marxist program could be expected to enable the SL to surmount this isolation. A revolutionary organization can sustain itself in enforced isolation, i.e., when opportunities for growth and influence are non-existent. It is another matter when opportunities are present which can be and are not grasped. Frustrations, sharp disputes, and concomitant organizational losses are then inevitable.

Suspension of Spartacist

The majority in the NY Local, and Cde. Robertson particularly, seem unaware of the damage done to the SL by the ten month hiatus between the tenth and eleventh issues of Spartacist, coming as it did at a time of increasing frustrations for the organization. Cde. Robertson has waxed indignant over what he feels to have been the tendency

to "panic" on the part of comrades. Cde. Turner, who, at a point when Spartacist No. 10 was already four months old, pressed his proposal for the emergency employment of a member of the PB as a part-time assistant to Cde. Robertson, to ensure that No. 11 was not further delayed, is seen as particularly culpable in this respect. The seemingly incomprehensible "panic" on the one hand, and inexcusable "laxity" on the other, turned out to be neither the one nor the other, but rather differing perspectives.

To Cde. Robertson, a "splinter" propagandist group, "living off its accumulated capital," has to be most concerned, not with the "form" of a regularly published organ -- not with convincing militants that it is a serious movement, possessing the necessary answers to present problems, that it was and is the only programmatic embodiment, in embryonic form, of the future American Leninist vanguard party -- but with the more important questions such as the "maintenance of the NO," and of a "propagandist line internationally." Fortunately, Cde. Robertson was able to find a solution to the problem of the press in the person of its new editor, Cde. Cunningham. But, if Cde. Cunningham should, for some reason, no longer be available, the frequency of the press would, evidently, again fall to one or two issues per year.

Of course, a Leninist organization must maintain its organizational structure and its international outlook and connections. It cannot, for the sake of a regular press, ignore other fundamental organizational and political needs. Of course, a small propagandist group will inevitably be hard pressed to function with any degree of regularity in any and all areas vital for the movement. It becomes necessary for such an organization, with its limited available resources, constantly to operate under emergency conditions, attending to the most pressing emergency first. However, the particularly low priority given the press by Cde. Robertson can now be more readily understood in the light of the present dispute. Even so, Cde. Robertson, who sees the SL as uninhabitable by workers, cannot be more serious about attracting student radicals without a fairly regular press.

A Conservative Tendency

Cde. Robertson, at a PB meeting ending several sessions of discussion concerning the functioning of the NO, and immediately prior to the opening of the present dispute, threatened to form a "conservative tendency" -- in the positive sense of the term, should he find it necessary -- against those whom he considers to be trying to burden the organization with tasks and responsibilities beyond its capacities.

It would seem that Cde. Robertson has, for some time, represented a conservative tendency in its negative sense. In analyzing the phenomena of conservatism in the party, Trotsky, in his Lessons of October, said the following:

"Each party, even the most revolutionary party, must inevitably produce its own organizational conservatism, for otherwise it would be lacking in necessary stability. This is wholly a question of degree. In a revolutionary party, the vitally necessary does of conservatism must be combined with complete freedom from routine, with initiative in orientation and daring in action. These qualities are put to the severest test during turning points in history ... Both conservatism and revolutionary initiative find their most concentrated expression in the leading organs in the party."

In an earlier section of the same pamphlet, Trotsky also said the following:

"Generally speaking, crises arise in the party at every serious turn in the party's course ... every period in the development of the party has special features of its own and calls for specific habits and methods of work. A tactical turn implies a greater or lesser break in these habits and methods ... the danger arises that if the turn is too abrupt or too sudden, and if in the preceding period too many

elements of inertia and conservatism have accumulated in the leading organ of the party, then the party proves itself unable to fulfill its leadership at that supreme and critical moment for which it has prepared itself in the course of years or decades."

It would seem that the difficult objective conditions under which the SL is required to function has brought to the fore the conservatism of Cde. Robertson, so that he is today in the position of the type of leader who inclines, in Trotsky's words:

"to drag the party back at the very moment when it must take a stupendous leap forward ... to see primarily difficulties and obstacles in the way of revolution, and to estimate each situation with a preconceived, though not always conscious, intention of avoiding any action."

The Robertson-Seymour Bloc

Cde. Robertson

Marx, in his letter to Kugelmann, April 17, 1871, in discussing the role of accidents as "part of the general course of development ... compensated by other accidents," also states:

"But acceleration and delay are very much dependent upon such 'accidents,' including the 'accident' of the character of the people who first head the movement."

Cde. Robertson has played a key and vital role in the formation and continued operation of the Spartacist movement. He has, until recently, been the only person in its ranks willing and able to assume the responsibility of being a full-time functionary. He has shown himself to be an articulate, audacious leader, able to deal incisively with many questions arising in the anti-war, student, electoral, and certain trade union arenas in which the non-specializing college graduate predominates. He has played a predominant role in developing the political positions of the SL. In the process, Cde. Robertson has demonstrated the capacity to take into account the many-sided aspects of a situation, and simultaneously deal with several political and organizational questions in depth, and with flexibility in tactical application.

Cde. Robertson's twenty years of political experience, his wide-ranging theoretical and practical knowledge, his acute intelligence, represent valuable assets for the SL. His independent mind, strong character, and dominant personality are qualities which a revolutionist must possess. Cde. Robertson's predominance in the organization is, by no means, accidental.

That a tendency toward uncritical acceptance of his judgement has also developed is understandable, given the lack of any comparable figure in the organization. That Cde. Robertson consciously encourages this tendency is also evident. Cde. Robertson has, as National Chairman, functioned in a manner calculated to preserve a relationship of master and pupil in the leading bodies of the SL, thereby, completely distorting the Leninist conception of a collective leadership. The operation of the National Office so as to entrust responsibility to leading comrades, which would enable them, in the process, to develop confidence in their capabilities and judgement, to gain expert knowledge in specific areas of SL activity, and thereby to expedite the work, is foreign to Cde. Robertson. He builds dependency. While he has been most insistent on strict adherence to the organizational forms of democratic centralism, with minutes methodically kept, the essential content has been the domination of Cde. Robertson. However, as he tends to function erratically, and to the extent that the National Office is a house with one pillar, the periods of Cde. Robertson's ebb coincide with the paralysis in National Office functioning. Cde. Robertson has increasingly tended to obscure the distinction between his own and the collective views of the SL leadership.

The positive quality of a firm will turns into its opposite when it becomes willfulness. Cde. Robertson's arrogance, his conviction of his own brilliance, and, the opposite side of the coin, a visible contempt for the judgements and conclusions of other comrades when they conflict with his own, have played and continue to play an exceedingly negative role in the SL, and have helped to weaken the bonds of comradeship within the organization. Where Cde. Robertson is unable to convince politically, and becomes persuaded that a threat is present to his control over the organization, he resorts to vituperation, and to the tightening of the organizational screws. By so doing, he derogates the political questions at issue into a mere contest of wills and only succeeds in driving intransigent or wavering comrades out of the organization. The portentous consequences of this approach to the SL, now in the throes of a sharp political struggle, is painfully obvious.

It is, however, Cde. Robertson's restricting conception of the SL -- perhaps originating as a reaction to the grandiose posturing of a host of self-proclaimed heirs to the mantle of Trotsky, which now seems to serve him as a means to avoid a recognition of the SL's responsibility to become the party of Marxism in the US -- which is most pernicious to the organization.

Cde. Seymour

Cde. Seymour, since becoming a member of Spartacist, has demonstrated a willingness to accept increasing responsibility in its ranks. Since assuming the post of local organizer, he has been able to discharge his duties with increasing efficiency, despite his own inclination for, and greater facility in, propagandist activities. Cde. Seymour, who teaches economics at the college level, has also lead classes in Marxist economics. He has evidently set himself the goal of becoming a serious Marxist leader of the organization. His hard work for the SL has been amply demonstrated in this period, as well as his potential for leadership.

Cde. Seymour, an alert and intelligent comrade, seems to suffer from a pronounced inability to appreciate the dialectical method. Of the leading comrades in the local, Cde. Seymour's thought processes best seem to match the description by Engels, in his Socialism, Utopian and Scientific, of the metaphysician:

"To the metaphysician, things and their mental reflexes, ideas, are isolated, are to be considered one after the other, and apart from each other, are objects of investigation fixed, rigid, given once and for all. He thinks in absolutely irreconcilable antitheses. His communication is 'Yea, Yea; Nay, Nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.'"

An example of Cde. Seymour's mechanical mode of thought is his continuing conviction that MLCRC is and was an exercise in mass leafleting, divorced from caucus building. Cde. Seymour, whose focus of interest seems to be mainly in campus, anti-war, and electoral areas, has gazed upon MLCRC with a jaundiced eye from the beginning. He has been skeptical about the underlying conceptions of the Memorandum on the Negro Struggle, although some recent indications exist that he has shifted his position from one of skepticism to one of uncertainty.

Cde. Seymour originally took the position that the super-exploitation of black workers "is not a civil rights issue as such" for the trade unions, that there are unions whose membership is predominately black, and who are "poorly paid, but that this is not discrimination, per se (because) no better jobs are available." He also indicated that while the TUEL (Trade Union Educational League) had a "live issue" -- industrial unionism -- around which the early American communists could launch a struggle, a similar situation did not exist on the issue of super-exploitation. It is therefore not necessary, in Cde. Seymour's opinion, "to have a set of demands against discrimination" in the unions, and a "broader" approach to trade union activity should

be posed.

In voicing his disagreements forthrightly, Cde. Seymour takes a welcome departure from those who passively accepted the line heretofore. Open disagreement, at least, produces the possibility of discussion from which all participants can benefit.

The root error in Cde. Seymour's thinking seems to lie in his interpretation of the following statements by Marx, in Volume I of Capital, pages 44 and 170-171, respectively, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1967:

"Simple average labor, it is true, varies in character in different countries and at different times, but in a particular society it is given. Skilled labor counts only as simple labor intensified, or rather as multiplied simple labor."

"The value of labor-power is determined as in the case of every other commodity, by the labor-time necessary for the production, and consequently the reproduction, of this special article ... The value of labour-power is the value of the labourer ... in his normal state as a labouring individual. His natural wants, such as food, clothing, fuel, and housing vary according to the climatic and other physical conditions of his country. On the other hand, the number and extent of his so-called necessary wants, as also the modes of satisfying them, are themselves the product of historical development ... on the degree of civilization of a country ... on the conditions ... habits and degree of comfort in which the class of free labourers has been formed. In contradistinction, therefore, to the case of other commodities, there enters into the determination of the value of labour-power, a historical and moral element. Nevertheless, in a given country, in a given period, the average quantity of the means of subsistence necessary for the labourer is practically known."

Therefore, evidently concludes Cde. Seymour, inasmuch as Marx also states that commodities tend to exchange at their values, one rate of exploitation prevails within individual capitalist countries. His abstract and academic approach to this question not only ignores the concrete reality in capitalist society, but also misconstrues Marx, who, together with Engels, was well aware of the phenomenon of super-exploitation in industrially developed as well as in colonial and semi-colonial countries. For example, on pages 599-600 of Volume I, Marx says the following:

"In the chapters on the production of surplus-value it was constantly presupposed that wages are at least equal to the value of labour-power. Forcible reduction of wages below this value plays, however, in practice too important a part, for us not to pause upon it for a moment. It in fact, transforms, within certain limits, the labourer's necessary consumption-fund into a fund for the accumulation of capital. ... But if the labourers could live on air they could not be bought at any price. The zero of their cost is, therefore, a limit in a mathematical sense, always beyond their reach ... the constant tendency of capital is to force the cost of labour back towards this zero."

In his letter to Schlüter of March 30, 1892, Engels says the following about conditions in the US:

"Now a working-class has developed and has also to a great extent organized itself on trade-union lines. But it still takes up an aristocratic attitude ... leaves the ordinary badly paid occupations to the immigrants, of whom only a small section enter the aristocratic trades. ... And your bourgeoisie knows much better even than the Austrian government how to play off one nationality against the others, Jews, Italians, Bohemians, etc., against Germans and Irish; and each one against the other, so that differences in the standard of life of different workers exist, I believe, in New York to an extent unheard of elsewhere ... and to cap it all, John

Chinaman stands in the background who far surpasses them all in his ability to live on next to nothing."

To a Marxist, therefore, discrimination today not only consists in preventing black and Spanish-speaking workers from entering the "aristocratic trades," but, as well, in the playing-off of the white workers against the black, "so that differences in the standard of life of different workers exist." That is, as a result of the "historical and moral element," a situation exists where more than one "average quantity of the means of subsistence necessary for the labourer" is accepted and more than one "normal state of the labouring individual" exists; and, where part of the "consumption-fund" of the black and Spanish-speaking workers is transformed "into a fund for the accumulation of capital," i.e., super-exploitation. The trade unions, which take an "aristocratic attitude" to the black and Spanish-speaking workers, fail to organize the "ordinary badly paid occupations" or, the labor bureaucrats who do organize them usually sign "sweetheart" contracts with their bosses, which reinforce the "historical and moral element" of racial discrimination.

Cde. Seymour should realize that the idea that the "ordinary badly paid occupations" are inherently so is an aristocratic and fetishistic attitude, not qualitatively differing from that of the common, garden-variety capitalist apologist, who sees the solution to the poverty of the "lower classes" in education. The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King once declaimed to a black audience, "Learn, baby, learn, so that you can earn, baby, earn." The same sentiment, when directed toward black workers by a white, inevitably takes on, not merely an aristocratic, but also a chauvinistic flavor. Cde. Seymour desires to function as a revolutionary communist, and is certainly no chauvinist. He has reached his erroneous position because of a scholastic approach to Marxist economics, and his own isolation from working class struggles.

Other ORO's and the Trade Unions

Some ORO's are beginning to move toward making the fight against discrimination a key question, despite Cde. Seymour's belief that this issue is too narrow for trade union caucuses to center on.

The Independent Socialists recently published an article by Cleophus Pierce, entitled "Memphis, Murder and Meanysm," in which he concludes:

"An attack on racism in the unions could pave the way for a widespread translation of black militancy into trade union forms, a major advance for the struggle for black liberation as well as for the labor movement."

A pamphlet by Victor Perlo, the Communist Party's chief economist, published in May 1968, entitled American Labor Today, has the following paragraph:

"A high degree of Negro-white unity was achieved in the struggles of the 1930's. What is necessary, in advance of the situation prevailing then, is that in the next major upsurge of labor struggles the achievement of real equality for Negroes be a key demand, with insistence on all the special measures necessary to realize that equality."

Of course, these organizations, to the extent that they can implement this policy, will try to adapt the Negro Question to their particular brands of opportunism. To the extent that they become the pioneers on this question, and win workers to their politics, they will tend to reap the harvest, which, as innovators, the SL -- with its transitional line -- could have gotten, commensurate with its size and influence.

It should be noted that Cde. Robertson, who disagrees with Cde. Seymour on the question of super-exploitation, has failed to voice this disagreement at any of the meet-

ings held to date. The bloc of Robertson and Seymour, which, it would seem, does not feel free to openly disagree on relevant aspects of this dispute, insists on amalgamating the positions of the minority which has openly discussed its differences on subordinate points, and which, because it is not organized as a faction, feels perfectly free to do so.

Variations on a Theme?

Cde. Robertson has recently proposed that the "pan-union" functions of MLCRC be adopted by the labor committee of a somewhat moribund white radical community organization, which, as a result of an infusion of SL comrades, and with SL comrades providing the leadership, continues to function.

This organization is seen as providing the electoral outlet which the SL vitally needs. It can operate on the basis of a broad transitional program, attractive to socialists, while not requiring the commitment and discipline of a Leninist organization. It can concretely oppose the opportunist politics of the PFP on the electoral arena via a congressional candidate, and, hopefully, attract some of the radical youth to principled socialist politics, and some, eventually, to the SL.

The labor committee, now non-existent, is to be resurrected, and is to assume "pan-union" leafleting at selected work places, utilizing the radicals in the community organization instead of the SL cadre. Present indications are that the SL perspectives which promise to reach black and Puerto Rican trade unionists are of great interest to those few original members of the community organization who still remain. The original proposal by the local majority of a rigid dichotomy between the caucuses in the trade unions, and the leafleting by the labor committee, has since been modified. SL members in caucuses will now be allowed to function in the labor committee. Leafleting, to the extent that it strikes a response in the work-place, can be followed-up by the labor committee's attempts to organize a caucus.

Some questions remain unanswered, however. The MLCRC was devised to reach the most oppressed workers. Student and other radicals were to be enlisted for this purpose. Who is the labor committee of the community organization devised to reach? Has the majority merely taken from the minority position in eclectic fashion its "rational kernel" -- the potential attractiveness of its trade union line to radicals? And is the agreement on caucus building by the labor committee only a sop to the minority?

If the labor committee is to be involved in both "pan-union" activities and building caucuses, then why break up the MLCRC in the first place? The rejoinder to this question until now has been that MLCRC was purely an SL instrument, whereas the community organization is broader. This reply is completely erroneous, in that it inverts the entire situation. While the MLCRC, following the desertion of two key SL members in the hospital field and the dispute in the SL, was pared down to SL members it was never its purpose to function on this basis. Prior to the defection, MLCRC had had at its meetings other hospital workers, an ex-CORE member, and unattached radicals. On the other hand, the community organization may begin to speak with the voice of Jacob, but the hands of Esau will soon become visible, if only because the enemies of the SL will see to it. Will it not then have difficulty attracting other radicals?

Isn't the form of an organizationally unattached body of trade unionists, who are in agreement on a transitional program, better than that of a community organization composed of middle-class type radicals operating under a socialist banner? In either case, the drawing power or lack thereof does not depend so much on the form of the initiation, but on its content. Which again brings to the fore the first question, in its broadest aspect, of the need for a TUEL-type organizational campaign in the trade unions against the super-exploitation of black and Spanish-speaking workers. MLCRC was, in essence, a small-scale TUEL. Is the community organization seen in such a role?

After distribution of six MLCRC newsletters to hospital workers, after clear indications of developing sympathy for the MLCRC program by these workers, after having finally developed a number of regular contacts, Cde. Robertson insists that further hospital work be abandoned, unless an immediate breakthrough occurs, inasmuch as no SL members are presently employed in this field. He insists, instead, that the SL cadre be placed exclusively in light industry, and into a situation which may not ripen for a year or two. Cde. Robertson reasons that the workers in light industry are "more like us," and therefore, that SL members would more readily enter and remain in this field than in hospital work. No consideration will, therefore, be given to sending other SL members into this vital field. This approach clearly reveals that Cde. Robertson and the majority in the NY local are not in the least serious about reaching the most exploited black and Spanish-speaking workers.

Class Basis of the Dispute

In analyzing the struggle in the SWP in 1939-40, Trotsky, in "A Petty-Bourgeois Opposition in the SWP," said the following:

"Any serious fight in the party is always in the final analysis a reflection of the class struggle."

This concept is elaborated in Lessons of October:

"A revolutionary party is subjected to the pressure of other political forces. ... During a tactical turn and the resulting internal regroupments and frictions, the party's power of resistance becomes weakened. From this the possibility always arises that the internal groupings in the party, which originate from the necessity of a turn in tactics, may develop far beyond the original controversial points of departure and serve as a support of various class tendencies. To put the case more plainly: the party which does not keep step with the historical tasks of its own class becomes, or runs the risk of becoming, the indirect tool of other classes.

"If what we have said above is true of every serious turn in tactics, it is all the more true of great turns in strategy. 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."

The class basis of the present dispute in the SL is clearly evident. If the characteristics of the Robertson-Seymour bloc previously delineated are listed, one finds that it is distinguished by an abstract, mechanical, metaphysical mode of thought, by an intellectual arrogance, by an elitist tendency to undervalue the working class, by an eclectic joining of bits and pieces of those aspects of the Memorandum on the Negro Struggle which Cde. Robertson feels can be adapted to petty-bourgeois arenas, by a tendency to restrict the SL to those activities largely involving the petty-bourgeoisie, by the domineering posture of Cde. Robertson which acts to reinforce dependency and tutelary relationships in the leading bodies of the SL, and the entire modus operandi in which he carries out the responsibilities of the National Chairmanship. Cde. Robertson, as the authority figure of the SL, does not attempt to help Cde. Seymour overcome his scholastic tendencies. On the contrary, he fortifies them in an unprincipled bloc, in which absolute disagreement exists on the fundamental question of super-exploitation. The Robertson-Seymour bloc is obviously a petty-bourgeois tendency in the SL. Moreover, the physiognomy of left-centrism, which can reach academically correct conclusions about the nature of events and the role of the working class, but in practical activity nullifies its findings, can also be clearly discerned.

Tactics and strategy relate to each other as the part to the whole, i.e., a dialectical unity of opposites, in which the one is continually interacting, interpenetrating and being transformed into the other. What was initially described as a tactical turn in the SL has now become a struggle over strategic direction, over whether the SL will

orientate toward the petty-bourgeoisie or the working class.

The Marxism of the SL

Marx begins The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte by stating:

"Hegel remarks somewhere that all facts and personages of great importance in world history occur, as it were, twice. He forgot to add: the first time as tragedy, the second as farce."

Marx, in developing this observation, indicates that the combatants engaged in a current struggle seize upon history and its figures in order to justify themselves and buttress their cause, but in disregard of the factors operating in a different historical period.

Cde. Robertson, in the course of increasing the organizational pressures within the SL, charges that the minority has a "split perspective." Cde. Kay Ellens, at one of the PB meetings discussing NO functioning, asked whether the leadership of the SL saw itself engaged in a "holding action." Both remarks are not only pertinent to the present dispute, but seem also to be echoes of the struggle within the SWP between the predecessor to the SL, the Revolutionary Tendency, and the then SWP majority.

Cde. Robertson's charge has the character of a self-fulfilling prophecy, to the extent that he insists on creating an invidious, malicious, uncomradely atmosphere within the organization, and substitutes organizational muscle for political discussion. In this respect, he apes the leaders of the SWP.

Cde. Ellens, who raised the question of a "holding action," touched upon the essence of the NO's present perspectives, which has no conception for the SL of development into a Leninist party.

At the same time, it is necessary to recognize that the situations in the SWP and SL, while containing certain similarities, also possess essential differences, and were created under historically different conditions. The situations are analogous to the extent that the majority in the NY local retains the conception of the need to build a working class vanguard party only in theory, while in practice ignoring the role of the SL in this respect. However, the SWP, abandoning its perspective toward the working class, sought substitutes in the petty-bourgeois radical elements, and adjusted its program in order to adapt to these forces. It has constantly tried to accommodate its politics in order to maintain the Popular Front-Umbrella relationship with the CP and pacifists. While it can occasionally be reminded of its past by, for example, the recent class struggles in France, and can even discuss the need for a Leninist vanguard party, it fills this form with a different content, in which the emphasis is on the "vanguard role" of the students and youth.

The SL, on the other hand, has proven, in the four and one half years of its existence, that it is the only organization in the US able to develop thoroughly Marxist positions on all the issues before it, and that it is able to withstand the pressures to make opportunist adaptations, as its positions on the American Question (Negro, anti-war, electoral), the Russian Question (China, Cuba, etc.), and other international questions, such as the Arab-Israeli war, demonstrate.

The thrust of its program tends to push the SL beyond the narrow limits devised for it by the present leadership, limits which also reflect the hostile environment in tendencies to inertia and routine. For example, the SL, by having accepted the need for civil rights caucuses in the trade unions, will have to go beyond token involvement in one union. An active civil rights caucus in one union will, inevitably, face revolutionists with the need to extend it to other unions. As the comrades work in the

unions and win adherents for the transitional program, they will find that candidates for the SL do emerge. They will, in other words, constantly be under the compulsion of transforming the SL, so that it can become an organization able to attract and keep workers, or, failing this, to remain a small, isolated sect.

Crisis of Leadership

The SL membership should consider the early history of the American Trotskyists. From the time in 1928 when Cannon and other followers of Trotsky were expelled from the CP, until 1933, they numbered approximately one hundred nationally, a quantity not appreciably differing from that of the SL today. This small movement was able to develop into a party which, in spite of its own shortcomings, played a major role in the development of the world Trotskyist movement.

The fundamental need of the SL at this time is for an alternative leadership which will accept its historic responsibility to build such a vanguard party in the US, and which does not quail before the contradiction between the small size of the SL and the large magnitude of its responsibility.

Harry Turner, 17 July 1968

The Internal Struggle Continues

7 Oct '68

by Harry Turner

The departure of members and supporters of the minority faction from the Spartacist League has not concluded the internal struggle. Sufficient forces and spokesmen for the minority position, as defined in Whither the Spartacist League, still remain within the organization. The issues posed by the minority have not been resolved, and the course of the SL for the next period has not yet been decided.

Those who have resigned have indicated that they did not feel that the organization could be salvaged, that its leadership had demonstrated a "qualitative incapacity to break with its past", and, that the organization had proven itself "unable to commit itself to advocate [and] work towards" the task of building a serious Marxist-Leninist organization in the United States. We who remain consider the judgement on the SL to be premature, and hope, in continuing the struggle, to win the SL cadre to the minority's perspectives.

It may be that some members of the SL, through mistaken conceptions of organizational loyalty, may begin to turn a deaf ear to the arguments of the reorganized minority. An immediate reaction by one of the newer members of the organization was that she now identified more strongly with the majority - not on the basis of its positions, but rather - on the basis that its "predictions" concerning a split perspective by the minority had been "proven", along with sundry accusations against individuals belonging to it. Understandably, new comrades are particularly vulnerable to glib explanations to complex situations, e.g., Why did the minority faction come into existence? Because Kay Ellens came back from France a dedicated conspirator determined to destroy the SL and build a Voix Ouvriere - type of organization in its place - because she played upon the weaknesses of comrades, to wit, impatience, activism, Black Nationalism, neurotic drives, sex needs, etc. - because objective conditions have demoralized some of the cadre who have then frantically grasped at simplistic panaceas.

And the issues? Of seriously implementing the Memorandum on the Negro Struggle, of giving priority to the reaching of the black and Spanish-speaking workers in the trade-unions, as the Central Committee plenum had unanimously directed, of a serious perspective of building a vanguard party of the working-class, of a collective leadership, capable of functioning seriously, regularly, methodically, to implement such a perspective? Obviously, when "answers" such as those above have been accepted, no need exists for the comrades to concern themselves with the issues posed by the minority. But the reorganized minority does not believe that the SL members, who have been deeply concerned about issues will be satisfied with the replies of the majority.

Revolutionary Consciousness, Class and Morality

The ongoing struggle in the SL, as in all serious factional contests, is serving to illuminate, not only political and organizational questions, but equally, the contestants themselves, e.g., their level of political consciousness, the classes on which they rest, their character (moral qualities, personality traits, mode of conceptualization, etc.).

To the extent that the leaders of the factions adhere to the issues, a factional struggle can have a powerful educative effect on the cadre. The history of Marxism is one of continual struggle with bourgeois

ideology, with both the overt ideologists of the bourgeoisie, and its indirect reflection within the revolutionary movement. These struggles have served and continue to serve generations of revolutionists.

Attempts by factional spokesmen to evade or conceal the issues by focusing on extraneous questions, by personal abuse of proponents, by organizational manipulation and pressure is also educative. To the extent that the issues involve class needs and pressures, their advocates also tend to evidence those qualities which Marxists have indicated historically typify the classes whose interests they reflect. In this respect, the minority has pointed to the eclecticism, arrogance, and lack of candor of the majority, as typical of the character and mentality of the petty-bourgeoisie.

The struggle with the petty-bourgeois opposition in the Socialist Workers Party in 1940 has provided the minority with a wealth of insight and ammunition against the leadership of the majority in the New York local. For example, Trotsky, in "From a Scratch to the Danger of Gangrene", said the following:

" . . . the gist of the present crisis consists in the conservatism of the petty-bourgeois elements who have passed through a purely propagandistic school and who have not yet found a pathway to the road of the class struggle . . . " ,

that,

"There has been more than one instance in history - more precisely it doesn't happen otherwise in history - that with the transition of the party from one period to the next those elements which played a progressive role in the past have drawn closer together in the face of danger and revealed not their positive but almost exclusively their negative traits.",

and, that,

"In the struggle that is developing, Shachtman is not in the camp where he ought to be. As always in such cases, his strong sides have receded into the background while his weak traits on the other hand have assumed an especially finished expression."

How apt! Trotsky might well have been discussing the present struggle. Nor should this coincidence be surprising. To the extent that both struggles involve class bases and pressures, Trotsky's generalizations in 1940 would have a bearing on the present dispute.

Think of it! Cde. Robertson, the outstanding ideologue of the SL and the focus of the attack by the minority, has not dared to respond to the charges that the majority does not have a perspective of building a Leninist party beginning with our "splinter propagandist group"; that the majority has abandoned all perspective for the "blackening" of the SL cadre; that Cde. Robertson, through elitist attitudes, and by separating theory from practice, eliminates any serious SL approach toward the working-class, black or white; that the majority is not functioning in a serious enough manner to maintain even a "splinter propagandist group"; that Cde. Robertson, by arrogantly substituting his own views for those of the PB, does not permit a collective leadership to exist; that his erratic functioning paralyzes the work of the National Office; and that he has deliberately initiated the factional

hostility through villification and threats of expulsion in order to force minority comrades out of the organization.

A Two-pronged Attack

The majority has organized a two-pronged attack against the minority. The first, and primary, is a campaign of obfuscation to blot out the real issues, to divert the attention of the comrades to secondary, peripheral questions, and to prevent the SL membership from giving earnest attention to the issues posed by branding the minority as organizationally hostile. These techniques turn, however, in dialectical fashion, against their users, in that they merely serve to illustrate the charges of the minority.

"Open Letter"

A case in point is the so-called open letter written by the NY local organizer, Joseph Seymour, and reproduced in full below. Interestingly, only one copy was ever delivered to a minority supporter, Cde. Hugh F., a member of the local executive committee. Did perhaps Cde. Seymour think better of it? He might well have blushed at the transparent dishonesties incorporated therein., It is meant to be, of course, an attack not only on Kay Ellens and Shirley Stoute, but against the minority faction as such, as then constituted.

"An Open Letter to Our 'Harrassed' Minority Comrades

"Two prominent minority comrades complain that their important trade union activities will suffer greatly, because they have been capriciously and maliciously ordered to work in the National Office. There is only one thing wrong with this statement, comrades Ellens and Stoute. YOU HAVE NOT BEEN ORDERED TO WORK IN THE NATIONAL OFFICE. YOU HAVE BEEN ORDERED TO CO-EDIT AND FACILITATE THE DISTRIBUTION OF FACTIONAL DOCUMENTS IN A FACTION FIGHT YOU STARTED.

"It is not the majority's fault if our trade union work will have to be cut back to supply resources for a faction fight you started and you want. It was you who submitted the first factional documents and demanded a national discussion on them. And it was you who forced the local to devote three, full meetings to the fate of M.L.C.R.C., and still wish to continue the debate after the local has voted on the issue. And it was you who demanded a local executive meeting be skipped, in order to devote a full local meeting to the political issues raised by your faction.

"And trade union activity is not the only aspect of our work that is likely to suffer because of this faction fight. The Spartacist supplement has been suspended to release the N.O. staff to distribute factional documents (remember the precious frequency of our press, minority comrades). Hard-working and important majority comrades will have to cut back their contacting and external work to reply to your documents and distribute these replies (you would like replies to your documents, wouldn't you?). Contacts will be turned off by the factional hostility.

"Comrades Ellens and Stoute wish to cease working on internal documents and devote all their political energy to trade union work. Good - nothing could be easier. Simply disband your

faction, withdraw your documents, cancel the local meeting to discuss factional issues. Now let us see where your real priorities lie, comrades Ellens and Stoute.

Joseph Seymour 8-9-68"

The minority comrades, indicates Cde. Seymour, are not being harrassed by being ordered to spend two evenings a week at the NO stencilling and running off documents, in addition to their other responsibilities. Perish the thought! They are merely helping with the work. Cde. Robertson has also indicated that this treatment is a necessary corrective to the tendency to make second-class citizens of the minority. But Cde. Robertson forgets that in my presence he jocularly proposed keeping the minority so busy as to not allow them time for factional affairs, e.g., visiting SL members, writing factional documents, etc.

Cde. Robertson at a recent local meeting insisted on having four motions passed by the NY local as recommended by the local executive committee on MLCRC functioning without discussion. In response to a question by Shirley Stoute as to the concrete meaning of one of the motions, i.e., how were MLCRC-CIPA meetings to be screened to keep out hostile or incompetent observers, Cde. Robertson shouted, "The answer is to get out." The majority then dutifully voted to pass the motions without discussion. Cde. Robertson thus openly stated the clear purpose of the tactics used by the majority - to drive minority comrades out of the SL. Not even the decaying SWP treated its minorities in so brazen a fashion. And what remains to be said about those who purport to be Leninists who behave in such a servile fashion?

The other points made in the so-called open letter are as tendentious and as revealing.

"A FACTION FIGHT YOU STARTED" - It was started by Cde. Robertson's attack on MLCRC, to which some of the comrades involved reacted defensively. Only in the unfolding of the dispute were perspectives of the contestants revealed, on the basis of which factions were formed.

"You submitted the first factional documents and demanded a national discussion on them" - Does the majority really believe that communists who see their organization threatened by the opportunist policies of a dilettantist mis-leadership, are to do nothing to try to save the organization?

"You forced the local to devote three full meetings to the fate of MLCRC and still wish to continue the debate after the local voted on the issue" - As a matter of record, Cde. Robertson initiated the first debate on MLCRC, the minority responded with its substitute and counter-motions at the second meeting, and the motions were voted at the third meeting. The minority was not concerned with continuing the debate about MLCRC, but with continuing the hospital work into which so much energy had gone, and which showed much promise. My motion which follows was also tabled to the local executive committee without discussion:

"Inasmuch as the hospital arena has proven to be most promising for the implementation of the Memorandum on the Negro Struggle, in that the hospital field is the nearest approximation in NYC to heavy mass production industries in respect to its concentration of hundreds and thousands of workers in one plant; the hospital

workers, buoyed up by their recent victory, are presently among the most militant workers in NYC; more than 80% of these workers are from the black and Puerto Rican minorities; a successful caucus based on the SL's trade-union perspective can be the bridge to other low-paid black and Spanish-speaking factory and service workers, e.g., garment center, restaurant, public housing, etc.; a considerable number of close contacts in this field have now been developed after only a few months of concentration; that, therefore, at least three comrades be persuaded to enter the hospital field without delay in furtherance of our trade-union perspective."

"It was you who demanded a local executive meeting be skipped" - Not true! As a matter of fact, I had called for a Saturday conference or for an extended meeting. It was Cde. Robertson who proposed a special meeting, and a majority supporter on the local executive committee, (Cde. Seymour?) who proposed to follow that meeting with a regular local instead of an executive committee meeting.

"The Spartacist supplement has been suspended to release the NO staff to distribute factional documents (remember the precious frequency of the press, minority comrades)" - Evidently press regularity is only of interest to the minority. Conveniently and predictably, the minority is now used as the alibi for again failing to keep to a press schedule. As a matter of fact, the primary reason for discontinuing the supplement scheduled for July was technical, such as timeliness of copy. Isn't that so, Cde. Cunningham?

"Contacts will be turned off by the factional hostility" - But the hostility was initiated and deepened by Cde. Robertson!

"disband your faction, withdraw your documents, cancel the local meeting to discuss factional issues." - Exactly! Bury the issues! Compare this position to that of Trotsky's, that:

" . . . the principled struggle must be carried through to the end, that is to serious clarification of the more important questions that have been posed." (From a Scratch To Gangrene, page 102)

"The Spartacist League, the Minority and Voix Ouvriere"

A major element in the majority's smoke screen is Cde. Gordon's document, The Spartacist League, the Minority and Voix Ouvriere. Its sole purpose is to shift the discussion from the issues posed by the minority to that of the political and organizational functioning of VO.

Cde. Gordon had a problem. She was fully aware that I do not share Kay Ellens views on VO organizational approaches. As secretary to the Political Bureau, she had heard me raise questions in preliminary discussion in connection with several points which she subsequently utilized in her document, such as whether VO has a sufficiently centralized structure to enable it to seize opportunities to give political leadership to French workers, on the one hand, and whether the cellular structure did not tend to have a hierarchical character, on the other. Cde. Gordon was also fully aware that I had criticized VO's political positions on the US Negro Question, on the Arab-Israeli conflict, and on the deformed workers states. She knew that I had questioned whether VO's attitude toward other so-called Trotskyist groups was not overly

conciliation. She also knew that the basis for the minority faction was its agreement on the need for a strategic perspective and tactical implementation in order to build a Leninist party in the US, and, in the first place, to apply the Memorandum, to strive to reach the most oppressed workers, to unite black and Spanish-speaking workers with white workers on the basis of a struggle against special oppression, and to do so by conducting the struggle, in the words of Engels, "pursuant to its three sides - the theoretical, the political, and the practical-economic (resistance to the capitalists)".

She knew, in other words, that irrespective of Kay Ellen's convictions about VO's organizational methods, the minority existed as a faction because of the serious issues here in the US. Cde. Gordon tries to shift the attention of the comrades from the real issues to VO by using faulty syllogistic logic.

"Kay Ellens", says Cde. Gordon, in effect, "is a partisan of VO organizational methods. She is also a member of the minority. Therefore, the minority supports VO methods. And, as organizational questions are essentially political, the minority either supports the political ideas of VO or "has an elaborate unconcern over political questions". Cde. Gordon's logic makes about as much sense as the following: Plums are purple. Plums are also fruit. Therefore, fruit is purple, and as it is essentially vegetable, all things vegetable are or should be purple.

Cde. Gordon, you are attempting an amalgam! Your reasoning is transparently fallacious. You have written a document for the majority which unwittingly projects the relationships which obtain within that majority, i.e., Cde. Robertson's domination and manipulation. The idea that the minority could form a faction based upon principled agreement on a given set of ideas is evidently beyond the majority's comprehension or belief. As far as the majority is concerned, there must be a puppet-master and puppets. Kay Ellens, the "conspirator", is seen as filling the first role.

"But she managed to take the majority of your faction out of the organization before the discussion was concluded. Doesn't that prove that the others were convinced by her organizational approaches?", argues the majority. They should be aware that every faction fight inevitably produces organizational losses. A serious faction fight develops when the perspectives, competence and/or integrity of the leadership, and, therefore, of the organization have been called into question. Those who have had their confidence in the leadership shaken, and who do not see either an alternative leadership to, or a successful outcome of the struggle, or who become demoralized and decide that the struggle within the organization or the struggle in itself is not worth-while, leave. The majority, however, prefers to believe that the "conspirator" convinced the others to resign by selling them VO's "phantom schemes" and "techniques of organization", rather than that the crisis in the organization results from the failures of perspective and function, i.e., leadership directed to the building of a vanguard party in the US.

Let us assume for the moment that Kay Ellens returned from France determined to destroy the SL. Could she have achieved the slightest success without the prior existence of a crisis in the organization? "But, there were the objective factors", says Cde. Gordon, in effect. How can you compare the functioning of a small group in the vast

expanse of the US with that of a force twelve times its size in little France, mainly concentrated in Paris?". The majority believes that it could solve the crisis in the organization, if only the discussion could be shifted onto this plane, and away from the charges of the minority. I, however, do not intend to be diverted into a discussion of VO's theory and practice. Moreover, VO is a fraternal movement which has demonstrated its serious revolutionary commitment over many years. Any critique of its work should be undertaken soberly by US revolutionists who still have a great deal to learn, and not as a factional device. Cde. Gordon's patronizing attitude toward a movement which has built one of the large Trotskyist parties in the world ill-befits a young student who has still to prove that she can build anything.

Your document, Cde. Gordon, merits additional inspection at closer range. It sheds a devastating light on the majority.

As a matter of simple honesty, when you write about the "non-success of the SL over the past year or so, during which time membership size has been constant", are you not really discussing the failures of the SL during which time membership losses have been significant?

And how do you square statements such as the following: "the right to factions is key in the Leninist method of determining the line of the organization", and "The function of organizational structure and methods is to safeguard against bureaucratic abuse and political stultification", with the truly obscene treatment of the minority, e.g., personal abuse and threats of expulsion?

You approvingly characterize VO's educational activities as "an attempt to make high Trotskyists of all members". High Trotskyists, indeed! You, of course, mean developed Marxists, but unconsciously, the whole of your elitist mentality shows itself! I have also used the term, but only derisively, to indicate a line of demarcation between high-priests and laity. You also use it as a boundary, but to mark off your intellectual elite from workers who are seen as incapable of developing Cde. Robertson's "Weltanschauung".

You dare to typify "VO's emphases on systematic contact work and internal education" as a kind of theory of stages! And, what is the majority's conception of the building of a Leninist party in the US but a theory of stages in which an absolute dichotomy exists between the "splinter propaganda group" and a mass party? Thus far, neither Cde. Robertson nor any designated spokesman for the majority have had the courage to respond to the minority's challenge that they speak to this point.

You state that "excessive concentration in the working class . . . may well be a tactical error. When elevated to the level of a theory, it is a theoretical one." This facile conclusion is a bit strange, to say the least, coming from self-styled Trotskyists whose most grievous weakness is their complete lack of roots in the working-class, and who have had the misfortune of maturing as revolutionists in circumstances in which they have been walled off from that class. Your bright remark brings to mind Lenin's retort to the Economists, that their worship of spontaneity in the working-class in a period of theoretical confusion was as appropriate as "wishing mourners at a funeral many happy returns of the day."

The Objective Situation

You justify a petty-bourgeois orientation by saying, "What do you do in an objective situation (which includes your size, composition and roots) in which you are not likely to have great success in reaching and recruiting workers?" Your faith in the working-class is touching! When will you deign to reach and recruit workers? Some other time, not now, in view of the "objective situation". This in a period of rising and sharpening class struggles! Isn't this a theory of stages? Your approach is undialectical. You separate objective from subjective. You operate in an impressionistic and eclectic fashion. The workers are not approachable at this time so let us concentrate on the student milieu, says Cde. Gordon.

The minority sees the "objective situation" in an entirely different way. Our understanding of developments within the working-class, black and white, and of the interaction of internal and external factors, nationally and internationally, gave birth to the Memorandum, to MLCRC, and therefore, to the possibility of "reaching and recruiting workers" to the SL. We, the minority, saw that, as a result of uneven and combined development, both difficulties and opportunities for reaching the working-class exist for Marxists. The question before those who wish to consider themselves Leninists and Trotskyists should be the basis and the methods by which a vanguard in the US can act to promote the unity of the more politically advance black workers with the more backward white workers.

The black workers are more advanced in that significant numbers of them are coming to the conclusion that this society holds no future for them, even though they do not yet see white workers as class brothers. The white workers, good trade-unionists though they may consider themselves to be, still have illusions about the society and hold racist attitudes toward black workers. This contradiction, a dialectical unity of opposites, must be resolved in a new synthesis, in a revolutionary socialist consciousness within the class, a unity of black and white workers. The Leninist party which alone is capable of accomplishing this task does not yet exist. The task of revolutionary socialists is to build this vanguard in the process of achieving this synthesis.

"You are posing a task suited to a mass party and not a splinter propaganda group!", will cry spokesmen for the majority. They are unable to comprehend that this task is basically the process by which Marxists in the US can sink roots in the class and build a mass party. Ironically, it is also the process by which the Marxists can draw some petty-bourgeois intellectuals to them, and transform them into working-class intellectuals through involvement in struggle. You see, Cde. Gordon, Marxist theory, in a manner of speaking, has its revenge upon you empiricists. The harder you run after the petty-bourgeois radicals (to tell them to go to the workers, of course), the faster they run away from you. Only as you succeed in proving your ability to function in and influence the working-class, as you show in practice the capacity to apply Marxism to the American scene, will they run to you.

It is because you and the other leaders of the majority are unable to understand this process, have not understood and are unable to apply the Marxist method, are really empiricists at heart, and would not know how to function and do not really wish to function in the same organization with workers, that you have smashed MLCRC. What else remains

for you to do but to bewail adverse objective circumstances?

"But we support the Memorandum. We are in favor of civil rights caucuses in the trade-unions, and are not even opposed to pan-union activities where they are appropriate, for example, a MLCRC attached to a local community organization, or the Committee for a Labor Party on the west coast", protests the majority and their spokesman, Cde. Joseph Seymour, with whose documents I shall deal at greater length in the concluding sections of this paper. In Cde. Seymour's felicitous phrase, let us see where your real priorities lie.

You have recently engaged the NY local in an adventure which is absorbing the energies of the comrades, and will continue to do so until Election Day. The election campaign, in which all the NY comrades are involved, was launched from a captured and defunct community organization by substituting the SL cadre for the vanished membership on a watered-down, minimum program from which transitional qualities are notably absent. I have not and do not oppose electoral activities, of course. They are a necessary aspect of revolutionary agitation and propaganda. Electoral activity should be engaged in where possible, in a manner commensurate with the size of one's organization and the availability of forces. Here, one must concretely determine the priorities involved.

The majority obviously hopes to attract the petty-bourgeois radicals by this campaign despite its fine words about the mixed nature of the district, and its student-radical, and Spanish-speaking and black workers. But this campaign, in all likelihood, will bring little publicity and few contacts even of a petty-bourgeois character. This electoral activity illustrates that the majority's priorities are plainly not directed toward the implementation of the Memorandum, to investment of the greatest share of the SL's energy in reaching the most exploited workers, but to the student radicals. Cde. Seymour makes explicit what is implicit in the campaign when he states that:

"All majority comrades are united in the belief that the principal way in which the Spartacist League will grow into an effective, fighting propaganda group on the road to a mass revolutionary party is to recruit radicals, including radical workers, by fighting for program within the radical movement, in this period, rather than devoting our major forces to work within the trade unions." (Super-exploitation and All That, page 1)

The assurance concerning "radical workers" is a typical example of Cde. Seymour's effrontery. His word-juggling demonstrates his contempt for his readers. How does Cde. Seymour expect to recruit radical workers? By concentrating "within the radical movement", says he. Does he expect to recruit any of the super-exploited black and Spanish-speaking workers by this tactic? Cde. Seymour does not say. For all practical purposes, these workers do not appear within his horizon, despite his glib assurances elsewhere that those in the majority "seek to implement the 'Memorandum on the Negro Struggle'".

Topeka Strike

Even empiricists are today stumbling over the conclusions which some of those presently in the minority began to formulate in 1965. The July 29th, 1968 edition of New Left Notes, carried an article by Les Coleman, entitled "Topeka Strike". He reports on the struggles

of the Kansas Health Workers Union, Local 1412, which has organized the workers in the State mental hospitals.

According to Coleman, the workers are fighting for "recognition, job training, a salary workers could live on and a voice in the running of the State mental hospitals". As a result of a work action, 5 workers were arrested, 60 suspended, and a doctor fired. The hospital administration decided to fire 35 of these workers, and the union called for a march to the capitol, and asked SDS and other organizations to participate. He reports:

"The night before, four hundred workers and people from the community had crowded into a small church to hear James Bevel and Hayward Henry speak. A mixed black and white crowd listened to the talk about black power and black pride, and were moved to a complete commitment to the strike. The united action had led the white workers to accept black workers on an equal basis, and their own conditions of employment had made them identify with a black movement that sought pride and dignity for its people.

"The following day, workers, community supporters, and 'outside agitators' marched to the capitol building. . . . Two days after the march, thirty-five of the suspended workers were in fact fired. The Union had to respond to non-representative power with the only power a union has. Pickets were thrown up around the hospital. . .

"The workers are primarily black, but both black and white workers support the strike and understand the racist power they are dealing with. One visitor here has called it the beginning of a new populist movement, and has said that the power structure has reason to be afraid. The force of men and women is small, but the idea is large. The idea is a challenge to minority employment throughout the country.

"The facts behind the action: State mental hospitals in Topeka are a major source of employment in Kansas, and . . . institutional racism is seen here in its plainest form. The highest-paid aide . . . is making only \$1.82 an hour. On the average, aides make about \$309 a month. . . . The aide is 'frozen' in his job . . .

"Minority employment structures exist in many unionized as well as non-unionized situations throughout the country. In literally hundreds of places of work, black workers given the lean end on the job and in the unions are forming rank-and-file caucuses and formulating demands on their union - or directly on the company in wildcats. In many cases, white workers will support them. The System's game - to divide by uneven oppression - is beginning to falter at the grass roots. . . . The pattern of black and white action against job discrimination and discriminatory control of unions will continue.

"Topeka is one - perhaps one of many - of the key sources of this new struggle. And in Topeka, the basic grass-roots fights on the principle of class unity - black and white class unity - is bringing new principles and goals to the Labor movement . . .

"In many ways, in its isolation and its clarity of principle, it the Topeka struggle is like the early civil-rights movement in the South. And just as that struggle 'generalized' itself in its

most militant form to the Northern ghetto and the entire student movement, Topeka may well 'generalize' its struggle throughout the American Labor force. The new populist movement, the movement which is not defeated by race divisions or divisions of student or worker arrogance and pride, is being born." (Emphasis added)

Les Coleman, an SDS member, is obviously mistaking the unity in struggle of black and white workers for neo-Populism, for a farmer-labor coalition, on the basis of the initial and tentative reaching out by the early Populist movement to the black tenant farmers and agricultural workers in the South. He sounds the keynote of a section of the "New Left", that of "control of the environment", a campaign which the technical and professional workers are, of course, seen as best fitted to lead. He over-emphasises the role of the student, and attacks "worker arrogance and pride". However, he also exhibits another more recent and more positive development of a section of SDS, its growing recognition that the working-class has the power to destroy the "System" through a social revolution.

He has empirically concluded that the key to further progress toward a social revolution lies in the unity of black and white workers. He sees this unity being built through black rank and file caucuses in the trade-unions, "supported" by white workers, and ending the division of these workers by "uneven oppression", and compares this movement to the "early civil-rights movement in the South". He wants to alert student radicals to this new, powerful movement so that they can help "generalize" this struggle throughout the American Labor force." Exactly! The minority, who long ago understood the importance of the struggle for civil-rights caucuses in the trade-unions has tried to "generalize", to spark just such a general movement in the trade-unions through a Trade Union Educational League (TUEL)-type of organization, through MLCRC.

Cde. Seymour's Three-part Reply

The second prong of the majority offensive is ideological. Cde. Seymour has evidently been given the major responsibility for penning an answer to the charges made and the issues raised by the minority, and true to his metaphysical outlook, has replied to Whither the Spartacist League in parts. The Sections, I. On the Faction Fight in the New York Local, II. Super-exploitation and All That, III. Criticisms of MLCRC's Functioning, are treated as having no bearing on, influence on, or relationship to one another, in proper scholastic fashion. The minority has, in contradistinction to Cde. Seymour and the majority, submitted a cohesive conception which logically leads to a conclusion, that fundamental class questions are involved in this struggle. Cde. Seymour separates the whole into parts in order to evade just this conclusion. However, his three-part reply reeks with the essence of a petty-bourgeois outlook and only serves to fortify the minority's positions.

Before entering into a critical examination of the subject matter as such, Cde. Seymour's aspersions on my veracity require an answer. Obviously, if the minority can be caught in a lie, then any issue raised by it is suspect. For Cde. Seymour to indicate that I have misunderstood him, am misguided, ignorant of the facts, illogical, untheoretical, etc., is within his rights. To impugn my veracity is another matter entirely. He must either support his statements with proof, retract them, or stand condemned as unworthy of the confidence of revolutionists.

Cde. Seymour accuses me of "failing to present the positions of the majority comrades accurately . . ." In Whither the Spartacist League, I cited the actual words used by the leaders of the majority in Political Bureau and local meetings, written down in my notebook at that time, and subsequently verified by comrades from both the minority and majority alike. Does Cde. Seymour dispute the fact that the words in quotation marks in the following sentences were uttered by Cde. Robertson at local and PB meetings in the context indicated:

"1) It is "naive to believe" that black workers could be won to the SL "at this time." Workers will join a transitional organization in the unions, and a mass party, but not a "splinter propagandist group." The SL can, therefore, only expect to recruit the atypical black worker, such as the West Indian who, not having personally experienced life-long racist oppression, does not hate whites, and the exceptional black worker who can be won for a 'Weltanschauung'.

"2) The basis for membership in the Trotskyist movement is not primarily activity, but rather agreement as to "what happened in Germany in 1923'". (Whither the SL, page 5).

or that Cde. Seymour said the following quoted words, and in the context indicated during the discussion period at a local meeting?:

"Cde. Seymour originally took the position that the super-exploitation of black workers "is not a civil rights issue as such for the trade unions, that there are unions whose membership is predominantly black, and who are 'poorly paid, but that this is not discrimination, per se /because/ no better jobs are available.' He also indicated that while the TUEL . . . had a 'live issue' - industrial unionism - around which the early American communists could launch a struggle, a similar situation did not exist on the issue of super-exploitation. It is, therefore, not necessary, in Cde. Seymour's opinion, 'to have a set of demands against discrimination' in the unions, and a 'broader' approach to trade-union activity should be posed. (Whither the SL, pages 10-11)

His first document simply insinuates that I have presented the majority positions unfairly, the usual charge of someone with a poor defense, who hopes that his audience will have equally poor memories. His second document states the following:

"The question of super-exploitation was not raised in the local debate over MLCRC's future, and only came up in inconclusive and disorganized conversations between comrade Turner and myself after the key vote had been taken. The views on this subject, comrade Turner ascribes to me are quite inaccurate . . .".

(II. Super-exploitation and All That, page 1)

I hereby categorically state that not only were the words quoted uttered by Cde. Seymour on the floor on the local in the second meeting devoted to MLCRC, but that I responded to his remarks in my summary, accusing him at that time of adopting the position that only one rate of exploitation existed in the US. Cde. Robertson can testify to my truthfulness, on this point at least, inasmuch as he should recall that he, privately and immediately after the meeting, informed me that I had justifiedly taken Cde. Seymour to task. What is, however, involved here is not simply the question of the flexible memory of an individual.

Whether or not Cde. Seymour has "forgotten" or has deliberately attempted to falsify the record is less important than the question of why the majority, whose leading member is Cde. Robertson, and in whose behalf he has written his documents, which presumably read and discussed them, and which, for the most part, was present when the points discussed arose, has permitted Cde. Seymour to retain these mis-statements in his documents.

The Issues in the Faction Fight

I shall attempt to deal with the main points made by Cde. Seymour in his document, I. On the Faction Fight In the New York Local, in the order raised. It is obviously not possible to deal with every aspect of every point, with every defensive twist and turn, of Cde. Seymour, without inordinately lengthening this document, not to speak of the tedium to the reader.

Cde. Seymour accuses me of not dealing "systematically with theoretical issues involved (such as the relationship between black and white workers and proletarianization as a categorical imperative of the Trotskyist movement)". But the purpose of Whither the Spartacist League was not to discuss these questions "systematically", but to sound the tocsin in the SL, to inform the comrades that a fundamental cleavage had taken place in the organization, to delineate the issues involved and to expose the underlying basis for the division. In that respect, Whither the SL was, and was supposed to be, the opening attack of the minority. By this criticism, Cde. Seymour "systematically" exposes his own academic formalism.

By his sneer at proletarianization "as a categorical imperative", he discloses a) where his own priorities are, namely, the student milieu, and b) his complete inability to comprehend why the minority, and for that matter all revolutionary socialists worthy of the name, have not only emphasized the role of the proletariat, but have concentrated on building an organization in the class. And certainly not on the basis of Kant's categorical imperative, in which an activity is seen as a good in and of itself, as a metaphysical, ideological, absolute divorced from practical class interests. Marxists, of course, as scientific socialists, base themselves on the proletariat because it is the only class capable of overthrowing capitalism, reorganizing production on socialist lines, and preparing the way for the development of a classless society.

Cde. Seymour denies my "right to deny" that the main motivation of the majority "for dissolving MLCRC was to facilitate creating left oppositions in key unions". I have not merely denied it. I have related this action to a series of acts before, during, and after MLCRC was dissolved, which coupled with the statements of the leaders of the majority, clearly indicates that the majority had and has no intention of implementing the Memorandum, had and has a theory of stages, in which stage number one remains activity directed mainly toward the petty-bourgeois radicals to convince them that concentration in the working-class is necessary, and that trade-union activity is seen at this time as:

"largely a question of good, elementary political hygiene, necessary to Trotskyists, as well as a showcase for white radicals, and not at all the main question of attempting to set the most oppressed workers into political motion." (Whither the SL, page 6)

For Cde. Seymour to state, therefore, that "comrade Turner cannot truthfully claim that the majority has wanted to liquidate trade union work" is either wilful misrepresentation on his part, or a complete failure to comprehend plain English. The questions were clearly about priorities, purposes served in, and forces committed to "trade union work".

In discussing his understanding of "the origins of the dispute", and my attitude toward work in petty-bourgeois arenas, Cde. Seymour, true to metaphysics as always, separates subjective and objective and cause and effect. Scrupulosity in dealing with an antagonist is also absent, and evidently not to Cde. Seymour's taste.

I said that "the SL was, therefore, able to operate only at the periphery of the anti-war movement, while attempting to direct it toward the working-class" (Whither the SL, page 7). Cde. Seymour does not see fit to quote the second half of the sentence, but only that section which he can fit into his proposition that Turner was "implying that the political character of the anti-war movement made it unprincipled to enter it in any way." What I had clearly posed was the serious difficulties for the SL arising from the contradiction between the SL's correct political line, its poor social composition, and the nature of the differing arenas where struggles were taking place. Cde. Seymour ignores my counter motion on MLCRC which states that:

"The local recognizes, however, that a Leninist organization cannot limit itself to trade-union arenas, but must also be involved in other aspects of the class struggle, e.g., anti-war, student, black ghettos, electoral activities, etc., to whatever extent is necessary and possible. For the SL, as yet a propagandist group, whose present function is mainly exemplary, the recruitment of cadre as a result of the upsurge in arenas involving the radicalized student milieu is a vital necessity. This local also has the responsibility for helping to maintain the NO. Forces presently involved in MLCRC and other trade-union activity will, therefore, have to be utilized in pressing struggles in other arenas, when and as necessary." (Whither the SL, page 1)

It too would not have fit the thesis that Turner opposes work in the anti-war movement because of its "political character".

A spate of "personnel-organizational mechanisms" is animatedly exuded by Cde. Seymour which includes the gem that "comrades Turner, Hugh F., Jerry E., or Sandra N. could have signed up for a night college course, giving them entry into the student anti-war movement" to prove that "collective and personal organizational decisions, motivated by political attitudes" were responsible for "our failure to carry out our line toward the anti-war movement", and that the existing personnel assignments did not reflect our political priorities". He, thereby, not only displays a lack of a sense of proportion in general, and an unawareness of the interaction of subjective and objective factors in the anti-war movement in particular, but also, that he deliberately ignores the decision by the PB in September 1967 and the plenum of the Central Committee in December 1967, which voted to give priority to implementing the Memorandum.

Cde. Seymour, in proving that "entry" into the anti-war movement would have been possible cites the activity of the comrades in the

Bay Area who were active "in and around the Peace and Freedom Party". In doing so, he has unwittingly testified, not to his thesis which being obvious to the point of banality needs no proof, but to mine, that the SL was functioning in an essentially difficult environment, that its "basic Marxist program tended to isolate it in the petty-bourgeois arenas from the dominant resistance-demonstration-issue third bourgeois party elements. Cde. Seymour pretends to be unaware that the PB had unanimously opposed entry "in . . . the Peace and Freedom Party" by the Bay Area comrades, as an opportunistic adaptation, on the grounds that the BA's hopes that PFP, an Independent Socialist Clubs property, could be pressured into becoming a labor party were illusory, and would also serve to sow illusions in others. Instead, the PB suggested that conditions be set for entrance which would expose PFP as the petty-bourgeois operation it is. However, the PB recommendations arrived after the BA comrades had publically announced their entry. Faced with a written fait accompli, Cde. Robertson met with the BA comrades and worked out the tactics so that an actual physical entry would take place which would later enable the BA to split from PFP in good time, hopefully, taking out some of their adherents. Cde. Seymour and the others in the majority were certainly aware of the facts in this situation. Why then, comrades should ask, was the situation so misrepresented?

Arithmetic meets with just as cavalier a treatment at Cde. Seymour's hands in his review of the situation in the NY local at the time the dispute "erupted". He counts 18 functioning comrades in the local, 11 of whom "had trade union work as their main area of external activity, 4 in the Social Service Employees Union, 7 in MLCRC". "Well", says Cde. Seymour, in effect, "eleven in trade-union activity, more than three-fifths of our active membership! By resisting a reallocation at MLCRC's expense, Turner 'arbitrarily' opposes work in the 'radical movement'!"

The composition of the "7 in MLCRC" was not discussed by Cde. Seymour who at first "desired ^{d/} . . . simply to get a few of the non-trade union members of MLCRC to pull out and devote themselves full time to other area", although he examines by name other possible sources in the NY local for the anti-war movement.

Smith and Sandra N., the hospital workers, Kay Ellens and Shirley Stoute, in light industry, and I, as chairman of the SL's Trade Union Commission were conceded by the majority to be necessary to the work. Of the remaining two comrades, one, Hugh F., a minority supporter, was already engaged in the community work into which Cde. Seymour wished to send him! Hugh F. at that time was functioning as a responsible member of the executive committee and fully discharging all his obligations to the community organization. The other, Jerry E., had been through the community organization, and had exhibited extreme reluctance to being again involved, because he considered that this organization was barren.

It must be admitted that the original basis for contention was quite narrow. However, it proved to be the dislodged pebble which launched the avalanche. Not that a comrade could not have been released from MLCRC for other work. My counter motion on MLCRC allows for just such a possibility. However, in the midst of a heavy campaign among hospital workers, I, of course, correctly felt it necessary to examine all other possible resources for petty-bourgeois arenas, before acceding to such a request. The factional conflict became inevitable when the debate on MLCRC made clear that differing priorities based on

differing perspectives for the organization was what was really being fought over.

It also happens that the SSEU is overwhelmingly composed of non-specializing college graduates. The trade-union activity of comrades in the SSEU is mainly directed to the ex-student radicals in its ranks. It is precisely because an unusually high proportion of ex-student radicals pass through this occupation that Cde. Robertson was so insistent on concentration in this union, and became directly and regularly involved in meeting with these comrades. Comrades should contrast the patient understanding of Cde. Robertson in this situation, in which SL cadre have been functioning for approximately four years, with few contacts and not a single recruit, with his precipitate snuffing out of MLCRC after a few months of activity.

A Small Matter

Cde. Seymour knowingly repeats a canard when he states that "Cde. Turner, who has expressed such indignation over the infrequency of the press, actually proposed that our new editor take a part-time job as a hospital worker and participate in MLCRC". The fact is that the newly arrived editor, Cde. Cunningham, expressed great interest in the work of MLCRC, and volunteered the suggestion that he find a part-time job in a hospital so that he could participate in this work. It was I who asked Cde. Cunningham whether this job might not interfere with his responsibility as editor. It was Cde. Cunningham who at that time felt that it would not. I have attempted on other occasions when this tale was bruited about, to have Cde. Cunningham correct the misrepresentation, but to no avail. Perhaps he feels that the issue is only a small one? He should be aware of the Chinese aphorism to the effect that a thousand league journey begins with one step.

The "Abdication" of Turner

Cde. Seymour States that:

"the majority comrades (e.g. Nelson, Robertson, Henry) who, faced with the virtual abdication of Turner as chairman of the SL's national Trade Union Commission, have in their writing and travels encouraged comrades nationally to seek to implement the "Memorandum on the Negro Struggle" in their local areas and have done whatever supervision of such work has been done at all."

(I, On the Faction Fight, page 4)

This tendentious statement contains the usual sly mélange of half-truths and double-talk which the comrades have, no doubt, begun to associate with Cde. Seymour's writing style.

The majority, including Cde. Seymour, is well aware that from the time of the plenum in December 1967, the trade-union work engaged in by the SL cadre nationally, to the extent that it was engaged in at all, was singularly lacking in activities designed to promote civil rights caucuses. Through February, 1968, attempts made to discuss the implementation of the Memorandum seemed to evoke little interest and much pessimism, according to the information sent by the locals to the NO. The prevailing theme seemed to be that while the Memorandum might be applicable somewhere else, it was not pertinent in the unions and in the geographic areas in which the comrades were currently involved.

Think of it! The US is a country with a labor force of approximately twelve and a half million black and Spanish-speaking workers of whom millions are in unions. The largest part of these millions work in low-skilled, low-paid jobs, in situations where labor bureaucrats have arranged "sweetheart" deals with the bosses, and with the better paid white workers acquiescent. But the SL cadre, it seems, is unable or unwilling to discover or create opportunities to become part of the daily struggles of this doubly-oppressed mass, and begin to implement the Memorandum.

I said before that through February, 1968, information reaching the NO contained little promise in connection with the Memorandum. However, the minutes of the New Orleans local of April 30, 1968, which reached the NO sometime in May, and which indicated that serious consideration was given to building a MLCRC directed toward a union with a high proportion of black workers was not seen by me until August. Only after Cde. Robertson had begun to talk about the "virtual abdication of Cde. Turner as chairman of the SL's national Trade Union Commission", did comrades from the minority begin to consider the possibility that the national correspondence might contain information of interest to the TUC. Why were the minutes from New Orleans never brought to the attention of the chairman of the TUC? Obviously, because the faction fight had already broken out and Cde. Robertson, who had just proposed the dissolution of the MLCRC in NY was not about to give information to the minority which it could use against the majority. What, if anything, was ever done by the New Orleans local to build a MLCRC, any discussions between the NO and the New Orleans local which may have served to discourage the comrades from going ahead with their plans, were certainly never reported to me to this day. Thus have "the majority comrades . . . encouraged comrades . . . to implement the "Memorandum . . . in their local areas".

By February, I had concluded that not only was it incumbent on the NY local to implement the Memorandum, but that in so doing, it would be setting an example to the SL cadre nationally. It should also be noted that even before the split, I was the only resident member of the five original members of the TUC still functioning. Two of the members, Sandra N. and Jack G. had departed the organization, and Shirley Stoute and Lyndon Henry were never able to arrange for their attendance at meetings of the TUC. The comrades who had been designated corresponding members were sent copies of the MLCRC Newsletters by me, as a practical demonstration of the implementation of the Memorandum, in the hope that they might spark a similar development elsewhere. Under the circumstances, I felt that my responsibilities as chairman of the TUC could best be fulfilled by devoting my energies to MLCRC.

MLCRC's Functioning

Cde. Seymour's third document, III. Criticisms of MLCRC's Functioning, is completely tendentious and a deliberate distortion of the events in connection with MLCRC. To the extent that it strikes an honest note, it merely reflects Cde. Seymour's completely academic outlook and his inability to understand strategy and tactics as directed toward the working-class by Marxists.

A prolonged reply to the misconstructions and distortions, the wriggings and writhings, of Cde. Seymour would not serve any useful purpose inasmuch as the answers, for the most part, have already been given in the Memorandum, the minority document, Whither the Spartacist

League, and in the present statement, e.g., that MLCRC "absorbed too damn many people", that the Minority was not interested in building civil-rights caucuses "within the context of a single union", that a union caucus which makes the issue of double oppression, of super-exploitation, its major axis does not have a sufficiently "comprehensive...approach", that "comrade Turner and the other minority comrades never appreciated the need to develop a detailed programmatic approach".

Cde. Seymour continually demands greater concreteness from the minority. In the discussion on the relationship between the abstract and concrete, Trotsky in From a Scratch to the Danger of Gangrene, said that:

"the concrete is a combination of abstractions - not an arbitrary combination, but one that corresponds to the laws of the movement of a given phenomena." (Trotsky's emphasis)

The problem for Cde. Seymour is not insufficient concreteness, although greater concreteness is usually desirable, but rather his inability to comprehend the abstractions involved in dialectical contradiction.

As to Cde. Seymour's criticisms of MLCRC for not developing a detailed program "before approaching workers in a union situation", the academic elitist breathes in every word. He works out a "concrete" program without consulting the workers, whose grievances do not play a "necessary" role in its development! Cde. Seymour does not realize how ludicrous he sounds. Nothing could more fully guarantee that revolutionists would be completely unable to acquire a base in the working-class than the tactical line of Cde. Seymour. But how can one explain that this tactical line is advanced by the majority?

Super-exploitation

The second document, II. Super-exploitation and All That, deserves a considered reply. While Cde. Seymour is mainly concerned with defending himself and the majority against the criticisms levied in Whither the Spartacist League on this question, to the extent that interest is focused on an area which has not received sufficient attention, a positive good can be derived from a defensive reaction to cover up a weakness.

Again, and before discussing the subject as such, a challenge must be answered as to the facts and their interpretation. Cde. Seymour attributes to me the conception that super-exploitation "is not only possible, but is an accepted part of Marx's theoretical model, and he quotes two passages to prove this." Cde. Seymour either fails to understand English or else is again unscrupulously attempting to distort my statements to his advantage. I said that Marx and Engels were "well aware of the phenomenon of super-exploitation in industrially developed as well as in colonial and semi-colonial countries." I then went on to quote a passage from Marx which clearly indicated that Marx had omitted this phenomenon from his "theoretical model", to wit:

"In the chapters on the production of surplus-value it was constantly presupposed that wages are at least equal to the value of labour-power. Forcible reduction of wages below this value plays, however, in practice too important a part, for us not to pause upon it for a moment. (Emphasis added)

Cde. Seymour then goes on to deny that the section quoted, the rest of which follows, has anything to do with super-exploitation:

"It in fact, transforms, within certain limits, the labourer's necessary consumption-fund into a fund for the accumulation of capital. The zero of their cost is, therefore, a limit in a mathematical sense, always beyond their reach . . . the constant tendency of capital is to force the cost of labour back towards this zero."

Cde. Seymour states that the whole passage "relates to the fact that during a severe depression, with widespread and prolonged unemployment, wages may fall below their traditional norms." Aside from the fact that Marx quite clearly refers to the constant tendency of capital, on what basis does Cde. Seymour reach his conclusion? None! He merely asserts it. The comrades are invited to pick up any edition of Volume I of Capital and turn to Chapter 24, page 1. They will note the following headings:

"Circumstances that, Independently of the Proportional Division of Surplus-Value into Capital and Revenue, Determine the Amount of Accumulation. Degree of Exploitation of Labour-Power. Productivity of Labour. Growing Difference in Amount."

Comrades who take the trouble to read through the few pages in this section will determine that no passages exist which remotely refer to a "severe depression, "widespread and prolonged unemployment" or to "traditional norms of wages". They would then have to conclude that Cde. Seymour is either guilty of the most slovenly scholarship, in that he presented his assumptions as fact, without having bothered to check the sources, or of attempting to misrepresent Marx, i.e., a deliberate swindle. In either case he stands convicted of the most complete contempt for the members of the SL and for the historical record.

Comrades should consider the following one paragraph sub-section from Volume III of Capital, page 230, of the Foreign Languages Publishing House edition:

"II. Depression of Wages Below the Value of Labour-power

"This is mentioned here only empirically, since, like many other things which might be enumerated, it has nothing to do with the general analysis of capital, but belongs in an analysis of competition, which is not presented in this work. However, it is one of the most important factors checking the tendency of the rate of profit to fall."

This paragraph clearly illustrates that Marx was fully aware that wages are depressed below the value of labor-power as part of the process of competition in capitalism, and that the extra-profit pocketed by the capitalist is a prime factor in "checking the tendency of the rate of profit to fall."

The comrades will recall that Marx demonstrated that surplus-value, or that part of the value that the worker produces in excess of the value of his labor-power, is the source of profit. The rate of profit is calculated by the capitalist as the proportion of surplus-value to the total capital (constant and variable) expended. By

constant capital Marx refers to machinery, buildings, and raw materials including intermediate products used in the production of commodities. By variable capital, Marx refers to capital invested in wages. If p' stands for rate of profit, s for surplus-value, c for constant and v for variable capital, then it can readily be seen that in the equation, $p' = \frac{s}{c + v}$, if s and c are held constant, the decrease of variable capital increases the rate of profit.

Marx designated the rate of exploitation or surplus-value as the proportion of surplus-value to the variable capital alone, as the actual relationship between capitalist and worker. If s' stands for the rate of exploitation, then in the equation, $s' = \frac{s}{v}$, as variable capital is decreased, the rate of exploitation is increased. If, therefore, a situation exists whereby the wage is regularly decreased below the average value of labor-power for a group or groups within a given population, and assuming that the average value produced in proportion to the level of skill demanded is the same for all groups in the population, then a situation of super-exploitation would exist.

Marx, in this section, merely records the empirical fact that the manifold artifices by the class of capitalist succeeds in squeezing extra-profits from the workers. He does not explore this situation because it does not pertain to a "general analysis of capital", and rather should be examined separately as part of a specific analysis of capitalist competition. Marx takes note of this phenomenon, however, because of its impact on the rate of profit, perhaps for the sake of completeness of exposition, and no doubt to prevent future Seymours from assuming that the phenomenon does not exist.

Cde. Seymour also disputes my interpretation of a section of a letter By Engels to Schlüter, on March 30, 1892. He grants that this section:

"does refer to different wages and standards of living between workers of different nationalities, attributing this to discrimination keeping certain nationalities out of the better paying occupations. He does not state, however, that the rate of exploitation between low and high wage occupations are different."

No misrepresentation is involved in connection with the passage from Engels' letter, but Cde. Seymour's metaphysical outlook again looms large. He has a veritable talent for disconnecting phenoma and sealing them into separate compartments.

The section of the letter in question is again reproduced, as follows:

"Now a working-class has developed and has also to a great extent organized itself on trade-union lines. But it still takes up an aristocratic attitude . . . leaves the ordinary badly paid occupations to the immigrants, of whom only a small section enter the aristocratic trades. . . . And your bourgeoisie knows much better even than the Austrian government how to play off one nationality against the others, Jews, Italians, Bohemians, etc., against Germans and Irish; and each one against the other, so that differences in the standard of life of different workers exist, I believe, in New York to an extent unheard of elsewhere . . . and to cap it all, John Chinaman stands in the background who far

surpasses them all in his ability to live on next to nothing."

The comrades will note that Engels is not merely discussing "discrimination keeping certain nationalities out of the better paying occupations", as Cde. Seymour would have it, but quite concretely, that the American capitalists "play off one nationality against the others . . . so that differences in the standard of life of different workers exist". Engels notes that the trade-union movement takes aristocratic attitudes toward the "badly-paid occupations" and leaves them "to the immigrants".

To a Marxist, to any one with a logical mind, this passage can only mean that the bosses take advantage of the competition between immigrants for jobs in order to be able to pay exceedingly low wages which quantitatively differ in accordance with the minimums which each nationality will accept, and that this situation exists because the trade-unions ignore these "badly-paid occupations", enabling the bosses to achieve an extra measure of exploitation from these groups. But, protests Cde. Seymour, Engels "does not state . . . that the rate of exploitation between low and high wage occupations are different." Here is an excellent example of formalistic thinking! No, Cde. Seymour, he does not. But let us assume for the moment, that the trade-unions had organized the occupations in which the immigrants were concentrated, so that the bourgeoisie could not play off the different nationalities, would not this have meant higher wages for these workers, and if so, assuming that the constant capital invested, and the total quantity of surplus-value derived were unaltered, would this not have meant a drop in the rate of exploitation? Would this, therefore, not have altered the relationship between rates of exploitation in low and high wage occupations? If they were originally the same, as you seem to believe, then wouldn't they be subsequently different, and vice versa?

Marxist Economics a la Seymour

Marx has made "a clear statement that the rate of exploitation tends to uniformity", replies Cde. Seymour, who has presented us with his understanding of the Marxist theory of exploitation in order to counter the conception of super-exploitation.

This summary by Cde. Seymour indicates again that he is incapable of understanding the meaning of words such as tendency or in fact any phenomenon in which dynamic interaction is involved. Cde. Seymour's concept of motion is mechanical, not dynamic. He tends to see absolute categories in place of relative relationships. He treats Marxist economics as dogma, as a finished system, mainly useful in exposition among student radicals, and not as a revolutionary instrument to be applied to current reality. He is, therefore, unable to understand Marx. Cde. Seymour does not attempt to absorb the clear statements of Marx and Engels into a more comprehensive understanding of Marxism. He instead sees complete opposition where he should see dialectical contradiction. He must, therefore, close his eyes to those aspects of Marxism which he cannot assimilate into his conception of Marxism.

Cde. Seymour attributes to me a belief that "a uniform rate of exploitation depends on all workers in the economy being accustomed to the same 'quantity of the means of subsistence' (which is really quite implausible)", proving, thereby, that he is also adept in the use of cheap debaters tricks which falsify the question at issue. Cde. Seymour slyly juggles with the words "uniform" and "average", and by equating

one with the other, sets up a straw man that he can easily knock down. It is obvious nonsense to say that I believe in the petty-bourgeois utopia that all workers can become "accustomed" to the same wage. Cde. Seymour attempts to vulgarize the question of super-exploitation to his advantage.

Similarly, Cde. Seymour's inference that I have said that his "positions on MLCRC derive from differences over the concept of super-exploitation" (emphasis added) is another deliberate vulgarization. My point was that Cde. Robertson, who at that time, accepted the concept and Cde. Seymour, who did not, had formed an unprincipled bloc in that they did not feel free to openly discuss their differences on this basic question.

And only someone totally lacking a sense of proportion could have concocted the "hypothetical situation" which Cde. Seymour has projected, in which the majority and minority respond according to his predictions in two hypothetical trade-unions with hypothetical compositions, hypothetical wage situations and hypothetical leaderships. Not only does this not deserve a reply, it has to be seen to be believed.

If the comrades will re-examine the section containing Cde. Seymour's conception of Marxist economics, they will note the complete absence of class struggle. Cde. Seymour's rendition is completely a-historical. Abstract economic mechanisms are presented divorced from living, contending social forces, in the best academic style. When I criticize his bloodless, academic conceptions of Marxism, Cde. Seymour protests that "political and union action limits profit maximizing, free-market behavior . . . and it is wholly illegitimate to criticize Marxist categories and conclusions by introducing limitations on free-market behavior". It is hard to believe one's eyes! Cde. Seymour actually believes that he is engaging in an academic debate over "Marxian categories", over "the Marxian economic model", which "as presented in Das Kapital, abstracts from legal and institutional restrictions on profit maximizing behavior"!!

And what does Cde. Seymour say? He informs us, in essence, that the rate of exploitation depends on "competition in the labor, capital, and commodities market." The "habitual standard of living" or in Marx's words, "the average quantity of the means of subsistence necessary for the labourer", if I understand Cde. Seymour correctly, is a subordinate aspect of this competition, and, in actuality, does not exist for the country as a whole. For Cde. Seymour, the "average laborer", and, therefore, it would seem, the average value of labor-power "is the average of the number of competent, but lowest wage, workers that a particular industry can profitably employ" (emphasis added) How does Cde. Seymour attempt to reconcile this position with the unambiguous statement by Marx that, "in a given country, in a given period, the average quantity of the means of subsistence necessary for the labourer is practically known." (emphasis added)? He makes no such attempt. He merely ignores Marx. And the majority approves!

"The Turner Hypothesis"

Cde. Seymour labels the concept of super-exploitation as "the Turner hypothesis" and hopes that "comrade Turner acquires . . . a willingness to submit his theories to factual tests." (emphasis added)

According to Cde. Seymour:

"the issue of 'super-exploitation' is a combination of factional red herring and intellectual pridefulness on Comrade Turner's part, believing that he has made a major contribution to our understanding of the Negro question."

Cde. Seymour actually attributes the concept of super-exploitation to me! One could perhaps excuse Cde. Seymour's howling ignorance in respect to the history of American socialist thought on the Negro question, although before rushing into print on this question, it would have seemed proper for a Marxist to have become acquainted with its history. But what excuse does Cde. Robertson, with his twenty years of experience, have? Can he in all honesty claim that he is unaware of the recognition of super-exploitation by some American radicals in relation to the economic situation of Negro and other minorities? And if so, is ignorance in his case excusable?

Moreover, Cde. Robertson, who took part in the initial discussion of strategy and tactics in the TUC on MLCRC, saw the first, programmatic leaflet prior to its mimeographing, and expressed praise for its contents, including the following section:

"FOR A LIVING WAGE

"We oppose a uniform percentage increase for hospital workers. The same percentage widens the gap between the lower and higher paid workers! A 15% increase for a maintenance worker earning \$76, and for a pharmacist earning \$150.68, would raise wages to \$87.40 and \$173.28, and increase the gap between them by \$11.20. Most of the lower-paid hospital workers are super-exploited black and Puerto Rican workers. The percentage approach accepts the low-pay, specially oppressed status for minority workers - accepts racism!

"Perhaps the leadership believes that a raise in the minimum to \$87.40 might be 'good enough' for black and Puerto Rican workers? That they do not have the same needs as 'important' trade-union bureaucrats? The latest U.S. Bureau of Labor statistics show that \$10,195 a year or \$196 a week is required for a moderate standard of living in New York City. Even our higher paid union members in hospitals are far below such a standard. We must fight for increases for all members, but first of all for the most exploited. Low wages for minority workers have always been used to hold down the wages of other workers. Decent wages for minority workers help all workers win higher wages.

-FOR A \$115 WEEKLY MINIMUM FOR HOSPITAL WORKERS "

How can he now, and without a word of explanation identify with a document which attempts to deny that minority workers are super-exploited, and, worse, airily dismiss this question as of no importance, even if it exists?

Some Historical Background

Obviously, only material directly relating to the history of super-exploitation can be mentioned in this paper.

The founder of the Socialist Labor Party, Daniel De Leon, voiced the position of the early Marxists in the US, that the oppression of

the Negro was simply a class question which would have to wait for a socialist solution. The Socialist Party, took essentially the same position. Eugene V. Debs openly stated that his party had nothing special to offer Negroes, and the early Socialist Party took no steps to develop a program of immediate demands in support of any struggles of the Negro for equality.

Cannon, in his The First Ten Years of American Communism, states, on page 232 that:

"The American Communists, in the early days under the influence and pressure of the Russians in the Comintern were slowly and painfully learning to change their attitude, to assimilate the new theory of the Negro question as a special question of doubly-exploited second class citizens." (emphasis added)

The discussion between Swabek and Trotsky on the Negro question and the slogan of self-determination, on February 28, 1933, as recorded in the minutes in summary form, show that Swabek said the following:

"In the North (as of course also in the Southern states) the wages for Negroes are always lower than for white workers and mostly their hours are longer, that is accepted as a natural basis. In addition the Negroes are allotted the most disagreeable work."

In the discussion in 1939 between JR Johnson and Trotsky, Trotsky said the following:

"The characteristic thing about the American worker's parties, trade-union organizations and so on was their aristocratic character. It is the basis of opportunism. The skilled workers who feel set in the capitalist society help the bourgeois class hold down the Negroes and the unskilled to a very low scale." (emphasis added)

The 1939 SWP convention's Document on the Right of Self Determination and the Negro in the United States of North America discussed the

"intensity of his [The Negro's] exploitation and the attendant brutal discrimination . . . to increase profit by cheapening labor."

The 1948 SWP convention resolution Negro Liberation Through Revolutionary Socialism discusses:

"the economic, political, social and cultural degradation of the Negro people below the levels of even the most exploited layers of the working-class."

The American Communist Party, which shares with the Trotskyists the common heritage of the early Comintern and its emphasis on the Negro question as a "special question of doubly-exploited" black masses, finds it useful on occasion to verbalize orthodox Marxist conceptions in order to retain its base of support among workers, and as a cover for its reformist policies. It must be said that, of all ostensibly revolutionary organizations, the CP is still the only one with a sizeable base in the working-class and among black workers. The CP, therefore, continues to pay closer attention to the economics of oppression of black workers than the other ORO's.

Victor Perlo, the CP's economist, whose findings were referred to with approbation by George Breitman, the SWP's expert on the Negro question, in the 1950's (well-before the SWP's degeneration), has written a pamphlet entitled American Labor Today, which states the following:

"Another fallacy is the idea that only Negroes and other non-white Spanish-speaking minorities are oppressed in the United States, and that this oppression is wholly different in nature than the exploitation of labor. Certainly Negroes suffer additional oppression and are robbed in extra ways. But the main material content of their oppression is exploitation, or more exactly, super-exploitation. The Negroes form a disproportionate share of the working class, especially in the toughest, most dangerous occupations. But their exploitation is yet part and parcel of the exploitation of the working class as a whole." (Perlo's emphasis)

Ernest Mandel, a leading Pabloist, referred to national and racial minorities as super-exploited sections of the populations, at the recently-held Fourth Annual Socialist Scholars Conference at Rutgers University.

Cde. Seymour's attempt to picture the historic communist position, that a special struggle should be waged against the special oppression of black workers and their super-exploitation, as part of the transitional process toward socialist understanding among black and white workers, as "Cde. Turner's hypothesis", and as "a doctrine that wages should correspond to productivity", is clearly ill-advised.

Does Super-exploitation Exist?

This phenomenon so pervades the society that one is tempted to ask Cde. Seymour and the majority, on what planet they have been living, that they can seriously pose this question. Not only are minorities super-exploited, but women, for example, to this day receive unequal pay for work equal to that of men. Documentary evidence in this respect is readily available through the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the US Department of Labor.

Super-exploitation is the lot of various sectors of the population. But the black workers have an historic role to play within the US working-class in the struggle for socialism, and it is for this reason, of course, that a struggle against the super-exploitation of black and Spanish-speaking workers was projected as a key question at this time, and not directed toward the agricultural laborers, as you sneeringly suggest. We are not dealing here with academic abstractions, but with the concrete application of Marxist theory to illuminate practice.

Cause and effect are seen by you metaphysically, as always, Cde. Seymour. You cannot understand the minority's position on the Negro question and attribute your mechanical approaches to us. You conclude, therefore, that the minority believes that "the blacks are the most revolutionary because they're super-exploited". This simplistic conclusion is, of course, only another variant of the hoary chestnut that Marxists are really only economic determinists. We, of course, believe that, in the final analysis, the economic factors are decisive, but we fully recognize that the economic base dynamically interacts with the super-structure, the "ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict", in Marx's words. Not only does the

minority not believe "consciousness to be automatic", but the present struggle in the SL is precisely over the question of bringing socialist consciousness to the working-class.

As our documents indicate, we happily agree with Trotsky that the black workers, who may never have "heard of the rate [sic] of super-exploitation":

"are convoked by the historic development to become a vanguard of the working class. What serves as the brake on the higher strata? It is the privileges, the comforts that hinder them from becoming revolutionists. It does not exist for the Negroes. What can transform a certain stratum, make it more capable of courage and sacrifice? It is concentrated in the Negroes. If it happens that we in the SWP are not able to find the road to this stratum, then we are not worthy at all."

(Discussions with Trotsky in April 1939 on the Negro question)

Cde. Seymour acts like a caricature of an empiricist on this question. History, even recent history does not seem to exist for him. But one does not have to be a Marxist to recognize that the black worker is robbed in the process of labor over and above the robbery, or exploitation in Marxist language, of the white worker. For example, television recently re-ran a Hollywood picture based on the development of the Tennessee Valley Authority in the 1930's. The picture was memorable only because of the occasional insights it gave into the treatment then of black workers under the Southern police state system. In one scene, the TVA administrator, who had arrived from New York, was visited by a delegation of white "responsible" citizens to discuss US government hiring policies. The administrator acceded to the delegations request to keep white and black laborers in separate gangs, but indicated that he could not pay the black workers less than the white for the same work, undercutting, thereby, not only the "mores" of the South, but the basic economic foundations of racial discrimination.

Cde. Seymour does not recognize that the existence of the Southern police state system since Reconstruction, like "South Africa, for example", has been a prime factor in the maintenance of a differential wage structure for the South as a whole, in lowering the wage structure for the entire US, and that this is primarily based, in the first place, on the extra-exploitation of black workers.

"The burden of proof falls on comrade Turner to demonstrate that the rate of exploitation for black workers is higher", says Cde. Seymour. As an economist, Cde. Seymour, you should have readily available to you statistical evidence that the same occupations receive less in wages in the South than in the North. A Marxist should also be able to relate this fact to the historic oppression of the Black people. Obviously, the "mechanism" you refer to, by which the bourgeoisie tends to drive down the price of labor to a uniform level does exist. Obviously, the arduous, dirty, low-wage job becomes the special province of the black worker who is driven to this work because he forms a disproportionate part of the industrial surplus army. Obviously, the white workers who stay in this field and in the same occupations tend to receive the same low rate of pay. That is why, Cde. Seymour, a Marxist views this area, as with all other phenomena, historically, a word you should underline in your lexicon.

Without question, Marxists have paid insufficient attention to the economic aspects of racial discrimination. It is necessary to go beyond simple repetition of Marx's explanation of exploitation to the application of Marxist economics to the concrete reality in the US. But your investigation of the phenomenon of super-exploitation can hardly be considered exhaustive. Your statistical approach seems to have been gross, and lacking in insight into a situation which, as a result of historical development is complex. A more sensitive approach might prove more fruitful. In this connection, a differential study of wages in jobs and occupations by areas, and by minority groups might be useful in concretely illustrating the extra-profits extracted from black workers in unpaid wages. For example, a correlation of the distribution of Black people in the US (20% in the South, 8% in the North Central and North East, and 5% in the West) with wages for occupations in which black and Spanish-speaking workers predominate, such as nurse's aide in non-governmental institutions (\$47, \$57, \$65.50, \$69 per week) or laundry worker in metropolitan areas (\$1.20, \$1.56, \$1.64, \$1.76 per hour) should produce significant statistics. (BLS, Dept. of Labor, 1966)

An historical treatment of the effect on the rate of exploitation of business cycles, wars, and of the shift of Black people from agricultural to industrial labor in the cities, would be an extremely valuable contribution to Marxism, if carefully done.

You might even inquire into the history of the relative relationship of "apparel wages" between the skilled and the semi and unskilled workers in dress manufacturing in the Garment Center, for example. You would find that in a period of thirty years, the relative standing of the white labor aristocracy in this field, the dress cutters and pressers, has also significantly decreased as against skilled workers in other fields, as the "ordinary, badly paid occupations" in the Garment Center became the special sphere of black and Puerto Rican workers, and as the relative wages for the latter occupations decreased as against other fields.

The "mechanism" of the "differential rate of profit" which you seem to believe exercises super-exploitation in reality helps explain why, for example, twenty-five giant apparel firms, such as Bobby Brooks and Jonathan Logan, have emerged since the second World War. According to a study by Leon Keyserling of the dress industry in 1964, the influx of capital into this field, and the erection of modern automated plants, has taken place on a base of low-wage labor, and a higher than average rate of profit, with the help of the labor bureaucrats of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union. Cde. Seymour, who should know something about the apparel trades by now, should be aware that a high proportion of the workers throughout the country in this field, except for the "aristocratic trades", is composed of black and Spanish-speaking workers.

Cde. Seymour completely eliminates from his discussion of the "Marxian theory of exploitation" the non-productive worker. A very large percentage of black and Spanish-speaking workers are found in occupations such as hospital sanitation, and low-wage clerical work. Non-productive labor, according to Marx, does not produce surplus-value, does not produce profit for a capitalist, but is bought as a service. Marx, in Theories of Surplus-Value, considers that more of the surplus-value produced by the productive workers and appropriated by the capitalists is retained by them to the extent that they can

extract unpaid labor from the non-productive workers, who perform necessary social labor, and who are necessary to the realization of surplus-value in the market. How would you, Cde. Seymour, estimate the average amount of unpaid labor-power, let alone unpaid labor appropriated by the class of capitalists from the low-wage non-productive workers "in a given country, in a given period", unless you compared their wages to that of the productive workers? What determines that a nurse's aide is to receive half to two thirds of the wages of factory workers? One cannot talk about rate of exploitation in this case, but can you say that the degree or intensity of exploitation is the same? Judging by your papers, you would answer this question in the affirmative.

And yet you state that black workers are the "most economically exploited". You are certainly aware that exploitation has a scientific meaning for Marxists. It is, of course, the expropriation of the surplus product from those who produce it. Under capitalism, this takes the form of unpaid labor extracted by capitalists from workers. The word "most" would indicate that "black workers" are more exploited than other "section [s] of the American working class". As you consider this "unlikely", and as the entire thrust of your paper is to the effect that the bourgeoisie does not extract an extra measure of unpaid labor from black workers, then you are cynically playing with words.

"Appalling" Conclusions

Your inability to comprehend that there are two sides to every coin, makes you unaware of the logic of your position, Cde. Seymour. You state that "a propos of nothing in particular, comrade Turner asserts, there are no 'inherently badly paid occupations'", and protest that I attribute to you "positions which if I held them, should make me a member of the Conservative Party, if not the John Birch society". You also state that:

"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."

The logical conclusions to be drawn from the latter statement is that the wages of black and Spanish-speaking workers, who are concentrated in the semi-skilled and unskilled jobs, are proportional to the surplus-value that they produce, and that, therefore, a) they are far less efficient and productive than the "superior" white workers, or b) that the jobs of these minorities are marginal, in that little surplus-value is produced, so that the low wage is still proportional, or c) that they are in the position of "cheap immigrant labor" which has a lower standard of life and requires less than "the average quantities of the means of subsistence".

In case a), you would be simply a chauvinist. Being a socialist doesn't automatically exclude chauvinism. Victor Berger, a leading light of the Socialist Party before the first World War, was an arrant chauvinist, who stated from the public platform his belief that Negroes were racial inferiors. In case b), you would be guilty of holding an "aristocratic and fetishistic attitude", in effect, repeating the standard apologia of capitalists faced with wage demands from workers, that they cannot afford them. In case c), to the extent that you can

so readily accept a lower standard of life for minority workers, again, you would be simply a chauvinist.

The liberal response in case b) would be to get a better job. How is this achieved under capitalism? Obviously, through education. The chauvinist in cases a) and c) also might not object to this solution to the Negro question.

If, on the other hand, you state that a lower than average rate of surplus-value is produced because of the marginal nature of the industry, and the wages of the workers are below that necessary to purchase "the average quantity of the means of subsistence", then, in Marx's phrase, "the labourer's necessary consumption-fund is transformed into a fund for the accumulation of capital", and the marginal industry exists on the basis that minority workers subsidize it from their wages. In which case, what becomes of your argument against super-exploitation?

While you protest that you desire to struggle to improve the economic position of black workers under capitalism (and, of course, are for an end to exploitation as such) you also state that "the reason black workers tend to be more radical than white workers is less economic than social". You separate the economic base from the social structure, in your usual metaphysical fashion, and thereby, eliminate the Marxist basis for comprehending the essence of social oppression. Racial discrimination can then be perceived only as a purely irrational phenomenon, an ideology which produces the material oppression of Black people. Idealism reigns supreme in the name of "cultural level" and "specific political tradition".

"Operational" Significance

The "operational" significance of the question of exploitation and super-exploitation becomes quite clear. The super-exploitation of black and Spanish-speaking workers is a part of the process of exploitation as such. A struggle against super-exploitation in the work-place becomes a means of uniting the workers against the whole process of exploitation. The struggle against super-exploitation leads directly to the conclusion of Marx, in Value, Price and Profit, that; "Instead of the conservative motto, 'A fair days wages for a fair days work!', they ought to inscribe on their banner the revolutionary watchword, 'Abolition of the wages system!'" (Marx's emphasis)

Trotsky in 1929, in his letter to the Communist League of America, said the following:

"We must find the road to the most deprived, to the darkest strata of the proletariat, beginning with the Negro, whom capitalist society has converted into a pariah, and who must learn to see us as his revolutionary brothers, and this depends wholly upon our energy and devotion to the work."

We believe that the minority's conception of work in the trade-unions, captures the essence of Trotsky's approach.

Cde. Seymour's criticisms of the conception of super-exploitation demonstrates not only ignorance and academic pedantry, but corresponds to his and the majority's petty-bourgeois orientation. Marxist levers are not needed if one is not serious about performing

work. The majority wishes to discard a particularly useful conception because its interests are not in working among black workers, but rather in work with student radicals. For the majority's purpose, a liberal approach to the Negro struggle will suffice. What knowledgeable liberal will not grant:

"a) that black workers are the most economically exploited and radical section of the American working class and b) that opposition to de facto and formal racial discrimination and emphasis on raising the wages of the poorest paid (in many areas, largely black) workers"

is necessary? The task, however, is to find the transitional approaches which will move the workers toward a socialist solution.

Marxists may never have "regarded the income distribution generated by the capitalist market as, in any sense, legitimate, whether or not the market is characterized by racial discrimination." But the question is, what the Marxists do in the struggle today to prepare the social revolution tomorrow. Your use of the passive verb "regard" is appropriate, in your case, Cde. Seymour. You might also take to heart the words of Cannon, in The First Ten Years of American Communism, on page 233, that:

"The old theory of American radicalism turned out in practice to be a formula for inaction on the Negro front, and - incidently - a convenient shield for the dormant racial prejudices of the white radicals themselves."

Conclusions

As the cadre is whipped into line by the leaders of the majority, as the members are conditioned to participate in the subterfuges and conscious deceptions designed by the leadership, as they ignore the abusive behavior of Cde. Robertson toward the minority, their moral and political degeneration becomes inevitable. No Bolsheviki are created in such an atmosphere, but sycophants who cannot call their souls their own.

Nor can "the basic Marxist program" be divorced from the question of organizational degeneration. Either the program must undergo a transformation as the organization shows itself unable or unwilling to function as a Leninist vanguard, to be congruent with, to reflect the goals and tasks posed by the deteriorating organization, or the organization must transform itself in the process of struggle for the Marxist program.

A significant indication of the path chosen for the organization is the abandonment by Cde. Robertson, in particular, of the historic conception of revolutionary socialism, that the black workers are a doubly-exploited section of the American working-class, that their special oppression has an economic content which unites them with the class of workers, and propels them in a revolutionary direction. The road is clear, therefore, to an abandonment by the majority of its largely verbal support for the Memorandum on the Negro Struggle, and to more "comprehensive" approaches to trade-union work, directed primarily, not to the black and Spanish-speaking workers, but to those workers who "are more like us".

An even worse portent for the organization is the contention by the majority that even if super-exploitation of minority workers does exist, it is without "operational bearing on the factional situation". The main question for the minority is the building of a Leninist vanguard through a turn to the working-class, and especially its most exploited layers, the black and Spanish-speaking workers. It seems that an important lever which can serve as the means toward that end, may or may not exist, but it has no "operational" significance, no strategic and tactical implications. This attitude demonstrates a contempt for theory possible only to eclectics, or to those who seize upon eclecticism in order to hide their theoretical bankruptcy.

Historic parallels from the annals of socialism are readily found, of others who began by ignoring "unimportant" theoretical conceptions and ended by abandoning the essence of revolutionary socialism.

A case in point is the Shachtman-Burnham-Abern clique during the faction fight in the SWP in 1940. Both Burnham, an opponent of Marxist dialectics, and Shachtman, the eclectic, who did not consider this question to have "operational bearing on the factional situation", or generally, importance for the functioning of a revolutionary organization, have long departed the revolutionary scene. According to Trotsky, Shachtman, who had no philosophic method, was led by Burnham, who did have a method, that of pragmatism. In the present fight, Cde. Robertson-Shachtman, who has no belief that black workers can be won to revolutionary socialism, "at this time", is provided with the theoretical justification which he had lacked, by Cde. Seymour-Burnham, who is as one with him in his myopia toward the black workers.

Not surprisingly, Cde. Seymour, who was derisively referred to, not long ago by Cde. Robertson, as no Marxist, is now seen by him in a new light. Cde. Robertson now refers to "the rising quality of Joseph Seymour as a Marxist economist." The strong-willed theoretician, Cde. Robertson, is united to the "no Marxist", Cde. Seymour, but in a curious re-arrangement, in which, within what limits we shall presently see, Cde. Seymour trades places with Cde. Robertson as the dominant ideologue of the organization. The tail wags the dog!

Nor is this the first time in history, that the strong-willed individual without a clear perspective has been led by a much softer person, who, however, did have a perspective. The reader will recall Trotsky's analysis of the relationship between Kamenev and Stalin before Lenin's return to Petrograd in April 1917, and the resulting accommodation by the Bolshevik party to Menshevism and defensism.

The clearest indictment of the present leadership, is that the ideological defense of the majority has been thrust into the hands of an academic formalist, who, because of an ingrained scholasticism, cannot help but find Marxism a book sealed with seven seals. Cde. Robertson, not only does not help Cde. Seymour discard his metaphysical proclivities, but, on the contrary, leans on them for support.

An alternative and collective leadership is vitally necessary to place the SL on the revolutionary road. Only the minority's conception of struggle directed toward the most exploited workers in the trade-unions, and its perspective of building a Leninist vanguard party in the US in the process, can save the SL from degeneration and disintegration.

21 Oct

by Harry Turner

Cde. Seymour's contribution to the dispute, IV. On the Black Question, was received by me on October 7, 1968, after The Internal Struggle Continues had been submitted to the National Office, and must, therefore, be discussed separately.

This contribution, despite some hesitant acceptance by some leaders of the majority, is inseparable from his earlier three documents. Part four of the tetology, its perspectives, its conclusions, the underlying conceptions, clearly indicates that it is the base from which Cde. Seymour has reached his other conclusions concerning elements in the super-structure in his prior documents. The majority, having said a, b, and c, refuses to say d. Having fathered Cde. Seymour's brain-child, and having, generally, expressed agreement with it, the majority stops just short of acknowledging it as their offspring, on technical grounds. The majority caucus was disbanded, says the majority, and did not adopt it formally! Cde. Robertson, however, at a NY local meeting, while criticising its Pabloite conclusion as a "weakness", and expressing his difference with a nuance, also expressed his basic agreement with the document as a whole.

Having liquidated the Militant Labor Civil Rights Committee, the tactical embodiment in NY City of the Memorandum on the Negro Struggle, and having abandoned the revolutionary socialist conception that the black workers' special oppression has an economic foundation, super-exploitation, the majority now moves to bring itself into programmatic consonance with its direction by proceeding to abandon all of its past positions on the Negro question which require revolutionary implementation. But not at one fell swoop. The process of degeneration, as history has shown, requires that the original banners be given obelance while the old forms are being filled with new content and before abandoning the forms as well.

The majority would still like to continue to utilize the Memorandum, but as a fig-leaf to hide its continuing failure to meaningfully implement it. However, the practice of the majority clearly shows that Cde. Seymour's perspectives are being put into practice, and not those of the Memorandum. The CIPA position paper on Labor and the Black Struggle, written by Mark Small, is a case in point. Its concluding section with the heading Labor Program, lists seven demands, but deliberately omits any reference to civil rights caucuses. Cde. Small, who has recently stated that he does not now believe that black workers are super-exploited, draws the logical conclusions from Cde. Seymour's documents and discards the line of the SL voted by its Central Committee and Political Bureau. The CIPA election brochures, despite the majority's chatter about a Militant Labor Civil Rights Committee in CIPA, also omits any references to the building of civil rights caucuses in the trade-unions.

Abstract and Concrete

Before dealing with the issues raised by Cde. Seymour in his document, I must again note that he criticizes the Memorandum because of its "high level of generality". I can only repeat what I have already stated in The Internal Struggle Continues, that while greater concreteness is usually desirable, Cde. Seymour's difficulty stems from his inability to assimilate the abstractions involved in the Memorandum because of his lack of dialectics. Cde. Seymour has

a metaphysical, mechanistic, academic mode of thought. The dialectic is as incomprehensible to an academic formalist as musical subtlety is to one completely tone-deaf. Cde. Seymour's proclivity, for example, for breaking the whole into unrelated parts is given free rein in this document. The methodology by which he makes "a distinction between a program and the central propaganda axis on which this program is justified" is very revealing. Cde. Seymour cannot comprehend that a program is developed in conjunction with and as part of the relationship in struggle of living, acting human beings. He, instead, in the example he gives, develops program in isolation from the forces which have to implement it and first decides that, "wages of the poorest paid workers" have to be raised. He then considers on what abstract principled basis one could "justify" such a demand. Only an academic is capable of such reasoning.

The Black Workers From a Revolutionary Socialist Viewpoint

Again, before going into the issues presented by Cde. Seymour, it is useful to review the attitudes taken toward the black workers by our revolutionary predecessors. Revolutionary socialists have always considered it to be their responsibility to sink roots among the most exploited layers of the working-class, and particularly the black workers. Thus, Swabek, in conversation with Trotsky, in 1933, said that:

"To us the Negroes represent an important factor in the class struggle, almost a decisive factor. They are an important section of the proletariat".

Trotsky made the same point more incisively in conversations with J.R. Johnson and others in April 1939, when he said:

"If the workers' aristocracy is the basis of opportunism, one of the sources of adaptation to capitalist society, then the most oppressed and discriminated are the most dynamic milieu of the working class."

Trotsky, generalizing from his knowledge and experience of the national question in Europe, understood the Negro question as a national question, and, therefore, believed the slogan of self-determination to be appropriate to this question. While the SL differs with Trotsky in seeing the Black people as a specially oppressed race-color-caste, it can learn a great deal from him on this question as well. His outstanding ability to apply the Marxist method provided him with brilliant insights into development. Trotsky understood that development takes place unevenly and by combination of the more backward and more advanced elements in a situation. He said to Swabek in 1933:

"I believe that by the unheard-of political and theoretical backwardness and the unheard-of economic advance the awakening of the working class will proceed quite rapidly. The old ideological covering will burst, all questions will emerge at once and since the country is so economically mature the adaptation of the political and theoretical to the economic level will be achieved very rapidly. It is then possible that the Negroes will become the most advanced section. We have already a similar example in Russia. The Russians were the European Negroes. It is very possible that the Negroes also through the self-determination will proceed to the proletarian dictatorship in a couple of gigantic strides, ahead of the great bloc of white workers. They will then furnish the vanguard. I am absolutely sure that they will in any case fight better than the white workers. That, however, can happen only provided the Communist party carries on an uncompromising merciless struggle not against the supposed national prepossessions of the Negroes but against the colossal prejudices of the white workers and gives it no concession whatever."

Trotsky, in his discussions with JR Johnson, agreed that the creation of a black organization would facilitate the building of a revolutionary socialist movement among black workers. He then went on to say the following:

"The task is not one of simply passing through the organization for a few weeks. It is a question of awakening the Negro masses. It does not exclude recruitment. I believe that success is quite possible; I am not sure. But it is clear for us all that our comrades in such an organization should be organized into a group. We should take the initiative. I believe it is necessary. This supposes the adaptation of our Transitional Program to the Negro problems in the States - a very carefully elaborated program with genuine civil rights, political rights, cultural interests, economic interests, and so on."

The Memorandum attempts to adapt the Transitional Program to the US working-class under present conditions and bases itself upon the historic positions of the revolutionary socialists, and the experiences of the early Communist movement and the SL membership in the civil rights movement and in the trade-unions.

Today, the black workers are "the most advanced section", and the struggle today is, as it was posed then by Trotsky, for the revolutionary socialists to carry on "an uncompromising merciless struggle . . . against the colossal prejudices of the white workers and give (s) it no concession whatever."

Plus One Equals Minus One

Cde. Seymour reveals his hopeless disorientation when he equates the approach of the Memorandum, directed toward uniting the most oppressed section of the working class, the black and Spanish-speaking workers, with the white worker, with the "anti-white chauvinism campaign in the early '50's" of the Communist Party. He identifies a strategy directed toward bringing the SL out of its isolation and into the trade-unions and the most oppressed sector of the working-class, with the policy of internal witch-hunting occasioned by the increasingly isolated CP during the witch-hunt in the US. Opposite phenomena are equated, plus one equals minus one in Cde. Seymour's methodology.

"Qualms"

Cde. Seymour has "qualms with this position (and they are no more than that)". Is it permissible in an ostensibly serious paper to put forth one's "qualms" as a serious critique? Should not Cde. Seymour resolve his "qualms" into a position for or against before "questioning" a basic perspective of the SL? No. This is not Cde. Seymour's method. His "qualms" serve as the spearhead of an attack. Having equated plus and minus one, he now equates his "qualms" over a strategy directed toward uniting the black and white workers via a struggle in the trade-unions against special oppression, with white-liberal guilt and paternalism.

Cde. Seymour actually views the Memorandum's approach as "gratuitously helping the oppressed and, even atoning for the sins of their white brethren", to which black workers will reply, "I'm a big boy, I can take care of myself". Cde. Seymour, who says he "may be wrong", believes that black workers "may welcome being accepted as ordinary fellow workers fighting a common enemy rather than as some poor put upon creatures who require everyone's special solicitude". How is it possible for Cde. Seymour to derive paternalism from

the Memorandum? By separating the dialectical opposites in the class into dichotomous, metaphysical opposites, and abstracting the class struggle from history. Cde. Seymour cannot understand "a number of contradictions (metaphysical) in comrade Turner's writings". How can "the fight against the 'special oppression' of the blacks (be) capable of radicalizing the working class as a whole?". How can white workers who have reacted negatively to the struggle of the Black people undergo the "fairly miraculous transformation" into becoming "civil rights activists within the trade-union movement?". Isn't the minority engaging in wishful thinking? Isn't Cde. Turner imputing a moral compulsion to white workers to "help" their black brothers?, questions Cde. Seymour.

Cde. Seymour shows hopeless confusion of mind possible only to a metaphysician to whom development and change, quantitative accretion to qualitative leaps, will always be a mystery.

The Memorandum's Perspective

The Memorandum poses a perspective which includes the interaction of the domestic economy and the world market on the working-class, and does not simply take the future as an extension of the present, i.e., continuity, but also in terms of sharp breaks with the past, i.e., discontinuity. Point 4 of the Memorandum which is completely ignored by Cde. Seymour, states the following:

"Prospects for achieving the unity of black and white workers against their exploiters are related to the objective necessity of the working class to pass from an economic level of struggle alone to an all-encompassing struggle which includes the political plane. The ruling class is presently planning to outlaw the right to strike in major industries. This poses the immediate need for workers to break with the capitalist parties, and organize an independent party of the working class, i.e., every major strike immediately confronts the state as the open agent of capital, and transforms the economic struggle into a political one. Economic pressures on the workers will increase as US capitalism attempts to counter the falling rate of profit and the downturn in the world capitalist market through further intensification and rationalization of the labor process, and as it attempts to shift the burden of the Vietnam war onto their backs."

What is, therefore, clearly posed is that as the working-class as a whole is subjected to economic and political attack by the ruling class, the need for class unity against the common enemy will enable revolutionists through a transitional program and organization to sink roots, to win white workers as well as black to socialist consciousness. The more advanced black workers with their increasingly militant and revolutionary outlook are seen as those most susceptible of being won to such a transitional program and organization, and the Memorandum clearly and consciously aims to breakthrough to these workers first of all. The more backward white workers are seen as lagging behind the blacks at this juncture, but of being increasingly won for the transitional organization.

Prove it!

Cde. Seymour doesn't openly disagree with this perspective. He merely has "qualms". Prove it, says Cde. Seymour, in effect. As usual Cde. Seymour stands outside of history. The struggles of the 30's, the radicalization of black and

white workers, the acceptance of black workers as brothers in arms, and the fight for equality of black workers, the role of the CP from the mid 20's through the early 30's in fighting against white chauvinism in the class and in winning black and white workers - all these struggles are completely absent from Cde. Seymour's consciousness. No one can know anything about present programs until after they are implemented, says the pragmatic Cde. Seymour, who excludes the most important historical lessons from his consciousness.

Even the limited work done among hospital workers by MLCRC "proved" that some white workers are ready now to be involved in civil rights caucuses; older white workers who recall their militant involvement by the CP, in the days when it controlled thirteen industrial unions, and had a reputation for militancy, as well as some of the young alienated professionals now working for wages. But the greatest number of contacts were black and Spanish-speaking workers, despite the growing acceptance of Black Nationalist attitudes toward whites.

The leadership of the Concerned Transit Workers (CTW), the black caucus within the United Transit Workers Union, was able to win the active support of some of the white drivers in the union, in "wildcat" strikes against the Chicago Transit Authority, around a program of better hours and working conditions, internal union democracy, and greater representation of black workers in policy-making positions within the union. Only as it became clear that the strike would be lost did the white workers, and many of the black workers as well, end their attendance at mass meetings and their participation on the picket-lines.

To even conceive that the transitional program in the trade-unions requires white workers "to make a . . . kind of sacrifice by devoting most of their trade-union energies and resources to bettering the conditions of black workers" is so fatuous as to be almost beyond belief. The underlying conception which Cde. Seymour refuses to understand is that the white workers must be aroused to a recognition that their interests are directly and immediately involved in the struggle against the super-exploitation of minority workers. To the extent that black workers are held down to "a very low scale" in Trotsky's words, the white worker's wages are also depressed. Is that really so difficult to get across to white workers? In circumstances, where the white worker also feels the increasing blows of capitalism on his back? Look at the Topeka strike of hospital workers for a positive example. (The Internal Struggle Continues) The broken strike of the woodworkers union in Laurel, Mississippi, serves as a negative example. Some of the white workers learned a bitter lesson that their refusal to fight against the special oppression of the black workers played into the hands of the company who utilized the racist attitudes of the white workers and the resulting racial division to break the strike and destroy conditions which the workers had gained over many years. Some of them learned that the fight for the rights of black workers is essentially a fight in the interests of white workers. Cde. Seymour, however, is unable to learn this lesson.

The black and Spanish-speaking workers today comprise approximately one sixth of the civilian labor force in the US, its most oppressed and radicalized layer. The Memorandum's perspective is that, as this layer interacts with the white workers in common struggle, as the white workers under the compulsion of necessity begin to recognize the minority workers as class brothers, as a revolutionary vanguard

provides leadership, then class consciousness, socialist consciousness, develops in both the white and minority workers.

Cde. Seymour does not agree. He will not go along with so "narrow" a conception of revolutionary activity in the working-class. He prefers a "broader" more "inclusive" perspective, less orientated toward the most exploited workers, who will object in any case to being given "everyone's special solicitude". Moreover, according to Cde. Seymour, the black workers will play an "extra-ordinary role" because they will act to develop class consciousness among white workers. However, this role does not depend on the development of class consciousness of the white worker, Trotsky to the contrary notwithstanding. For Cde. Seymour, abstracting for the moment from the particular axe he is sharpening, cause and effect are only related mechanically, with cause acting on effect, but never vice versa. The dialectical conception that cause and effect interact, interpenetrate and are transformed into one another is completely incomprehensible to him. The Memorandum, according to Cde. Seymour, is really saying that "the struggle to get white workers to support black demands is a means of developing class consciousness" (my emphasis), that, "Comrade Turner" wants "to agitate for a shorter work week as a means of fighting the oppression of black workers" (my emphasis), while "we" (the majority) believe that "everyone will be better off with the shorter work week, including racist and reactionary workers." It seems that Cde. Turner has developed this line because of his moralizing attitude which does not differ appreciably from "denouncing the racism of the white working class". This gross misinterpretation is, in Lenin's phrase, such a Herculean pillar of absurdity, that one can only marvel at it, while attempting to determine the underlying reason for the seeming irrationality.

History a la Seymour

In attempting to prove that a working-class can be racist and still possess "revolutionary class consciousness", Cde. Seymour turns, at last to history, but only to prove how little he has learnt of its lessons. Apart from his singular lack of even an "unconscious" dialectical sense, Cde. Seymour has an amazing lack of perceptivity, of sensitivity to movement and development in the class. In abstracting from history, in drawing historical analogies, one must be able to relate what is common, and distinguish that which is not. Cde. Seymour, however, lumps together all sorts of historical phenomena indiscriminately, mixes apples and pears together to produce a fruit salad, a hodge-podge, which defies comparison. One hardly knows where to begin to untangle the jumble.

Cde. Seymour states that "the Czarist Russian working-classes were pretty revolutionary, yet they never mobilized to end the oppression of the Jews, and the Black Hundreds were a political force until 1914."

The Russian working-class is treated as a monolith. If one reads Trotsky's History of The Russian Revolution, one finds that the Russian working-class, because it did not have a long history of development under capitalism, but emerged belatedly, with the relationship to the village of a large proportion of the proletariat still strong - this relatively young and small proletariat, (10 million out of a population of 150 million in 1917), given a revolutionary leadership, was capable of the great leap forward of a socialist revolution. However, Cde. Seymour, as always ignores the other side of the coin. The uneven

and combined development meant residues of backwardness in the class and among the masses, which in the long run, given the subsequent isolation of Soviet Russia, produced the degeneration of the first workers' state. If he had read Trotsky, he would have known that the Bolsheviks, who had strong roots in the working-class, were inundated by a patriotic flood with the outbreak of the first World War in 1914. According to the History, Volume I, page 36:

"The revolutionary ideas were barely kept glowing in small hushed circles. In the factories in those days nobody could call himself 'Bolshevik' for fear not only of arrest, but of a beating from the backward workers."

and on page 38 that:

"It seemed as though the war had produced a new working class. To a considerable extent this was the fact: in Petrograd, the personnel of the workers had been renewed almost 40%. All that existed before the war including the Duma faction of the Bolsheviks had suddenly retired to the background and almost disappeared into oblivion."

The whole process of development in Russia produced, therefore, unevenness - backwardness combined with accelerated development, prejudice and superstition combined with support for the Bolsheviks. The advanced US with its 68 million non-agricultural working force, will, in the process of its revolution, also exhibit unevenness; the revolutionary leap forward will be predicated by a leap in consciousness of the working-class in the process of which, a large part of the racist attitudes of the white workers will be buried, but not yet completely burned out. The proletarian dictatorship and a socialist transformation of society will be needed for that.

Trotsky points out in Volume I, page 42 that:

"many of the old beliefs were burned up in the fires of this struggle . . . (but) the terrible pressure of the war and the national ruin is accelerating the process of struggle to such a degree that broad masses of the workers, right up to the very revolution, have not freed themselves from many opinions and prejudices brought with them from the village and from the petty-bourgeois family circle in the town."

As to the Jewish people of Russia, it should be remembered that its development from a people-class, had resulted not only in a pervasive anti-semitism which was concentrated in the Russian country-side, and utilized by the Tsarist regime, but had also resulted in a one-sided development of the Jewish people. Few Jews were in heavy industry, and most Jews were in fields such as light industry, retail and wholesale trade, and in proportion to their numbers, had a high concentration in the professional and intellectual occupations.

Trotsky, in Volume I, pages 232-3, in evaluating the high proportion of oppressed nationalities in the revolutionary movement, states the following:

"Enemies of the Executive Committee (of the Soviets) in the reactionary camp made a great point of the 'preponderance' in it of non-Russians: Jews, Georgians, Letts, Poles, and so forth. Although by comparison with the whole membership of the Executive Committee the non-Russian

elements were not very numerous, it is never the less true that they occupied a very prominent place in the praesidium, in the various committees, among the orators, etc. Since the intelligensia of the oppressed nationalities - concentrated as they were for the most part in cities - had flowed copiously into the revolutionary ranks, it is not surprising that among the old generation of revolutionists the number of non-Russians was especially large.

"As a matter of fact at a moment of deep historic change, the bulk of a nation always presses into service those elements which were yesterday most oppressed, and, therefore, are most ready to give expression to the new tasks, it is not that the aliens lead the revolution, but that the revolution makes use of the aliens."

One can see from the foregoing what little merit resides in the statement of Cde. Seymour that "the radicalization of the white working class will diminish the particular weight of black workers in the revolutionary movement." This arithmetic formulation tends to obscure the essence of relationships in the revolutionary process. As Cde. Hugh F., a minority supporter, pointed out during the discussion at the NY local, the black workers, the "most oppressed", the "most ready to give expression to the new tasks" will, in all likelihood, play an exceptional role in the revolution in furnishing leadership to the class as a whole.

Cde. Seymour's other historical examples are as confused. The "Victorian British working class", to the extent that it accepted the oppression of the Irish acted in a non-revolutionary manner and in fact, lacked sufficient class-consciousness to overthrow British capitalism, as Marx had hoped, apart from other factors acting in that period. It was precisely the understanding of Marx, who called upon the English workers "to mobilize to end the oppression of" the Irish, and who played a large personal role in organizing demonstrations for Irish political prisoners, that English workers would never be able to free themselves as long as they permitted their ruling class to oppress the Irish. As to the role of the French in Algeria and French and Algerian workers in France, Cde. Seymour simply ignores historical development, and such potent factors as not only the lack of a revolutionary leadership but, the serious disorientation of a pseudo-revolutionary leadership, the French CP, in order to make his simplistic parallels.

The National Question

The reader should also note the smoothness with which Cde. Seymour glides back and forth from the question of the oppression of minorities within a country, to national oppression of the colonial or semi-colonial type. There are, of course, similar manifestations between the two, but also important differences which should not be vulgarized in this manner.

The issue here is the strategy and tactics of the revolutionists in the struggle. In the case of an oppressed nation, the Leninist position calls for the revolutionists from the oppressor nation to call upon the working-class to fight for the

right of self-determination for the oppressed nation. In the case of an ethnic minority such as the Jews, or, by extension, a race-color-caste such as the Black people in the US, the main struggle to be conducted by revolutionists is for revolutionary integration, i.e., a transitional struggle to end every-kind of discrimination in the process of preparing a proletarian revolution.

In the case of a minority such as the Jews, Lenin, for example, opposed the whole conception of national cultural autonomy proposed by the Bund for Jews; at the second Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party, at which the split between Mensheviks and Bolsheviks also took place. Nations, of course, are not static phenomena, decline and develop in an historical setting. Under circumstances such as the aftermath of a fascist victory in the US and the slaughter of Black people together with radicals, trade-union leaders, etc., the remaining black masses after the overthrow of fascism might decide upon separation and demand a section of the US for this purpose. The Leninists will uphold their right to make such a demand, will support their right to self-determination.

For the Leninist, uncompromising struggle against all forms of national oppression is mandatory. To the extent that Lenin's party had support in the working-class, it educated the workers in just this understanding. This is why, Cde. Seymour, although "they never mobilized to end the oppression of Jews", Jews were able to play so large a role in the working-class movement in Tsarist Russia. To the extent that the workers became thorough-going revolutionists, they discarded, overcame, or subordinated their prejudices.

Cde. Seymour completely fails to understand the nature of the transitional program and organization proposed by the Memorandum. Cde. Seymour states that:

"At no time in history has the mass of the working class engaged in a systematic struggle against oppression of national minorities, except as part of an opposition to an unsuccessful colonial war."

He has written one sentence containing three mis-statements. In the first place, "the mass of the working class" has "never engaged in a systematic struggle against oppression of national minorities . . . as part of an opposition to an unsuccessful colonial war" (my emphasis), to my knowledge. In the second place, the "mass of the working-class" only becomes involved in struggle at the height of a revolutionary situation, and not systematically, and, in the third place, not the whole "mass", "the class as a whole", even then.

The maladroit juxtaposition of the Jewish question in Russia and the Irish question in England to the Negro question in the US, is only possible to an academic pedant who cannot understand any of these struggles.

Strategy and Tactics of the Memorandum

It seems that Cde. Seymour is impermeable to the strategy and tactics envisioned by the Memorandum. However, for the sake of the reader who may have been swayed by the copious flow of Cde. Seymour's words, it is worthwhile to restate its objectives and perspectives.

The Memorandum was concerned to find the road by which the SL could begin to sink roots, first of all, among the radicalized black and Spanish-speaking

workers, and then, in the process of struggle, to convince the white workers of their stake in the struggle against the special oppression of the minority workers. The civil rights caucus, at first predominately black and Spanish-speaking, with a leaven of whites (radicals, older workers who remembered their "progressive" past, workers with sharp grievances against the labor bureaucracy) convinces the other workers in struggle and under the blows of the objective situation which is increasingly driving them into struggle, to become part of the organized resistance to the bosses and labor bureaucracy. The tactics are, therefore, to be aimed, in the first place, at the trade-unions where the mass of the most exploited black and Spanish-speaking workers are to be found, and to develop a program, in the second place, which can also win the white workers, in their own interests, and not on the basis of philanthropic attitudes toward minority workers (one feels abashed even to have to say it). The Memorandum, therefore, projects a transitional program for the civil rights organization in the fight against discrimination, for a higher minimum wage, for up-grading the skills of the minority workers, for a sliding scale of wages and hours - linking the struggles of the unemployed and especially unemployed youth, the Vietnam war, the organization of the unorganized, the replacement of the labor bureaucracy by rank and file control, and the need for a labor party. The white workers, thereby, would benefit directly and not merely as a result of the "indirect effect on the labor market". Cde. Seymour to the contrary notwithstanding.

Incidentally, a transitional organization is not immutable. As the class-consciousness of the workers deepens and develops, the form of the organization, not only should but, must undergo comparable change, although some lags are inevitable. To the extent that the program of the transitional organization becomes accepted by the white workers, to the extent that demands are won, to that extent can the organization shift its emphasis to that of workers in general, while the specific demands of black and Spanish-speaking workers continue to receive special emphasis.

Cde. Seymour demonstrates his complete incomprehension of the MLCRC program, and inability to understand the concept embodied in the word "transitional" when he states that:

"The program of MLCRC is essentially an attempt to extend the principles of the militant or movements to the trade unions and industry. Within the limited framework of civil rights-pressure group politics, such an extension is both important and desirable"

Cde. Seymour equates the "old civil rights movement" controlled by middle-class leaders and operating within, by an' for capitalist society for inconsequential reforms for the middle-class Negro, with the MLCRC transitional program directed toward the workers and orientated to the eventual winning of these workers to a socialist perspective. He asks the following:

"Why MLCRC type activity should draw in significant numbers of white workers, when the old civil rights movement, which comrade Turner must admit, had more organizational power and influence, prestige, and respectability than the Spartacist League, did not, is not divulged."

What hopeless confusion of mind! His confusion is even worse confounded by his equation of MLCRC with the SL. The whole conception was for MLCRC to be

a transitional formation similar to the Trade Union Educational League of the '20's, an organization which was originally posed and initiated as broader than the Communist Party, and able, therefore, to win militants, who identify with other socialist organizations and those with no organizational identification, to its transitional program. The entire MLCRC project would have had to be seen as a dismal failure to the extent that it and the members of the SL remained one and the same over an extended period of time.

The concept of a transitional organization in the trade-unions, if implemented in 1965, when the liberal civil rights movement began to disintegrate under the rising tide of militancy and the growing influence of Black Nationalist ideology, or even in 1966, might have borne excellent fruit by now. It would have presented a clear and realistic alternative, one of meaningful militant struggle, to the largely verbal militancy of Black Nationalism. It might today have prevented the Rhody McCoys and Rev. Olivers from uniting the black community, the overwhelming majority of whom are workers, behind them in a union-wrecking operation in behalf of Mayor Lindsey and the ruling class. It might have helped stimulate a rank and file movement in the United Federation of Teachers around a transitional program adapted to a union of professional workers, which would have fought the narrow labor bureaucrat Shanker- who is playing into the hands of McCoy and Lindsey, and actively promoting racist attitudes within teachers' union- by emphasizing the need for the unity of workers (parents, teachers, and students) to control the educational process, particularly in the ghettos now, as part of the struggle to control every aspect of their lives, beginning with production, i.e., socialism.

Initiated today in the trade-unions of the most exploited, there are excellent indicators, such as the Topeka Strike of state hospital workers, and the Chicago transit workers struggle, that a transitional program and organization as projected by the Memorandum might be successful in building a national movement which can rally large numbers of black and white workers, and of winning the support of student radicals and black militants. The road which is projected by the Memorandum might, in other words, be the road to the black workers in particular and to the working-class in general, that Trotsky kept pressing the SWP to find. But obviously, it is not the road that the leaders of the majority in the SL wish to travel.

Cde. Seymour states that "to attribute the failure of the working-class, to engage in the struggles of the black masses to positive racist sentiment reflects a liberal concept of society.". The "Leninist" Cde. Seymour knows better, of course, The "liberal" Trotsky, had the following to say about "positive racist sentiment" among the workers, in a letter to Claude McKay in 1923:

"...In North America the matter is further complicated by the abominable obtuseness and caste presumptions of the privileged upper strata of the working class itself, who refuse to recognize fellow workers and fighting comrades in the Negroes. (AFL President) Gompers' policy is founded on the exploitation of such despicable prejudices, and is at the present time the most effective guarantee for the successful subjugation of white and colored workers alike."

In 1933, he said the following in conversation with Swaback:

"But today the white workers in relation to the Negroes are the oppressors, scoundrels, who persecute the black and the yellow, hold them in contempt

and lynch them. . . 99.9% of the American workers are chauvinists, in relation to the Negroes, they are hangman and they are so also toward the Chinese. It is necessary to teach the American beasts. . . . The Negro can be developed to a class standpoint only when the white worker is educated. On the whole, the question of the colonial people is in the first instance a question of the development of the metropolitan worker."

He also stated the following about passive adaptation to "positive racist sentiment" in his letter to the Communist League of America, in 1929, part of which was previously quoted in The Internal Struggle Continues:

"The trade union bureaucrats, like the bureaucrats of false Communism, live in the atmosphere of aristocratic prejudices of the upper strata of the workers. It will be a tragedy if the Oppositionists are infected even in the slightest degree with these qualities. We must not only reject and condemn these prejudices; we must burn them out of our consciousness to the last trace. We must find the road to the most deprived, to the darkest strata of the proletariat, beginning with the Negro, who capitalist society has converted into a pariah, and who must learn to see in us his revolutionary brothers. And this depends wholly upon our energy and devotion to the work."

He also stated in 1932, in an article printed in the Militant:

"But if the proletarian group works in a district where there are workers of various races, and in spite of this, it consists only of workers of a privileged nationality, I am inclined to regard them with suspicion: Are we not dealing with the workers' aristocracy? Isn't the group poisoned by slaveholding prejudices active or passive?"

"Spartacist Position" - The Black Workers on Probation

Cde. Seymour believes that "Comrade Turner has evidently not grasped the essence of the Spartacist solution to the black question". The black workers are not, says Cde. Seymour, "the vanguard of the American working class "automatically", by appointment, but have to:

"act in a way analogous to a vanguard party. . . by systematically and consciously intervening in the struggles of the class. . . If. . . the black masses were to break with the Democratic party, founding a largely black, but not exclusionist, radical party fighting for a working class program. . . this would act as a pole around which militant white workers would be drawn." (original emphasis)

Blacks will overcome the racism of white workers by:

"proving to the white working class that (they are) . . . their most effective ally in the fighting of all economic and social battles. (If the blacks will show themselves to be). . . the most solid element in the labor movement (and). . . provide (s) most of the human and material resources in all militant organizations and struggles. (If they provide) . . . the best leadership cadre (in) . . . the interests of the class as a whole"
(my emphasis)

then, not only will they gain the support of the white workers, but Cde. Seymour, personally will accord them the accolade of vanguard.

He lectures the black working-class that they:

"can and should play a role similar to that of the Jewish working class in Czarist Russia and Irish workers in nineteenth century England. . . in mass black organizations. (To become the vanguard they must eschew a) . . . program primarily geared to the particular oppression of black workers, and a rhetoric that underplays the oppression of the working class as a whole".

In the final analysis, Cde. Seymour assures the black workers that they will only gain by their highmindedness:

"since the Black people are overwhelmingly working class, the black population generally benefits from any gains the class as a whole makes."

This incredibly pompous peroration, this Lenten sermon intoned by the observer from Olympus, Cde. Seymour, and approved by most of the leaders of the majority, is then the "Spartacist position on how the black masses can" become the vanguard of the working-class. Cde. Turner, on the other hand, is seen tending to "sociological determinism" because he:

"views the failure of black civil rights activists to adopt a working class socialist perspective as a result of the conditions of ghetto life and the indifference of the white working class"

The above is Cde. Seymour's interpretation of the Memorandum's line that:

"A transitional organization is needed at the point of production and in the process of labor, where black and white workers come into contact in their class role, to prove in action that unity against the class enemy is possible and necessary, and to make available to the working-class struggle the immense revolutionary potential of the black workers."

Distilled Essence of Pabloism

Cde. Seymour projects on to me the motivation that:

"we should first build integrated trade union caucuses primarily aimed at fighting the the oppression of black workers, and then we can turn to the Browns and Cleavers and say, "see, I told you the white working class isn't racist",

as a jumping-off point for a conclusion and a declaration that:

"In advocating these policies, the minority is transferring the burden of radicalizing the white working classes from the leadership of the black liberation movement, who command potentially enormous political power, at this time, to the obviously much weaker Spartacist League."

Rap Brown and Cleaver, who are maladroitly coupled, are seen by the "Leninist", Cde. Seymour, as the "leadership" who will radicalize "the white working classes". He scolds them as "an important part of the left whose responsibility in not providing an attractive alternative to discontented white workers should not be overlooked." And what role does Cde. Seymour see the SL playing in this process? Of course:

"to convince" the "black power" radicals. . . our political opponents (to whom) . . . naturally we don't adopt the same tone" (as to Marxist groups) . . . the Browns, Foremans, and the Cleavers (the latter might listen), . . . to mobilize the black masses to fight for the general interests of the working class."

In addition to this splendid activity, Cde. Seymour and the majority will, of course, address themselves to the petty-bourgeois arenas where they hope to recruit radicals. With this as a basic perspective, Cde. Seymour's other utterance concerning "our ability to initiate action in the black movement" is merely wind.

Not only is Cde. Seymour clearly abandoning a vanguard conception toward the black working class, and obviously accepting the concept of dual vanguardism, but he is also openly relinquishing the role of vanguard for the white working class who it seems is to receive its "radicalization" at the hands of the "black liberation movement" whose "enormous political power" outweighs that of the SL. Cde. Seymour, not only testifies to the minority's charge that the majority does not have a perspective of building a vanguard party in the US, but has put forth almost a caricature of a Pabloist outlook which is pervaded with elitist snobbery. The SWP's capitulation to Black Nationalism, at least had the rational of eventually winning the black masses. Cde. Seymour shuns them. At the local meeting which discussed his document, Cde. Seymour made clear in his summary that the "leadership cadre of the black liberation movement" was his concern, and not its following. Only the leaders of the "black liberation movement" need apply to the SL for membership. Only they are capable of understanding Trotskyism a la Seymour.

As Cde. Hugh F. pointed out at the NY local meeting, Cde. Seymour's elitist attitude toward black workers, extends to white workers as well, despite his heated defense of:

"white workers who have real economic problems . . . (and who) resent being told they're moral lepers . . . because they don't give half a week's salary to the Urban Coalition and spend their weekends demonstrating for civil rights bills."

Cde. Seymour's demand to the black workers that they subordinate their struggle against their special oppression in the interests of the "class as a whole" and as a means of overcoming white racism is clearly an adaptation to white chauvinism. He does not differ qualitatively, despite the positive format and pseudo-revolutionary rhetoric in which his perspective is couched, from the liberals who have become alarmed by the upsurge in struggle of black workers.

In essence, Cde. Seymour returns to the discredited perspectives of the early Socialist Labor Party and the Socialist Party.

His sermon to the black workers that they should comport themselves like the Jews of Tsarist Russia or the Irish reminds me of a recent discussion with an ex-radical acquaintance who also wanted to know why the Black people could not conduct themselves like other oppressed minorities, instead of rioting, etc.

His attack against the Memorandum as having a position "gratuitously helping the oppressed" and as conceptualizing black workers as requiring "everyone's special solicitude", of demanding that the white workers "make sacrifices for the sake of a more oppressed section of the class"; his ardent defense of white workers against the charge of "positive racist sentiment", which he sees as largely "a feeling on the part of white workers . . . that they have been abandoned by the liberal democrats, who are now exclusively concerned with the Negroes"; his conception that the Kerner Report on the ghetto uprisings "made a positive contribution to the development of reactionary sentiment within the white working class"; his vehement defence of white workers for "their" belief "that the principle aim of their unions and political organizations is to struggle for their immediate economic betterment"; his opposition to "rhetoric that underplays the oppression of the class as a whole in emphasizing the special oppression of the black people"; his incredible rhetorical question to the NY local in summary to "prove" that the black workers need the support of white workers, "Even if super-exploitation does exist, can militancy alone get them ten dollars an hour without their having to work for it?"; when combined with his other remarks previously mentioned, make an unmistakable pattern. The militant struggles of black workers which have been met by increased hostility by racist whites and not least of all by white workers, seems to have evoked a similar response from Cde. Seymour.

James C. Cannon's statement in The First Ten Years of American Communism quoted in The Internal Struggle Continues is worth repeating:

"The old theory of American radicalism turned out in practice to be a formula for inaction on the Negro front, and - incidentally - a convenient shield for the dormant racial prejudices of the white radicals themselves."

Not only does Cannon's statement seem fully applicable to Cde. Seymour today, but "the dormant racial prejudices" do not seem to be as dormant in Cde. Seymour as they should be or as he must imagine them to be.

Cde. Seymour, the new ideologist of the majority in providing it with its justifications for a petty-bourgeois orientation, for the abandonment of a perspective seeking to build a Leninist vanguard, is also injecting a deadly poison into the veins of the SL. The leaders of the majority, and Cde. Robertson, first of all, are actively assisting him in this procedure which can only end in the thorough degeneration of the SL. Only an alternative leadership who will implement the turn to the working-class as envisioned in the Memorandum can save it.

10/21/68

October 29, 1968

To the members of the Spartacist League:

On Monday, October 28, 1968, I was "partially and conditionally" suspended from the Spartacist League, from membership in the Political Bureau, and from a "leading, policy making role" in the organization, unless and until I agree to sign a statement to be dictated by the leaders of the majority.

As a "partially and conditionally suspended" member, my documents, The Internal Struggle Continues and Ideology and Practice, will not be produced and circulated by the National Office as part of the material for the forthcoming conference, nor will I be permitted to attend the conference, except to appeal my suspension.

The Rubicon for the Spartacist League, after four years of existence as a separate organization was to have been the conference projected for Christmas week. The future direction and perspectives of the organization were to have been finally decided by the leading cadre assembled for this purpose. The leaders of the majority, fearful of the impact of the minority's documents on the cadre, and unable to politically cope with the exposure of their further political degeneration, has once again resorted to the well-tested organizational methods of the common bureaucrat to remove an opposition.

The brazen effrontery of Robertson, whose agile brain concocted the formula for the exclusion of the remaining minority from the conference, knows no limits. Where, except in Stalinist organizational practice, is there a precedent for a "partial" suspension of a full member of the highest body of an organization? Where, in the practice of revolutionary socialism, have documents bearing on an ongoing dispute in the organization, and submitted before a suspension, been withheld from the membership? Where, except in organizations in the process of political degeneration, have the spokesmen for a minority position been denied the right to present that position to the highest policy-making body of that organization?

In order for these penalties to be abrogated, I must sign a declaration to the effect that I:

1. repudiate my allegations in The Internal Struggle Continues that "An Open Letter To Our Harrassed Minority Comrades" was dictated to Cde. Seymour by Cde. Robertson, withdraw my statements in Ideology and Practice that Cde. Seymour's document, IV. On the Black Question, was deliberately tampered with "to soften the clearly Pabliste line, so that there are now two versions of his document in circulation", and that Cde. Seymour had stated at the NY local meeting that, "We are not interested in recruiting someone who doesn't even know who Malcolm X was", and to apologize publicly and in writing for the "slanders".
2. state that, if Ellens and Stoute were guilty of the charges made against them, they deserved to be expelled.
3. admit to a breach of discipline in mailing a "factional circular" to members of the SL in the "guise of a letter", of not having sent a copy to the National Office, and of not having had the "circular" distributed through the NO in the

first place.

4. disavow the position that factional activities preclude organizational assignments, no longer refuse such assignments, and indicate that I will, in future, undertake to function creatively as a leader of the organization, to help carry out its line.
5. admit to a breach of discipline in having continued to discuss the internal situation in the SL with my son, in not preventing him from attending meetings of the Workers League, and to agree to break political ties with him.

Cde. Robertson eliminated all doubt concerning the negotiability of any of these demands. They must be complied with completely, in every aspect, in a "dictated statement" to be supplied by him.

It is, of course, not possible for me to sign such a declaration. Robertson ignores the history of the Revolutionary Tendency in the Socialist Workers Party, incredible as it may seem. Art Phillips, Tim Wohlforth, and Gerry Healy broke with the majority precisely because it refused to sign a statement authored by Gerry Healy, one which they had had no hand in formulating, and which they were not permitted to alter. History, in a manner of speaking, does indeed play queer tricks! However, I did agree to the following concessions which were not considered acceptable by Robertson:

1. I agreed to strike, and, in fact, have stricken all references to Robertson as the author, instigator, or initiator of Seymour's "Open Letter". I agreed to publically indicate that my belief that the letter was dictated by Robertson was based on inference and not on fact. I also agreed to remove, and, in fact, have removed any references to tampering with Seymour's document, IV. On the Black Question, and to the disputed remark. I would not, however, agree to a written apology to Seymour. The documents, The Internal Struggle Continues and Ideology and Practice, had not been circulated by the NO, and this demand was an obvious factional device without the slightest merit, under the circumstances. In addition, I remain unconvinced that Seymour alone inspired and authored the "Open Letter". I made the same allegation in my presentation to an enlarged meeting of the NY local two months ago, at which Robertson and Seymour both spoke, Robertson from the floor and Seymour in a presentation and summary. Why was my statement challenged only now? I also remain unconvinced by the protestations of both Seymour and Robertson that a mere typographical error was responsible for the two versions of IV. On the Black Question. Seymour's explanation was that his original copy supplied to the NO was at fault, while Robertson indicated that the typist made the error. Nor is an apology in order for my hearing, transcribing, or verifying "difficulties" in connection with the remark in question.
2. I agreed to make the required statement concerning Ellens and Stoute provided I could assert, at the same time, that I remained unconvinced of their guilt of the charges, that the emphasis on organizational disloyalty was being used to evade the political questions raised, that the insistence on expul-

sion after resignation for political reasons smacked of what Trotsky had called "Comintern venom", was motivated by malice, was a type of ritual, proxy execution.

3. I agreed to stipulate that a breach of discipline was committed in directly mailing a letter to comrades outside of NY city, while indicating that, after the disbanding of the majority faction, I had believed I was at liberty to do so, in order to inform them of the minority's continuing existence, and that the omission of a copy of the letter to the NO was inadvertant. I also agreed to not send other factional materials of a general nature out directly thereafter, but only through the NO.
4. I would not agree, however, to either directly or indirectly indicate that I had held a position that factional activities precluded organizational assignments, or that I had refused such assignments. As a democratic-centralist, I have always contended that a minority is duty-bound to carry out the line of the organization. Hugh F. and I have, therefore, appeared every Saturday morning at election rallies for the West Side CIPA Assembly candidate, prepared to speak and distribute materials, despite our conviction that this activity was completely worthless. We have also been involved in local sales and distributions every week without fail. To those in the majority intent on harrassing the minority, and their snide remarks that I did not seem "busy", I had responded that I was, in fact, very occupied in preparing minority statements for publication, in corresponding with comrades outside NY, and in carrying out local assignments. While never having refused an assignment on the basis of factional priorities, I had continued to maintain that factional rights were not merely formal in an organization purporting to be Leninist, and that a minority should be allowed time to function as such. As to functioning creatively to carry out a line one believes to be destructive to one's organization, the majority demands the psychologically impossible. A loyal member must carry out a line he disagrees with, but how can he be expected to function creatively in the process, to originate more effective tactics and policies which can only do greater harm to his organization?
5. As to my son, Howard, as he began to identify with Trotskyism, he expressed a desire to attend meetings of the SL, and received a standing invitation to attend local meetings before the faction fight began. His standing invitation was renewed after the dispute erupted, and he, thereby, became fully acquainted with all factional differences. It is, of course, natural that he identifies politically with my views, although I have never tried to impose them on him. It is also quite natural, under the circumstances, that I have continued to keep him informed about developments in the SL.

Prior to the faction fight, and in the absence of a youth group around the SL (I had indicated to Robertson on several occasions that the basis for such a group existed), Howard became attracted to the Workers League's aborted youth organization. He lost interest in that group because of its low political level, and had stopped attending its meetings long

before it went out of existence and long before the faction fight developed. Since then, he has attended one meeting of the Workers League which celebrated the thirtieth anniversary of the Fourth International and showed films about the French general strike. He has also expressed an interest in a class series on Pragmatism to be led by Wohlforth. It did not require Robertson's threat, given laughingly, at the meeting which renewed Howard's invitation to SL meetings, that "We would beat you up", to ensure that Howard would keep his word not to divulge the SL's internal affairs to opponent organizations. Howard is thoroughly honest and honorable, as one would expect a sixteen-year old, who has been newly imbued with a revolutionary socialist conception, to be. To believe that I would send him to the Workers League to spread information about the faction fight, as Robertson has stated, discredits him, and not Howard or myself. I could not and would not "demand" that Howard not attend the WL meetings, nor would I "break politically" with him. But I did agree to refrain from giving him further information about the internal affairs of the SL.

Despite the considerable concessions on my part, and despite the picayune nature of the charges against me, Robertson insisted on imposing the "partial and conditional" suspension. It became quite obvious that the "conditional" suspension is, in fact, an unconditional and hypocritical political elimination in the guise of a suspension, and that were I to bring myself to sign the statement demanded, other grounds would be found to ensure that neither I, other members of the minority, nor minority documents would be permitted into the conference.

That the leaders of the majority in the SL have far outstripped the SWP in its highhanded treatment of a minority should not occasion surprise. The SWP descended from the height of a genuinely revolutionary organization under the blows of difficult objective conditions and its own theoretical inadequacy. In its degeneration, it had to limit itself in dealing with its dissidents so as to project a simulacrum of its past organizational practice, in order not to unduly disturb its membership. The SL which proved unable and unwilling to reach the height of revolutionary practice, and to develop beyond the politics of the small circle built around a personality, is relatively freer from restraint. Whatever Robertson says goes! Who is to say him nay? Al Nelson, who has throughout his career subordinated his considerable political talents to docilely carrying out Robertson's every whim? Lyndon Henry, who did not even have the courage to come to the meeting of the Political Bureau at which the organizational violence to the remaining minority was done? Dave Cunningham and Joseph Seymour, who were recently co-opted by Robertson to the PB? Mark Small, whose disasterous loss of self-assurance is cheerfully promoted by Robertson? Joel Salinger, the NY local organizer, who, in his six months of membership in the SL has shown himself to be a particularly apt pupil of the Robertsonian art of organizational malice and manipulation, and who openly stated that I should be expelled for disloyal thoughts?

More than half of the original full members of the central committee elected at the founding conference of the SL are no longer with the organization. Of the remaining four, two show signs of instability which presage their imminent departure as leaders, if not as members of the SL. More than half of the originally elected

alternate members of the central committee has also resigned. Robertson reigns supreme!

The founding conference of the SL in September 1966 registered the establishment of a promising organization comprising more than eighty revolutionary socialists. This organization, which we labored to build and maintain is now in extremis as a result of the dilettante stewardship of Robertson and his majority, and his pernicious perspectives for a "splinter propagandist group" orientated mainly toward student radicals. The extent of the failure of the SL can be more readily understood if one compares its accomplishments with that of the early Trotskyists. Under Cannon, with a membership not appreciably differing in size, they were able, without interruption, to publish a semi-monthly newspaper, and, eventually, build a party, and help to build a world Trotskyist movement.

The largest share of condemnation for the failure of the SL must be apportioned to Robertson, whose personal qualities, not only his outstanding abilities, but also his serious weaknesses, were harnessed to a limiting and disabling perspective, one that he felt competent to pursue. His narrow vision is, unhappily, the result of his development as a revolutionist from student origins, under conditions of divorce from the working-class and its struggles, the situation of a generation of revolutionists. His pre-eminence in the SL, the absence of other authority figures of similar stature able to oppose him, and a cadre without sufficient political background, knowledge and experience, has enabled him to win his present pyrrhic organizational victory, which serves to eliminate the SL as a revolutionary instrument.

Under the circumstances, I have no other recourse but to resign from the Spartacist League. In doing so, I and those in political agreement with me, continue our struggle for a Leninist vanguard party.

A party of the bolshevik-type can only be built, in this as in every country, by basing itself on and sinking ineradicable roots in the working-class. In this country, in this historical epoch, this task can only be accomplished on the basis of an orientation by revolutionary socialists toward the most exploited and most revolutionary sections of the class, the black and Spanish-speaking workers. No movement, no matter how it sees itself, can be considered revolutionary which does not apply itself to this task. The path to the building of socialist consciousness in the working-class, in general, today, lies through the black and Spanish-speaking workers, in particular. Socialist consciousness in the class can only be achieved today through the building of transitional organizations and the development of a program able to unite black and white workers. This unity can only be achieved today on the basis of a struggle to end the special oppression of the minority workers, not by asking the black workers to wait for socialism, not by giving black workers "permission" to form separate organizations to fight for "their special interests", and not by other opportunist adaptations to Black Nationalism or white chauvinism.

The building of a Leninist party has proven to be difficult in the extreme, especially in this country. The SWP, the leading Trotskyist party of the Fourth International, proved unequal to, and degenerated in an attempt to by-pass, this fundamental responsibility. The expansion of Stalinism in Eastern Europe and Asia, the emergence of a deformed workers' state in Cuba, the long-lived post World War II economic upsurge, carried in its wake enormous theoretical confusion.

In this country, as in every capitalist country, the by-product of the exceptionally difficult objective circumstances, has been the proliferation of a host of small radical organizations, most of whom exist as small circles around a dominant personality, claiming to be the essence of the future revolutionary leadership of the working-class.

As the crisis of world capitalism sharpens, with the ending of the post-war upsurge, as the contradictions of American capitalism continue to intensify, increasingly propelling the workers against the capitalists, their state, and their labor-lieutenants, and also intensifying the struggles of black workers against their special oppression, new opportunities for revolutionists emerge. The struggle to realize them, will not only force those who wish to be revolutionary socialists to the recognition of the urgent necessity of submerging individual egoism to the task of building a working-class vanguard party, but will also serve to clarify the programmatic basis for its accomplishment.

We intend to play an active role in this process. To the extent that we are able, we will seek to promote a principled unity in action which can further our perspectives, with all groups purporting to be revolutionary socialist. We hope to take part at the same time, in an ongoing process of discussion and debate, to clarify the basis on which a Leninist party can be built.

In resigning from the Spartacist League, I, and those in political agreement with me, do not intend to build or join an anti-Spartacist League. We would hope that those who decide to remain in the SL would also wish to be involved in discussion and in action with us. We bear no malice toward any individuals who remain in the SL, or to the organization as such. It is with a sense of profound regret that I end an association of more than five years duration, in recognition that the SL's course is set toward a non-revolutionary future.

Harry Turner

October 29, 1968

To the comrades of the Spartacist League:

The national leadership by means of a number of unacceptable demands of Cde. Turner has succeeded in throttling the main voice of the minority, and blocking the circulation of definitive minority documents. These documents should have been available to all comrades in preparation for a national conference where differences could be fought to a conclusion. In addition, Cde. Turner was to be stripped of his position as a member of the Political Bureau, and of his right to attend the conference with voice and vote.

Why has the national leadership found itself compelled to issue a completely unacceptable ultimatum to Cde. Turner, inevitably resulting in his suspension? The reason is that the leadership found itself completely unable to cope with the minority's political positions. The tactics resorted to, for the purpose of preventing a thorough thrashing out of differences, by the majority are the typical bureaucratic methods which a left centrist grouping, the majority in the Spartacist League, could be expected to utilize.

In order to make the Spartacist League into a viable revolutionary organization, the comrades would have had to replace the national leadership, and implement a program which up to this time has only been given lip service, that is, establish roots in the working class by "blackening" the Spartacist League, and seriously attempting to move the organization in the direction of the working class.

On finding the above impossible to attain, finding valid meaningful criticism stifled, finding dilettantist rhetoric continuing, e.g., expressing identity with the working class and with its most exploited section, the black workers, but with no serious attempt to put words into action, serious comrades must now conclude that the Spartacist League has eliminated itself as a revolutionary organization, and resign as I hereby do.

Hugh F.

I. ON THE FACTION FIGHT IN THE NEW YORK LOCAL

by Joseph Seymour

It is understandable that many comrades outside New York will not understand the issues in the dispute or comprehend the deep factional heat. In fact, to many New York comrades, including myself, the intense factional hostility appeared sudden and unjustified by the operational differences between the comrades involved.

For this reason comrade Turner's document, the first fully accepted by the minority as a statement of their position, is most welcome, as it formalizes the differences and provides a framework for discussion. Unfortunately, comrade Turner's document has a number of weaknesses, apart from its main substantive positions. It fails to present the positions of majority comrades accurately, it begs many of the important tactical issues in the dispute (such as the relationship between the existing radical movement and the working class) and it fails to deal systematically with theoretical issues involved (such as the relationship between black and white workers and proletarianization as a categorical imperative of the Trotskyist movement). The most serious weakness of comrade Turner's document is that it presents the New York majority as wanting to liquidate trade union work, when, in fact, one of the main reasons for dissolving MLCRC was to facilitate creating left oppositions in key unions. Comrade Turner may strongly disagree with this as a tactic, but he has no right to deny the motivation for it. Because of the inadequacies of the Turner document, a full understanding of the factional situation and political implications thereof requires a consideration not only of the official minority document, but the Turner memorandum, the Ellen's working class perspective document, the actions and statements of minority comrades, as well as issues not directly touched upon in the dispute.

THE ORIGINS OF THE DISPUTE

Although some subterranean frictions had existed in the P.B. for some time, the present dispute erupted over the question of the allocation of local forces, as comrade Turner has indicated. The local organizer believed that the existing personnel assignments did not reflect our political priorities. In particular, we did not have the forces to wage any kind of struggle for our position in the anti-war movement. Therefore, he attempted to get some comrades to switch their main area of work from MLCRC to the anti-war movement and related radical organizations.

Comrade Turner does not deny our failure to fight inside the anti-war movement, describing our relationship to it as "peripheral," which in practice largely meant handing our literature at demonstrations. Since we (including the minority comrades) had spent a great deal of time, as well as our literary resources, in evaluating the anti-war movement and developing a tactical perspective for it, the "peripheral" relationship of the New York Local represented a failure to carry out our line toward the anti-war movement, as well as a serious imbalance between our deliberations about the anti-war movement and our attempts to change it.

At this point comrade Turner and I, first cross political swords. While comrade Turner attributes our supposed failure to carry out our line toward black trade unionists to organizational decisions, motivated by political considerations, he views our failure to carry out our line toward the anti-war movement as caused by the character of the anti-war movement itself. Referring to the men-of-good-will resistance polarization of the anti-war movement, Comrade Turner states, "therefore, able to operate only at the periphery of the anti-war movement," implying that the political character of the anti-war movement made it unprincipled for us to enter it in any way. However, the anti-war movement was neither so

ideologically homogeneous nor organizationally monolithic that entry would have been impossible. Moreover, during the past six months, while the MLCRC dispute has raged, the old anti-war movement has undergone a process of political disintegration caused by the upcoming elections and peace maneuvers. That the anti-war movement was capable of developing new directions is indicated by the development of radical third parties out of it and a generally more favorable attitude toward working within the army, as against resistance, as well as increased radical activity within the army, itself. The erroneousness of comrade Turner's views are obvious when one considers that outside New York, our comrades have fought very well within the anti-war movement. In many parts of the country we've been active in S.D.S., a key anti-war organization. Our West Coast comrades were oppositionists in trade union SANE, and in and around the Peace and Freedom Party, and our New Orleans group has functioned in the mainstream of the anti-war movement.

Any number of personnel-organizational mechanisms were available to establish strong sections of the New York local in the anti-war movement. Comrade Turner could have been active in his trade union anti-war committee. Comrades Turner, Hugh F., Jerry, E., or Sandra N. could have signed up for a night college course, giving them an entrée into the student anti-war movement. Sandra Newman, rather than becoming a hospital worker, could have taken over most of Liz' N.O. functions, freeing Liz to work at Columbia. Comrades Mark S., Turner or, later, Ellens could have become local organizer, freeing me to become active in New School S.D.S. whose leadership is quite receptive to Trotskyist ideas. Related to this whole line of reasoning is the fact that we had two comrades at C.C.N.Y. for the whole year, and they weren't even able to organize a single public talk. Moreover, whatever campus work was done, was done primarily by Donna H., although comrade Stoute had more time and is far more politically competent. Since its inception, Comrade Stoute has regarded MLCRC as her main area of functioning. The point is that our failure to carry out our line toward the anti-war movement was caused by collective and personal organizational decisions, motivated by political attitudes. Since its inception, MLCRC has been at the heart of these organizational-political considerations.

To fully understand the local situation, when the New York organizer and national chairman decided that the allocation of forces did not correspond to our priorities, a detailed description of the New York personnel situation is required. Let us consider the local at the beginning of April, prior to the Henes-Newman split and the influx of summer comrades. Of the 18 functioning members of the New York local, 11 had trade union work as their main area of external activity, 4 in the Social Service Employees Union, 7 in MLCRC. Moreover, MLCRC had within it two very close sympathizers gained through other work. Of the seven other comrades in the local, three were more or less full-time national office functionaries, although comrade Turner, who has expressed such indignation over the infrequency of the press, actually proposed that our new editor take a part-time job as a hospital worker and participate in MLCRC! A fourth comrade was the local organizer, who was the only person in the local doing sustained work in another radical organization. A fifth and sixth comrades were Bob Ross, an inactive, professional malcontent, who was obviously on his way out, and Donna Ross, who had a full time job and was going to night school, as well as having serious criticisms of the organization. The seventh comrade, comrade Turner unsuccessfully attempted to get to take a union job and participate in MLCRC. While Comrade Turner insists, even vehemently, that he is in favor of a balanced approach and work in the petit-bourgeois radical movement, in practice he has favored personal assignments that would reduce our involvement in the radical movement to an essentially literary one.

My first desire was simply to get a few of the non-trade union members of MLCRC to pull out and devote themselves full time to other arenas. The opposition of MLCRC's leading comrades to this, the arbitrariness of deciding which non-union comrades should stay in MLCRC and which should not, and growing political criticisms of MLCRC's functioning led me to take the stronger position that, with the exception of comrade Turner, only those comrades active in, or about to be active in trade unions should be in MLCRC. It was only the defection of the two comrades in the hospital workers union, and the routinist reaction of the leading MLCRC comrades to this, that led comrade Robertson to conclude that the MLCRC should be dissolved into a fraction in another, omnibus union, where we had a good possibility of locating four comrades. But before we discuss the Robertson proposal to dissolve MLCRC as it then existed, a word on the Ross-Newman split is in order.

Unfortunately, comrade Turner did not discuss the Ross-Newman split, since it sheds light on the alleged deep hostility of the New York majority to trade union work and MLCRC. For some time Bob Ross had expressed sympathy for the hippy-Maoist, Greenwich Village anti-war groups, whose main activity was getting beat up by cops. He told the local he wanted to work with them, ostensibly to recruit to Spartacist, and the local reluctantly agreed to authorize him. We were all surprised when Sandra Newman and Sam Smith, our two hospital worker activists, said they also wanted to work with Bob R. in the Village radical movement. All the leading comrades in New York, including the national chairman and local organizer, tried to discourage Smith and Newman from doing this, and to impress upon them that the organization attached great importance to building an oppositional caucus in the hospital workers' union. The particular incident which led to their split was the local Exec's voting unanimously that Smith and Newman should participate with the hospital workers' contingent at the spring peace demonstration, rather than with the Village radicals, as they desired.

With the Newman and Smith defection, the majority, and initially, comrade Turner concluded that our chances of building anything in the hospital workers' union was nil, since not only didn't we have any comrades there, but the two people we attempted to build around were now enemies. Comrade Ellens dissented, maintaining that if we continue our previous work, we could still build an opposition around contacts, and comrade Turner has since come to the same conclusion. Since the hospital workers' union had been the sole public arena for MLCRC, it seemed logical that MLCRC should gradually transform itself into a fraction in another fertile union, where we had comrades and likely to get more in. As a secondary after-thought, it was decided that the more general propagandistic activities of MLCRC could be usefully combined with our other activities in the radical movement by using it as a base for a labor-civil rights committee of a New Left socialist organization the Spartacist League had fallen heir to. A detailed discussion of the dissolution of MLCRC, its aftermath, and the disputes caused will appear further in this document, but first a number of important theoretical and political questions involved in this dispute should be taken up.

We have seen so far that the MLCRC's reflex of grabbing personnel for the hospital work has, in fact, threatened a balanced division of forces in the NYC local between this work and other important aspects of our functioning. We have also sought to show by some examination of the detailed history of the NYC local disputes that Comrade Turner cannot truthfully claim that the majority has wanted to liquidate trade union work. The majority held that, after the political demise of Ross and Newman -- i.e. the liquidation of a Spartacist fraction in the hospital workers' union -- we had only a toenail-hold left there and should, while continuing with our propaganda toward the hospitals through the period of their

contract negotiations, shift MLCRC over to an energetic pursuit of an SL fraction in another union which had a high concentration of black and Puerto Rican workers and was accessible to our comrades, one comrade being already an applicant to that union and at least two others employed in job categories which are covered by that union. It has also been mainly the majority comrades (e.g. Nelson, Robertson, Henry) who, faced with the virtual abdication of Turner as chairman of the SL's national Trade Union Commission, have in their writing and travels encouraged comrades nationally to seek to implement the "Memorandum on the Negro Struggle" in their local areas and have done whatever supervision of such work has been done at all. The majority has participated as members of the NYC local in the distribution of the MLCRC leaflets to hospitals all over the city. The minority's only claim to being the trade union wing of the SL has consisted in its stubborn insistence that it maintain an oversized force of people and work indefinitely from the outside, regardless of the need for party fractions inside unions, in its one pet union -- hospital workers.

31 July 1968

II. SUPER-EXPLOITATION AND ALL THAT

by Joseph Seymour

No member of the majority and, as far as one can tell, no member of the minority, except comrade Turner both orally and in writing in "Whither the Spartacist League", regards the super-exploitation of black workers as a major issue in the dispute. The contention that my positions on MLCRC derive from differences over the concept of super-exploitation is factually incorrect. As previously indicated, my initial positions on this question stemmed from my judgement, in the capacity as local organizer, that the local allocation of forces did not correspond to our political priorities, and that is all. The question of super-exploitation was not raised in the local debate over MLCRC's future, and only came up in inconclusive and disorganized conversations between comrade Turner and myself after the key vote had been taken. The views on this subject, comrade Turner ascribes to me are quite inaccurate, as will become evident.

To the extent that comrade Turner regards the majority faction as unprincipled because (it is alleged) I oppose MLCRC out of differences over the super-exploitation of black workers and comrade Robertson out of organizational conservatism (the views of the other majority comrades, including two full and three alternate central committee members are apparently unimportant), his position is erroneous. All majority comrades are united in the belief that the principal way in which the Spartacist League will grow into an effective, fighting propaganda group on the road to a mass revolutionary party is to recruit radicals, including radical workers, by fighting for program within the radical movement, in this period, rather than devoting our major forces to work within the trade unions.

Despite the fact that the theoretical issue of super-exploitation of black workers has no operational bearing on the factional situation, it is worth discussing because it has educational value and indicates certain characteristics of the minority's thinking. But before discussing it, it is necessary to make a few points indicating what major political issues turn on "the fundamental question of super-exploitation".

All majority comrades believe a) that black workers are the most economically exploited and radical section of the American working class and b) that opposition to de facto and formal racial discrimination and emphasis on raising the wages of the poorest paid (in many areas, largely black) workers will be an important part of our trade union work. Comrade Turner is free to argue that these political conclusions depend on accepting that the rate of exploitation of black workers is greater than that of whites, but I'm not sure he really wants to argue this.

A Look at Political Economy

Despite comrade Turner's lengthy quotations from Das Kapital, I believe many comrades may not understand what this dispute is all about.

The essence of the Marxian theory of exploitation is that, with the prevailing technology and stock of productive equipment, workers can produce more than their normal standard of living, in a physically tolerable working day. Marx called the number of hours needed to produce the normal standard of consumer goods of the average laborer, the "value of labor power". Marx held that capitalists hired workers at the money equivalent of their value

of labor power, but made them work longer hours than was necessary to produce an equivalent of standard of living. The value of the commodities (measured by labor time required to produce it) produced over and above the equivalent of the worker's wages, Marx called "surplus value". Thus, if a worker worked 8 hours, and required 6 hours to produce an equivalent to his consumption, the surplus value he produced was 2 hours.

Marx called the ratio of surplus value (very roughly profits per worker) to the value of labor power (wages) the "rate of surplus value" or "rate of exploitation". In the example in the above paragraph, the rate of exploitation is 2 over 6, or 1/3. As the quotation from Marx comrade Turner cites indicates, Marx believed that, although different types of workers received different wages, the rate of exploitation of all workers tended to be the same. Some comrades might find this difficult to conceive, and an illustration might help. Consider a piece rate system, where a worker receives \$1 for producing a hat, which sells for \$1.50. An average worker produces six hats a day, receiving \$6 in wages, while his employer receives a profit of \$3 on the hats he produces. The worker's rate of exploitation is \$3 over \$6, or 1/2. A superior worker produces nine hats a day. His wage was \$9, but the profit of his work was \$4.50. The rate of exploitation of the superior worker was \$4.50 over \$9, or 1/2, also. Marx believed that rates of exploitation between different occupations were similar to rates of exploitation between different quality workers in a piece rate system.

The key question is why did Marx believe this, or, more precisely, what is the mechanism which tends to make all occupational rates of exploitation equal. In brief, the mechanism is that a differential rate of exploitation means a differential rate of profit between industries, and, therefore, capitalists in the relatively low profit industry will switch to the relatively high profit industry. Thus, let us say a high wage industry pays its workers \$100 a week and the average product per worker sells for \$120, while in a low wage industry, wages are \$50 a week and the product per worker sells for \$65. This means that capitalists in the high wage industry only receive \$20 in profit for every \$100 they pay in wages, while capitalists in the low wage industry receive \$30. Naturally, capitalists will seek to leave the high wage industry and invest in the low wage one. As they do this, the rate of exploitation will be equalized by one or a combination of four mechanisms: as employers move out of the high wage industry, this results in unemployment, and workers in that industry are forced to accept a pay cut. Two, the increased demand for labor in the low wage industry causes wages to rise. Three, employers in the low wage industry are forced to hire less efficient workers, reducing the rate of surplus value. And four, the expansion of commodities for sale in the low wage industry will drive down their price, since the demand for these products is not unlimited.

Despite Marx's clear statement that the rate of exploitation tends toward uniformity and the strong logic behind this position, comrade Turner insists that "super-exploitation" (i.e., different rates of exploitation for different groups of workers) are not only possible, but are an accepted part of Marx's theoretical model, and he quotes two passages to prove this. However, these quotations prove nothing of the kind. The first, from Das Kapital, relates to the fact that during a severe depression, with widespread and prolonged un-employment, wages may fall below their traditional norms. This is completely irrelevant, since it concerns the rate of exploitation for the labor force as a whole, whereas super-exploitation refers to differential rates of exploitation between sections of the labor force. The second quotation, from Engels, does refer to different wages and standards of living between workers of different

nationalities, attributing this to discrimination keeping certain nationalities out of the better paying occupations. He does not state, however, that the rate of exploitation between low and high wage occupations are different.

Comrade Turner's error is that he believes a uniform rate of exploitation depends on all workers in the economy being accustomed to the same "quantity of the means of subsistence" (which is really quite implausible), rather than it being a result of competition in the labor, capital, and commodities market. Marx defined the value of labor power as "the value of necessaries habitually required by the average laborer". The use of the term "average", in itself, indicates a) that more than one habitual standard of living exists and that b) each individual does not receive a wage equal to his particular habitual standard of living. Considering differences between occupations, the key question is what is the "average laborer" an average of. It certainly isn't uniform for the entire labor force, for, in that case, all workers would receive the same wages. It is the average of that number of competent, but lowest wage, workers that a particular industry can employ profitably. Thus, if the glove industry requires 10,000 workers to produce as many gloves as can be sold at a normal profit, the 10,000 efficient glove workers, who are willing to work for the least wages, will be the base from which the industry wage is determined. This means that a large influx of cheap efficient labor will lower the value of labor power in the relevant industries, and if, sufficiently extensive, will drive it down to their own level, regardless of the prevailing wages in the industry. And there are many instances in the history of capitalism when cheap immigrant labor or cheap foreign labor, embodied in imports, has driven the wages of native labor below its historical norms.

The effect of an influx of cheap labor on rates of exploitation can be seen more clearly with an example. There is an influx of immigrants from a poor country, who are quite efficient in many industries requiring un- and semi-skilled labor. If the trade unions can't prevent it, the cheap foreign born competition will drive down wages in the industries where they are efficient. The wages of all native laborers, who can't get out of the immigrant labor industries, will fall to the same level as the immigrants, regardless of their previous standard of living. However, the story does not end here. The fall in wages means that the rate of profit of the immigrant labor industries are higher than other industries. Capitalists will rapidly expand investment in the immigrant labor industries. As the output of these industries expands, the market is glutted and the exchange value of the output declines (i.e., the price falls). This process continues until rates of profit are uniform throughout the economy. Thus, the old rate of exploitation is restored in these industries, despite lower wages and no decline in the physical efficiency of labor.

Do these remarks mean that a higher rate of exploitation on black workers in this country is impossible - by no means, although it doesn't follow automatically from the fact that black and white workers have different accustomed standards of living. The uniformity of the rate of exploitation is based on the workings of a profit-motivated competitive market. To the extent that racial discrimination interferes with competitive behavior, racially differentiated rates of exploitation become possible. In South Africa, for example, the rate of exploitation of black workers is unquestionably higher than whites, since whites are paid higher than their competitive wage for political reasons and the practice of blacks receiving less wages for doing the same work as whites is common. Whether the type and extent of discrimination in the U.S.

is such as to create the same situation is an empirical question, about which nothing conclusive can be said a priori. The burden of proof falls on comrade Turner to demonstrate that the rate of exploitation for black workers is higher, rather than simply asserting it. There are two a priori reasons why I believe such "super-exploitation" to be unlikely. First, no occupation is exclusively white or black, so that a differential rate of exploitation between black and white workers would also mean a differential rate of exploitation between low wage and high wage occupations. Secondly, the difference between low wage and high wage occupations tends to be similar throughout the country, regardless of the concentration of the black population.

This provides us with a simple, but fair, test of the Turner hypothesis. If the phenomenon of super-exploitation is present, one should expect the difference between low and high wage jobs to be greater where there is a large minority population than where there is not. I, therefore, compared occupational wage differences in New York City (where super-exploitation should exist) and in Washington state (where it is unlikely to). The results were inconclusive, but did not support the Turner hypothesis. Comparing the ratio of heavy manufacturing wages to apparel wages in the areas, the ratio is far greater in Washington, contrary to the Turner hypothesis. Comparing the ratio of heavy to light manufacturing wages, it was slightly greater in New York City (1.12 to 1.09), which is consistent with the "super-exploitation" theory, but statistically insignificant.

A propos of nothing in particular, comrade Turner asserts, there are no "inherently badly paid occupations". If by "inherently", comrade Turner means occupational wages that can't be changed by trade union and political action, then I agree with comrade Turner. This is why one can accept the program of MLCRC, without adhering to comrade Turner's views on "super-exploitation". However, such political and union action clearly limits profit-maximizing, free market behavior. After all, one of the principal functions of union is to prevent the capitalist from hiring individual workers who will work for less than the going wage. The Marxian economic model, as presented in Das Kapital, abstracts from legal and institutional restrictions on profit maximizing behavior, and it is wholly illegitimate to criticize Marxian categories and conclusions by introducing limitations on free market behavior. Moreover, 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.

While not super-exploited in the technical sense, the particular oppression of the black masses does make them potentially the most radical section of the working class. However, this is not merely because they are poorly paid. In fact, the particular form of that oppression creates a much higher degree of permanent unemployment for the black workers - a condition of life that is worse, particularly in terms of self-respect, than working for low wages. The reason black workers tend to be more radical than white is less economic than social. The pervasiveness of racial oppression makes them see through the sham of "democratic" ideology, while the failure to integrate the black population throughout the social spectrum makes it difficult for the black masses to identify with the American ruling class.

Pridefulness and False Conclusions

Considering the relatively late age at which he began serious study, his

heavy political and familial responsibilities, and his lack of academic training in the area, comrade Turner's mastery of Marxian economic theory is both admirable and remarkable, and the above comments are not meant to discredit him, in any sense. One can only hope, however, he acquires two of Marx's important virtues as a thinker. One is simply a willingness to submit his theories to factual tests. The second is a resistance to coloring reality in order to strengthen his political arguments. The conditions of life of black people in this country, both economic and social, are wretched enough to warrant our indignation and hatred for this system, without also having to prove that the ratio of profit per worker to wages, is greater for blacks than for whites.

As previously indicated, I believe the issue of "super-exploitation" is a combination of factional red herring and intellectual pridefulness on comrade Turner's part, believing he has made a major contribution to our understanding of the Negro question. Any majority comrade or un-decided comrade can accept that black workers are exploited at a greater rate than white workers (it is possibly true) without this affecting his position on any significant aspect of the factional dispute. While the majority comrades don't believe any important political conclusions turn on this question, comrade Turner obviously does and it is worth asking ourselves what these are.

The first conclusion, stated in the second paragraph on page 12 of "Whither the Spartacist League", is simply appalling. It is appalling because it attributes to me positions which, if I held them, should make me a member of the Conservative Party, if not the John Birch Society, rather than the Spartacist League. It is even more appalling because it implies that equal rates of exploitation, justify the existing wide occupational wage differences. According to comrade Turner, if a workers is sufficiently fortunate to find himself a job where he is producing commodities worth twice as much as some other workers, he somehow deserves twice as much pay. The doctrine that wages should correspond to productivity has always been an anathema, not only to socialists, but to most workers, which is why the trade union movement, universally, has opposed the piece rate system in favor of the more egalitarian time rate system. It really shouldn't be necessary to remind comrades, that Marxists have never regarded the income distribution generated by the capitalist market as, in any sense, legitimate, whether or not the market is characterized by racial discrimination.

The second conclusion implied by comrade Turner is less shocking, but goes right to the heart of the differences between the majority and minority. The minority's assessment of the political attitude of various groups tends to be based on socio-economic and, in a certain sense, moral considerations. For the minority, the blacks are the most revolutionary section of the working class because they're super-exploited (although almost all American workers, black or white, have never heard of the rate of exploitation) and to call into question their super-exploitation is to call into question the revolutionary character of the black masses.

Consciousness is Not Automatic

Of course, there is a relationship between the fact that blacks are the most exploited section of the working class and the most radical, but they are not the same thing. There are millions of white workers who are economically as bad off as most blacks, and a good section of them are likely to be politically reactionary. The present revolutionary character of the black masses is not an automatic reflection of their social conditions (which haven't changed that much in the last 35 years), but is determined by the total development

of the black people, of which the political experiences of the past decade are a decisive factor. There are millions of agricultural laborers, who are unquestionably the most exploited and oppressed section of the American labor force (and more likely to be super-exploited, in the narrow sense, than the black population as a whole), but nobody in the Spartacist League contends that our major task is to reach this most oppressed section of the working class.

The majority recognizes the (fairly complex) effect economic exploitation and political oppression have on revolutionary consciousness, but regards political consciousness, as reflected in organized activity, as the decisive criteria in determining our fields of action. The minority is more likely to regard objective socio-economic conditions as decisive, down-grading the importance of political consciousness, as manifest in organized activities.

These differences can be illustrated by looking at a hypothetical situation. We have decided to put a few, able comrades into a union. We're debating which of two unions. The first is composed over-whelmingly of black and Puerto Rican women. Wages are atrocious and the union leadership is thoroughly corrupt, and in no sense represents the workers. While there are indications of general discontent, the union has neither a history of radicalism nor organized opposition to the leadership. The second union is an omnibus union with a wide wage range. It is only 15% black. It is Stalinist led, and has a radical past. It has been a fairly effective business union and wages are higher than average for the various skill levels. Currently, the leading Stalinist cadre is undergoing a deep split as a result of the Sino-Soviet dispute and general crisis of world Stalinism, although it also manifests itself in differences over trade union policy. The logic of the minority's position would lead it to select the first, while the majority would opt for the Stalinist union, because that's where Trotskyist cadre are more likely to be found.

To summarize - the minority sees a fairly direct relationship between objective socio-economic conditions and revolutionary political consciousness. The majority regards the relationship between socio-economic conditions and socialist consciousness as highly complex, maintains that socialist consciousness is strongly influenced by many other factors, of which two of the most important, cultural level and specific political tradition, may be negatively related to economic exploitation. This is, after all, why we don't see the revolutionary forces in the "wretched of the earth", the permanently unemployed and the rural masses in the poor countries.

7 August 1968

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III. CRITICISMS OF MLCRC'S FUNCTIONING

by Joseph Seymour

Comrade Turner is absolutely right in noting that the seemingly small question of MLCRC gave rise to major, numerous, and complex political issues. The discussion legitimately ranges from trivial, but operationally significant, questions as to who did what, when, to some of the most fundamental questions of Marxist theory. A second complication arises from disentangling comrade Turner's particular views, notably on the black question, from the actions, program, and potential of MLCRC and MLCRC-type activities. Therefore I propose to break a discussion of MLCRC into three parts; first, some general political criticisms of MLCRC, second, a discussion of Turner's views on the black question, and third, a description of the still unsettled disputes about MLCRC's disposition that have raged since the passage of the Robertson motion.

Union Work Must Be Concrete

Before discussing political criticisms of MLCRC's functioning, it should be recalled that the most important criticism is that it absorbed too damn many people. Comrade Turner states that I viewed MLCRC with a "jaundiced eye" from the first. This is untrue. I did believe that the Turner "Memorandum on the Negro Struggle" was too general to provide an effective guide to oppositional work within trade unions. I held that the success of MLCRC would depend upon the ability of its members to translate the goals of the Turner Memorandum into a series of demands and strategies around which potentially successful opposition groupings could be built. I emphasized that these would have to be realizable within the context of a single union under existing economic conditions. In general, I believed and believe that a successful union caucus must have approximately as detailed and comprehensive an approach to the union as has our social service workers' caucus - a view which considered not only the general industry and union situation, but took into account the internal political situation (e.g., other opposition groups) as well as such important things as the timing of demands. In emphasizing the need for concreteness, I was guarding against the danger that MLCRC would degenerate into something like Trade Unionists for a Labor Party, in which the slogan, "Fight against the super-exploitation of black workers" like the slogan "We need a labor party now", was used as an excuse for not dealing with the specific conflicts that existed in particular unions.

Due to the fact that Sam Smith had been in the union a long time, the MLCRC comrades were able to develop a pretty good knowledge of what was going on in the hospital workers' union. However, I believe that comrade Turner and the other minority comrades never appreciated the need to develop a very detailed programmatic approach, comrade Turner believing that the general line of MLCRC was so powerful that it could attract workers and the question of implementation would work itself out naturally. There is an indication of this type of thinking in Whither the Spartacist League?

Discussing how MLCRC will be built and expand into new unions, comrade Turner states "the friends, relatives, and contacts of these workers could be expected to come forth with their grievances and as potential forces around which other caucuses can be built in other unions". In a certain sense, the tactical implementation of MLCRC's line is expected to come from random contacts. Of course, we must give serious consideration to the grievances of union contacts, and these grievances may play a very important role in develop-

ing a caucus program (though this is in no sense necessary). However, before approaching workers in a union situation, it is up to us to develop a program that is both consistent with our general goals and realizable given the particular political situation in the union. When an MLCRC cadre visits a contact, he should aspire to know more about the union than the contact and be able to suggest certain priority actions an oppositionist might take. In other words, he should be able to provide some leadership. If the contact has strong objections to the program (and this is unlikely), we should be able to successfully defend our prospective program or modify it in light of criticisms. The notion that radicals should throw out certain general demands, pull in whoever responds, and then work the specific implementary program and approach, either "through struggle" or by some "democratic" inter-action is a New Left notion which is singularly ineffective.

MLCRC's functioning had an adverse effect on the development of specific oppositional programs for two reasons. First, as a pan-union organization, comrades developed a tendency to generalize about the New York labor scene rather than particularize. Secondly, the major area of concentration was a union in which, after the Ross-Newman defection, we had no members and depended for our intelligence on a few, politically inexperienced, contacts. It was felt that by concentrating a number of able comrades in one union, we would be more likely to develop that kind of specific, concrete program necessary for building an oppositional caucus.

A second criticism I had of MLCRC was a secondary one about its form, which wouldn't be worth discussing hadn't comrade Turner presented a garbled version of it. I was not sure if MLCRC was meant to be a civil rights type pressure group, a kind of extended employment committee of New York CORE, where comrade Turner developed many of his ideas on union work, or a transitional pan-union organization, similar to our West Coast Committee for a Labor Party, the Worker's League's TULP, and P.L.'s Workers' Action. (I now believe it was closer to the latter). It turned out to be an academic distinction. However, the significance is this. A group operating an oppositional caucus in a union would have to take positions on many issues not obviously related to the oppression of minority workers (e.g., the Vietnam War, the elections, affiliation with other unions). Had significant numbers of people from different backgrounds been won to MLCRC, basically to fight discrimination in the labor movement, they may have opposed our positions on these other issues, or objected to taking positions on them at all. However, since MLCRC remained overwhelmingly Spartacist, the question never came up.

The third and most important criticism of MLCRC is that it inhibited caucus building in the one proletarian union we had members in. After the Ross-Newman split, it was obvious to most comrades that building an oppositional caucus in the hospital workers' union was highly problematical, and we should concentrate where we had people. In principle, there was no contradiction between building a light industry union fraction and continuing MLCRC. In practice, the maintenance of a separate organization was time and resource consuming, and some of MLCRC's most active people would be the core of the new union caucus. But importantly, the MLCRC people considered their hospital work exceedingly important and showed no drive to establish the new caucus. It was and is true (I believe no minority member would deny it) that the majority comrades see a far greater importance and urgency in building the new union caucus than the minority comrades. Thus the continued existence of MLCRC, as before, would have acted as a physical and psychological drain on the energies of the only definite forces we have to work in a union, largely consisting of poorly paid black and Puerto Rican workers.

10 August 1968

IV. ON THE BLACK QUESTION

by Joseph Seymour

To my mind, the most worthwhile aspect of this dispute is that it forces us to re-consider the black question in a more critical and operational way. With comrade Turner, I regret that the Turner Memorandum did not receive more critical attention. Part of the explanation is that it seemed very plausible and non-controversial, and also it stayed on a fairly high level of generality. In discussing comrade Turner's views on this subject it is useful to separate a discussion of the strategy of recruiting black workers from a discussion of the relationship between the fight against the "special oppression of black workers" and the white working class.

On Recruiting Black Workers

To make this discussion meaningful, it is necessary to make a distinction between a program and the central propaganda axis on which this program is justified. (The failure to make this distinction is one of the reasons the Turner Memorandum did not receive very critical attention.) Thus, if one decides that our central trade union demand is raising the wages of the poorest paid workers, this can be justified a) as the most effective means of keeping up wages as a whole, b) in terms of general egalitarian principles, or c) as a means of combating racial discrimination, since, in many areas, the poorest paid workers will be black. Comrade Turner advocates making the central propaganda axis of our trade union work the fight against the oppression of minority workers, even though many specific policies advocated could be justified in other ways.

The basic theory behind this approach is similar to that held by the Communist Party during its anti-white chauvanism campaign in the early '50's. It is that blacks in this society have been so oppressed by race hatred that they distrust all whites, even white revolutionists. Therefore, the main task of a revolutionary organization is to overcome this distrust by making the fight against discrimination the main political issue of party work and taking extra special pains to combat white chauvanism in all aspects of party functioning.

My qualms with this position (and they are no more than that) have the following character. An important contributing factor to the rise of nationalism in the civil rights movement was that the whites in the movement presented their participation as one of gratuitously helping the oppressed and, even, atoning for the sins of their white brethren. Most people do not like charity and resent the moral superiority of someone who is making sacrifices out of an abstract sense of justice. As socialists, our answer to this is that we are fighting for the rights of blacks, not to help people more unfortunate than ourselves, but as a means of creating a society in which everyone, including ourselves, will be a lot better off. However, the liberal rationale for white participation in the black liberation movement remained the general accepted one.

Now it is possible that the reaction of black workers to a group of largely white workers establishing a trade union opposition group to fight the "special oppression" of black workers may be "I'm a big boy, I can take care of myself." On the other hand, they may welcome being accepted as ordinary fellow workers fighting a common enemy, rather than as some poor put-upon creatures who require everyone's special solicitude. I may be wrong. Black workers may respond to a civil rights type program for the trade unions, regardless of who

advocates it, and may react passively to a more general militant trade union policy. Frankly, I don't know and neither does comrade Turner. We don't have enough experience in trying to recruit black workers around different propaganda orientations to judge. Did the anti-white chauvanism campaign of the C.P. enable them to recruit and maintain significant numbers of blacks? The important point is that comrade Turner's approach is not the only one consistent with trying to recruit black workers, and its correctness must be proven.

Black Liberation And The White Working Class

However, it is not whether a civil rights approach in the unions is the best way to recruit black workers that is the most important difference we have on this issue. It is whether the fight against the "special oppression" of blacks is capable of radicalizing the working class as a whole.

It is very difficult to come to grips with Turner's position on the black question, because of a number of contradictions in comrade Turner's writings. A cardinal issue is whether significant numbers of white workers can be won to a fight against the oppression of black workers. In the Turner Memo, we are told, "white workers have been content to allow the segregation of black workers in low paid jobs to continue, and react to the struggles of the black people with attitudes ranging from passivity through indifference to outright hostility". However, in the Turner factional document, the aim of MLCRC is described, "to unite black and white workers in a struggle against the super-exploitation of black workers and other minorities." - an aim which is, presumably, realizable at the present time. Thus, we are told that white workers who are indifferent to and hostile to the struggle of the black masses are to become civil rights activists within the trade union movement. How or why this fairly miraculous transformation is to come about is not indicated. Why MLCRC type activity should draw in significant numbers of white workers, when the old civil rights movement, which, comrade Turner must admit, had more organizational power and influence, prestige, and respectability than the Spartacist League, did not, is not divulged. I jump on this point because it is typical of the minority's tendency toward wishful thinking. Comrade Turner feels very strongly that white workers should help their black brothers, just as all the minorityites feel very strongly that the Spartacist League should have a meaningful working class base. Therefore, if one affirms it strongly enough, it will happen.

Probably the best jumping off place to discuss Turner's views on the black question is point 6 on the Turner Memorandum:

The concept of the SL that black workers are slated to play an exceptional role in the coming US revolution retains its validity. It can be implemented only as white workers develop the recognition of the identity of the interests of the proletariat. Conversely, insensitivity to the special needs of black workers is but an aspect of the lack of revolutionary consciousness. Concentration on the building of a transitional organization within the working class which would fight for its unity is, therefore, not simply a short-cut into the class, i.e., the recruitment of black-worker cadre, but also the main road to the building of socialist consciousness in the class.

This passage is all wrong. The extra-ordinary role of the black working class in the American revolution does not depend on the development of class consciousness of the white workers, but stems precisely from the fact that

black workers will be a decisive agency in developing that class consciousness. The radicalisation of the white working class will diminish the particular weight of black workers in the revolutionary movement.

Comrade Turner states that the failure of the white working class to support the black struggle is an aspect of a general lack of revolutionary consciousness, and then reverses the argument to say that the struggle to get white workers to support black demands is a means of developing class consciousness. But this reversal is completely illegitimate. In a certain sense, the willingness of workers to struggle against the oppression of national minorities, like the willingness of workers to support colonial revolutions against their own country, is the highest form of class consciousness, since it indicates an ability to recognize class unity in the face of powerful traditional differences and the willingness to make sacrifices for the sake of a more oppressed section of the class. To expect significant sections of the white working class to actively support the black struggle at this time, is not different from expecting them to actively support the Vietcong. After all, the failure of the American working class to support the struggles of the Vietnamese masses is also an aspect of a lack of general revolutionary consciousness. Classes, like humans, usually go through a period of crawling before they sprint.

In describing the attitude of white workers to the black liberation movement, Comrade Turner feels that it could be and should be different. Indeed, he intends to march the Spartacist League into the trade unions to change all that. Now, denouncing the racism of the white working class has become something of a past-time from Muslim mosques to the faculty cafeteria at Berkeley. As Marxists, we have to look at this more critically.

Comrade Turner states that the failure of the white working class to support the civil rights movements reflects their general lack of revolutionary class consciousness. I believe comrade Turner will admit that the Czarist Russian working classes were pretty revolutionary, yet they never mobilized to end the oppression of the Jews, and the Black Hundreds were a political force until 1914. The Victorian British working class was fairly class conscious, yet Engels deplored their failure to oppose British imperialism. Today, nobody would question the revolutionary combativeness of the French workers. However, the failure of the French working class to effectively oppose the Algerian War or, even, the persecution of Algerian workers in France was an important factor in leading Franz Fanon and others to write off the working class as a revolutionary force. At no time in history has the mass of the working class engaged in a systematic struggle against oppression of national minorities, except as part of an opposition to an unsuccessful colonial war.

To attribute the failure of the working class to engage in the struggles of the black masses to positive racist sentiment reflects a liberal concept of society. Each individual has his own rounded political philosophy and acts accordingly. If someone doesn't oppose racism, it's because he's a racist. As Leninists, we know better. Except on issues that immediately concern them, the mass of workers tend to be politically passive. The actions and attitudes of the working class are largely determined by tradition, authority, and, decisively, the leadership of working class organizations.

As Marxists, and not liberals or Christians, we have no right to expect, and, therefore, to project, that the class as a whole will fight national oppression, inside the country or out, independently of a more general revolu-

tionary struggle. What we do have the right to expect is that individual radical workers will join in the struggle against racial oppression, and the more radical the class as a whole, the greater the number of such radical workers. Most importantly, it is necessary to fight within working class organizations (trade unions and parties) to get them to oppose national oppression. Sometimes, such organizations can mobilize the entire class in the struggle against national oppression. However, mass working class organizations can not be built around the struggle against national oppression. How successful would the Bolsheviks have been if they had made their main agitation-issue equality for Jews or the nascent British Labor Party if they had made theirs Irish independence.

The most serious consequence of the liberal belief that failure to be active in the civil rights movement is an indication of racism is that it has led to propaganda which, with noxious moral superiority, is continuously decrying the sin of race hatred in the white lower classes. The line of left-liberal civil rights propaganda, as embodied in the Kerner Report (which was praised by Carmichael and Rap Brown because of its hard line on white racism), has made a positive contribution to the development of reactionary sentiment within the white working class. It has done so because it asserts a) Negroes are a uniquely oppressed group in American society, and the principal conflict in American society is between races and not classes, b) that the plight of the black people is the result of the racism of the white population as a whole, making no distinction between workers and the ruling class, and c) that improvement in the conditions of the Negroes will require sacrifices on the part of the entire white population, including the working class. White workers, who have real economic problems and whose life is not exactly *la dolce vita*, resent being told they're moral lepers by college professors and wealthy television commentators, because they don't give half a week's salary to the Urban Coalition and spend their weekends demonstrating for civil rights bills. Although liberal bourgeois politicians have made no real concessions to the black masses, they have made verbal concessions by presenting the plight of Negroes as the overwhelming moral issue of our time. Much of the drift to the right, as indicated by the success of the Wallace campaign, reflects, not positive racism, but a feeling on the part of white workers (particularly of other ethnic minorities) that they have been abandoned by the liberal Democrats, who are now exclusively concerned with the Negroes. A common complaint among white workers is "everyone talks about the black's troubles, what about my troubles?"

Comrade Turner is not asking white workers to make economic sacrifices for the black masses. On the contrary, the programs he advocates would benefit white workers through their indirect effect on the labor market. However, he is asking the white working classes to make a different kind of sacrifice by devoting most of their trade union energies and resources to bettering the condition of black workers. Now, underlying the belief of liberals, black nationalists, and most New Lefters that white workers should make sacrifices for the black masses is the notion that the white working class is so affluent and bourgeoisified that an unwillingness to make such sacrifices can only be attributed to racism and petty selfishness. Does comrade Turner believe that the mass of white workers are so content and wall off that it is unjustifiable for them to believe that the principal aim of their unions and political organizations is to struggle for their immediate economic betterment?

Comrade Turner fails to realize how much white middle-class support for and participation in the civil rights movement was motivated by class and race guilt. (Read an account of the national conference of the Committee for New

Politics.) Students, academics, and other white collar professionals are privileged sections of America and, some S.D.S. theoreticians to the contrary, they realize it, and feel a need to soothe their consciences by helping the less fortunate. Whatever statistical differences may exist between white and black workers, white workers do not think of themselves as a privileged section of American society, and were not drawn to a movement which presented white support as a form of moral charity. In a certain sense, the failure of large numbers of white workers to join the civil rights movement is a reflection of their class consciousness, in that they did not see black workers as on a vastly lower social level than themselves.

Comrade Turner has evidently not grasped the essence of the Spartacist solution to the black question. We have often spoken of the black population as the potential vanguard of the American working class, and I don't believe the minority comrades would object to this term. This term indicates we believe that black workers should act in a way analogous to a vanguard party. A vanguard party achieves leadership of the working class by systematically and consciously intervening in the struggles of the class to carry those struggles forward. If the black workers are going to play a vanguard role in the class, they also must systematically and consciously intervene in the struggles of the working class as a whole. If significant sections of the black masses were to break with the Democratic Party, founding a largely black, but not exclusionist, radical party fighting for a working class program, on a parliamentary level, in the unions and other organizations, this would act as a pole around which militant white workers would be drawn. If the black masses were organized to intervene in all labor struggles, the balance of class power in this country would be qualitatively changed and significant reforms accomplished.

The principal agency in overcoming the racism of the white workers must be the organized black masses, who can only do that by proving to the white working class that the black population is their most effective ally in the fighting of all economic and social battles. Racism sentiment serves a deep emotional need for many workers and will not be transformed into pure tolerance based on class identity. White workers will either hate and fear the black masses or admire and respect them as the best fighters in the interests of the class as a whole. The only viable attitude a class conscious white worker can have toward the black population is one similar to that white radicals have now (without the element of class and race guilt) - a sense of positive solidarity with that section of the population that is the most solid element in the labor movement, because it provides most of the human and material resources in all militant organizations and struggles, because it contributes the best leadership cadre, steeled in numerous conflicts with the ruling class, because its representatives in government and mass organizations are the most militant and best representatives of the interests of the class as a whole.

The black working class can and should play a role similar to that of the Jewish working class in Czarist Russia and Irish workers in nineteenth century England - an oppressed minority, who, because of that oppression was the most radical section of the working class, and consciously led the class. However, black workers do not have this role automatically. It must be consciously embodied in mass, black organizations. Black workers can only win the leadership of white workers if they have a program and political doctrine that is obviously and directly in the interest of all workers. Black workers can not lead the working class, with a program primarily geared to the particular oppression of black workers, and a rhetoric that underplays the oppression of the

working class as a whole in emphasizing the special oppression of the black people.

Is the Spartacist position on how the black masses can gain the leadership of the entire working class and simultaneously overcome white racism based on purely abstract reasoning or does it have some basis in the history of the labor and black liberation movements? During SHCC's healthiest period, they supported the striking miners in Hazard, Kentucky, both financially and by sending in some of their organizers, mostly, but not exclusively, white. The effect on the attitudes of these white, Southern, Baptist workers was obvious. All of them took pains to emphasize their sympathy for the black cause, and, on their own initiative, they organized a demonstration at the Kentucky state house supporting some anti-discrimination bill, an event probably unique in the history of the civil rights movement.

Tragically, this type of project (I don't believe it was part of a conscious strategy) was abandoned when the nationalist leadership came to power in SHCC. Against actively supporting the struggles of white workers, the "black power"ists raised two powerful arguments. One was that since most blacks were worse off than most white workers,

why should they waste their precious resources on white workers. And the other was why should they help white workers, many of whom have racist sentiments. To these arguments, we have the following answers. Without the active support of the white working class the black masses can not significantly alleviate either their political oppression or economic degradation. And the only way, at this time, that the black masses can gain the support of white workers against their special oppression is to convince white workers that they are their best allies against the capitalist class. Secondly, since the black people are overwhelmingly working class, the black population generally benefits from any gains the class as a whole makes. About 15 per cent of the coal miners in eastern Kentucky are black.

While Comrade Turner adheres to the Spartacist trade union program, he advocates a propaganda orientation which undermines the central purpose of that program. Within the context of the Turner Memorandum, it is quite correct to emphasize that a shorter work week will particularly benefit unemployed black workers. However, I believe Comrade Turner thinks this should be our main agitational point in advocating this policy generally. The reason that the call for a shorter work week is our central economic demand, is that although it will particularly benefit black ghetto dwellers, it is in the interest of all workers, and therefore is an issue around which the class can unite. Everyone will be better off with a shorter work week, including racist and reactionary workers. And we want racist and reactionary workers to fight for a shorter work week, because the only way they are going to become radicalized is by meeting vicious opposition from the ruling class to demands they believe are just and desirable. To agitate for a shorter work week as a means of fighting the oppression of the black masses is roughly equivalent to agitating for higher wages, as a means of hurting American imperialism, by making U.S. exports less competitive on the world market. It is true and important, but likely to severely limit support for the policy advocated. It is legitimate and desirable in certain union situations to present our program primarily in terms of fighting against the oppression of black workers. However, our general trade union propaganda must emphasize our program as one in the immediate interest of all workers.

Comrade Turner's positions lead him to take a fairly soft attitude toward "black power" radicals, since he views the failure of black civil rights

activists to adopt a working class socialist perspective as a result of the conditions of ghetto life and the indifference of the white working class. (This is another example of the minority's tendency toward sociological determinism). Comrade Turner's views have a certain similarity to that of SDS. SDS believes that before white radicals can seek to influence the black liberation movement, they must first build a mass anti-racist base in the "white community". Comrade Turner believes that we should first build integrated trade union caucuses primarily aimed at fighting the oppression of black workers, and then we can turn to the Browns and Cleavers and say, "see, I told you the white working class isn't racist". In advocating these policies, the minority is transferring the burden of radicalizing the white working classes from the leadership of the black liberation movement, who command potentially enormous political power, at this time, to the obviously much weaker Spartacist League.

Commenting on the drift to the right in Reagen's election as governor, Geoff White wrote:

The decisive factor in preserving the impasse and permitting continued rightward drift is the failure of the left to provide leadership toward a serious class-oriented alternative to capitalist politics. If the crisis of leadership can be overcome, then an alternative can be presented which can attract support on a mass basis, among Black militants, the working class, the disaffected intelligentsia and even among some of those very elements whose false consciousness places them today in the Reagan camp.

It is not clear just what groups White included in "the Left", but the "black power" radicals are an important part of the left, and their responsibility in not providing an attractive alternative to discontented white workers should not be overlooked. If black civil rights activists have more sociological justification in rejecting proletarian socialism than white college students, the effect of this rejection is far greater, because the black masses can be won to a revolutionary political organization, at this time. The "black power" radicals are as much our political opponents as other "Marxists" groups, although, naturally we don't adopt the same tone toward them. To the extent we are able, we must convince the Browns, Foremans, and the Cleavers (the latter might listen) that their failure to mobilize the black masses to fight for the general interests of the working class as a whole, and thereby overcome the racism of the white population, may well have catastrophic consequences for the black masses and the white working class, as well as themselves and ourselves.

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I was quite surprised to find such serious differences on the Negro question erupting so suddenly in our midst. I believe the reason is that we have never been able to implement our vanguard concept for the black movement in a concrete way. Between defending black militants against state persecution, opposing pro-Democratic Party liberals on the one hand and exclusionist nationalists on the other, our ability to initiate action in the black movement has been limited. With the Deacons and in New York Core, we have attempted to act as consummate civil rights militants, but were working with programmatic principles other than our own. The program of MLCRC is essentially an attempt to extend the principles of the militant or movements to the trade unions and industry. Within the limited framework of civil rights-pressure group politics, such an extension is both important and desirable.

We have, for the most part, unconsciously, adopted a two stage approach to recruiting black cadre. We work in the civil rights movements, try to function

as model civil rights militants, while at the same time trying to win individual black activists to a view of society and the role of the black masses, that is fundamentally at variance with that of all sections of the black liberation movement.

This two-stage approach may be the best, perhaps the only, way to recruit black radicals and working class militants. This is why I don't oppose the program of MLCRC, even though I differ with Comrade Turner's views on the black question. Nevertheless, I believe we owe it to ourselves to create a control to MLCRC-type activities in unions with significant black composition. I suggest that in some union, with a large black population, we establish an oppositional caucus with a more universal class program than MLCRC to see if black workers can be attracted more directly to a proletarian socialist viewpoint.

14 August 1968

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expanse of the US with that of a force twelve times its size in little France, mainly concentrated in Paris?". The majority believes that it could solve the crisis in the organization, if only the discussion could be shifted onto this plane, and away from the charges of the minority. I, however, do not intend to be diverted into a discussion of VO's theory and practice. Moreover, VO is a fraternal movement which has demonstrated its serious revolutionary commitment over many years. Any critique of its work should be undertaken soberly by US revolutionists who still have a great deal to learn, and not as a factional device. Cde. Gordon's patronizing attitude toward a movement which has built one of the large Trotskyist parties in the world ill-befits a young student who has still to prove that she can build anything.

Your document, Cde. Gordon, merits additional inspection at closer range. It sheds a devastating light on the majority.

As a matter of simple honesty, when you write about the "non-success of the SL over the past year or so, during which time membership size has been constant", are you not really discussing the failures of the SL during which time membership losses have been significant?

And how do you square statements such as the following: "the right to factions is key in the Leninist method of determining the line of the organization", and "The function of organizational structure and methods is to safeguard against bureaucratic abuse and political stultification", with the truly obscene treatment of the minority, e.g., personal abuse and threats of expulsion?

You approvingly characterize VO's educational activities as "an attempt to make high Trotskyists of all members". High Trotskyists, indeed! You, of course, mean developed Marxists, but unconsciously, the whole of your elitist mentality shows itself! I have also used the term, but only derisively, to indicate a line of demarcation between high-priests and laity. You also use it as a boundary, but to mark off your intellectual elite from workers who are seen as incapable of developing Cde. Robertson's "Weltanschauung".

You dare to typify "VO's emphases on systematic contact work and internal education" as a kind of theory of stages! And, what is the majority's conception of the building of a Leninist party in the US but a theory of stages in which an absolute dichotomy exists between the "splinter propaganda group" and a mass party? Thus far, neither Cde. Robertson nor any designated spokesman for the majority have had the courage to respond to the minority's challenge that they speak to this point.

You state that "excessive concentration in the working class . . . may well be a tactical error. When elevated to the level of a theory, it is a theoretical one." This facile conclusion is a bit strange, to say the least, coming from self-styled Trotskyists whose most grievous weakness is their complete lack of roots in the working-class, and who have had the misfortune of maturing as revolutionists in circumstances in which they have been walled off from that class. Your bright remark brings to mind Lenin's retort to the Economists, that their worship of spontaneity in the working-class in a period of theoretical confusion was as appropriate as "wishing mourners at a funeral many happy returns of the day."