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DISCUSSION  
BULLETIN 2

THE LABOR BUREAUCRACY  
AND  
THE RADICAL MOVEMENT

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THE LABOR BUREAUCRACY AND THE RADICAL MOVEMENT

In one sense the subject of this report is not a surprise, but in another sense it is. The sense in which it is not is the obvious one - no doubt everyone has noted that Nelson has not been around for 6 weeks. First I want to give the facts, the latest facts on the case, and then we'll have our analysis. On July 20, during a discussion on Detroit and the relations of the REB to Detroit ( I want to emphasize that this discussion was the agenda that was unanimously agreed on by the REB the week before, and I want to emphasize also that the week before when the agenda was agreed upon, was a month after I had asked Nelson could he please give his analysis of the situation in Detroit. It was quite obvious it was the worst branch in the whole country, and that he was the obvious leader of it, had been for 7 years, and specifically for 4 years since we broke, and ought to be the one. But he came in and said he didn't have anything to say. It was then that we agreed that I make the analysis). Now during this discussion, and we will get into it later on, Nelson burst out first with, "I have one concrete proposal. I want a year's leave," and then changed it to outright resignation. I told him then that that was not on the agenda, and I refused to discuss it; that if he wanted to propose anything like that, he come in the next week and tell us about it and we'd discuss it. But that at this point we were going to discuss what we had all set for discussion. Now, despite his resignation, he did not walk out. In fact he behaved as a principled member of the REB, once I had told him he was out of order. But he did not appear again, even though he had to appear with an editorial and other material. Now we exercised great patience to protect his rights, and to give him a chance to catch himself. But the latest report from Milton which showed that he did not mean to withdraw his statement, made it necessary for the whole organization to come to a conclusion, and first of all for the REB. Therefore, last Wednesday, at the REB meeting, we voted to send him, and did send him by registered mail, the following letter:

August 24, 1955 - by registered mail:

Dear Nelson:

Milton reported to the REB meeting of August 17, a telephone conversation he had had with you on August 13, in which you indicated that you had no intention of continuing with the responsibilities of co-editorship which you accepted at the Easter Conference.

These are the facts: 1) The REB met on July 20, to make a political analysis of the Detroit situation. 2) In the course of the discussion that you suddenly proposed that you take one year's leave, and shortly thereafter, during the meeting, you throw in your resignation. 3) The chairman informed you that you had not put such a point on the agenda, that the REB would not divert from the agenda which had been accepted unanimously

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and which had been set the previous week, and that you could present your resignation to the REB at its next meeting if you chose to. 4) You continued to participate in the remaining points on the agenda, both as a co-editor, and as a responsible member of the REB. You not only participated in full, but we voted not to present the concrete motions to Detroit flowing from the analysis that week because you were to be cut of town, and we decided not to present it in your absence. 5) After the meeting was adjourned, you informed Milton that "of course" he would see you around. 6) Several days later you spoke with Rorty on the phone on matters relating to the paper, and said you would bring the copy to the next meeting of the REB. 7) You failed to appear at the next meeting of the REB. Instead you sent the copy for the paper down with Frazier, with no word of explanation as to your absence. 8) The REB voted to safeguard your rights by keeping the minutes of July 20 for the record only, until we heard further from you. 9) In the absence of the chairman who was on leave Milton phoned you on August 13, as mentioned above. You referred to your statement of resignation and asked if he didn't think your statement of July 20 "sufficient." He told you he would discuss no such thing with you on the phone, but would if you came to the REB and presented it there. 10) In view of your conversation with Milton and your continued absence from the responsible job to which the Conference assigned you, the REB is compelled to act and to make its action known to the membership. 11) The first step was to consult with the REB members who fully endorsed the stand of the REB. 12) Accordingly, tonight's meeting of the REB voted:

a) to reject your resignation with its slanderous statement. It notes instead that you chose to walk out on the special anti-war issue, and left the whole burden on the shoulders of the responsible worker-editor.

b) to suspend you from membership for failure to carry out your editorial responsibilities solemnly undertaken at the conference, to which you apologized, when you retracted your sudden and irresponsible statement that you would not be an editor.

c) to remove your name from the masthead as co-editor.

d) to inform the membership of the facts of the matter, and to make available to them the minutes of the REB meeting of July 20, which had been written up for the record only.

13) The REB position will be presented at the next meeting of the Detroit local, of which you are a member, and at which you are free to appear. The meeting will be held Saturday, August 27, at 7 PM, at Weaver's home.

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14) To further safeguard your rights, the REB Heroby informs you that you have the right of appeal to the next duly convoked convention. No body lower than the body which has elected you, has the right to expel. Your suspension, however, remains in effect until the convention.

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As you see, he is not present. That shows what he thinks of the organization, and even more what he thinks of his own political position. He doesn't think it's a political position because it isn't. He isn't here to fight it.

Before I go to the July 20th report, and since it is the Detroit local which is at issue I thought it should be given in person, although the minutes are right here and everyone can study them, I want to call to your attention the Johnsonite organ of August, with its very spurious play at "objectivity" for nothing so sets off the entirely opposite methods of analysis than this grappling with the problem of Nelson. Just to throw around words like "stupid and reactionary" regarding Nelson, which they did in the last issue, got them no further than the Stalinists throwing around words like "fascist" as a designation of Trotsky. So now they have suddenly embarked on "the facts." The conclusion to which they twist the facts reminds me of nothing so much as the manner in which the Stalinists quote Marx. They changed not one single word, in the actual quotation, which shows that it is a matter of the actual class relations, production relations, etc., etc. And then suddenly they say "But since we have no private property, all this does not apply." Now where the Stalinists make everything a question of private property, the Johnsonites make everything a question of personality. Now it's Nelson's political personality, and tomorrow it's somebody else's. Just as empty as the question of Private property. Again the Stalinists say that since they have no private property and therefore no classes, the Hegelian law of development through contradiction from now on does not apply. From now on all you have to do is criticize and self-criticize. Now the Johnsonites have perfected criticism and self-criticism into such a fine point they have done nothing for 4 years before and they are doing nothing now but contemplate their own navels. That doesn't mean that the Stalinists have given up the claim to Marxism. Quite the contrary. They spend millions and millions of dollars to pretend that they are Marxists, to hide from the workers that they are the very opposite of Marxism, that they have transformed Marx's theory of liberation into one of enslavement. Why do they use the word Marx and Marxism? Not alone because their origin is Marxist and they have to pretend that they are the followers of Marx. No, that wouldn't be sufficient. They need the West European proletariat, and the colonial proletariat - who have absolutely no use for capitalism. If you want to get anywhere

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in Western Europe you better begin by saying we're not capitalists, we Marxists. And the same thing with the colonials. The best proof of that, watch what our State Department does. You know how we're supposed to believe in "free enterprise?" But all the propaganda pamphlets they issue for Western Europe or for Africa they say we are not really capitalists, we have reached a stage beyond. But in America they can dispense with Marxism. And the Johnsonites, too, think they can dispense with the doctrine of Marxism, they're so "American." Anything is good enough for the American working class. So that Correspondence now presents the whole question of the split which was due to the war and our listing and their running like cowards, as if it were a question of Nelson's personality. That's a new one.

They leave out what is really the reason, which is that the immediate war preparation which seemed on the question of Formosa to bring the war so close here, that the State Dept. was taking no chances of missing up on any group, even so small as ours. That is what is "personified" in us... Marxism and anti-war. And that is what drove them away. To try and say that it's a question of Nelson's personality, no matter how many facts they put into it, would make it the empty shell that it is. And that is why despite the facts that they changed from epithets against Nelson to so-called "objective facts" it all ends up in the Big Lie that Nelson didn't see the need for organization.

The truth is the exact opposite. Nelson not only sees a need for organization. He wants a real BIG one. We have a real big mass organization, he'll come in. If he has workers to lead, he'll be here. Especially if he has the right to lead them, and you don't interfere. It's not the need for organization that he doesn't see. It's the need for Marxism that he doesn't see. That's what he's ready to throw overboard. And neither for the Johnsonites. That is why they can conclude that Correspondence has no other purpose for existence except to express hostility to ALL FORMS of bureaucracy in EVERY section of society. They're getting very broad-minded now. You have somebody you're against? Just call him a bureaucrat and express yourself in Correspondence.

Well, that is one way of forgetting our class analysis that took some 10 years of patient work both in original sources and against the collective bureaucracy theory of Shachtman. He also was against bureaucracy. That's what he's for. Fight for democracy in everything everywhere. I don't know why we fought him for 6 years to conclude that that's all Correspondence exists for. No, to us the struggle against bureaucracy means a very specific bureaucracy, the labor bureaucracy and the state bureaucracy - the two bureaucracies, economic and political which express capitalism in this stage of its development. Without that basis you leave the field of Marxism and enter that of psycho-analysis.

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I regret only that Nelson, despite his leadership in the break from Johnsonism, could not let them rest in their isolation camp, instead of making them achieve while they've broken from us, what they could not achieve so long as they were with us and I was here, the break-up of Nelson and Weaver. Not only in this split, but for 4 years they worked to achieve this. It was not an easy matter to see that Nelson doesn't run to them, or run somewhere else. But it was quite clear already during the split, that although he took his rightful leadership, and didn't let them break up this fusion of worker and Marxist, he couldn't stand the smallness of the group. He isn't going to psychoanalysis, and they are. What's the difference?

Greater objective forces are pulling at Nelson than he can withstand, as you will see from the July 20th meeting, where we dealt seriously with the problem, not of Nelson, but of Detroit; not of the bureaucracy "as such", but the overriding need to overcome the labor bureaucracy in the only manner it can - through the fusion of the rank and file and the trade union worker with Marxism. I want to state here categorically that there is no other significance to the trade union dispute of 1920. Absolutely none.

Lenin's analysis that there are three social formations in the population as a whole and in the party - workers, rank and file workers, trade unionists, and Bolsheviks, or theoreticians - meant that since we have all the problems in the party itself that are facing them, let's see where we can go from here. First he says it is a very intricate relationship and they must work out; secondly, let's not put up the party as against the mass. Let's always be sure to check the party work by the non-party mass. Despite all the Johnsonite personality twist to this crucial dispute, the simple truth is that there can be no new society short of this merger of the working people with Marxism to which they are moving on their own, all the time. But the labor bureaucracy puts a brake, or the state capitalist, or Social Democrat, someone. But that's where they're moving all the time. That's all their instinctive drive to a new society means - they're moving toward Marxism, and want to merge with that, and that's what will bring the new society.

How is that to be achieved? Because we know it's no simple matter. It was achieved in the Russian Revolution and it failed anyway. That is and must be the concern of every single serious politico who does more than babble about the new society, and how much greater he is than this one or that one.

That is the reason why, and the only reason why, we must begin with ourselves. Otherwise I'd begin with the world crisis and the proletariat as a whole. Not in general, but in particular, for it is Detroit, that ever since 1937, held the key to the answer. Ever since the CIO was built. It immediately

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said "now look here you Marxists, you've existed for 100 years here, and you've gotten nowhere. Now here is this tremendous movement. Will you connect up with it, or will you remain isolated?" You see, it's not the problem of Nelson, it's something a lot bigger. It existed long before Nelson knew about it.

But on July 20 I began my report to the REB. First of all I want to tell you that I said when I began it, I said, this report is 2 years too late. And it should have been made by a worker-leader. Not that the theoretician cannot do it, but it would have signified a new stage if the worker trade-unionist had learned something of Marxism and was able to achieve this analysis. But we can't just go on waiting. I've waited for two years, and then I waited for one more month, and now we have a paper and an organization and a book. We must get them, we can't let Detroit just wallow.

You know why we made a good beginning with News and Letters? Very fine - the finest paper there is. Not because of Detroit, but despite it. It was Frazier and Milton that made possible the tremendous first issues, because they were in the class struggle, in the stream of it, where there were strikes - and they're not rank and file members. With them and the politics the center was able to bring to it, we were able to move with each issue. So in a sense it was n't the rank and file of Detroit, which at that time consisted of Crane and Lacy, and Miles and Durant and Stallworth. I said let's not fool ourselves... who is the rank and file of Detroit? Let's analyze them one by one. I asked, why does Crane who has been analyzed as an enemy of this organization for years, feel so at home, when he hasn't paid dues, he doesn't do any work, and so on. I said Crane doesn't interest me the least bit. The fact that he's at home, that's what interests me. I said, take an entirely different level, Miles and Durant - they are not Crane and Lacy - they are with us. But you have only to compare the 60 subs Durant brought to Correspondence and the 3 or 4 here, and you will see that something is wrong. He, Nelson, was the leader, and he had to take that up. It is the REB that must take responsibility for without it being a political unit, you cannot expect Detroit to be one. Detroit is not a political unit and does not even have any sense of organization. I said you must fight the thing on the REB, not on Detroit.

I said first of all you must recognize that it's not the result of the break, although the situation was aggravated for the simple reason that every single break in history gives people who are on the way out of the movement a chance to hide beneath some excitement and "taking sides." Every politician knows that. As a matter of fact, before you break you always say "Gee I hope so and so doesn't follow me," because you know he's just on the way out. So that the break is not the cause of it.

Two, there was nothing subjective about it... although in any crisis strength of character shows and so do weaknesses of character. And ever since the war, we have known that the weakest began to run for cover. Who doesn't know that? Beginning with Johnson and down to the lowest, even though he was safe, far, far away.

Therefore, three, when they began to run - when is exactly what points to the objective source, beginning with the world crisis and ending with our own isolation from the labor movement.

Dominating over both objective forces are two things:

1) absence of a labor party. It is not only the workers who act politically. It takes a lot of petty bourgeois revolutionists off, who would like to be leaders and talkers and big shots. Let them go to the labor party, it takes them off the revolutionary movement. There's an absence of a labor party here, we suffer from it, it dominates every single aspect of life.

2) the domination of the labor bureaucracy, which can be seen clearest in Detroit. That's why we're always having the biggest mess in Detroit.

Now we cannot move one single step forward if we deny that this bureaucratic domination affects us. The first step to overcoming it is the recognition of its existence.

I pointed out two little things. I said, when I came to Detroit something hung over me like a heavy cloud - the 9:30 curfew. You couldn't call anybody after 9:30. I said those petty-bourgeois intellectuals! We sent them out from New York to proletarianize themselves. They're used to sitting up to 2:00 AM, talking over nothing at all. Now I can't call them after 9:30. We're supposed to be preparing for a big convention, our first public convention, and yet after 9:30 you can't call anyone. Excitement? You can't be excited about the fact that you're going to publish the only worker's paper. Oh no, the labor bureaucracy's not excited, so you can't be. Lackadaisical? On certain days you can't do anything, only on such and such days you do it. What more would a labor bureaucracy want? When they cannot win you to them, then this immobilization of our own ranks does it - they've immobilized us completely. You're going to tell me there's no domination by the labor bureaucracy when I meet such a branch when I move into this city?

This has a history, and that's why I want to go back to 1937. In 1937 when the CIO was built, every Marxist, and for the moment I will include even the Stalinists, because that's one thing they know - they know their enemies in America, in Russia they don't know because they are the ruling class -



everyone knew that from now on Detroit is the key center to all of American labor and therefore to Marxism. And everybody sent in a group of intellectuals to merge with the workers. You know who they merged with? The labor bureaucrats. Everyone of them. That's what happened to the UP and SWP. Cochran, what happened to him? Widdick, what happened to him? Mazy, what happened to him? Every single one of them. They came down to win over the production workers to Marxism, and ended by capitulating to the labor bureaucracy, or trying to get a little tiny wedge into a left-wing caucus. You think we didn't know that? Of course we did, but we thought we were different. We had the right position, they had the wrong one.

In 1947 when we said, during the Interim Period, we want the greatest of them all - Nelson - he's the only one who didn't capitulate - automatically he's the greatest of them all. Only he, too, has just come to Marxism. We will send down a bunch of Marxists, and this unity will bring about the millenium! Here they are: Miles, Durant, Breda, Busch, Ceil - every single one of them, trying to tell me I can't call them after 9:30 in Detroit. I have nothing against "emigres." But don't go parading as something else. Lenin didn't even pay any attention to the other countries, he said I know I'm an emigre, but I want to pay attention to my own country..

We waited from 1947 to 1951, four long years for this merger. Nobody was "putting a gun at your head" like some people around here with "You produce." Four years for this merger. Up to 1950 Nelson at least was able to fight the labor bureaucracy. The last time he had a fight with Reuther, 1950. But we didn't fool ourselves either, because we knew that even though he was fighting the labor bureaucracy, the bureaucracy had all the power in their hands - and the point was not to let the bureaucracy achieve indirectly what they couldn't achieve directly. That means that even though they couldn't directly break Nelson, they shouldn't break indirectly Nelson and the whole group by accomplishing our isolation, complete and utter isolation from the labor movement. That was the problem, when we broke for our independent existence in 1951. We walked off with a prize, Nelson who didn't capitulate. How was he going to see that he should not be isolated and to merge this Marxism in the labor with complete and full freedom. Nobody would dare touch Nelson. We wouldn't let them, not only that nobody would dare. Maybe that wasn't too good. Maybe it was too much protection, but at any rate that was one thing we did.

Only one single thing was won from 1947 to 1951. Ho's sitting over there - Hilton. That wasn't Nelson who won it, it wasn't even the American Question. The Negro Question and Marxism won him. What happened in 1951 when we already had our independent existence, and Nelson was already a big leader. You always begin with a few things, I mean if you are Nelson.

You don't want to be the organizer of the branch, but you don't want someone else to be the organizer so you're going to have an executive of 20 or none at all, or something like that. The whole thing became one running fight between Nelson and the Detroit local with the center. They were fighting, not the labor bureaucracy, not to see that the labor bureaucracy doesn't isolate them, but the center. Boy, that's where you really have to fight. To call the Pittsburgh branch a bunch of dope fiends. That's how you show that you're not isolated from the labor bureaucracy and that you're really going places. Why this branch stank so much that even the one we won from the SWP, Hilton, who brought the NEW, Indignant Heart, couldn't get going. Until the center intervened. They couldn't sell or get anything going even on Indignant Heart.

You think, well Marxism ... yes, Marxism. The first year I worked on the book since the break, and I thought I had achieved something on the Paris Commune and Marx. I thought I had achieved something because I showed that even when you're a great intellectual and the founder of all modern Socialism, like Marx, certain things do not become clarified when you're not with the labor movement. And the "Fifties ..." when he first began working were quite empiric, because that was the defeat of the 1848 revolution. The Sixties ... beginning with the Civil War in the United States and ending with the Paris Commune was an active period, when suddenly all that he had been working on blossomed forth. And I showed how the French edition was written, of Capital, with the help of the French masses. You think anybody in Detroit learned anything either of Marx or the Paris Commune or anything else? No sir. There was Nelson here to say, "She uses such big words nobody can understand them!" It was a disgraceful meeting you people had. Absolutely disgraceful.

Johnson had his own reasons for keeping me away from Detroit, and keeping me away from Nelson in particular. I'm not interested in those reasons. I kept away myself because I wanted Nelson to develop. But this was one time I finally intervened. I wrote two letters. One to Nelson, and one to Broda and Coil and Busch. To Nelson I said, forget Weaver - I didn't use the proper words - you would use better ones, but you are the worker, tell me which words. The important problem, is that we want to present it to the American proletariat. Have another meeting, and tell me, just how are you going to talk about Marxism to the American working class. That's what's important. Write your own. And to Broda and Busch I said, look here, you people, you were sent to bring Marxism - Nelson's fine, but he only comes from the trade-union movement. You're Johnsonites, and you're supposed to bring Marxism. What's the idea of capitulating before him? Why couldn't you say what it means to you? I don't care about the thousands of workers you've never even touched. Tell me what it means to you? That will advance it some.

There is a very specific reason why the paper is the only thing that is new for three decades, and why it is to us what the party was to Lenin. We have reached a very much higher stage. We don't have to bring consciousness to the working-class. Marxism is in their very bones. And if you just listen to them express themselves, you will find out a lot, especially if when they express themselves, you express yourselves. That's the little thing they forgot, the Johnsonites. There was never any room for us to express ourselves. In other words, it's back again to syndicalism.

I said we started something new at the Conference when we broke. We said a return to Marxism on a new basis, a paper that has what the workers say but that also has Marxism. For that we had to stop reducing everything to worker and intellectual. We have to remember a little of Marxism. It isn't all intellectuals. You have the bourgeois intellectuals, and the Marxists. And therefore we have to begin with seeing how the bureaucracy has immobilized us number one, and number two how Johnsonism has robbed us of Marxism and diluted it. And we ask a very simple thing - leave us a lone for six months and let's see where we get. And we get all this restlessness. And all this disorder. Hegel has a word for it. "The giddy world of self-perpetuating disorder."

I said what is this all about. Let's get down to some facts and let's do some work. Let's get down to the book on Marxism. I ended by saying I had nothing concrete to propose for Detroit. But I was sure something concrete would arise out of the discussion in the REB, once we faced this political problem, and we face it not by psychoanalysis about it, but by placing ourselves right in relation to the labor bureaucracy.

Nelson could hardly wait for me to be finished. That man is an impatient character. Petty-bourgeois impatience characterizes him. Right off the bat, just like that - he never thought about this at all - I waited for two years for him to make any sort of analysis. I make the analysis and the very first words out of his mouth, "I reject your analysis flatly. I don't agree that the situation in the Detroit branch is due to the labor bureaucracy. I'm getting sick and tired of being blamed for the situation in the Detroit branch. You say I have capitulated to the labor bureaucracy - I have a concrete proposal. I'll take one year's leave of absence, and you correct the situation."

I said, "No, I won't agree to any year's leave of absence, that isn't going to solve anything." He says, "I'll take it anyway."

Milton said that he learned a lot from the analysis, and that he wanted to begin with this analysis, to see where we could get because everybody could see that Detroit wasn't going anywhere.

Frazier said that she saw that we lacked direction. "We have to analyze and show where the movement is going. Just to say what the workers are saying isn't enough. The analysis is what advances the class struggle. We could live ourselves up with a project like the book on Marxism. That's what makes a class conscious worker. I couldn't have written my articles without being in the movement. We need theory, especially the newer ones. The newer ones are seeing the CIO in decay and have not been corrupted by it. (She is talking about the newer ones not in our movement but in the labor movement, the ones who are having all the wildcat strikes.) They are the ones who are fighting Reuther. But they don't have the rich experiences, they've only been in the organization since 1948. "

Obrion said let's not get into the business of blaming Detroit. It's the leadership we have to begin with. "Anybody sitting at the local meetings, an outsider or anybody, knows that on any issue people look at Weaver and then at Nelson. If there were a real basis for that duality, it would exist in two different political positions that meant something. But it doesn't appear in that form. I don't know of any theory that Nelson has stated that is in contradiction to what Weaver has proposed. We have seen little differences but no different political line. Yet you cannot help getting the feeling in this local that there are two poles to gravitate to. No organization can exist that way - sitting on pins and needles. You can't build any organization, no matter what kind, on that basis." And then he proceeded to show what he thought was going to make it a political unit.

Before Rorty could speak, Nelson: I want to speak again. And that's when he burst forth. Here is Nelson's statement: "O'Brien says that for years people look at me and then at Weaver. Weaver says, and before that, Johnson used to say that the situation in Detroit is my responsibility.

"No doubt there are differences. I have patiently waited for years to see an analysis of those differences brought above board. Everything done in this organization is typical of liberals and opportunists. Differences are slurred over. What Weaver is proposing is that I become a hack of horse. Without thrashing out those differences, Weaver says you have to straighten out the branch.

"I don't want that worker-intellectual business to go into the paper. (That's my Two Worlds column he's talking about.) She's smuggling in an untruth. Weaver, that Two Worlds (#4) does not go into the paper as my position. Your first responsibility is to work out those differences between us.

"When we split in '51 (Listen carefully, and see what this man is saying) I, like everyone else, thought I was going to learn something. I have learned nothing. I used to read on my own. I don't even feel like reading any more. We have no position on organization theory. We have been guilty of opportunism on the organization question. (Look whom he quotes) As CLR showed

in Chapter 7, speaking about France, we are trying to live by Bolshevik methods without being a Bolshevik organization. That's what's paralyzing us.

"I'll tell you about capitulation. (Listen to this man.) The split from the SWP in 1940 was a capitulation to World War II. Our split from the SWP in 1951 was a capitulation to the Korean War. I will predict that this organization will capitulate to this war and to the labor bureaucracy, if it has not done so already.

"CLR has written 10 thousand words, if not 100 thousand on the paper and has said nothing. That's no accident. He's not the only one who has said nothing. No one else has said anything, either.

"Concretely, I want to notify the REB that I no longer consider myself a member of this organization for the reasons I just stated."

Now Rorty - I'm quoting Rorty only in part, I quoted Nelson complete. "History repeats itself, the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce.... We have just had an objective analysis of the domination of the labor bureaucracy here in Detroit. The only thing Nelson has to say about it is that he rejects it flatly and very subjectively he complains that he's tired of being blamed. What is this business of being 'blamed'? And the only thing he has to offer is that he will take a leave or will resign. This is what I mean that the second time it is a farce.

"At the Conference, we had just gone through a split that rid us of the dead weight that had been dragging us down for years, and we were meeting together to plan our course and our life and Nelson was ready to scuttle us just then by throwing in the bombshell, without warning, that he would not serve as editor. It stunned us then. This thing that Nelson said tonight is no bombshell, it is a pathetic fizz. Small as we are, we are the only Marxist organization in the country; if it isn't to be found in this room it is to be found no where. We are not capitulating to the labor bureaucracy. We are the only ones who have any basis on which to oppose them. Just look at our very first issues of the paper. If Nelson leaves, it is because he is capitulating to the labor bureaucracy, not we. It's a harsh thing to be saying to you, Nelson. I never thought I'd live to say that to you, but if you go it's because you are capitulating to the bureaucracy."

I had to stop them. I said, "This isn't on the agenda. That's not the way to introduce a political thesis if you are serious about it."

Milton said, "When Nelson said at a local meeting the other

week when Crane was talking, that political differences exist between him and Weaver, that should have been on the floor. I can't have much respect for people who say there are differences but don't state what they are. But Nelson never stated his differences.

"When Nelson said at the Conference that he wouldn't be editor, I was never so shocked and upset in my life. I feel much different now. I would feel better if you're around, but I'm not upset by what you just said. I will clear the air. You know what happens when you're always under pressure. It's like being up for trial. The suspense gets you. You wish you got your sentence no matter what. That's just the way it is now. One thing I'm sorry about. You say you're resigning and I don't know what differences you have. Maybe I'll never know. But I'm not upset. I'm glad it's out in the open."

I told them that I would have nothing to say on his statement, except to show it's slander. If he is serious, and brings it up I'll do it more than in passing. But for any man who has learned all the Marxism he knows - and it isn't much from us; who has been in all those splits, a leader; who knows that ever since the death of Lenin there has been no theory to explain Stalinism basically and seriously except that of State-Capitalism; and no theory to explain the new society except what State Capitalism is united with, that is, worker's revolt. We are the ones who did it - and to treat the only new thing that has appeared in the slanderous terms that the SWP did - that's not serious. That's just a man who says anything that's in his head in order to get out from under. People can invent some fantastic things when they want to leave the movement, and all they want to do is get out. I think they should.

I said, you're very anxious to leave the movement, Nelson. And he interrupted me. He said, "What movement? You don't even have a position on the American question." Now if we don't have a position on the American question, no one has.

Weaver repeats, "You're very anxious to leave the revolutionary movement, Nelson. You're ready to give patient years to the old organizations and to the labor bureaucracy but you display this sullen impatience - this completely petty-bourgeois restlessness to the core. This tendency is the only new one since Lenin because Trotskyism was not a new tendency but only kept aloft the banner of Leninism. But ours is now. And all that we had done on State-capitalism and workers revolt. And all that we are doing on Marxism and the paper. That you throw out. And say it's capitulation to the war. You see not the SWP capitulating to Tito, which is what happened - but you say we are capitulating on Korea. No one is asking you to be a hack and you know it. You've had it pretty easy here. The question is are we just going to throw in the book as though it is one more incidental thing like a paper distribution once a

month or are we going to present it in such a fundamental manner that they see this as the political line?"

We sent a letter to the membership, because we have a lot of work to do and we're not going to let Nelson stop us anymore than we're going to let the bourgeoisie or Johnson stop us.

We have work to do. The tour is to begin September 17th. The paper is to continue. I began at that time the report to the REB by saying that would have reached a new stage had the editor made the report. Or one of the editors.

I want to say that we have reached a new stage in a very unusual manner — because if we can get rid of that domination and not separate worker and intellectual, but know that worker and Marxism must be united to have the new society, we will have gone a long ways towards it, in our own small way.

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DISCUSSION:

Frazier: A point of procedure. Durant isn't saying what Durant is saying. Durant is repeating what he has learned from Nelson all week, through various phone calls and visits, and we probably will hear it again. I have a procedural point. This discussion is not from a person who is leaving, but from a person who has left. That is what this information is on. And I make a point that we have at least a time limit. There is just a limit to how much a person should listen to.

Milton: Firstly, I want to say I have a lot more respect for Durant than I have for the rest of them that have left, especially from what I know. Durant has tried to come out with something, he tried to give a reason, and that the others didn't do. I have had a lot of experience with Durant and he with me. Many times Durant can't get things and he plays with it. People have always used him to carry things, just as he is doing now. Sometimes it is quite a while before he realizes that, like when he uses this business that he is not going to be a hack, how people do use him for a hack in carrying out something that they kept here the whole time they were in the organization. And I would have more respect for them in doing it themselves than trying to use Durant to do it.

Now the position as I saw it, the analysis that Weaver gave here -- quote me OOI wish we could have one every month, on Marxism and so forth. It is what I feel I wanted, it is what I feel was needed for me when I first came into the revolutionary movement. A lot of these petty things, Durant making this statement "I can't have a vacation" and so forth, is secondary to the political analysis made and the whole conception you gave of revolutionary politics. You have to analyze people, an individual, politically, when something like this happens, and that is what I think Weaver did in this whole business with Nelson.

It wasn't one of those open reactionary positions, but lots of times I had to examine myself very clearly on some of the statements Nelson would make, to see what was he really saying to me. Many of the articles he would say, "Is this for whites only", or he had that in mind, and I thought more than once that it seemed somewhat unfair, kind of an accusation, saying, well, you're anti-white, and you are doing is writing things for them.

Now I don't know. I was somewhat glad when Frazier mentioned and Durant mentioned it too, that he had been out to see Nelson, because it cleared up some of the things I had in mind. Now this whole business, Durant--before I get to that I just want to say one thing: I discussed with Nelson less than I guess with anybody else in the group; I mean political discussions. He was always somewhat hard for me to understand and I told him that. But I was used to talking to E who I thought was as close to Nelson as anybody else. I knew that Nelson wasn't just a worker, an ordinary worker. I sensed and understood that Nelson was an intellectual. And Nelson is as clear an



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intellectual as anyone sitting in this room. I don't care who plays around with it. I don't care how the organization has gone wrong or made a mistake and bent backwards on saying Nelson is a production worker and so forth and so on. I had asked a lot of questions, and I had discovered that Nelson has actually worked on production only two years in his life, that Nelson has been a committeeman or in some leadership all the time. It wasn't altogether this business that the organization has taken him out of the factory and he can't go back. But that he had lost his position as committeeman in the shop then, and that's when he came to the leadership of editing the paper.

I was thinking very seriously about some of the things Weaver analyzed, some of the things she said. I was really thinking that some of the things would hit you, Durant, from our experience, and the way we obtained our independence and this whole discussion of Marxism, but I see you go the other way... When Nelson left I said very frankly that it is a blow, a blow to everyone of us to see someone like Nelson leave. But at the same time it lifted this whole burden of suspense, you never knew what you might say that would blow the man up. It's like walking around dynamite. And you don't want that to happen in a group that you are trying to build.

Another pressure that was on me was the whole business of what the tendency built Nelson to all the time. I didn't want to be the one to say, Well, I had a big fight with Nelson. I knew I wasn't the one that was going to jump up and say I am walking out. It isn't part of my life. You yourself, Durant, have said it before that Nelson has told you that Crane is one of the slickest maneuverers we had in the organization. Now you are saying we didn't give him a chance. How can a person change like you? Nelson had to say at the meeting "I will be the one to straighten Crane out if he comes up with anything." Crane blew up all over the place so that even Nelson finally broke with him, said he couldn't play around with the paper that way. He said it. Nelson finally made a

remark after Crane resigned that he would take over the editing of the labor page and I would take over the editing of the Negro page. But now that's who is running to him.

I think it is true -- if you have four people or three or two, who are willing to work together, who are willing to see objectives the same, who are willing to try and do something, it is much better than having twenty who are pulling all kinds of straws, all kinds of maneuvers in all kinds of ways and then at the end they got somebody who is very serious, and if there is anybody I ever believed was serious it is Durant, and then use him to come in and say well, these are the things, this is Weaver, etc., and the political position she gave is blown out the window. Nelson was the same way. He just said, "I reject it flatly." At the end he started laughing and talking. And this article that he rejected to going in, it finally boiled down to one thing. Then he said that he was going out with the children Sunday so he would see me next week. I said all right. I said I didn't take your statement serious. He said, "Yeah, I meant it." I just can't understand anybody like that.

Mary: (to Durant) I don't think you know what you are talking about. First of all I have no respect for you like Milton has, maybe it's because I don't know you. Secondly, I want you to know something. When you said that you were going to resign, and I saw you had a written statement, I wanted to get up and say that I didn't want to listen to that statement. If you want to go, just go. The door is over there. If you want to work here, work with us, and present your ideas and fight for your ideas, that's okay. But if you are going to go after making a big speech, I don't want to hear it. I can read at my leisure at home, in bed, anyplace, but not here. (Durant: But I have responsibilities, to certain people I brought around.) You have no responsibilities.

I know this isn't going to sound political to you, especially after listening to what you said, but I think you got a h... of a nerve putting yourself up to Weaver. I have seen so many people like this in these organizations. I don't know where they get these big ideas. All of a sudden they are big shots. And another thing, wherever you go to now, I'm sure it will be people that we all know, tell them this -- it is not Weaver, don't come to me and tell me Weaver does this and Weaver does that. I'm in this organization, too, and so is everyone sitting in this room. They're not here because Weaver is over there. I haven't heard no slanders against Nelson. I said at the REB that I was sorry to see Nelson go, because to me he represented something in the organization.

I don't know. I've seen it for so many months now, people say something and someone is writing it down to quote two months later. I can say a lot of things I have heard you say that sound crazy to me. Like skilled workers being more militant than unskilled workers. (Durant: It's true under this system) Don't tell me it is true. (Durant: Let me tell you....) Don't tell me skilled workers struggle harder. I worked with them, I made \$40 a week while they made \$90. You don't know what you are talking about. Nothing else to say except that I just don't want to sit here and argue with him, that's all, if he wants to go, let him go.

Frazier: First I want to say something on Nelson. I think I know him a little better than most people here, but not too well. He is one of those guys you don't get to know. Nelson was with the union bureaucracy from way back, way way back. From almost the minute he walked into the factory. After he was last defeated for committeeman - and by the way we had a lot of discussions over that, over him running for committeeman. He would ask my opinion and I would tell him what my opinion was of the committeeman. I said he is my enemy just like my boss is. Nobody wants to call him. The women would rather try and solve it themselves. That was my experience back in 1950. He was still playing around with the union. Union went into decay. At the time Nelson joined the movement the lower part of the bureaucracy, that is the committeeman, they still had the militancy that they had during the struggle and there was a respect there for the committeeman. Nelson was at that stage. And as the bureaucracy decayed, so did Nelson. So did Nelson. You can't remain a part of something and not decay. Not as Y once said at a branch meeting, "I don't know why Nelson is different from the other committeeman." He wasn't. He wasn't different. Proof of it -- you got the list of subs that he had. They are all from either bureaucrats, and I mean the lower or up to B, I guess that's about almost as high as you can go, down to committeemen and potential committeemen. Those who have run year after year and haven't quite made it, and they want a little of the gravy, too. And they all are ready to sell their soul. Those were Nelson's friends. Those are the ones that came around. Our neighbors, he would have nothing to do with. It is true. In our neighborhood, we're orphans out there. Absolute orphans. And it has always been that way. Our neighbors have never known Nelson. You only have to look at the list of subscribers, that's the written evidence. Those were Nelson's friends.

On Durant, I was sorry to see what happened to Durant. I know Nelson well, I know what he is capable of. And Nelson knows Durant. I know what he was doing to Durant and I was

just sorry to see Durant fall for it. And that is all Durant has done, just fallen for a line.

I want to say something on L. Durant, do you know who drove L. out? You! You drove L. out. L. had some little disagreement. He came in with discrimination, into the group. And the first thing he wanted to talk about it, you brought out a bunch of old documents that Johnson had said ages ago. L. came to our house with it. Nelson had the devil of the time with L. If you want to know about L. discuss it with Nelson. You can still run and talk to him. You're the one that drove L. out. You were willing ... that's right, you were the one to discredit a member of the organization against an outsider. L. was out then. And that is true! That is strictly my opinion, and I got this from L. If you want to know about it, you ask him. He is the one that brought the document around that you dug out of the deep file.

I have nothing more to say except that when it comes to capitulation, Nelson capitulated a long time ago. To the bureaucracy. Not only to the bureaucracy, after he had a taste of the labor struggle. So what he says about us giving into the war, Nelson did.

This is probably going to mean the breaking up of the marriage for me. I realize that. Durant was for that, too, by the way. I beg your pardon Durant, but that is immaterial, too. One of the worst things, one of the most unpolitical remarks that I have ever heard out of Nelson's mouth is that I am staying in for spite, that I am staying in for spite. I said that I have some differences, they are organizational differences. Principly, I agree with the line 100% and this is where I'm staying regardless of where Nelson goes.