

STATEMENT ON UNITY WITH THE SOCIALIST WORKERS  
PARTY AND THE EXTRAORDINARY PARTY CONVENTION

\* \* \* (See "Note" on Page 6)

The National Committee of the Workers Party, after reviewing all the developments relating to unity with the Socialist Workers Party in the past year, deems it necessary to re-state the position of the Party.

The Workers Party, seconding the initiative taken by the then Minority of the SWP in proposing the merger of the two organizations more than two years ago, promptly declared in favor of re-unification. Our Party considered that the unity would signify a big step forward in the advancement of the revolutionary movement here and abroad, provided the unification were achieved on a solid basis. In the course of the first attempt to reunite the two organizations, our Party demonstrated beyond question that it was prepared to make every conceivable concession to the SWP in the interests of unity, short of the abandonment of our own political line and of the democratic rights that every member and every group within a revolutionary party should freely enjoy, including the right to propagate its political line in an orderly and responsible manner. Our Party stated repeatedly and unequivocally that in spite of the wide breach between the political and theoretical positions of the two organizations, representing two tendencies of the Trotskyist movement, these differences were compatible with common membership in a single, united Party, provided that discipline in action and party democracy were fully and equally assured and that the formal unification were preceded and prepared by a local and increasingly close practical collaboration between the two parties in all possible phases of the class struggle. This position was maintained by our Party with unwavering consistency.

The leadership of the Socialist Workers Party evaded its responsibility for a long time by refusing to take a position in favor of or in opposition to unity or to practical collaboration between the two parties. It met the proposal for unity inside its own party with violent attacks upon the Minority aimed at discrediting and isolating it. At no time in the course of the few discussions with the Workers Party in that period did the SWP accept any of the proposals on unity made by our Party, or put forward any counter-proposals of its own. Finally, at its last national convention, the leadership of the SWP obtained a "unanimous" vote in opposition to unity with our Party, in condemnation of the Minority which first advocated the unity, and in expulsion of the two remaining leaders of the Minority - the first time in the history of the American Trotskyist movement when members were expelled for their dissident political opinions. In addition, the convention just as "unanimously" adopted the notorious document proposed by the leadership in which our Party was condemned as a "petty-bourgeois" tendency and the Fourth International was called upon to declare that those holding our political and theoretical views were, by virtue of that fact alone, excluded from membership in the International. This put a definitive end to the first attempt to achieve unity between the two parties. The responsibility for the conclusion rests exclusively upon the shoulders of the SWP leadership.

Early this year, upon the intervention of a representative of the Secretariat, a second attempt to achieve unity was begun. Once

again our Party declared itself ready to make such a unity possible. It even went further in making concessions to the SWP and adopted a resolution on unity aimed at nothing less than saving the face of the SWP leadership in order to facilitate a 180 degree turn-about-face on its part in the matter of unity. In no respect, however, did our Party find it necessary to make any significant, let alone fundamental, alteration in the position it had taken earlier on the unity question.

The National Committee of the SWP thereupon adopted, again unanimously, a resolution in favor of unity with the Workers Party. This complete reversal of the position against unity adopted a short time earlier at its convention, was accomplished without any reference to the previous position, without any acknowledgment of it or any explanation of the reasons for changing it. The bureaucratic opposition to unity was simply replaced by a bureaucratic support to unity.

The misgivings created in our Party by the SWP's resolution in favor of unity were enhanced by the first proposal made to us by the SWP leadership. Our Party had committed itself to abide by the decisions of the Extraordinary Party Convention on the conditions that it be permitted to participate in the Convention with full rights and that the unification of the two parties be achieved. The first proposal of the SWP to our Party was that we could choose between a unification accomplished after the EPC or an immediate unification; but that in the latter case, discussion of the EPC would terminate on the spot. Since the latter proposal would mean that the united party would be deprived of the opportunity, the right and the obligation to discuss the vital problems to come up for decision at the EPC, the Workers Party promptly declined the second choice and agreed with the first.

Meanwhile, it became clear that the SWP leadership not only did not contemplate any serious and substantial steps toward preparing a solid foundation for the unity, but that it envisaged only such a unity as required the capitulation of the Workers Party. Except for a couple of minor and in no case decisive exceptions, all the proposals made by our representatives for practical collaboration between the leadership and the ranks of the two parties in order to prepare a firm ground and a healthy atmosphere for the actual unity, were rejected by the SWP representatives. The latter acted toward the Workers Party not as toward an independent organization with which it was obligated to work out in common and on the basis of equality the means of consummating a merger, but as toward an organization which was already transformed into a grouping within the SWP, subordinated to it and subject to its discipline. Hence, their refusal to work out a united position with our Party in the election campaigns conducted in recent months. Hence, their refusal to arrange for joint meetings of the party fractions in the mass organizations, or joint meetings of any kind between the two memberships. Hence, the attack upon one of our sympathizers as an "informer" and a "tool of the State Department," made in the press of the SWP and without consultation with our Party. Hence, the antagonism disseminated in the SWP against our Party because it prefaced the publication of the Joint Statement of the two parties on unity with an editorial explanation of its own in LABOR ACTION. Hence, the circular letter of X to the SWP membership, not aimed at preparing the latter for comradely and fruitful collaboration with the Workers Party, prior to the unification and inside a united party, but aimed at misrepresenting and maligning our Party, at mob-

ilizing the SWP ranks for a factional assault upon it instead of for unity with it, and above all at creating and stimulating among the SWP ranks a demand for the capitulation of the Workers Party as the condition for unity.

In order to bring all this duplicity and maneuvering to the surface where it could be scotched, the Workers Party declared bluntly that it had never conceived or agreed to a unity based upon a capitulation or upon the cession of any of its democratic rights within the united party. This declaration produced a highly desirable result in that it finally elicited from the SWP leadership an equally blunt declaration of its position. In the "unofficial" speeches of the two leaders of the SWP, they made it crassly clear that practical collaboration between the two parties was possible only where the Workers Party accepted the policy and decisions of the SWP and that unity between the two parties was possible only if the Workers Party capitulated to the SWP.

The open proclamation of this position, which is not only unacceptable to the Workers Party but which it is not even interested in discussing, means that the second attempt to achieve unity between the two organizations has also been smashed. Once again, the responsibility for the failure rests upon the shoulders of the SWP leadership. It has ruined for a long time the possibility of unifying the ranks of the revolutionary movement and thereby gravely undermined the possibility of unity of the movement abroad.

So far as the Joint Statement of the two parties on unity is concerned, the Workers Party records the fact that the past actions of the SWP leadership have reduced the Statement to the significance of a paper declaration. Now, after the engineering of the Johnsonite split from the Workers Party and the proposal of the SWP to admit this faction into its ranks, it has eliminated even the formal significance of the Joint Statement and rendered it totally inoperative and meaningless - and worse than meaningless because it has made it a hypocritical deception. Our Party has neither the desire nor the need to engage in formalistic hypocrisies or picayune show-window maneuvers by pretending allegiance to a document which has been reduced to a mockery. In view of the actions of the SWP, the Workers Party has no further grounds for being bound by the provisions of the Joint Statement, including the provision which deals with the acceptance of members or former members of the SWP into its ranks.

The Workers Party considers, further, that it has the task of making clear its position on unity, the record on unity, and the responsibility for the failure of the attempt to achieve it, before the membership of the SWP, the radical working class public in general, and the International Movement.

At the same time, it is clear that our Party cannot and need not devote a disproportionate amount of its time and energy to this task. The future of the Workers Party is by no means determined by its attitude toward the SWP nor by its relations with it. To convert the Party into an organization which is primarily concerned with the SWP, or into an organization whose chief claim to political existence is its pro-unity position, would mean to sterilize the Party.

Our Party will triumph or be defeated only insofar as its program and policies are confirmed and sustained in the class struggle. Our

Party favored unification with the SWP not because it suffers from any fetishistic attitude toward unity in general, but because a unity with the SWP, accomplished on a sound basis, would have made it more easily possible to overcome, by our joint comradely efforts, the stultifying bureaucratic regime now prevalent in the SWP and the radically false theories and political line which animate it, thus making the united revolutionary movement not only a numerically stronger but a politically more effective factor in the working class of this country. Unity for any other purpose could not possibly have any importance for our Party. No, although the road of unity has been solidly blocked off by the SWP leadership, the road along which we can propagate our program among the advanced workers remains wide open and available to us to the fullest extent of our capacities.

It is necessary to understand that the failure of the unity is due only in part to the maneuverings and the bureaucratic intolerance of the SWP leadership, which feared the presence in its ranks of hundreds of trained, able and devoted militants whose political line differs from that of the leadership and threatens its domination. The SWP leadership has done everything it could to extend and to deepen the political differences between the two parties, in order thus to assure the continued division between them. Instead of growing agreement, the lines between the two tendencies grow more clear-cut and politically irreconcilable. The tendency represented by the SWP leadership is that of the right wing of the Fourth International. This characterization is determined not by the purely ceremonial and therefore inconsequential "radical" phrasemongering to which it is addicted on occasion, but by the fundamental theoretical and political line to which it is increasingly committed. The objective aim of this line is the conversion of the working class and revolutionary movements into a "left wing" of counterrevolutionary Stalinism (as the objective aim of social reformism is the conversion of the working class into the left wing support of bourgeois democracy, democratic imperialism). On this score, our Party has no mere tactical difference with the SWP tendency, but a fundamental and politically unbridgeable difference. Our Party is more firmly than ever opposed to any defense of Stalinist Russia and Stalinist imperialism. The SWP not only continues to favor the defense of the Stalinist counterrevolution but even supports the GPU regime in Poland and other occupied countries against the popular national movement of resistance to Stalinist imperialism. Our Party is in general opposed to support of or alliances with the reactionary Stalinist parties in the capitalist countries. The SWP favors support of these totalitarian organizations as against the democratic reformist tendencies in the working class.

In the light of this division, the recent capitulation of the Johnsonites becomes all the clearer and more reprehensible. It only underlines the purely literary character of its own ultra-radical phrasemongering and the farcical nature of its theoretical and political position.

If the tendency represented by our Party would have an independent political role to play even if it were part of a united Party together with the SWP tendency, this holds with multiplied force under conditions when our Party is organizationally independent. The formula, "Neither Washington nor Moscow - for the class independence of the proletariat and world socialism!" not only sums up the revolutionary position of the genuinely Marxian movement of our time but draws

the line clearly between our Party and the SWP tendency and between our Party and all brands of petty bourgeois centrism and reformism.

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Basing itself upon the position it has repeatedly set forth, our Party has the duty to intervene actively and firmly in the life of the Movement as a whole. Early this year, the Party committed itself to participate with full rights in the deliberations of the EPC and to abide by its eventual decisions, but only on the condition that unity would be achieved between the Workers Party and the Socialist Workers Party. This condition went and still goes without saying, for without it there would be created the absurd situation in which two independent parties would exist with the same program and political line. In other words, our commitment was only another way of stating what we had stated for two years, namely, that our tendency was prepared to act as a disciplined minority of a united party provided it was guaranteed its democratic rights within that party. In view of the fact that the SWP leadership, in connivance with the Johnson faction, has now eliminated the possibility of unity, our Party, while still committed to presenting and fighting for its views, including its position on unity, before the assemblies of the EPC, reserves the full right to establish its position toward the decisions adopted at the EPC at a regular convention of our Party to be held after the EPC.

The Workers Party holds that the uninterrupted crisis of the Movement can be resolved in a revolutionary way only by a fundamental change of the position now dominant in it on the key questions of the class nature of the Stalinist state; of the slogan of "unconditional defense" of that state; of the support of Stalinist imperialism in the occupied countries or the support of the popular democratic movements of resistance against Stalinist imperialism; of the position taken by the official Movement on the national resistance movements in general; of the position taken by the official Movement toward the Stalinist and social-democratic parties; of the conception now held of the character and the role of the Fourth International, which is sectarian through and through; and finally of the bureaucratic conception of democratic centralism advocated by the present leadership of the Movement, inspired by the SWP leadership. The main task of the Workers Party before the EPC, during its sessions and afterward, is to mobilize the maximum amount of support for the course which it advocates. Toward this end, our Party openly seeks to establish a bloc of all sections of the Movement which occupy a left-wing position on the main questions in dispute and which aim to prevent the reduction of the Movement to the role of "left wing" of Stalinist reaction, a role which means in the long run the abandonment of the basic positions of socialist internationalism.

This is the fundamental concern of the Workers Party with regard to the EPC, and all other considerations are subordinate to it.

At the same time, the Workers Party makes clear in advance that it rejects in toto the pretensions of the leadership of the Secretariat and those members of the CIC who are aligned with it, to the role of a "third party" in the matter of the unity negotiations between our Party and the SWP. The events of the past period have showed conclusively that the Secretariat leadership has acted consistently as the factional agent of the SWP leadership, not only with regard to

our Party but also with regard to other sections of the Movement. It has thereby not only failed to discharge its elementary obligation to act in accordance with the functions that properly belong to such a body, but it has forfeited the right to be considered a responsible and objective authority in the Movement. It has not only pushed the disastrous theoretical and political positions of the SWP leadership to an extreme throughout the world, and heavily compromised the authority and prospects for growth of the Movement, but it has taken responsibility for the indefensible factional excesses of the SWP leadership and acted as its factional agent in all sections of the Movement, even to the extent - when it considered it factionally necessary - of ignoring its basic political solidarity with such sections. In connection with its political struggle against this leadership, the Workers Party therefore considers it an obligation to join with all those who are actuated by objective and non-factional considerations in the effort to restore a healthy democratic regime and an objective and authoritative leadership to the Movement as a whole, as an indispensable prerequisite to ending the chaos and disintegrative tendencies which now afflict it and to rendering possible its long-postponed reorientation and progress.

August 11, 1947.

Political Committee of the  
Workers Party

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\*NOTE: The Political Committee is submitting the above statement as a draft for the consideration of the National Committee meeting to be held in connection with the Active Workers Conference. At the same time, the draft statement is being made available to the membership as a whole so that it may be discussed both before and during the Active Workers Conference itself.

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