

Marxist Bulletin No. 4

Expulsion from the Socialist Workers Party

DOCUMENTS ON THE EXCLUSION OF REVOLUTIONARY TENDENCY SUPPORTERS

Part II

Published by

SPARTACIST

Box 1377, G.P.O.

New York, N. Y. 10001

\$4.00

Table of Contents -- Part II

	<u>Page</u>
17. <u>Rescind the Suspensions!</u> -- Statement to the National Committee by the five suspended supporters of the Revolutionary Tendency, 10 December 1963	55
18. Letter to the National Committee Plenum by D.G. and R.S., 17 December 1963	65
19. Oral Statement to the Plenum by Laurence Ireland, 28 December 1963	68
20. Report to the Plenum on Internal Party Situation by Farrell Dobbs, 28 December 1963	72
21. Minority Report to the Plenum on Internal Party Situation by Myra Weiss, 28 December 1963	84
22. Plenum Vote on Internal Party Situation, 28 December 1963	95
23. Letter to Wohlforth by James Robertson, 2 January 1964	96
24. Notice of Expulsion: letter by Farrell Dobbs, 22 January 1964	97
25. <u>Concerning Our Expulsions</u> -- Letter to the National Committee by Harper, Ireland, Mage, Robertson and White, 10 February 1964; plus cover letter appealing to next party convention	98
26. <u>Robertsonite Attack on the Party</u> -- Motion by the Political Committee	102
27. Appeal to the "United Secretariat of the Fourth International" by James Robertson, 23 February 1964	103
28. Resolution on Robertson Group by the United Secretariat; plus cover letter by Pierre Frank, 17 April 1964	105
29. Letter Seeking Appeal to Next World Congress by Harry Turner, 18 May 1965	107
30. Letter Refusing Appeal to World Congress by Pierre Frank, 28 May 1965	108
31. Letter Requesting Appeal by Representative of the Expelled to 1965 National Convention by James Robertson, 13 August 1965	109
32. Letter Evading Requested Appeal to National Convention by Edward Shaw, 27 August 1965	110

RESCIND THE SUSPENSIONS!

Statement to the National Committee of the Socialist Workers Party by the five suspended supporters of the Revolutionary Tendency, Lynne Harper, Laurence Ireland, Shane Mage, James Robertson, and Geoffrey White.

I. Introduction: the Political Committee Action Against Us

1. On August 2, 1963, the Political Committee adopted a motion which took up some old accusations of Wohlforth and Philips, paraphrasing them in summary form as (1) 'Hostile Attitude toward the Party', (2) 'Double Recruiting', and (3) 'Split Perspective'. The PC motion concluded by instructing the Control Commission to look 'into possible violations of the statutes of the party, especially involving Robertson, Ireland, and Harper.' On October 24 after some months of purported investigation the CC reported, exclusively on the basis of written opinions offered by Robertson, Ireland, and Harper internally within their own tendency, that: 'In these statements by the Robertson-Mage-White minority their hostile and disloyal attitude toward the party is clearly manifested.' The PC in its motion of November 1 found it necessary to expand on the CC's sole conclusion by presenting lurid accusations created out of thin air and giving as sole source 'as indicated by the Control Commission's report'. The PC went on to suspend from party membership comrades Harper, Ireland, Mage, Robertson, and White. Moreover, the suspensions were without specified time limit and were to be with 'the same force and effect' as expulsion during the period of suspension.

2. Thus for the first time in the history of the SWP a leadership has taken the punitive action of exclusion from the party of minority supporters on the basis of opinions! This action is rendered even more grave and unprecedented by the fact that the views for which punishment was inflicted were themselves nothing more than personal contributions to a private discussion within a minority tendency!

II. Background: Recent Trends in the Party

3. Through the period of the last two party conventions (1961, 1963) the party has witnessed a systematic and general attrition of representation on the NC of all minority factions or tendencies, dissidents, and other critics. Thus, for example, Bert Deck, the then managing editor of the International Socialist Review and associate of Murry Weiss, was removed from the NC after he offered a slight modification to the PC line on the Cuban Question for the 1961 convention. In the same period there has been a systematic denial, compounded by calculatedly hysterical Majority hostility, of the rights of the party.

membership in branches--above all in the largest branch, New York--to express opinions, offer recommendations to leading bodies, or even to discuss new developments or the actions and decisions of the party leadership.

4. A year ago the Majority made an assault on the very right of our minority, and by implication any minority, to exist within the party. A provocative attempt was made by Majority supporters to intrude into a private Minority gathering. As the upshot of our informal protest to party authorities, it was revealed that the incident had taken place at the instigation and under the direction of a Majority PC member. The leadership white-washed this action by adopting a condemnatory motion which accused the Minority of being the guilty party for having held such a private tendency meeting! These events are fully detailed in our document 'For the Right of Organized Tendencies to Exist within the Party!'

5. In connection with the last party convention, the Majority made severe incursions upon party democracy and upon our party rights:

a) The National Secretary, Dobbs, without offering any reason, refused to print in the bulletin material on the international question which we deemed important to present to the party. In the same pre-convention discussion period the National Secretary likewise deferred printing documentary material on the youth question. Later an opportune legal problem presented itself as an excuse for refusal. A key document in this collection has been kept from the movement since September 1961 by the PC.

b) At the convention itself the Majority refused to give any representation on the National Committee to our minority despite a sufficient numerical as well as clear cut political basis for such representation. Thus the Majority has not only deprived us of our proper voice within the party, but it has also put into question the legitimate authority of the leading party bodies, the NC and PC, by electing them on a restricted basis.

c) In reporting the convention to the public, the Militant article, after identifying James Robertson and Shane Mage among others by name, stated that 'They charged that... the leadership of the SWP were in the process of abandoning Marxism.' This cynical abuse of control of the public press by the Majority to identify and isolate inner-party opponents is indeed an abandonment of the method of controversy among Marxists.

6. In a continuous series of incidents over the past two years, the Majority has abused its leading position in the party to hinder, harrass, and immobilize supporters of our tendency. The evident general aim of the Majority has been to make as the

penalty for individual comrades becoming oppositionists the paralysis of any political role, either within the party or in broader outside movements. Thus there has accumulated a seemingly endless list of all-too-legitimate grievances on this score. Perhaps the most outrageous and flagrant incident of harrassment was that against comrade Shirley in removing her from Southern SNCC work. Most common has been the regular, rarely overridden refusal to accept into membership contacts brought to the party by the minority. Yet throughout the past several years, and whatever the provocation, our tendency has always counselled and insisted that its supporters abide in a disciplined way by the decisions the Majority imposed upon the party.

7. The foregoing sections are intended only to sketch the immediately relevant portion of the party's organizational side in the past period. We do not suggest that these are the main characteristics of the party's evolution, even of the organizational aspect. Rather what is described is that part of the party's face shown to the party's minorities, particularly to our own tendency. At the same time as the comrades of the Revolutionary Tendency have responded in a disciplined fashion to developments within the party, we have not failed to form and offer opinions among ourselves and to the whole party as to the meaning, implications, and direction of the course the party has been pursuing in regards to both political revisionism and organizational degeneration. The determination of the more general processes at work in shaping the party was exactly the subject under hot discussion in the tendency when the documents were drafted over which the Majority now raises a scandal in its desire to exclude us from the party. See for example Robertson and Ireland's 'The Centrism of the SWP and The Tasks of the Minority' (September 6, 1962) and also the earlier basic tendency statement, 'In Defense of a Revolutionary Perspective' (in 1962 SWP Bulletin No. 4).

Suffice it to say that the most salient features of the party's overall motion in the last period have been as follows:

a) In general political approach the party has sought after substitutes for a revolutionary working class perspective-- notably the surrender of all Marxist responsibility toward the Cuban Revolution through abasement as an uncritical apologist for the Castro regime; repeating this process over Ben Bella's Algeria; negotiating an alliance of convenience and mutual amnesty with fellow Pabloists internationally ('reunification of the F.I.');

and most lately, within the United States, in a will-o'-the-wisp chase after Black Nationalism.

b) Yet while the party Majority has eagerly given itself over to enthusiasm for the goals of alien movements, it has resolutely avoided such opportunities as would further involvement and struggle in the party's own right. Thus actual civil rights

work, North or South; a serious approach to Progressive Labor or participation in the travel to Cuba committee and its trip; any modest effort at rebuilding the party's contact with the workers, such as plant press sales or Hazard miners work, have all either come at the Minorities' urgings, but vastly too little and too late, or have been refused outright. The proper word for such conduct is abstentionism.

c) It was in the party leadership's instant, instinctive responses in the moments of great crisis or apparent peril-- the Cuban missile crisis last year and the Kennedy assassination this year--that the party's utter loss of a revolutionary compass has been most decisively shown. (See our statement 'Declaration on the Cuban Crisis', later printed in 1963 Bulletin No. 18)

d) Within the party the shift in equilibrium of forces in the central party leadership through the retirement of Cannon and the elimination of Weiss has intensified the drive by the Dobbs regime to solve all questions by brute organizational force.

As a result of the totality of these underlying considerations the Majority leadership has been driven now to seek the exclusion of our tendency from the party. In essence this is a 'punishment' of us for our very tenacity in remaining in the party despite its degeneration and for our intransigence in struggling against that degeneration.

III. The Accusations Against Us

8. In view of the material already written, listed below, there is by this time little that needs be added as regards the vacuity, irrelevance, or downright falseness of the accusations of statutory violations made against our tendency or its individual supporters.

The party leadership has officially presented its case against our tendency in the following materials: a) letter of National Secretary Dobbs to James Robertson, July 5, 1963; b) PC motion of August 2, 1963, 'On the Robertson-Ireland-Harper Case'; c) 'Report of Control Commission on the Robertson Case', October 24, 1963; d) PC motion of November 1, 1963. The following replies and refutations have been offered by individual tendency supporters: a) letter of Robertson to Dobbs, July 9, 1963; b) letter of Geoffrey White to the PC, November 5, 1963; c) letter of Laurence Ireland to Dobbs, November 8, 1963; d) letter of Shane Mage to the PC, November 10, 1963; and e) letter of Lynne Harper to the NC, November 18, 1963. We urge the National Committee members to familiarize themselves with this correspondence.

9. The accusations of our indiscipline were originally put before the party by the Wohlforth-Philips 'Reorganized Minority Tendency' in appendices to their document 'Party and Class' (1963 SWP Bulletin No. 27). We shortly replied with our 'Discipline and Truth' (in Bulletin No. 30). In our reply we stated that 'Party and Class' lied, and we sought to show why its authors had been led into such action. With documents written earlier within the tendency, which we appended to our reply, we proved that we had been the object of false accusations. Moreover, to even the most superficial observer there is an insoluble contradiction in Wohlforth and Philips' accusations against us. If the charges were true that we were some kind of split-crazed wreckers, then Wohlforth-Philips should have taken far more decisive and prompt action than their act of waiting a year after first revealing within the then common tendency such heinous crimes, then simply repeating the revelations to the party as a whole. But if the charges were not true, they should never have been made in the first place. Instead they went ahead to publicize their accusations and then deprecated them by declaring them to be no valid basis for organizational action against us by the party leadership!

Nonetheless, it is to the credit of the Wohlforth-Philips group that they have now come forward, first, in disassociating themselves from their earlier accusation that we had a split orientation. This had been the key point in all of Wohlforth's other charges. Secondly, it is to their credit that they oppose organizational action against us, thereby implicitly declaring that their own old accusations had been without real, actionable substance, but were rather their own interpretations.

10. It would be an enormous and pointless task to seek to pin down and dispose of very many of the irrelevancies or wild distortions in the charges which the PC and CC have levelled against us; e.g., the abusive nonsense about 'double' recruitment or the childishness of proposing to expel us because we are alleged to have a 'split perspective'. Indeed the core of the case against us collapses immediately upon examination because it depends upon one false equation, to wit: party members, even if organizationally loyal and disciplined (as we are), can be 'really' loyal only if, in the course of carrying out party decisions, they agree with the leadership.

No matter from what side the Dobbsian interpretations given in the PC and CC material are approached, it always turns out that to the central leaders, 'loyalty' to the party means loyalty to the leaders. Because our acceptances of discipline justifies and is justified by our inner-party struggle against the leadership policies, our carrying out of party decisions is dismissed as 'cynical' and presumably then defective because it lacks sincerity. Thus, many of the 'quotations', even in their selected and trimmed form, offered of the views of tendency

supporters can have as their only purpose making the point that we don't believe in or agree with the party's changing policies and direction of recent years, nor do we respect the initiators and directors of those changes, either.

It is elementary, but no longer obvious in the SWP, to note that discipline has meaning especially when there is disagreement. Democratic-centralism is most fully called upon to regulate differences and mobilize the entire party for carrying out arrived-at decisions when there are sharp and keep-going divisions. To exclude from the party those who have sharp and deep differences, those who believe that the policies and course of the Majority leadership are part of a profound degeneration, is to amply prove the existence of that degeneration.

11. For our part, we have and do declare that our political loyalty lies exclusively with the Trotskyist program. It is as a derivative of this prime consideration that our tendency has always sought to abide fully by the discipline of the party, despite the rapidly advancing disease of degeneration in the party. It is in this sense and no other that the much-quoted phrase in the Robertson-Ireland document was advanced about avoiding 'mistaken concepts of loyalty to a diseased shell'. We would be peculiar people indeed should we find our loyalty resting with the cancer growing within the party! This should have been evident to any honest reader of the materials in question, for otherwise many other statements in these inner-tendency documents would be in flat contradiction and would reduce the entire set of opinions to a meaningless jumble. Notable in this connection is the statement in comrade Harper's draft 'Orientation of the Party Minority in Youth Work' that 'we must act as disciplined SWP members at all times'. Again, in comrade Ireland's 'What the Discussion is Really About', is found: "But since our perspective is one of remaining in the SWP, we can hardly afford to violate 'party discipline or party statutes.'" (Incidentally, this latter document had been turned over to the Control Commission by comrade Ireland to remove any possible ambiguities about his opinions on actionable subjects. However, the CC in its 'Report...' gave no acknowledgement of the receipt or very existence of this document, much less any mention of its contents!) Finally to put this whole point another way, if the SWP has become centrist in character as we stated in our main resolution to the last party convention, 'Toward Rebirth of the Fourth International' (that '...the centrist tendency is also prevalent among certain groups which originally opposed the Pablo faction'), then some organizational conclusions reasonably follow that justify our acting as disciplined party members despite the party's centrist politics. Further, it necessarily follows that such a conclusion is no more or less incompatible with party membership than is holding the political analysis which led to it.

IV. What Our Expulsion Would Mean for the Party

12. It may be that sections of the National Committee have not thought through the international implications of expelling our tendency from the SWP. Within the limitations of the Voorhis Act, the American party has been a prime mover in the recent reunification with the Pabloist forces of the International Secretariat. In an effort to draw into the unity as many of the scattered and divided groupings as possible, big promises were made to those opposed to the basis of the unification to convince them to come along anyhow. For example Dobbs and Hansen wrote in the article 'Reunification of the Fourth International' (Fall, 1963, International Socialist Review) as follows:

'Groupings with much deeper differences than opposing views over who was right in a past dispute can coexist and collaborate in the same revolutionary-socialist organization under the rules of democratic centralism.'

and

'The course now being followed by Healy and Posadas and their followers is much to be regretted. Under the democratic centralism which governs the Fourth International, they could have maintained their political views within the organization and sought to win a majority.'

Even more recently the United Secretariat of the Fourth International itself declared in its statement of November 18, 1963, in reply to the Healy-Lambert grouping, that:

'The fact remains, however, that they /British and French 'International Committee' sections/ have demonstratively refused to unite in a common organization in which they would be in a minority. They demonstratively refused to accept the majority decision of the International Committee forces on reunification. They demonstratively refused in advance to abide by majority decision of the world Trotskyist movement on reunification.'

and

'As for our position, we stand as before for reunification--on the basis of the principled program adopted at the Reunification Congress--of all forces that consider themselves to be revolutionary socialists.'

13. Our tendency opposed the projected unity move. Indeed the tendency itself was born in opposition to the political course which underlay the projected unification. We stated our opposition and proposed an entirely different political basis for reuniting the world movement in our 1963 draft international resolution, 'Toward Rebirth of the Fourth International'. We also made it crystal clear in advance that should the pro-Pabloist unification win a majority and go into effect, then the dissident and opposing minority internationally who shared our general outlook should go through the experience of the falsely-based unity attempt. We stated our willingness 'demonstratively' to accept the reunification in the entire concluding section of our recent international resolution which states:

'(19) 'Reunification' of the Trotskyist movement on the centrist basis of Pabloism in any of its variants would be a step away from, not toward, the genuine rebirth of the Fourth International. If, however, the majority of the presently existing Trotskyist groups insists on going through with such 'reunification', the revolutionary tendency of the world movement should not turn its back on these cadres. On the contrary: it would be vitally necessary to go through this experience with them. The revolutionary tendency would enter a 'reunified' movement as a minority faction, with a perspective of winning a majority to the program of workers' democracy. The Fourth International will not be reborn through adaptation to Pabloite revisionism: only by political and theoretical struggle against all forms of centrism can the world party of the socialist revolution finally be established.'

And we ourselves have more than fully met the conditions set forth by Dobbs-Hansen and by the United Secretariat. On top of abiding by discipline and accepting decisions, we have resisted abuse, disloyalty, calculated incitement, and outright provocation by the American leadership to force us to leave 'voluntarily'. Our tendency is therefore virtually unique in its ability to be the living test of the genuineness of the claimed democratic-centralist based and inclusive reunification. Several things will be clear should we be thrown out for holding opinions by no means more critical of the U.S. and international Pabloist leaderships than views held by others who have been publically and repeatedly invited to join in the unification. If we are excluded, then the true scope of the unity as an act of bad faith and deliberate fraud by its instigators will be definitely shown to all Trotskyists.

In a very practical and concrete way, the SWP-NC by its action towards us at its December 1963 Plenum will go far in making final for this period both the shape of its own relations with the world movement as well as those of its international allies.

14. Are all sections of the National Committee prepared to take responsibility for the kind of developing internal life which our exclusion would formalize? We are by no means the only people in the party who believe that the SWP is degenerating apace or that the Dobbs regime is a disaster for the party. If these views become proscribed through the awful example of our expulsion, then such opinions would be driven into a fetid underground existence. Inevitably there would be a multiplication of the symptoms of organizational degeneracy--the flaring up of intensely hate-filled quarrels on the permitted secondary questions, cliquist plots, hysterical reactions by a leadership fighting dimly seen enemies. Such an atmosphere could only accelerate the rightward motion of the party's cadres and train the newer members in a caricature of Marxist party life.

These are some of the general considerations which have always kept the Trotskyists from proscribing opinions within the party, however obnoxious they may be to the leadership, or of expelling the holders of such views. Moreover, in the specific case before the NC action against our tendency will not achieve its desired aim of turning the party into a docile machine. Others will continue as oppositionists within the party, and we will press our struggle from outside for readmission and for acceptance of our political viewpoint. It is within the province of the NC to prevent the demoralization and splintering of the party being brought on by a bureaucratically heavy-handed leadership.

15. For the NC to intervene to return the party to the revolutionary organizational practices of the past is to hold open the possibility of a revolutionary future for the SWP. If the NC permits the destruction of our party membership, it thereby acquiesces to the destruction of any chance for a reversal of the rightward, revisionist course of the party because those who opposed it would be excluded. By eliminating the content of party democracy, the degeneration of the party becomes irreversible. This need not be!

The SWP Majority reflects no implacable bureaucratic social layer. Its loss of a proletarian, revolutionary perspective, its eager search for substitutes and short cuts--idealizing the radical petty bourgeois leaderships: the Castros, Ben Bellas, Malcolm X's--is not some inevitable automatic reflex based upon a position of privilege. Rather despair and ensuing degeneration have come through prolonged isolation, persecution, weakness, and aging.

The NC stands now at a last cross roads, at which it yet has open a conscious choice. Sections of the party leadership may already have gone much further in political revision or bureaucratic organizational practice than they ever intended.

Although it would be idle to deny that it is very late, there is still a choice; the party does not have to, is not predestined to, continue down the road it is travelling at full speed. To repeat: to halt now is to leave open the way back so the party might again have a revolutionary future.

V. Conclusion: Rescind the Suspensions!

16. In the normal course of seeking to rectify a mistake or an injustice within the party, one would normally turn readily to the NC as a resort, but under the extraordinary circumstances in which the central party leadership has plunged the party with the NC's acquiescence to date, we must offer a reservation. Presumably we are expected to appeal the disciplinary action of the PC against us. But how can we appeal against what has not been the finding of any trial; how can we appeal against accusations which have no relation to any alleged intended violation of the rules of democratic-centralism?

17. Despite the outrageous position in which we would be placed in appealing to the NC from a non-existent trial, we are prepared to send a representative to appear before the NC at its coming plenum to present our case and to answer questions the plenum may wish to put to us. Because of the grave defects in the present situation we do not turn to the NC with an appeal but with the demand: RESTORE PARTY DEMOCRACY! RESCIND OUR SUSPENSIONS!

18. Finally, we call upon all party members, branches, individual NC members, and political tendencies in the party to present letters and statements to the NC calling for the lifting of the suspensions and restoration of our party rights as a vital interest of the party itself!

December 10, 1963

December 17, 1963

December 1963 Plenum
National Committee
Socialist Workers Party

We came into the party during the McCarthy witch-hunt period. Our struggles in our trade unions and in civil liberties organizations against the injustices of those days contributed to the social consciousness that led us to the SWP and into the general revolutionary struggle. Some eight years later we find ourselves struggling in the party against the same kind of practices that helped to propel us into the party in the first place.

We carry no brief for the Robertson-Mage-White tendency. Politically we characterize them as petty-bourgeois. We regard them as fundamentally incorrect on the questions of China, Cuba and the Negro struggle. We have opposed them polemically many times in both floor and literary debates. And we do not condone the opinions expressed in the Robertson-Ireland document of September 6, 1962. (It is the thoughts and opinions in this document that constitute the main basis for the so-called disloyalty charges against the tendency.) It would be very easy, therefore, to find excuses and justifications for removing them from the party. But our concern for the principles of socialist democracy and for the future viability of our party will not allow us such opportunistic indulgence.

The Swabeck tendency has been called "Stalinist" by leaders of the party and leaders of the youth. Yet here are we alleged "Stalinists" struggling against the same techniques used by Stalin against Trotsky and the Left Opposition. Only now they are being used in the name of Trotskyism against political opponents in the Trotskyist movement.

The leadership of our party accuses a minority tendency of a hostile attitude, a split perspective, and double recruiting. All three really fall under the category of perspectives and attitudes, for the charge of double recruiting was not substantiated by actual evidence either in the PC charges or in Comrade Dobbs' presentation to the New York branch. They are "suspended" as disloyal not for any specific acts but for "attitude" and "perspective"--that is, for thoughts and ideas. This is the technique of thought control.

Thought control techniques and concepts have been used throughout history as one of the main weapons against the revolutionary progression of society. To the extent that the SWP leadership uses the counter-revolutionary weapon of thought control against its political opponents, to that extent it will cease being revolutionary. Before their conviction and jailing under the Smith

Act, suppose Comrade Dobbs and Comrade Cannon had used within the party concepts of thought control similar to those the PC is now using against the Robertson-Mage-White minority. Would they not have been in a compromising position? (Unjust expulsion from the revolutionary party is tantamount to a jail sentence to anyone who regards himself as a genuine revolutionary.)

The charges of split perspective, hostile attitude and double recruiting (unsubstantiated) taken together form the basis for the party's charge of disloyalty. None of these is alone sufficient to support the charge. They are dependent on each other. Therefore, the party leadership just fuse the three to give them weight in lieu of any acts of disloyalty. This is a familiar technique.

Hostile attitude and split perspective are abstract ideas, not actions. Double recruiting, on the other hand, is concrete; it is an action. Therefore, it must be examined separately.

Double recruiting, as an accusation implying disloyalty, appears to have a factional motivation, because if logically extended and rigidly applied such a concept would restrict party membership to people in complete agreement with all of the party's current majority positions.

Take the members and sympathizers of Uhuru in Detroit as an example. They have been described by one of their spokesmen as Mau-Mau Maoists who use as basic texts the writings of Mao Tse-tung. If they joined the party they would quite naturally be members of the Swabeck tendency, irrespective of whether they joined the party on the basis of the party's line on the Negro movement. But what if the Swabeck tendency were instrumental in recruiting such people? Is the Swabeck tendency to be charged with disloyalty for "double-recruiting" and expelled from the party? Will prospective black revolutionaries whom the Swabeck tendency might recruit be refused admittance to membership if they share the Swabeck position on China? Obviously if such a course were adopted the party would be committing hari-kari.

Is the Seattle branch, which in the main supports the Kirk resolution, to be expelled by use of such criteria as has been used against the Robertson-Mage-White group if their members should recruit people supporting the Kirk position, as would be almost unavoidable in the circumstances? And what about the Milwaukee branch? It supports the Freedom Now resolution, but most of its members also support the Swabeck position on China. If they should recruit Negro militants with a predilection for the Swabeck position on China, are they to be "suspended" and the prospective members rebuffed?

The party is suicidally impaling itself on the horns of a self-defeating dilemma. Comrades, isn't the party small enough after 35 years without further reducing its potential by the introduction of these undemocratic strictures?

In order to purge out dissent, the party leadership is touching all the well-known bases used both by the bourgeoisie and by Stalinism. It is with a horrible fascination and deep indignation that we watch this process unfold in the SWP.

By such compromising acts and unprincipled tactics the SWP discredits itself and the entire Trotskyist movement, and forfeits any right to lead the masses in the name of and toward the revolutionary conquering of power for socialist democracy.

We protest the suspension of the Robertson-Mage-White tendency by the Political Committee and request the National Committee at its Plenum to reverse this decision.

Comradely,

/s/ D. G.

/s/ R. S.

NOTE: This communication represents the personal views of the writers. We have not consulted with the Swaback tendency, of which we are a part, as to agreement or disagreement on its contents. We opposed the "suspension" of the minority in the discussion following Comrade Dobbs' presentation of the PC position at a New York branch meeting.

Oral Statement to the December 1963 Plenumby Laurence Ireland

Comrades of the National Committee, I appear before you this morning to demand that you abrogate the suspensions against the five minority members. I also ask it of you. At the beginning, I'd like to make it plain that I'm speaking as an individual, I'm not an elected member of a tendency, I've not been designated to make any official statements. I'm speaking as somebody who does not want to be thrown out of the SWP. The immediate question I think is not one of agreement with or support of any particular views of the minority either as a tendency or of particular individuals in the minority. No, comrades, I think the question at hand is simply one of the right of a minority tendency to exist in and criticize policies of the Socialist Workers Party without the consent or approval of the leadership.

What are we charged with? What am I charged with? What in the hell did I do wrong? The Control Commission who investigated me concluded by a statement saying that a hostile and disloyal attitude toward the Party is clearly manifested. An incorrect attitude. Now this is not true in the first place. But think of it--a wrong attitude! Well, we'll take a look in a minute to see what this attitude consists of. However, the PC motion of Nov. 3 goes beyond the findings of the Control Commission, the body appointed to investigate us, and charges us, me, with advocacy of these positions basically:

First, and now I quote from the PC motion: "Assuming the guise of a study circle, the group leadership projects a discussion policy that disregards convention decisions to close discussion on disputed issues and goes ahead factionally on a business-as-usual basis." This is what the PC says. Now let's be clear what we're doing. Let's be straight about what we think, what I think. Nobody assumed any 'disguise;' what we did was out in the open. There was no policy projected or undertaken to disrupt branches, to continue a business-as-usual basis in the branches of the important questions before the Party. This was never done, comrades. And this was never projected. These are private documents that we voluntarily turned over to the Control Commission and appended to the PC motion which I assume you have. You'll find no such content. But, comrades, there's a profound, a fundamental, difference between reviving discussions on the floor of the branch after the convention is over and continuing to talk about these things among the various groups and individuals.

Do you stop thinking when the convention is over about the Negro question? Do you stop thinking about Cuba or Algeria? I mean, is there a time--now for two months we can think about it, maybe talk over with somebody over coffee--no. What does this mean? At least what does it mean to me, and correct me if I'm wrong. It means that an action line is taken by the party, that's what we act on for the next year or two years,

and it means that on the floor of the branches you don't raise hell and raise havoc going over and over this line, you can't do it that way. But do you stop talking about it? Do you stop thinking about it? No. Anybody who would just turn his mind off and on like that isn't worth a hill of beans to me.

Now, in these documents we turned over--you remember that they're intra-tendency documents submitted by individuals for discussion within the tendency, never voted upon, never projected as an action line of the tendency and were, in fact, preliminary views by the authors of the documents themselves. That's why in part you'll find this study circle thing. This was an attack and an answer to Wohlforth and had reference to raising the intellectual, the theoretical, caliber of party members. What we were in effect saying, trying to say, was that the level of cadres in the SWP and in our tendency should be as high as possible.

If you expel us, then, it won't be for disrupting the branches on this point, it won't be for raising havoc or trying to disrupt the SWP. Is this a crime to continue to think about these things and to discuss them--or is it a duty?

Secondly, the PC said that new people recruited into the group are considered ready to apply for party membership only after they have first been indoctrinated against the program, convention decisions and organizational principles of the party. This is a lie. I think anybody who operates like that ought to be thrown out of the party right away. How in the hell are you going to recruit people to a party by indoctrinating them against the program, against convention decisions, and against the organizational principles, the Leninist principles, of the party? How do you, well, I mean what do you think I am--some kind of monster?

Listen to Trotsky writing in "In Defense of Marxism:" "If the majority of party members are mistaken, the minority can by and by educate them. If not before the next convention then after it. The minority can attract new members to the party and transform itself into a majority."

Double recruitment? Heaven forbid. You recruit members to the party and then you recruit into the tendency because you think you've got the best point of view within the party, a point of view you're trying to project as the majority view of the party. What is wrong with this? What is disloyal with this? Is that a viewpoint you think the majority of the party should undertake to carry out? Of course you're going to try to convince new members as well as old members, anybody in the party, but only people in the party.

Lastly, group discipline, I quote from the PC motion, is put before party discipline. Then let's get this clear, because this is false. We put forward, I put forward, the

proposition that discipline stems not from the organizational form of a party but from programmatic principles of the Fourth International. Again in Trotsky's words, "The International is not at all a form as flows from the utterly false formulation of the Independent Labor Party. The International was first of all a program and a system of strategic, tactical, and organizational methods that flow from it." Cannon said exactly the same thing. Discipline is a question of program. If you accept a program, then you're bound to it.

Nobody's got a gun at my back. I came into this voluntarily. I'm fighting it voluntarily because I want to stay in. My discipline is based upon the program of the Fourth International. It always has been and by Christ it always will be. No actions are charged against us--disloyal attitude. And yet, sections of the leadership or the whole leadership or I don't know who, wants to expel us, me, from the party.

Now I--you don't need me, but I need the party. I joined this party consciously. I'm 31 now. I've only been in a couple of years, but I knew what I was doing when I joined. I knew why I joined. I knew why I didn't want the CP, and I tell you, as soon as I found out about Trotsky and Trotskyism, in other words Marxism, I joined. And now, now, you're going to expel me or suspend me, I don't know what, this is all kind of new to me. You'll excuse me if I'm a little upset. Why? Because we didn't agree on the need for political revolution in the Soviet Union, China, and other deformed workers states? We don't disagree. Because we attack dialectical materialism? Is this Shachtman all over again or something as some people seem to think? We haven't attacked it. Because we find fault with the concepts of democratic centralism? No. Because we denigrate Marxism, Leninism, Trotskyism? No. Because we disagree with the program of the Fourth International? No. Because we have broken discipline and gone outside the party? No, we haven't. Because we refuse to accept the program and discipline of the Socialist Workers Party? No. Because we do not agree with every aspect of the majority line? That's true. This is our crime!

We've had the audacity to declare and carry out a principled opposition to the leadership faction within the party. Again, I repeat, without the consent of the leadership. If they consent it's OK. Is the chief merit, comrades, of a bolshevik now declared to be obedience to the leadership? Have capitalist pressures become so insidious in the party that the minority is exactly equal to menshevik in the SWP? Is it disloyal to be in a minority? Is it factional to be in a minority? Is it petty-bourgeois to try and formulate the differences as sharply as possible and to argue them out? Is this disruptive? Or is it a Bolshevnik attempt to try to improve and strengthen and sharpen the majority line? The action line of the party? Is this a disloyal act, comrades,

or is it one of the highest and most responsible duties of a Bolshevik, that is, the principled sharpening of the majority line?

The Socialist Workers Party is going to have an anniversary very soon. I think, comrades, there can be no more appropriate time for reviewing party history, recent as well as past, and party principles. I urge you in the strongest possible fashion to lift the suspensions of the minority members, to return this party to its democratic centralist course--and the two go together--democratic centralist course, before it's too late. To demonstrate by your speeches and your votes that the Socialist Workers Party remains true to a Leninist heritage by loyally protecting the right of a disciplined minority tendency. Thank you.

28 December 1963

REPORT ON INTERNAL PARTY SITUATION

(December 1963 Plenum)

By Farrell Dobbs

Comrades:

The suspension from membership of Comrades Robertson, Mage, White, Harper and Ireland involves a major question of vital concern to the party: Shall the party demand unconditional loyalty from all its members; or will a disloyal faction be allowed to conduct internal war against the party, acting under cover of alleged "minority rights?"

Criticisms of the suspensions, which have been advanced by some comrades, have raised an even more basic question concerning the character of the party itself: Shall we remain a Leninist-type party, founded on the concept of basic political homogeneity, guided by the principles of democratic centralism, and operating as a disciplined whole through the principle of majority rule; or shall the party degenerate into a loose all-inclusive formation of autonomous factions? Shall it be derailed from its basic political homogeneity, stripped of its democratic centralist principles, rendered incapable of acting in a disciplined way as a united body with a single fundamental purpose?

Our answers to those questions will be vital to the party's future. The Political Committee has taken its stand in keeping with our understanding of the established principles of the party, and it's now up to the Plenum to make its decision for the guidance of the party membership. For the information of the plenum in reaching its decision, I will undertake to recapitulate the facts in the case and motivate the disciplinary action taken by the Political Committee.

The suspensions hinge on the Robertson-Ireland and Harper documents, which were appended to the Control Commission report of October 24 and with which you're all familiar. We first learned of the existence of these documents on the eve of the last party convention. Wohlforth exposed them in an article he submitted to the discussion bulletin (Vol. 24, No. 27). He said of the Robertson-Mage-White faction: Theirs is a split perspective. They reject party discipline and party building. They seek to sneak people into the party. They function in part as an independent entity carrying on an organizational faction war within the party. They are a faction that includes non-party members and have become so deeply alienated from the party that as a faction they have already split in content—those were the characterizations

of the document by Wohlforth at the time he made reference to them in the bulletin.

As National Secretary, I at that time, on the eve of the convention, requested copies of the documents from Robertson. He refused to make them available and said the proper procedure would be to convene a Control Commission inquiry. I then asked Wohlforth for copies of the documents to which he had referred, and he denied my request saying the documents were what he called "private political material." For the moment I will leave aside the handling of the matter at the convention and focus at this point on the steps taken after the convention.

On August 2, the subject was brought before the Political Committee. A motion was adopted noting that the Wohlforth accusations raised grave questions involving a hostile attitude toward the party, double recruiting and a split perspective. The Control Commission was asked to conduct an investigation of the matter. The Control Commission held a series of hearings in New York. It obtained copies of the documents in question from Robertson, Ireland and Harper. Mage and some others of the faction appeared at the hearings. All of them were given ample opportunity at that time to disavow the documents. Not a single one of them did so.

On October 24 the Control Commission submitted a report of its investigation. Now the comrades are already familiar with the split line in the Robertson-Ireland and Harper documents that were appended to the Commission report—and on the basis of that report the Political Committee took disciplinary action on November 1, suspending the five from membership. I want to read to you the characterization of the disloyal conduct of the faction as set forth in the Political Committee motion:

"Assuming the guise of a 'study circle' the group leadership projects a discussion policy that disregards convention decisions to close discussion on disputed issues and goes ahead factionally on a business-as-usual basis. In external activity they propose to function as 'united blocs' seeking to work as free-lancers in areas where they are unhindered by the presence of comrades loyal to the party. They undertake the recruitment of outside contacts into the group on the basis of the group's program, methods and practices. New people recruited into the group are considered ready to apply for party membership only after they have first been indoctrinated against the program, convention decisions and organizational principles of the party. Group discipline is put before party discipline. Group work within the party is cynically projected as 'the best possible opportunity for building our tendency and not through any mistaken concepts of loyalty to a diseased shell.' Such are the concepts, methods and practices with which the Robertson-Mage-White group is indoctrinated by its central leaders and by the Harper-Ireland propagators of the leadership policy. Those concepts, methods and practices are alien to our party, wholly disloyal and utterly intolerable."

That was the characterization in the Political Committee motion that suspended the five from membership in the party. Since the suspensions, various comrades have raised criticisms of the Political Committee action. The texts of the criticisms as they have been received up to this time are in your folders and you've had an opportunity to familiarize yourself with them. I will not undertake a reply to each specific statement of criticism, I will seek instead to deal with the general categories involved.

A feeling is expressed that the party was not given sufficient information about the case. Insofar as the comrades have felt handicapped concerning full knowledge of all the facts, we must recognize there has been an oversight and steps must be taken to correct it. That can be quickly accomplished. We propose that all the material pertaining to the case be published internally for the information of the party membership. All of the material submitted to the plenum can in fact be ready within a few days after the plenum for distribution to the membership. And that information can be supplemented reasonably soon thereafter by publication of the pertinent details concerning the plenum action on the case. In that way we can quickly have all the facts before the entire party membership.

It is claimed that the suspension procedure violated Article VIII, Section 3 of the party constitution. The assertion is made that charges should have been presented in advance and that the accused should have had a chance to answer the charges at a trial.

Those criticisms reflect a misunderstanding of the constitutional procedures involved in this case, and they reflect a confusing of branch methods of discipline with the exercise of the national powers of the Control Commission. The Control Commission is an extraordinary body constitutionally invested with special powers as provided under Article VI of the constitution. When the Control Commission acts in any case, Article VI supersedes Article VIII, Section 3. Article VI establishes the Control Commission as a permanent national body, elected by the party convention. It is given wide latitude in acting to safeguard the integrity of the party and to enforce its basic principles. The Control Commission has constitutional authority to investigate any individual or circumstance within the party, and it acted entirely within its power in demanding from the Robertson-Mage-White group the documents in question. Moreover, the Control Commission is authorized by the Constitution to delegate any of its authority to representatives in the exercise of that power, a provision intended to meet practical problems as was the case in this situation. Comrade A. Chester of the Control Commission and Comrade Taber, designated as a representative of the Control Commission, conducted the investigation here in New York.

A charge is made that the Control Commission acted as an agent of the Political Committee and that the Political Committee went beyond the Control Commission findings. That charge again simply misconstrues the

constitutional provisions involved. Article VI specifically provides that the Control Commission shall present its findings and recommendations to the Political Committee for action. It further provides that the Political Committee may take immediate action, or it may refer the matter to the National Committee, if it so chooses. The case before us was handled exactly as the constitution provides and there are no grounds whatever for criticism on that score.

A criticism is made that White was not called before the Control Commission. It is also pointed out that White and Mage did not sign the documents in question, and the Political Committee is accused of convicting them through guilt by association.

Those allegations merely fog up the central point of the case. The documents involved constitute a declaration of war on the party. They define the party as a right centrist formation. They speak of irreconcilable internal divisions between "reformists and revolutionaries." They call for planned and united group action within the party. They state the aim to pick and choose their battles, to detect times when it is most advantageous to attack and when it is best to maintain silence. They do this within the framework of a proscription against any "mistaken concepts of loyalty to a diseased shell."

Some critics of the suspension would dismiss these documents as the product of what they call "individual stupidity." The Political Committee holds otherwise. It's a declaration of war on the party. It's a disloyal course that cannot and will not be tolerated. All leaders of the Robertson-Mage-White faction must bear the responsibility for their collective position. It's immaterial whether one or another faction leader signed the documents or not. Let us note in passing, however, that in their replies to the suspensions neither Mage nor White disavowed the documents. They actually reaffirmed them, but they did it of course with their customary double talk. All the leaders of the Robertson-Mage-White faction must face the consequences of everything the faction does. That just happens to be the way political life works out, and people who can't face up to that fact of political life should stay out of leading positions.

It's somewhat different in the case of the ranks of the group. Some of them may have gotten sucked into the attack on the party without realizing what they were doing, what they were getting into. If any of them want to turn around they should be given a chance to do so. But the leaders of the group knew exactly what they were doing and now they must face the consequences.

Critics of the suspensions attack the Political Committee on the grounds that it is exercising alleged thought control. The assertion is made that the charges are based solely on the opinions of the suspended comrades. It is demanded that the Political Committee must produce concrete evidence

of disloyal acts. And some of the critics have likened the Political Committee action to capitalist use of the Smith Act.

Here again, several basic facts are overlooked by the critics. The party is a voluntary organization. People can belong to the party or not, as they may choose. But there's nothing voluntary whatever about the acceptance of governmental authority. It's exercised over everyone, whether they like it or not. And that's why governmental attempts to proscribe views are anti-democratic. People who disagree with the views of the governing party are not simply told they'll have to organize a rival party; they're threatened with jail. The difference is qualitative.

As a voluntary organization, the party has the right to define the basis of its existence. That's traditional to the whole history of organized political action. Now we, obviously, won't allow fascists or terrorists or white supremacists in our ranks. Of course, those political categories are extreme examples which do not apply in the case before us. But those categories do serve to illustrate in an immediately perceptible way the fact that the party does put distinct limits on the right of advocacy within its ranks. In addition to that, the party exercises its right to define all its basic beliefs programmatically in setting down the conditions for membership, and the party has an equal right to define the organizational principles with which all members must comply. Those who don't subscribe to the party's basic beliefs have the democratic right to withdraw from the organization. On our part, we can't allow them to remain in the party and advocate anything they please, especially under the circumstances in which we must operate within the main fortress of imperialism.

We not only can't let disloyal people advocate anything they please within the party, we can't let them do so behind the back of the party, as the Robertson-Mage-White faction has done and is still doing. If the documents in question are only a harmless expression of views and opinions as they hypocritically pretend, why didn't they submit those views and opinions openly for party discussion? Why did we have to pry the documents out of them? The answer is plain for all to see. The documents characterize the party as a right centrist formation and project a split perspective. The leadership of the Robertson-Mage-White faction advocates rejection and violation of the most elementary condition of membership in this organization: loyalty to the party. For them, obligations to the party are subordinated to and superseded by their own factional aims. They're conducting a wrecking operation inside the party, and that's why they tried to keep the documents a secret, because party wreckers are not popular in our ranks.

We face a declaration of war, and it is the duty of the leadership to defend the party against the would-be wreckers. We don't have to await formal proof of specific hostile acts, nor do we have to let concrete evidence pile up, one fact upon another, until the sheer weight of their attack on the

party makes their patent disloyalty obvious even to the most blind. Disloyalty requires corrective measures, right here and now. We recognize the right of the Robertson-Mage-White faction leaders to oppose the Socialist Workers Party. We'll defend their democratic right to form a rival party on their own to combat us. But they won't be allowed to act as wreckers within the SWP.

Our critics argue that disciplinary action against the Robertsonite leaders is an attempt to settle political differences by organizational means. They contend that disciplinary action signifies in practice suppression of the right to organize dissenting groups within the party.

Those charges are false. The party convention settled the political issues in dispute by a decisive majority. All minority viewpoints within the party had a full opportunity to be heard. There was no restriction of legitimate minority rights. In fact, the situation was just the opposite. The leadership bent over as far as it possibly could to assure full freedom of expression and just a little bit better than 100 per cent of what were the legitimate rights of the minorities. When we came to the convention and the vote was taken, it was proven that the minorities had simply lost the political argument within the party.

The actions of the convention represented, comrades, a compelling expression of the will of the party membership in its overwhelming majority. The political line was clearly defined by the convention and the comrades now want to get on with responsible, disciplined, loyal party building work. That requires party unity on the basis of democratic centralism. That means subordination of the minority to the majority; that means the unconditional right of the majority to decide and the unconditional duty of every party member to accept the decision and help carry it out. That's what democratic centralism means.

No one, comrades, is asked to surrender dissident political views. There is no impairment whatever of the normal rights of a minority. There is no prohibition of the right to organize dissenting groups, of the right to organize factions within the party. But a minority must loyally submit to majority decisions and wait for a new opportunity to advance its dissident views when internal party discussion is again in order. Meantime, comrades holding minority views should pitch in and help build the party.

So far as the party leadership is concerned, the efforts of all loyal comrades are valued, without a single exception. Political differences do not in any way disqualify any comrade from having a full opportunity to serve the party. The demand for loyalty is not to individual leaders, and there isn't a scintilla of truth in any contention to the contrary. The demand is for loyalty to the party program and to the organizational principles of the party. That demand in no way disqualifies loyal party builders who may hold dissident views on one or another point. But in the case before us we are dealing

with a disloyal group of faction leaders who are out to wreck the party, and that's a horse of a different color.

Some of our critics contend that we can't do anything about these wreckers because they have minority rights. We're told that a faction has an unqualified right to its own internal life and we are instructed that official party bodies have no right to pry into the written or oral work of a minority.

It is necessary to remind comrades who hold that view that this party is not a loose federation of autonomous factions. The party's thoroughly established principles reject the spurious concept of so-called "all-inclusiveness." That concept would paralyze the party internally and render it impotent in its external work. Historically we have striven for homogeneity in our organization on the basis of the party's principles. Our programmatic aim is a struggle for power to transform society. All our activities, our methods, the internal party regime are designed to serve that aim. And our great historic task requires complete discipline and centralized direction within the party. The party must assert its right to control its public activity and to regulate its internal life. The party cannot sanctify an atmosphere of uninterrupted conflict internally. No minority can be allowed to run wild inside the party. The part must be subordinated to the whole, the minority to the majority, in any democratic and disciplined organization. A disciplined party must regulate the conduct of organized groups in its ranks; as well as the conduct of every individual member. Its official bodies must determine what is correct procedure, based on the party's principles and statutes.

The 1953 Resolution on Party Organization, which you find in your folders, sets forth the party's organizational principles. I should note in passing that some parts of the resolution deal with a given political conjuncture. For example, the references in the 1940 section to the proletarianization campaign. But these specific conjunctural features are secondary to the basic line of the documents, and our principles are very clearly delineated in those documents. There is other fundamental material on the party's organizational principles available in other documents. One of these is "The Struggle for a Proletarian Party," by Comrade Cannon, which served as a guide to our cadres in the 1939-40 internal struggle. We propose that a commission be established to codify all of this material in a single document for the purpose of educating and re-educating the cadres of the party in democratic centralism, to inspire party patriotism as part of revolutionary consciousness, and to show the vital interrelation of principled politics and organizational principles. Those needs are more urgent than ever in the current political situation with which Comrade Halstead dealt yesterday in his report which I won't attempt to repeat here.

We are told by the critics of the suspensions that the leadership should present an assessment of the history and development of the Robertson-Mage-White faction. In reply I would point out that their articulateness in the long

internal discussion has made their political history reasonably well known to the party generally. Not so fully understood, however, except in the branches where they exist, is their long record of disloyalty to the party. Well, let's take a look at the record.

In the fall of 1962, Wohlforth and Philips announced what they called a "re-organization" of the minority as it had previously existed during their cohabitation as a group with Robertson-Mage-White. Wohlforth and Philips issued a declaration of loyalty to the party, you remember it was published in the bulletin prior to the convention. Robertson, Mage and White kept mum. The party wondered who is loyal, who is disloyal, why the split? Next came the Robertsonite provocation of the New York "study group," which was a concrete act. They set up this little factional tea party for minority supporters and what they called "sympathizers," and they organized it behind the back of the party branch. When the Political Committee called them to order, Robertson, Mage and White issued a joint declaration to the National Committee, you'll recall, in which they denounced the Political Committee as "bureaucratic." They said they would abide by "normal" discipline; they said they would not as a faction surrender the "necessary and essential" functions of the group. They left the meaning of "normal, necessary and essential" to their own definition in the name of their so-called rights as an "organized group."

Next came the Wohlforth accusations on the eve of the convention. He revealed the existence of the documents in question and described them. This threw considerable light on the cause of the minority split in the fall of 1962. Those who opposed the line of the Robertson-Ireland and Harper documents went with Wohlforth and Philips in the minority split. Those who agreed with, accepted, supported the line of the documents stayed with the Robertson-Mage-White faction. And I should say, by the way, that once that split took place a vote was no longer necessary on the documents. Those opposed voted with their feet, and that's why it's a fraud for the Robertson-Mage-White faction leadership to advance the claim that the documents aren't official because they allegedly weren't voted on.

At the time of the Wohlforth article in the bulletin exposing the Robertson-Ireland and Harper documents, Robertson, Mage and White rushed to the bulletin in a jointly signed article in which they called Wohlforth a liar. But in that article they made no affirmation of loyalty to the party. Instead they submitted as an appendix to their article in the bulletin a copy of a letter that Robertson had written to White a bit earlier. In that letter Robertson called the Robertson-Ireland document a reflex of the need for struggle when "Trotskyists and centrists" co-exist in one party.

At the convention the facts then known were reported to the Nominating Commission. Among some critics of the suspensions it is now contended that the Nominating Commission transformed itself into a virtual control

commission and exacted punishment against minorities without any hearing or trial on the charges. Nothing could be further from the actual facts of the situation. The Nominating Commission simply excluded the Robertson-Mage-White and Wohlforth-Philips groups from the slate it brought into the convention as its recommendations for the incoming National Committee. The Nominating Commission explained to the convention why representation was not included for those groups. It said their loyalty to the party was in question and took the view that loyalty must be a prerequisite to the usual practice of giving minorities representation on the party National Committee.

Robertson was nominated from the convention floor. A secret ballot vote was taken and Robertson got 7 votes out of a total of 61 delegates voting. Wohlforth was not nominated. Neither group got representation on the National Committee in the democratically conducted convention elections which took place by secret ballot. Now this clearly meant that the convention agreed their loyalty was in question, and remind yourselves, comrades, that the convention just happens to be the highest body in this party. When it is in session, the convention has absolute power, up to and including changing any part of the constitution and basic programmatic and organizational positions of the party that it chooses, and that was its opinion.

A parenthetic question arises: Where does the Wohlforth-Philips group stand today? In the split with Robertson, Mage and White, they declared their loyalty to the party. But they waited several months, right up to the eve of the convention, before informing the party of the Robertson-Mage-White split perspective. Wohlforth refused my request for copies of the Robertson-Ireland and Harper documents. And now the Wohlforth-Philips group has denounced the Political Committee for its action in suspending the leaders of the Robertson-Mage-White faction because of their disloyalty to the party. Clearly, the Wohlforth-Philips group still has some things to explain to the party.

To get back to the case of the suspended Robertson-Mage-White faction leaders, those who appeared before the Control Commission refused to disavow the documents in question. They failed to give any assurance of their loyalty to the party. Since then you've seen their written protests and you've heard Robertson and Ireland here before the plenum today. They remain dishonest to the party from beginning to end. They deny double recruitment "of the type" claimed. They say they will not flout "legitimate" discipline. In each instance they'll fill in the definition according to what serves their factional aims, not in accordance with the basic organizational principles and the fundamental good and welfare of the party. They accuse the Political Committee of taking factional reprisals against them. What was Ireland's usage today—"the leadership faction?" Everything in the party is reduced down to a game of factions in their view. Robertson says, "You guys." There's a lot of meaning comes through in these small usages of one or another kind, particularly before the plenum of the National Committee.

They predict the bureaucratic degeneration of the party, inventing nothing new, but just repeating what Robertson, Mage and the others learned from their study of Shachtman's past attacks on the organizational principles and the program of the Socialist Workers Party. They predict the descent of the party into Stalinism, the usual claim of a disloyal faction that is conducting a split attack on the party. They ridicule the idea of party patriotism. They sneer at the concept of party loyalty as a "religion." And to this day, they are carrying on as usual in their war against the party, showing letters and documents around on the sly, peddling scandal and petty gossip, fishing for new suckers in the party.

I have here a note from Comrade Dave, the Chicago organizer, who writes: "Tonight it was brought to my attention that the enclosed documents and testimonials were sent to Chicago c/o SWP, 302 S. Canal. I am returning them to you together with the covering letter which accompanied them." Now the accompanying letter is signed by Al Spanfelner of the Robertson-Mage-White faction. It says in part, "Enclosed for your information are copies of motions, letters and statements representing a number of comrades calling for the lifting of the suspensions. I urge you to give this material your closest attention, and request that, if you are so moved, you add your voice to those of the comrades who have so protested. Would you kindly forward me a copy of any material you may submit to the National Office." Attached to Spanfelner's letter is Wohlforth's statement in protest of the suspensions, Wendell Phillips' letter in protest of the suspensions, the motion adopted in New Haven in protest of the suspensions, the statement by Arne Swabeck in protest of the suspensions and the motion submitted by Myra to the Political Committee on the night that the suspensions were voted.

How this material came into the hands of the Robertsonites, we don't know, but their aim in using it is obvious on the face of it. They haven't changed their methods one iota. If they were in any way, shape or form serious about wanting to be loyal, disciplined members of this party, at this time of all times, particularly under circumstances where they were given an opportunity to address the plenum, wouldn't they be meticulously careful not to be violating party procedures? Instead they practice factionalism as usual, fishing for new suckers. And the practice doesn't end up nationally; it goes abroad.

We have here a copy of a letter that Healy wrote to Germain under date of November 8. He says, "We have just learned of the following developments within the SWP. Five members of the Robertson group, including Robertson, have been suspended from membership of the SWP by the Political Committee upon the recommendation of a report made by a Control Commission investigation. This report consists of quotations from documents written by members of the Robertson group over a year ago." Now listen to this next part: "It is the first time in the entire history of our movement that I have ever heard of people being suspended for having written things in an internal bulletin."

Whether the Robertson-Mage-White faction leaders gave erroneous information to Healy, or if Healy added his own interpretation, or whether it's a mutual effort in which they both put their considerable talents in this direction at work, we don't know. But it's a blatant falsehood. We're accused of taking action for an article allegedly written in the internal bulletin, when it actually took a Control Commission proceeding to pry this article out of these disloyal faction leaders. The false charge is made in order to try to deceive people abroad— and if there are some branches within the party that haven't caught the full score because they didn't have to live with this faction within the branch, how much more difficult must it be for groups elsewhere in the world to understand the true situation.

Now the December 10 joint statement of those suspended, which they have submitted to the plenum, adds up simply to a renewed declaration of war on the party. They would have the comrades believe that their war is against the party leadership, not the party itself. But as their documents show, that's not true. Their fight is against the program of the party which they term "right centrist." Their fight is against the party's organizational principles which they call "bureaucratic." They're at war with the party leadership simply because the leadership is determined to enforce the program and the principles of the party. In short, they don't consider the SWP their party; they consider it a right centrist hunting ground for factional raiders. You'll find the basic intent of the Robertson-Mage-White line echoed in recent issues of the "Newsletter" in which Healy purports to read the whole SWP out of the Trotskyist movement.

Must we stand like sheep while all this is going on? Must we tolerate their factional raiding tactics until the splitters themselves decide the most propitious time to make their split? Is that what we're reduced to? What a commentary that would be on the party leadership and on the party itself. But that's not the case.

This party knows how to recognize disloyalty on the part of people who are conducting a wrecking operation, and it knows how to deal with them. It's the duty of this plenum to deal firmly and in no uncertain terms with these factional raiders. We consider it the duty of the plenum to expel them for their disloyalty. We consider that firm disciplinary action is imperative to preserve the program, organizational principles and integrity of the party. We consider that decisive action by this plenum is vital to the good and welfare of the loyal, young reinforcements who are beginning to pour their energy and devotion into our movement and who represent the future of our movement.

In closing I want to present a motion to the Plenum on behalf of the Presiding Committee. The motion reads as follows: "The Plenum of the National Committee concurs with the characterization of the leaders of the Robertson-Mage-White group as set forth in the Political Committee's motion of November 1, 1963, and approves the Political Committee action in

suspending five of the group's leaders from membership in the party. Because of their disloyal conduct, the plenum hereby expels from the party Comrades Robertson, Mage, White, Harper and Ireland. All material pertinent to the case shall be published forthwith in the internal bulletin for the information of the party membership. The plenum hereby creates a special commission to prepare a draft codifying in a single document a full reaffirmation of the party's organizational principles as they have been set down in various official party documents at earlier times. The commission shall be composed of Comrades Cannon, Dobbs and Warde. Upon its completion, the draft shall be submitted for consideration at a forthcoming plenum of the National Committee."

28 December 1963

MINORITY REPORT ON INTERNAL PARTY SITUATION

(December 1963 Plenum)

By Myra Tanner Weiss

Our session last night comrades, gave me little room to be optimistic about today's proceedings. The fact that we could nominate a slate for President and Vice President and my name would not even be raised for consideration, after over a decade of training and campaigning to the best of my ability, as the second leading spokesman of the party, was a personal hurt. But more than that, you will have a problem which may not be too great, but it will exist, of explaining it to the members of the Socialist Workers Party who respected the work I have done, and you will have a problem explaining it to the many friends of the Trotskyist movement with whom I have dealt in the course of three national campaigns. This fact struck me particularly hard last night when a dear friend of mine called and said, "Do I have congratulations to offer again?" And I said nothing, because I didn't know what to say. Should I say I am too old, that I am being demoted and tapped out of a major area of my activity because I am aged, after 46 years of life, or should I say that I have an organizational difference with Comrade Dobbs, and for this reason I am being punished?

No one has given me an explanation but we better find one that can be given without giving the impression that our organization is machine-ridden, unfair and bureaucratic. But, as I have said, that was just a personal hurt. The issues I am going to discuss with you today are far more important, they mean to me the very essence of Trotskyism — which was born in the struggle against Stalinist monolithism — which was the conscience of the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, as Daniels calls it in his book on the Conscience of the Revolution. Trotskyism, which defied the notion perpetuated by the bourgeoisie and validated by Stalinism, that power meant bureaucracy, that power in all circumstances means abuse and that socialism and freedom are an anomaly. Trotskyism alone has defied that notion and by its living example has sought to refute the slanders of the bourgeoisie against Marxism and demonstrate that our socialist future will be a free one and not a vile, bureaucratic, tyrannical thing that Stalinism has made it appear to be. And because I regard this as the issue, I hope that no matter what you feel for me as an individual, you will listen carefully to what is to me the most important speech I have ever made in the Trotskyist movement.

Now a number of comrades have suggested that I have been doing some new thinking on the organization question. This sinister sounding phenomenon is false. I regret to say I have been working too hard and too many hours to do any new thinking. All I have been able to do is keep alive the thoughts

that made a Trotskyist of me in 1935 and have kept me going at top speed ever since as a revolutionist in this country. Now I think there has been some new thinking going on. Precedent after precedent has been set in this conflict. Innovation after innovation, until I scarcely recognize our party as what it was as I knew it all my political life. I am going to say nothing in my contribution to this discussion that I have not said over and over again hundreds and even thousands of times as your three-time candidate for vice-president and as a spokesman for the party in Los Angeles for 19 years. If I was wrong then in my perceptions of the Bolshevik movement, you should have corrected me for I thought I was speaking for you as well as myself.

I said on many a public platform and on television and radio that the Socialist Workers Party was the most democratic organization in the United States and perhaps, because we were revolutionary and in addition lived here in the country of imperialist reaction under conditions where we were able to operate as a legal party, we were perhaps the most democratic organization in history. Now, organization by definition is a contradiction to democracy. Organization means the subordination of a minority to a majority and thereby a limitation of the freedom of a minority inevitably. Full freedom for the individual will be won only with our socialist victory. But for the present, understanding the contradiction in organization, with full consciousness as Marxists, of this contradiction, we made a conscious effort to overcome the difficulty with an absolute guarantee that minority rights will be protected, including—and no other organization can boast this—the right to organize to oppose an existing leadership, the right to form a faction, inherent in the very nature of the bolshevik conception of democratic centralism.

Only a year ago in the 1962 election, the N. Y. State election campaign, I debated the Presidential candidate of the Socialist Labor Party before a thousand students here in N. Y. C. And I won their warm approval when I pointed out this essential difference between a truly democratic movement and one that has the form of democracy but not its essence. Now, I have built this movement, and so have you, with the help of this concept of socialist theory. A man or woman can advocate whatever he pleases within our organization, whatever he pleases, as long as he abides by the discipline of the organization. We recruited people on this notion. We put it to them, "You're not in full agreement with our program yet, you have some reservations on materialism, you have some reservations on the nature of the Russian state. Do not let that be an obstacle. If you agree with us in our struggle to educate the American working class to the class concepts of Marxism and socialism, join our ranks and fight with us. You will have all the room in the world to assimilate our other programmatic concepts or to teach us yours if we are wrong."

Was I deceiving these people when I told them this? We built the youth movement in the first place, for the first time that the Trotskyists have had a youth movement since 1940, with this notion. Wohlforth had

reservations on the nature of the Soviet State. That didn't bar him from membership. You didn't exclude him on that account. Shange Mage had reservations about our position on Yugoslavia. You didn't bar him from membership on that basis, on the contrary, you welcomed him with open arms—youth at long last, who, together with the younger elements in the SWP, will be able to build up a youth movement. And they began that process. And how did we thank them for the work they did in a low period in our own history? With the expulsion for their political views.

Comrades is this our honesty, is this our conception of democracy? Democratic centralism, comrades, is not an obscure, esoteric theory. It is not difficult to understand. On the one hand it is not something that can cloak anarchy, the negation of organization, or something that can cloak all-inclusiveness; that is, like the social democratic movement where you are not only allowed to have your opinion, your dissident opinion, in the organization, but you can take it to the public and publish a paper on the basis of that dissident opinion; and that is what we have always meant when we spoke against all-inclusiveness. Nor is it an organizational form that can give us monolithism, or as you more carefully put it, homogeneity. It is simply this: the requirement that everyone acts as one in the public eye, that's all; that the minority abide by the discipline of the majority.

We must organize to enhance our strength, but we do not want to oppress anyone in our movement, or make that enhanced strength a burden to anyone. So we say, "Have your opinions, even if you must fight for your opinions within our organization, but join together with us when we campaign against the class enemy, when we battle the racists, when we struggle to get on the ballot, when we engage in all of our many activities. And you will be welcome to the full freedom that is offered within our movement." Our uniqueness as a political phenomena is not our centralism. Centralism is something you can find all over the country, from the top of the ruling corporations, down to the lowest trade-union, bureaucratically-run organization. Our uniqueness as a political phenomenon is our democracy. These are my thoughts and as I know our history, that history bears out this conception of our movement: That our struggle is not over. We are in the process of making history. We are adding to the history that has been made, or we are going to destroy that history and begin a new pattern of internal relations and organizational conceptions.

Now, I want to begin with the Control Commission. I don't see it as Comrade Dobbs put it, and this is something all of you can explain to me if his conception is correct. My conception, and I believe the history of our movement bears it out, is quite different. What is it? Why do we have it? You won't find the answers to these questions in the constitution which merely sets procedures and authorizes power. But you will understand the reasons for this body in our literature and in the history of our movement. In a truly democratic organization, where important differences are resolved through struggle, passions become inflamed and objectivity obscured. Primarily to

protect the democratic right of minorities, as well as the public safety of the party, a Control Commission is established. It is composed, not of leading political figures, as a matter of fact, the constitution permits only one member of the National Committee to function on the Control Commission. It is not composed of political leaders, not those involved in factional disputes in a central fashion, but comrades who stand out as being fair, capable of being objective in the heated atmosphere of factional alignment. Their function is not political, but simply that of ascertaining facts. We want to know what is, not what opinions one has.

This Control Commission, however, has violated this conception of the Control Commission, and I believe it is the first one that has done so. At the instigation of the ruling faction in this dispute, the Control Commission permitted itself to pry into the private thoughts, the preliminary working papers of a minority tendency. And—innovation number two—presumed to evaluate those opinions. There was apparently no attempt on the part of the Control Commission to find out if these thoughts had ever been carried into action, or even were the final thoughts of the individuals involved, let alone a tendency decision. But aside from that, in a manner far from impartial, the Control Commission submitted to the Political Committee two of these preliminary documents, preliminary to the factional conclusions of the Robertson-Mage group; and in a totally unfair phrase referred to these documents as "previously withheld from the party."

Now, of course, that is a lie, just a plain lie. You are not required, any member of the party, to submit your working papers, your preliminary drafts, your preliminary thoughts to the party. You have a right to privacy in these matters. If not submitting these documents to the party constitutes withholding them from the party, then the majority is equally guilty. Do you think the majority faction documents and draft resolutions and correspondence, its preliminary proposals, and thoughts, are submitted to the party? They are not. They never have been. And nobody ever thought of suggesting that they ought to be. Although it might be, on occasion, interesting to learn the evolution of an opinion. However, comrade Dobbs, as he reported to you, on July 5, wrote to comrade Robertson saying that "I hereby formally request that you immediately provide me with copies of both these items"—which Farrell has explained to you. Now Robertson who in my opinion regarded too lightly the inherent right to keep personal possession of his preliminary papers, answered comrade Dobbs and submitted, if I am not mistaken, the document which he wrote.

As for the other documents, he referred comrade Dobbs to their authors, pointing out—I don't know if he pointed it out or not, but I do—that he didn't want to be compelled to be a stool pigeon. I don't know if comrade Dobbs pursued the matter further, or with what result. But I do know that the Control Commission, which constitutionally can demand to see anything it pleases, unless it stole the documents, and I don't think they did, asked for them and got them. So again, how are they being withheld from

the party? The Control Commission has failed, in my opinion, to live up to the high standard of fairness and objectivity it has tried to set in the past. However, I do not feel harshly toward them, for they acted at the instigation of the Political Committee which must bear the prime responsibility for these organizational innovations. And so I come to the Political Committee and the majority motion which you have here.

I was going to say a word about the composition of the Political Committee, the fact that it is for the first time, under similar circumstances, a monolithic body, as far as political resolutions are concerned. Ordinarily, when we emerge from a convention, we have such a condition only after a split. But at this last convention, we had a number of minorities. Every single one of our resolutions was contested. Yet we emerged without minority representation for any of the groups. I don't know if the Robertson group required, or if we were required to give the Robertson group minority representation--7 out of 61 delegates--I've forgotten what the proportionality was. But I do know that I wasn't told at the convention, and I have been told and you have, by comrade Dobbs, that the reason they weren't given representation was because they were disloyal. Comrade Kerry said so on the floor of the Convention on the last day in the last hour of the convention. But that's not a trial. That, comrades, was comrade Kerry's opinion, to which he has a perfect right. But in my opinion, comrade Kerry does not have the right, and neither does anyone else, on the floor of a convention to charge others with disloyalty.

We have proper procedures for such vile accusations and we know them well. These comrades, or any comrades, deserve the right to answer such charges, outside of the heated atmosphere of a political struggle. Yet apparently they were tried, by the nominating commission, and in comrade Kerry's own mind, and they were punished. Denied representation on the PC. All right, this is another innovation in party procedure. And now, comrade Dobbs comes before us today and submits as other evidence of their disloyalty, the fact that they were left off by the nominating commission and that the convention hereby decided that they were under suspicion of being disloyal. This is really compounding crimes of injustice.

In the PC of November 1st, I asked that we postpone consideration of the Control Commission report before we acted on it, until the comrades charged with disloyalty were present. I also asked that we postpone action until a member of the Control Commission was invited to be present to answer any factual questions we might have to ask. And there were factual matters in dispute in the PC discussion. The majority voted my opinion down and proceeded to suspend the 5 comrades of the minority, and in so doing the PC violated the constitution. Not only the tradition of our movement, not only the tradition of our revolutionary movement, but the letter of its law, the minimal guarantees that we try to provide in our constitution. Comrade Dobbs explained that Article VIII, Section 3, is superseded by the section on the Control Commission. It doesn't say so. It doesn't say in the constitution that this overrides another article of the

constitution. In his opinion, it superseded a part of the constitution. That's his opinion, it's not mine. Now that Article VIII, Section 3, is designed, minimally, it is true, minimally, to guarantee that anyone who is charged with disloyalty or any other crime in our movement would get a fair hearing. And that is to be superseded by the fact that that doesn't cut out a Control Commission designed to objectively verify facts? Not on your life, comrades.

Section 3 says charges against any member shall be made in writing and the accused member shall be furnished with a copy in advance of a trial. The trial— am I out of my mind? Doesn't a trial mean the presence of the accused? Doesn't it mean a defendant? Doesn't it mean the presence of those who are charged for punishment so they can see who is accusing them and what they're being accused of? And permit evidence to refute it? Comrades, that constitution is not superseded unless you are blinded by factional motivations. And if you are so blinded that you can destroy the constitution of the SWP, who will punish you? You have power. No rank and file group opposing you, no individual like myself opposing you, has power. You have power. Only you can save the constitution, I cannot do it and I beg you to think before you take such a drastic action.

We don't even have as much protection of the right of a comrade, as comrade Robertson pointed out, as is guaranteed by bourgeois law. The right to attend one's own trial before judgment is passed was not a right given us by a magnanimous ruling class, but a right, as all democratic liberties in bourgeois democracy, that was fought for by the oppressed through centuries of struggle. It was purchased at the great price of much blood of those who lacked all power except their poverty. I believe the battles they fought are our heritage and socialism does not destroy these freedoms, it guarantees them to all and extends those freedoms to the essential democracy of industrial socialism. If the constitution, as I have said, minimal as it is, cannot protect the members of the SWP, who will protect them?

Now, on the resolution passed by the PC, and here I'm going to have to skip a few points that I wanted to make, for lack of time. I wanted to read to you for example from the Struggle for a Proletarian Party, from other sections of the same resolution on which the PC is basing its suspension. For example, this paragraph: "Only a self-acting and critical-minded membership is capable of forging and consolidating such a party and of solving its problems by collective thought, discussion and experience. From this follows the need of assuring the widest party democracy in the ranks of the organization." And many others. But most important, let me show you the action we took at the time of the split in 1940, to try to prevent that split.

The Shactmanites announced before the whole convention that they intended to publish a document, a paper counterposed to that of the majority and take it to the public. We didn't expel them for that. We did say that any who proceeded to carry out this threat would be immediately expelled

from the party. And we said, on the other hand, to show you that we do not want to divide with you, we will guarantee that while the discussion stops in all branches, following the convention, all the important articles and theoretical documents will be published in our press as a symposium under the joint editorship of both sides. We said that if either side or both desired, there would be a continuation of the discussion in written form. And finally, we said, and here I quote, "No measures are to be taken against any party member because of the views expressed in the party discussion. Nobody is obliged to renounce his opinions, there is no prohibition of factions, the minority is to be given representation in the leading party committee and assured full opportunity to participate in all phases of party work."

We were generous, we were democratic. They were offered a great deal, but that generosity is not apparent in our procedures with this present tiny opposition. Now, the resolution of the majority, after quoting this document on which it's trying to base its action, begins by saying: "As indicated in the Control Commission's report of October 24, 1963, the foregoing provisions of the 1938 resolution are violated by the leadership practices of the Robertson-Mage-White group." Practices, group? Neither one is ever mentioned in the Control Commission report. All the Control Commission did was to obtain two documents that were the preliminary working papers of individuals in a pre-convention, inner-caucus discussion. Practices? Not a word. Thoughts? So what is meant in the majority resolution when it says: "... As indicated in the Control Commission's report ... ?" Do you think we aren't looking? But we are looking. Maybe not the majority members of the PC, but the rank and file will be looking. Those whom we hope to win to socialism will be looking. And will they see it there? They cannot, because it is not there.

Then, as if to demonstrate their own shaky feeling, those who composed the majority resolution, in the PC, concluded: "... because of their violations of party loyalty..." We've always spoken of violations of party discipline, and now we have to determine loyalty and that's an idea. Don't you know what an idea is? You can't touch it. Turn and twist as you like, you will not be able to measure it, because it is a thought, a feeling, an emotion. Do I have to tell you that, comrades? And yet the majority of the PC voted to suspend comrades because of their violation of loyalty. Shame! Shame on you! And Dobbs can get away with it here? Maybe, and he did get away with it in the PC. But will you get away with it before the eyes of the radical public? I say you will not and you will have destroyed a great tradition fought for by Trotsky and all of us at one time, at least.

Did the suspended comrades really organize a study circle? I don't know, nowhere does it say that they did. In the pre-convention discussion I heard it charged on the floor of the New York Local. And these comrades replied that they were having a faction meeting, which is their right. I have heard talk about dual recruiting. Who has been dual recruited? When? In which branch? What's his name? These are facts, I don't get them from the

Control Commission report. And I don't get them from the majority resolution. All I get is statements. As if that constituted a fact. But it hasn't and doesn't. I know that the majority invited non-party members in on its political and organizational disputes, as long as they belonged to the youth. Were these the people who were dual recruited? Then they were dual recruited at the invitation of the majority. Comrades, you say that they have violated party discipline—they value group discipline over party discipline. Where? When? On what points?

Dobbs gets up and says they want to split the party, that they believe in all of this—violation of discipline, they don't want to remain in an empty shell. These comrades get up and say "We do want to remain in the party. We regard the SWP as being the basic revolutionary cadre in this country." They say "We will abide by discipline." How many times do they have to swear a loyalty oath in order to convince you? But we don't need to be convinced. We don't know if it is Dobbs who is lying or it is they who are lying. I don't know. We can know only by what they do. So stop talking about what they think. And have the patience and the democratic decency to see what they do.

Now, I know, or I suspect, that this isn't really what's bothering the majority comrades on the committee. They think they are dealing with a Healy tendency. But they didn't charge that. And if they did, we would have a different discussion. An interesting discussion in my opinion. Not whether a group has the right to organize factions in the SWP, which I have always assumed it did, but whether or not a group has a right to organize an international faction. Now I think this is a horse of another color. And I am not so sure where I would stand on such a question. But that hasn't been discussed. And if that's in the back of your minds, you should discuss it. Let me point out comrades, that they are not in an international caucus with Healy. This is not so. If that is really what is motivating you I can prove that it's not so. And I will take just a few minutes to prove it.

You wondered about this loyalty oath that was brought in by Wohlforth over a year ago. You've got to appraise it. Why wouldn't Robertson or Mage sign it? Because they want to split with the party? Because they're disloyal? Wohlforth is right? But that's not so. That resolution presented to us by Wohlforth was written by comrade Healy. You didn't know that perhaps, but it was—you bide your time comrades, I'm not on the witness stand—I didn't know until very recently, but I know now. It was written by comrade Healy. But it wasn't given to us as comrade Healy wrote it. There were certain deletions and it was those sections that were deleted from Healy's draft against which Mage and Robertson voted, thereby being expelled from the attempt to organize an international faction.

One of the deleted sentences read: "All discussion and disagreement within the tendency is part of the discussion within the international tendency. Patience will have to be exercised so that while time is allowed for such

differences to be adequately discussed internationally, the political aims and functioning of the tendency remain unimpaired. For this purpose, there will be facilities available for all members of the tendency to express their opinions in a special international tendency bulletin to be published by the SLL. This bulletin will have a limited circulation amongst the leaders of the international groups who will be invited to comment and participate in the discussion inside the tendency. All written discussion must be carried out within this bulletin. "

So Robertson and Mage said this was bureaucratic. It was bureaucratic on two counts: 1. that the document as a whole had been presented to them with a pistol at the head—vote for it or else—they had not participated in its preparation; and 2. the development of a tendency would be completely smothered under Healy's procedural tyranny and bureaucracy. Mage said: "I disagree with the proposal for centralized discussion among members of a tendency in the U. S. through a bulletin published in England. This proposal could only tend to obstruct the healthy political and organizational development of the tendency. Moreover, as far as I can see, it would be a direct violation of party discipline and certainly would be a disloyal act toward the party." And this is the man you're going to expel. While you grab Wohlforth around the shoulders, buddy-buddy. What a great guy he is. And you're going to expel those who couldn't stomach, in their first encounter with Healy, his bureaucratic, sectarian methods of organization.

Now, I only learned about this very recently. But I knew it long ago. I knew it when Wohlforth first presented his document to the PC. Not being a hostile, hateful, suspicious type, I went to comrade Mage and I said: "Look, we just got word of your split. Will you tell me what it's all about?" I had no intention of taking Wohlforth's word for this deed, this fact, as did the majority of the PC. And Mage discussed his verbal disagreements with Healy. He didn't tell me the whole story and I didn't ask to hear it, but I was thoroughly convinced that any collaboration between Healy and Mage and Robertson was out of the question.

Now I am for reunification. I have played as important a part in favor of reunification as any member in this leadership. Healy honors me by making me enemy No. 1 and Swabeck enemy No. 2. The hardened Pabloites in Healy's opinion, in the SWP, those without hope for redemption, are Weiss, Swabeck, Joe Hansen, and William F. Warde. We are all hardened Pabloites. I presume he still has hope for Comrade Dobbs. And that, I think, is wrong. Because I think Dobbs is just as much for reunification as any of the rest of us.

But from the beginning I raised the question: What is going to happen with the British? Healy is a sectarian, he is going to split. Now, if he insists on it, there's nothing that can be done about it. At least for awhile. But if he makes that split, to the extent the movement can do so I think it would do well to leave a way so that Healy and the British comrades later on

can find their way back within the reunification. That was my point of view, and I thought everyone agreed with it. I talked to Hansen about it, and I talked to others about it. Hansen's subsequent conduct in the course of the reunification effort convinced me that he was working along that line, and I was glad.

But what you are doing here, comrade Dobbs, is not helping to reunify the splintered and isolated and fragmented and quarreling-interminably Trotskyist cadres throughout the world. You are trying to sharpen the split, and deepen the hostility. And I declare that that is out of keeping with our objectives in unifying the Trotskyist forces. I believe you are conducting a wrecking campaign on the SWP, not only on our reunification efforts, because you are running counter—with these bureaucratic and unprecedented procedures—not only toward this minority tendency, but to every minority tendency in the party; and not only to all the other minority tendencies in the party, but to many of us who belong to no tendency; but who happen to be not too tired to continue the battle for the kind of socialist freedom that has always been our objective. You are going to split us, and split us again, and split us again? When will you learn to get along with people who have differences? You're always going to have them. If you do not, you will have an empty shell of an organization. A hollow mockery of a revolutionary party. When are you going to learn to get along despite differences, to tolerate them, to make it possible for some people to function?

Now comrade Dobbs says we are going to have a party based on discipline. I say, yes, I have never objected to that. I believe that if somebody takes their disputes outside our organization they should be expelled for doing so, and I have voted for such expulsions. I believe that if we tell a minority tendency we will not have any further discussion on this question, and they defy us and try to break up party meetings, they must be disciplined, and I will vote with you to do so. But you haven't even accused these people, except in the abstract, of defying any party mandate. At which branch meeting? On which occasion?

Now, differences that are settled at conventions, arise in new forms. You cannot help that. But in the normal democratic process of discussion, these can be met, the discussion limited to the one interesting hour of the otherwise dull branch meeting, and the other hour can be devoted to planning our campaigns. But our rank and file have never been limited to those who'll go out and sell subscriptions and raise money for the party. That was the CP's concept of the rank and file. Our members think politically, speak politically, and will every day of the week. And when they cease to do that, you do not have a revolutionary party any longer.

In conclusion, comrades, let me say that if your sense of justice is somewhat warped, if you are weary, if you are too tired—resolve the problem in your own mind, by the constitution, at least. It wasn't necessary in the past because it was presumed that the leadership, even more zealously

than the members, even more zealously than a minority, would guard the rights of any individual or any minority in our party. But if you do not, you still must confront the fact of a constitution which at least guarantees a trial, and a hearing. So do not make innovation number 32. Do not make innovation number 32 a destruction of the constitution of the SWP.

28 December 1963

New York City
January 2, 1964

Tim Wohlforth
New York:

Dear comrade Wohlforth,

Upon due consideration in the light of our recent expulsions, I have been led inescapably to the conclusion that it continues to be in the political interest of our tendency for your group to remain in the SWP. Therefore it is our responsibility to assist your grouping in maintaining itself within the party despite the role which you played in making possible our own expulsions.

Consequently, I want to communicate to you two pieces of information which you may find useful to know in protecting your membership in the SWP. Comrade Myra Weiss has told us that at the recent party plenum she felt it necessary to defend our tendency against the charge of being 'Healyite agents.' As you will recall, I mentioned to you previously that this summer Feingold had spread the story in Los Angeles that 'Robertson had raised a lot of money for Healy'. When Myra came forward to defend us against the drive to exclude us from the party, we turned over to her copies of all relevant documents and also told her of the money rumor being circulated as well as the true facts behind it.

To clear this whole point up, Myra read to the plenum previously unpublished sections from the original version of the document which comrade Philips had brought back from England a year ago and which your tendency submitted to the party in edited form as the 'Call for the Reorganization of the Minority Tendency.' While Myra's action certainly absolved us from any current organizational association with the SLL, it may have placed your tendency in additional jeopardy.

The other information is related. We are giving serious thought to shortly publishing a series of informational and documentary bulletins for public sale and directed especially to the party membership. One particular sequence of material to be covered would include a bulletin under the title 'The Split in the Revolutionary Tendency,' consisting in part of our correspondence exchanges with comrade Healy over the period November 1962-January 1963. Comrade Healy has already granted his express permission in his letter of 29th May, 1963 to use his writing as we see fit: "So far as we are concerned, you are at perfect liberty at any time to publish any correspondence you have had with us." However, formal permission does not exhaust our responsibility so we are giving this advance notice of our contemplated step. This should permit you to take measures to counter possible adverse effects within the party upon your reorganized tendency.

Fraternally,

James Robertson

cc: (4)

New York, N.Y.

12 February 1964

Farrell Dobbs,
National Secretary,
Socialist Workers Party:

Dear comrade Dobbs,

Enclosed is a declaration to the National Committee
by the five expelled Revolutionary Tendency supporters,
Lynne Harper, Laurence Ireland, Shane Mage, Geoffrey White
and myself.

We formally notify you at this time of our intention to
appeal the expulsions to the next party convention.

Fraternally,

James Robertson

CONCERNING OUR EXPULSIONSLetter to the National Committee

The five members of the Revolutionary Tendency expelled from the Socialist Workers Party declare to the National Committee that our expulsion has taken the party another long step on the descent into Stalinist monolithism.

Nothing in the history and tradition of the party can be used as a precedent to justify our expulsion for thought crimes. Nor can the party justify the violation of elementary norms of procedure which even bourgeois society grants an accused, such as a trial. Not a single act is charged against us! Instead, the leadership has torn out of context quotations from written opinions in an internal discussion in our tendency, given them the most sinister interpretation possible, and used them as a pretext for our expulsion.

The concept put forth by the National Secretary, Farrell Dobbs, that the majority is the party, makes very clear the intention to convert the party into a completely docile organizational instrument in which only officially sponsored ideas will be permitted expression. This intention cannot now be masked by soothing assurances to the contrary to the other minorities.

The political motivation for this action is also quite clear. The leadership has abandoned the fundamental Marxist concept that the working class and its vanguard must lead the masses in order to achieve a socialist transformation of society, and continues to seek to convert the party into an appendage of petty-bourgeois radical groupings. It hopes that humble obeisance and adulation will enable the party to ride the coat-tails of the Castros, Ben Bellas, and Malcolm X's into the socialist future. At the same time, the leadership cannot openly admit to discarding the basic principles on which the party was founded. For example, it is still eager to use a phrase such as the Permanent Revolution after discarding its political content, as a cover for its political nakedness. The leadership is, therefore, especially vindictive toward our tendency for exposing them, and seizes any and all organizational pretexts in an attempt to silence it.

A particularly envenomed situation was created by the majority in youth work. For the first time in seventeen years, and with minority party members playing a leading role, a significant youth cadre had been developed. The majority found it intolerable that party members identifying with the minority led this cadre, and set about to displace them. A campaign was therefore launched by the party from outside the youth movement to remove the youth leadership. In doing so, youth independence and initiative was deliberately destroyed. In the circumstances, charges of disloyalty to the party and double recruiting can only be described as a hollow mockery.

We have used every legitimate opportunity which presented itself to expose and oppose the abandonment of a revolutionary class position and the abstentionist policies which directly derived therefrom. Accordingly, we have protested with all our strength the opposition of the Majority to a policy which permits sending Negro members into the Negro rights movement in the South, as well as the refusal to allow white members to participate in this struggle in the North. We have called for the involvement of the membership in select trade-union concentrations, and have also raised the need to resume our traditional policy of cooperation with leftward moving radical groups, now in motion as a result of the Sino-Soviet dispute. In sum, we have demanded the involvement of the party in the struggles now taking place, with the object of influencing them in the direction of greater militancy and mass participation, to help the process of crystallization of a left-wing, and to recruit to the party new militant working-class and intellectual forces--and we shall continue to do so.

We declare to the National Committee that the efforts of its majority to isolate us from the membership by expelling us are in vain.

We shall continue to appeal to the membership in person and in writing to reject the politics of opportunism and abstentionism, and to return to the revolutionary policies and practices on which the SWP was founded.

We consider ourselves to be a temporarily expelled section of the party and declare that we will do everything in our power to gain readmission to it.

As part of this perspective, we declare that we shall support every action taken to involve the party membership in the fight for Negro rights, to reach out to the trade-unions, to oppose the desperate attempts of American imperialism to stem the tide of revolution throughout the world, and to combat its ever increasing danger to the existence of humanity.

We welcome the party's announcement of its plans to run presidential and vice-presidential candidates in 1964, although we must protest the refusal to place Myra Tanner Weiss on the ticket. In replacing her as a punishment for opposing its unprincipled organizational highhandedness, the leadership merely demonstrated its own insensitivity to the struggle for women's rights which Myra's candidacy served to highlight. We shall, in any case, support the party's efforts on the electoral scene to promote socialist ideas, defend the Cuban Revolution, and fight against colonialism and imperialism.

We also declare that in thrusting us outside the party's ranks, the responsibility for the necessity of our open political work falls on the leadership. We shall, as a result, direct

our efforts not only toward the party membership, but also toward other, leftward moving, radical groups, the Negro rights movement, the trade-unions, and the mass movement in general. We are, therefore, compelled, while outside the party, to make our criticism known to the radical public, while we continue to press our struggle in every possible way for readmission to the party.

We shall, in short, continue our struggle for a working-class vanguard free from alien class influences, and thereby capable of leading the masses to socialism.

Fraternally yours,

Lynne Harper

Laurence Ireland

Shane Mage

James Robertson

Geoffrey White

February 10, 1964

C O P YTO ALL BRANCHES

Dear Comrades

Robertsonite Attack on the Party

We are attaching for your information copies of a letter from James Robertson and a statement submitted by the expelled leaders of the Robertson faction. The Political Committee has adopted the following motion concerning this new maneuver against the party:

"In their statement of February 10 the expelled leaders of the Robertson faction announce they will carry on 'open public work' and will make their criticism of the party 'known to the radical public'. On the heels of the statement they came out with a public organ called 'Spartacist' in which they open public attack on the party.

"Although presented in the hypocritical guise of appealing their expulsion to the next convention, the statement can only be construed as a continuation of the splitting course long pursued within the party by the Robertson faction. It is the elementary obligation of all comrades to repulse the splitters and to serve notice that anyone undertaking to act as their agents inside the party will be called to account.

"All party branches are requested to keep the Secretariat informed of the public activities conducted by Robertsonite splitters and to promptly report any evidence of collaboration with them from within our ranks."

Comradely yours,

Farrell Dobbs,
National Secretary

FD: sf

New York, N.Y.
23 February 1964

United Secretariat
of the Fourth International,
c/o Pierre Frank
Paris, France:

Dear Comrades,

The National Committee of the Socialist Workers Party at its December 1963 plenum expelled five party members, supporters of the Revolutionary Tendency. The comrades involved are Shane Mage, Geoffrey White, Laurence Ireland, Lynne Harper and myself.

Having exhausted all presently available recourse within the American party, we are now writing to formally request that the United Secretariat express its opinion on behalf of the restoration of our organizational rights in what is, politically, your American section. Over the past several months, copies of all relevant documents have been sent to the United Secretariat. This material makes it superabundantly clear that the expulsions took place exclusively because of our intransigent adherence to our opinions, and through no breach of democratic-centralist discipline on our part. A systematic summary of the issues to the time is found in our document, "Rescind the Suspensions!" of December 10, 1963, by the five then-suspended RT supporters. (Subsequently another supporter of our Tendency, Roger Abrams, was also expelled from the party on trumped-up charges.)

We would like to remind the United Secretariat of the resounding guarantees, regarding party internal democracy, found in "For Early Reunification of the World Trotskyist Movement" (March 1, 1963). This document was advanced by the SWP Majority itself as the summary of alleged basic positions upon which unity with the International Secretariat forces would stand or fall. The entirety of the relevant section of the resolution is as follows:

"(4) The Fourth International as an international organization, and its sections as national parties, must adhere to the principles of democratic centralism. Both theory and historic experience have demonstrated the correctness of these principles. Democratic centralism corresponds to the need for quick, disciplined action in meeting revolutionary tasks while at the same time assuring the freedom of discussion and the right to form tendencies without which genuine political life is denied to the ranks. In its adherence to internal democracy, the world Trotskyist movement stands at the opposite pole from the stifling regimes imposed on working-class organizations controlled by bureaucrats trained in the schools of Stalinism, the Social-Democracy or reformist unionism."

Fine words! And words which are presumably binding upon the United Secretariat. For at the July 1963 SWP Convention, the party resolution hailing the international reunification the previous month noted that:

"The Convention of the Socialist Workers Party is especially appreciative of the fact that the basic document, which received unanimous approval both at the conference of the majority of the sectors adhering to the International Committee and at the World Congress called by the International Executive Committee, was the statement issued by the Political Committee of the Socialist Workers Party, "For the Early Reunification of the World Trotskyist Movement." The unanimous adoption of this document, which reaffirms the programmatic foundations of world Trotskyism, is proof of the thoroughly principled character of the unification and a most favorable augury for its durability."

Regarding the major international implications of our expulsions, we would draw your attention again to sections 12. and 13. of our "Rescind the Suspensions!". There is, moreover, a further consideration. We have heard it put point blank by friends of the European sections of the "Reunified" International group that part of the unity deal with the SWP was an agreement that all affairs of the American party were to be outside even the moral jurisdiction of any international body--in short, "Hands Off!" If this is true and the United Secretariat is unable or unwilling to offer a significant objection to the flagrant organizational abuse by the SWP Majority leadership, then it would be proved that your Reunification Congress created not a real international body at all, but a deliberate illusion!

But we would rather find to the contrary. We want readmission to the SWP. We reaffirm for the hundredth time our disciplined acceptance of the line of the Majority. In exchange we know that, within the SWP, we will have the opportunity with minimal organizational obstruction to press for our viewpoint in an orderly way among the largest number of declared Trotskyists. All this we spell out clearly in the "Editorial Notes" of the enclosed periodical, SPARTACIST, which we have now begun to publish for the period of our exclusion from the SWP.

We await your early reply.

Fraternally,

James Robertson

cc: Dobbs
 Germain
 Maitan
 Healy

April 17, 1964

Dear Comrade Robertson,

At its last meeting, the United Secretariat took up your letter soliciting our opinion about your group and its relations with the Socialist Workers party. The material which you sent us, plus additional evidence which was brought to our attention, was considered.

As a result, a resolution was adopted stating our views on this question. A copy of this resolution is attached for your information.

Comradely,

Pierre Frank
for the United Secretariat

Air
Enc.
cc: Farrell Dobbs

RESOLUTION ON ROBERTSON GROUP

The Robertson group is marked by (1) an ultraleft sectarian political line, especially evident in relation to the colonial revolution as a whole and the Cuban Revolution in particular; (2) bitter opposition to the reunification of the world Trotskyist movement, in which it views the role of the Socialist Workers Party as one of "betrayal" because it supported unity; (3) judgment of the Socialist Workers Party as a "centrist" formation in which the discipline of the Robertson faction takes precedence over party discipline in line with the perspective of eventual split when conditions become most favorable.

The Robertson group considers the sectarian political positions and course of the Socialist Labour League, above all its opposition to reunification of the world Trotskyist movement, to be generally correct. While the exact relations of this group with the leadership of the Socialist Labour League remain obscure, two differences do appear to exist. On the one hand, the leaders of the Robertson group seem to hold that it was an error on the part of Healy not to participate in the reunification of the world Trotskyist movement--he should have "entered" in order to blow up the reunification from within. On the other hand, the leadership of the Socialist Labour League seem to have correctly judged, or been informed about, the split orientation of the Robertson group in relation to the Socialist Workers Party and to have taken the initiative to break with the group for that reason.

The letter addressed by the leaders of the Robertson group to the United Secretariat, asking for a "moral" opinion on the expulsions of its leaders from the Socialist Workers Party is not a serious step in the context of an appeal but is a move aimed at striking a blow against the reunification. Otherwise they would not have first taken their case to the general public, as they have, featuring their tendentious version of the expulsions in a newly launched public faction organ. Similarly they would not have taken their minority political views to the public in this same faction organ. Both moves are in flagrant violation of the principles and practices of democratic centralism which require a minority in a revolutionary socialist party to abide by majority decision. The correct procedure--as is well known by the leaders of the Robertson group--would have been to appeal any measures considered incorrect or unjust to the next convention, while meanwhile doing their utmost to demonstrate their basic loyalty--if they have any--to the Socialist Workers Party.

In view of these considerations, the United Secretariat (1) holds that the so-called "appeal" by leaders of the Robertson group is a mere publicity move that seeks to advance hostile factional aims; (2) condemns the course taken by the Robertson group, particularly its unrestrained public attacks against the Socialist Workers Party, as injurious to the interests of the world Trotskyist movement.

Box 1377, G.P.O.
New York, N.Y. 10001

18 May 1965

United Secretariat
of the Fourth International
21, rue d'Aboukir
Paris 2e, France

Dear Comrades,

It has come to our attention that a World Congress scheduled for this June has been organized by the United Secretariat.

It is our desire to send a representative of the Spartacist group to the Congress in order to appeal the "Resolution on Robertson Group" of the United Secretariat of April 1964, upholding the Socialist Workers Party's expulsion of members of our group for maintaining ourselves as an oppositional tendency within the SWP. We hereby formally request permission to attend the World Congress for this purpose.

Our representative would not only seek to present our defense, establishing that the expulsions were solely because of our adherence to ideas, and that no violations of democratic centralism took place on our part, but also to take up the deliberate fraud perpetrated on the world movement in the U. Sec. resolution which used as a justification for the expulsions, the publication of SPARTACIST, an act which followed the expulsions.

Should the permission here requested be granted, we would need notification as to the exact date and place, so that our representative might attend. Should you grant our request, we then further ask that copies of our letter to you of 23 February 1964 and your answering "Resolution on Robertson Group" be made available to your membership electing delegates to the World Congress.

Fraternally yours,

Harry Turner, for the Spartacist
Resident Editorial Board.

May 28, 1965

Spartacist Resident Editorial Board
Box 1377, G.P.O.
New York, N.Y. 10001
Etats-Unis

Dear Comrade Turner:

In reply to your letter of May 18, we call your attention first of all to the fact that the Fourth International has no organizational connection with the Socialist Workers party and consequently has no jurisdiction in a problem such as you raise; namely, the application of democratic centralism as it affects the organization either as a whole or in individual instances.

Therefore, we limit ourselves merely to an observation of fraternal nature: the SWP provides for appeals to higher bodies; the proper place to direct your request is, consequently, to the next convention of the SWP.

As for the projected World Congress of the Fourth International, we should like to correct the misinformation you have received. The date is not at all in June.

Fraternally,

United Secretariat of the
Fourth International

Pierre Frank

13 August 1965

National Committee
Socialist Workers Party

Dear Comrades,

On 12 February 1964 we formally notified you of our intention to appeal the expulsion by the NC of five members of our tendency to the next party convention.

Subsequently another half dozen tendency supporters were expelled by the New York Local. Their appeal is now joined with that of the comrades initially expelled.

Having received no acknowledgement of our earlier request, we again ask that a representative of the expelled members of the Revolutionary Tendency be permitted to appeal our expulsions to the forthcoming convention of the SWP as provided by the party constitution.

We further ask that several documents on our expulsions be made available to the convention delegates for their guidance in this matter. In particular we have in mind:

"Concerning our Expulsions"-- Letter to the National Committee, by the expelled, 10 February 1964;
 Letter from Robertson to the United Secretariat, 23 February 1964; and the U.Sec. resolution in reply, "Resolution on Robertson Group";
 Letter from Turner to the U.Sec., 18 May 1965; and
 Letter from Frank in reply, 28 May 1965.

If you are agreeable, we would be willing to mimeograph this material ourselves for the delegates' kits.

Finally we request notification at your earliest convenience of the date, place and amount of time available for presenting our appeal. We also ask that our spokesman not be excluded from being present during the discussion on our appeal and that he be given the opportunity for a brief summary. The exclusion of our spokesmen from the plenum that expelled us, following our presentations, made it impossible for us to know, let alone answer any specific accusations brought against us by the reporters or from the floor.

Fraternally,

James Robertson

