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DISCUSSION  
BULLETIN 6

Preliminary Draft of  
CONSTITUTION and BY-LAWS

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DISCUSSIONS of BOOK ON MARXISM: West Virginia;  
Frank, L.A.,  
Youth (Groggins),  
Detroit.

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SEARS ON FORM OF ORGANIZATION

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DELSON ON FINANCE BULLETIN ,

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Miscellany

June, 1956

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Rough Preliminary DraftPROPOSED CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWSPREAMBLE

People everywhere are looking for a new way of life today, under which man can be free to guide his own destiny, set and establish his own mode of living, conditions of work, forms of his association with his fellow man.

The totality of the world crisis is seen in the basic inability of either the Russian or the American social, economic or political systems to solve any of the basic problems of the working class or to be able to offer any present or future freedom from exploitation, degradation or misery.

The age of state capitalism, whether in its totalitarian form or its capitalist democratic form, can offer nothing to humanity but the prospect of another world war. The advent of nuclear weapons, possessed by both sides, seriously raises the question of the survival of mankind in the event of such a struggle.

It is clear that the working people's opposition to war is based upon a vision of a new society in which they, to a man, control their own lives. Any opposition to war, which is based on less than this, must end in capitulation.

We believe that the working class is the only force in the world today capable of changing present-day society and of evolving the forms and the shape of future society. Just as in 1936-37, the American working class found its own way, through the sitdown strikes, to industrial organization and the CIO, so they are searching today for the new political and social forms to fight the labor bureaucracy. Since the 1948-50 miners' strike and the advent of automation, the problem of guiding their own destiny has gotten down to the point of production itself and posed the basic question: what kind of labor? Abroad, the June 17th revolt of the East German workers and the revolts of the slave laborers in the Vorkuta prison camps in Russia itself, show man's determination to fight for his freedom. They have answered affirmatively the question: Can man be free in this age of totalitarianism?

As an expression of the search for a fundamentally new way of life, we hereby establish NEWS & LETTERS COMMITTEES. In keeping with this principle, we establish the paper, NEWS & LETTERS, whose editor shall be a worker, and the articles for which shall be written on a decentralized basis.

We feel that the Negro people occupy a place of special significance in American life. Their struggle for equality and justice, which is taking place every day in every city of the country and increases in tempo and effectiveness, stands in the forefront of the struggle for freedom.

Draft Constitution -p.2.

In establishing NEWS & LETTERS the purpose is to create a forum for the expression of the working class struggles and give voice to the aspirations, thoughts, ideas and needs of the working people, and to create a centre around which the basic ideas of working class emancipation and freedom can crystallize and find the broadest possible form of public expression and acceptance.

We hold that the method of Marxism as a system of theory and thought, is the guide for our growth and development. We hold it to be the duty of each generation to interpret Marxism for itself. We reject the attempt of both the Communists and the Administration to identify Marxism with Communism. Heretofore, American radical groups have failed to establish the theory of Marxism on native grounds. We have therefore undertaken to set forth our own interpretation in book form. It will express Marxism as a world view and as an exposition of the workers' struggle in America in this period of automation.

NEWS & LETTERS, the publication of these committees, shall be published no less than bi-weekly. It is our aim to assure its publication and to promote the firmest unity between workers, Negroes, women, youth and those intellectuals who have broken with the ruling bureaucracy of both capital and labor. We hold that the labor bureaucracy is the last barrier to the full emancipation of the working class.

We make no pretense of being a political party. We constitute ourselves as NEWS & LETTERS COMMITTEES, whose members come together to promote these ideas in an organized manner. If the workers take the initiative to form a political party, it is our hope that the accumulated experience and ideas expressed in NEWS & LETTERS, may be useful in such an event.

Those who join us in these committees do so of their own free will and are bound only to carry out the decisions which they have democratically arrived at. Others, who are not members, are free to contribute material for the paper and to participate in the discussions of these committees.

Accepting these principles we adopt the following by-laws for the conduct of our affairs:—

BY-LAWS

- 1) The Convention of the entire membership of the NEWS & LETTERS COMMITTEES shall be the highest body of the organization.
- 2) The convention shall be assembled on a nation-wide basis as often as is necessary, but in no case shall more than 2 years elapse between conventions.
- 3) The Convention shall elect a National Editorial Board which shall function as the highest body in the organization between conventions. The NEB shall elect its own officers.
- 4) The members of the NEB, resident in the centre where the paper is published, shall constitute the Resident Editorial Board and shall act for the NEB and the membership in all matters affecting the immediate needs of the committee. The REB shall meet not less frequently than bi-weekly.

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Draft Constitution and By-Laws, p.3

5) The REB shall issue a call for a convention at least 90 days before the date set. Resolutions and discussion material shall be presented in bulletin form at least 60 days before the convention to permit the fullest possible discussion. All members of the committees as of the date of convention call shall have voice and vote at the convention. Any member, or group of members, may submit any resolutions, constitutional amendments or discussion material.

6) One-third of the membership, provided they are not all members of the same local committee, may at any time for a special convention, which would then be conducted under these rules.

7) The decisions of the convention shall be binding on all committee members.

8) Local committees may be established with their own local rules and regulations provided that these do not conflict with this constitution. Three or more members in a single city may apply to the REB to set up a local committee.

9) In localities where fewer than three members reside, these members shall be members at large, responsible to the REB.

10) Regular dues for employed members shall be \$1.00 per week and for unemployed members 25¢ per week. Contributions to the organization sustaining fund are voluntary.

11) Local committees shall meet not less frequently than bi-weekly and shall send full minutes of their activities and decisions to each other, and to the REB.

12) Membership

Membership shall be a privilege among freely associated individuals. Acceptance of membership carries with it acceptance of responsibility to carry out and loyally support commonly arrived at decisions of the majority. The membership of any local can invite others to work or participate with them in their discussions, or to exclude those whose conduct or attitudes would hurt the organization.

a) Members shall be dropped for irregular attendance at meetings or for being more than a month in arrears in dues without proper excuse.

b) Members may be suspended for conduct detrimental to the working class.

c) Members may be expelled by the local committees for proved charges of class collaboration, chauvinism against Negroes, or other minority groups, or of conduct unbecoming a member of the group.

d) To protest members against false charges, any charges against any member must be presented to him or her in writing in detail at least 24 hours before the charges are heard by the committee. The person so charged shall have the opportunity to speak and to defend himself against the charges a) before the executive of the local committee, b) before the local committee itself; he shall also have the right to appeal a) to the REB and b) finally to the next convention itself.

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Draft Constitution and By-Laws--part

e) If, at some future time, former members wish to reapply for membership, they shall be accepted only on the basis of passing through a satisfactory probationary period of three months, during which time they shall demonstrate their serious intentions.

13) This constitution and by-laws may be amended only by a majority vote of the convention in full assembly, or by a roll call vote of the entire membership.

14) The committees shall undertake correspondence with workers abroad whose ideas are similar to our own and shall conduct a free interchange of ideas.

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June 6, 1956

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WEST VIRGINIA REPORTS ON BOOK DISCUSSIONS

April 21, 1956

Dear Weaver:

Thought I would send you the report of last night's meeting, instead of through Rorty, since it was on the book, and there were some things that would have really warmed the cockles of your heart.

First of all, it was a meeting in the Run, at the home of the Negro couple who have been coming around more and more (they were very close last year, right after the split and then drifted away for some time). They have a blind son who has become quite interested, and attended even when they didn't. They had gotten in a store-house of eats and drinks, to have refreshments afterwards, which they thought they might make some money on for the paper for us, if the crowd was large enough. It wasn't -- there were only seven of us. And though they were disappointed that more didn't come, we weren't. It really meant a great deal, I think, that they had it, and had gone to such trouble to plan everything.

Andy had prepared a presentation on the last chapter. Only one other miner, Leo (a white miner you may have met before) came. But as soon as Andy started, he interrupted with his ideas--and from then on, Andy's "planned presentation" was considerably altered. It proceeded as a back and forth discussion, but as Andy said, he got in every point he had been going to make, since everything came up naturally:

(At point where Andy raised the question what kind of labor)  
Leo: If a boss is on your neck all the time, he's going to be on your nerves. You've got to watch the machine. But as far as operating the machine, a man can work that system out himself. And when a man gets into certain circumstances, he can't stand no more. He can fix it so it will go, or quit. So the company isn't gaining a thing by doing that. They still do it, but it's a man's principle that counts. If you let them do it... You take my job or your job in the mines. If you let them breathe down your neck, something is going to happen -- something will go wrong. But if you don't pay them any mind, like my boss who says I want this done, or that done -- I'll do what I can and that's all, you can take it or leave. He'll go away and leave you alone. If you see fit that you should do something, you go ahead and do it. If you don't lay down on it. That's the way I look at it.

(At the point where Andy said "You have to look at what the workers are doing, and from there you get the ideas of where the society is going, Leo interrupted:)

But it's also the man himself that causes all this. Some men in there just break their necks. There's a fear of their jobs, for one thing. And their own conscience bothers them. If a man used his brains, he'd do what he could, and if they weren't satisfied, he'd smash it down. But there are so many who will do what

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W.Vr.-p.2

management says, even if they kill themselves. If we could only get them the knowledge and the fighting spirit

Both Leo and Pete were insistent with the idea that the men are killing themselves with automation and doing what the company wants. And that you have to teach them it's wrong. But though it was the "old union man's" concept that the young ones don't know the score, yet what they kept hammering at over and over was HOW. How to get the men to stand together and stop it. How to get the paper over, How to get others reading, How to get others to meetings, etc., etc.

One other thing impressed me, that everyone (including the son who seldom speaks, but thinks plenty) spoke--and with feeling. Toward the end, Betty asked: "I've not read up on history. Who was this guy Marx?" Andy answered, and then I asked to read some passages from Marx (which they had discussed in the course of the discussion and which sounded like Marx himself, though in different words, of course.) I read from the chapter on Machines. Everyone was listening and nodding at certain parts--I wish you could have been there to see it. And then the tape became a muddle --everyone began to talk at once -- so "today-ish" those quotations were! Pete's remarks especially you would have loved:

PETE: I've listened to you discussing that book and that fellow Marx. I can't word it like him, but I know exactly the meaning of it. You go into any industry and work 8 hours for so-called pay. But in the 8 hours that man makes enough off you to cut your throat. He's just drilling your life away, generation by generation. When that generation dies out, he's got a young one coming in. We poor working people are keeping them, such as, Montgomery Ward, Consolidated Coal Co., or any big concern. They aren't going to get broke, because we're going to make enough profits for them to keep grinding us down, generation after generation. It don't matter how smart you are. You may think you're smart, but you're nothing. That book absolutely tells you all that. And we can't make them enuf money fast enough. It's "Hurry up, let's get this here, loading machine's coming. Or here comes that boss and all that kind of stuff. Seniority doesn't mean a thing. They have no classification, it's something new. They gave six free dinners over at the Hotel. I told them, you think they gave you a free dinner --they ought to have kicked your bucket.

Novells: I haven't had any experience in life at all, and I've never worked. But from what I hear and observe, the thing I think people have to learn is that when they think if they do everything for the boss, or whoever's in charge, they think the boss will do them a favor. If they ever learn that the boss isn't going to do anything for them, then they can break out of their fear. They think they're going to get something extra --so they go back and tell

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on others --but when they get sick or something those bosses aren't going to do a thing.

Pete: You know, I laid there this morning about a quarter after six. I looked out the window, and the snow was falling. I said to myself, "You just got to get up there and go, whether you feel like it or not." I just said it to myself. I didn't even speak it to my wife. I just said to myself: "Now you call that a free man? You got to go. You either got to go or tell the reason why. Or tell a lie or something, ain't you? And if you don't go, that man's going to mark it down on your slip. He's going to tell you, "We're depending on you." It's as good as telling me, "If you don't be there, I'll get somebody in your place. He don't care how I feel."

Leo: If we could show some of these people the way life should be lived, then you've got a great thing. But that's going to be a hard job. You read that book, maybe thousands of others won't. I'm not talking again it. The thing is how to get it into their heads that that that man shouldn't control them; they should control him. How and where and when do you show that?

Afterwards we had our "party", and discussed the convention. They were all being very concrete about their plans and sound very much as if they will all come. Then Pete mentioned that he was disappointed, because he thought we would be able to make some money. And pulled out a buck and turned it over to me for the paper, for the evening. Pete and Betty each got up and got a buck, too. And Leo pulled out a buck as well. Dick made a public announcement that he was waiting for his check, and would have some money for the paper as soon as it came.

All in all, it was a fine evening, so far as Andy and I felt. But the best was still to come. (Then came the announcement that Dick and Joy joined. At the same Hunt had also included a description of their first meeting on the book where she had made the presentation, I were present, including Bill from Fairmount. It was held formally at The Shack.)

One incident in particular I must pass on to you. On Friday when I was summarizing the purpose of our discussions I wanted to make two points: one, that on the basis of the discussion and "criticism" of the draft, sections might be revised, but, two, it was not a matter of revising the ideas, rather it was a matter of study of the book as a total philosophy and presentation of our body of ideas. The only thing was that I never got to explain the importance of the ideas as representing "us"--before interrupted me at the word, "criticize". He the miner broke right in--in loud protest. He said, "What do you mean criticize? That means you don't agree doesn't it? It seems to me that we shouldn't come to criticize the book. We have to read it to see what's in it and come to understand it, not to criticize it!" He was so absolutely right that I really had to stop for breath."

Hunt



## M A R X   A N D   F R E E D O M

MARX AND HUMAN FREEDOM is a book of tremendous scope and vision. It is concerned with the origins, the activity and the future of man in industrial civilization. The central core of man's existence - his need to work in order to develop - is related to every sphere of his life; economics, politics, philosophy, religion and culture in a total conception such has never before been presented.

Modern man's use of his labor as a self-developing activity is shown to be the self-creating freedom that alone can bring him out of the existing jungle in which he lives. "Man's thinking not only reflects the objective world, but creates it", through the fusion of feeling and acting.

When the German philosopher Hegel, at the beginning of the 19th century, described the activity in society as continuous movement toward the "absolute idea" induced by a necessity to overcome contradictions, a process he called dialectics, he laid the basis for the understanding of freedom. This understanding is at the heart of Marx's analysis of modern industrial society in his book CAPITAL. This too was the center of Lenin's thought when he wrote "Freedom is not something that you have, but something that you are."

Karl Marx, 100 years ago, in his study of capitalist society made clear the degradation of human living that must follow the transforming of man's labor from the self-developing activity of primitive man into work that is separated or alienated from him. Work becomes a dreaded means of existence instead of a necessity of life.

Marx's predictions have come true, for the crisis that is now present in the world comes from the chronic social sickness produced by the abnormal division of people into mental and manual workers - a process that is inseparable from the alienation of the workman from his work, and which leads inevitably into the class division of society. The measure of this crisis is seen in the threat by the representatives of millions of people to use inter-continental guided missiles with a hydrogen bomb war-head answered by a threat of even more devastating weapons.

In MARXISM AND HUMAN FREEDOM, we can see how the invention of the early industrial machines, the cotton spinner and the steam engine created the factories and led to the forceful separation of the laborer from the land in order that he would tend the machines. It was Marx who first saw that man's labor was being separated from his humanity. The factory owner made out of man's power to labor a commodity with which the capitalist accumulated surplus values. To the laborer was returned only sufficient value to maintain him. The surplus value which is accumulated dead labor in the hands of the capitalist comes to dominate and control the living labor to an ever increasing extent.

The piling up of masses of commodities creates recurrent surpluses, impossible to get rid of with profit to the capitalist. Such economic crises lead to mass unemployment with resulting chaos. We see then an amazing picture in which the fruit of man's labor is destroyed and abundance leading to war and misery.

Well-meaning rational people, utopians and idealists, liberals and many who call themselves socialists, attempt to alleviate the misery. They seek the aid of government in reforms through legal actions. They make plans for a more equitable distribution of the products produced. Their success is superficial, for they are not grappling with what is essential - man's freedom to develop in his work.

In MARXISM AND HUMAN FREEDOM, it is clearly shown that the most important contribution made by Marx lies in his revealing that capitalist society sprouts the seed for its own destruction. The alienation of man's labor smolders on like a live volcano, which must inevitably burst out. The incompleteness of man's life creates the dissatisfaction, which is the dialectic movement for its resolution.

To change the conditions of his labor, man carries on an objective struggle which has changed history. There is recorded the attempts of the early workers to destroy the machines and burn down the factories; the violent revolutions of 1848 which swept throughout the whole of Europe; the uprising of the Paris Commune

in 1871, which created the first workers state; the drive of the American slaves for emancipation; the continuous agitation for shortening the working day; the organization of unions and the establishment of an eight hour day; the fight against speed-ups; the sit-down strikes and the creation of new industrial unions for the lowest unskilled workers.

Attempts to pacify and control the changing but never ceasing revolts takes new forms. In Russia all production is centralized in the hands of a state bureaucracy. But though the laborer is told that there is no longer a factory owner or a capitalist, his labor power is extracted from him with even greater brutality.

In the United States a huge middle class grows up, eager for the benefits promised by democratic capitalism. But the white collar, originally a symbol of a better life, becomes only a front for something hollow. The millions of salesmen, clerks, technicians, record-keepers and bookkeepers, as well as most professionals stagnate and compete in a world dedicated to business. There is no way here to recognize their human potential.

Automation appears on the horizon. Instead of this promise of relief from monotonous and brutalizing labor being a signal for rejoicing, it brings instead the fear of unemployment and even greater human deformity.

The crisis deepens subjectively as well as objectively. Though material possessions like the radio, T.V., automobile, household gadgets, clothing, increase, the cost for living and a sense of individual well-being becomes harder to find. There is instead a growing inner tension and insecurity and a restlessness.

The family becomes unstable. Disinterest and delinquency appears among the youth as it beholds a future in which it can not feel at home. Women reject a home life made stagnant by the pressure of the joyless labor of their men. Divorce is common and the factory seems inviting.

To restrain and control both the subjective and objective resistance of the working man is a task which capitalism must continually pursue. It has created a huge army for this very purpose - a bureaucracy of organizers and specialists. There are vice-presidents, foremen, stewards, teachers and educators as well as policemen. Even the union leaders have been drawn into this work and play an effective part. But "a world run by specialists for the ignorant is and will be a slave world."

These agents must continue to find ways and means to sell an alienated fragmented life to people seeking something else. They cannot succeed, for man today is "concerned, not with the fruits of labor, but the very labor itself."

For deep in the very nature of man is an awareness, which, "under penalty of death," compels him to be satisfied with nothing less than being free.

Frank

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THE YOUTH AND THE BOOK\*\*FROM DETROIT DISCUSSION

Presentation by Groggins†

I don't suppose I will be saying anything new by saying the book is tremendous. I read it several times and each time I reread it I saw something new I didn't see the first time. It sent me back to reading Lenin's State and Revolution and I saw something new there I hadn't seen before. I cannot now separate the two—Lenin and the present book.

The easiest way for me to deal with the book is to say how it has affected me personally. Most of the time around here I am called "the youth". I am getting older but what I am concerned with most organizationally is the attempt to build a youth group. The youth feel a hunger, a gap in their lives, and book fills that gap completely. I'm pretty infatuated with the book. Marxism, the total outlook of the book, does capture the imagination of the youth.

Most recently I was concerned with some college youth. The SWP has a student publication on that campus and they also try to capture the imagination of the youth. The first time I read what they had to say on socialism it was like a blow in my stomach. I couldn't see how anyone could find socialism attractive the way they present it. All they had to say is that society is chaotic, that what it needs is a plan. The worker is mentioned as the other pole of the capitalist, but the main point is that if you can help plan, you can set up a rational society. Here, for example, is what they say on the French Revolution: "From the first, the rising bourgeoisie came into conflict with the old ruling class, the feudal aristocracy, which stood in the way of the development of the capitalist economy. The feudal aristocracy was based on serf labor bound to the soil, while the bourgeoisie needed to set these serfs "free" so that they could work in the factories. Moreover, the feudal lords, through their control of the state, imposed all kinds of taxes, imposts and restrictions on the towns, hampering the development of industry and exchange."

Contrast to this "capitalist need to free the serf" with the description of the French Revolution in the book: "In the town they organized themselves into committees, clubs, societies, the Commune, to assure the destruction of the old and the creation of the new social order. Different from the American Revolution which had no feudal order to contend with, the French was marked at once by great daring and continuance, permanence, of its revolutionary actions. There were great mass mobilizations not alone against the royalists, nor even the right wing of the bourgeoisie (Girondists) but also against the left wing (the Mountain), led by the best known of all bourgeois leaders, Robespierre. This, in fact, was the greatest of all achievements of the Great French Revolution—the workers' discovery of their own way of knowing."

For me this is everything. It is dealing with history as something living. What the urban poor were doing from day to day. It shows their activity—their way of knowing through doing.

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Detroit discussion--Groggins-p.2.

Again, what the book means to me, is the articulation of things which seem so everyday that no one pays much attention to them. But when they are recorded they are recognized immediately as fundamental. Recently, we had a wildcat in my show. Some white collar executive said, "Why do you go out now? I want a vacation, too, but I can't see going out." Of course he was booed and quickly dismissed. "Vacation". He sees nothing. You put in 8 hours daily. You get no satisfaction out of anything you do. You want to get away from it all—you want a "vacation. That means nothing to the executive. It reminded me of the 1950 high school strike when some said all the kids wanted was to play hockey. But they couldn't say why they wanted "to play hockey" so badly that they would even fight the cops and march on city hall, and do all they did in that strike.

The book builds on such feelings and doings. Look at the chapter on automation, how it works in Angela Terrano's article, which deals with automation not only as it means unemployment, nor even as more leisure time, but that work itself will have to be something totally different. The same is true of education. It can't be something you are driven to, as the miner describes how he is driven to work, and the kids feel they are driven to school.

The book draws all these feelings and sets them in context, deals with them seriously, as no other Marxist today is doing. I started by talking about the students. One of them asked me: isn't there Socialism in Sweden? He had no experience at the point of production. But what excuse is there for the S'P to deal with socialism as just "plan". The mentality is the same. Both of them would like to set up a rational system where the workers are docile. That is socialism to them. This book shows, instead, that everything hinges on self-activity of workers. Socialism is what they want. All this is in the book very clearly, especially in the chapter on the 1920 debate..

What all this means to a younger person like me. It totals up what's been happening in my life-time, not only in America, which is tremendous in itself, but on a world scale. Stalinism or any form of nationalized property doesn't solve any fundamental problems for the working class. The struggle goes on. Vorkuta isn't dealt with as an isolated incident. It shows how Russian workers are coping with the monstrosity of Russian Communism.

Take what just happened among the Czechoslovak youth. The New York Times of May 28th sneaks of their demands. The Czech youth are asking for the right to recall National Assembly members--the right of control and recall of their elected representatives--something that happened in the Paris Commune. Nothing is finished. Everything that seems to be in motion is in motion. Again, let me read a passage from the book, this time from the last chapter: "Just as the German and Russian workers in 1953 wrote two glorious pages in history on how man can free himself from the totalitarian stranglehold, so have the American workers ever since automation raised the fundamental problem of the contemporary world: what kind of labor?...The workers don't go in for abstract argumentation on leisure and plenty at some future, unspecified time. They ask concrete questions: 1) how much unemployment will automation bring about? 2) Does the seniority...mean nothing under the new conditions? 3) What about the ceaseless speed-up? The machines are 'man-killers' that are constantly breaking down, and breaking down the nervous system of the men themselves."

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Detroit discussion—p.5

The student and professional planner who do not see the self-activity of the worker have a tremendous distrust of the workingclass just because they cannot "handle" men as if they were things. If the workers don't go the way the planners want them to, they want to have nothing to do with the workers. Just as the Trotskyists start with a preconceived plan in which to force everything and discard what doesn't fit, so this student began speaking against "the illogical" ways of wildcatting. He said he was for "the theory" of revolution, but not for the revolution itself. As the book puts it, "The cynic stands ready to show that nevertheless neither in American nor in Europe had the workers completed a revolution, created a workers state and that all, therefore, including the national resistance movements during the war, or the wartime strikes and Negro demonstrations, or post-war national and international revolts has, if not been for naught, they have certainly "from a Marxist viewpoint" been unsuccessful. That is true. The deeper truth, however, is that the workers did something, the full consequences of which we do not yet know. Certainly no fundamental problems have been solved by World War II and the crisis is now total, the H-bomb putting a question mark over the very survival of civilization as we have known it."

After talking about the futility of plan, the author concludes that the theoretician must take impulses from the masses and work toward a new unity of theory and practice. That is the job of the Marxists today. That is why I want to end with what the book ends: "This is not intellectual abdication. The new impulses can come only from those on whose backs all the oppression weighs. Once the theoretician has taken the impulse from the worker, his work does not end. His work then first begins. It is no small task to work out a new unity of theory and practice. It took Marx his whole lifetime. We are more fortunate than he and do not have to begin from the beginning. We have Marx to build on. We have the great divide in Marxism to absorb. We have the experience of more than three decades rich in working class struggles since Lenin's death as well as the day to day struggles of the Negro masses. The movement from practice to theory cannot fail to meet the movement from theory to practice if we live our lives with the working class."

Milton: I like Groggins' presentation very much. Other so-called Marxists cling to the conception of planning and say all workers have to do is follow them. It reminds me of an incident several years ago when union meetings were more democratic than today and I got the floor at one of them. I was showing the role of the bureaucracy—how they were crushing the revolutionary actions of the workers day in and day out. One of the bureaucrats gets up and says: "This guy doesn't know it, but when the revolution comes, I'll be there." I said: I don't want to know what you'll do when. What I am talking about is how now you are crushing the revolutionary actions of the workers.

We have talked so much about using the paper as a weapon in the class struggle. It never concretised itself in my mind, till now. I see the paper as a weapon in the class struggle in something as direct as this book. The book is it. This will be our weapon in the class struggle.

June 3, 1956

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SEARS ON "WHAT FORM OF ORGANIZATION?"

I would like to say a word in order to correct, or at least to make us aware of what I think is a mistake in the procedure of this meeting. To show that, I want to speak for a moment on the method of the bulletin. In the past, when we have had a discussion of a major political problem or a major organizational problem, by and large, it was initiated by a leader. Even where it was started by some current in the ranks, or by some concrete objective situation, it was at least prefaced by a speech by a leader, which set the line and the tone of the problem which had to be resolved.

This bulletin, this discussion in the national leadership, started on an entirely different basis. That is, instead of Weaver or Rorty or O'Brien talking on what our form of organization should be, the REB asked Mary to come before them. Mary was to have her say and on the basis of what this worker said at the meeting, everyone would join in and then the document would be drafted and only then it would be presented to the organization as a whole.

Now, certainly that is not what we have done in our meeting today. I'm not blaming anybody. If anyone is to blame, it is certainly myself and the other political leaders here for not being aware of it. But the nature of the discussion here shows that certainly we should have had a presentation and that we should, in all likelihood, have had Watkins make such a presentation. We're very much at fault and the discussion is suffering as a result of not having done so.

In the bulletin it says, on p. 4, something that shook me up for a minute: "The struggle between the third layer and second, or between worker and intellectual, that will move us forward has to be the struggle that comes from two different ways of life -- not that of a label or personality. If we are unified around Marxism, Marxism will discipline us."

As soon as I saw that I said, what are we starting here? Are we going to start a personality clash, as we had in the Correspondence group, between this person who was labeled worker and that one who was going to be labelled middle or alien class influence? Then when I looked at it a little further and thought about what does actually move an organization forward, there is no doubt that what moves an organization like our forward is the impact between working class ideas and other ideas.

The last sentence in that paragraph is: "If we are unified around Marxism, Marxism will discipline us." Marxism is the theory of the working class, the ideas of the working class. Certainly the way we have proceeded in this meeting has not been along those lines. I'm not going to blame anybody after a period of some silence for jumping in and trying to direct, to lead a discussion because that's a responsibility of any member, worker or non-worker. I want to say this too, that the discipline of Marxism is the discipline that comes from inside of us. It is not something that you can set down in a bulletin.

We have discussed that problem for months, here in this local, in one form or another. How can we get a consciousness of what we are about? The consciousness has to come from inside the individual. I have one concrete suggestion, based on personal experience of mine. First, I'll relate the personal experience and then I'll tell you what my very concrete recommendation is.

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Sears, p. 2

The experience is in regard to the editing meetings. When we have had articles on labor here, when we have had articles to do with the class struggle, the meetings moved forward. When we didn't have those articles, the meetings, by and large, did not move forward. And now if they do not move forward when we have visitors here, when we do not have a working class direction to the meeting, then these visitors took over. They took over and the meetings became other than what we would like them to be.

My concrete suggestion is this: that just as in those editing meetings, every time that I would come in prepared to set that meeting off in a certain objective direction, a certain objective relationship to the class struggle was apparent, so every single worker here has to be exactly prepared to do the same thing on any discussion and particularly this convention discussion. I think it is shameful that we had a silence at the beginning and that Watkins and Ronson and, in a certain sense myself, do not come to these meetings prepared to speak first. I don't speak first deliberately because I'm local chairman, because of a certain position in the organization and so forth, but I believe that Watkins and Ronson should come prepared to meetings and prepared to speak.

We should have had a presentation at this meeting and we didn't. Individuals here, with some class experience and some class instincts are going to be prepared whether a speaker has been assigned or not to come in here and initiate the discussion and set it on a certain track. This has nothing to do at all with any kind of artificial system like seating workers in front and seating everybody else in the back. I wasn't around here when that happened in Correspondence. You don't establish the relations between working class thought and other forms of thought by means of such an artificial division. That's just a show aim, as it happened, all it did was to confuse the issue and to distort the relations between working people and other forms of thought. But the thing has to be as a result of a certain internal discipline where the workers in this organization who have some relation with the workers around them and have some experiences and, in particular, Watkins, who has been thinking of the problem of the form of the organization, act as a spokesman for the working class and for the organization.

#### Decisions to Be Made

If I may just move this discussion ahead a little bit -- on the forms of working class organization. None of us can predict what these will be. What we are concerned with is that in a month we're going to have to make certain decisions about our form of organization.

I'll enumerate them as they are listed at least in this bulletin. One is a re-registration. What is a re-registration? Re-registration relates to a constitution and a list of obligations for membership in this organization. What obligations, what kind of list of obligations do we want for this organization? Do we want such a list for one thing? These are concrete things. These aren't questions of workers councils or workers committees or how do you get a sense of Marxism into the organization, into the paper. These are very concrete questions. What kind of an organization do we, as a united group, sit down and ask of ourselves and each other? That's a concrete proposal. Resolution or no resolution, Mary is advancing this, or the REB discussion proposes a list of obligations which we have never had in our organization.

Just as a point of history I might add that when we first started, five years ago, we set up a constitution. I daresay that very few people in this

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organization have ever actually had it at hand. I have it at home. It had two points. I don't even remember myself what it says. It never was printed. I don't believe it was even mimeoed, just typewritten. The only provisions it had were: 1) the relations between the national committee, the REB and the national convention as the leading body in the organization; and 2) in case of expulsion, the local branch has a right to suspend a person and it gave constitutional protection to a member if he was suspended by a local to be able to appear before the national convention.

We never established exactly what we were unified around and, to my mind, that is the whole point of this convention. We are not going to decide, by means of writing a resolution, how our meetings are going to be, how discipline is going to be established, how local committees are going to function, how relations between leaders and ranks are going to be resolved. Those are not resolved by resolutions. In my opinion at least, those are resolved by living practice and by the way the people in the organization care to have it function. We have had many pretty words in the past as to how the organization should function and all that, in practice, was subverted because we weren't on a Marxist road, because we lacked certain experience, because certain leaders had aims of their own which weren't apparent to the rest of us. And there was a difference in thought and in purpose. But certainly at this convention we are going to have to decide what constitutes membership in this organization.

What is it that makes us belong to this organization? What is it which binds us together? What do we obligate ourselves to do by membership in this organization? That's the framework we have to work within.

A Thought on the Youth

I'd like to wind up with two very simple thoughts. One on the youth. I believe that in the following sentences from the bulletin, p. 7: "In looking at the breakdown you have to see what came out that was good, for in so doing you get glimpses of what is possible. I do believe, though, it would be wrong and crazy for us to think that we have a youth group. We most likely will discuss this too at the convention in more detail -- what to do. There are a few youth in the group who can write on youth for the paper. We just have to keep in mind what we are and not exaggerate." From these sentences, far from seeing no way at all of building the youth, you get some of the concrete things that have come out in the paper that are good and can't be ignored. Those actually are a basis for building and, furthermore, the whole lesson of the 1950 student strike -- I don't want to go into that any further -- but I think that you have to read that section on youth over. What's involved is a recognition that we do not have a youth group but there is no question here of not striving to build one or thinking that one is not possible.

May 1956

-- Sears



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DALSON ON THE FINANCE BULLETIN (from L.A. Discussion)

I think this problem isn't anyone's fault in particular. This problem bothers a lot of people.

I want to deal with some of the things the previous speaker said. But I want to preface them with a few other things first. Like others, when I first read the Finance Bulletin, when I skimmed through it for the first time, I felt rather bad. I was also annoyed at one of the remarks made which gave the impression that, because we live in California, we are wealthy. But on reading the Bulletin over thoroughly I feel differently.

It isn't that I suddenly saw the light, and I didn't suddenly come to the conclusion that we do have all kinds of money that we're not contributing and that we ought to just shell out a little bit more, or anything of the sort. But the fact that stands out is that we have been in a crisis in more than one respect and we have to start recognizing the fact, that actually there has been a certain attitude all along here, where a couple of people carried the ball while a few other people pulled away because they're torn by several things.

Facts and Attitudes

On the one hand, they want to see the paper continue. On the other hand, they're tired, worn out, and it makes them angry to be asked to do anything further beyond what they've been doing. The fact remains that if that attitude weren't here, and if we all felt unanimously that we had to do what we had to do, and went ahead and did it; and pulled out all the resources that we possibly could, that we would have gotten more money; and that we will get more money.

If we felt a certain unanimity of opinion and feeling about what's necessary without relying on the centre and looking to it to take care of everything-- Actually we haven't really faced the problem concretely and openly as to how we would really feel if there was no such paper. Somehow we got the idea in the back of our head that there are some people that will carry it on, only I don't want to be touched any more. I'm going around in circles to get to my main point.

Now I want to deal with a couple of the things of the other speaker. She feels that the paper is o.k., but the people have done her dirt. People don't want to accept her and she makes an analogy between a married couple and, to a great extent, the organization.

Relations in a Marriage and Relations in the Organization

The organization can be compared in many respects to a marriage, but in very fundamental respects it cannot. Certainly in a marriage if a person puts his arms around another person and the other person rebuffs him, then that person has a perfect right to say: The hell with you; I don't want to have any more to do with you. You don't want me; I don't want you either, and away you go. But that doesn't work out very well with a revolutionary paper and a revolutionary organization.

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Delson, p.2

The whole idea of the book and the whole idea of the philosophy and everything else we believe in, and the method that we are trying to learn, is exactly the opposite of this attitude.

Let's take exactly what would happen if you did decide: "Well, people aren't accenting me; I'm not going to knock my head against a wall. I'm tired of being rebuffed; I'm tired of being told this doesn't amount to a hill of beans. I want a little approval and I'm not getting it so the heck with it. I'm just going to fold up and sleep awhile while they start moving around and then I'll be there."

Then what happens when that happens? What happens is that when they do start moving —moving, that is, in a respect that you can see because people are moving in a respect that other people can see but you can't. But let's say that people are moving in a way that you can see, then what are you going to say?

You're going to be there with what?

Who's going to listen to you? What have you said up till now?

How will you understand how they are moving? You won't know the first thing about it because you haven't been there all along.

Sure, it's hard. I think that this must be one of the most difficult kinds of periods to go through in a revolutionary movement, the time when people aren't accepting you wholeheartedly and saying: This is exactly what I've been looking for.

That is to say in your experience in any case because there are people in the movement, in the organization, who do find people who say: This is exactly what I'm looking for; and that was in some of the bulletins. Milton reported it—the fact that a guy goes into his shop and says to a committee man that came around and asked for money for COPE: "This paper (NEWS & LETTERS); if you want money for this, o.k. But I'm not going to give money for that (COPE)."

In other words, it's within other people's experience, but it isn't within yours. And it isn't to a great extent within mine either.

#### Us and the Outside World

It's also easy to look inside your own egg shell and see nothing. The hard part is to look outside of the egg shell, and see something else moving around beside your own little world.

Because what happens is that when you decide to move things are going to be so far beyond you, that you're not going to be able to catch up. Then, where are you going to be?

That's what people who (I'm not saying that you're going out, or that you are out, or anything of the sort) but that's what a lot of people who have gone away from the movement say: "I'm tired; nobody listens to me." They say it because they see only within the confines of their own experience. And to a great extent they don't even understand their own experience. They're feeling sorry for themselves; a

Delson n.3

little too much so, a great deal of the time. So what happens?

The people who left the movement also said: "You know when the revolution happens, you can expect me. I'll be there." Make an appointment!

But where are they in the meantime?

What happens to you as a human being, as a person? Do you think you go on with the same feelings and attitudes? You think you're constant?

Does it happen in a love affair? Does it happen in any kind of a relationship when you're not giving of yourself? When you're not pulling everything out of you, to give what you possibly can, and all the resources that you have, then after a while you can't. You're lost.

I'm not speaking to give you a lecture. These are my own thoughts for myself, and it goes for everybody else.

What To Do

The thing is that we've got to be precise in order logically to discuss an attitude toward the \$5,000 fund. We've got to start thinking in terms of what we are going to do, what shape we ourselves are in.

We're wrong in a lot of our attitudes. In other words—sure, it's a good thing to stick up; it's a good thing to fight back and to stick up for your rights when you're absolutely sure that you are right. But it is another thing just to accept blindly and take too seriously your own attitudes on some things when you haven't been moving for a long time. You have to start examining exactly where do you stand in this whole thing objectively.

It seems to me the only answer is to look at it objectively. I've been looking toward Sears' investigation of this other method of printing hopefully as well as Watkins. I don't know if it's the full answer, though. I don't think it is, but I've been looking at it as a little bit less of a strain. But certainly the answer isn't there.

The answer is in our own attitude as to what in the world we ourselves are willing to give of ourselves. If in private discussions people are going to speak all kinds of antagonistic things and show all kinds of antagonistic attitudes and then on the floor not say a darn thing about how they really feel about something—are not willing to say what they themselves are going to do or what they themselves are not going to do—how they really feel; how they take themselves; how they see themselves in a revolutionary movement as it is today, not as it will be tomorrow, then we'll get nowhere.

We've got to discuss that before we can say seriously whether we're willing to give all that money. For myself personally I'm willing to do what I have to do. If this is the only answer, and if it's

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P.4

seriously the only answer that we have to raise \$5,000—then for myself I will go out and work; if it's the answer for me, then that's what I'm going to do. If \$500 is going to assure the paper and since I'm not willing to see the paper go under, I think that would be a great loss to us. You just can't stop at your own attitudes and say that's it. You have to look at the paper.

Wilton on Fund:

I expected a political discussion in relationship to the organization. It is how we look at the whole that counts. I know I can raise \$200 because I have to. I look at it from the point of view of needs. I've always looked at things that way in my own life. If I die and I owe \$10,000, o.k.

It is not inhuman, in my opinion, to want some nice things but it is inhuman to say that because I need some nice things, I cannot give the organization what it asks for. I know many workers, Negroes, who on the average pay their church \$10, \$10 a Sunday, not a month, a Sunday. They have other responsibilities too and they have plenty of debts. I'm indebted over my head and I'm working now only three days a week, and even the less of pay for two weeks. You know the average guy is glad to miss two weeks. He says I could have used the money, but it was worth having the two weeks off. I just can't see how anyone can have a different attitude toward one's own organization.

From W.Va. Letter

Fairbanks and I were talking about the current wildcat and what a crime, literally, it is not to have a regular paper, with all it would mean in the present situation.

I do know that it is the sort of thing that makes you grit your teeth at not having a regular, frequently issued paper! It is the same feeling as when everything was popping in Montgomery and you felt how much the paper was needed. You just don't write the same way for a "monthly" as you can for a bi-weekly or weekly. Things happen so fast—the issues or situations don't die—but lots of articles that would be hot today will be cold a month from now. I think you know what I mean.

Hunt

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