

OCT 3 1979

October 1, 1979
San Francisco, Ca.

Political Committee, SWP

A discussion will shortly take place in the branches here around the perspectives report referred to in the enclosed statement. Because of the ramifications of this discussion on the party as a whole I want to make certain we do not stumble over some procedural question and therefore solicit from you your suggestions for correct procedure to follow in branch discussions.

Comradely, :

Mat

September 30, 1979
Nat Weinstein
489 27th St.
S.F., Ca. 94131

Political Committee, S.W.P.

Dear Comrades,

(I voted against the tasks and perspectives report by Comrade Lou Jones presented to the S.F. Bay Area District Committee of the S.W.P. -- a copy of which I presume has been forwarded to you. As a member of the National Committee, I feel it proper to make my statement available to the National Committee as a whole.)

At the heart of the Jones report is the proposal to center the California election campaign of the party on the labor party slogan. This proposal follows the action taken by the 1979 SWP national convention to similarly center the presidential campaign on the need for a labor party based on the unions.

But questions in my mind expressed at the time of the Spring 1979 party plenum in N.Y. as to what was meant by the proposed labor party focus of our national presidential campaign has developed into deeper concern by this latest interpretation of our labor party policy.

I want to state once again so that there should be no misunderstanding, I am completely in favor of the correct tactical application of our labor party slogan. The question that is in dispute is the correct way to use the slogan.

The Jones proposal, as we shall see, goes beyond permissible propaganda, educational speeches and statements by our candidates and would involve the party more intensely in a labor party agitational campaign than I believe is warranted. The labor party campaign being proposed would be justified if it was in response to evidence of heightened labor party sentiment within the workingclass. Of course the need for a labor party seems, to those already convinced, to grow greater with each manifestation of the bankruptcy of class collaborationism. But, I repeat, there is as yet no overt evidence produced that this has resulted in any significant growth of labor party sentiment in the union ranks -- and it is the union ranks that are our central target.

The Jones report included a proposal for a U.S. Senatorial campaign in California and a petitioning effort to place state and national SWP candidates on the California ballot with which I concur. But Comrade Jones also projects a petition campaign stressing mobilization of our industrial comrades in the plants to gather a considerable bulk of the necessary signatures from among their co-workers. Whether a significant number of signatures can be gathered in the workplace as proposed, is highly questionable, and the price we would pay for the effort would be too high. It would result

in an indiscriminate exposure of our industrial comrades as open members of the SWP without regard to specific conditions in each plant and the particular status of each comrade.

This goes counter to all our experience in the unions and to everything written on the subject by Trotsky, Cannon, Dobbs and Kerry. Such a socialist "coming out" would erect an obstacle to effective participation by our comrades in the struggles that will erupt with increasing frequency on the job. Generally speaking, identifying all industrial worker comrades as open SWP members at this stage of our entry into the industrial unions will tend to exclude them from playing the most modest roles in leading struggles on the job.

Such a campaign to gather SWP nominating petitions on the job violates the most elementary rule of revolutionists to carefully determine who should and who should not function as open SWPers. It replaces a flexible approach with a rigid tactical prescription.

Of course, it is entirely possible and necessary to orient and encourage comrades to find ways to get out our ideas and our press that are reasonable and sober, and as circumstances permit.

The effect of a wholesale socialist "coming out" that such a petitioning campaign would incur will have virtually the same objective effect as a blanket proscription against fraction intervention into union struggles around safety, speedup, union security and other such issues, except as passive participants carried along by events.

Worse yet, despite such a policy of self-isolation comrades will be caught up, willy-nilly, in the heat of events and find themselves providing convenient, albeit unwitting, targets for the bosses and their tools inside the unions.

By opening ourselves up so heedlessly to ready victimization at the hands of the bosses we will harm the party's credibility as a revolutionary workers' organization that knows how to fight. Such a turn of events, too, would contribute to demoralization and thus add to the ultimate effect of forcing ourselves onto the sidelines in upcoming struggles.

It might be argued that we should avoid taking responsibility for the guerrilla-like confrontations breaking out so long as the class collaborationists continue to retain their hold over the unions; that these encounters will almost always end in setbacks under these circumstances. My view, simply stated, is that such experiences are an inevitable stage workers must go through to reach class struggle consciousness. We must go through these experiences with them -- not blindly and passively, but as revolutionists -- attempting to whatever extent possible to intervene with class struggle methods. It is only in this way we will learn how to apply our program to the real live struggle, and prepare ourselves for the decisive battles to come.

Light is shed on the thinking behind the misuse of the labor party slogan by the proposal for comrades in our industrial fractions to petition on the job to put the party on the California ballot. Together they show a tendency toward a purely propagandist approach toward intervention in the unions. According to this method, socialist propaganda which includes the use of the labor party slogan to help explain our ideas is counterposed to the method of the transitional program. Jones' report, as presented, leads the party in the direction of sectarian abstention from those struggles in the plants out of which a class struggle left wing can and will emerge.

The political line of this report goes counter to the SWP program and I therefore vote no.



Nat Weinstein
San Francisco Branch