

role-modeling socialist behavior

THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF ISAAC RAB

karla doris rab

ROLE-MODELING
SOCIALIST BEHAVIOR

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“There is one thing stronger than all the armies in the world, and that is an idea whose time has come.”

— Victor Hugo



RAB'S MATHEMATICS

To everyone's protestations against his socialist "utopia" with "one cannot change the world into a moneyless coöperative world society without leaders or borders" he would invariably point out the logic of mathematics: if every world socialist — between 50 and 100,000 at least at present — followed his dream of the goodlife and convinced just one person and they in turn convinced just one person the revolution would be here in a year — "there is nothing as powerful as an IDEA whose time has come."

— Trevor Goodger-Hill



“The most important task facing humanity today is to spread knowledge and understanding of the case for socialism.”

— Isaac Rab

PREFACE

All over the world, we see anxiety about money, homeless people asking for help, the pressures of earning a living putting extra stress on all kinds of relationships. These things are everywhere we look. They are hard to miss.

We are living in a society based on greed. Capitalism needs to keep expanding until it eats up the whole world.

It isn't very hard to recognize that no matter what our standing in this capitalist world — whether we're on Welfare, we're working for a living and making it, or we have enough capital so we're all set even if we don't work — we are all adversely affected by the stress of living in this sick, greedy society.

What is much harder to recognize is that it doesn't have to be this way. There is a viable alternative to capitalism. My grandfather, Isaac Rab, knew this 'way back in 1916.

Rab always said that the most important task facing humanity today is to spread knowledge and understanding of the case for socialism. This little book in your hand is my contribution to that task. I am one of the "world socialists" referred to in the poem on the previous page.

The reason spreading knowledge and understanding of the case for socialism is so important is that World Socialism can only come into being when huge numbers of ordinary people understand what it is, and want it enough to commit themselves to making it work. That's the one factor lacking to establish World Socialism right now. All the other material conditions necessary for a socialist revolution, such as the technological ability to produce abundance, are already in place. Once there is a general recognition that global capitalism is clearly not operating in the interests of most people, and never could be reformed so that it would — and that a viable alternative to global capitalism does truly exist, the rest will be easy.

It might sound like a waste of time to devote one's whole life to telling people what's wrong with the world, and why and how to change it to make it better. In fact, it might sound so impossible as to be pretty nutty.

But on the other hand, I remember Papa Rab saying, when we first started talking about these things together, "Just picture what it would be like. You know *you're* no smarter than anyone else. Other people can do

the same as you. Picture what would happen if thousands and thousands of people were *doing* the same thing as *you* are.” (He spoke in italics a lot.) “Think what would happen then. Just multiply yourself by about a million and imagine what an impact that would have.” Meaning, it has to begin somewhere. That’s why the title of this book is *Role-Modeling Socialist Behavior*.

Papa spent his whole adult life role modeling socialist behavior: i.e., spreading socialist knowledge and understanding every chance he got. That’s how a convinced socialist should behave, because if we all did that, why then we’d have socialism! So Rab would strike up conversations with anyone who crossed his path, and nine times out of ten, he’d bring the subject of the conversation around to socialism pretty soon. He said that was planting seeds.

It’s a good touchstone to use, that concept of multiplying yourself by a million or so. It’s especially handy when you vote, for instance. If you think about it that way, it doesn’t seem so nutty to spend your life telling people what’s wrong with the world, and why and how to change it to make it better.



A word about me: Born into the Rab family in 1940, I learned about socialism by osmosis, first at endless discussions around our kitchen table, later at WSP socials in our living room, then in meetings and classes at Headquarters. I can’t remember a time when I didn’t know that I was a socialist, in the same way I knew that I was a little girl, that I was a Bostonian, that I was a Rab. Rab was my “Papa.”

For a long time, though, I didn’t really understand what being a socialist meant; or what “the movement” was all about; or even what “socialism” was. I remember walking home from Second Grade one day, when I noticed that red flags had been put up all over the neighborhood. Joyfully, I announced to my family, “The Revolution has finally happened!”

“How do you know?” asked Papa. “They’ve put up scarlet banners! That’s the Socialist flag!” I enthused. Patiently, I was made to understand that those flags were being used to warn people away from a construction site, and that the Revolution probably wasn’t going to happen for quite a long time.

Later on, when I was a bigger girl, I asked Rab to please explain to me what socialism was. He said it was three things: a science, a movement, and a system of society. He talked about the materialist conception of history, the class struggle, and a classless, moneyless society based on the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments of production.

Well, that was quite a bit to digest all at once, but I tried. By the time I officially joined the World Socialist Movement in 1962, I had a good basic understanding of the case for socialism. From then till now, I’ve been doing my very best to speed the day when the Revolution does happen. You know, the only thing standing in the way at this point is the lack of a conscious majority of people who understand what socialism is, and are willing to commit themselves to making it work.

I hope that reading here about Papa Rab will inspire you to become a part of that conscious socialist majority.

CHAPTER ONE

Beginnings

1893 — 1915: Rab's family in Navaradok; his childhood in Boston; Ohio Northern University.

Rab's parents, Sheppie Rabinowich and Sarah Friedberg Rabinowich, came from Navaradok shtetel, in Minsk-Gobernia, on the Russian-Polish border. Sheppie's father and grandfathers for generations back had been rabbis in Navaradok, and Sheppie, in keeping with the family tradition, also studied to be a rabbi; but at the last minute, he decided that it is irrational to believe in a god. Therefore, he gave up on being a rabbi and became a lay teacher and a scholar instead. He was one of the few Jewish people in those times, in that place, who had papers to travel anywhere he wanted. And he considered himself a revolutionary socialist.

Sarah Friedberg was a young distant relative of his. They first met when her family engaged him to tutor her. Like Sheppie, Sarah was already an atheist, and she was very bright. He convinced her of the importance of establishing a socialist society, and somewhere in the midst of his teaching and their discussions, she fell in love with him despite the large difference in their ages and the fact that they were cousins of some sort.

I have no way to know how the Friedbergs or the Rabinowiches felt about this marriage, but not long afterwards, Sheppie and Sarah left for America. Sarah was pregnant during that long trip. They arrived in Boston in August 1893, and on December 22, Sarah birthed a son in their new home, a small apartment above a stable for horses in the North End.



They named him Isaac. From the beginning, they taught him that his life would make a difference in the world. They taught him that his family was special because it held the tradition of ideas and understanding in the highest regard. “Does he have a good understanding?” the family still ask of one another today, discussing a newcomer. And in the years when Sarah had become “Sarah Mutter” to Rab’s own small children, she would always ask them, “What are you reading?” after she had bestowed her wet kisses on their cheeks.



The year after Rab was born, Eugene V. Debs led 60,000 workers in what came to be called the Debs Rebellion, outside Chicago. All those workers participated in a work stoppage along the Western railway lines: the great Pullman strike of 1894. It was a mass action for socialism, well-organized and orderly.

Sheppie, a member of the Socialist Labor Party during his first years in the United States, left it to join Debs’s organization in 1899. By that time, he had established himself as an importer of his own special brand of tobacco, which he sold at “Sheppie’s Blue Store” on Washington Street in the South End, and distributed to other smaller stores in the area.

Sheppie worked hard, and Sarah relieved him at noon so that he could rest, although her family, like his, had been well-to-do in Navaradok and the Rabinowiches of Boston always had a maid. As soon as Rab was old enough, he also helped out in the store. “I used to go over the route to take orders and to deliver bundles,” he told us later.

The family considered itself to be special, but this had nothing to do with material possessions: it was a matter of what they valued as important. Sarah used to say that highbrows talk about ideas; middlebrows talk about events; only lowbrows talk about other people. The Rabinowich family talked about ideas. Sheppie’s Blue Store became a gathering place for discussions. Later, as an adult, Rab bragged, “My parents would preach socialism to the customers.”*

“Because of my parents’ friendships and discussions with a coterie of inspiring persons in the neighborhood, I spent time with such persons as Wm. Monroe Trotter ... Not only did I spend time in his store, but I accompanied him on his walks doing errands on behalf of *The Guardian*.” (Trotter was a well-known Black radical; *The Boston Guardian*, which he

* See Selected Letters, pp. 350—351.

had founded in 1901, was a protest newspaper with the motto “For every right, with all thy might.”) Rab felt he had a deep bond with Trotter, but “many theoretical differences.”

Another Black radical whom Rab remembered only as “Mr. Cook,” was at the Blue Store so often he was “practically a member of the family. But when Marcus Garvey loomed on the horizon” [this would probably not have been until Rab was in high school], “ [Mr. Cook] became an ardent supporter of his cause. You can picture the discussions. But in no way did it interfere with personal relations. [All the people at the discussions] had one thing in common: [they were] genuine human beings.”

A few of them, some White and some Black, also considered themselves to be socialists. Through Sheppie’s influence, in 1909, these people formed a Local of the Socialist Party of America, the party of Eugene V. Debs.

Sarah and Sheppie presided over discussions where ideas of all sorts were discussed, but the most important were ideas about social change. Rab, being somewhat frail as a child, was often home from school, listening to his parents — and especially his mother — expound their radical ideas.

It is clear from his memories that mother and son were kindred spirits.



For his part, he loved and admired her more than anyone else. When he was in his early seventies, he wrote of her: “Sarah... my mother... was the pioneer revolutionary socialist in the family. She was free from religious superstitions, unqualifiedly. Both Comrades Kohn and Baritz visited my parents in Boston, while I was still in Detroit. It was my father who had originally convinced her of socialism while they were still in Russia, but in his later years he became enamored of the Russian bug and the Jewish ‘problems.’ He never swallowed the religious nonsense, clarity on this was too deeply ingrained.”*

Sheppie was a joiner. He was a founding member of organizations ranging from the Workmen’s Circle (the old *Arbeiter Ring*) to the Communist Party of America. Although Rab loved and respected him, he was critical of him for letting his emotions carry him from one organization to another: “Away back in 1893, my father was a member of

* See Selected Letters, p. 294.



Rab in 1897.

the Socialist Labor Party, then he jumped with the other Kangaroos into the Socialist Party of America when it was formed in the 1899 - 1900 period. In 1919 he became a charter member of the Communist Party, to which he belonged until his death.”*

Rab told me when I was still quite little that his mother had instructed him how to live his life. She told him, “You are a socialist. Even though it isn’t fair, people are always going to judge socialism by the way you behave. So your life must be exemplary.”

Rab’s sayings came back to me, as I watched his brain die during the 1980s. How many neurons can be lost and still let the mind retain an adage like “The Devil takes care of his own!” (Rab always said that with a mischievous smile when something went well.)

Often, in a discussion that was in danger of turning into an argument, he would say: “Please! Don’t believe a word I say!” Papa always wanted you to question everything, to keep an open mind while looking around you, then to make up your mind based on what you had found out for yourself.

He loved to point out the distinction between being “open-minded” and being “broad-minded.” “Broad-minded” people will accept an idea that seems vaguely on the right track, even if it isn’t demonstrably valid; a broad-minded thinker might thus be willing to compromise on matters of principle. If you ever thought that the Americans for Democratic Action, for instance, or the Students for a Democratic Society, were organizations that might actually accomplish something significant, that would indicate you were “broad-minded” because neither the ADA nor the SDS were primarily focused on eliminating capitalism — whereas, obviously, real democracy (which surely must involve the ability to make meaningful choices about one’s own life) is impossible within the framework of capitalism.

If, on the other hand, you kept an “open” mind, sooner or later you had to become convinced of the case for scientific socialism. “There are only three things a person can be,” he told me: “a fool, a knave, or a socialist.”

* Selected Letters, p. 205.

Rab was very clear that there is no such thing as “socialistic.” A thing either is Socialist, or it is not.

Another maxim (which went hand in hand with being open-minded) was “Don’t try to make the facts fit your ideas. You have to make your ideas fit the facts.”



In 1895, Sarah gave birth to another son, Nat, and not long after to a baby girl, Leah. As a comrade in the Socialist Party of America, Sheppie sent all three of his children to the Boston Socialist Sunday School at 88 Charles Street, which had been organized towards the Turn of the Century to expose children ages 6 - 10 to ideas they wouldn’t hear weekdays in the public schools. Ike and Nat started at the Sunday School in 1902, Leah a little later. “We used to sing socialist songs and have a general good time ... Pity there are no such things any more,” Rab reminisced later. “One of the highlights was the massive Moyer/Haywood/Pettibone parade of labor unions and other organizations. The Sunday School led the procession and I was the proud chief marshal, in 1906.”* This parade was part of a national outcry against the frame-up of three socialist labor leaders, members of the Western Federation of Labor and founders of the I.W.W., on a murder charge. In Boston, 12-year-old Rab marched at the head of 50,000 union members chanting “If Moyer and Haywood die; If Moyer and Haywood die; Twenty million workingmen will know the reason why.” The three men were found not guilty.**

Rab’s elementary schooling was at the Dearborn School and the Aaron Davis School. “In the 6th Grade,” he told a friend in 1968, “I was expressing ‘radical’ views to a bunch of kids. It was not long before I was brutally attacked by a gang of enraged kids in Orchard Park because of my remarks on the Church and patriotism. The favorite remark: ‘You goddam Jew, you killed Christ!’ (And all the time this was going on, I felt sorry for their ignorance and superstitions and didn’t hold any grudge against them.) ... Incidentally, my father was boycotted by religious Jews for opening his store on ‘sacred’ holidays because of their superstitious nature. And strange to say, he was regarded as an authority by the same Jews on the Bible because of his youthful studies.”

* See Selected Letters, pp. 317-318.

** For more of Rab’s reminiscences about the Sunday School, see Selected Letters, p. 351.

Rab's high school years were spent at Boston Latin School, where he formed a friendship with Arthur Fiedler, a classmate who later became famous as the conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. The two young men maintained close ties of friendship long after their school years. While at Latin School, both of them, along with all the other students, were part of the school Chorus; but, unlike the musical Fiedler, Rab was politely asked not to sing, but just to move his lips because he kept throwing everyone else off-key with his enthusiastic attempts at carrying a tune.

Though not very successful at Chorus, Rab greatly enjoyed school athletics. He was always proud that he once won the 100-yard dash in Track (his wind being still not strong enough for the longer events). He was also an outstanding scholar, particularly in Latin, Greek and mathematics.

He graduated in 1912, the same year that Sarah bore her fourth child, Dina. You can see him in his high school Graduation picture above. With Isaac (or Ike, as he was called in those days), Nat, Leah and Dina, Sheppie and Sarah Rabinowich's family was complete.



Of course, being Sheppie and Sarah's son, Rab considered himself a socialist long before he graduated high school. Like me, his grandchild, he must have learned it by osmosis, not only from his parental family, but also from discussions at the Blue Store. He had joined the Socialist Party of America in 1909, at age 16.

The story goes that the SPA's Constitution at that time required members to be at least 18 years old, and that five members were required to constitute a Local. But four of the men who had been discussing socialism at the Blue Store were looking for a fifth so that they could organize a Roxbury Local; and once Rab agreed to be their fifth member, they got special permission from the SPA Headquarters in Chicago for him to join. "We held several meetings in small halls on Tremont Street," he

recalled later, and added that, of the five comrades, "One especially was a powerful speaker. The meetings were poorly attended, however."

He served as the Local's secretary from 1909 until 1912, when he left Boston.

He wasn't quite sure, however, what being a socialist meant in behavioral terms. After graduating from Boston Latin School, Rab applied and was accepted to Harvard College, a course of action which his parents both encouraged. But in the summer of 1912, he conceived the notion that, as a socialist, he really wasn't interested in that type of an education. He wanted to be a real worker. He did some serious thinking and reading that summer, and in the fall, instead of matriculating at Harvard, he took the train to Ada, Ohio, and entered the Freshman class of the Agricultural College of Ohio Northern University, which offered a program he felt was suited to his interests. Spending his life on the land as a farmer sounded right to him.

I am tempted to say this decision to learn farming might be seen as the first signal of Rab's intent to role-model socialist behavior.



Rab's roommate at Ohio Northern was the son of the General Superintendent of the Cadillac Motor Car Company in Detroit, Michigan. This young man had many practical talents and a good heart, but not enough academic ability to pass his exams on his own; so Rab, always generous, agreed to tutor him. They became fast friends, and even bought a motor-cycle together that both of them could use to get around.

Rab became part of a group, perhaps a club, of undergraduates who called themselves "The Junta."

In the WSP Archive, there is a program of the "First Annual Banquet of the Junta," held at the Bellevue Hotel, Sunday, June 2, 1913. It contains a song (to be sung to the tune of "Kelly") with a verse each for five of the members. Rab's verse goes:

Has anybody here seen Rabby?

R, a, double b, y

Has anybody here seen Rabby?

He can dance like a butterfly.



Clockwise from the left, you can see Sarah Mutter (holding Rab's hand), Rab, Leah, Nat, Sheppie (seated) and Dina as they looked around 1915.

*On Socialism he will rave,
And this will bring him an early grave.
Has anybody here seen rabby?
rabby and his photo-graph.*

Apparently he had found a group of kindred spirits. Handwritten on the back of the program is another verse, or maybe a chorus, to the song:

*“Junta — Junta
That’s the place we go to
Sunday night with all the boys.
There we make a lot of noise —
Socialism Anarchism Optimism Pessimism
Then to Miller we would go
Whist to play and ball to throw
That’s what we do at the Junta —
Junta — Junta —”*

Rab once told me that he wrote a paper called “Agrarian Societies and Socialism” while attending Ohio Northern’s Agricultural College.

It turned out, however, that Rab’s university career came to a sudden end; he never graduated because of an entirely unforeseen circumstance that changed everything.



This photograph of the Junta was on display in Rab’s various homes for many years. The words in the circle read “Our Slogan: SERVICE FIRST.” Rab is standing third from the right in the second row.

The agricultural students were traditionally required to raise a crop using the latest and most up-to-date methods available. In the Spring semester of 1915, Rab and his roommate were given a five-acre plot of land near the Scioto River in Belset, Ohio. They chose to raise onions as their project. In Rab's own words (transcribed from an oral history tape made in 1978), "...we had everything that you could imagine happen to us. Everything. We had a wind blowing ... we had a sun that burned ... five times we had to replant, reseed it. But the climax was, one day it started raining, pouring, thunder. It was real, real rainstorm, and it lasted all night. We had a wooden cabin, two bunks one on top of the other, see; but he went someplace ..I was alone there that night. When I woke up in the morning, I found myself floating down the Scioto River." Having lost the entire crop of onions, there was no money left to go back to school. So the roommate (whose name is nowhere mentioned in any of the accounts I've heard of this part of the story) wrote to his father on Rab's behalf. The father was well aware that his son would never have gotten this far in his academic career, nor passed any examinations, without Rab's tutoring. "Bring him to Detroit," he wrote back, "and I'll give him a job."

"And he gave me a job that I was no more qualified for than the Man in the Moon," said Rab later. "He put me in charge of all the tool cribs in the Cadillac Motor Car Company. And what did *I* know about machinery, tools, lathes and all that kind of stuff? I wasn't *equipped*. But he kept me there for about seven or eight months. He should have fired me in two weeks! But anyhow, that's how I happened to get to Detroit. That was in the middle of the summer of 1915."

CHAPTER TWO

Rab Becomes a Revolutionary

1915 - 1921: Detroit, Michigan; Rab's introduction to revolutionary socialism; founding of the WSP; marriage to Ella; starting a family; the Socialist Education Society

Detroit was a boom town from 1910 to 1918. Auto and other industries attracted hosts of workers. When Europe went to war, contracts for military supplies went to Detroit, and workers from Canada and Britain who didn't want to get into the army came there too. Among these were members of the Socialist Party of Canada (SPC) and the Socialist Party of Great Britain (SPGB), both Marxist and opposed to reformism.

In the Detroit Local of the Socialist Party of America (SPA) reformers predominated, but the revolutionary minority drew encouragement from the new reinforcements and from Kerr's *International Socialist Review* with its flow of Marxian classics and corresponding American studies. The combination of these circumstances led to the establishment of a noteworthy study class in Duffield Hall, a highlight of the period. The two instructors were Adolph Kohn, a Marxist scholar, and Moses Baritz, professionally a musicologist and a formidable debater and socialist agitator, both of them members of the SPGB..." *

Rab's first introduction to Detroit, Michigan, where he lived from 1915 until 1921, was as a guest in the home of the General Superintendent of the Cadillac Motor Car Company, in the wealthiest part of the city.

1915 Rab, though, was not remotely interested in this opportunity to join the Cadillac Company. Almost as soon as he arrived in Michigan,

* From an early draft of Rab's unpublished 1974 Introduction to John Keracher's *How the Gods Were Made*. A later draft is included in Selected Writings, pp. 449-455.

he got in touch with the Detroit Local of the Socialist Party of America. He already knew Bertha Kleemann, who had only recently left Boston to join her husband Sam in Detroit; the Kleemanns were acquainted with the Rabinowich family through the Socialist Party of America.

Rab soon learned about the study class being conducted in Duffield Hall by members of the Socialist Party of Great Britain (SPGB) such as Adolph Kohn and Moses Baritz.



“...In Detroit,” he wrote years later, “I came into contact with so-called slackers escaping military service in Canada and England. They changed my whole point of view from reformism into revolutionary socialism. These comrades from the SPC and the SPGB wielded a great influence in Detroit Adolph Kohn with their study classes and street meetings and public lectures.”*



When Rab entered his very first class with SPGBer Moses Baritz, his impulse was to impress Baritz with his learning, which was, after all, considerable. The class consisted, in part, of readings from the first volume of Marx’s *Capital*. Rab proudly offered to translate a Latin phrase, to show off his classical scholarship, and Baritz graciously accepted the offer, so that Rab felt like a helpful assistant instructor. But

Moses Baritz a little later in the same class, based on Marx’s text, Baritz asked the class: “Do the workers pay taxes?” Rab’s answer was, “Why, sure, the workers pay taxes,” and then he listened with surprise to Baritz’s response.

“Taxes are essential to the maintenance of the capitalist state. In the long run, the workers don’t pay taxes. All that happens is that the workers function as transfer agents via withholding taxes, sales tax and the like, resulting from the quarrels among the various sections of the capitalist class to shift the burden of taxation. As far as the workers are concerned, these ‘taxes’ are but a reduction in wages.”

Baritz stressed that taxation is not a working-class problem. It is a problem that the ruling class, that is, the capitalist class, has to grapple with. If the

* For more about this period, see *Selected Letters*, p. 205.

taxes paid by the workers were drastically reduced — or increased — that would have no significant effect on them as a class.

The capitalist system tends to turn more and more things into commodities. As an economist, Marx explains that the value of a commodity varies according to the necessary labor time wrapped up in its production.

Wages or salaries are the workers' means of subsistence. They are what the workers get for something they sell. The only commodity they have to sell is their own physical and mental energy. This is generally disposed of on a time basis, and, like every other commodity, its value (the value of labor power) is determined by the necessary labor time wrapped up in its production — i.e., the things working-class families need to live, such as food, clothing, housing, entertainment, transportation, training/education, etc.

When the prices of those things rise on account of higher taxes, then the workers, through unions and other labor organizations, have to struggle with their employers to keep wages even with the cost of living. If taxes are lowered for any reason, then employers try and force wages down. But in either case, the social situation has not changed. Looking over periods of low prices, low taxes, low wages, we find the same general conditions as in periods of high prices, high taxes, high wages.

There is only one way really to improve matters significantly and permanently, and that is removing labor power from the category of commodities, abolishing the system of capitalism, and establishing Socialism in its place.

This analysis was new to Rab, in spite of all the SPA meetings he had attended. The gregarious, charismatic Baritz, together with Adolph Kohn, a quiet and scholarly theoretician, introduced Rab to Marxian economics, and to the view of capitalist society articulated by Engels and Marx.

He continued to attend the study class, as well as lectures given by Kohn and Baritz.

It was also around this time that Rab first encountered John Keracher, the Michigan State Secretary of the SPA. Keracher was originally from Scotland, but had settled in Detroit and been in the SPA there since 1910. He and Rab became good friends.

Rab became an active revolutionary in 1915 as a direct result of his exposure to the SPGB's principles. It brought him to the realization that there

was, as yet, no political party in the United States embracing the principles of scientific socialism. Neither the SPA nor the SLP had the necessary scientific analysis.

The socialist revolution would have to be the result of conscious, political action undertaken by a majority of the whole community; only so could it sustain itself. As Rab so often pointed out, “Socialism cannot be rammed down the throats of the workers.” It cannot be brought about by leaders or great men, but only by convinced socialists, i.e., by ordinary working people committed to making it work. The first step in revolutionary activity, then, must be to educate people about the futility of trying to administer capitalism in the interests of society as a whole, which is an impossibility on the face of it, and persuade them of the desirability — and even the necessity — of socialism. Then, once this idea takes hold, the revolution can be as simple and as easy, in Rab’s words, as “voting capitalism out and voting socialism in.”

The Socialist Party of Canada, which held to this analysis, was already publishing a journal called *The Western Clarion*, for which Adolph Kohn was writing under the name “John O’London.” The SPC was the third largest political party in Canada at that time.



1916 In April 1916, Rab attended a lecture at Duffield Hall with Bob Reynolds, a member of the Socialist Party of America who had come to Detroit from Bay City, Michigan.

After the lecture, Rab couldn’t pull his eyes away from the girl taking up a collection a little way down the aisle from them. She was slender, and wore a white picture hat that framed her face. Rab turned to his companion. “Who is that girl? Do you know her?” Yes, Reynolds knew her from Bay City; she was Ella Riebe, a friend of his sister Martha. Her father, a German, had been active in the Party for a long time. “That’s the girl I’m going to marry,” Rab told Reynolds. (Rab was 21 and Ella was 19 years old.)

It was fairly easy for Reynolds to arrange for Rab and Ella Riebe to be paired up at the May Day meeting just a few weeks after this, a big affair at which the SPA traditionally had the boys and girls in the Young People’s Socialist League (YPSL) “couple up” to sell red roses to the crowd. That was how Rab and Ella met, introduced by Bob Reynolds. For Rab,

it was love at first sight. He had never before felt like this about anyone. He was suddenly transformed into a man romantically and irresistibly head-over-heels in love.

Over the next weeks and months, the young couple exchanged stories. Rab told Ella about his family in Boston, and his agricultural studies at Ohio Northern (she was very sympathetic about the lost onions). He also told her about the job he'd just landed in the tool crib at the Ford plant, to earn some money before he went back to college after losing his position at Cadillac. Ella was a country girl. She told him about growing up on a sheep ranch out West in Laramie, Wyoming, with her brothers Otto, Freddie and Willie, and how poor Willie had just recently been killed in a tragic bicycle accident. She told him about her wonderful Father, Alex Riebe, and about her Mutter, Anna von Kleeman Riebe, who had been so sick with breast cancer until they sold the ranch so she *Ella Riebe* 1917



could have an operation, and how after that, the family had to move to Bay City, and then, in 1914, to Detroit. She told him about the time when she was a little girl and Eugene V. Debs had picked her up and kissed her when she presented him with a bouquet of red carnations at a socialist rally.

By the time it was summer, it was hard to tell whether Ella was warmed more by the Michigan sun, or by love.

Both of them were *naifs*. Neither of them had ever been warned what might happen if they gave in to their feelings of passion. In fact, both the Rabinowich family and the Riebes prided themselves on their freedom from conventional prejudices, and on their commitment to Socialist values. Rab and Ella had the confidence of the innocent and the open-minded.

Both of them enjoyed the frequent discussions of Marxian socialism that went on among their comrades in the YPSL, as well as with some of the broader membership of the Detroit SP Local. 1916 was certainly an exciting time for anyone interested in changing the world. Probably most of the people involved in the Socialist Party of America were following the news of current events in Russia very closely. It was possible

to read between the lines in the newspapers and imagine a real Socialist Revolution was brewing there.

There was one couple in the Detroit Local who, like Rab's parents, had considered themselves revolutionary socialists in Russia before immigrating to the United States when they were young. The Rivkins had become well established in Michigan; both husband and wife were successful physicians, and they had a teen-aged daughter, Olga. The Rivkins now wanted very much to return to Russia, where they felt they could help the cause of the Revolution that was fermenting there; but Olga didn't want to leave Detroit. It had been her home for her whole life. She led an active social life centered mostly around the YPSL and had many friends, including Ella Riebe, and others in that social circle.

Olga's parents felt uneasy leaving her on her own, a single girl with no one to watch over her. They noticed that she liked to dance with Walter Green, one of the young socialists in the group. They spoke to Green as a comrade, and told him that if he would marry their Olga, they would provide him with enough money so that there would be no financial problems facing him and his young bride.

And so it was arranged. Olga's parents went back to their homeland, thrilled to be able to take an active part in the Russian Revolution.



John Keracher, still the State Secretary of the SPA, also watched what was happening in Russia. As a Marxist, he was aware that circumstances in Russia were not really ripe for Socialism. But what if it could muster support from workers all over the world? Wasn't there a role that the SPA could play to help?

The way Rab remembered it later, his friend Keracher might have acted differently if he hadn't been the State Secretary of the Michigan Socialist Party at this time.

A new political party was needed in the United States, a party "determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labor or avowedly capitalist, ... [to] call upon all members of the working class ... to the end that a termination may be brought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labor, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom." *[From the Dec-*

laration of Principles of the SPGB.] Gradually, that summer, a group came together in Detroit with the goal of establishing just such a party.

Rab was sure Keracher agreed with the SPGB principles. Keracher had persuaded the Michigan SP to change the first clause in its Constitution so that the Party would no longer support reforms of capitalism; and he had also rewritten Clause II, regarding the role of religion in capitalist society. There was a substantial revolutionary tendency within the Detroit Local of the SPA (sometimes referred to as the “Michigan Marxists”), which included Rab himself, Walter Green, George Ramsay, Bob Reynolds, Martha Reynolds, and others. But in the end, John Keracher apparently felt he could use his influence to move the SPA closer to the SPGB position by remaining within it as an active member.

On July 7, 1916, Rab and the other “Michigan Marxists” officially formed their own organization, which eventually came to be called the Workers’ Socialist Party of the United States.

In July 1916, 43 members of [Baritz’s and Kohn’s] study class, including 19 members of Local Detroit, SPA, of whom this writer was one, decided it was time to organize a genuine socialist party in the United States along the lines of the SPGB. The Workers’ Socialist Party of the United States resulted.*

Rab reminisced later about how he and Adolph Kohn that July had sent out notices to announce the organizing meeting to form the WSP in Detroit. At first, this group actually named it “the Socialist Party of the United States,” but since the SPA challenged their right to that, “Workers’ Socialist Party” was substituted.**

“Nineteen of us resigned from the Socialist Party of America, and the attitude of most of the members there was, ‘You don’t hand in any resignation, just quit, that’s all.’ And they passed a motion that they shouldn’t accept the resignation. But Keracher took the floor, and explained that it was an obligation that they should, see. They took a vote. All those in favor, they raised their hands, and all those against, they raised their hands, and Ella voted in favor of not accepting. And I yelled out, just like this: ‘You, too?!’ Spontaneously, you see.”***

* From Rab’s unpublished Introduction to Keracher’s pamphlet *How the Gods Were Made* — see p. 452.

** See p. 209.

*** Rab, Oral history with Mardon Cooper, 1978.

Along with Rab, some of the founding members of the WSP were Bill Davenport, who became its first Secretary; Bill Gribble, the first organizer; Lawrence Beardsley; George Ramsay, and Walter Green. It is not clear whether or not Ella Riebe was officially a part of the new organization at the beginning. She had, after all, voted not to accept Rab's resignation from the Socialist Party. I think it's likely that both she and her friend Olga left the finer points of socialist theory for the men to sort out.

But emotionally, Ella gave herself to Rab without holding anything back. He had swept her off her feet. He embodied everything she valued and desired: he was handsome, charismatic and intelligent. Like her father, whom she adored, he was a Socialist, and a free thinker who had no use for religion.

Alex Riebe, upon being introduced to Rab, did admire the young man's intellect, and was impressed that Rab agreed with the very socialist principles that he, Alex, had held dear for so long. Years before moving his family to Michigan, Riebe had been an organizer for Eugene V. Debs's campaign in the three-state region of Wyoming, Colorado and Montana.

But after a while, it struck the man that his adorable little girl, the apple of his eye, was actually considering leaving home and marrying this *Isaac Rabinowich*. This Jew. He couldn't let that happen. Although he was an atheist, Riebe came from a Christian family of Prussian origin, and when as a young man he shook off the Christian faith, he did not lose the anti-Semitic feelings he had grown up with. Now things were going much too fast, and he wanted to slow them down somehow.

Some new rules were established in the household for Ella. "The doors are locked at nine o'clock! If you are not back by nine, you will not be allowed to come in."

As Rab told a comrade later, "They made it awful tough for Ella. We decided that I would quit the job I had in Detroit, and I would go to Ann Arbor, to the University of Michigan, and resume my studies, and she would get a job in the Five-and-Ten, which she did, and we'd tell her parents that we separated ... But something happened. On account of the pressure being put on Ella . it finally got under Ella's skin."*

* Oral history with Mardon Cooper, 1978.



One evening in September, when nine o'clock came, they were not back. And when they did eventually arrive back at the Riebe home, they found the door was locked. Although Ella could see that her mother and father were in the house, they wouldn't let her in.

What should she do? Rab brought her to Bertha Kleemann's house, where she stayed until they decided. Ella and Rab were married on September 27, 1916, only a few months after they had first met. "Oh," Rab said, unsuccessfully trying to conceal his disappointment

the first time he saw his slender sweetheart undressed. "You don't have any breasts!" But before Ella could mind very much, he showed her how little it mattered.

None of Ella's family came to visit them after they were married, neither her parents nor either of her brothers. Her mother pretended not to see her when they passed each other on the street. Ella walked to the house where she used to live, but no one would acknowledge that she had ever been a part of the family there.

1917 As the winter months came on, Ella began to feel weak, and too sick to face the thought of food even when her friends Bertha, or sometimes Olga, fixed her favorite things. Bertha, the expert in such matters, recognized the signs of pregnancy. Neither Rab nor Ella ever forgot Bertha Kleemann's kindness and the care she took of her then. Bertha was a real friend in need.

One cold February day, Anna Riebe saw Ella walking through the market, looking very pale — and saw her faint. The mother took the daughter back to the family house; and all was forgiven.

That month, at around the same time that Rab and Ella moved into the Riebe home on 28th Street, the Russian Revolution began in earnest. Leon Trotsky paid a visit to Detroit that year, during his American tour. A majority of the Michigan SPA membership, including Keracher, were moved to support the Bolshevik attempt to establish Communism in Russia, and the socialists in the new Workers' Socialist Party were sneered

at for their failure to recognize a socialist revolution when it took place.* To their credit, the WSP comrades saw that there was no conscious, political majority of convinced socialists in Russia; any “revolution” there could only lead to the establishment of a capitalist government.

Still, the excitement surrounding events in Russia made for increased class awareness on the part of working people of Detroit. As President Wilson urged Congress to declare war against Germany to make the world “safe for democracy” that April, Rab found himself speaking to larger audiences than ever before.

Ella gave birth on August 11, 1917. She was screaming in pain on the kitchen table of her parents’ house, and Rab was glad when the doctor gave him an errand to do to get him out of the way — at least, so the story was passed down in the family to me.

Here is a letter Rab himself wrote about the events of that time, dated August 12, 1917:

..Dear Aunt Rosie,

The most wonderful, sweetest girl in all this world is, now, my wife. The story of our love-affair is, indeed,, rare, in Capitalist Society. As Engels points-out in the best book that I ever read or studied, The Origin of the Family, our love is, almost, impossible to the bourgeoisie and can only be developed in the more favorable soil of proletarian, surroundings, in few instances.. The action and practice of Capitalism,, with its resulting superstructure of its present moral conceptions, of course,, really prevents, in the larger sense,, true love. One of the few, rare,, real love affairs under Capitalism, is mine, and someday, when we meet together, I may tell you, the story.

Fifteen minutes after twelve,, yesterday afternoon, “a little stranger arrived to brighten our lives,,” Willie Karl Rabinowich, is his name,, weighing seven pounds. We named him, Willie after Elld’s older brother, who died years ago, and Karl after Karl Marx— We can’t figure out who it resembles,, all that has been definitely decided is that it has my nose, Ask Uncle Nathan what he thinks of that. Otherwise, his features are perfect. Dear Ella is, resting comfortably. The sufferings of birth-labor are indescribable but Ella came out of it excellently. She is nursing little Willie and he is as fat as a tub.

* Selected Letters, pp. 265 and 359; also, Selected Writings, pp. 449-455.

Love from-Ella-and-myself to the-family and-regards to all our friends.

*Your nephew,
Isaac.*

P. S. Answer soon and I promise you, some discussion on any Socialist topic, Uncle Mashie or you may disagree with me^.

Ella continued to nurse Willie Karl, and Rab continued to be a doting father at the same time as he was constantly involved with socialist education. He never was successful, however, in bringing any of the relatives referred to in this letter into the Workers' Socialist Party. Uncle Mashie (Sarah's brother) remained in the Socialist Party of America and later became a Zionist; Uncle Nathan remained apolitical.



Ella and Rab remained close to Sam and Bertha Kleemann, and also developed a warm friendship with Olga and Walter Green. Walter and Rab consistently supported one another's propaganda efforts.

Olga was enchanted with little Willie. She was expecting a baby of her own in the winter, and she and Ella formed a special bond. Olga missed her own mother terribly. She didn't really care much about things like Marxian economics or the class struggle, the subjects that occupied Walter's mind and took his attention away from her. She wished her parents were with her during these months of her pregnancy, and wished her mother



Rab and Willie' 1918

could be with her when the baby came. Ella remembered how hard it had been for her, too, to be separated from her parents, even though Rab and she had been so much closer than the Greens seemed to be. And now, to her relief, the Riebe family had truly become reconciled to Ella's marriage. How could they help falling in love with their new grandson? Maybe Walter would change, too, after his baby was born.

When Willie was a vigorous and healthy three-month-old, one day Olga came to the Rabs' home while Rab was at work at the Ford Plant. At first,

Ella couldn't make out what was wrong. Olga was incoherent, almost as if she had lost her mind. "Where is he? What will I do?" Finally, the story was told: Walter Green had left her, taking with him all the money her parents had entrusted him with.

The relationship between Walter Green and his wife Olga had been, sadly, much like Engels's conception of a typical love affair in capitalist society: under unbearable stress. Both Ella and Rab commiserated with Olga, abandoned at the very time when a woman is most dependent on a husband.

When Olga gave birth on November 25, 1917, she was so distraught she was unable to care for her child. Ella nursed Olga's baby, Joey, along with her own Willie, and both children thrived.

1918 Rab had joined the auto workers' union, the UAA, in 1915, shortly after arriving in Detroit. By 1918, he had been put in charge of running the tool crib at the Ford plant. That year, he was teaching his fellow workers about Marxian economics in the yard of the plant, explaining, among other things, that regardless of the socialist pretensions on the part of the Russian Communist Party, it was a form of capitalist economy that was being developed in Russia; and urging that if they wanted to bring about a real socialist revolution, the first step must be to organize and spread socialist awareness in Detroit.

1919 For a while, his employers at Ford tolerated Rab's teaching. But after the war ended, there was a climate of increasing repression towards Communists, Anarchists, and Socialists, not only in Detroit, but all over the United States. The apparent success of the Russian Revolution in 1917, which inspired hope for a better world in many ordinary workers, had alarmed the representatives of the ruling class. A.M. Palmer, the U.S. Attorney General under President Wilson, organized raids against radicals in which union offices were smashed and the headquarters of many Communist and Socialist organizations were ransacked.

Faced with this hostile political climate, the Workers' Socialist Party membership had a hard decision to make.

Without changing its principles, the group opted, in 1919, to abandon the structure of a political party, and to re-group as The Detroit Socialist Education Society. George Ramsay, who became its Secretary, referred to the Detroit SES as a "club."^{*}

* From the minutes of the Detroit SES, Jan. 3, 1921.

By that time, the Ford Company would no longer allow Rab to teach his study classes in the factory yard, as he had been doing since 1917. During the Palmer Red Raids, he was teaching a class on *Wage Labor and Capital* in the Auto Workers Hall. One among the many workers who attended was the young Frank Marquart, who eventually became an education director for several Detroit UAW locals (1937 - 1958).* Marquart remembered Rab in his memoir, *An Auto Worker's Journal*, in which he also noted that several members of the new Marxian party contributed theoretical articles to *The Western Clarion*, journal of the Socialist Party of Canada in its earlier incarnation.

1920 In April 1920, Ella gave birth to another baby, a little girl this time. Rab wanted to name her Hatikvah ("Hope" for a revolution), and Ella wanted to name her Wilhelmina because it went nicely with "Willie." But Ella's mother, who had lost two of her own five children, had already insisted Ella's firstborn be named for her son Willie, killed in a bicycle accident in his teens. Now she was adamant that her granddaughter carry the name of the little girl she had lost as an infant: Anna. So this baby was called Anna Hope Rabinowich.

The same month that my mother was born, the shop foreman told Rab he had to stop teaching his Marxist classes anywhere, and he had to stop making speeches about socialism anywhere, too, if he wanted to keep working for Ford. But Rab didn't stop.

He was doing a good job for Ford, running the tool crib. His fellow workers respected and admired him, and did their best for him. Rab bragged that he never lost a tool while he worked for Ford. In the end, he was not fired immediately, even though he continued to organize for socialism whenever and however he could.

He was warned that if he continued with his radical activity, the Ford Company would blacklist him; but Rab was not about to let any job interfere with the important work he was doing. Ultimately, he was fired; and, blacklisted by Ford, he found himself unable to get a paying job anywhere in Detroit.

Rab, Ella and their children were living with the Riebe family, so they continued to have a roof over their heads even after Rab had no more income. But it was an untenable position to be in. Besides, Sheppie Rabinowich was urging his son to come back in Boston.

* Selected Letters, p. 357.

1921 So, when Willie Karl was four and Anna Hope was almost a year old, Rab left Detroit, promising to send for them, and for Ella, as soon as he could. Rab never went back to the Agricultural College at Ohio Northern University, and never graduated from any institution of higher learning. He devoted the rest of his life to organizing for socialism.

It is interesting to reflect on the unlikely combination of circumstances that brought Rab to Detroit. Had the Scioto River not flooded its banks in Ohio in 1915, and had his college roommate not been the son of a Cadillac executive, he might very well have become a farmer.

CHAPTER THREE

The Birth of Boston Local

1921 - 1932: The move back to Boston; Capen Street Days; the Vagabond Club; the Science Club; Rab's Study Class at International Hall; from Socialist Education Society to Workers' Socialist Party; 198 Walnut Avenue.

Moving and settling in

Rab's father had been urging his son to return to Boston, because he needed help in the store.

Sheppie had joined the newly formed Communist Party as a charter member, and Sheppie's Blue Store had become a central distribution point for Communist literature while Rab was in Detroit. It was well-situated for the purpose, in the Roxbury neighborhood of Boston, not too far from the CPA's Headquarters on Winona Street. Comrades could conveniently visit there to pick up pamphlets and the latest Communist circulars.

Sheppie's Blue Store was something of a gathering place for these "revolutionaries." Many of them already knew Rab from before he left Boston. Some of them were still members of the old SPA; others were in the SLP, or the new CPA. None of them had ever heard of the Workers' Socialist Party, nor of the SPGB; and none of them took it seriously when Rab tried to explain why his new organization did not support the Russian Revolution. They assumed that Rab would rather be a big fish in a small Socialist pond, than a little fish in the big pond of the new Communist movement.

Be that as it may, Rab helped out at his father's store, as did Sarah, while Sheppie drove around town with his horse and wagon, delivering Communist literature along with the cigars and tobacco with which he provided various corner stores around the City of Boston.

Before too long, Rab was able to send to Detroit for his family. Ella and the children left the Riebe household to join Rab in an apartment in the South End of Boston. All of them, at various times, told me stories about those days. One of my favorites was the story of how my mother had been blind for a while as a baby in the South End.

Ann loved to tell this story: “While we lived there, I had diphtheria, and the doctor gave me too much toxin, or antitoxin, or something ... [My mother] was still nursing me then, and she passed her hand in front of my eyes, and noticed that I couldn’t see. How terrible that must have been for her! But I couldn’t see; I was blind for three months.”

Ann could date her earliest memory to the time before she became blind, because when she regained her vision the family had moved to a different place. “My earliest memory is a visual one: looking through white bars and seeing a mackerel sky and a full moon, and what looked to me like a big Easter egg on a wall. The bars were my crib, painted white, and on the back of a building of some sort, they had painted an ad for King Arthur’s Flour, that looked like an Easter egg to me .. And I was nine and a half months old then!”

Her earliest memory was of seeing, between the white painted slats of her crib, the view of the alley outside the window of the South End apartment. By the time she regained her vision, the family had moved to Roslindale.



In Roslindale

Ella was lonely in the new place; they were further away from Rab’s family and she made no new friends in Roslindale. She took Willie and Anna for long walks through the nearby Reservation, where both of them enjoyed rolling down Tower Hill. When, in 1996, I asked my Uncle Bill to tell me about this part of Rab’s story, he remembered most vividly the wooden bathtub there.

At Ella’s urging, Rab moved the family back to the city, to a “great big red house, with a porch all around it.” Anna was three and a half years old when they moved to Morton Street, in the Dorchester neighborhood.

Willie started school from the Morton Street house. He told me Ella had taken him to several different Kindergartens the year before, but he didn't want to go and nobody made him. When he started First Grade, Ella simply told the school he'd been to Kindergarten. By that time, his English had become passable (his first language was German, since he had grown up among the Riebe family who spoke German at home). Because the Boston School System could not accept that "Willie" was a real name, he became "William Karl Rabinowich" in all his school records, and, eventually, even the family called him "Billie" or "Bill."

Capen Street Days

The house on Morton Street was cold, and the landlord unsympathetic; so after only a year, the Rab's moved again, the fourth move in just over three years. But this time, it was to 123 Capen Street, Dorchester, the place they were to call home from 1924 to 1932, while Billie and Anna grew from childhood into adolescence.

Rab had resumed the task begun in Detroit, his lifelong work of spreading knowledge and understanding of the case for socialism, almost as soon as he got back to Boston. He began soap boxing while the family lived on Morton



Rab, Anna & Billie, 1923

Street, and continued after the move to Capen Street in 1924. He spoke on Dorchester street corners all along Blue Hill Avenue, and became a familiar figure to the groups who would gather to hear his point of view on current events. His charisma as an outdoor speaker drew large audiences to listen to the socialist analysis.

Of course, he stayed in touch with the socialist comrades he had known in Detroit. George Ramsay, Tom Bolt, and perhaps a dozen others remained actively involved in the Socialist Education Society (SES), established in 1919 "to promote the study of Scientific Socialism through the medium of study classes, lecturers, and the best and latest literature attainable." By the mid-Twenties, this group, without making any changes in its principles, had dropped the name SES in favor of "The Marxian Club." Rab corresponded regularly with these comrades.

Meanwhile, another branch of the Socialist Education Society had gotten started in New York City in January 1921, at about the same time Rab left Detroit for Boston. Inspired by some of the same British draft dodgers who had been in Detroit earlier, for about three years the New York SES carried on regular propaganda meetings, classes, and lectures, which were advertised in *The Western Clarion*. Walter Green moved from Detroit back to his home town of New York City in September 1923, and became active in the group. It was there that Green met Sam Orner, the taxi driver immortalized in the play *Waiting for Lefty*. Rab was delighted that Green was now much closer, although neither man had the means to travel the distance from New York to Boston easily.

In 1923, the New York SES reprinted an SPGB pamphlet, *Socialism and Religion*. The Declaration of Principles held by the SPGB (and by the WSP when it was first founded in 1916) was included on the inside front cover of this SES pamphlet with only one alteration: — instead of affirming that “the party seeking working-class emancipation must be hostile to every other party,” the SES pamphlet version “declares its purpose of carrying on educational work to the end that [a] political party [seeking working-class emancipation] be formed.”



Rab was aware of these active socialist groups in New York and Detroit, but there was nothing comparable in Boston. He had not a single comrade to help with the revolutionary task he had set for himself. Ella provided moral support, but was too occupied with the children to be an active socialist.

My Uncle Bill told me, in 1996, that he remembered Rab and Ella fighting quite a bit during the Capen Street days. Fights were mostly about issues of money and security. Both Ella and Rab placed a high value on socialism, and on raising their family; but for Ella, her children always came first. For Rab, the first priority was the socialist movement, the successful outcome of which he understood to be necessary in order for all children to have good lives. This difference between them was never to be resolved.

Rab was always having job interviews and being offered positions. Bill Rab remembered Ella saying, “For goodness sakes, take one of them, even if it’s only for a little while.” Sometimes, her husband complied

— for instance, after he stopped helping at Sheppie’s Blue Store, he worked at Friedberg’s Electric and Locksmith Shop for several years. This business belonged to Rab’s uncle, Mayshe Friedberg, who made a good living operating it. The shop was successful enough that Uncle Mayshe could afford to travel, which he was eager to do; so when he took his two nephews, Nat and Ike (as Rab was always called by his parental family) into the business, Mayshe freed himself up to spend his time as he pleased.

This was during the period when the city of Boston was gradually being converted from D.C. to A.C., and the shop did contracting work all over the Back Bay neighborhood. Rab was in charge of managing the inventory. He did well, and learned enough to become competent at minor electrical repairs in all the various places he lived afterwards; but, following the usual pattern, it wasn’t long before he found that the job interfered too much with his attempts to organize for socialism. Nat, recently married and struggling to support his wife Mary and their son, was not unhappy when Rab left. Nat kept Mayshe’s firm a financially successful enterprise right up until the Depression, and his son Leon grew up to make a successful career as an electrician, too.

Rab consistently put socialist work ahead of mere opportunities to earn money, and turned down many prestigious and high-paying jobs that were offered him, until Ella would shout in frustration: “Get out of this house!” — which Rab obediently did, often asking his son if he wanted to come with him in the car (“Maybe so he’d have an excuse to come back,” Bill said). The boy always went because that meant he could have a “driving lesson.” He liked to sit on Rab’s lap and help steer the car.

Bill told me about one occasion in particular, when there had been no shouting, nor a fight of any kind, and Rab was asked to take him out of the house for no reason he could think of.

Ella had become pregnant for the third and last time, and she realized that there would not be enough money to take good care of the two children she already had, if a third were to be born. Ella knew by then (if she had not known all along) that Rab would never put his family’s fortunes ahead of Socialism; and, after all, she was a socialist too. She adored Rab because he was what he was. Ella, just as sincerely as her husband, yearned for a world where mothers and fathers could nurture their children because they had free access to what they needed, without

the necessity of working for wages. How could she bring another child into this bleak capitalist society?

She made her choice and asked Rab for help. He found a doctor who was willing to terminate Ella's third pregnancy. (This was, of course, before such help was legal; Ella's choice was more dangerous than it would be today.)

She was sick and bleeding; she didn't want her son to see her that way. That's why she asked Rab to take Billie out of the house. Years later, Ella did tell her daughter about the abortion; and, later still, Ann told me about it — but all Billie ever knew was that he got to go for a ride in the car, alone with his father, one time when there hadn't been any fighting.

Around 1926, Ella took both children and went back to her family's home in Detroit for several months.



In 1927, Rab and Ella took Billie and Anna to march in the funeral parade for Sacco and Vanzetti, two Anarchists executed by the State for a murder of which they were patently innocent. It was an example of the class struggle in action; the capitalist class had squashed the lives of two workers using the raw power of the State. Both of the children were impressed with the significance of this event, but Anna, seven years old, also remembered later being afraid of getting lost in the scary and confusing mob of people. Rab brought them to a frame shop where they could take shelter from the crowd outside.

This shop belonged to a professional artist, Fred Jacobs. Jacobs and Rab talked about Sacco and Vanzetti, and about how the capitalist class effectively deals with threats to the system. Rab was no Anarchist, but he often said that when Anarchists erred, they erred in the right direction: that their hearts were in the right place, although often they hadn't thought things through. The "direct action" advocated by many Anarchists appealed to the heart, but Rab's position was that political action, as advocated by Socialists, would be necessary to achieve a lasting Revolution. Heart and head must both be involved.

Two members of the working class were arrested and convicted of a murder by the State of Massachusetts. Evidence in overwhelming abundance shows that these two workers were innocent of the crimes

of which they were accused. Hosts of people who have no inkling of the existence of a class struggle, admit this. If you don't know it was a class affair, your masters did! Electric chairs are made by workers, operated by workers, and sat in by workers: here is one case of something being done for the sole benefit of the working class! ... Sacco and Vanzetti were kept in prison for seven years, and then executed by the master class, who, by the way, seem to have a pretty thorough understanding of their class position and interests, and show a lot of solidarity in protecting those interests! It's a shame and a disgrace that we working people don't show the same understanding and the same solidarity in protecting our own class interests!

Jacobs, a former Wobbly, found that Rab's analysis of the class struggle resonated with his own. From then on, the frame shop, located at 113C Warren Street, in the Roxbury neighborhood, became the first "Headquarters" for the people who were to form the nucleus of socialist activity in Boston. Jacobs lived in rooms behind the shop; there was a little kitchen and a place to sit and talk. Fred Jacobs was the first worker in Boston to be recruited into the socialist movement through Rab's influence — and the first person Rab could count on to help him in his task of building a revolutionary socialist organization in Boston.

The Vagabond Club

It was not long after this that Rab took charge of the Vagabonds, an athletic club that played a role in the growth of the socialist movement in Boston that no one could have anticipated.

The Vagabond Club was associated with the Hecht House, which was still a well-known institution in Dorchester during my own childhood in the 1940s. It was a Neighborhood House whose mission was largely keeping young people off the streets by providing them with supervised activities (mostly sports-related) after school, drawing boys and girls from many different school districts. There was a policy that every Hecht House club must have an adult director. The adult who had originally directed The Vagabond Club now no longer could find time for it, and since the members were very eager to continue meeting, they looked around for a suitable replacement.

Several of the young Vagabonds already knew Rab. Some of them had been part of the audience who went to hear him speak about socialism

on Blue Hill Avenue, and were already familiar with his ideas. It was young Louis Spiegel, a high school boy who happened to be the Rab's upstairs neighbor in the Capen Street house, who asked Rab if he would be willing to become the director of the Vagabond Club.

Well, Rab had always been interested in athletics. Nevertheless, under his directorship, the Vagabond Club did not really remain a typical athletic club. The Vagabonds continued to play baseball and tennis, but they also were taken on tours of the Harvard Museums, where Rab lectured them about the exhibits (and where Harvard undergraduates also were sometimes drawn to hear his explanations). He encouraged them in discussions of science, history, anthropology and materialism, and on more than one occasion he brought experts in these fields to address the boys.



This photograph was taken three or four years after Rab took over the club. Rab is on the extreme right, his hand on the shoulder of Nathan Krigman ("Kriggy"); in the center is Max Kutzer. Both Vagabonds later became active members of the WSP

With Rab as Director, although the club *per se* never became overtly socialist, the Vagabonds all learned to keep an open mind while observing the world around them, and the club itself became an environment that fostered receptivity to a socialist analysis of the world. These boys, whose average age was about 16 when they first came under Rab's influence, all lived in different parts of Dorchester. They brought their friends to hear Rab speak. More and more people heard the case for

socialism. In the end, eight of the Vagabonds joined the socialist movement; but all of them, not only those eight, were part of a widening social circle where socialist ideas were understood and accepted.

The Science Club and Camp Nitgedaiget

Rab treated his own children in much the same way as he did the Vagabonds. He encouraged them to explore everything they could, to keep open minds, to be scientific in their analysis, and to make up their own minds as to what explanations made the most sense. Billie went to Hebrew school with one of his friends for a while; he also attended some

Holy Roller meetings; Rab encouraged all this exploration. He and Ella also sent the children to the Young Pioneer meetings sponsored by the Communist Party, where they met children whose parents belonged to various other political organizations.

Billie and Anna had many friends in the neighborhood where they lived. Both Rab and Ella encouraged them to bring their friends home. Ella was always warm and welcoming, and somehow, in spite of Rab's not being a good provider, she could always find refreshments when Anna and Billie's friends came by after school. One of these friends, Bob Weisberg, told me in his oral history that the flat on Capen Street was a haven for anyone who wanted to drop in.

For these youngsters too, Rab created an environment that would foster the socialist outlook. Treating this houseful of his children's friends as young scientists, he encouraged them to form a Science Club.

Rab was the Director of the Vagabond Club, but he never exactly directed the Science Club; he let the kids do that. They met in the big living room at Capen Street, and after a year or two, there were so many of them that they couldn't fit into the living room any more and spilled over into the dining room as well. When Bill Rab, at age 81, reminisced about the Science Club, he said, "Somewhere in the attic, I have some of the science periodicals that we put out. We called it ... *Science News* or something like that; and what it consisted of was the talks that we gave, to the Science Club, on whatever subject happened to interest us there, or on a specialty. There were a couple of people with specialties .. When we gave a talk, we couldn't just ramble; we had to have notes, or sometimes we'd type it up. I think that's where I learned to type. Sometimes we would hectograph them. The original ones were hectographed, and later on, we got access to a mimeograph machine someplace . . ."

Sometimes one of the Vagabonds would give a lecture at the Science Club. (The Vagabonds were about seven years older than Billie, ten years older than Anna.)

The club began with Billie and Anna's friends and neighbors, but later, those friends would bring other friends in, and the circle expanded. Bill's best friend, Squee, for example, brought in many newcomers. It is noteworthy that although the club's subject matter was science, not socialism, several of these children (including Weisberg) joined the WSP when they grew up. One of Rab's maxims was: "All the sciences are interrelated, and

Socialism is the Queen that unites all the sciences, because only a socialist is capable of viewing science objectively, without moral reservations and ethical compunctions.”*

The Rab children also attended Camp Nitgedaiget, a summer camp run by the Communist Party. The camp was on a lake in Franklin, MA; some Young Pioneers stayed there, others were brought each morning by a bus that picked them up in front of International Hall. Here Billie and Anna met more children of Communists and “socialists” from various organizations. Many of the other parents knew of Rab, and knew that Rab didn’t agree with many of the ideas being inculcated into the Young Pioneers. At Camp Nitgedaiget, Anna met Lilian Pollock, a girl who was to be her closest friend all through her girlhood, and brought her into the Science Club. Lilian grew up to be a scientist and always gave credit to the Science Club for getting her started on the right track. Bella Polatnik also first met the Rabs through the camp, where she, like many others, developed a crush on Billie. Bella later joined the WSP for a brief time, and still at the time of this writing acknowledges the influence of Rab and the Science Club on her thinking.

I commented earlier in this narrative that Fred Jacobs was the first person Rab could count on to help him in his task of building a revolutionary socialist organization in Boston. That statement really should be qualified. In a sense, Rab’s first helpers were his children. Both Bill and Anna were tremendously popular with their peers, as if they had inherited some of their father’s charisma. When my mother reminisced about her teen years, she often remarked that all her girlfriends were in love with Billie at one time or another, and certainly she herself, from age 15 on, drew men and boys to her like moths to a flame. They were both remarkable in this way; and, beginning at Camp Nitgedaiget and the Science Club and continuing for years afterward, they were also remarkable in their success at recruiting their friends into the socialist movement. Fred Jacobs was the first person Rab influenced to join the Socialist Education Society, and the first to become a member of the WSP when it re-formed itself out of the SES; but Billie and Anna, along with the Vagabonds, were a very significant part of the base upon which Boston Local was built.

Years later, when asked how he had managed to enlist his children’s support as he did, Rab replied, “Socialist pressures on their children ... often create resentments and resistances. There is no substitute for ‘exposure’ rather than persistence. I’ve been fortunate in having very favorable

* Selected Letters, p. 180.

advantages, such as being able to organize and direct boys' clubs and science clubs when the kids were young. My emphasis was on 'making ideas fit facts' rather than on 'making facts fit ideas.' This is effective in creating the healthy attitude for hearing the socialist case. At no time was the 'heart' divorced from the 'head' but the coupling of the 'heart' was on the groundwork of the 'head.' Then, of course, there was Ella, without whose enthusiasm and support there would have been no results. In a word, I had the lucky breaks and no special credit for superior wisdom is really involved.”*



Rab never stopped adoring Ella. But it wasn't always easy for her to give him her “enthusiasm and support.” She was concerned when he put the socialist movement ahead of his family responsibilities. He never really had a career except for that of a revolutionary, although he was successful and respected at almost every job he had, from the position at the Ford plant in Detroit, through working at Friedberg's Electric and Locksmith Shop with his brother Nat, to the proofreading he did for the Hearst newspapers in the 1950s and later. Rab's goal, though, was to spend as little time as possible making money, while he devoted himself primarily to the socialist movement. Ella, on the other hand, cared more deeply for her children's welfare than for anything else.

So it was that Ella was frustrated, and at times depressed. Once, when she went to Rab's mother for comfort, Sarah told her, “Remember, we come from a long line of self-immolators.”

From Socialist Education Society to Workers' Socialist Party

In 1929, a new phase of socialist organization in Boston began, as Rab and Walter Green reconnected in person. Ella was horrified at the prospect of seeing Green again after his desertion of her friend Olga twelve years before. Rab's thought was: “It is easy to condemn. The acid test of a socialist reaction to an individual's behavior is socialist sympathy and understanding. Personally, I reserve my condemnations for the system and its apologists.”**

In New York Green had found a new companion who fully shared his commitment to socialist education in a way that his first wife never

* Selected Letters, pp. 295—296.

** From a letter in the Archive dated June 15, 1959.

had done. Bertha, or “Babe” as she preferred to be called, was gainfully employed full-time as a typist (a useful skill for anyone interested in the communication of ideas). She was happy to put aside any thought of conventional family life in order to devote herself to revolutionary activity. Together, Walter and Babe were urging the New York SES to begin publication of its own periodical: *The Socialist*.

Meanwhile, in Boston, Rab had already begun an informal Marxian study class in the big living room of the Capen Street flat, for people who had demonstrated an interest in socialist ideas.

Green visited Boston on August 16, 1929, and addressed a meeting of this study class at Rab’s home. The Minutes of this historic occasion, taken in Fred Jacobs’s careful handwriting, record:

Meeting called, to-order at 123 Capen-Street to discuss the advisability of issuing an-educational socialist publication/.

Comrade Green-of N.Y.C. gave talk on-the value to the movement of such-a paper.

After some discussion- Comrade Louis Spiegel was elected- Chairman- and-F. Jacobs Secretary. Moved-and-seconded- that the name of the Marxian-Study Class be changed-to- The Socialist Education-Society.

The New York comrades officially admitted Rab to the Socialist Education Society as a member at large that October, and the first issue of the new publication, *The Socialist*, appeared in November 1929.

Rab was one of the regular writers for *The Socialist*. I think I hear his voice in an unsigned column in the first issue, asserting: “The Socialist Movement is far from dead in America. The capitalist press is congratulating itself prematurely on the downfall of the S. P. of A. The force of the class struggle still operates. We strive for the amalgamation of those groups and individuals throughout the land, subscribing to our position. Upon that position we shall erect the political party of the working class.” Elsewhere in that issue, he wrote “The Other Side of the Wailing Wall,” an analysis of the then-current situation in Palestine.

Rab’s contribution to the second issue (December 1929) is reprinted in full as “Our Practical Program” in *Selected Writings* (pp. 428-432). It is well worth reading, and its analysis is as timely today as it was in 1929.

Here are just a few excerpts:

“Our immediate task is to arouse a Socialist understanding, to the end that we . . . may . . . establish Socialism.” In a word, a Socialist revolution first must take place in the heads of the workers; then will follow the conquest of political power, overthrow of the capitalist system and the establishment of Socialism.

A Socialist working class, conscious of its position in society, has no need for a special program or blueprint plans. Whatever measures are dictated by the particular social forces then operating will be adopted by a Socialist proletariat. The socialization of production, together with the concentration of capital, has already laid the economic foundation for Socialism. . .

Our “practical program,” if you please, is clear and definite ... “The working class must organize *consciously* and *politically* for the conquest of the powers of government.”

... Let us briefly review such measures as are advocated by the alleged Socialist organizations.

1. The so-called Socialist Party of America is not a Socialist organization. Even the cloak of Socialist appearances was shed at their last convention, when the clause subscribing to belief in the class struggle was dropped from their application for membership form.
2. .The Workers (Communist) Party[’s] “practical program” was ... so involved ... that it required 64 pages, “The Platform of the Class Struggle,” to state these demands. A little comment on but a few of these “revolutionary” gems will serve as an object lesson in the pitfalls of a “practical program” ... We find demanded the “immediate enactment of a Federal law. . . for a . . . forty-hour, five-day week . . . and forbidding all overtime. . . . This is a measure that helps capitalism run more smoothly, and is a favorite palliative of capitalist reformers .[In all,] there are 102 demands by these practical people. If all this activity resulted in the arousing of revolutionary understanding there might be some justification, but sorry experience has shown that it only results in apathy because of the false hopes raised, then dashed.
3. .The Proletarian Party, too, has a “practical” program. They “call for the unfaltering support of the class-conscious workers everywhere” to “the movement of Anti-Imperialism among the backward nations,” because they “fight . the Imperial Capitalist Class.” A travesty on Marxism, indeed . Countries like China, India and the rest, are blos-

soming out into capitalist countries . . . The newly rising bourgeoisie in such backward countries find the ideologic expression of their economic and political needs in movements of nationalism.

4. . . The Socialist Labor Party . . . stated officially their practical program: — “Not a ‘general strike’ of the workers but a ‘general lockout’ of the Capitalist Class . . . by organizing the workers, industrially, to take and hold the means of production”. A study of history will show that control of economic resources is only made secure by control of the State . . . It is impossible for the working class to take and hold industry as long as the state is in the hands of the capitalist class. . . Their view that the industrial union is the ONLY means of taking and holding industry, is but the pipe dream of the S.L.P. . .

. . . Our task at the moment is to carry on the work of socialist education. The capitalists rule today because the workers sanction and uphold the existing form of property relationships.

It is worth noting that this article denounces all these other organizations equally, since at this time there were strong social and personal links among them. The Proletarian Party, for instance, had been formed by Rab’s old friend, John Keracher. Moreover, Rab always maintained that there was no competition going on about who was going to make the Revolution: if another group should turn up that proved to be organized on the same basis as the WSP/SES, he was, in principle, ready to take steps to merge. But this article delineates very explicitly some of the factors that prevented him from considering the Proletarian Party, or any of the other parties mentioned, as a genuine socialist organization. To him, it was always clear that they were not organized on the same basis as the WSP or the SES. To join forces with any of them would have been tantamount to abandoning the task of preparing the groundwork for a lasting socialist revolution: namely, building a conscious, political working-class majority who are committed to socialism based on knowledge and genuine understanding.

All the issues of *The Socialist* in the WSP Archive from 1929 and 1930 announce many activities in which the group in New York were engaged. There were lectures being given, for instance, on the basis of political economy, and on the nature and development of the State; and there was also a weekly class based on Engels’s *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*. Members of the New York S.E.S. were clearly engaged in socialist activity at this time.

Rab's study class at International Hall

Each issue of *The Socialist* also contains an advertisement for Rab's study class, which by late September had moved into International Hall, located at 42 Wenonah Street, Roxbury. This was the Headquarters of the local Communist Party, who had offered to let Rab use their hall free of charge out of respect for his father. Sheppie Rabinowich was a "good Communist," but his son, of course, was not. Rab made it clear from the beginning that he would not present the Communist position (e.g., support events going on in the new USSR), and in fact would oppose it at every opportunity in conducting his class.

Nevertheless, from September 1929 to March 1930, Rab was able to use International Hall free of charge. From that point on, "hall rent" of \$1.00 per meeting was required, and by the end of December, the Communist Party was no longer willing to put up with the disrespect they were getting from Rab and the members of his class. After fifteen months, socialist meetings at International Hall came to a stop.

As the reader will remember, when Walter Green addressed Rab's Marxian Study Class back in August 1929, the members of the class voted to name themselves a Boston branch of the SES. This was, however, a little premature. At the beginning, there were really no membership requirements for being in the study class. Rab's younger sister Dina came, for instance, and even chaired one of the meetings. She brought her best friend along, and this young lady got to be chairman the following week; neither of these two was ever seriously interested in socialism. Fred Jacobs brought his friend Tom Flanagan to the meetings, and Tom came often enough so he was referred to as "Comrade Flanagan"; but Flanagan also never officially committed himself to socialism, although he remained a close sympathizer.

In spite of this, the core group that met at International Hall did agree with the principles of the SES; and it was they who were to form the nucleus of Boston Local.

The Minutes from those fifteen months of meetings document a small but lively organization who were actively involved in distributing *The Socialist*; they also attended, and helped publicize, both street meetings and the indoor lectures given by Rab and by visiting comrades from New York. They paid dues and voted democratically about how those dues would be spent (regretting that some of the money went to the Communist Party as hall rent). They also studied Marxist literature, and were encouraged to give weekly 'three-minute talks' on various subjects,

ranging from current events to scientific developments to economics. In this way, the Vagabonds, and other regular class attendees, developed their speaking skills.

(As an interesting side note, several years later — long after the class Rab had conducted at Communist Party Headquarters had found other meeting places — a controversy arose in the newly-formed WSP as to whether it was a violation of the Party Constitution for a member to conduct classes under the auspices of another organization. Scott Frampton, who was Secretary of the National Executive Committee at that time, wrote: “. [A] good example of the proper method in such cases was that used by Moses Baritz many years ago, when he had a class in Detroit ... under auspices of the S.P. of A. At every point he showed the class not only the Socialist position, but also showed how the S.P. of A. was not taking that, but an anti-Socialist position.”* Frampton recognized that, like Baritz, Rab had made it clear at every point how different the socialist analysis was from that of the Communist Party.)



That spring (while the study class was still meeting at International Hall), little Anna was looking forward to more interesting matters. She would be turning ten years old on April 18. She told her parents she would like to see New York City for her tenth birthday. Anna really thought she was asking for the impossible, because she knew trips were very expensive. Rab amazed her when he said he would be honored and delighted to take her to New York for her birthday.



Anna and Rab, 1930

My mother loved being shown the sights of New York. What a thrill it must have been to climb up the Statue of Liberty's arm all the way to the torch! But the most special part of the trip, for her, was the time spent alone with her father, far away from her always-teasing big brother Billie. She always remembered that trip as one of the highlights of her childhood. On the other hand, she was also aware that one reason he was so willing to fulfill her birthday request was that there was some important socialist organizing going on in New York City.

* Nov. 7, 1932. WSP Archive.

In fact, Babe Green had written this letter to Nils Akervall, a Detroit comrade, on April 9 (just over a week before Anna's birthday):

A few weeks ago a discussion arose on the new Constitution and By-laws [of the SES], of which I enclose a copy . Walter suggests that if at all possible you attempt to dig up an old copy of the Detroit Workers' Socialist Party's constitution for purposes of comparison. Both Walter and Rab consider it much better. He would like to have your version of the story, therefore this suggestion.

Upon taking up the first part of the Constitution we immediately struck a snag, and thereafter nothing else was taken up until 12:00 PM. when a motion was moved and seconded to adjourn, which, of course, most of us did not.

The entire discussion, which was quite heated, had to do with a new name for the organization and the advisability of forming a political party. Strange to say, someone whom we never expected to bring up the subject, did so. The man is Sam Orner. A number of them were in favor of both, but there was a great deal of opposition. The matter was tabled until April 25th.

The reason why the above is given to you with such a wealth of detail is due to the fact that Walter wants you to line up those who are interested in joining and yourself on the side of a political party. Walter proposed that all members at large should have a hand at voting on the formation of a party, that is why he is so anxious to have you and the others join. A few here and there could bolster up our position tremendously.

Looking at the matter from all angles it is quite necessary that we once and for all become a political party, instead of holding on to the name of the S.E.S. as though nothing better could be found, just because of the conservatism of a number of the members. We intend to get in touch with Rab in Boston and see what we can do with him.

My mother had the impression that the little group of socialists in New York had grown up around Green, as the group in Boston grew up around her father.

Rab, Walter and Babe Green and Sam Orner must have engaged in some very lively discussions that April. Orner and Rab remained lifelong friends and comrades.

Green and Babe spent three months at the Rab household on Capen Street that summer. Billie Rab could remember the date for certain,

because the Greens were there the August when he turned thirteen, and managed to take up so much attention that no one remembered his birthday request: a bicycle. Bill explained to me that although the Rabs did not consider themselves Jewish, still, most of his friends had had a big fuss made over them at their Bar Mitzvah when they turned thirteen, so he *had* been expecting **something**.

Ella still disliked Green intensely for the way he had betrayed her friend Olga. Rab was able to overlook this; he was full of admiration for Green's deep commitment to organizing for socialism. I think Rab also appreciated his free-spirited way of life. Walter and Babe lived on a houseboat when they were at home, and held unconventional views on many aspects of life unrelated to scientific socialism, such as matters of diet and digestion. Both Billie and Anna felt, resentfully, that the Greens were allowed to take over the household during their visit. Ella learned to cook vegetarian food while Walter and Babe were guests in her home, and the whole household remained vegetarian until Billie began to complain of stomach aches (well after the Greens' departure), at which point Ella, supported by the family doctor, insisted that they resume a more conventional diet — although a few delicious vegetarian meals, such as her spinach-and-egg pie, continued to appear on the menu throughout my own childhood. Rab followed some of Walter Green's precepts, such as fasting one day each week, for the rest of his life.

Aside from these anecdotes that both my mother and my uncle Bill loved to tell, it is clear that the grown-ups, that summer, were focused on how best to go about organizing for socialism.

It was during the Greens' visit, on August 3, 1930, that Jacobs became the second Boston socialist admitted to the SES, in time to be eligible to vote for the resumption of the name Workers' Socialist Party and for the change from an educational society to a political party. Fred Jacobs never became a speaker for the Party, but he was a loyal member. (See page 437 for a tribute Rab wrote for Jacobs upon his death, in 1958.)

Some of the New York comrades, probably those accused of "conservatism" by Babe in her letter to Akervall, favored changing the name of the organization to the "Working Class Educational Society," which could be affiliated with a "Working Class (Revolutionary) Party." Others favored "Social Revolutionary Party," or "Marxian Party." There was some concern that the word "socialist" might no longer mean, to the

average worker, the same thing that Marx had meant when he used the term “socialism” interchangeably with “communism.”

Nevertheless, when the ballots were all in and counted, on September 12, 1930, the old Workers’ Socialist Party was re-formed at a meeting of the New York Socialist Education Society, and the twenty-eight members in good standing at that time became charter members of the new political party. Thus the WSP continued as it had begun, having only used the alias of “SES” for an eleven-year interval.

The New York comrades were slow to put into effect the decision made in September 1930. It was actually not until the spring of 1931 that a “Memo on Reorganization” was finally sent out, which read:

“At a meeting held June 5, it was decided to take the action for which the convention of May 30 was called . and to refer this action to the members for their comment and correction. The provisions of the Constitution were put into effect, with the election of the following national officers.

Secretary: E. Hagman

Treasurer: S. Frampton

Additional Members of the Executive Committee:

E. Brown

S. Felperin

J. Frampton

N. Akervall (Detroit)

I. Rabinowich (Boston)

As to the two Auditors, nominations were asked for in the report sent to the members. Minutes of the N.E.C. meetings are to be sent each time to N. Akervall and I. Rabinowich, who will function on the E. Comm. through correspondence.

N.Y. Local was established.

E[dgar] Hagman, Sec’y.”

Soon after that, Louis Spiegel, Ralph Ober and Louis Shapiro, all members of the Vagabond Club who had been in Rab’s Marxian Study Class, joined the WSP That made five comrades in Boston — the number needed officially to constitute a Local. On June 12, 1931, Boston Local was officially

recognized by the National Executive Committee of the WSP Rab, Jacobs, Spiegel, Ober and Shapiro were the five charter members.

198 Walnut Avenue

Fred Jacobs had introduced his friend Tom Flanagan both to socialist ideas and to Rab. In 1931, Flanagan was living with his sister Nellie at 198 Walnut Avenue. On one occasion, he invited Rab and Ella to dinner. Ella was tremendously impressed with his gracious home, which was situated directly across the street from Munroe Park, in Roxbury. Nellie Flanagan's health was delicate, and her brother took care of her. Ella regaled Anna, then about 11 years old, with descriptions of the house and what a kindly old gentleman Tom Flanagan was.

Rab often set up his soap box on the corner of Blue Hill Avenue and Talbot Avenue, just across from the tennis courts of Franklin Field. Many of the Vagabonds enjoyed playing tennis and watching the expert matches that sometimes went on, so inevitably there was some cross-over between the group listening to Rab speak and the group competing on the tennis courts. It is not surprising that one day in the late summer, a really top-notch tennis player named George Gloss crossed Blue Hill Avenue to hear Rab speak. Gloss was about the same age as the Vagabonds, and knew some of them from the tennis games. He expressed an interest in joining their club, but was rejected by vote of the membership. In spite of this rebuff, Gloss became a regular at Rab's lectures, and at least once, probably in 1931, he was a visitor at the Capen Street flat. Gloss was to play a major role in the history and development of the WSP

As the summer turned to fall, Nellie Flanagan's health worsened, and she died in 1932. Tom Flanagan, finding himself alone in a big house in the very depths of the Depression, and seeing people he cared for and admired having trouble paying their rent, invited the Rabs to move in with him. He kept two rooms for himself, which were off-limits except by invitation; but the rest of his spacious home was theirs to enjoy.

There is a wonderful irony in the fact that during the worst of the Depression years, when so many workers suffered hard times, the Rabs were always comfortable, and even able to offer comradely hospitality to others. Early in 1933, they moved from Capen Street, Dorchester, to

198 Walnut Avenue, Roxbury, across the street from a lovely rock park. Flanagan never joined the WSP, but he was a comrade in a very real sense, inviting his friends the Rabs to share his home with him.



Rab in his heyday as a soapbox orator



Rab

(Photo taken in the late 1920s or early 1930s)

CHAPTER FOUR

The Local in its Heyday

1932 - 1947: WSP Headquarters at 12 Hayward Place; The Western Socialist; “a youthful mingling of social and socialist activity”; the war years; the WSP moves to 27 Dock Square; the Scott Nearing Debate; the World Socialist Party



Speakers' Mall on Boston Common

Around seventy new members joined Boston Local of the Workers' Socialist Party between 1933 and 1939.

Towards the beginning of this period, the comrades were renting a hall in the Morton Theatre Building on an as-needed basis for

propaganda meetings, while the discussion at business meetings centered around plans for distributing *The Socialist Standard*; how best to publicize Rab's Study Class (which had been meeting more or less continuously ever since late 1929); lectures; and, during the summer, outdoor meetings, at which the local membership were joined from time to time by visiting comrades from New York. The official contact address, which was listed in the *Socialist Standards* of the period, was Fred Jacobs's home in Roxbury.

In late November 1933, with a membership of twelve, the Local voted to rent a two-room suite in Codman Square, Dorchester — one room having a seating capacity of 75, and the other suitable for an office. The Local was very eager to publicize this new Headquarters; they asked the comrades in England to help by advertising, and the SPGB complied. An ad appeared in the *Socialist Standards* for April and May 1934.

Much later, in 1978, Rab was asked how he had gotten Boston Local started. In reply, first he mentioned the Vagabond Club and the Science Club; and he told about organizing street meetings. Then he said, “but more important, I organized a class in Dorchester. That was the most wonderful class. It was always on a Tuesday night, and the average attendance, believe it or not, was 125 people ... It’s amazing. It’s unbelievable. And who were they? The class was organized in a very unusual fashion. The first section was a discussion on current events. And all the politicians of Boston and Dorchester (it was a Jewish neighborhood up there on Blue Hill Avenue) used to come to that class to get information about current events. They’d stay for the other stuff, too. The second section was some Marxian pamphlet. *The Communist Manifesto; Value, Price and Profit*; all that kind of stuff, see? The third section was, there was an ex-member of the SLP. He was an elocution teacher. And he says, ‘I’d like to give a class on speaking.’ So that was the last section of the class. And that’s how come it was so well attended every week for over two years. Gee, that was something out of the ordinary!”

WSP Headquarters at 12 Hayward Place

Within a few years, as the membership grew, it became feasible to move WSP Headquarters to 12 Hayward Place, a tiny byway just off 600 Washington Street in the heart of Boston. It was an easy walk from there to the Boston Common, where there was a long-standing tradition of outdoor speaking.

The new Headquarters was a long walk from the Rabs’ home in Roxbury, but Rab and Ella used to walk to Headquarters on a regular basis, often accompanied by other comrades. One of these old-timers, Ralph Roberts, reminisced with me in 2005 about Rab’s wife — my grandmother — during this period: “You know, we would go to Rab’s on Walnut Avenue, and we’d walk to Boston from there, to the Headquarters (to save carfare). We’d walk together as a group, and talk the whole way up there, and Ella would ... come along with us. She always used to ask questions, ‘What have you been doing?’ and all that stuff. She had a genuine interest in everybody who came there. She was a great mate for a dedicated socialist.”



Members of Boston Local spoke regularly on Speakers Mall, a space along the Charles Street side of Boston Common which disappeared in

the 1950s, when the present-day parking facility was built. Soap box orators representing many different groups, both political and religious, spoke there all during the Thirties and Forties.

The WSP was also an active presence on the close-by Tremont Street side of the Common. During this time, Rab was by all accounts an outstanding speaker, both indoors and outdoors. (Unfortunately, by the time I was old enough to pay proper attention to such things, his thoughts had gotten so much faster than his speech that sometimes the phrases would slur. He would talk about “the doggie-dog jungle of capitalism” and not until much later would I realize that this meant “the dog-eat-dog jungle.”) But during the Thirties, Rab soap-boxed effectively on the Common and elsewhere, joined from time to time by visiting comrades from New York like Walter Green, Edgar Hagman, and Jack Whittaker.

George Gloss, who joined the Party in 1933, was the first member of Boston Local other than Rab to take a really active part in the work of spreading socialist knowledge and understanding. Gloss proved to be an excellent outdoor speaker.

Ella wrote a letter to Rab, dated August 27, 1935, when he had gone out of town on a trip with the Vagabond Club (which was still meeting during this period). The letter is worth including here because it so artlessly shows the delight both of them felt at how well Boston Local could function in Rab’s absence. It also gives a good idea of what the Local’s activities were in the mid-Thirties.



*Rab on an outing
with the Vagabonds.*

“Dear Rab:

Be careful not to catch a cold, this is just to let you know that I have one coming on, I can feel it, you know that grand swelling feeling, but don't worry. “Ella and the Kids” are not missing the goat one bit. Now that you are gone, we are one step nearer to socialism. We are through with wet nursing, we now feed them alfalfa tablets, we will soon come out with a report disclosing startling results...*

I did not go to the afternoon Common Mall meeting, but I understand G[eorge] G[loss] pulled off a piece of strategy. He opened the meeting 10 minutes earlier,

before any of the other meeting had begun, in this way he got the whole crowd that were hanging around the Mad, when the others opened their meeting here way in his talk and as good many stuck. 80\$ literature way sold, Rothstein, Callahan, Jacobs were present.

forums way O.K., too, George just gave as "rambling" talk with clippings from the newspapers, his new "Huebook" from the State House stood him good 15 were present. Questions were asked on the ballot, and how it will take place, etc. Collection way as \$1.02.



George Gloss on the soap box,
 Rab standin & atn & ht

Last night Street meeting, GG gave as general talk, not bad at all, if only he would try to develop his own intelligence and not constantly rely on "clips" for once he way good in the answering of questions, but near the end the meeting way broken up by a

bunches of hoodlums, but as it was near 10:30 it did not matter. After the meeting we had as discussion Alpine had as group at one place, and G.G. at another. In this discussion, George did a most masterly job, it way a treat to see how he not only met, but put ad their arguments on a dusty back shelf no longer meeting the need of Society today, and they listened with keen interest until way after 11-O'clock, it way really as second meeting.

for Tuesday class, Leos Kahan will give a talk on Science, he will speak for about an hour and a half and then George will interrelate it to our position the scientific socialist positions. GG will also speak on Engely, and we look forward to a very pleasant evening.

Street meetings are no worry to us, I wrote to Jack [Whittaker], "Do you think any of the N.Y. fellows can come to speak on the Common Sunday, and at our forums?"... I hope Jacks can influence some one to come, if not, GG will give a talk on Engely, and if it is as good as his talk on Marx way as few months ago, well it will be worth listening to, as you will remember...



Anne Rab and George Alpine

Anne- and Bill are on the job every morning at 7:30, Bill is anyway. Anne gets there around 8 but never much later, they say there is absolutely no business.

Oh yes! Lest I forget, it will be a damn shame if Kriggy don't do something about his election. Everyone wants to see our candidate. GG made it clear that it was not the man but the principles of the Party they should vote for, that too long have they voted for men who later betrayed them. It caused us plenty of worry last night, and Kriggy better come in and attend to his obligation to the Party or else the Local Activities Committee will take action... To those in the Boston Local now this is a very vital thing, and no monkey business will be tolerated believe me."

In this letter, when Ella says "GG" she means George Gloss, but where she says simply "George," she may be referring to George Alpine, another comrade.

Of the comrades Ella mentions in this letter, the only ones I remember clearly (other than the Rab family) are Charlie Rothstein and Kriggy. I don't know how Rothstein met Rab — probably through the Study Class — but he was always quiet, like Fred Jacobs. Those two, I understand, were always present at meetings but spoke



Billie Rab, Rab and Kriggy — 1938

very seldom. Jacobs moved away from Boston before I was old enough to really have retained much of an impression of him, except as an old man who was a comrade; but Charlie Rothstein was a presence in the WSP until I was active in it myself, always doing his quiet part. He used to spend his summers in Miami, and eventually he retired and moved there permanently.

“Kriggy” — Nathan Krigman—was one of the Vagabonds who remained an active socialist for his whole life. (I do not know whether or not he “fulfilled his obligation to the Party” regarding the election Ella alludes to in her letter.) He and Bill Rab later became business partners. Kriggy died young, leaving a wife and three young children. Billie gave his only son the middle name of “Krig” in honor of Comrade Krigman. (Karl Krig Rab was born in 1950, not long after Kriggy’s death.)

Because it was recognized that anyone representing the WSP in public needed to have a solid grasp not only of the subject matter they were speaking about, but also of any issue that might be brought up by a heckler in the audience, no comrade spoke in public for the organization without having passed the Speakers Test.

Rab and Jack Whittaker both had taken the test in January 1933. The National Executive Committee, which was located in New York until 1939, administered the test in person to comrades applying for it in the New York area. In Boston, Rab handled it himself, until the Local had enough speakers to form a committee for the purpose.



Rab always had a special talent for reaching out to people and communicating with them. This was not only true for people close at hand, like the Harvard and MIT professors he often got to speak at the Vagabond Club meetings, but also for people far away whose writings he admired. Early in the Thirties, Rab became impressed with the work of Anton Pannekoek, the Dutch astronomer and Marxist theoretician. He corresponded with this scientist, establishing a relationship of mutual respect. Referring to Pannekoek later, Rab wrote: “He is one of the greatest scholars you’ll ever meet ... He wrote *Marxism and Darwinism*, which is one of the socialist classics. He does not agree with us on the question of the ballot. He thinks the industrial workers will organize Workers’ Councils and take and hold industry and introduce socialism. But on Marxian economics, reforms, and especially the question of leadership, he is crystal clear.”*

At the Harvard Tercentenary in 1936, Pannekoek received a special honorary degree for his work on astrophysics. He let Rab know he was coming to Boston well in advance, and the two of them arranged for him to address a meeting at WSP Headquarters.

* Selected Letters, p. 203.

Ralph Roberts, one of the newer comrades, was assigned to meet Pannekoek and bring him to Headquarters. "Rab told me to go to the subway," Roberts reported, "and wait out on the outside, and a man by the name of Pannekoek, a philosopher, will come and speak to us. And he'll be wearing a flower in his lapel. Sure enough! A little old man with white hair came out, wearing a flower. I said, 'Are you Mr. Pannekoek?' He said, 'Yes.' I introduced myself and told him I was here to greet him and take him down to the Headquarters . . . And that night we had a good turn-out at the meeting, and he spoke. His approach was similar to ours — that's why Rab knew about him."

Rab smiled mischievously when he told me the sponsors of Pannekoek's trip to Boston were upset that their *honoré* "much preferred the WSP environments to the Harvard intellectuals." Rab crowed, "He gave us the most inspiring talk on Russia I've ever heard. It was impossible to get in the hall; people were in the [outer] hall and stairs. His Socratic method of dealing with the Russian patriots was superb: 'Is that not so?' He had opposed the Bolsheviks at the very beginning on the basis of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat vs. democratic majority."

Later, in 1947, Pannekoek contributed an article on "Public Ownership versus Common Ownership" to *The Western Socialist*, jointly produced by the SPC and the WSP since 1939. Later still, in 1959, when I was planning a trip to Europe, Rab urged me to look him up and say "Hello." I was too shy to do so at that time, and Pannekoek died the following year.

"A youthful mingling of social and socialist activity"

The street connecting Hayward Place with the Tremont Street side of the Common, where both Gloss and Rab spoke almost on a daily basis, is called Avery Street. A young student of accounting named Leonard Feinzig was putting himself through night school by working in that neighborhood as a bookkeeper, and got into the habit of walking through the Common on his lunch hour, eating his lunch on a bench and listening to the speakers from various groups and organizations. In the fall of 1936, Feinzig heard Rab expounding the case for socialism, and after that, he was eager to get involved. Noticing Feinzig's interest, another comrade in the crowd, Julius Sherman, told him he was welcome to attend a forum at the WSP Headquarters right down the street, any Sunday evening.

It was at one of those Sunday forums in 1936 that Feinzig met Rab's daughter (who as a teen-ager, liked to be called "Anne" instead of "Anna"). It wasn't long before they were courting. Anne, 16, was in her Senior year of high school when they met; Lennie was 18.

Len Feinzig joined the WSP on December 11, 1936. He passed the Party's Speakers' Test in September 1938 (three months after being awarded his Diploma in Accountancy from Bentley). Anne Rab didn't join until May 28, 1937; but she passed the Speakers' Test a month before Lennie did. She told me Rab was surprised when she became a speaker for the Party — that he hadn't expected her to. She was pleased to have made him proud of her. She'd done something her brother hadn't done, and she felt good about that.

Anne and Lennie knew they were in love forever within months after they met. They are my parents, and when I was born into the family in 1940, they named me "Karla" in honor of Karl Marx. Their marriage lasted for 63 years, until my



mother's death in 2002. Lennie, my father, remained an active member of the WSP till he died at the age of 88.



All during the Depression era, more and more people were attracted to the Workers' Socialist Party; and the more members there were, the more activities the organization was able to support. There were Locals in New York, Boston and Los Angeles in the mid-to-late nineteen thirties. The National Office was still located in New York, at 5 Sylvan Place, and regular business meetings were held there twice a month; but it was in Boston that socialist propaganda activity really thrived.

The July 1938 issue of *The Socialist* (since 1937 the "Official Organ of the Workers' Socialist Party of the U.S.A.," rather than of the S.E.S.) lists the following calendar of activities for Local Boston:

Sunday — Open-Air Meetings. Boston Common, every Sunday from 3 to 6 PM. Forum at Local HQ every Sunday at 8 PM.

Monday — Open-Air Meetings. Talbot & Blue Hill Avenue, Dorchester, 11 AM.

Tuesday — Marxian Study Class. "The Gotha Program," 1163 Blue Hill Ave., Dorchester, Every Tuesday, 8 PM.

Wednesday — Speakers Class, for members only. At 198 Walnut Ave. every Wed. at 8 PM.

Thursday — Study Class at HQ, Textbook used, "The Theoretical System of Karl Marx" by Louis Boudin, every Thursday at 8 PM.

Friday — Business Meeting of Local, at HQ.

Saturday — On June 19 and August 21, Museum of Fine Arts Tours. "History of Social Customs." Meet at main entrance at 1:30 PM.

Youth Movement. Study class on "The Communist Manifesto" and "News Events" every Sat. at 8 PM, 198 Walnut Ave., Roxbury

The local that had grown up around Rab kept socialist activities going on every day of the week. Its membership not only had a solid understanding of the case for socialism due to the ongoing study classes, but also an enthusiasm for promoting the movement which proved contagious.

The Minutes of the monthly business meetings for 1936-39 were kept in a in loose-leaf 3-ring binder, now in the WSP's Archive. Through these Minutes, the Secretaries of Local Boston (Ella Rab in 1937, followed by Charlie Rothstein through 1939) tell how the Local supported the 1937 decision by the party's National Administrative Committee (NAC), located in New York, to resume publication of *The Socialist*. besides contributing articles, members arranged for the paper's distribution at local bookstores and sold it themselves at street meetings; the Local Activities Committee also assigned comrades to sell Party literature door-to-door.



Ella Rab, c. 1937

Local Boston raised money to help New York publish *The Socialist*, and also to pay for local propaganda activities, including the rent on 12 Hayward Place. They held raffles, which were moderately successful; but the most important fund-raising activity was the holding of weekly Party socials, at which a collection was always taken up.

Bill Rab referred to this later as “a youthful mingling of social and socialist activity.”

Socialist fervor was in the air. When the Boston comrades hired a band to play at their socials, half the musicians wound up joining the organization as active members. (Jazz musician Nat Hentoff attended study classes, though he never was recruited into membership.) Local Boston was truly in its heyday. A critical mass had been achieved.

What might be seen as a kind of climax to this period in Party history was the “mass meeting for Socialism” that the members of Boston Local held that year. The suggestion first came up at an August meeting of the Local, at which it was agreed “that a mass meeting be held at the Old South Meeting House, providing \$25.00 for that purpose is raised beforehand.”

A committee of six, including Billie Rab, Len Feinzig, “Kriggy,” Ralph Roberts, and two others, was put in charge of making the arrangements. They held a “Depression party” social on November 12, to raise money, and considered which comrades would be the best speakers for the occasion. Billie made an advertising circular to distribute.

It was the custom at this time for the officers of Boston Local to present a “Semi-Annual Report “ to the membership every June and December. Here is Secretary Charlie Rothstein’s account of the mass meeting in his semi-annual report for the winter of 1938:

... The most important event of the period was the mass meeting for Socialism, held at the Old South Meeting House on November 27. Despite the fact that the weather was unfavorable, between 230 and 270 workers were present .. The fund for the mass meeting was first set for \$25, but with the aid of our members and sympathizers throughout the country, the final figure reached far beyond expecta-



Mass Meeting Truck

tions. Thousands of circulars were distributed throughout the city and suburbs. A brief announcement was made over the radio, and a sound truck was hired for a day to advertise the meeting. There were also two conspicuous ads placed in the newspapers. The speakers were: Comrades A. Rab, I. Rab and Gloss of Local Boston, and Comrade Felperin of Local New York. The chairman was Comrade Muse. The position of the Workers' Socialist Party was ably presented.



Towards the end of the time that Rab's family lived at 198 Walnut Avenue, some of younger members of Local Boston had voted to organize themselves as a club, "The Young Workers' Socialist Educational Group," under the auspices of the WSP. They studied pamphlets that were available from the selection at Headquarters (the first one they chose was *Marxism and Darwinism*), but held their meetings at the Rabs' home.



*Bob Weisberg
and Anne, 1936*

Of course, the Rabs had a long history of holding Open House for young people interested in scientific socialism. Bob Weisberg (a former member of the Science Club who was also in the Young Workers' Socialist Group, and a frequent visitor to the Rabs "because it was so much more interesting and welcoming than our own homes,") told me: "We'd be there, you know, until 1:00, 2:00 in the morning ... we never would go home. One time, Rab decided that we should go home, and paraded through the living room naked, saying: 'I think you should all go home.'"

At one meeting, Mickey Rosenfield's Minutes record, a suggestion was made that "all members be asked to sit in the room and take part in the text" and at another meeting, a motion was passed "that no individuals be allowed in any other part of the house but the living room during the meetings."

This group had an Educational Committee comprised of Anne Rab, Lennie Feinzig and George Alpine; as well as a Social Committee that included Bella Alpine and Bobby Weisberg. Ralph Roberts was in the youth group too, although he was probably its oldest member. As an organizer for the ILGWU, Roberts was able to introduce many of his Union contacts to socialist ideas. He also was at least partly responsible for the extraordinary success the WSP had at drawing crowds to the party socials at Headquarters.

Mickey Rosenfield was the group's secretary. Reading her Minutes, I have the impression that "The Young Workers' Socialist Educational Group" felt, in many ways, like a continuation of the old Science Club, with a lot of the same individuals in attendance, and the same kind of informal oversight from Rab; only now, the young people were older and more politically focused.

This was the core group who planned the socials for Local Boston. In September 1938, there was a highly enjoyed masquerade, followed by the "Depression party" fundraiser for the mass meeting on Nov. 12, and a gala New Year's Party on Dec. 31. The Youth Group also arranged for tours of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, which were conducted by Rab.

During the meetings at 198 Walnut Avenue, each member in turn gave a 15-minute talk on current events, which often led to lively discussions about the Civil War in Spain and other issues of the day. Rab attended



The photo above was taken at a New Years Eve Party at 12 Hayward Place in 1938. The woman labeled #1 at the far left is Ella Rab (Rab himself is not in the picture); #2 is Alvin Zalinger, later Professor of Sociology at Boston University; #3 is Len Feinzig, with Anne's arm around him. #4 is Bill Rab with Mickey Rosenfeld, #5, posing with her elbow on his back. #6 is Abe Feinzig, Lens' brother, arm in arm with his wife Shirley. Standing just behind Ella is #7, Kriggy. Ralph Roberts, beside him, is #8.

some (or perhaps even all) of their meetings — which is not surprising since it met in his home. A few times he stepped in and gave the current events talk in the absence of the person whose turn it was to give it.

Meanwhile, the Local in general participated in very successful outdoor Sunday meetings on the Charles Street Mall, which continued into December with an estimated average attendance of 264 people.

A crowd estimated at 1,350 listened to a debate between the WSP and a group called the American Action Associates on Sept. 11. The topic was: 'Can Capitalism be Reformed in the Interest of the Working Class?' with Comrades Gloss and I. Rab representing Local Boston.

As Comrade Rothstein asserted in his report at the end of the year:

In conclusion, due primarily to the mass meeting and to the large attendances at the Sunday outdoor meetings, the last 6 months of the year 1938 can be considered as the most successful in the history of Local Boston. The influence of the Local was extended, and many workers became acquainted with the name and principles of the Workers' Socialist Party for the first time.



Towards the middle of 1939, Tom Flanagan — the owner of the house at 198 Walnut Avenue, who had so graciously invited the Rabs to share it with him in 1932 — began courting. When Flanagan and his sweetheart set up housekeeping together, not only could the WSP's Youth Group no longer meet at 198 Walnut Avenue, but Rab and his family had to find other quarters as well.

George and Bella Alpine, members of the Youth Group, were already living in a pleasant and affordable apartment building at 71 Symphony



*Bella and George
Alpine, 1938*

Road, Boston, which was actually closer to Headquarters than Walnut Avenue was. When Flanagan hinted to Rab that he should seek a new home, Bella told Anne and Lennie that there were vacancies where she and George lived. Anne and Len moved in on one floor, and Rab, with the rest of the family, took a larger apartment upstairs.



*Tom Flanagan
and Gloria Pitta*

Billie Rab had married Mickey Rosenfield in 1937, while the family was still at 198 Walnut Avenue, and Ella and Rab had given the young couple their bedroom at that time. Around the time the family left Roxbury, sadly, Billie's marriage was beginning to fail.

The Western Socialist

1939 was the year when *The Western Socialist*, the journal of the Socialist Party of Canada, moved to Boston and became a joint organ of the SPC and the Workers' Socialist Party. The first issue of *The Western Socialist* had been published in Winnipeg, Manitoba, in October 1933; but by 1939, the Canadian comrades feared for its continued publication because of the political climate. The Canadian Parliament declared war on Germany September 7, 1939.

Although New York had always been the seat of the National Office, and the New York comrades were still managing to hold regular meetings and to publish *The Socialist*, it was clear that Local Boston was in a better position than New York to take over regular publication of *The Western Socialist*. Through his Anarchist connections, Rab knew someone who had been on the Sacco and Vanzetti Committee a little over a decade earlier. Aldino Felicani owned the Excelsior Press, in Boston. There were enough active Local Boston comrades to assure getting out a publication on a consistent basis (which they did from 1939 until 1980), whereas the publication of *The Socialist* by Local New York had proven to be spotty at best.



Proofreading The Western Socialist

At around this same time, the National Office was also transferred to Boston.

The first issue of *The Western Socialist* to be published by Excelsior Press was Vol. VI - No. 55, but it is clear that this issue was prepared largely in Canada, and it carries a "Manifesto of the Socialist Party of Canada on the War." The next issue is dated November 1939, when the USA was gearing up for World War II. On the front cover is emblazoned this statement about the war:

“For us the cry must not be national defense but International Working-Class Solidarity.”

— A sentiment as timely and meaningful today as it was then. It is discouraging to note that from 1939 to the present writing there has never been a time when war was not being waged someplace on Earth, and to remember that in all these wars, the victims have been overwhelmingly members of the working class.

This manifesto, written about the second “world war,” makes many points which could be applied to the war going on in Iraq as I type these words.

**WORKERS' SOCIALIST PARTY MANIFESTO:
YOU and THE SECOND WORLD WAR**

A considerable number of the governments of the world have aligned themselves in the holocaust of war. The United States Congress, through recently enacted measures, has prepared plans to conscript many of the industries of the country with their workers. The owners of these industrial plants will continue to receive adequate profits, of course. Arrangements have also been completed by Congress for the conscription of workers into the army and for the instituting of such dictatorial measures as war situations may make necessary. From the experience of the [First] World War, we may expect the press, radio, schools and clergy to tell us to defend “our homes” and “liberties.”

WHY WARS ARE FOUGHT

Modern wars are fought, not for noble ideals, but for markets, raw materials and for strategic military or naval objectives which can be of future advantage to the material aggrandizement of a country's ruling class. These are the principal causes which can, and may, involve the United States of America, as well as other countries now neutral, in this war.

This conflict of interest between capitalists in different countries is of no concern to the average member of the working class. It greatly concerns important sections of the capitalist class in these warring countries. For them it means their expansion or contraction as exploiters in the world's economy, depending on whether their particular government is victorious in the war; but for the workers war means only fields of wooden crosses and shattered lives.

“YOUR ENEMIES”

When the armed American worker faces the “enemies” of the ideals for which he is persuaded to die, these “enemies” turn out to be none other than workers like himself. They, too, are told they must fight to save an ideal or a truth that must be preserved. Under Capitalism these workers are not allowed to live together in peace but must slaughter each other in wars as a result of their being conscripted and forced to fight in the armies and navies of the various countries.

AFTER WAR ENDS

Whether retaining the old or having a new “alien” master ushered in, YOU are still wage-slaves. The Class Struggle still rages. This Class Struggle between the workers and their REAL enemies, the capitalist class, continues unabated, manifesting itself in strikes, lock-outs, unemployment, dependent old age and poverty. No war has ever freed the worker from his worry of how to eke out a living or stopped his robbery by the capitalist class. After all the wars that have been fought for “liberty,” “freedom” and “democracy,” the great toiling mass of humanity is exploited as never before. The liberty YOU fought to preserve proves to be the LIBERTY TO STARVE in the midst of plenty.

WORKERS SHOULD STOP AND THINK

It is unquestionably true that democratic institutions, in the hands of a Socialist majority, would serve as a lever of emancipation. The very needs of capitalist society fostered the advances in such democratic “rights” as exist today. However, for YOU, American Democracy means regimented education, degrading charities and economic slavery. With the present confusion among workers the Capitalist Class has a better opportunity to restrict civil liberties; and in the midst of wars to “defend democracy,” much of the limited democracy now existing is lost.

THE SOLUTION

Fellow Worker, there are NO solutions to our problems within this jungle of capitalism. National boundaries have been destroyed economically. The world is becoming more and more of a closely knit, interrelated unit. Highly developed machinery and modern science has made the production of wealth a socialized process demanding social cooperation. Wars over wealth are only necessary under Capitalism. Abundance is now possible for all.

Only Socialism can be adapted to the needs of modern society. Socialism, i.e., the common ownership and democratic control of the means of living by and in the interest of all society, is the solution of our problems.

When the workers, who are the great majority of the population, realize that the only thing worth fighting for is Socialism, they will organize for this object.

DELAY NO LONGER! JOIN THE RANKS OF THE WORKERS' SOCIALIST PARTY; PUT A SPEEDY END TO THE PROFIT SYSTEM THAT BREEDS WARS AND GREATER WARS.

Boston, Mass., October 16, 1939.

National Administrative Committee

The War Years

In September 1940, the United States passed a military conscription bill. All during the war, the WSP maintained a policy that no member of the Armed Services, or of the Police Force, could remain in the organization. Some of the comrades were conscientious objectors, but most who were drafted left the party until they were released from duty. Bill Rab was not drafted until late in the war; he served with the Air Force, in Europe, from 1943 to 1945.

I was a pre-Pearl Harbor baby, so it can be said I kept my father out of World War II. I was born in 1940, while Anne and Lennie were living on Symphony Road. Since times were hard, Len had taken a bookkeeping job for a company in Atlantic City during the last months of Anne's pregnancy. He stayed in New Jersey with WSP Comrade Robert Housely until my birth brought him home again.

During the early Forties, there were gala socials at Headquarters almost every week, but there were also Party socials at the house where my own memories begin, at 5 Dennison Street, Roxbury, where the family moved in 1941 when I was 18 months old. The same crowd came to both places. Donations to the WSP were always taken at socials, and this income was a significant part of what paid for the Party's propaganda expenses.

The socials are what I remember best about the WSP all during my childhood. The socials and the picnics! At least once a summer, often more, all the comrades and sympathizers would gather at Houghton's Pond in the

Blue Hills, or at one of the Gloucester beaches, Wing-aersheek or Stage Fort Park. It was easy to imagine living in a socialist society with so many people sharing food and camaraderie that easily. Party socials and other social activities were a huge part of what kept the interest so high in the WSP all through this period, as indeed had probably been the case all along.



I am the little girl in this 1943 photograph. I'm sitting between Ella and my aunt Shirley, surrounded by women socialists (the men were all pitching horsehoes).

The social element was a supplement to the classes Rab still offered in *Capital*, and other Marxian texts like *The Communist Manifesto*, *Wage Labor and Capital*, and *Value, Price and Profit*. Billie and Anne both made charts to help Rab teach those classes, and so did Aimé Martinat, an artist who had joined the Party. Later on, when I was older, those charts would definitely help me understand things — but my memories from the early Forties are largely of Aimé and my mother trying to earn some extra money by painting furniture, a business venture doomed to failure since, although the furniture was beautiful, neither Aimé nor Anne had any talent for business. The charts, on the other hand, were a valuable graphic aid to Rab's study classes.

I remember when I was six or seven, Rab was working on a new chart, "A Man's Eye View of Evolution," which I now realize he must have started even earlier, and kept revising to keep it up-to-date with advances in science. It graphically summarized cosmic events from a time where there was only "Matter and Energy" to the present. Rab was very proud of that chart, and of being a scientist (although to Billie's chagrin, he never accepted the Big Bang theory).

One of his favorite aphorisms was: "All things are interrelated, and Socialism is the Queen that unites all the sciences." He demonstrated this continually by starting up conversations with people about whatever they were interested in, and quickly turning the encounter into a discussion of the case for socialism — without ever changing the subject. Rab also was fond of making the point: "Everyone you talk with



Rab and Kayla m. 1942 that will easily concede that in their own particular line of work, things would go better if we had socialism. But very few people can see that the same can be said of all aspects of society.”

Billie Rab was drafted in 1943. Although his relationship with Mickey had ended after two and a half years of marriage, she came to see him off when he was shipped overseas from a New York air force base. That was not so surprising; but both Ella and Anne were surprised

that another girl also came to see him off: it was Billie’s new girlfriend, Caroline Clemente. Rab, however, was not surprised. Knowing that his son intended to make Carrie his wife before he went overseas, Rab had helped to arrange for Carrie to travel to New York, where Billie was stationed, so the couple could get married — but events moved too quickly. Billie was shipped overseas earlier than anticipated, leaving his fiancée single.

The photograph below, taken in 1942, shows a skit in progress during a social at 12 Hayward Place. On the wall, to the Left in the photo, is a blackboard with the words:

Sunday Forum, Oct 31: "Clear Thinking"—Rab
Wed. Class: "Socialism, Utopian and Scientific,"—I. Rab
LOOK AT THE BULLETIN BOARD IN THE HALL
FOR SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS — DEBATES — SOCIALS.

Notice the four musicians in the back, one at the piano, another watching the skit from behind a music stand. They provided music for the dancing after the skit ended.

The “girl” seated at the desk is Billie Rab, dressed in drag! It was at this social that Billie first met Carrie. She told me later that she really thought he was a girl, and was surprised when he asked her to dance. Carrie had come to the social with her high-school friends Sally and



Dawn Amari, whose father Joe Amari was an Anarchist Rab knew from the days of Sacco and Vanzetti.



When Billie finally came safely home from the War in 1945, he married Carrie, right in the big living room we had at 5 Dennison Street, Roxbury, and moved with her to an apartment in Dorchester. They decided to get married on the Winter Solstice because it's the longest night of the year. Billie and Carrie's wedding was the most wonderful party I had ever been to, and I thought my new Aunt Carrie in her wedding dress was the most beautiful grown-up I had ever seen.



Headquarters at 27 Dock Square

With only a month's notice, the WSP was forced to leave its Headquarters at 12 Hayward Place in 1946, and being without a place to meet for several months put a strain on the membership of the Local. There was an organizational slump that needed to be addressed. The Party outside Boston, however, was doing even worse.

On July 2, 1946, at a Local business meeting, Rab was elected National Organizer. He conceived his tasks in this position to be twofold: "(1) to help the headquarters staff to dig itself out of its detail difficulties caused by being swamped with work, being short handed, and the lack of a proper routine system and (2) to aid in building up the Party."

After a short search for a new place, the organization moved to 27 Dock Square, in the Faneuil Hall neighborhood, that August. One of my early memories is of watching my mother paint the beautiful tin ceiling of the new Headquarters. There were lots of tiny squares, and it was hard to brush the white paint into them. But it looked so wonderful and shiny when it was all



*Dock Square (Faneuil Hall
in the background)*

done! That Headquarters, as I remember it, was mainly one big room, with wooden folding chairs and a few tables. There were frequent socials there which I was sometimes brought to. At one of them, when I was six or seven years old, I was given a part in one of the skits the comrades put on.

Although I didn't realize it at the time, my mother was the Secretary of Local Boston in 1946. She was an active socialist, and also held a job in a machine shop during and after the War. I was raised by Ella and Rab as much as by Anne and Len, and have always felt very lucky for having had four parents instead of the usual two!

As Secretary of the Local, Anne Rab oversaw the move to the new Headquarters; in fact she got her boss at the machine shop to lend the WSP a truck for the move. 27 Dock Square was an even better place for a party (in both senses) than Hayward Place had been. It had huge windows that could be seen from the street below, one of which had a sign (made by Billie) reading "Workers' Socialist Party." As an added feature, it was located near Faneuil Hall, then as now a famous Boston landmark.



Rab, in his new role as National Organizer, went back to Detroit in an attempt to build up a Local there, where the WSP had originally been founded almost 20 years earlier. He visited Olga Rivkin, the old friend whose baby Ella had nursed along with her own son in 1917. That baby was grown up now, and Olga had remarried. Rab now met her second husband, Louis Bradlin, for the first time. (This photograph of the Bradlin family was taken a few years before Rab's visit.)

Olga, not particularly interested in Rab's socialism, had never spoken about it with the children she had with Bradlin. Her parents had returned to Russia in support of the 1917 Revolution, and Olga had taught her children to admire the Soviet Union.



Now Olga was dismayed to hear Rab insist, after all this time, there was no real socialism in the USSR, and she said as much to her teenage daughter.

“Never mind,” said young Harriett, “I’ll set him straight,” and she tried to tell him how wrong he was. But Harriett now had much the same experience that Rab himself had had, the first time he heard Moses Baritz expound the case for scientific socialism right there in Detroit.

“In Socialism,” Rab explained to Harriett, “there will be no classes. You can’t deny there is a class-divided society in Russia, can you? There won’t be any money in Socialism; everyone will have free access to what they need. Do you think that’s the way it is in the Soviet Union?” Harriett, listening to Rab, became a scientific socialist on the spot. “He had such vitality,” she remembered when we talked about this in 2004. “He was an inspiration! He could quote *Capital* like Scripture.”

Harriett became one of the comrades in the new Detroit Local that resulted from Rab’s organizing visit, joining Gordon Coffin and his daughter Mardon, Irving Canter, Frank Marquart and others. And although she was away from the socialist movement during the Sixties and Seventies, she was to return as one of the strongest supporters of the organization in the years after Rab was gone.



Looking back, it seems as though this period was the height of Boston Local’s heyday. In 1946 - 1947, there were about a hundred active socialists in Boston, many of them members of the WSP, and as many more who were “strong sympathizers” who could be counted on to support the organization’s activities. All of these participated in a huge social at the new Headquarters that had the dual purpose of giving everyone a good time, and helping to pay for the move.

At weekly business meetings, the Local comrades accepted many women and men into membership who had first been attracted to the movement through the socials and only later had attended forums, lectures and other activities. Early in January 1947, the NAC made a formal request to Boston Local that they use a written application form, which could then be reviewed by the NAC before the acceptance became final.

A Controversy in the WSP

A man named Lou Fein applied for membership that March. Although in general agreement with WSP principles, he stated a few things differently. He said, for one thing, that when the socialist revolution occurs, it will not be a victory for the working class — because at that point, there will no longer be a working class, socialism being a classless society.

Anne Rab, Secretary of the Local, understood his point: “The revolution,” she agreed, “will be accomplished by a vast majority of socialists, among whom will be capitalists. And if you must picture it as a pitched battle, the opposition will be a minority of dolts, among whom will be workers. It will not be class that divides the ranks, but ideas. Because of the overwhelming numerical strength of the working class, my guess is that they will constitute the majority in both factions.”

A second point on which Fein criticized the party’s Principles was in their insistence that the only way socialism can be achieved is through political action. “It is quite possible,” he said, “that the WSP might be outlawed as a political party in the future. That would mean, by the ordinary definition of the term, that political activity had ceased. So what! The job of the WSP would not change at all; that job being to make socialists. Education for socialism goes on with or without an organization in the form of a political party.”

A third issue had to do with trade unions. On his application for membership, he wrote: “The socialist movement has one function only; to make socialists. If a union provides a suitable place to spread socialism, let’s use it, but I think that a socialist organization should not concern itself with trade unionism, but should concern itself with being hostile to present trade unions as active supporters of capitalism.”

In later discussion, Anne Rab agreed with this and added further, “I see that a trend of capitalism generally is toward better working conditions and higher standards of living. Why? For one thing, capitalist production itself no longer requires the more obvious and ruthless methods once employed so generally; and also, the organization of workers into unions is a factor. I would never deny the important role of the second, but we shouldn’t minimize the first.”

The problem was that many WSP comrades in the Thirties and Forties were active unionists: Ralph Roberts and “Chubi” Kligman were

both organizers for the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union (ILGWU); Frank Marquart worked as Educational Director for different United Auto Workers' locals; many other comrades were very involved in their unions. Anne was accused by George Gloss, speaking for the NAC, of failing to recognize "that we are a working-class organization ourselves, and that we are part of the working class. This fact, in itself, compels the socialist movement to support the struggles of our fellow workers to the extent that we do."

During discussion, Lou Fein, Anne Rab, Henry Muse, and many other comrades and strong sympathizers expressed the idea that "the organization of socialists into a political party for the abolition of classes does not represent the interests of the workers *as a class*. Socialists are united by a common bond of understanding, not class." A majority of the WSP, however, contended that such statements are non-socialist because the struggle for socialism is primarily a working-class problem. "If we have capitalists in the Party, it is only because they have risen above their class interests and come over to the party of the working class."

Lou Fein's application was rejected, but the controversy within Boston Local continued for months.

Rab had often made the point that the criteria for membership were simply understanding that capitalism can never operate in the interest of society as a whole, no matter how it is "reformed," and that socialism represents a viable alternative to capitalism in which the interest of society is identical to that of each individual. However, Rab was out of town for most of the time "the Anne Rab controversy" raged in Boston.

There were strong feelings on both sides of the discussion. At one point, Anne blurted, "I agree with Lou Fein, and if you think he shouldn't be a member, maybe I shouldn't be either!"

Anne was an official speaker for the Party, and the Secretary of the Local. She thought that her defense of the Fein application would persuade others to change their minds about it. But the strategy backfired, and Anne was dropped from the Party rolls in late June, along with Henry Muse (who had been the circulation manager of the *Western Socialist*). Rab — still away on his organizing tour — and Sam Orner, in New Jersey, both sent telegrams to the NAC in Boston, urging that they not take any action rashly — but it was too late.

Throughout her life, Anne consistently defended the case for socialism even though she had been hounded out of the only organization that held to that case. In the course of time, ironically, the Party's position came to look very much like her analysis of trade unions. As the labor movement in the U.S. slid steadily downhill, newer members of the WSP did not trouble to hide an openly critical attitude towards unions and their politics. By the time that happened, though, Anne Rab had lost interest in being a member.



The Scott Nearing Debate

Meanwhile, at the same time as all this was going on, Local Boston comrades on both sides of the controversy were busily making preparations for what was to become their largest and most effectively publicized activity to date: a debate at Boston's Old South Meeting House between Comrade Frank Marquart and Scott Nearing.



Frank Marquart

Nearing was quite a well-known figure in 1947, already the author of several books, who considered himself a pacifist and a socialist, but who also supported the Soviet Union. He had agreed to debate with the WSP on the topic: "Resolved: That the Soviet Union is Pioneering an Alternative to Capitalism." It was rare for a figure of his reputation to debate with the representative of a party which had no famous "names," and Local Boston did everything they could to take

advantage of this opportunity to attract a large indoor crowd to hear the case for socialism.

After considering several alternatives, the decision was taken to have Marquart of Local Detroit represent the Party. Marquart had plenty of speaking experience as the Education Director for the United Auto Workers union, and could well articulate the socialist position in the

debate. Len Feinzig was chosen to be chairman. The comrades placed advertisements in the two largest Boston papers, the *Globe* and the *Herald*, to appear on the morning of the debate; they printed and distributed circulars; they rented a sound truck to tell everyone about the event; and they erected a prominent sign outside the Old South Meeting House. These efforts paid off; on at 8:00 PM, May 2, 1947, a large audience came to hear two avowed Socialists debate about “Communism.”

During the debate, Nearing stated: “Russia, despite its present shortcomings and difficulties, represents the vanguard — the beginning of a new system that is to replace capitalism.”

Marquart summed up as follows: “To replace American capitalism, I would not advocate the bureaucratic totalitarian Russian state capitalism which Nearing favors, but socialism. Socialism means a system of society where there would be no classes; the means of production would be at the disposal of society as a whole; commodity production and the price system would be wiped out; cultural advantages would be open to all the people; the state would be replaced by a democratic administration of things, and the guiding motto would be ‘From each according to his abilities and to each according to his needs.’”

According to everyone I ever heard speak of this debate — and it was still being spoken of well into the next decade, when I began to listen to the comrades at Headquarters — Marquart won hands-down. There was a huge May Day social immediately afterwards to celebrate.



The 1947 Annual WSP Conference was held at 27 Dock Square over the next two days, May 3 and 4. There were twenty-seven members of Local Boston in attendance, among them Harry Morrison (“Harmo,” who had arrived in Boston from Los Angeles only weeks earlier); and eighteen strong sympathizers. Besides these, there were comrades from Detroit and New York Locals; members at large from Rhode Island; and a visitor from Montréal, Quebec.



George Gloss, as National Secretary, called the Conference to order. He is pictured in the photograph to the left. In 1947, Gloss was just getting started in the used book business. Later, he owned and operated the famous Brattle Book Store in downtown Boston.

Henry Victor Muse gave his report as Circulation Manager for *The Western Socialist*. A Native American, Muse had been in the Party since 1935. He reported that 5,000 copies of each issue were being printed. For the most recent issue, 3,755 had already been distributed. There were 394 individual subscribers in the U.S., 162 in Canada, and 11 foreign, for a total of 567. Beyond that, the *WS* was mailed to 175 libraries; while 2,660 copies were sent in bundles to be distributed by other comrades and groups in the U.S. (466), Canada (469), and foreign countries (1,725). More copies had been distributed free to new contacts, as exchanges, and a few to ex-subscribers; and the rest (1,245) were set aside for binding, mailing, future sales and free distribution. Muse affirmed, "The most important activity we carry on is *The Western Socialist*."



Len Feinzig, the National Treasurer, was by this time running a business with his two brothers, one of whom was also in the WSP. Feinzig noted in his report that in order to continue activities at the present level, and to increase them, the party would need to increase its income somehow; and several motions were made and passed regarding ways to do that.

Rab gave his report as National Organizer: how he had helped with office routine, and how he had acted as a handy-man ("keeping [things] in tip-top shape, on the theory that we should take pride in headquarters, especially as we have so many visitors"). As to building up the party, he felt he had had more success nationally than he had locally. "I had visualized," he reported, "talks at factory gates, wide distribution of circulars, many talks at all kinds of organizations, and so forth, in Boston. But they did not materialize. However, there have been the addition of science movies, some debates, and a university talk arranged as a result of my being Local Boston Organizer."

On the national scene, however, he felt he had accomplished a great deal. His trips to Detroit, Chicago, Greenwich, R.I., and NYC resulted in



"a new Local in Detroit, the nucleus of a Local in Chicago, eight new members and increased enthusiasm and interest in the Party." He added, "There is no way of finding out the number of seeds that were sown."

Several important items were on conference Agenda that year, including discussion by those in attendance regarding the work of the Organizer; *The Western Socialist*; and various proposed new propaganda methods.

World Socialist Party of the United States

One Agenda item that gave rise to a very lively discussion was choosing a new name for the organization, which had come up because of a troublesome confusion between the “Workers’ Socialist Party” and a new Trotskyist organization which had dubbed itself the “Socialist Workers Party.” Many members were reluctant to give up the old name, which had, after all, been in use for many years before this new group appeared. In the end, it was decided to send a referendum to the entire membership, asking “Do you want the name of the party changed?” and also, “Whichever way you voted on the question just above, if the name is changed which of the following names do you prefer?” Six choices were listed.

When the votes were tallied, the WSP officially became the World Socialist Party.

Rab often exclaimed in later years what a fortuitous choice that was. It emphasizes the international nature of the socialist movement. In fact, the group of companion parties subscribing to the same object and principles as the Socialist Party of Great Britain, which before 1947 had never really had a common name, is now known as the World Socialist Movement.



Rab (in the background) with the members of the WSP of Canada's Vancouver Local in 1968 at John Ahrens's lakeside cabin ("The Rock"). Left of Rab is Don Poirier, Local Organizer; left of Poirier is Roy Watkins, its Secretary; the elderly man wearing glasses is Bill Pritchard (the old SPC's spokesman at the Winnipeg General Strike trial in 1919), visiting from Los Angeles. Standing to the right is John Ahrens, the Local's Treasurer and most active correspondent.

CHAPTER FIVE

Changes

1948 - 1973: Post-War McCarthyism; Rab as a union man; the two Rab households move to Newton: 62 Woodcliff Road; Rab's and Gloss's tour of Great Britain; the National Office moves to Detroit; WSP issues of the Ballot and Violence: "Is there Room for Differences of Opinion in a Socialist Party?" Another Generation of Socialists; the WSP and the Civil Rights movement of the Sixties; the WSP at 50.

I had become aware of the Boston Local while I was growing up at 5 Dennison Street. I remember big WSP socials in our living room, where the comrades would dance and play charades and generally socialize together. A donation would always be taken up, usually by Papa, sometimes by another comrade.

I remember discussions around our kitchen table with the visiting comrades who would come to talk about socialism with my family — Mimi and Papa and my parents. ("Mimi" was my name for Ella Rab.) There were so many visiting comrades that once Mimi wrote the words "Rab's Hotel" in the frost on our window.

Jack Whittaker from New York Local stayed with us several times, for a few days or a week at a time, and sang "I Don't Work for a Living" and other Wobbly songs. Bill Pritchard visited from the West, and sang "The Wabash Cannon Ball" over and over again, at my request. Cathy MacPhail, who was the daughter of a comrade in the SPGB's Glasgow Branch, stayed with us for many months and sang dozens of Scottish songs. (Songs — many of them from the little red IWW Songbook — were always there in the background of my childhood.). Cathy was

engaged to an American soldier she'd met back in Scotland, but while she was in Boston, she was part of the Rab household.



Another woman who was part of our household for a long time, off and on, was Chubi, pictured on the left. Her real name was Jenny Kligman. She was a member of the WSP, and she was also an organizer for the ILGWU. Chubi and I bonded. Once, when I asked my mother if I could have a Fairy Godmother like Cinderella and Sleeping Beauty had, she said, "Sure — who would you like it to be?"

I did consider Cathy MacPhail briefly, but Chubi was my final choice. She became my Socialist Godmother. She was pleased, and was always a wonderful Godmother to me, probably even better than a Fairy one would have been, for the rest of her life.

All during that period — from when my memory begins, up to my adolescence — there was a ferment of socialist activity going on in the background of my world. My four parents took me to Boston Common, where I heard WSP speakers like Papa, Daddy (Len Feinzig), and George Gloss (who called himself my Uncle Rooga). One time, around 1944, Gloss helped me up onto the ladder, and I yelled, "Workers of the world, unite!" I remember many Sundays when huge crowds would be there, listening to the WSP speakers.

Changes: The Post-War Period

Gradually, a combination of various factors caused that situation to start changing around the time this chapter begins.

"After the war, the social climate became less favorable to spreading socialist ideas. Returning servicemen were forced to reorganize their lives under new circumstances and perspectives, altered hopes and fears. With the cold war anti-red sentiment and the witch-hunting of the McCarthy era, the Party suffered along with every other group that deviated from the 100% flag-waving jingoism of the period. The WSP continued to hold its own for many years, but it had clearly lost its momentum of earlier days."

— W K Rab, 1986

From this point on, although in my private world nothing had changed, in the outside world there was a marked decline in socialist ferment.

Partly, this was because so many members were now starting families and establishing themselves in careers. But there was more to it than that; it was a different era.

There was less activity going on at the Dock Square Headquarters; which led to a decrease in Party income; which in turn led, in 1950, to giving up the rooms at Dock Square for a much smaller, less expensive Headquarters. New people came around, but didn't join the movement; the fervor for spreading knowledge and understanding of the case for socialism didn't catch hold even in those who were sympathetic to the cause.

The circulation of *The Western Socialist* was to decline steadily throughout the whole next decade, dropping from a total of almost four thousand copies distributed in 1947, to only about two thousand in 1957; and this was probably not due to anything the members of the WSP did or did not do. The material conditions were simply not as conducive to a general desire for social change as they had been earlier. The American working class were disinterested in socialism during the post-war years, making it a discouraging time for socialists.

In the 1930s, the words "socialism" and "communism" had represented ideas that many people were interested in pursuing. This was the happy "youthful mingling of socials and socialism" described in Chapter Four. By the 1950s, however, "socialism" had become a dangerous word. The House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), founded in 1938, was investigating Communists, while Senator Joseph McCarthy (first elected in 1947) was finding Communists and socialists trying to undermine the USA everywhere he looked.

Still, the WSP went on. The camaraderie among the Boston socialists — the members of the WSP and the larger group of sympathizers who didn't officially join — provided a social glue that kept Boston an active Local for a long time.



Here is the Organizer's Report that Rab presented to the 1948 Conference of the WSP:

Resulting from instructions of last year's Conference, I spent much of my time in the field until the financial situation at the end of 1947 did

not warrant this work at the expense of maintaining the *WS*. Though the collections, etc., covered the expenses, there was a falling off of national income. We were not then and are not now able to afford this project.

I visited Springfield, Mass., New Haven, Conn., East Greenwich, R.I., N.Y. City, Detroit, Chicago, Vicksburg, Mich., Flint, Mich., and Milwaukee. Besides visiting contacts and *WS* readers, I gave several talks and slide lectures, participated in debates and discussion groups. The net results were not spectacular. The phrase "sowing seeds" best describes the venture. Classes were revived in Detroit and New York. A Local was reorganized in Detroit. Interest on the part of some old-timers was renewed. Many new sympathizers and some new members resulted. Most urgently desirable would be local socialists in many locations, such as Milwaukee, where there is some high regard for the WSP but no local individual to fill the gap.

As additional observations, I would note that the *WS* is not increasing its circulation and needs special attention by this Conference, and also that the [amount of] contributions to Party funds is deplorable.

Upon assuming organizer duties I stated that its success could be measured in terms of obtaining socialist voluntary cooperation of members and sympathizers in subdividing our labors. In that respect, the results were far from glowing. It is important that detail work and committee work be assumed by more members instead of the present situation where a very few carry on the whole load. Personally, I would like to be relieved of Party work, except for the Editorial Committee, and start writing a pamphlet on *Science and Socialism*. Also, I would prefer helping to get out much-needed new pamphlets and leaflets.

— I. Rab, National Organizer

Unfortunately, although Rab was asking to be relieved of some Party work when he gave that report in 1948, Boston Local had recently lost some of its most active comrades, and shortly after, another, Fred Jacobs, also left the area. Lack of manpower was never to stop being a major problem in the WSP during Rab's lifetime, nor was it the only factor that got in the way of his writing.

Over the next year or two, Rab carried on an exciting correspondence with one of the comrades in the newly reorganized Detroit Local, Irving B. Canter. (This correspondence is included in a separate section on pages 141-163.) The two men planned to collaborate on a book bringing Marxian economics up to date — but something interfered.

As Rab explained to Canter, “one personal difficulty I have [in working on our book]: I am now a sub-proofreader on the Boston Hearst newspapers, which means I must report at 9:00 mornings and 7:15 evenings. If I get work during daytime, then I must sleep nights; BUT if I don’t get work daytimes then I must get more sleep, so that I don’t fall asleep if I should get work that night. You have no idea what havoc this works in any organized routine for research work ... but I’m determined to go through with this project with you ... ”

Until 1948 or ’49, Rab had never had a paying job that lasted more than a few years. He always put WSP work ahead of any job. Now, however, after spending several months as a “sub” (a position which he got, at the age of 55, by claiming ten years of proofreading experience based on his Editorial Committee work for *The Western Socialist*), he settled into the routine of the Hearst composing room, working from 6:00 P.M. to 2:00 A.M. five nights a week.

There is no question that this job at the newspaper cut into the time Rab had available not only for writing, but for Party work of all kinds.

On the other hand, this job gave him another platform from which to speak about socialism — a different fertile field for “sowing seeds”: his fellow workers in the Hearst composing room, who were his union brothers and sisters in Local 13 of the Boston Typographical Union, and the larger International Typographical Union whose journal reached thousands of workers.

Rab as a Union Man

Frank Marquart, who had ably represented the WSP in its 1947 debate with Scott Nearing, was on the editorial board of the magazine *Dissent* during the 1950s. In 1959, Marquart wrote an article for *Dissent* on “New Problems for the Union.” He asked Rab for his opinion on it. Rab wrote back:

.I liked it very much ... but you were content to list the problems. Such an article as you wrote could have appeared in *Fortune Magazine*, or in some economic or sociological journal .We have an overproduction of such “analytical” articles. What is needed is articles coming to grips with “So, what about it?” The nearest you come is: “.by a labor movement I mean an association of trade unions — more important, of trade unionists — who feel that in some sense they are committed to a vision of a more selfless and devoted life than can usually be provided by our commercial society.”

Not one word do you say about unions as the economic phase of the class struggle; the inherent strength of unions when banded in solidarity for common interests; the need for political action for social change, or any similar observations that constitute meaningful problems for present-day unions.

Because [*Dissent's* editorial board] think only of practical measures within the framework of capitalism, socialism appears a long way in the distant future. The advantage of a socialist is that he has the knowledge and understanding to think *outside* the framework of capitalism. That is why a socialist can be an optimist on the basis of historic necessity, truth and science. The answer to that question: "So, what about it?" is WHAT IS NEEDED ARE SOCIALISTS ... Finally, please find enclosed a copy of the latest *Boston Typographical Bulletin*. It contains my advice to my fellow members to read this issue of *Dissent* devoted to "Workers and Their Unions." The information is important for unionists to read, even if it doesn't go far enough. I have had several items in the *Bulletin*, such as: "Is Labor the Cause of Inflation?"; "Wages and Prices: Who Are the Featherbedders?" and reprints from *The Western Socialist*. So, you can see I'm not commenting from any ivory tower or in an academic sense. Let me tell you, the really serious limitation — far more serious than the limitations of unions, themselves, as adjuncts of capital — is the behavior of those alleging to have socialist views inside unions.*

Role-modeling Socialist behavior was Rab's life work.

He had been an active unionist in Detroit in the earliest days of the Workers' Socialist Party, when he taught classes in *Wage Labor and Capital* in a union hall. It was in exactly this same spirit that he now continued his socialist teaching in the Typographical Union.

As of this writing (2006), the ITU is the oldest surviving trade union in the United States, and is still notable for its long history of union democracy. Within it, Rab had ample opportunity to spread knowledge of the case for socialism.

In 1949, he published his first article in *Vox Populi*, the ITU journal, documenting that "there is a conflict of interests between capital and labor because, in the final analysis, a reduction in wages results in an increase in profits. Conversely, an increase in wages results in a decrease in profits. Inexorably, wages are determined by the cost of existence of the workers. It is the rise in living costs that compels the fight for higher wages. The superstition that a rise in wages causes a rise in prices has been exposed as brain-washing propaganda by capital."

* Nov 27, 1959; see Selected Letters, pp 191-194.

To one of his fellow workers in Local 13, who aspired to a leadership role in the Union, he wrote this letter teaching about the class struggle:

There is a point of principle upon which I would disagree with you: that labor and management have a community of interests that can be jointly and intelligently settled over the bargaining table.

Fundamentally, the interests of management must be to operate profitably. They are not in business for love or for the benefit of the employees (although often, intelligent employers are benevolent because it means harmonious relations and is good business).

Labor, on the other hand, is primarily concerned with wages, hours, and shop conditions. Without their unions, labor would be in a sorry plight, for capital is in the stronger position, economically. Unions are the only weapons workers have. You have had ample experience to realize where labor would be if they had not resisted and fought.

You are badly mistaken if you imagine that anyone can serve both these conflicting interests. Inevitably, you will find yourself facing all kinds of quandaries and headaches, worrying yourself sick — but you will have to serve the interests of the publishers — or resign.

I am writing this because I believe you are honestly mistaken. The mere fact of your refusal to sign a contract with the *Herald-Traveler* without a proviso that, in case of a strike, you will have the option of joining the men and women on the picket line speaks volumes for your good intentions. Unfortunately, you will learn the hard way that you cannot serve two masters.

Your thinking can't help being affected by the very nature of your responsibilities. Already you have stated: "The newspapers have financial problems," and "The day of flag waving has passed." Unwittingly, militant unionism is easily transformed into "flag waving."

After listening to your comments at the last union meeting, I refrained from taking the floor for fear of seeming to imply that you were "selling out." I am positive that you had no such idea in mind. But at the same time, I did want to emphasize to the membership my disagreement with the principle that you stated, which should be voiced. I only wish I knew how to make these remarks without making it seem to be "personal" or an "attack," but merely as a statement of a basic principle of unionism.

I would appreciate it if you would recommend that this letter be published in our local bulletin.*

In a letter to the Editor of the *ITU Journal*, May 18, 1963, he wrote:

.T h e primary objective of unionism is the fight for improving wages, hours and shop conditions. It is the urgent need of the workers to resist the encroachments of capital on their economic interests that produced the unions in the first place. The inspiring history of the early struggles of unions demonstrates that our *strength* lies in solidarity and militancy. We just saw anew how this was confirmed to the hilt in the recent [1963] New York newspaper strike. Can anyone question that the Big Six [*i.e., Local 6 of the NY Typographical Union*] never would have won their major demands without resorting to the strike?

.The roster of those congressmen in both houses who voted for measures such as Taft-Hartley and Landrum-Griffin only demonstrates how some of our “friends” really think, when the chips are down. It is a fallacy to expect “liberals,” with their abstractions of “justice,” “progress,” “the good fight,” etc., to grasp Labor’s problems. In fact, the ITU’s opposition to arbitration is rooted in our realization that these “broad-minded, impartial” arbitrators examine “both sides” without understanding the issues involved. Real progress can only come when we fight our own battles.**

It’s easy to see how Rab could not find much time to collaborate on a book with Irving Canter, nor to do any serious writing of his own; and I think it was around this time — the late Fifties or early Sixties — that he came to recognize this himself. It was around 1963 that he began giving me copies of the letters he wrote, many of which are included in this book, and told me, “I’d like you to do something with these letters someday.”



The Family Moves to Woodcliff Road

Socialism was the most important thing in Rab’s life, but he was also the center of a close family. In July 1950, the Rabs and Feinzigs — Rab and Ella, Ann and Len, along with 10-year-old me — moved to a home of our own in Newton Highlands, and Rab reveled in the stewardship of the beautiful little house and garden at 62 Woodcliff Road. He constructed a patterned brick walkway from the front door to the street,

* Selected Letters, p. 175.

** Selected Letters, p. 277.

and a low brick wall all along the front border of the property. He even built a brick barbecue near the back door, and a folding counter top to compensate for the lack of space in the tiny kitchen.

He enjoyed being a handyman, fixing things, finding solutions to household problems.

Although the WSP did not thrive during the 1950s as it had in the Thirties and Forties, nevertheless the Fifties were a positive and exciting time in Rab's personal family life.

Best of all, the new house, with its large living room and a cellar set up with a bar and lots of room for dancing, was ideal for WSP socials. This was especially useful now that the spacious Dock Square Headquarters was gone. The family had finally found a permanent home, and never moved again during Rab's lifetime.

Billie and Carrie Rab already had two children, Denise Ann and Karl Krig. Within a few years, these "Rab Juniors" moved into a house at 39 Floral Street, within easy walking distance of Woodcliff Road, so that the whole family of Rabs was together again.



"It is pleasant to recall," wrote Bill Rab in 1986, "that Rab found optimism and encouragement even when things appeared adverse. One such special occasion was his visit (with George Gloss of Boston) to Great Britain during the early fifties: he brought back unending anecdotes and accounts of the trip. He met people he had only known through correspondence or the *Standard*, or by reputation. He attended meetings in London, Manchester and Glasgow, speaking at branch and propaganda meetings; he was thrilled by the size, quality and support of the general membership. The entire experience was one of the highlights of his life."

Gloss had bought the Brattle Book Shop in 1949, and by 1954 had successfully established himself in the used book business. Unfortunately, this meant he could no longer represent the WSP as a speaker for fear it might jeopardize his career, alienating clients who knew him only as a bookseller. It also meant, however, that now he was able to support the movement in ways that had not been possible before.

Rab's and Gloss's tour of Great Britain

When in 1954 Gloss needed to make a book-buying trip to England, he offered to take Rab along as his guest.

The World Socialist Party of the United States is a "Companion Party," an affiliate of the World Socialist Movement. A basic premise held by the WSM is that, since capitalism is a global economic system, it can be replaced only by a system of society that is also global in scope: World Socialism. We consider it likely that before the socialist revolution can take place, there will be affiliated organizations of ordinary people in many different parts of the world. Historically, though, the movement began in England. Rab's first contact with it had been through members of the Socialist Party of Great Britain. The SPGB has always been the largest and most active party in the World Socialist Movement.

When Rab and Gloss made the trip to Great Britain and were warmly greeted by comrades in England and Scotland, it must have felt like the fulfillment of a dream.

Here is an account of the trip, reprinted from the Sept/Oct 1954 issue of *The Western Socialist*

A SOCIALIST TOUR

Fulfilling the ambition of many years, two American comrades took a two-week trip to Britain to meet the members of the Socialist Party of Great Britain and participate in their activities.

Never to them did life in the socialist movement seem more momentous and meaningful than those two weeks.

While flying across the ocean, the comrades engaged a fellow plane passenger in an intensive (12-hour) explanation of Socialism. When the plane landed at Shannon, Eire, he gave them a dollar for a *Western Socialist* subscription; a few hours later, when the plane landed at London, he decided to join company with them for the day, meet the SPGB comrades, and attend the outdoor meetings at Hyde Park.

From the time they landed at London airport, and were met by two wonderfully patient comrades with motorcar and motorcycle and driven to an inviting home for a most refreshing reception, until they left Prestwick Airport two weeks later with friendly farewells from Glasgow comrades, they were simply overwhelmed by the sheer warmth and cordiality of the comrades. Everywhere they went they received a grand

welcome, and the hospitality in the homes was genuinely gracious. A welcoming social was held at the Head Office, London, at which about 150 comrades exuberantly expressed themselves in group dancing, singing and discussing — for a most enjoyable evening.

The afternoon of their arrival, the comrades headed for their first outstanding destination — Hyde Park. There they met a goodly number of comrades and saw some SPGB speakers in action. They had little time to listen for, in response to persistent requests, they took the stand to speak to large and attentive audiences. The crowds at this and other outdoor meetings at which the comrades spoke, looked and acted much like those on Boston Common and asked similar questions. However, at every meeting, they asked about conditions in the U.S., the possibility of socialist expression, the influence of “McCarthyism.” Opposition came mainly from a few vociferous Communists; heckling was far less than anticipated, and there was usually a round of applause for Socialism.

Starting with the meeting at Hyde Park, the comrades were almost completely absorbed in Socialist activities. In the fifteen days in Britain they spoke at eight outdoor meetings (Hyde Park 2, Lincoln’s Inn Field 3, East End Market 1, Portsmouth 1, Glasgow 1); ten SPGB Branch meetings, one Executive Committee meeting, and a lecture at Workers’ Open Forum, Glasgow. Besides these organized meetings, there were numerous group discussions with comrades until the wee hours of most mornings. It was inspiring and instructive to listen to and participate in the critical and interesting discussions on various aspects of socialist theories and analyses. At every branch meeting the need was stressed for closer cooperation, correspondence between the overseas comrades, articles for the *WS*. Emphasized was the fact that we are as one and we are not alone.

While in London an extremely encouraging message was received from a Glasgow comrade stating that a seventeen-year-old member had just appeared before a Tribunal and had been exempted from military service. “Part of my defense on behalf of the comrade was the production of a copy of the January 1945 *Western Socialist* (in which appeared a most effective article dealing with a socialist analysis of war by the young defendant’s mother). All the Glasgow members present at the Tribunal agreed that the *WS* was a very powerful card to play.”

A meeting with two members of the Editorial Committee, both of whom had helped edit the *Socialist Standard* for more than thirty years, proved very valuable. There was an exchange of information, help-

ful suggestions were offered, and closer cooperation in the future was assured. Most important was the fact that surplus articles would be made available for the *Western Socialist* thus enhancing the possibility of its monthly issuance.

To reciprocate in a small way for the splendid cooperation by the SPGB with the WSP throughout its existence, the American comrades made a donation toward launching a fund to employ a full-time paid organizer. This project, which was presented to the Executive Committee for consideration, received a very favorable response wherever the comrades traveled. Incidentally, while in Glasgow, a comrade made a generous donation to the WSP

A fascinating trip through the heart of England was made possible by the splendid cooperation of a Lancashire comrade who drove 215 miles to London in his "jalopy" and then traveled back with the comrades through Oxford, Warwick, Stratford on Avon, Litchfield, Kenilworth, and the Midlands to Burnley where wonderful hospitality awaited them. While plenty of the countryside was beautiful, a perpetual pall of blackness and misery seemed to hang over the entire industrial area. Much seemed to remain just as Engels described it in 1844. The stone barrack-line slums were everywhere; the smoke seemed to darken everything.

The trip to Burnley made possible a hasty visit to Manchester where, within a few hours, a meeting at the home of a comrade was arranged. About twenty-five, among them a charter member of the SPGB, met for a stimulating discussion of Socialist problems.

One of the most inspiring incidents of the visit took place in a comrade's home. There, in a kitchen, a group of comrades from England, Ireland, Scotland and United States discussed their common problems, spoke the same socialist language, adhered to the same principles. Before leaving for the Workers' Open Forum meeting, they stood around a table, firmly grasped hands in a symbol of international solidarity, and expressed the hope for the speedy realization of an international Socialist conference.

Climaxing the trip (only a few hours before plane time) was a meeting at the Workers' Open Forum, Glasgow, addressed by the two [American] comrades. The hall was jam-packed by more than 450 workers who, except for some heated opposition in question and discussion by a small group of Communists and Anti-Parliamentarians, enthusiastically received and loudly applauded the Socialist case.

After the meeting the comrades were surrounded by well wishers, and more than a hundred lined the sidewalk to cheer them on their way. En route to the airport, a fifteen-minute stop was made at a comrade's home, where a goodly group of Glasgow members, who had been present at the meeting, expressed great enthusiasm, sang comradely songs, and further cheered the comrades on their way. Awaiting them at the airport, thirty miles away, was another group of Glasgow comrades who stayed with them for a grand confabulation until enplaning time, almost 3 a.m.

In a letter recently received from a comrade at Burnley, Lancashire, the following estimate of the trip is expressed: "That your visit to England and Scotland aroused tremendous interest is beyond doubt. In London and Manchester (and over the 'phone to Glasgow) we learned from many comrades something of the great enthusiasm which is but one of the results of your tireless endeavours to visit as many branches and meetings as was possible during your all too brief stay ... Our comrades in America will feel tremendously encouraged when they realise the full import of your visit to Britain. I feel sure that I am merely expressing what hundreds here are already thinking and saying, that your momentous visit must and will be the forerunner of many more involving many comrades. And equally important, it must be two-way traffic, and who knows? — maybe it won't be very long before Delegates from all the Companion Parties will be converging on some city in Europe or America for the first Socialist International Conference."



The National Office Moves to Detroit

In an attempt to create a better division of labor within the WSP, that is, to spread the necessary work out among as many comrades as possible, it was decided in 1950 that the National Office of the party should be moved from Boston to Detroit.

Both the National Office and the Editorial Committee had been in Boston since 1939, meaning that the same cadre of active comrades was called upon not only for all the administrative work, but also for all the tasks associated with the *Western Socialist*—the routine chores of circulation, such as packaging the magazine into bundles to be mailed, mailing the single copies to individual subscribers, and so forth; plus editorial chores, such as editing and proofreading articles. (Excelsior Press, where the *WS* was printed, was also located in Boston.)

With a newly revitalized Local in Detroit, the transfer of the National Office was done with high hopes all around that this would make the WSP a more effective organization.



At the 1950 Conference, held in Detroit, Irving B. Canter replaced George Gloss as the National Secretary, since the new NAC had to be composed of Detroit comrades. The Editorial Committee (consisting of Rab, Harry Morrison, Len Feinzig and George Gloss) remained in Boston.

Tom Jackson, still an active member of the WSP reminisced in 2006 that when he joined Detroit Local in the early Fifties, “Irving Canter was conducting a series of lectures, in an upstairs room

Irving Canter in one of the wonderful old houses in an ex-posh neighborhood near the university ... I liked and admired Irving a lot. His lectures were real eye-openers — in fact, they formed the foundation of my understanding of socialism and capitalism .. Irving had a good sense of humor, and it enlivened his exceedingly informative lectures.” The lecture series Jackson attended was “Economics Since Marx” (the title of the book Rab and Canter were still trying to write together), an outline for which was presented to the 1950 WSP Conference as a “Class on Advanced Economics.” (This outline is reproduced on page 144.) Canter was also a frequent contributor to *The Western Socialist*, writing mostly about economics, under the pen name “Karl Fredericks.”

Comrade Mardon Coffin became the new National Treasurer. Comrade George Lynch transferred from Boston Local to Detroit Local in order to facilitate the transition. Harriett Bradlin Cooper and a good number of others, including my Socialist Godmother “Chubi” (whose work had taken her to Detroit) were all active members, capable of serving on the Detroit-based NAC.

Unfortunately, almost from the very beginning, problems arose.

WSP Views of the Ballot and Violence

There was a broad consensus among the comrades that a new pamphlet was needed, with the working title of *Introducing the WSP*. Canter wrote the pamphlet and submitted it to the Editorial Committee, which approved it with the deletion of just one sentence. The new NAC reinserted the

sentence. The resulting controversy continued over the next several years, creating two factions of comrades who accused one another of misinterpreting the socialist attitude towards violence, with the sad result that not only was the pamphlet never published, but Canter stepped down as National Secretary, as the National Office returned to Boston.

The subject of all this controversy was the exact manner in which the socialist revolution will take place.

There was never any question that the socialist revolution envisioned by the World Socialist Movement will have to be brought about through the conscious political action of a socialist majority. We have always supported political action, as opposed to direct action, to accomplish the revolution, because direct action carries such a huge risk of violence. The ruling class has never hesitated to use all the lethal weapons in its arsenal, as well as all the armed forces under its control, against the workers whenever necessary to maintain its power. In any confrontation involving violence, the ruling class has every advantage over the workers.

Therefore, when a majority of ordinary working people are convinced that ending capitalism is in their interest, they must first seize political power in order to establish socialism. (The working class majority already has economic power, so once it has political power as well, establishing the new society can be relatively easy.)

No aspect of this analysis was ever challenged by either faction of WSP comrades during the “ballot controversy” of the 1950s.

In the original version of the proposed new pamphlet, after a statement that the WSP advocates the ballot as a revolutionary tool, Canter went on to say: “However, as a minority party today, the World Socialist Party does not, nor should not, lay down the exact steps by which the majority, once it becomes socialist, will introduce socialism.” The presence or absence of this deleted sentence has little if any effect on the meaning conveyed. Certainly no one was advocating a violent revolution. The real issue seems to have been: who was in charge, the Editorial Committee or the NAC?

On one level, it is tempting to conclude that George Gloss — who had been a key member of Local Boston for a long time, serving both on the NAC and the Editorial Committee for the whole decade of the Forties — simply found it too hard to give up his position as National Secretary.

Gloss wrote letters on Party letterhead to comrades in distant areas of the U.S., and in the other Companion Parties, arguing his personal opinion that the NAC's position, articulated by Irving Canter, was un-socialist.

While agreeing that using the electoral process would be the ideal method of establishing that a majority supported socialism, Canter insisted that no one can foretell the future. On the Editorial Committee, Rab and Feinzig both supported him in this, but were opposed by Gloss and Morrison. In 1953, in a personal letter to Rab, Canter wrote:

Morrison is still putting words in comrades' mouths, because he wants to believe they think in this manner. It is unfortunate that he should level his attacks on you, for after all you are the main instigator of the WSP as it stands today, and if you do not know the Party's position on the ballot, who does? Looking back ... I do not see your position any different than that expounded when you came to Detroit. Of course, there has always been a difference between us as to what we thought *might happen* at the time of the socialist majority, but we were both agreed on getting that majority first. I think your approach is scientific, that of Morrison completely dogmatic, theological, and teleological. I do not hope to change Morrison; he will go on for years with the same type of thinking, that he has the answers not only for today, but for all time. Power to him, but history will prove him wrong. Certainly the fact that we were all wrong in predicting a post-war crash (of course, other factors intervened, but we did not foresee these, so the analysis applies) should bring us all up sharp as to what will happen in the future.

You see, it was for all these reasons that I did not want to answer Morrison or Gloss any further. It would have been a waste of time. Why don't we wait until we get a socialist majority, meanwhile using the existing parliamentary machinery. I hesitated a long time about joining the WSP because of this matter of the ballot (and also the state), and I credit [Com. W Z.] Miller with breaking down my objections.

I met him out on the street one day, and we were discussing the matter, of how I did not think the ruling class in this country would permit a majority to assert itself at the polls. He said, how do you know? Why don't you work towards the majority, and then we will see what the ruling class will do? Then he quoted Engels about the ballot being nothing more than a barometer. I realized he was right, that my views about what I thought would happen in the future might not even hap-

pen at all. Further, if capitalism boasts about democracy, and the rule of the majority, let us take them up on this.”

Later that same year, Sam Orner shouted at a Party Conference, “It is not a question of method, but of winning over the majority of the population. We as a minority cannot tell the working class five or a hundred years in the future what they will do in order to gain power. We should not tie ourselves to restrictions, and lose members ... The socialist revolution will be achieved by people who know where they’re going. We don’t know what the socialist majority will do in the future. Our job is to spread sound socialist knowledge. Only an idiot would advise violence! We can’t tell in advance what specific situation may arise. Today we advocate the ballot, we can’t tell about the future.”

Many comrades have always felt the revolution will be accomplished “peaceably if we can, forcibly if we must” — an acknowledgment that no one can predict the details of a future situation. The “ballot controversy” officially ended with the passage of a party-wide referendum stating: “We advocate the ballot as a means of attaining socialism and anyone who advocates violence as a means of attaining the socialist victory cannot be a member of the WSP.”

Rab’s own analysis (written a decade later) was simply:

The socialist revolution is political in nature and it will be accomplished by the conscious, socialist majority. The reason we always emphasize the ballot is clear. The ballot is the symbol of the politically conscious, socialist majority.

The trouble is that, unfortunately, “force” and “violence” are not synonymous terms. When they are used as substitute terms for each other they lead to quibbles ... By “force” in the context of the socialist revolution, is meant the power to accomplish our objectives, and this force includes social and economic forces (developments). I would recommend your rereading of Engels’ *Anti Duhring*.

The Communist Manifesto, p. 80, SPGB edition: “Political power, properly so-called, is merely the organized power of one class for oppressing another. If the proletariat, during its contest with the bourgeoisie, is compelled by force of circumstances, to organize itself as a class, if by means of a revolution it makes itself the ruling class (by winning the battle of democracy, p. 79) and, as such, sweeps away by

force the old conditions of production, then, it will, along with these conditions, have swept away the conditions for the existence of class antagonisms and of classes generally, and will thereby have abolished its own supremacy as a class.”

And hereby hangs a tale, the horror of the bourgeoisie that the *Communist Manifesto* advocates violence with their hypocritical condemnation by quoting, out of context of the *Manifesto* itself, the final paragraph of the historic document: “They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions.” (Note the last three words.)*

The 1955 Conference was held in New York City. A party-wide referendum sent out from that Conference resulted in a decision to move the National Office back to Boston. Gloss regained his title of National Secretary and the group of Detroit-area socialists remaining in Detroit Local carried on as best they could.



For men like Canter, Morrison, Orner and Gloss to become so passionate over the controversy just described demonstrates how seriously each of these comrades took the task of spreading knowledge and understanding of the case for socialism. The urgency of this task is even more evident now, in the 21st Century, than it was in the 1950s; they were certainly justified in being passionate about it. But, unfortunately, each of them also became persuaded that the movement was failing to grow because the Party (or individuals within the Party) was doing something wrong. Gloss blamed Canter; Canter blamed Gloss and Morrison.

In fact, there was an unfortunate tendency on the part of the membership to blame one another for the failure of the organization to make better progress, instead of taking into account the over-all material conditions of society. Hank Faunce, a close sympathizer ever since he first came in contact with the WSP in 1946, told me: “There was a lot of infighting among the members in the Forties and Fifties.” (When I asked him once if he knew why my mother had been dropped from the rolls in 1947, his response was, “She didn’t dot her ‘i’s and cross her ‘t’s right, that’s all.”)

* For the rest of this letter, see pp. 312-315.

Is There Room for Differences of Opinion in a Socialist Party?

Rab considered an open mind to be a valuable asset. One of his most remarkable qualities is that he never had an ego large enough to think he had all the answers. Yet ironically, over and over again, the members of various Leftist parties and groups would dismiss the World Socialist Party as being dogmatic and sectarian, so interested in keeping itself “pure” that it excludes many real socialists. To this, Rab would counter that such critics frequently complain that “capitalist parties have stolen their planks (as though any capitalist party could steal a socialist program). Look at the net result. Where are the socialist masses? As far as numbers are concerned, they are not much better off than the WSP. Their practical, realistic policies have proven worse than illusory. They have failed to make socialists! Yet, they continue to heap scorn and sneer at the World Socialist Movement for our small numbers. With smug omniscience, they dismiss the WSP as ‘dogmatic sectarians’ ... The real question is: — Who have ignored the lessons of experience?” *

Moreover, in response to the accusation that the WSP wanted to keep itself “pure,” he asserted that because a Socialist party is democratically controlled by its membership, “an influx [of non-Socialists] could transform a genuine Socialist party into its opposite.” Membership requirements must be “narrow enough to exclude all who are not Socialists.” Still, “in a socialist party there is plenty of room for differences of opinion.”** “Broadly speaking, a Socialist is one who understands that Capitalism can no longer be reformed or administered in the interests of the working class or of society; that Capitalism is incapable of eliminating its inherent problems of poverty, wars, crises, etc.; and that Socialism offers the solutions for the social problems besetting mankind.”***



When the National Office had left Boston in 1950, the WSP had moved to 11 Faneuil Hall Square — only a block away, but less expensive to rent because, where Dock Square had been bright and spacious, Faneuil Hall Square was a dingy place with little rooms. There were still frequent socials, but since the new Headquarters did not lend itself to social activity, these were more often in comrades’ homes. The two Rab house-

* Selected Letters, pp. 297-298.

** See “Requirements for Membership,” reprinted on pp. 433-435 from June 1953 *Forum*.

*** See “Is There Room for Differences of Opinion in a Socialist Party?” in Selected Writings, pp. 440-442.

holds in Newton were the most frequent locations — the Rab-Feinzigs at Woodcliff Road, and the “Rab Juniors” a few blocks away. And of course, Boston Local created plenty of other social occasions: picnics in the Blue Hills and an annual outing to Stage Fort Park in Gloucester. There was a subset of the comrades called “the Gloucester crowd” who established a kind of commune in Gloucester, renting the same house every summer. As an adolescent, I sensed that my mother didn’t quite approve of this; even then, I realized this was because of romantic adventures going on among the socialists. Looking back on it now, it feels as though the Gloucester crowd’s commune in the 1950s was a precursor of the lifestyle that became predominant in the two decades that followed.

When I was in my teens, I began going up to Headquarters myself, for activities other than socials.

Although there was less attendance at WSP activities in general than there had been earlier, there were still regular meetings at 11 Faneuil Hall Square — business meetings of Local Boston; Editorial Committee meetings (*The Western Socialist* was still published every other month); and Sunday Night Forums. The first time I remember going up to 11 Faneuil Hall Square was a Sunday in 1954, when I listened to Rab give a talk on “An Introduction to the Philosophy of Socialism.” Rab also offered a “General Knowledge Class” on Monday evenings; but I did not attend that, being too preoccupied with school, and also with outside activities like the Boston Children’s Theatre at the time.

Then Len Feinzig, my father, brought me up to Headquarters with him in 1956, when I was in high school, and gave me a job to do. He handed me a list of all the libraries in the U.S., on which someone else had already put a star beside each library that had a subscription to *The Western Socialist*. My job was to make a selection of ones that didn’t have a sub to the *WS* yet, that I thought ought to be given one. The libraries I selected would receive a free sample copy of the magazine and an invitation to subscribe. I don’t remember whether or not I knew this at the time, but the annual WSP Conference had been held in Boston over the previous Labor Day weekend, and one of the things the comrades had voted to do was start a Library Campaign. Feinzig had proposed this as a way to increase the circulation of *The Western Socialist*, which had been dropping steadily ever since 1947. (Two years later, at the 1958 Conference, I learned that 2,162 copies had been distributed that year — up from 2,057 copies the year before — so the Library Campaign was actually a success.)

That was my real introduction into socialist activity. Not long afterwards, I happened to be in the Boston Public Library working on a high school research project. Standing at the old wooden card catalog in the Reference Room, I looked up the WS, not really expecting to find it. When I saw it listed, I felt a surge of pride that I still can call up now when I think about it. That was probably the first time I realized that the World Socialist Party was not just what I saw at home and at Headquarters: it was an organization with the potential to influence anyone who used a library — and I myself had added to its influence by adding more libraries to its circulation.

During my senior year of high school, I kept going up to Headquarters with Lennie, Billie and Rab. I learned to use an Address-O-Graph machine to put addresses on bundles and single copies of *The Western Socialist*. I also sometimes brought my high school friends up to a discussion meeting, although none of them was impressed enough to come back a second time.



The visit of Rab and Gloss to the SPGB in 1954 sparked a series of reciprocal interchanges between SPGBers and their U.S. and Canadian counterparts. In the fall of 1957, Gilbert McClatchie (known as “Gilmac” or simply “Mac”) came from London to address the 1957 WSP conference, which was held at a Boston



*Chubi, Gilmac and Ann Rab
at the 1957WSP conference*

hotel, rather than at the WSP Headquarters. This was his first trip to North America, but Mac ultimately made many tours across the United States and Canada in the interests of socialism. “Rab’s Hotel,” in its new location in Newton, was busier than ever as a stopping place for visiting comrades.

Many diverse people sat, at various times, around the extra-large oak table in the dining room at Woodcliff Road, and were drawn into intense discussions about current events, the state of the world in general, and about

the meaning of “socialism.” Rab himself was sometimes away at work; but guests found ample stimulation from conversation with other members of the family. Gilmac, Cyril May, and Jim D’Arcy were among the SPGB comrades who were quickly becoming friends.

Not all the visitors were members, however: Tony Turner spent many hours at our table after he had left the SPGB. Turner was possibly the best-known outdoor speaker of all time in the World Socialist Movement. On September 3, 1939, the day World War II broke out, he had kept an audience of thousands spellbound in Hyde Park, London, and he had spent many years as the principal Party Organizer. Turner had recently left the SPGB to avoid creating a schism in the socialist movement, since he was aware of opposition from some of the membership on a subject he felt strongly about.

Turner questioned Ann closely as to why she was no longer in the WSP — a matter narrated in the previous chapter of this book — and the two of them recognized they had a great deal in common. Turner had written, in 1953: “It is my contention that all this talk . . . of the ‘working-class alone’ as the saviours of humanity, springs from the fact that the nature of socialism has been forgotten, disregarded, or not known. Socialism is a way of living; living harmoniously with all people. It is untrue that there are people who have little or nothing to gain by the establishment of socialism.” Both were certain (as are, I am sure, most of the membership of the WSP in the 21st Century) that the socialist revolution will benefit not only the workers, but everyone; and that we should direct our outreach not only to workers, but to everyone. This is not to deny the class struggle, but to understand that the struggle won’t end in a victory for the working class, but rather in an end to both classes.

Comrade Gilmac, too, entered into discussions about “the Ann Rab controversy,” both with Rab and with Ann — not on his first visit (as Turner did) but on one of his later trips to Boston, after he knew her better and recognized that she consistently presented the case for socialism as though she were still a member even though she wasn’t. After a while, he told her privately that he thought her position on unions was the same as his own, and that he felt it was wrong for her to have been dropped from the Party rolls.



The economist Paul Mattick and his family were very frequent visitors to Woodcliff Road, from when I was in high school until the early Seventies. Our family were all on very close terms with Paul Sr., his wife Ilse, and their son (who was a gangly adolescent when we first met). Mattick had been writing occasional articles for the *Western Socialist* since the 1940s, but was living in New York for most of that time. In the photo on the right, taken on the back porch at Woodcliff Road, the man standing aiming a camera at the camera is



Billie Rab. To his left is Lennie; continuing clockwise is Ilse Mattick; then Carrie Rab. Paul Mattick is sitting in the middle, turning to look at the camera; his son is sitting next to him, and then Ann.

Mattick was not a member of the WSP Like Pannekoek, whom Rab also held in high esteem, he was a Council Communist and did not agree with the WSP on the ballot, believing rather that Workers' Councils would take hold of industry and introduce socialism. But Rab might also have said of him as of Pannekoek that "on Marxian economics, reforms, and especially the question of leadership," he was "crystal clear."

Council Communism is one of the currents described in *The Thin Red Line: Non-Market Socialism in the Twentieth Century*, edited by John Crump (1987). Crump asserts: "To find a coherent set of ideas which are subversive of capitalism, and which do offer an alternative to production for a world market, one must turn to the 'thin red line' represented by the five currents which are examined in the following chapters."

Rab often said to me (and also wrote in letters to others): "All it takes to be a good socialist is to understand that capitalism does not work in the interests of the majority, can never be reformed or administered in such a way that it would, and that socialism — i.e., a classless, moneyless society where everyone has free access to all the available wealth — represents a viable alternative to capitalism." Crump's book did not appear until after Rab's death, but I'm sure he would have liked it and agreed with it.

In common with others on “the thin red line,” Mattick agreed that:

- In socialist society, production will be for use, and not for sale on the market.
- Distribution will be according to need, and not by means of buying and selling.
- Work will be voluntary.
- In socialism, there will be no social divisions based on class, sex or race.
- Capitalism must be opposed however it manifests itself in all existing countries.

When Paul Mattick Jr. reached the age when he should go to high school, the Matticks were living in Jamaica, Vermont, a town whose public schools did not offer the kind of education his parents wanted for him. The Rab family lived in Newton, Massachusetts, which at that time had one of the highest ranked public high schools in the United States. I would soon be off to college, so my room was available. We invited Mattick Jr. to live with us and attend Newton High using our address as his residence.

When young Paul moved in that summer, one of the first things we did was have a discussion about what he should be called. His parents always called him “Bubbe” but that was clearly embarrassing. None of us liked “Junior” but we knew his father as “Paul,” so as a group, we all took new names. Paul Jr. became Otto Mattick (and for years everyone called him “Otto”). Since he was thought of as my little brother, I became Sista Mattick. The rest of the family were Axio, Rhu, and Dog Mattick. We all had a lot of fun and enjoyed Otto’s company — and also that of Paul and Ilse.



I went away to college in 1957 — to Jackson College for Women, still at that time a separate part of Tufts University. Its campus is just a few miles North and East of Newton: near the Mystic River instead of the familiar Charles. Far enough away for me to be fully in my own world, but close enough to be within easy reach of the family and the comrades.

By that time, I understood what Rab and the rest of my family were struggling for; but I confess I wasn’t as interested in it as I knew they were. No one in my family ever urged me to be a socialist, either. I went away to Jackson College to study Classics in preparation for a career as a Latin teacher, and to participate in the dramatic productions at the Tufts Arena Theater.

Strange, though, that whenever I was interested in a young man, I always made sure Rab and Lennie got a chance to talk about socialism with him.

It was in the summer between freshman and sophomore years of college that I brought home a Canadian poet whom I had encountered: George Gerell, from Montréal. I had a job that summer ushering in a theater in Copley Square, and after the productions, often I'd go with a girlfriend to one of the coffee shops that were then proliferating across the Charles River in Cambridge. I met Gerell at the Café Mozart in Harvard Square, and it was the beginning of a long relationship.

Eventually, at Woodcliff Road, George spoke about the novel he was writing, and when he mentioned that he was planning to write it in England, Rab urged him to look up our comrades in the Socialist Party of Great Britain. Shortly before Gerell left for England, we became engaged.

During the year he was away, he wrote letters not only to me, but also to the other members of the family. He told of spending time with Gilmac, as well as many other comrades, and it was clear that he was learning about — and becoming convinced of — the case for socialism. Rab was almost as excited about Gerell as I was. Here is just one of many letters he sent:

My very dear George:

I note that you are soon to visit Holland. Do me and yourself a favor. Contact the North Holland Publishing Company in Amsterdam. They are a well-known firm and you won't have any difficulty locating them. They are the publishers of Pannekoek's *Anthropogenesis*. Will you please ask them for Pannekoek's home address and visit him, if at all possible ... Lenin, in his *State and Revolution*, deals with Pannekoek, who opposed the Bolsheviks at the very beginning on the basis of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat vs. democratic majority. Be sure to make a special visit to him and please give him my regards, also the Boston Comrades and also give him greetings from Paul Mattick, in Boston. By the way, did you notice my reference to Pannekoek in my article on evolution in the *WS*? That reminds me, bring him a copy of that article, it will serve as a real introduction.

Am looking forward to your cooking a meal at 62 Woodcliff.

Tickled pink at your company with Ted [Kersley] and Gilmac. Needless to say, never forget to give them (all the comrades) my best regards and good

wishes. You are surely taking advantage of your opportunities to really enjoy the cultural phases of British life. You might enjoy a visit to the comrades in Glasgow. By the way, I gave Karla a young fellow's address in Edinboro for you to correspond with.

Affectionately and comradely, Rab*

I spent the summer between junior and senior years traveling through Europe with George, spending the final two weeks in England. Rab had given us many addresses of people to look up. Looking back now, how I wish Rab had coached me better about those contacts! One of the people I did visit at his request that summer was Tom Bolt. George and I spent a very pleasant day with Bolt, but Rab had not told me anything about him, and our conversation did not progress much beyond tourist small talk. Not until I began to research this book did I realize Bolt had been present in the early days of the WSP in Detroit.



George and I cut the wedding cake while Uncle Billie looks on.

That summer of 1959 was, nevertheless, a memorable adventure.

We married in December 1960. All the Boston Local comrades and sympathizers were invited to the wedding, as well as friends and family; 62 Woodcliff Road was filled to overflowing with people.



Rab seizes the opportunity to bring up the case for socialism with a group of people he had never met before: my in-laws who had come to the wedding from Montréal.

George and I moved to Montreal, where both of us joined the Socialist Party of Canada. There, we began an attempt to organize a new Montreal Local (which did eventually come into being in 1966) but returned to Boston in 1962 for George to earn a Ph.D. in English at Tufts while I supported us and started work on a Masters in Humanistic Studies. We each transferred our membership from the SPC to the WSP (US) in 1962.

* Selected Letters, pp. 202-204.



My favorite picture from that day, of course.

Another Generation of Socialists

During the 1960s, Boston Local was in better shape than it had been in a long time. Four new members joined by 1964. After the choking conservatism of the Fifties came a resurgence of the idea that perhaps we might not, after all, be living in the best of all possible worlds. I remember people in Somerville, the working-class community where George and I lived, reacting to the Cuban Missile Crisis with fear. “Socialism” (at least the Cuban version of it) wasn’t as universally hated as it had been, and young people were becoming interested in alternatives to capitalism again. There

were enough people of my own generation who had joined the Local so that we were able to form a Local Activities Committee, which freed up the older members to run the NAC and the Editorial Committee. (Not that the newer comrades were discouraged from participating in those committees either.)

The photograph below (taken in 1963) shows Len Feinzig speaking on Boston Common, an activity that was becoming increasingly rare but still possible then. Flanking Com. Feinzig are Steve Butterfield (one of the new members of Boston Local) on his right, and Trevor Goodger-Hill (a recent recruit to the SPC from Montréal) on his left. Like the WSP, the Socialist Party of Canada was also expanding in the Sixties, with a strong young Local in Toronto and an emerging group in Montréal, two areas where the SPC had not previously been a significant presence (Winnipeg and British Columbia were its strong points in the first half of the 20th Century.)



In 1964, SPGB Comrade Adam Buick took time off from graduate school in London to see first-hand what was happening in North America. When he returned to London, he wrote this report of his visit for the Executive Committee, also published in the *Socialist Standard*:

During the months of July, August and September I was in the United States on a student vacation scheme. During this time, I was in Boston for 10 weeks and in Montreal and Toronto for one week. In Boston I was able to take part in all the activities of the local, indoor and outdoor meetings, socials and leaflet distribution as well as attend the

WS.P. conference ... The Local has a very active membership, both locally and nationally. As will be appreciated the political atmosphere in the United States is considerably different from that in Britain. There the working class have no interest in politics ... This makes it all the harder for the American Socialists to put over our case ... On the other hand, members in the U.S. have openings which we have not, as for instance, the purchase of radio time and radio programmes in which listeners can participate by telephone.

In Boston activities are in the hands of a Local Administrative Committee, composed of the younger members of the Party. They are responsible for organizing all activities [such as] indoor meetings each week [which] take the form of a talk or tape-recordings, or a film followed by discussion. Outdoor meetings are held every Sunday on Boston Common. The W.S.P. is the only organization to avail themselves of these opportunities, although the conditions are not ideal owing to the persistent attempts by Cuban refugees and various patriots to shout down our speakers. Occasionally protest meetings on Civil Rights, peace, slum clearance etc., are covered by the Local's literature sellers. During the university term other opportunities for putting over our case are available. All in all, prospects in Boston are hopeful.

The LAC consisted of Steve and Connie Butterfield, George Gerell and myself, and Bill Jerome. Bill's wife, Joni, was a close sympathizer. Once a month we held LAC meetings in one another's homes, where we socialized and planned activities for the next four weeks.

We had a lot in common: all of us were young married socialist couples with children. Steve and Connie's son Stevie was a toddler; both Joni Jerome and I had baby daughters. (My daughter Sara, named after Rab's mother, was born in January 1964.) Steve, George and I were all graduate students at Tufts University (Connie had a nine-to-five job); we often could arrange matters so that three of us could attend Party functions while the fourth watched Stevie and Sara. Joni Jerome and I could and did discuss natural childbirth and socialism with equal fervor. We all were committed to working for socialism, and we worked well together.

A major project of Boston Local in the Sixties was our radio program. The Local first became aware of radio's potential through Harry Morrison's initiative as a caller to AM radio talk shows, which gave the Boston listening public exposure to the case for socialism at no financial cost to the Party

at all. In 1963, a radio interview was arranged for Comrade Eddie Grant who was visiting from the SPGB, and radio interviews continued being relatively easy to set up for visiting comrades on many occasions.

But in some ways more exciting was the fact that, starting in 1964, the LAC was authorized to buy radio time on WCRB-FM on a regular basis. At first, we experimented with different formats, but by 1966 we had settled into a routine — five-minute broadcasts each developing a specific topic and including an advertisement for activities at Headquarters — which continued well into the 1970s. At first, I did most of the work for the WCRB broadcasts, both in writing or borrowing material and also in presenting it. As time went on, Morrison did more and more of the writing; but the voices were always a good mixture of women and men, and not always the same individuals.

The WSP at 50

1966 was the 50th anniversary of the WSP. What had developed from “Workers’ Socialist Party” to “Socialist Education Society” and was now an active World Socialist Party had begun in July 1916. 1966 was a good year, and everyone felt like celebrating.

The Editorial Committee produced a special 50th Anniversary issue of the *Western Socialist*. Bill Jerome wrote an article on WSP history; Canadian Comrade Jim Milne reminisced on “Western Canada 50 Years Ago”; and there were reprints of various manifestos from the early days.

In addition to these bows to the past, there was an announcement captioned “A Milestone in Our History” telling the world we were about to move into a new Headquarters: the Gainsborough Building, at 295 Huntington Avenue. The LAC had long since formed the opinion that the impression made by our current meeting space was not helping us. Steve Butterfield in particular urged that we create an environment in our new space that would be bright and welcoming. (He suggested, among other things, that as people entered the building, the aroma of fresh-brewed coffee should always greet them.)

Following are some excerpts from the report on Local Boston’s activities for 1966, read at the first annual conference to be held in the Gainsborough Building. (The entire report can be read in the Chapter Notes at the end of this book.)

Local Boston has had an active year, highlighted by several “special events” in addition to our regular activities.

The Party buys time on local radio WCRB FM . Saturday evening radio broadcasts have proven one of our best sources for new contacts. These broadcasts consist of a 5-minute talk on some aspect of the socialist case ... and an advertisement of our other activities, including the *Western Socialist*, delivered by the WCRB announcer [Dave MacNeil] ... The radio activity elicits quite a large response from WCRB’s listening audience, about half of it negative — this is addressed to the station — and the rest sympathetic, or at least curious. We receive an estimated 4 or 5 requests for information each week.

The heart of all our local efforts here in Boston is the regular propaganda meeting at Headquarters, where an average of 4 or 5 Party members meet from one to several new contacts each week.

From time to time during the past year, chiefly through the agency of Com. H. Morrison, the local has been able to reach a wider audience.

On Oct. 13, Com. Morrison presented the case for socialism for several hours over WNAC-AM radio, on the “Comment” show with Fred Gale; and — as a bonus — the station later aired excerpts from the program as an advertisement..

At the Vietnam protest march on March 26, several members of the Local distributed socialist literature in front of the Arlington Street Church...

On May Day ..Com. H. Morrison addressed the Arlington Street Church Singles Club on “Capitalism and Socialism.” There was an audience of about 125 people, and com WK. Rab made a tape of the proceedings.

Finally, again through the efforts of H. Morrison, SPGB comrades Phyllis and Arthur George spoke on socialism over WNAC-AM radio, on Aug. 24, on the Palmer Payne program, from 6:15 to 8:00 PM.

[There was a social held] New Years Eve party at the home of the Rabs and Fentons in Newton. This was a great success from every standpoint: a good time was had by all and the Party netted \$150.00.

The biggest news in this report, of course, is our move from 11 Faneuil Hall Square to our present address at 295 Huntington Ave. This brand-new Headquarters has not yet really been put to the test, but we face the new season confident that our central location and pleasant

meeting rooms will enable us to make many new contacts and, just as important, to hold the interest of these contacts, so that next year we can report some new members.

Respectfully submitted,

Karla Rab, sec'y, Boston Local

Sad to say, we did not have new members to report in 1967; but we did manage to maintain a good level of activity. Four or five of us took turns being in charge of the Saturday sessions at 29 5 Huntington Avenue, where there were always coffee and refreshments available in case someone who had heard the radio announcement the day before should appear. In addition, Comrade Joe Lyle often took some flyers and distributed them to passers by on the street (usually college students), inviting them to the meeting that was about to start. There generally were a few newcomers on Saturdays, and often a good discussion would take place; but there were seldom more than ten in attendance altogether, and most of those were already members or sympathizers.

One day when it happened to be my turn to speak, there was a surprise in store for me. It was an evening when the Black activist Stokely Carmichael was speaking at the Ford Hall Forum, across the street from our building. Such a huge audience had come into town to hear Carmichael speak that many had to be turned away. Comrade Lyle brought a sizeable number of this spillover crowd up to Headquarters.

It was the first (and last) time I ever addressed such a crowd of people on socialism, and I was unprepared for the occasion. My audience made it clear they wanted to know our attitude towards what they called "the Negro Revolution" and I wasn't sure what to say. What came out of my mouth was something like: "Socialists are color blind; we need a socialist revolution which will benefit all of us, regardless of race or sex." This was met with outrage. Many better and more experienced speakers than I were present, but none of us socialists were able to satisfy this group that we had anything relevant to say to them. After a while, in twos and threes, they all left.

The Civil Rights Movement of the Sixties

The WSP has always maintained that socialists are "color blind." One of our core principles is that "As in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of

the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.”

But what exactly was our attitude towards the “Negro Revolution”? It was a matter that frequently came up during the two decades that Rab and I worked for socialism together.

Some comrades felt that, as socialists, we should stand aloof from this unrest because it was an attempt to make the capitalist system work better — a reform. Others found it hard to ignore the plight of people of color in the United States. (George Lynch, for example, who had been an active, even a dedicated, comrade both in Local Boston and in Local Detroit, disappeared around the time of “Freedom Summer” [1963] and several comrades remain convinced that he went South in support of the uprisings there and, like so many others that summer, lost his life.)

Rab summarized his views:

First of all, the fight for civil liberties, which includes free speech fights, house to house canvasses, selling periodicals on the streets, etc., is not a reform. Socialists have participated in just such demonstrations in the past and will again in the future, when the occasion arises. After all, civil liberties are important socialist tools and weapons to carry on socialist education and propaganda. Note well, our attitude has always been that we will march side by side with others but never under the banner of others. We will not be identified with non-socialists.

Let me define reforms. They are measures that require legislative action by the capitalist state to improve the operation of the system, or at least that is their object. This typifies the Negro movement generally. This can be seen by the emphasis on establishing equal social position of Negro and white capitalists, as well as equality of rights for Negro and white workers. You will observe the constant emphasis that this constitutes “good Americanism” and is the highest patriotism. What have we in common with the prevailing confusions, superstitions and aspirations (essentially, bourgeois) of Negro and white supporters of the system? Socialists are, literally, color blind! Our sympathies are with the exploited of all colors.

The civil liberty phase of the Southern Negro resistance . was a spontaneous demand of the colored workers that had overwhelmed the Negro spokesmen. These “leaders” found themselves followers who were led by a historic demand that had come of age. But this no longer [in 1965]

typifies the situation. This can clearly be seen in the concentration on bourgeois demands being made by the Negro organizations. They have become respectable. Like the "successful" victories in Asia and Africa, they are only concerned in a better administration of capitalism.*

To this he added a little later (in an undated letter):

In the 1960's we are witnessing the coming of age of the general recognition of and determination to alleviate the social plight of the American Negroes. But we are not witnessing anything that does away with this social plight. All we see are legalistic measures being enacted, which require coercion and duress for their enforcement. And, in the diplomatic arena, the driving force behind the official support of the Negro "equality" movement is admittedly the necessity of creating a favorable image of American "freedom and democracy" in the Asiatic and African continents with the reactions on European chancelleries.

A question: Negroes of the South, would you see your future? Just go up North and ask your brother Negroes about the alleged blessings of Negro "equality and freedom." The passage of civil rights measures and the so-called abolition of discriminatory practices have not, in any way at all, altered the predominant social relations.

And the primary characteristic of a social revolution is to change the social relationships. The social revolution called for in the historic conditions of the 1960s is to supplant production for profit (capitalism) with production for use (socialism).

Inherently, capitalism breeds prejudices, bigotry and hatreds. Kenneth B. Clark, in *The N.Y. Times Magazine* (4/4/65), bemoans the "Delusions of the White Liberals." Unfortunately, both Negro and White liberals, as well as Negro and White reactionaries, suffer the same delusions. This very concept of race, itself, is a fallacy, speaking scientifically. Negroes and Whites are essentially social categories, as can be seen by examining differing behaviors and attitudes throughout the globe. *Homo sapiens* is but one species.

Capitalism is a class society, despite the apologists and pundits. The Negro and White capitalists have common interests, and the Negro and White workers have common interests. It is an illusion that Negro capitalists have common interests with Negro workers.

* See p. 316.



Chubi, my “Socialist Godmother,” died in 1968. Rab and I attended her funeral together. Chubi had been close to me for as long as I could remember, especially so during the period when I was engaged to George, and when our daughter Sara was a toddler. She never got to see my son Adam, who was born in 1967; but I brought pictures of him with me to the hospital when I visited her there at the end.



A controversy had been brewing within the Socialist Party of Canada for some time, and by 1968 it had reached crisis proportions. Rab took advantage of some accrued vacation time from work to make a seven-week tour of Canada hoping to reconcile the two factions. The controversy centered around two groups of socialists in Vancouver, each claiming to be the legitimate Vancouver Local of the SPC, and each barely on speaking terms with the other.

Rab was confident in his skills as a mediator. He was on good terms socially with everyone involved in the controversy. He spent time in Montréal, where a new Local had been chartered in 1966, in Toronto, and in Winnipeg. Then he continued on to British Columbia on the West Coast, where there was a Local in Victoria (now the seat of the SPC’s General Executive Committee), and the two warring Vancouver Locals which each challenged the other’s legitimacy.

Returning home, he was certain he had been successful. “In Canada my time was divided between talks and meeting with all comrades involved in the Canadian controversy, with the view of resolving the dispute on the paramount basis of the good of the movement,” he wrote in his report of the trip to the 1968 Conference. “The warm hospitality extended to me everywhere indicates the strong bond of socialist comradeship and socialist common interests that persists in spite of the appearances to the contrary.”

But the outcome was not so rosy. The younger members (in Montréal, Toronto and one of the groups in Vancouver) did not feel supported by what they perceived as the rigid organizational structure of the SPC. The Montréal Local disbanded in 1969. Trevor Goodger-Hill and Marie Koehler, both comrades who were very close to George Gerell and myself

— and whom we had been at least partly influential in encouraging to become active in the movement — essentially gave up on the Socialist Party of Canada, both resigning their membership. They did not abandon their hope for a socialist revolution, but each chose to work for socialism outside any organization.

By 1972 the members in Toronto were so discouraged that the Local essentially fell apart, and some of the comrades in B.C. drifted away. It would be over a decade before the SPC recovered any momentum again.

(The reader may get some insight into the nature of the controversy by browsing through Selected Letters. Much of Rab's correspondence during the 1960s was on the subject, particularly his letters to Vancouver Comrades Watkins and Ahrens.)



It was inevitable that this Canadian episode had an effect on the morale of the WSP(US) membership, especially since the *Western Socialist* was a joint organ of the two organizations.

For this and for many other reasons, the Party outside Boston was doing less and less, the most notable exception to this being Comrade Samuel Leight, of Tucson, Arizona, who spent the 1970s speaking on local radio. In the following decade, he was to use his radio scripts as the basis for two books, so that ultimately his talks on socialism reached a much larger audience.

The manpower shortage generally was much worse in the Seventies than in the Sixties as comrades lost interest and/or moved away from the Locals. New York Local lost its Headquarters in 1972; both there and in Los Angeles, the members ceased holding meetings that year. Although there were officially Locals in New York, Detroit, San Francisco and Los Angeles, they were increasingly "shadow" Locals whose members had no success at spreading knowledge and understanding of the case for socialism to potential new recruits.

In fact, looking back, it can be seen that the WSP(US) had begun its slow transformation into an organization of members at large. At the 1972 Conference, Rab put the question of how interest in the movement might be maintained by isolated members at large on the Agenda; but no action was taken. At several later party meetings in the 1970s, various suggestions were made regarding methods of supporting and encouraging members at large to participate in socialist work (there was actually

quite a lot that members at large could do, even before the advent of the Internet) but none of the suggestions were put into effect.

One comrade wrote: “The history of our progress (or lack of it) as shown in our Conference Reports over the years, discloses a continual state of crisis. Yet we are still here.”

In Local Boston, it was easy to “keep on keeping on” because there was so much to do.

1973 saw the first appearance of the WSP on television. The program was “Catch 44,” a half-hour of prime time TV on Channel 44, the local Public Broadcasting System outlet, which was offered free to any community group who requested it. We took eager advantage of this offer, and put on three different performances over the course of the next few years. The first was a panel discussion starring Local Boston comrades Harry and Sally Morrison, Karla Rab, and Mike Phillips. Phillips was the National Secretary that year. He had originally joined the WSP in 1939, but like so many other comrades, after returning from the Second World War he had settled down to raise a family and effectively disappeared from the movement. Unlike most of those who disappeared, though, Mike returned to the WSP again around 1970, and made his most valuable contributions to the socialist movement in his middle age and beyond.

Our second TV production was essentially the same format as the first, with I. Rab, Mike Phillips and Perry Wilson as the discussants. We were able to get considerable extra mileage out of these two efforts, moreover, by showing videotapes of both programs at Headquarters.

The third time we appeared on “Catch 44,” we decided to try something a little different, and put on a half-hour dramatization acted out by members and sympathizers. Nine or ten people were involved in all, and we had such a good time rehearsing together and then putting on the show that morale in the Local rose to a higher level than it had been in quite a while. (In fact, one of the actresses joined the party a few months after the performance.)



Most of Boston Local’s activities did keep going, although most of what we did was not strictly speaking Local work. The small core of active

members participated in national level efforts, such as getting out the *Western Socialist* every other month. The initially very encouraging response to the radio broadcasts on WCRB slowed down to a trickle. Most of the broadcasts were now re-runs, and Morrison was the only one writing new scripts.

One goal that had been agreed on years before was for the WSP to bring out a pamphlet. Many times this had come up at conferences, and votes would always be taken in favor of it, but somehow an actual pamphlet never appeared, only leaflets, and the special 50th Anniversary Issue of the WS in 1966.

Finally in 1973, the Editorial Committee conceived of a pamphlet that everyone knew could be produced out of materials already on hand. The 300th issue of the *Western Socialist* was published as *The Perspective for World Socialism* — radio talk scripts, all written by Harry Morrison. 2,500 copies were bound with a special cover commemorating the 300th issue of the *WS*; 500 with a pamphlet-style cover for WSP(US) use; while 2,000 copies were left uncovered so that covers could be provided later with different information on or inside the front or back cover according to the wishes of any companion parties.

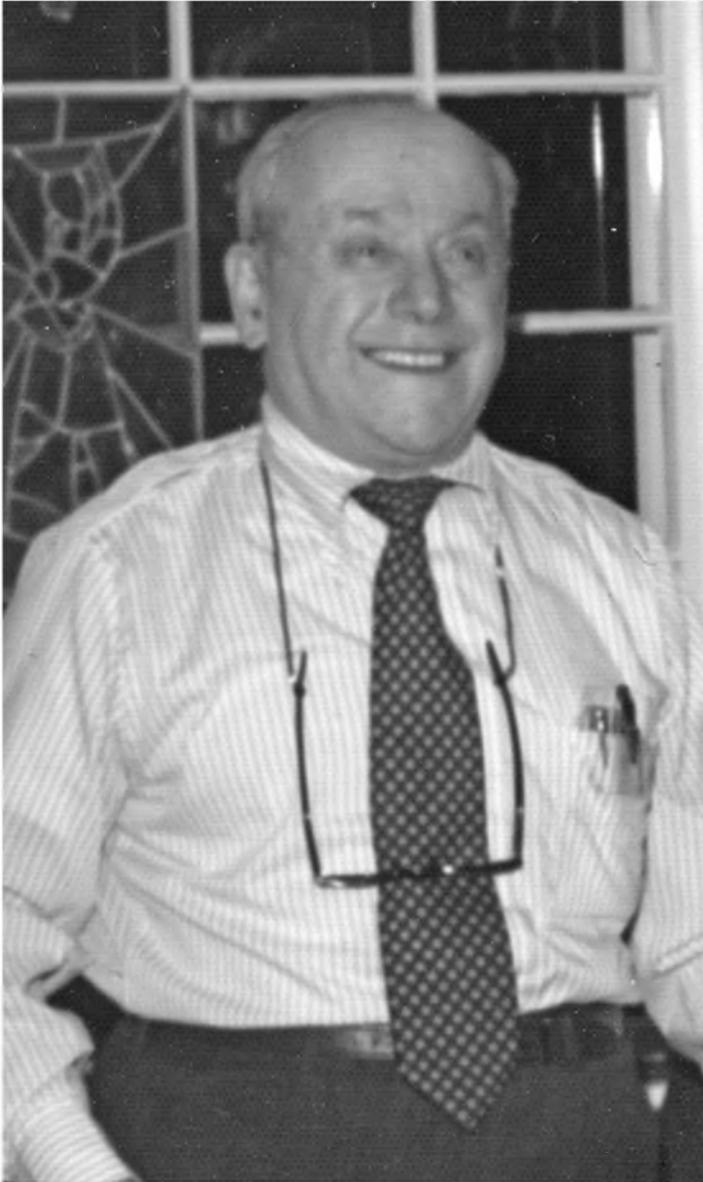


At around the same time that *The Perspective for World Socialism* appeared, Rab retired, at last, from work at the Hearst papers. There was an official ceremony at which he received a certificate stating that on September 23, 1973, he had “completed twenty-five years of continuous membership in the International Typographical Union of North America and merits the respect and admiration of all Union craftsmen.” However, Rab was much prouder of the informal surprise party given by his co-workers in Local 13 of the Boston Typographical Union, with whom he had shared 25



years of camaraderie. Some of them had come to appreciate his socialist outlook, and even those who didn't had learned from him the principles of union solidarity. They honored him with a large poster with a picture of him, on which each had written a short message.

Rab had every reason to feel good about himself, with so many of his co-workers making much over him. Moreover, unbeknownst to him, his family was also making plans to honor him with a surprise party as his 80th birthday approached.



I. Rab, December 1973



The above photo of Rab and Karla was taken by Mardon Coffin Cooper at the WSP annual conference, September 1971.

It was a wonderful party. Hundreds of people came, and well over \$1,000.00 was donated to the WSP in his honor.

Among the guests were the Mattick family — Ilse, Paul and “Otto” (pictured in the photo on the right; Otto is in the background) — and



also some of the musicians who had been recruited either at the old Hayward Place headquarters or at 27 Dock Square. All the stalwarts of Boston Local came, of course, as well as a few comrades from Detroit,



such as Mardon Cooper. Three former Vagabonds were there: Ed Seifert (a life-long active member of the WSP), Red Wolf, and Ray Richmond (pictured on the left). Conspicuous by his absence was George Gloss, by this time a local celebrity for his book give-aways at the Brattle Book Shop. Gloss was unable to attend because of

poor health. Steve and Connie Butterfield drove down from Vermont (where Butterfield was now teaching at Castleton State College) to honor Rab; it was the first time they'd visited Boston in a long time.

Most of the people at that party, including myself, thought Rab was just the same as he'd always been; but Ella and Ann, who saw him on a daily basis, later revealed to me that they'd already been vaguely aware then that something was not quite right. Rab himself often said, jokingly, “There’s nothing the matter with my memory, but my forgettery is working over-time!” But then, he'd never had a particularly good memory; I laughed with him about it, and I wasn't worried.



Rab did not serve on the NAC in 1973, but he did perform the duties of National Treasurer, and carried on a widespread correspondence with comrades outside Boston. He also attended all the Party functions held at Headquarters during this period.

The NAC met twice a month, and Harry Morrison, as National Secretary, typed the Minutes of each meeting and signed his name onto a master sheet, from which mimeographed copies were made and distributed. It had been Rab's custom to sign his Treasurer's reports on the mimeograph master, too; but starting in January 1973, Rab's name is usually typewritten — and where there is a signature, it is not in Rab's own distinctive handwriting, but in his son Bill's.



How the Gods Were Made

Spreading knowledge and understanding of the case for socialism has always been the most important function of the WSP. To this end, besides distributing the *Western Socialist* and the *Socialist Standard*, the organization has generally been involved in distributing books and pamphlets from other sources. One such source was the Chicago-based Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, from which we obtained such socialist classics as Pannekoek's *Marxism and Darwinism* and Keracher's *How the Gods Were Made*.

John Keracher himself, along with his Proletarian Party, had been closely identified with the Kerr Company until his death in 1958. After that, the Proletarian Party was in charge until 1971, when, with their organization passing out of existence, its leaders gave control of the Kerr Company to a new Board of Directors, including Fred Thompson (an IWW leader whom Rab had met during his 1947 organizing tour of the Midwest), and Burt Rosen, a Korean War draft resistance activist and veteran socialist.

Rosen contacted Rab in 1973, asking if he would write an introduction to a new edition of *How the Gods Were Made*. Needless to say, Rab was thrilled at the opportunity. He had wanted to write a pamphlet for a very long time; but circumstances had always intervened. Now, at last, he was given this invitation which would not only give him his opportunity to write, but would also be a major benefit to the Party. Since the WSP was the largest purchaser of the Keracher pamphlet, Kerr was offering to reprint it, with an introduction by Rab, in two editions, one of which would have "a WSP cover, with WSP announcements and its Declaration of Principles" — on condition that the WSP would help with the expenses of reprinting, and would agree to take 2,500 copies.

The WSP's Editorial Committee Report to the 1973 Conference announced: "With reference to Com. I. Rab's Introduction to Keracher's *How the Gods Were Made*, the Edit. Comm. hopes that this pamphlet will be issued as a party publication. Negotiations are now in progress [with Kerr] with goal of purchasing 2,500 copies of our own edition."

Rab received a letter from Fred Thompson in June 1974:

Burt Rosen tells me you will be doing a biographical sketch of Keracher for a new edition of *How the Gods Were Made*. Glad to hear it.

I happened to be reading something of the struggles within the Finnish Socialist Federation, and the attacks after the 1907 Iron Range strike on the Finns for being godless. The Socialist Federation of course responded that "religion is a private matter." It reminded me of the old discussion in socialist circles on that question: SPA taking the position that religion is a private matter and welcoming those of various faiths; I believe SPGB took the position that since religion is a social fact it is not a private matter, but part of the enemy's arsenal. The anarchy syndicalism [*sic*] International Working Men's Association (otherwise known as the First International) in its statement of principles "declares itself atheist." The IWW sings of pie in the sky, but has steadily taken the position that a union should not attempt to dictate a member's politics or religion, etc.

I was wondering whether it might not be interesting, in case you have the documents handy, to put in a few sentences about this discussion on religion within the ranks of the radical movement, and the various views that have been held.

Yours,

Fred

To which Rab responded:

It is my intention to summarize the issue of "religion as a private matter" and its contrast with "religion as a matter of social concern." Note, not primarily as a part of "the enemy's arsenal," even though it is also that. The latent strength of socialism is its scientific analysis, which is in harmony with an understanding of the social forces at work in society. Its generalized conclusions are confirmed and corroborated by unfolding events. That is the acid test. This is great merit of Keracher's *How the Gods Were Made*.

Regarding John Keracher, I intend to praise his contributions to socialist understanding. Also, I will be critical of his "Dictatorship of the Proletariat" confusions and his support of the Soviet Union...

I agree with you that religion is not a union matter. It could not be otherwise, given that Unions are primarily involved in the economic phase of the Class Struggle..

I forgot to mention that in the Introduction, I'm thinking of mentioning our [*Keracher's and Rab's*] personal relationship. Despite any differences of opinions that developed after the Russian Revolution we remained fast friends. In fact, when visiting Boston to speak for the Proletarian Party, he stayed with me at my home.

As ever,

Yours for a sane world here and now,

Rab*

Apparently Kerr was eager to go ahead with the project, because Thompson's next letter came quickly, with an undertone of urgency to it:

.I could probably have taken for granted without writing you, that in an introduction to *How the Gods Were Made* you would mention the different views that have been expressed within the socialist movement regarding religion and the relation of the socialist movement to it. That is good. When we first reprinted *The Pullman Strike*, I was disappointed that we had not added at least a page or so to give the main facts of the strike and to suggest what books say what about it. Since then in our reprints we have tried to be helpful to a wide range of readers, by adding informative rather than polemic introductions, and this has helped the working stiff reader who digs history on his own account, and has got a much wider class room use for the various books. *The Right To Be Lazy* coming out now has a life of Lafargue, very brief, but hard to come by otherwise; and some explanation of the circumstances under which he wrote it, and notes on the folks he talked about. I think it will be a better educational tool that way. With so few people knowing anything about Keracher, an account of him will not only make the book something plainly written by a real person, but also tie its debunking use to constructive social effort. How about a listing of five or six books one could recommend in the same field?

* See p. 374.

Burt tells me he has so few copies, he would like to turn it over to printer. The *Introduction* need not be long, in fact it shouldn't be: primarily to tell who Keracher was, what sort of a fellow, his prime interests or concerns. He did that well for Engels, and I hope you can do it as warmly, but more briefly for John Keracher. Certainly no harm [in mentioning] that you could be friends and argue in a friendly way about the difference in evaluating the Russian revolution, etc., but of course not going into the pros and cons of the arguments. I expect you, he and I all see the movement as bigger than its sundry organizations and parties, and consequently the need for the solidarity of a varied left, a differentiated left, capable of intelligent discussion of its differences. Some of my young friends today, I regret, do not seem to see this need.

Best wishes,

Fred Thompson*

Rab was excited about this prospect. He wrote an introduction to Keracher's pamphlet covering all the points he felt should be made, and he showed it both to me and to Bill, asking each of us to look it over. I took this job very seriously, read what he had written, and offered a few suggestions as to the wording. I don't know what Bill's editorial comments were, but he also did some editing before Rab sent it off to Kerr.

Besides requesting this editorial assistance from Bill and me, Rab also wrote to others for help at several points along the way. He wrote and re-wrote his introduction several times, trying to accommodate the requests from Burt Rosen, representing the Kerr Company, as to both the length and the scope of the piece. I don't remember any other project to which he devoted quite so much effort as this one. In the end, however, for whatever reason, his essay was never published anywhere until now, although Rab had hopes for it at least until January 1976. I suspect the problem may have been simply that he couldn't bear to make it as brief as what was wanted.

How The Gods Were Made deals, of course, with religion, a subject towards which Keracher's attitude was identical to Rab's — but quite different from that of many others. As Rab put it, in this excerpt from his Introduction:

* See pp. 375-376.

For years there has raged a continuing controversy between two schools of socialist thought on the significance of religion. One school would avoid any discussion of religion as though it were a plague, insisting that religion is a private matter for every individual to decide for himself. It holds that any other view only antagonizes prospective socialists and keeps them from joining the socialist movement. The other school maintains that religion is a matter of social import, both practically and theoretically.

In *How the Gods Were Made*, Keracher demonstrates that religious beliefs, in any of their forms, are incompatible with an understanding of socialism, both as a science and as a movement.

The apologists for outworn religious superstitions emphasize that religion is, primarily, concerned with moral and ethical principles. But, despite these nebulous explanations, it cannot be denied that the essence of all religions is the service and worship of God or the supernatural. Actually, man made God in his own image, in spite of the contention of religionists that the reverse is the case. No longer can religion be justified on its own terms.

It is true that there are many gaps in our knowledge, but whenever we get answers they always prove to be physical, material ones. This applies to the social sciences, including morals and ethics, as well as all other branches of science.

(This is only a brief excerpt; the entire text is included on pp 449-455.)



Alzheimer's Disease

Ella had a major stroke in 1975, which shook the whole family to the core. With Ella confined to a wheelchair for the remaining five years of her life, Ann devoted herself completely to her mother's care. Nevertheless, when Ann needed to leave the house for brief periods, she had no anxiety about leaving Ella with Rab. I was busy during that time raising my family, teaching childbirth classes, and going back to school (I graduated and became a Registered Nurse in 1976). When I visited 62 Woodcliff Road, I failed to notice anything unusual about Rab. He often called me down to his "office" (a small space in the basement) to show me his correspondence, including letters which can now be read in this book.

Many other people also failed to notice his decline, including WSP comrades who had become so confident in Rab's ability to rise to any occasion that they took it as a given.

On some level Rab knew his "forgettery was working overtime" more and more in his ninth decade. In spite of this, though, everyone around him expected him to function the same as he always had. As an example, in 1976 when Harry Morrison — who had been doing tremendous amounts of work at Headquarters — got a new job that cut into the time he was able to devote to the Party, Rab rose to the occasion and took over many of the routine tasks.

Later that year, Rab wrote:

.I've not been on the Edit. Comm. for a few years. After 35 years of being continually on the Edit. Comm. the comrades relieved me from serving on that committee. However, they had asked me to continue proofreading the *WS*, which gives me an opportunity to make suggestions regarding articles. I do not attend Edit. Comm. meetings — the reason I'm not on the committee is that I'm involved in routine matters. I open the mail, process subs, mail literature orders, and handle many details, such as answering minor inquiries, as the factotum of the party office. This is on top of my Treasurer duties and my personal correspondence, not to mention reading books and correspondence. As you can see, I'm busy.*

As I was reading over Rab's letters as part of the research for this book, I noticed that those written during this period are just a little less clear than the earlier ones. Although it is easy to tell what he wanted to say, the words sometimes are so garbled that I felt a need to edit for clarity before transcribing them into Selected Letters. (A good example is his letter to Frank Marquart dated May 24, 1976, where I have left Rab's own words in a footnote; see pp 393-395.)

Rab continued to carry on a voluminous correspondence all through the 1970s, and to give me carbon copies of the letters he felt were important. However, beginning in 1979 there are some letters in the WSP Archive where the signature is in Billie's handwriting, not in Rab's own. These letters were probably as much Bill's as Rab's, and I have not included any of them here.



* See pp. 413-414.

Ella died on December 5, 1979. Only after this point did it become obvious to me that Rab was no longer able to function normally. I don't think he ever quite realized that Ella was dead. He knew it sometimes but would forget it again. Maybe that loss was the last blow, the one he couldn't recover from.

Meanwhile, my own life was changing too. As my husband became more invested in his academic career, his attention was less and less on the things that had once kept us close. When he took a sabbatical from teaching in 1978 to travel abroad, I declined to accompany him. At the time, I did not think of this as signaling the end of the marriage; but when Gerell returned, it soon became clear that our relationship had changed. The months on my own had given me the self-confidence to understand that I would be happier without the compromises implicit in this marriage. For the first time, I assumed complete responsibility for my own life. Sara was fourteen years old then, and our son Adam had just turned eleven.

The following year, 1980, saw the last issue of *The Western Socialist* published. Harry Morrison had suffered a heart attack towards the beginning of 1979 and, on the advice of his physician, "retired" from active work in the WSP because it was too stressful for his cardiac condition. He devoted himself to his own writing, and no longer attended meetings. George Gloss, who had once been a key figure on the Editorial Committee, was becoming increasingly frail. (Gloss died in 1985.)

George Gerell, once Rab's hope for the future, was no longer involved in the movement. Bill Jerome, still a socialist, had a busy law practice; Steve Butterfield had moved to Vermont, where he was teaching English.

If Rab had died suddenly in, say, 1975, it is not impossible that one or more of these (or other) veterans of Boston Local might have been jolted into action. But Rab did not die; even when it was quite apparent that he was suffering from Alzheimer's disease, he kept on keeping up the appearance of an active comrade — with the aid of his son.

Bill told me that starting at some point in the late Seventies, Rab "found that his handwriting just was failing him — he couldn't quite manipulate the pencil, or maybe it was his eyes — I don't know, but he just couldn't write too well. And the typewriter was just beyond his power. So he'd have me type letters. It was impossible to have him dictate it. He'd ramble and it just wasn't anything that could be typed. So what I'd do,

I'd let him ramble, and I'd take notes, and then I'd type it out and have him 'proofread' it, you know. And he said, 'Oh, that's fine, fine, fine!' but I know there were a lot of little things I'd changed, because I knew he'd made mistakes."

Although no one knew it at the time, Bill Rab was helping his father more and more. At first, Rab could tell Bill what he was trying to say; even when he lost that ability, Bill generally knew what his father would have wanted to say in response to the letters he received.

But Rab had always kept in touch with so many comrades, all over the United States and Canada, as well as in England, and scattered from Iceland to Australia to France! In a very real sense, he had extended his hand in comradeship to everyone he corresponded with: the old stalwarts of the World Socialist Movement and the new contacts, students and workers. He had been the teacher, the confidante, the mentor, the peacemaker. All this ended, winding down slowly; imperceptibly enough so that many people outside Boston didn't even notice it was gone.

I asked Carrie Rab in 2004, at what point *she* knew that Rab really was not himself any more. She thought for a long time, and then said: "Well, I always thought that he was the same until he turned, like, about 84 or 85. I still thought he had his marbles. And then eventually, of course, he didn't. But he was the same person, as far as I was concerned ... [until] one day he said to Billie, 'Who are you?' And so life changed. And I think Billie's life changed. He couldn't get over his father not knowing who he was. That was in 1981."

That jibes with my own perception. In 1981, I was dating a man named Hal (who was not a socialist). At one point, Hal agreed to debate with Bill Jerome on some subject at WSP headquarters. Although the debate turned out to be an embarrassing fiasco in many respects, it delighted Rab. Hal thought he was "probably the last person to get into Rab's long-term memory" — but only a few months later, Rab no longer recognized him.

I think that debate may have been the last public meeting of the WSP that Rab attended.

In 1982, when Boston Local voted to give up the Huntington Avenue headquarters because the landlord had raised the rent, no one told Rab. He realized, from time to time, that there was no more Headquarters, but that temporary "knowing" wasn't as devastating as it would have

been earlier, because he retained it only intermittently, just as with the memory that Ella was gone.

There was never any question of moving the National Office back to Detroit, or to New York, where once there had been so many socialists. Now there was no Local any better equipped than Boston to maintain a National Office. The closing of the rooms at 295 Huntington Avenue, therefore, was a blow not only to Boston Local, but to the whole WSP(US).

On one occasion, when Rab realized there was no more Headquarters, he said to Bill with disgust, "Christ, you mean I have to start all over again?"

Everything that had been in Headquarters was stored in various comrades' homes. Comrade Aaron Feldman, the National Secretary in 1982 — who was living at that time on the Twin Oaks commune in Virginia — took most of the records there, and took on most of the organizational work. Cartons of WSP papers, pamphlets, etc., were moved to my cellar in Lexington, and to Bill and Carrie Rab's in Newton. Comrade Ken Stewart also took some. I moved the large, framed Party manifesto, "THE WAR AND THE GREATER WAR," from the wall at Headquarters and hung it on the wall of my living room, where it remains to this day and will stay until the World Socialist Party is strong enough to have an actual Headquarters again.



With no official Headquarters, NAC meetings (as we kept calling them until 1983, although the administrative functions of the Committee were no longer being carried out) were held at the Watertown home of Ruth Seifert, the widow of Eddie Seifert. (Both of the Seiferts had been members of Boston Local from the beginning.) Ruth was no theoretician, but she was always willing to help out in whatever way she could; and at this time, she took over more responsibilities than previously. It was Ruth who opened a new bank account for the party, to which Rab, for so long the WSP Treasurer, had no access.

In October 1982, the official mailing address of the WSP became Post Office Box 405, Watertown, MA, because Ruth Seifert took on the responsibility of picking up the mail, and she lived not far from the Watertown Post Office. Besides picking up the correspondence from the Post Office, she sent out notices of meetings about once a month,

having lent her apartment on Spring Street as the usual meeting place. Rab attended only one of those meetings. Lennie Feinzig, Mike Phillips, Bill Rab and Ruth Seifert were the regulars, with Ken Stewart and me sometimes joining in.

Meetings began with Lennie noting the incoming correspondence. I was asked to keep track of it, but had a hard time of it, I remember, because I never had a chance to look at the letters ahead of time, and they tended to get distributed during the meeting to whoever — most often Lennie or Mike — was willing to respond to the those that needed a response. So my secretary's reports were woefully inadequate. Little activity was carried on in Boston. I think we were all demoralized by Rab's decline — I know I was, at any rate.

On the other hand, there was some activity going on outside Boston, which we made an effort to support.

Comrade Samuel Leight, in Tucson, Arizona, brought out his compilation of radio talks, *World Without Wages (Money, Poverty or War)*, in 1980. The magazine *In These Times* for August 1982 carried an ad for this book, with Ruth's Watertown address given as the contact. Leight's second book, *The Futility of Reformism*, appeared in 1984.

Some comrades in the SPGB, notably Steve Coleman, proposed that one way to fill the gap left by the demise of *The Western Socialist* might be to publish (in England) a semi-annual journal which would be a joint publication of all the international contacts of the World Socialist Movement. At the "NAC meeting" at Ruth Seifert's home in November 1982, Billie Rab, Lennie, Mike Phillips and I fully discussed this idea and came to the conclusion that we approved of it. Lennie sent out a summary of our discussion along with the November Minutes: "We are prepared to submit at least one original article and one classic reprint [for each issue] ... Although we are at the present moment very weak and very few, we felt this long-range activity may have the best chance of success." (Seven issues of *World Socialist: Journal of the World Socialist Movement* did appear between 1984 and 1987, each with contributions from the WSP[US] as well as other members of the WSM.)

By 1983, we were no longer sending out "NAC Minutes" but an occasional "Report to the Membership" covering whatever correspondence and activity we had to tell about. One such report includes the statement "Rab is physically well, but ageing. He is in his 90th year." Gloss came to

one of the meetings that year, with a generous donation of money and a request for literature to display in his bookshop.

Comrade William Z. (“Red”) Miller died around this time. The bulk of his estate was bequeathed to the Companion Parties, the largest share going to the WSP(US). There was considerable discussion in Boston as to what propaganda use we could make of this completely unexpected windfall, but there were so few active members that the decision was taken to donate it to the SPGB. The only voice seriously raised against this was Ken Stewart’s. At one of the meetings at Ruth Seifert’s, a vote was actually taken to dissolve the Party; but nothing was done about it, and it’s not clear that our small group had any authority to take such a step without even consulting the membership outside Boston.

Comrade Ron Elbert, who had joined the organization in 1973, was living in Orlando, Florida during this period. A frequent contributor to the old *Western Socialist*, he also had articles in three issues of the new journal, *World Socialist*. In 1983, Elbert composed an ad and placed it in *The Nation* magazine on behalf of the WSP, advertising the *Socialist Standard*. His ad brought such a good response that when Mike Phillips suggested, at a Party meeting held in February 1984, that we should try to increase the distribution of socialist literature in the USA, I made a motion that we send Elbert some of the funds from the Miller bequest, to be spent advertising the *Socialist Standard* “using his own judgment as to specifics.” The result was another highly successful ad that ran in several issues of *The Progressive* magazine.



Meanwhile, Ann cared for Rab, as she had cared for Ella before. Lennie was not much help, since he was at work most of the day. Ann’s back, which had begun to trouble her during the years she spent lifting Ella in and out of bed, got much worse in the 1980s. Rab had always lived with Ann and Lennie, but after a while, Billie and Carrie Rab, who lived only a few blocks away, took on the role of caretakers for him on weekends, and later, he stayed alternate weeks with each household. No one in the family ever seriously considered putting Rab into a nursing home.

In May 1986, the first issue of *The World Socialist Review* appeared. None of the Boston members had had anything to do with it; it was the brain-child of an enthusiastic new member in Marne, Michigan, Rich Foland, and a former member of the SPC, Ray Rawlings, who turned it out clan-

destinely on a photocopying machine at work. In the second issue (Fall, 1986), Foland, Walter Kobus, also in Michigan, and Aaron Feldman, in Virginia, were the only American socialists listed as contacts, and Sid Catt, in Toronto, was the only Canadian — although the Watertown Post Office box was still listed as the address for the WSP, as was the SPC's Victoria address, without giving the name of a contact person.

By that time, Rab remembered the WSP only intermittently. When I spent time with him then, in fact, it seemed to me that he had forgotten all about Socialism, just as he had forgotten not only who we, his family, were, but even who he himself was. I was wrong, though, as Billie told me later; it was only an intermittent forgetting. Billie said: "He was still writing letters then, and holding meetings — in his imagination."

But most of the time, he didn't know anything except that he was with people who loved him, even though he wasn't sure who any of us were. Late that fall, Ann's back was so bad that she asked Billie and Carrie to keep Rab longer than their usual week.

He had been at Floral Street a little over a month when he died, on December 31, 1986. There was a New Year's Eve party going on. Billie tells the story:

The night that he died, he'd got out of bed, and he came half-way down the stairs (with a bathrobe on, fortunately), and I quick went up the stairs to greet him, and introduce people to him while he was leaning over the banister of the stairway — this was still before a lot of people had come, and it was mostly people, friends he knew anyway — and he says, "Oh, I didn't mean to interrupt the meeting." So I said, "Well, it's really nothing you have to be concerned with, it's just paying bills, and how to get more money, and how to set up a youth organization." That's the kind of thing I'd always say to him. I had meetings for him every day.

.We were always planning meetings, people coming in from New York — a lot of it was imagination, but it was all Party. Everything was Party oriented, till the last night. He died during that New Years Eve party, and he was happy about it. He was with comrades, and they were enjoying themselves. He exhausted himself, going up and down the steps. I think he actually came all the way down, when I think about it. But, be that as it may, I remember him shaking hands over the bannister, along the wall. And between Carrie and I, we were up there [*in his room*] with him, never skipped ten minutes even.

Believe me, I have thought about that night.

It took place 15 minutes before New Years, with the bells chiming and the whistles blowing, the popcorn popping and whatnot. Fifteen minutes before that was when he died. And probably at 2:00 in the morning, there were still people downstairs, the undertakers had been up there and had prepared him, and they carried him down the stairs right through the party, out the front door. Of course, I went out, and Ann was there — and shucks, there was nothing I could do — I went back to the party. This was all arranged through the Tufts Department of Anatomical Donation. Very considerate people.

It was really a Socialist passing. I was really proud.

This is the “Tribute to Rab” that appeared in *World Socialist Review* #4 (Winter, 1987). It is essentially the same as what Billie read at his father’s memorial service:

**TRIBUTE TO RAB
(1893 - 1986)**

Last New Year’s Eve, I. Rab, a founding member of the World Socialist Party, died. The following is a tribute offered in his memory.

While still attending high school in Boston, Rab was the youngest secretary of the Socialist Party of America (Eugene Debs, Norman Thomas) and considered himself quite well grounded in Marxism. In 1916, as a young man enrolled at Ohio Northern, he went to Detroit in search of a summer job, fully intending to resume his studies in the Fall. He found employment at the River Rouge Ford plant and also contacted the SP of A. There he met his wife for 63 years, Ella Riebe, whose father had been an organizer for SP of A in the Montana-Wyoming-Colorado region.

He heard about two Englishmen who were conducting socialist classes. The “Brits” were Moses Baritz and Adolph Kohn of the Socialist Party of Great Britain who chose to sit out the war in the USA. After his first encounter with Baritz’s eye-opening mockery of his reformist position and Kohn’s scholarly analysis on the same theme, Rab was never the same again. He knew what he wanted to do with the rest of his life. So much for the SP of A! So much for college! He would stay in Detroit.

Rab was a quick learner and, encouraged by Kohn and Baritz, despite World War I, organized on-the-job classes using SPGB pamphlets

as text in the factory yard during lunch hour. He was warned by his supervisor many times, but he ignored the consequences. His defiance finally resulted not only in his dismissal but in his being blacklisted. By this time he and Ella had two little children, and there was nothing to do but move back to Boston.

Somewhere around this time, a few scattered comrades in New York and Detroit along with Rab in Boston organized the Socialist Education Society, which eventually evolved into the Workers' Socialist Party and finally the World Socialist Party. Alone in Boston, Rab spoke on street corners and attracted enough people to start classes, first in his home and then in rented rooms, empty storefronts and finally meeting halls. He was a colorful speaker and a superb teacher, so much so that by the mid-twenties a viable group had been organized.

In 1928 he became the director of a sizeable boys' athletic club called "The Vagabonds." He knew little about baseball but his talks on science, philosophy and current events (from which he always extracted a socialist message) soon had the boys reading Party literature and listening to selected university professors whom Rab had been able to persuade to address the Club in their specializations. At least half the group eventually joined the WSP

The depression of the thirties provided fertile soil for socialist propaganda, and the Party grew in numbers and spirit. There was much enthusiasm and a youthful mingling of social and socialist activity. A new and busy Party headquarters became a center of many interests. Rab's house became a home away from home to comrades and prospects alike. The open-house atmosphere was graciously presided over by Ella, whose children had by then grown up sufficiently for her to become active in the Party. She was secretary of Boston Local during the most dynamic years.

Then came World War II. The Party, even under wartime conditions, managed to carry on successfully. Regular forums, debates, economic classes and discussions, as well as the publication of the *Western Socialist* were steadily maintained. Of course, during this period, Rab was not alone; there were many members eager to write, speak and even clean up headquarters after a meeting or a social event. It was possible to embark on an organizing tour of the Detroit-Chicago area which was instrumental in re-establishing the Detroit Local. Those were probably the happiest and most rewarding years of Rab's life.

After the war, the social climate became less favorable to spreading socialist ideas. Returning servicemen were forced to reorganize their lives under new circumstances and perspectives, altered hopes and fears. With the cold war anti-red sentiment and the witch-hunting of the McCarthy era, the Party suffered along with every other group that deviated from the 100% flag-waving jingoism of the period. The WSP continued to hold its own for many years, but it had clearly lost its momentum of earlier days.

It is pleasant to recall that Rab found optimism and encouragement even when things appeared adverse. One such special occasion was his visit (with George Gloss of Boston) to Great Britain during the early fifties: he brought back unending anecdotes and accounts of the trip. He met people he had only known through correspondence or the *Standard*, or by reputation. He attended meetings in London, Manchester and Glasgow, speaking at branch and propaganda meetings; he was thrilled by the size, quality and support of the general membership. The entire experience was one of the highlights of his life.

He had begun his quest for a sane society before the days of radio; yet he realized that modern times called for modern measures in the use of the mass media. To his credit, he even appeared on the Party's TV broadcasts in the sixties. Rab was disdainful of the concept of "leaders" and "great men," implying as this does that an understanding of the forces which drive capitalist society was not required. He liked to use the initials A.C.D.S. PIE (A Clear, Definite, Socialist Position Is Essential) as a gimmick in lectures and a closing in correspondence.

It is sad to lose him. He symbolizes an era in which one man's voice did not seem so insignificant as today. Although Rab would protest, there is no doubt that the scope of his intellect, the example of his humanity, his expertise as a teacher and his charismatic magnetism combined in a unique personality that inspired people to think ... and thinking people to act. Would that there were more "ordinary" men of his ilk.

EPILOGUE

A core principle of the World Socialist Movement is that history is not made by great men, but by prevailing material conditions. That is indisputably the case (although, of course, it is also true that each individual human being is a *part* of the prevailing material conditions, otherwise it could be argued that the attempts of the WSM to spread knowledge and understanding of the case for socialism can have no effect on history).

No one who remembers Rab doubts that he influenced the history of the socialist movement in the United States during his lifetime. In the 1990s, when I did oral histories with many people for this brief biography, that point was made over and over again.

Here are some of the things I heard — “Your grandfather was the key to keeping the Workers’ Socialist Party alive ..Rab was a good organizer, when I look back on it. He was friendly, warm-hearted; he had that smile, all the time, on his face. A sweetheart of a guy.. Rab was never narrow-minded. He was a dedicated man about his beliefs ... That’s why he kept it together, all those years ..I was so affected by the way he taught. He was a great teacher. The people who knew him, people that were scientists themselves — when they heard Rab speak, it made an impression on them.”

His son Bill said: “He was head and shoulders above anybody else because of his panoramic, interconnected appreciation of what constituted ‘Social Thinking.’ In those days, he had that. The way he just went up to Harvard and MIT, and talked to these bigwigs, professors and Nobel Prize winners, he’d just make himself right at home with them, and they accepted him.”

Still, of course we recognize that Rab’s passing without having achieved his goal does not mean that a socialist revolution is any less (or more) likely than it would have been if he had never lived.

In the years since what now seems like “the dark ages” of the 1980s, the World Socialist Party of the United States has reinvented itself. No single comrade has replaced Rab in all the roles he played in the organiza-

tion; but various comrades have done their parts — beginning with Rich Foland in Michigan, who began publication of the *World Socialist Review* in 1986 as a successor to the old *Western Socialist*, and quickly followed by Ron Elbert, mentioned briefly in the last chapter, who breathed new life into Boston Local when he moved here in 1987. Elbert and I formed a deep connection as comrades both in the socialist movement and in our own lives.

The trend that was already beginning in the 1970s has continued; the WSP(US) is now an organization of members-at-large. Even in Boston, there is no longer an organized local. However, we continue to exist as an organization. In 1997, five comrades — Elbert, Len Feinzig and myself; Tom Jackson (once of Detroit Local, then living in Pennsylvania); and a new recruit from Illinois — held an informal meeting at which we determined to re-establish a more formal structure within the loose connection of members-at-large that was all that was left of the WSP at that time.

The following year, the first meeting of a new National Administrative Committee took place. Elbert and I were joint National Secretaries that year. The NAC met via telephone conference call, instead of in any particular city.

Most of our work now is done over the Internet. The WSP presence on the Internet has become our largest single source of new members, and we are currently taking in about the same number of new recruits each year as the Party did in its heyday. But in addition to those new member comrades, hundreds of people are exposed to the case for socialism on our Web site every day. Although the number of those people who feel ready to commit themselves to the WSM remains small, we are planting many, many more seeds than socialist comrades of Rab's generation could.

Given this situation, it is hard to measure the growth of the socialist movement. Even in the years when there was lots of social activity in Boston Local, as well as study classes, public meetings, speakers on Boston Common, etc., there were always more sympathizers than official Party members. People who visit our site, and the Web sites of other organizations of the WSM, are potential sympathizers. When the time comes, I wouldn't be surprised if those sympathizers make up a big part of the conscious political majority needed to establish Socialism.



The necessity of revolutionary social change is much more dire today, in the early 21st Century, than it was during Rab's lifetime. How can anyone seriously imagine capitalism continuing much longer? We are on a countdown now to some big changes, one way or another. Mainstream scientists predict that sometime in the first twenty-five years of this new Millennium, the point of no return will have been reached, after which even if "business as usual" stops requiring environmental degradation, it will be too late to reverse the damage already done.

Material conditions, notably the effects of global capitalism on the ecology of Planet Earth, have changed enough so that, in my own experience of talking with people who have never before even heard the case for socialism, I notice that more and more of these people already recognize that capitalism is not working. The "anti-capitalist" movement has many adherents — although that in itself is useless without the goal of a clear alternative.

Rab himself used to say that a socialist is always an optimist. That is true. If a person weren't an optimist, that is, if a person were easily discouraged, s/he probably wouldn't become active in a socialist movement. After all, it does seem pretty unlikely that all these people who are now in basic disagreement with the World Socialist Party are ever going to see what already seems so obvious to us Socialists. If you, therefore, are of a "pessimistic" or "realistic" turn of mind, it's hard to sustain much enthusiasm for actively promoting the socialist case. It's too easy to give in to the embarrassment of being out of step with almost everyone else you know, whose circle of friends and acquaintances doesn't include a single other socialist. I suspect the reason many people who have no theoretical argument against socialism fail to involve themselves actively in the movement, is that they see no hope of success. It's a syndrome sometimes called T.I.N.A. — "There is no alternative" [to the present system].

But the fact is, you never know till you try. If you don't try to raise the consciousness of everyone you come in contact with, as Rab so consistently did, how can you really know what might have happened if you had? Rab would start up or join into conversations at the drop of a hat — with the person sitting next to him on a bus, plane, or train; with a hitchhiker he picked up; with chance acquaintances, neighbors, co-workers, everyone. And he made a lot of socialists that way.

Rab told me, many years ago, that socialism can be established only if certain necessary prerequisites are in place. One — the only prerequisite

still lacking in his generation, and even today — is a conscious political majority of people who understand what socialism is and are willing to commit themselves to making it work.

Another prerequisite, however, is potential abundance. Rab thought that second prerequisite was still lacking in Marx's time, so that socialism would not really have been possible then. Without the technological ability to provide abundance for every man, woman and child on the planet, it would from a practical standpoint be impossible for everyone's self-defined needs and wants to be met, even if the means of production were owned in common by the entire human community.

In capitalism, of course, *real* abundance does not exist. The capitalist economy requires that many necessities of life be deliberately kept in short supply so that a profit can be made on their sale. However, enough technological advances were made during the 19th and 20th Centuries so that *potential* abundance does currently exist.

Rab never said socialism will happen automatically, but he did say that the only alternative to it is chaos. Now it has become plain that if we don't get our act together as a conscious political majority and establish socialism soon, the chaos that will replace capitalism will take the form of climate change, including massive flooding from global warming. The loss of most of the major cities world-wide, as the water level rises, could easily cause more economic upheavals than even capitalism can rebound from. And the rainforests will be gone. The global environment will be less friendly to our species than it was before. Abundance, potential or otherwise, may no longer exist on Earth.

It seems to me it behooves us to work harder than ever at making socialists, to avoid the alternative future staring us in the face. It's easy to fall into the trap of being a realist.

Socialists, being optimists, ask: Why not give socialism a try? If the alternative is to witness the ruin of everything human beings have accomplished on our small planet, the good along with the bad, why not spread the word that there is a different way of organizing society? If everyone did that, the Socialist Revolution could happen as quickly as it takes a person to change their mind. In Rab's words, "It's as easy as voting capitalism out and socialism in."



WSP Social, 1955. Standing (left to right): "Pepper" Santaniello, Mel Braveman, Harry Morrison, Rab, George Gloss. Seated: Ed Seifert, Helen Wolf Red Wolf.

CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN RAB AND CANTER, FEBRUARY TO NOVEMBER 1949

Sunday, February 13, 1949

Dear Rab,

Don't look now, but you are writing a book on economics. That is, if you are agreeable to it, to working on a "Primer for Students of Marxian Economics" along with me. Of course, I am assuming that you are not writing one at present, and that is the reason I have taken the initiative in this project.

The way to begin is to begin. For this reason I am typing up my outlines for the elementary and advanced classes in economics, just to give us something to go on. As you can see, they are written hurriedly, need development (which I always give verbally in the class) and perhaps correction, so do not be too severe in your criticism. I am just trying to get something down on paper the fastest and most convenient way I know how. I have our classes, and writing for the *WS*, and also want to try some "literary" writing, and then it will be time for our open-air meetings soon, and on top of it all there is the "divertissement" side of education.

I am sending you the first page, plus a brief outline of the work. I plan it in two sections, elementary (basic components of capitalism), and advanced (process of capitalist production). We could also say the static, and the dynamic. But all this matter of form or material is irrelevant at the moment. Never has the need for such a work been as pressing as today. Everywhere I go people ask me, "Where can I get one single book on Marxian economics that is not too advanced?" The best I can answer is Kautsky's *Economic Doctrines*, but this is not up to date, and does not contain illustrations applicable to the American scene.

We can change the material around any way we see fit, but the important thing, and the hardest, is to begin. In German I learned a proverb, and

learned it well: “*Im Anfang, alles ist schwer*” [*In the beginning, everything is difficult*]. Even if I merely provoke you to refute me or criticize, I shall have served my purpose, which is for us to get out of this damned lethargy, and break the ice thaw, so that the torrents of socialist thought will roll over the capitalist landscape, flood it, and with the recession of the waters, bring the new soil of socialism. Boy, is the corn green!*

I am really serious about this, and I believe that we can make a real contribution to socialist thought. I hope you can see your way clear to going ahead on this. If so, I shall continue typing up my notes, and sending them on their merry way. Let me know at once. Of course, I intend to go ahead with it anyway — the bug had drawn too much blood to stop — but it would help if this were a matter of collaboration. And your knowledge of Marxian economics won’t hurt the project either.

On the question of labor and labor power, I am a little clearer on what I meant in my last letter, and now I can see where my language could be taken erroneously — and in good faith. I meant to say that labor represents the extent of labor power in use. Not extension, which implies an addition. But I do not want to go into this in detail, as I am writing an article for the *WS* on “the price of labor,” as discussed in Hazlitt’s 25 cent book *Economics in One Lesson*. I am going to call the article, “Two-Bit Economics,” in respect to the edition in which it appears. If this be flippancy, make the most of it! So, if you read the *WS* (I do when *certain* articles appear), you will get my treatment of labor and labor power. In this I want to trace Marxian development from Ricardo and Smith, and show where this vulgar economist, Hazlitt, is a pygmy compared to the classical economists, and a non-entity when compared with Marx.

Let it go at this, and I anxiously await your answer on the above,

Comradely, I. B. CANTER

* Canter is probably referring here to a 1945 film called *The Corn is Green*, which dealt with Welsh mining town where “the capitalist landscape” was particularly depressing.

Enclosure 1
The first page of Canters' proposed book,
Economics of Capitalism

ECONOMICS OF CAPITALISM

INTRODUCTION - Marxian Economics and Political Economy

In our class on Utopian and Scientific Socialism we found that the material conditions are responsible for the political, religious, intellectual, social institutions, and that with the development of technology, the economic, which now embraced natural conditions, was the decisive. It is the understanding of the economic that permits us to see the different classes in society, the struggle between them, and the institutions of the state and private property.

It is the economic alone that makes socialism feasible and inevitable, not humanitarianism or moral feelings. The two factors that made socialism scientific were this concept of historical materialism just expressed, and the theory of surplus value, which we will take up in this class. However, it is just as important to understand the place of Marx — and there has not been a major contribution to economics since Marx — in political economy, as it is to understand Marxian economics itself. The reason for this latter statement we shall develop presently.

Development of Economic Theory

Every new set of economic conditions brings forth economic theory which reflects that historical circumstance. This is the application of historical materialism. Marxian economics itself is a reflection of the advent and development of the industrial revolution. Before this were the classical economists, and before them the mercantilists. Beyond the latter we need not go, because it is not within the confines of this work.

Including Mercantilism there have been four principal schools of Economic thought, Mercantilism, Classical Economists, Scientific Socialists, and the Vulgar Economists of the bourgeois school of economics. Of course, there have been various schools in between, but since these were in the main branches from the main schools, we cannot give them a separate and independent existence. Such a "school," for example, was that of the Utopian socialists whose economics was that of the Classical economists, but who added developments which foreshadowed the school of Marx and the scientific socialists.

*Enclosure 2**Brief outline of the work, Elementary and Advanced Sections
[handwritten, in Canter's writing]**The Economics of Capitalism**A Primer for Students of Marxian Economics**Elementary*

Preface — Need to bring Marx up to date and also the need for a sample pamphlet. No one in the field has written in light of conditions for workers in this country.

Introduction — Place of Marxian Economics in Political Economy

Theory of Value

Function of the Commodity, Money

Labor and Labor Power

Surplus Value

Decomposition of Surplus Value—Profits, Industrial Commercial, Interest & Rent

Labor-Capital Struggle, — Limitations of Unions

Advanced Section

Methods of Capitalist Production — Cooperation — Division of Labor — Manufacture Machinery and Modern Industry

Definition of Capital — Parable & Constant

Evolution of Capital — Primitive Accumulation

Merchant to Industrial Capital

Law of Accumulation of Capital

Changes in Conversion

Law of Falling Rate of Profit — Complementary Causes and Contradiction

Emergence of Finance Capitalism

International Development of Capitalism

Cartels, Struggle for Markets

Economics of State Capitalism

Socialism: Solution to Capitalism

February 16, 1949

Dear Rab,

Just a note on something which came to mind while preparing for the economic class.

Recall that Marquart raised the question of whether or not the worker did get back some of the surplus value he produced, in the form of cheaper transportation, parks, etc. Our answer, if I remember correctly, was that we might as well speak of the worker getting surplus value back from police protection, military defense, etc. which are in the interests of the capitalist class.

I am thinking of a deeper analysis. That is, surplus value is produced in the factories, at the point of production. Under capitalist relations, the use-values produced are *immediately* alienated from the worker, according to the labor time involved in reproducing his labor power.

In other words, the only way the worker could decrease his exploitation would be by taking longer, more of the part of the working day, to produce and reproduce his labor power, and thus take away from the surplus value going to the capitalist.

Thus:

Value of Labor Power	Surplus Value	
3	5	Index rate of exploitation
4	4	Decrease in exploitation
2	6	Increase in exploitation

What Marquart is talking about is real wages, but you cannot talk about “taking back surplus value” in the form of cheaper prices, etc. This surplus value has already been produced. That is why you cannot speak of the worker being “exploited” a second time when he buys from the merchant. Value remains *unchanged* once it leaves the production process. To describe the workings of the price system, of the market, etc., *without* using the law of value as a basis, is nothing more nor less than unadulterated bourgeois economics (purchasing power school, cheaper taxes for workers, low-cost housing, etc.). Realistically we cannot ignore the market, but without the law of value, the workings of the latter are incomprehensible. And without the law of value, the question of

increased exploitation, yet higher real wages; increased mass of profits, yet lower rate of profits, crises, depressions, wars — all this would be a mass of contradictions.

Not only that, but reformism is a result of abandoning the law of value, and plays the bourgeois game of “playing the market,” law of supply and demand, etc. A reformist who calls himself a socialist is, objectively, a bourgeois “radical.”

What’s this about *fille* Ann adopting reformist policies? Am interested, not from a personal view, but from wanting to know her line of reasoning.

Just finished “Two-Bit Economics,” and since I would like you to go over it personally, will type an extra copy with the one I send Dock Square. You will have it in a few days or so.

I have more time for research now, so will start on the foreign trade and export of capital situation in the U.S.. I think I can show that this is nothing but state-controlled. Want to blast the free enterprise advocates, as well as show the trend under capitalism towards the intervention of the state.

Any suggestions?

Comradely, I. B. CANTER

Washington's Birthday, 1949.

My dear Comrade Irving:

I'm single-spacing this letter because I'm short of paper at the moment but this serves to remind me to urge you to double-space your articles and leave about an inch and half margin on the left side of the sheet, when submitting manuscripts for the *WS* as well as for our joint efforts.

This being a holiday and me not being confined to duties of lesser importance (such as a job), I've set aside today for a general letter to you on many matters. My handicap since working as a proofreader on the newspapers is that it has been screwy hours. I'm only a sub and must report every day at "show-up time" to be assigned to go to work at some later time, often as long as four hours later. Usually I have to work nights and must sleep days and it raises havoc with everything. On my off days, I've either assisted Billie in his new venture in the printing shop, or helped out with detailed work in headquarters, or attended to some activities. Strange as it seems, though I've been busy, somehow my conscience has been bothering me in respect to spending my time to the best advantage for really useful and important things.

In the midst of my soliloquizing on this anomaly, comes your call to arms: "Don't look now, but you are writing a book on economics ... a Primer for students of Marxian Economics." Yes! I heartily accept. Please allow me to comment on your notes on a separate sheet of paper after I finish this letter.

I'm enclosing herewith a book review from the financial page of this morning's *Boston Globe* reviewing: *Saving American Capitalism*, edited by Prof. Seymour E. Harris (Knopf \$4.00). It is an attempt to draw up a blue print for Operation Rescue of American capitalism and capitalism generally. Note well that even the book reviewer mumbles "perhaps" in his comments on the book. It occurs to me that this book might serve as a very useful and worthwhile subject for your "Economic Notes" in the *WS*. Why not get a copy from the library and review it — or better still, write the publishers for a review copy, on our letterhead and accompanied by sample issues of the *WS*.

It occurs to me that I'm in a swell position to get economic articles into the *Typographical Journal*. Now that I am a member of the International Typographical Union, I'm surely entitled to submit articles to their

Journal like I used to for the *Machinist's Journal*. I shall condense (and eliminate specific naming of socialism) your "Economic Notes" for the *Journal*. I may rewrite my Machinists articles for it, also. If time permits, I shall do this today so that I may enclose copies for you. If your "Economic Notes" succeeds in getting printed in the *Typographical Journal*, I'll suggest that it be a regular feature of the Journal with requests for questions from the reader. Good inspiration, is it not? If accepted, it will reach many more readers.

Surprising was the fact that the Shactman group challenge the Los Angeles local to debate the question of supporting a Labor Party. Gates is to represent the Trotskyites and Fred Evans is to represent us. There was a close vote between Evans and Waldron. Many are disappointed that Waldron is not our representative, however majority counts and both were eager to debate.

It was also surprising that the Henry George single tax organization in Boston challenged us to a debate. This is rather unusual for them. But what I personally like about it is that it is not just Single Tax that will be debated, but socialist economics. Apparently some discussion must have arisen about the validity of the theory of surplus value so they desire a public debate on: "Is The Theory of Surplus Value Valid?" Too many of our debates, by the very nature of our being usually the challenger, focus on a negative proposition about the evils of capitalism. This is unavoidable, I realize, but it is welcome to defend socialist theories for a change.

This next item should have been number 1 in this letter, really. At last night's meeting, the NAC approved of Mike Cooper's application blank. Please extend him my congratulations on this milestone. One of our weaknesses is we don't utilize and harness the energies and enthusiasm of new comrades. This is very important. Their very applying for membership is a token of more than just mere acceptance of socialism but the expression of a desire to do something about it. The most useful thing they could do, aside from making new contacts, would be going house-to-house distributing old copies of *WS* and getting new subs. This is merely a suggestion. Oh yes, please extend my regards to Comrade John Steel. I don't believe I ever met him.

While on the subject of Detroit local, would you deem it advisable for me to write comrades Red Miller, Walter Kobus and Ashton Gordon regarding "reactivizing" their personal attention to the Detroit local?

Also would it be advisable for me to write them as well as Ramsay and Glicman regarding the ever-present plight of finances (a constant headache but unavoidable). Also, should I drop lines to such as Bill Davenport and others. Write me what you think about my writing them. I certainly don't want to offend or irritate anyone. If you think it might help and Chubby agrees that it might be a splendid idea, I'd be tickled to drop them all lines. In fact, if you agree, draw me up a list of those (1) who might help with finances, (2) those who might help with work, and (3) those who might help with attendance at classes etc. Needless to say, Comrades such as Chubby, Mardon, and yourself who carry on — patiently, persistently — in spite of disappointments and discouragements speak volumes.

In a very real sense, a reformer is one who thinks in terms of the market. This is so (even though Trotskyites, Bolsheviks and other reformers don't recognize it as truly descriptive of their reasoning), because their very policies revolve around reorganization of social institutions rather than the abolition of them.

As for Anne and her adoption of reforms. She denies this vociferously. What she says is that the revolution is not necessarily going to be a class conscious one of a socialist majority. For further elaboration of her views on this why not drop her a line.

So much for this. Now to rewriting your notes for the *Typographical Journal* and then specific comments on our joint venture.

Comradely yours,

Regards to one and all,

RAB

P. S. On second thought, instead of dealing in detail with your proposed outline, we should make a list of questions that dominate current economic thinking (including the popular Austrian school and college economists) and organize them in some order, with the intent being submitting them to the crucible of examination. Likewise the same attitude to Marxian economics — i.e., not to praise but to reexamine in light of evidence. My first effort will be to visit Baker, Widener and Boston libraries and list the newer important economic works to examine. Your outline will serve as a useful reference guide for correlating the development.

We must not stress economics in a vacuum so much as interplay of material conditions, i.e. not *only* economics.

For material on state-controlled U.S. capital, there must be a wealth of U.S. Gov't documents. Important reading is Michael Young's *Planning for Plenty*, rationalizing Labor England.

I'll send you a summary of what I discover in libraries as possible starting points. Now, I must lie down, as I have to show up tonight even though it is a holiday.

5 Dennison St.,
Roxbury 19, Mass.,

3/10/49

Dear Comrade Canter:

Report #1 on joint venture on Economics Book
Specifically on Government in Business (State Capitalism)

Information Please Almanac - 1949 Edition

Charts: Table III, p. 349 - Gov't Aid for Exports

Table IX, p. 350 - Gov't Investments Abroad

Table XV, p. 352 - Trade Agreements

Chart on p. 235, "Impasse of Democracy" by E. Griffith outlining
spheres of Government Actions

In going through the catalogue file, I noticed that only one book bore title "State Capitalism" specifically, signifying that the tendencies of modern economic development are not generally recognized as being just that. Under the categories of state socialism, government ownership, nationalization, etc., will be found the material needed. I've noticed the Presidential Report of Economic Advisors (not the correct title but just published) which should be a veritable arsenal of material. I'm going to tackle it.

Thought: we do not want, do we, just a mere rehashing of the Marxian economic doctrines, but rather a study of 1949 economics intended as a popular statement, from a scientific socialist point of view, of the world economic forces in operation today.

Let me know if I'm starting off on the right foot; I don't want us to be working at cross purposes with each other.

A word of one personal difficulty I have. I am now a sub-proofreader on the Boston Hearst newspapers, which means I must report at 9:00 every morning and at 7:15 every evening. If I get work during the daytime, then I must sleep nights, but if I don't get work daytimes, then I must get more sleep so that I don't fall asleep should I get work that night. You have no idea what havoc this works in any organized routine for research work. Besides, I've had to spend some time helping Billie get a new location for his enterprise. But, I'm determined to go through with this project with you. I've not yet really bitten into the actual preliminary work of organizing my share of the job.

5 Dennison St.,
Roxbury 19, Mass.,

4/11/49

Dear Comrade Irving Canter:

Making progress slowly but surely.

Enclosed you will find a suggested outline submitted to you for your criticism and suggestions, and additions.

As you had emphasized, this work of ours must be in terms of 1949 realities and not merely a rehash of socialist economic truisms, i.e., merely a restating of *Value, Price and Profit* and *Wage Labor and Capital* using 1949 American figures. (There's a difference, you know.)

Of course, I realize that it is not your intention that the whole study be devoted to State Capitalism but rather a 1949 edition of Marxian Economics, which *must* include a review of Marxian economics, as such, and should be brought up-to-date with 1949 American figures. Check and double check.

Let me know if I'm proceeding in accordance with your wishes and let me have your reactions. If I'm not careful, I'll soon get down to actual writing, but before I do, I want to collect all the data first and then organize this data in a logical pattern to fit in with the outline enclosed herewith.

As I mentioned previously, my working schedule on the newspaper job I have raises havoc with any set plan of study and working on this project. For example, today I've spent well over 2 hours on this task of ours and must go to sleep (12:30 noon) so that I won't fall asleep on the job if I am hired for the night shift, which begins at 7:15 P M. I am only a sub and must show up morning and night show-up times to see if there is any work.

Sad news about Liska [*Starck*]. She was avoiding us since her return from Europe, though she did visit Headquarters. She finally sent us a letter of resignation stating that her visit to Europe, especially Czechoslovakia, made her feel that the Commies do merit our support. She did say that she was suffering from mental indigestion and wasn't sure of herself at present and was not going to join the CP just now. Pity, but patience is called for in her case.

For other news, I must refer you to Gloss; must close now, hurriedly.

P.S.: If you wanted to write Liska, it might be a good idea...

Regards to all,

RAB

[*The outline promised in this letter begins on the next page.*]

- I. Why a popularized section of this study to be devoted to State Capitalism.
 - A. Proof of the historic necessity for socialism
 1. Capitalism has outgrown individual control or management
 2. Evidence of social cooperation
 3. Doomed to futility
 4. Not essential step to socialism
 - a. Only way capitalism can function in absence of socialist majority
 - B. Effect of state capitalism on heads of workers
 1. Confused with socialism both by “friends” and foes
 2. Pressing demand for clarity because of its very nature

II. What is State Capitalism?

- A. Control, direction, regulation and/or ownership through state machinery of productive and distribution processes.
 1. Common characteristics
 - a. With capitalism as a social system
 - (1) Commodities; wage labor-capital
 - b. With all state-capitalist countries
 - (1) Legal measures and government agencies
 - (a) Appearances of suspending “normal” capitalistic economic relationships
 - (b) Concepts of Private Property
 2. Variations
 - a. No two identical state capitalist countries
 - (1) Totalitarian (Fascist) Countries
 - (a) e.g. Russia
 - (2) Middle Road “Socialist Democracies”
 - (a) E.g. England
 - (3) Free Enterprise Countries
 - (a) e.g. USA

III. American State Capitalism

- A. Special study
 1. Dominance of USA in world scene
 2. USA real key to socialist transformation of society

- B. Section in this phase to be devoted to:
 (not in this order necessarily)
1. Collective bargaining
 - a. Industrial disputes—hours and wages
 2. Utility rates
 3. Railroads and communications
 4. Trade policies
 5. Atomic Energy Commission
 6. T.V.A.
 7. Currency
 8. Banking
 9. Agriculture
 10. Housing

References being examined:

- T. Arnold - *Folklore of Capitalism*
 Means & Ware - *Modern Economy in Action*
 Presidential Economic Report
 E. Freund - *Administrative Powers over Persons and Property*
 Sharfman - Interstate Commerce Commission
 V.U. Key Jr. Administration of Federal Grants to States
 J.H. Bitterman - *State and Federal Grants in Aid*
 Authority and Individual (Harvard Tercentary)
 TVA - NRA - other alphabetical soup references
 W.A. Robson - *Public Enterprise*
 Rohlfing - *Business and Government*
 H. Finer - *Modern Government*
 O. Spengler - *Decline of the West*
 E.S. Hilton - *The Impasse of Democracy*
 Pareto's studies
 L. Mumford - *Technics and Civilization*
 Bearle and Means
 National Resources Commission
 Technical Trends and National Policy
 L. Rogin - Significance of Marxian Economics for Modern Trends,
Amer. Economic Review. March 1938.

2155 Anderson
Detroit 13, Michigan

May 27, 1949

Dear Rab,

Please, excuse this interminable delay in answering your letter of — I am ashamed to note — April 11, in which you enclosed your outline. As a matter of fact I have been thinking of it all this time, and already have done a good deal of research on the international phase of state capitalism, as you know from the articles I have written for the May and June *WS*, and the final one I have in mind for the July issue, in which I will draw the political conclusions.

You see, I have a definite plan in mind: Not only to utilize this material in a book form, but also to write articles for the *WS* as we go along in our research. So many books are contemplated, but are not finished, especially if the intended authors are working in the shop and also active in socialist work. Therefore, I am certain this material will be used, when I compile it into articles for the *WS*, whereas the book remains a question mark. After all, the important thing about knowledge is to get it into the hands of the workers, and if this can be done in *WS* article form for the time being, so much the better. The book will work itself out. But it looks like a several year proposition to me, unless we can drop everything, including working for a living, and give all our time to it.

I want to make one suggestion: Let us make the note-taking or research uniform. I put all my research on 5x8 index cards. In this way I can incorporate them into a filing cabinet, and use them in my classes, for which I also have 5x8 index cards. So often we take notes and lose them; they should be permanent-ized (if that is a word) so that in the future, if someone wants to take up the research where we have left off, they will have all the previous research catalogued and in available form.

Now, another suggestion: let us divide the research, each one taking those subjects and fields with which he is best acquainted, or can most easily work in. For example, I have already done quite a lot on the international phase of state capitalism. As a matter of the fact, the three articles I will have written will pretty much cover the subject for American capitalism, although we will have to deal with British Labor capitalism also in this field. I am also going to investigate to what extent American capitalism is

being financed by government bonds, which will show the trend toward state capitalism. The results, which I will write up for the WS, should be very revealing.

Now, in order to get down to cases and divide up the material, it is important to know what we are looking for. While your outline contains much we will have to deal with, I think it is not very logical in its sequence. You start off with the necessity of socialism; I think we should end on this point after proving that capitalism, even under its state form, cannot solve the contradictions of the market. What we should do is to accumulate the material first and let the conclusions work themselves out.

On a separate page, I am jotting down a few notes to give you my idea of the outline to be followed. As you can see from it, there must be a one-chapter summary of Marxian economics as he stated it, only in a very popular fashion. Suppose you take this: a fast, condensed version of Vol. I of *Kapital*.

Next, the trends of capitalism since Marx wrote his economics. This will bring in Russia, England (German and Italian state capitalism also) and the U.S. I can take Germany and Italy, because I already have some material on it. You take Russia since you have the material in Boston, and we will halve the British question, if you like. I can take the international phase, you the national, the domestic economy.

The U.S. will be the major point, as I agree that socialism is not highly probable throughout the world, until American capitalism is brought to its knees. Here again we can make the same division as on the British question: I have the international research well in hand; that leaves the domestic scene to you. Here again we can make more divisions of labor, if you wish.

It seems then that we should examine the different "liberal" schools of economics, such as the Keyserlings, etc. They raise questions about the possibility of planning under capitalism, etc. We should state and answer same.

Then come the conclusions about the necessity of socialism.

Oh yes, you have a point about the effects of state capitalism on the heads of the workers. Good. This deserves a separate chapter, perhaps right after the economic presentation.

I still think that the best procedure, and one I follow in my research, is to go on accumulating the facts, and then let the headings and divisions fall out in the process.

Let me know what you think of my divisions of labor, as marked on the separate page.

Comradely,

I. B. CANTER

OUTLINE

I.

Introduction:

- Altho Engels pointed out the development toward state capitalism, since his time many complex forms have arisen, which means
 7 ^1) They must be investigated and stated
 . {2) Restatement of Marxian economical answer to critics that
 (Marx must be "re-examined"(that is, revised]

II. Marx and his times

- (1) Development of capitalist economy at that time
 (2) Summary of Marxian economics

III. Development since Marx and Engels State Capitalism in various forms

- Rab* }
Canter }
 A. Russia
 B. Germany and Italy ("Fascist" forms)
 C. British labor government *1945-1951*
IX. Domestic International (Leads)

American capitalism

Reis — "Key to world situation] transformation to socialism

Rab ^^ Somestic economy

TVA, Agriculture, military expenditures, bonds, etc.

. Position in world economy

Canter ECA, Foreign trade and capital exports, etc.

IV. Schools of economics

- P* Planned capitalist production
 - Purchasing power school
 Transitional, or progressive" labor governments

V. Conclusions

- 7 Necessity of socialism
 Trends of state capitalism.

August 4, 1949

Dear Rab,

.. I am pleased to learn George [Lynch] would like to settle in Detroit, as that would give us the one person necessary for the NAC, as well as supply another teacher of our classes. In this respect, I extend a welcome hand to him if he wants to come and stay on the place until he can get located here. I cannot myself obtain work for him — there is much unemployed in Detroit — altho he could probably get on where I work if he wants to work hard on production. Tree surgeons around here are mainly employed by the city, I believe, although there are some private concerns.

Comradely,

I. B. CANTER

2155 Anderson
Detroit 14, Michigan

Wednesday, November 30, 1949

Dear Rab,

I have finally drawn up a rough draft for the class on economic theories of today, and would like to get your opinion on it, as well as the opinion of others I can reach.

Before going into any explanations, let us see if I have the right approach. The purpose of such a class, as I see it, is to bring Marx up to date, which means going into the present day theories of economics and also the practice of nationalizations, state capitalism. This is the criticism which has been directed at the WSP: that it does not deal enough with present-day theories of economics, but remains wrapped up in the dogma of the law of value. Now I am not interested in answering the critics, but in developing Marxian economics into the present period of history. I agree that to remain steeped in Value, Price and Profit is not to carry forth the essence of Marxism, namely the changing material conditions, and the necessity of constantly examining, probing and proving.

This was the attitude with which I approached the subject at the conference. Incidentally, in drawing up this outline it occurred to me that this is the book that has to be written, *Economics Since Marx*, the one book that is necessary to bring Marxian economics up to date. Dobb, Strachey, Schumpeter and the others try to do this job in a way, but it is only the WSP, with its principles, that can do the job correctly. I am not proposing that we start writing a book, but perhaps in drawing up this class, as a series of articles, we can develop them into a book.

So now let's get to work, first, agreeing on the outline, and then assigning the individuals to do the work.

1 - To begin with, I thought it necessary to state the law of value, both in its evolution from classical economy, and also the full implications of it as a key to understanding capitalism. Dobb does this in his *Political Economy*, but it is not very well done, too obtuse, or perhaps it is I who is responsible.

2 - Then, a criticism of the law of value, especially by such authors as Boehm-Bawerk, von Mises, and the Austrian school, also any of the modern economists who have seen fit to criticize the law of value. Blake

has some good stuff on this, but I think we can improve on it. Boudin also is good.

3 - Now, the economic developments since Marx wrote, nothing in the way of analysis, but just presenting the changes, as indicated in the outline. Lynch has sort of taken this, but nothing definite yet.

4 - This economic development serves as a prelude, in my opinion, to examining the present day school of economics. Perhaps I have not done too good a job on the "three schools." Where do Schumpeter and Sweezy fit in? I have Schumpeter's *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* out of the library, and intend reading it soon.

It may be because of the length of the class — this is getting more like a book, though — that each one of us will have to take more than one subject.

I would like to take the chapter on Keynes myself, but as I say, we will each have to take additional ones.

5 - On the analysis of present trends, I have put theory in with practice under all three countries, Russia, England and U.S.; but it is fairly obvious to me that theory in each could well be a separate item, especially so in the case of Russia, where they have gone into this quite thoroughly, calling wages "social return," etc. Leontiev has some of this, but I know there is much more available from that outfit in New York which translates Russian textbooks.

What do you think of this? Separate theory and practice, combine them in one lecture (a gigantic task), or deal with Russian theory and practice separately, and combine the other two?

6 - Finally, we should end with a re-examination of Marxian economics in the light of the preceding. Is it valid today? Must changes be made? New terminology, etc.

Quite a job, what?

Now, as to what I want from you:

- 1 - Criticism of outline and your suggested changes
- 2 - Place of Schumpeter and Sweezy in present day economic theory
- 3 - What item OR items you are willing to take.
- 4 - Who would you suggest to collaborate on this, keeping in mind the subject matter.

5 - Whether it wouldn't be advisable to write these up as articles or essays, so they can be published (mimeographed or multigraphed) as a textbook: *Economics Since Marx*.

This is our contribution, or rather, our chance to make a contribution to Marxian economics, and we should hammer our heads on it.

Personally, I would rather we were spending time in organizing socialists, but from the experiences I have had, this next period is going to be one of developing Marxian theory in preparation for the activity which will come later.

One other thing. You are familiar with articles that have appeared in the *Western Socialist*. Has there been one on "the meaning of property"? If not, I would like to attempt same, going into the difference between personal and private property as socialists understand it (*Anti-Duhring*), and also the changes in property relationships, especially the present form of state property. Also, has there been an article on "the meaning of state socialism"?

I am handicapped in writing in that I am afraid to duplicate. I know I mentioned the necessity of writing an article on fascism while I was in New York last week, and someone said this has already been done.

I know this is a big order, tackling this class or book or what-have-you on economics, but I think we can do it before the next conference.

As I wrote GG, I will go with Mardon tomorrow and seek a headquarters. We have five for the NAC now, Mike Cooper having passed two weeks ago. Hope we can get the NAC here within the next two weeks, as we are all "raring to go."

Comradely,

I. B. CANTER

[*Outline of Class on Advanced Economics begins on the next page.*]

ECONOMICS SINCE MARX
(Class on Advanced Economics)

Part I: Law of Value, Criticisms

I. Labor theory of Value

- a. Historical development, primitive origins in “social philosophers”
- b. Approach of classical economists
- c. Departure taken by Marx and full implications of theory

II. Criticisms of Law of Value

- a. Boehm-Baewerk, Austrian Schools, and others
- b. Modern economists and their criticisms

III. Economic Developments since Marx

- a. Monopolies, state capitalist forms
- b. Expansion, contraction of imperialism; the new imperialism
- c. Changing economic nature of wars (nationalist-markets-domestic economics)

Part II: Present Day Economic Theories; Three Schools

IV. Orthodox Bourgeois Economists

- a. Schlichter, Hansen, and others

V. Keynes Schools of Economics

- a. General Theory of Employment
- b. Variations among followers

VI. Other schools

- a. Liberal-CIO school of Keyserling
- b. Social Democratic: Sternberg, and others

Part III: Present trends; Economics of State Capitalism

VII. The Soviet Union

- a. Theory of the USSR economists
- b. Practice: accumulation of capital, export of capital, statistics on existence of classes, distribution of wealth, etc.

VIII. Economics of British Nationalization

- a. Theory
- b. Practice: government bonds, administrative boards, "equalization" of incomes, limitations of taxing profits, welfare programs

IX. Trends in American Capitalism

- a. Theory of New Deal, Fair Deal
- b. Welfare state
- c. Planning full employment

Part IV: General Summary

X. Re-examination of Marxian Economics

- a. Law of value valid today?
- b. Changes in theory necessary?
- c. New terminology?

[NB. Some of the articles on economics that Canter speaks of in this correspondence about a book were published in The Western Socialist under the by-line "Karl Frederick. "

See, for example:

WS Vol. 15 No. 146 (March-April) 1949, "Economics Notes in Review: Two Bits Economics," pp. 8—11

WS Vol. 15 No. 147 (May) 1949, "Economics Notes: U.S. Capitalism and World Economy, Part 1 — Foreign Trade," pp. 15—19

WS Vol. 15 No. 148 (June-July) 1949, "Dr. Sternberg on Crises," pp. 8—11 "Economics Notes: U.S. Capitalism and World Economy, Part 2 — Foreign Investments — Export of Capital (Truman's Global Concept)," pp. 18—22

WS Vol. 15 No. 149 (August) 1949, "Economics Notes: U.S. Capitalism and World Economy, Part 3 — Political Aspects," pp. 17-22

Canter also wrote voluminously on economics in the WS throughout the early 1950s. Some of the subjects included a careful analysis of the economic role of unions in capitalist society. — KDR, 2010]

SELECTED LETTERS



The photo above was taken by WSP Comrade Mardon Cooper in the back yard at 62 Woodcliff Road, Newton, MA, Rab's home from 1950 until his death in 1986.

I would like to offer this very brief introduction to these Selected Letters.

Rab once wrote, "I consider my function in the movement to be, first, a teacher; and secondly, a cohesive force, as long as that can be done without emasculating principles." As a matter of fact, that is exactly what he did. In an atmosphere where many lost tempers gave rise to tempests, Rab poured oil on those turbulent waters. He always had the good of the movement as his priority.

Referring to another comrade, Rab once wrote: "He is a fluent writer with a facile pen. I envy his ability to write so clearly and effectively. I sweat blood even writing a letter, not to speak of serious articles, etc. I rewrite several times and then it is not always satisfactory." Indeed, for several of the letters selected for this publication, more than one version exists in the WSP Archive. I have generally transcribed the final version here; but sometimes the choice is not entirely clear.

Throughout his adult life, Rab carried on a voluminous correspondence. When I was about twenty, he started giving me carbon copies of letters he wrote that he thought I might be interested in reading, and I kept them. Later on, he asked me if, some day, I might do something with the letters, and I promised I would. My desire to keep that promise is what originally got me started on this project; but I have not limited its scope to only the ones he gave me. Below is a just small sample of the letters written by Rab which are now in the WSP Archive.

These letters are arranged in chronological order, rather than by correspondent or by subject matter. Some have been excerpted here, and some have been edited. All the original letters are available in the WSP Archive, where anyone may read them. To arrange a visit to the Archive, write to WSP(US) at P.O. Box 440247, Boston, MA 02144.

Although the Archive also includes many letters written *to* Rab (and I have included some of those here), there is only one instance where Rab actually requested such a thing: He copied out a quotation from a letter sent him by Serge Huard (a Canadian comrade) on a scrap of paper, with a note to me: "INCLUDE IN LETTERS." Judging from the shakiness of his handwriting in that note, I think this was probably in 1979 or 1980, close to the end of his time. Here is the Huard quote:

"So I do not have a choice, good or bad results, even no results at all, there is only one way to go as a socialist, even if I must go that way slowly for the moment."

—*Karla Doris Rab*

April 2010

NOVEMBER 6, 1946

[Letter to George Jenkins (SPC)]

My dear Fellow Worker:

It is a pleasure to “take a little time out to explain the WSP attitude to the SLP and why.” Were you to spend a week in headquarters and observe the busy bees devoting their enthusiastic cooperation, voluntarily, to the many details connected with the carrying on of socialist activities in all its facets, you would realize how precious time is. There is an increasing interest in socialism and this has increased the burden of work. While we get quite a thrill out of this healthy situation, it does not ease the tasks.

But of paramount importance, is discussing the various questions we receive from readers of *The Western Socialist*. The material conditions of production have made the world overripe for socialism. The one factor that is standing in the way of the speedy introduction is the confusion in the minds of the workers. Once the majority of the workers become convinced of socialism, the capitalist class will have no alternative but to submit to the will of the people, whether they like it or not. For that reason, our primary need is to clarify the understanding of the workers.

For convenience, I will number your queries as I reply to them.

(1) What prevents the 2 organizations from getting together? Of course it is, as you say, differences in “programs.” But, the “programs” reflect the differences in theoretical analyses. So the real thing is the differences in theory. You will find that this difference in theory is really a difference in objectives. The difference in the theoretical understanding of the social forces working in capitalism gives rise to a different understanding of socialism, as a system of society. In other words, we do not have the same object.

Let me stress, there cannot be two socialist parties in any one country. If another socialist organization appeared on the scene, then the only possible action that we could take would be to make immediate overtures for a merger. We would offer them the open arms of comradely greetings and unity. The Workers’ Socialist Party and its companion party in Canada, the Socialist Party of Canada, are not organized to do something for the working class. In fact, we are not organized in the interest of and on behalf of the working class. Sounds strange, does it? This is just the foundation of our position — The working class must organize, consciously and politically. Nobody can do anything for them but them-

selves. The working class, as socialists, must organize into a socialist party. The WSP is the party of class-conscious socialists; it is the party of the working class. Its small membership merely reflects the small number of class-conscious socialists. The real test of whether the WSP is the party of the working class is to be found in examining the position of the WSP to discover whether it is the sound, scientific analysis of the laws of motion of capitalism and the correct statement of the workers' needs. So, again, it boils down to the question of its understanding. It is the difference in understanding that prevents the 2 organizations from uniting.

(2) You note — and we are very glad that you made this observation — that the SLP “campaigns for Industrial Unionism.” That is one of the major points in the SLP analysis that not only distinguish it from the WSP but demonstrate the unsound understanding of the nature of capitalist society by the SLP. If the SLP were content merely to state that within the framework of capitalism industrial unionism might be a more effective form of resistance to the encroachments of capital than the craft unions, there would not be any serious quarrels and there would be no justification for 2 organizations on that score, itself. BUT to them industrial unionism is something far more than that. It constitutes a new contribution to Marxism. (Not that Marx is a biblical prophet and that there couldn't be further contributions to Marxian science, since his days.) But, industrial unionism does not constitute any new addition to socialist science. In fact, it is erroneous, when examined scientifically in light of the workings of capitalism.

Let us examine industrial unionism in two aspects: (a) as the road to power and (b) as the germ of the new society. As you know, the SLP maintains that the ballot is as weak as a woman's tears unless it is backed up by the economic might of the workers. This concept presupposes that workers who are clear-thinking socialists politically will not be socialists economically. It is inconceivable that people who are socialists in the political field are not likewise socialists everywhere they may be, whether at work in the shop, going to the movies, or wherever they may be. People are not divided in half, one half of the body socialist and the other half not. Once they are socialists politically, they are by the same token socialists economically. Whoever gains control of the state machinery (and the gaining control of the state machinery is a political act) also, by the very same act, gains control of the economic resources. The capitalist class itself maintains its control and ownership of the economic resources

through their control of the state machinery. The revolutionary act is the political victory of the workers, which puts them in a position of power, with the resulting control of the army, radio, every organ of propaganda, the police, courts, etc. The objective of the socialist movement, i.e., a socialist working class majority, is accomplished, by the conquest of political power. This is the essence of understanding the nature of the state, the central organ of power.

Furthermore, to talk of the economic might of the workers in their industrial unionism is not correct when society itself is examined. On the economic field, the working class is impotent. What do they possess, aside from their muscles and brains? They are propertyless. All that the workers can do on the economic field is to attempt to slow down the worsening of their condition, so far as wages, hours, shop conditions are concerned; but they cannot stop the direction: downward. If they go out on a strike, who starves first, the workers or the owners?

The trouble is not that the workers are not organized into the proper kind of economic organization, but that they are not socialists. Socialists know what to do and will utilize all the tools and weapons that are available. Actually, the essential thing is the realization that in order to introduce socialism, the workers must first gain control of the state machinery in order to transfer the means of living from the hands of the capitalists to the hands of society — after which the state disappears and in its place we have an administration of affairs.

But to make bad matters worse, the SLP, strange as it may seem, do not want socialism and have no concept of socialism as a system of society. They certainly do not have the same object that we have and are not fighting for the same things we are.

Before I deal with their Industrial Republic of Labor, where everyone votes from where he works, let me make a preliminary observation. Whilst we cannot make a blueprint of socialism, we can realize its general process because of our knowledge of the laws of motion of society. It is fundamental and basic to recognize that socialism would be but a fantastic, utopian dream if it were not for the fact that man has solved the problem of production and has become potentially the master over nature. Mankind is not confronted with the problem of how to plan and organize production. If he were, he would not yet be ready for socialism. In other words, the conditions for socialism would not be ripe, if the problem was how to organize the productive forces and processes. This blueprint chart with the wheel of the various industries in socialism is

merely the projection of capitalism into socialism. This SLP wheel demonstrates that they have no concept of even the outlines of a socialist society. Even a superficial view of the world today, under capitalism, already reveals that the world is an integrated, socialized, interrelated unit, economically, and is not divided industrially. Socialism means a classless society (not an industrial union society), where the very social interrelationships are so closely intertwined that production cannot be conceived as functioning industrially.

History has passed the SLP by. The problems of a socialist society are everything but that of production, in spite of all those detailed charts of the clairvoyants. In socialist relationships the arrangements are for leisure, culture, refinements, sanity, each day being an adventure in living, square pegs in square holes, social behavior; in short, the identity of interests of every individual and of society as a whole. How ludicrous to those living in a socialist society will appear the SLP worries about industrial divisions and voting from where you work. The SLP doesn't realize that when plenty and abundance become the order of the day, it completely changes people's behavior and attitudes. But to show how far from having any grasp of socialism the SLP are, and how they are thinking in terms of capitalism, consider their notion that workers, under socialism, get the full product of their toil. In the first place, there ARE NO "workers" under socialism. There is no working-class section of society, but all are equally members of a classless society. No problem of equal share with equal work could possibly exist in socialism; people in a sane society would not be that limited in vision or behavior. Just the reverse, the inspiration of socialism is that, being social animals, people give according to their abilities and receive according to their needs (without any thought of getting their "full" share — a meaningless concept in a sane society).

Further criticisms of the SLP are their position that religion is a private matter and not a social concern, thereby ignoring the scientific, materialistic basis of socialism; their "reverence" for the American founding fathers; and their dogmatic sectarianism, in the sense of ignoring reality and looking at history to prove their ideas instead of making their ideas harmonize with an understanding of historic forces.

Sorry but I must close now. I am forwarding you some *WSs* that have some articles on the SLP. Be sure to let me hear from you again and soon.

Yours for a world fit for human beings,

I. Rab,
National Organizer, Workers' Socialist Party

MAY 30, 1955

[This open Letter to Comrades Evans, Parker, Rowan, Turner and all others interested, re: "A Criticism of the Socialist Movement — A Reexamination" was published in Forum, July 1955, p. 151]

The great thought that has gone into this article is obvious, but it seems to me that you have lost sight of the general panorama of modern capitalism because of your enthusiasm for the incipient socialism you observe taking place. You have become so beguiled by the alluring trees that you don't see the putrefying forest.

Here's how I see these same incipient socialist developments. If you want to see evidence that socialism is practical and possible today, see what modern capitalism is compelled to do in order to function. With all the "socialist" aspects of highly developed capitalism, it has not and cannot do away with the private property aspects of its inherent relationships. The very transformation of capitalist private property forms from owners, intimately and directly associated with products and their production, into the gigantic private property forms of today, which are more or less typified by varying aspects of state capitalism and absentee ownership describes the process satisfactorily enough. Especially note that state ownership as well as cartels, monopolies, huge corporations and other highly socialized appearances of ownership are but factors of a system in which the proceeds of that society (surplus value, in the last instance) belong to the "eaters" of surplus value. What I would emphasize from the observations of incipient socialism that you stress is that here is evidence that men are social beings and can cooperate in their common interest. Even in capitalism, observe how human beings can function. More particularly, we see increasing demonstrations that the highly developed technologies, the tremendous productive processes, the shrunken globe, the present day problems of management and needs of efficient production bring into being the introduction of vast social measures. Most important, we see the conclusive proof, as it were, that the change from capitalism into socialism is a relatively simple matter, rather than requiring intricate, complex involved measures. In fact, haven't we always maintained that if ... [capitalism had not developed the technology for producing potential abundance], the conditions would not be ripe for socialism. The evolutionary changes laying the groundwork for socialism have taken place within capitalism.

IDENTIFICATION "WITH"

There are two key words in your article that illustrate my criticism of your statement. At the close of Section L you say, "...we can make people see that this is the general and significant direction of social change." I could wholeheartedly agree with this view, i.e., the identification of incipient socialist developments taking place today. However, quite a different attitude is presented in the concluding paragraph of your joint statement. There you urge "identifying with society's incipient socialism." If words have meaning, it appears to me that you actually propose, in essence, that we participate in the administration of capitalism. To identify with can only mean, in my book, becoming associated with these measures in an active, direct fashion. What becomes of our socialist responsibility as social scientists to study these developments, draw the significant lessons, and arouse our fellow workers and fellow humans, for that matter, to understand and then act! Look now, by "plugging their socialist-leaning element," aren't we rationalizing and condoning the status quo, and even justifying the glowing apologetics of those who prate on the virtues of capitalism?

Capitalism must, of necessity, introduce these "socialist-leaning" measures for its own functioning, whether for better or for worse. It has become too gigantic to be operated otherwise. There is no need for our active participation, except, of course, as individuals making a livelihood in this society being compelled to sell our commodity, labor power, on the market.

I certainly do not want to do you any injustice. If I misconstrue your meaning of "identify with" please clarify it for me.

SNOWBALL VS. AVALANCHE

You contrast two quotes from Comrade Gilmac and myself as though one were an "avalanche," and the other a "snowball" approach. Gilmac's article in *Forum* had for its theme that there was taking place in the heads of the workers a gradual evolution of ideas which also "involved the cooperation of everybody" for the change of society. He deprecated the gradualism based upon an assumed coexistence, as it were, of a partial socialist and a partial capitalist society; what is sometimes referred to as a mixed economy. The conditions propitious for socialism and making socialism mandatory include the "socialist-leaning" aspects of capitalism. I'm sure that Comrade Gilmac would not oversimplify the transformation of cap-

italism into socialism by saying that on one Friday at 2:15 PM we had capitalism and presto, one minute later at 2:16 PM, socialism was introduced via an avalanche. Comrade Gilmac is fully aware that the seed of socialism is fertilized within the womb of capitalism and after a period of gestation, the new society is born. The essential core of the process is that the *predominant* social relations of capitalism give way to the *predominant* social relations of socialism. As for me, personally, I lean very heavily to the view that it will be a very brief and a very simple matter. Not only are the conditions NOW overripe for socialism, but the only stumbling block I see on the horizon is the lack of a socialist conscious majority. That was the point of my statement that you quoted. Project yourself into the circumstances of a 20% minority and you can easily visualize the behavior of those in control and the concessions they would offer. The momentum and geometric growth from a 20% minority to overwhelming, stirring, enthusiastic, inspired majorities staggers the imagination. To me, this is but a short step. The mechanism or modus operandi of the socialist change presumes the socialist consciousness and socialist majority rather than participation in "socialist-leaning" measures. The only validity I see in the terms "snowball" and "avalanche" are as descriptions of capitalism and socialist transformation. Capitalism is the snowball, and the socialist revolution is the avalanche.

SOCIALIST FERMENT

It is your contention that our task has become that of encouraging and accelerating the incipient socialism process taking place today by identifying ourselves with it. It raises the question: for what object. The answer you give, of course, is to "precipitate" socialism. Aside from the criticism above, this presupposes that the ideas of mankind are not affected by developments themselves. Is it possible you are not aware that man is, also, a thinking animal, affected by his environments? Are you not aware that, imperceptibly and unwittingly, in response to the very incipient socialism you observe, a ferment goes on in the back of everybody's head? It makes what had been taken for granted quite questionable. Formerly held ideas are transformed from being reasonable and rational into the very opposite. This ferment of ideas results in crystallizing socialist viewpoints. In a sense, this is the real strength of socialism. Science, truth, and necessity are all on the side of socialism.

EQUALITY

You “emphasize” efforts at equalitarian, cooperative endeavors as “a contribution to socialism.” Aside from the capitalist limitations (*and what limitations they are*) that you have recognized yourselves in the article, there is another aspect, it appears to me, that you are overlooking. We have no need to train men or encourage men to behave socially. That is the ever-normal behavior of *homo sapiens*, even in property societies. For an outstanding contribution to the soundness and validity of this social phenomenon, I highly recommend a new study that has just now been published (1955), *The Direction of Human Development, Biological and Social Bases*, by M.F. Ashley Montagu, published by Harper and Brothers, New York. It is a valuable, scientific contribution that shows the basic cooperative nature of Man. The book’s documentation, its footnotes, appendices, and comprehensive bibliography make it a must in every socialist library. Montagu is not a socialist, and we would quarrel with some of his points, but he is a scientist in this field. (Incidentally, this work illustrates the point that I was making on the latent strength of socialism and the ferment at work.) I can’t help noting another illustration of the fallacy of your reasoning on this point. The transformation of backward areas into a predominant socialist society doesn’t require vast changes in their social behaviors. The vestiges of early communal existence have never been completely uprooted.

It is an illusion to imagine that we must actively work for the “furtherance of human cooperation.” What we must work for is to help speedily inaugurate favorable environments where human cooperation can really function. I fear that you are confusing the efficient harnessing by highly developed capitalism of man’s innate gregariousness and sociability, with manifestations of growing “equality.”

CONCLUSION

You correctly say that “the Party ... must apply itself to the presentation of socialism as a science and as a way of life.” However, “encouraging the growth of socialist tendencies in attitudes and institutions” by “identifying with” the “incipient socialism” mistakes the function of socialists today. Our task is primarily that of arousing socialist consciousness, on the basis of evidence and unfolding events, that capitalism has outlived its historic usefulness and is now ripe for burial; that socialism is no fan-

ciful utopia, but the crying need of the times; and that we, as socialists, are catalytic agents, acting on our fellow workers and all others to do something about it as speedily as possible.



I hold that greater understanding and a better grasp of the socialist analysis results from the constant thrashing out of issues. A healthy membership is the reward of objectivity. For this reason, I deplore dropping members because of differences or disagreements. In practice, this makes it quite difficult to thrash out issues, because members may fear dire consequences. Also, it would prevent any democratic changes by a majority of the Party, should they be convinced of the validity or need. Especially, I find it unwarranted to base actions against comrades upon articles written in *Forum*, the journal established for the very purpose of inter-party discussions. To those who ask, "Why do you want to be in the Party if you disagree?" the reply is that socialists want to be banded together for socialism. The Party is not a competitive rival with others in a struggle to establish socialism.

I do recognize that there can be justifications for dropping a member when an overt act hostile to the Party is committed, but thinking things through and re-examinations are not "hostile overt acts" in that sense. It is still fresh in my memory how the "dissidents" behaved while I was in England. Their behavior was just the reverse of "hostile." They were selling literature on the streets, speaking on the platform, active in their branch meetings, etc.

Finally, specifically, in this very article that I am criticizing because of my disagreements with it, appears the following comment: it is the hope of the four signers that their statement will "enable the issues involved to be more widely discussed and with as little as possible of animosity or interruption of current Party work ... The changes we suggest in outlook or activity are not put forward as an ultimatum, or as a programme now to be adopted."

OCTOBER 27, 1958

[Rab was an active member of the International Typographical Union from 1949 to 1973. This next letter was written to a fellow member of the ITU.]

Dear Stan:

There is a point of principle upon which I would disagree with you: that labor and management have a community of interests that can be jointly and intelligently settled ... over the bargaining table.

Fundamentally, the interests of management must be to operate profitably. They are not in business for love or for the benefit of the employees (although often, intelligent employers are benevolent because it means harmonious relations and is good business).

Labor, on the other hand, is primarily concerned with wages, hours, and shop conditions. Without their unions, labor would be in a sorry plight, for capital is in the stronger position, economically. Unions are the only weapons workers have. You have had ample experience to realize where labor would be if they had not resisted and fought.

You are badly mistaken if you imagine that anyone can serve both these conflicting interests. Inevitably, you will find yourself facing all kinds of quandaries and headaches, worrying yourself sick — but you will have to serve the interests of the publishers — or resign.

I am writing this because I believe you are honestly mistaken. The mere fact of your refusal to sign a contract with the *Herald-Traveler* without a proviso that, in case of a strike, you will have the option of joining the men and women on the picket line speaks volumes for your good intentions. Unfortunately, you will learn the hard way that you cannot serve two masters.

Your thinking can't help being affected by the very nature of your responsibilities. Already you have stated: "The newspapers have financial problems," and "The day of flag waving has passed." Unwittingly, militant unionism is easily transformed into "flag waving."

After listening to your comments at the last union meeting, I refrained from taking the floor for fear of seeming to imply that you were "selling out." I am positive that you had no such idea in mind. But at the same time, I did want to emphasize to the membership my disagreement with the principle that you stated, which should be voiced. I only wish I knew how to make these remarks without making it seem to be "personal" or an "attack," but merely as a statement of a basic principle of unionism.

I would appreciate it if you would recommend that this letter be published in our local bulletin.

TANUARY 19, 1959

Dear Fellow Worker Weaver:

Please find enclosed \$2.50 to cover an annual sub to *Press* plus a copy of each back issue that may be available.

The readers of *Press* must be quite perplexed as to what *Press* stands for. The Proletarian Party was bad enough in its futile efforts to be Marxist and Bolshevik at the same time. But *Press* goes much further in its attempts to be all things to all men — well symbolized on the cover page of its last issue, which includes such figures as Nkrumah, Nasser, et al. as heroes of the revolutionary socialist movement.

Note well: *Press* decries political parties but sponsors a new Labour Party; it urges the class struggle but supports colonial nationalism; it advocates the ballot but sympathizes with anarcho-syndicalism; it bemoans reformism and urges immediate demands on the political field; it alleges itself uncompromising on principles (shades of dogmatic sectarianism?) but panders to all sorts of bourgeois confusions. The one thing *Press* fails to do is spread socialist understanding. *Press* places its emphasis more on emotions than on science.

Ironically, I'm writing as an emotional guy myself. Even *Press*, with only a surface appearance of revolutionary fervor, having as its only asset, sincerity, at times gives me a tingle down my spine. But, unfortunately, *Press* is divorced from socialist agitation and propaganda in its very essentials: its scientific sense. The socialist movement is not only heart, but is a combination of heart *and* head. It is almost a truism to say that when the workers, as a class, couple their latent revolutionary fervor with socialist understanding, they become an indomitable force sweeping everything before it. "Nothing is more powerful than an idea come of age, it is more powerful than the strongest armies."

One day I'll write a short article for *Press* on the theme that there is now in existence, in Canada (and has been for years) a socialist party dedicated to the proposition that the workers, as a class, must organize consciously and politically to introduce socialism.

By the very nature of the socialist movement, there cannot be two *socialist* parties in one country. If, perchance, there were, steps would be taken to merge. Socialist parties are not rivals in the field, competing to emancipate the working class. A socialist party is the party of the working class;

it can be nothing else. "Unity for socialism" has no meaning unless based on the common realization that its sole object is to introduce socialism. (See the latest issue of *Dissent* for my definition of socialism.)

I realize that impatience and disappointments give rise to such efforts as *Press*. But experience is the best teacher. *Press* is but repeating already-exploded errors and confusions. The acid test of scientific revolutionary socialism, in theory and in practice, is the unfolding of history. There is no royal road to socialism. The crying need of our time is for *class conscious, revolutionary, scientific socialists*. Ideas are the battlefield of today, and capitalism itself is our greatest ally. The workers are not dumb, merely confused. When they wake up, they will act.

TANUARY 24 1959

Dear Fellow Worker Gabriel Kolko,

This letter is in the nature of a special appeal to you.

In the Winter 1959 issue of *Dissent* appears a superb article by you which gives factual evidence of the real economic prospects of today's capitalism. It is very useful research, uncovering data and raw materials for an analysis — But it stops there!

I get the impression that you are hesitant about committing yourself (and I may be doing you an injustice) as to your conclusions. It may be that you are counting on the awareness of the *Dissent* reader to recognize the analysis inferred by your findings. In the context of *Dissent's* generally superficial views on current topics, this is unwarranted.

Unfortunately, the type of research to which your article is limited can be and is being done by able bourgeois economists, objectively seeking facts, as such. Useful, valuable, and important as are these findings, they uncover no answers to basic questions even though they reveal the bases for real answers.

What is particularly distressing is the unfulfilled promise anticipated from the title of your article: "Ferment in the Economy."

The appetite is whetted for coming to grips with:

1. What is it that is being fermented?
2. What is the fermenting agent?
3. What is the end-product of this fermentation?

— and you let us down with silence.

What could be more important — when the very subject is today's economy — than arousing the understanding realization that capitalism cannot be reformed, managed or administered in the interest of society, mankind, or the working class? In a day and age when resistance, rebellion and abolishment of the status quo is the pressing need (i.e., the introduction of socialism as a social system), would you, like so many of the *Dissent* fellows, dismiss this conclusion, sneeringly and with contempt, as dogmatic sectarianism?

FEBRUARY 19, 1959

Dear Eve Smith [*a former member of the Socialist Party of Canada*]

Socialists welcome critical and searching questions. Thinking is not and never has been a violation of socialist discipline. Socialists are not dogmatic sectarians who are blindly and religiously faithful to socialist conclusions despite the lessons of unfolding experience. Should an examination of the real world prove the case for socialism to be invalid, it would be a serious reflection on those who continued to be socialists. That is why socialists are open-minded, in contrast to being broad-minded. They do not tolerate exploded myths and superstitions. Yet they should be patient with individuals groping to find out what the score is. Especially is this true in a day and age when the material conditions of existence are ripe for socialism with the sole exception of maturity of social and political thinking.

The only thing standing in the way of socialism today is the lack of socialists.

The problem today is that of socialist education. Socialism cannot be rammed down the throats of the workers against their wishes. By its very nature, socialism is inherently democratic, i.e., it requires a conscious socialist majority. This cannot be overemphasized for it is the clue to socialist tactics and programs on the basis of historic necessity.

Socialists are leery of the word, "radical." Actually, socialists are not radicals in the common usage of the word. We are, rather, revolutionary. Under the heading of "radical" must be included a hodge-podge of confusions worse confounded with the added burden of being just nebulous, vaporous discontent based on blind misconceptions. Examine some "radical" pronouncements and see for yourself. Don't take my word for it. What a company is included in the term "radical"! Of course, there is no question whatever that there is a need for "some sort of unity of understanding," as you put it; but that is the function of a socialist organization, i.e., a socialist party. It is clear that in the contents of such an organ as *Press*, the only possible result could be greater befuddlement as to what it is all about. *Press* reminds me of the Arthur Morrow Lewis book on "Blind Leaders of the Blind."

There is no question that the same criticism I made of [the word] "radical" might be applied to the word, "socialism." That word also means all things to all people. Hence, my letter to *Dissent*. The problem here

is that of the poverty of language. Historically, socialism — as a science — has become identified with Marxism. In spite of the various “schools” of socialism, it is a generalization of social evolution viewed in a process of motion that ties up the scientific findings of archeology, sociology, economics, etc., into an interrelated whole. Socialism has been called (and with some validity) the queen of the sciences.

Then, there is the problem of “blackout” and unawareness of the existence of the WSP and SPC. I will not quarrel that there are secondary factors that have mitigated against socialist organizational work. Some instances are personalities, smugness, intolerance, disgust and a host of others. But, these are secondary factors that apply to all groups. We are victims of a capitalist environment. If you want to see a cross section of mankind today and what a terrible indictment it makes of our society, examine the socialist movement. Yet, it is remarkable and outstanding that, taken as a whole, there is more genuine humanity, more inspiring behavior, more real people to be found in the socialist movement than anywhere else. The bond that ties us together being what it is: forever putting an end to poverty and insecurity and all the ills that flow from a dog-eat-dog jungle and inaugurating a sane society, fit for human beings to live in, in and of itself, reflects itself on socialists and their behavior, in a marvelous fashion. Not that socialism is to be judged by the behavior of socialists. It is not. *Socialism does not stand or fall on the basis of the behavior of socialists.*

But as to the “narrow, rigid, doctrinaire workings of the WSP” and its sister parties, this is only an appearance. To be uncompromisingly opposed to the nonsense of Genesis as against the soundness of organic evolution is not being doctrinaire or rigid, by any stretch of the imagination. Even at this late date, outwardly it appears as though the prevailing thinking is in support of Genesis and that evolutionary concepts have “failed” to convince the great majority. But, in spite of this superficial observation, actually no one really quarrels with Darwinism anymore, in spite of all the lip service contrary-wise. The testimony of the museums, popular magazine articles, school and college courses, etc., speaks volumes to the effect that Darwinism has become the *established* point of view, even though it is not always the *accepted* point of view. In spite of all the daily and repeated annihilations of Marxism, it is now more widely and firmly established than ever. Every basic explanation of historical processes in the universities is rooted in Marxism; all the analyses

of sociological studies are based on the Marxian approach. The more they scorn and ridicule Marxian materialism, the more does it serve as the rationale of conclusions reached by the scholars. Gordon Childe, the social psychologists, even contemporary novels and plays reflect the imperceptible influence and recognition of the Marxian point of view. With Louis Boudin, we can repeat with more justification than when he said it: Marxism has become the established explanation but has not yet become the accepted explanation. Whenever current thinkers deal with their subject matter scientifically, it is done on a Marxian basis.

Just ask yourself: in the past 50 years, aside from the SPGB et al., what work has been done by way of propaganda and agitation for socialism? Answer: practically nothing! Not by the German Social-Democrats. Not by the Scandinavian Socialists. Not by the CCF, the SPA, etc. Not by the CPers or their splinters. These are the very ones who moan that socialist propaganda has failed — but they never tried it! They have been so immersed in “fresh” thinking (not that there is anything but praise for fresh thinking), that they have had no time for *sound* thinking. If only all these energies that have been devoted to immediate demands, especially to get into a position to administer capitalism through election victories, had been devoted to socialist agitation — just imagine the progress of the movement. The workers never hear the socialist message.

You bet there are plenty ways of improving our propaganda. The socialist movement desperately needs fresh blood and fresh ideas for spreading knowledge. Once it has been established that the principles are sound and valid, then the drive becomes — in your accurate words: “how to promote them?” That is where our thinking and discussion should be concentrated. Junking truth and understanding in favor of erroneous and wasteful activities that only divert workers from coming to grips with their situations is not only useless, but inexcusable. If we are sound, we must muster our strength.

Here is the challenge that all critics of the companion parties must answer: What is so new and different in the circumstances of 1959 that it requires a different objective than the abolition of capitalism and the establishment of socialism? What is the new short cut that can bypass the necessity for convincing the great majority of the necessity for socialism? What other steps can be taken today that will alter the workings of present-day society to something other than exploitation and a continuation of the present class relationships?

Finally, you ask in regards to my *Dissent* piece: “Was capitalism ever administered in the interest of society or the working class?” Yes, most certainly it was, in the historical sense. Although capitalism has now outlived its historic usefulness, social evolution could not have skipped capitalism. We owe a debt of gratitude, figuratively speaking, to capitalism. It transformed the handicraft tool to the gigantic socialized machine; it shrank the world into a closely-knit economic unit; it revolutionized transportation and communication; it spread literacy from 5% to 90% of the population; in a word, it laid the groundwork for socialism. As *The Communist Manifesto* emphasized, the best interests of the workers in 1848 was the victory of the bourgeoisie and the growth of capitalism. (It is really ironic to hear the *Manifesto* quoted today, out of context, in defense of compromise with the bourgeoisie and reforms.) In another sense, let us not forget that capitalism is our greatest ally in making socialists because of its very workings.

MAY 23, 1959

[Ben and Fanny Cosor were both active members of the New York Socialist Education Society in the 1920s, and were among the first comrades to join the New York Local of the WSP.]

My very dear Comrades Ben and Fanny Cosor:

This personal letter is an appeal to your deep-rooted socialist conscience. It is addressed to two comrades who know the real score but who have become caught in a web of circumstances.

The entire socialist movement, on the surface, is at a low ebb. There is a stultifying apathy pervading not only the socialist movement but even the labor movement as well as popular and accepted causes. This is a reflection of the times in which we live.

However, imperceptible forces are at work undermining this apathy. This can be seen in some popular fiction and movies. They portray an undercurrent of stirring and awakening. Movies like *He Who Must Die* and *Roots of Heaven* are symbolic, even though they are not socialist in content. It is very significant that when socialism is explained to almost anyone in a scientific, objective manner and without mentioning the word: socialism, it invariably meets with agreement and acquiescence. Just try it and see. The power of words as instruments of propaganda could not be better illustrated. In *Socialism, Utopian and Scientific*, Engels makes the point that when concepts that had been taken for granted as being reasonable become obviously unreasonable nonsense, you are on the verge of a social change. Nothing is more powerful than an idea come of age, it is more powerful than the strongest armies, sweeping everything before it. Furthermore, ideas may crystallize overnight after a slow process of accumulating changing concepts.

By the very nature of their understanding of social forces, socialists are optimists. They see the panorama of interrelationships. They may and do err with respect to dates, etc., but they are not wrong about the process of social evolution into revolutionary changes. History, science, and above all else necessity is on the side of socialism. It can no longer be denied that society, today, is faced with the alternative: chaos — extinction — vs. survival. Confronted with such an alternative, socialist ideology comes of age.

It is easy to get discouraged. But what else is meaningful or useful? Granting the validity and necessity of socialism, we have no alternative save doing socialist work, especially in light of the fact that the primary need today is socialist understanding and a socialist majority.

TULY 12, 1959

[A Letter to the Editor of the magazine Dissent]

Writing “as a socialist,” Joseph Buttinger analyzes the limitations of *The Ugly American* in the Summer 1959 issue of *Dissent*. After reading the article, the following questions come to mind:

1. What is the “merit in criticizing the people and methods *our* government employs in order to implement our foreign policy,” and what is “the need that exists for a book to castigate the shortcomings, sins of omission and blunders that in the eyes of Asia *falsify* America’s real political will,” which is described as a “foreign policy [that aims] at a world of freedom, justice and economic progress for all”? (my emphases.)

Who is this “our”? Can it be denied that the U.S. Government is the government of the American capitalist class? Does it represent the economic or political interests of the working class?

Aren’t the basic issues involved in American foreign policies rooted in the economic rivalries between competing national sovereignties (rival bandits) for spheres of influence, markets and economic advantages?

Aren’t the shibboleths of “freedom, justice and economic progress” but propaganda slogans to rally workers (the vast portion of the population) to fight a war alien to their interests? Who is falsifying “America’s real political will,” its real aims?

2. On what grounds does Mr. Buttinger contend that “on the skill with which we use . . . the weapon of foreign aid in the pursuit of political aims in the international arena” hinges the question of “survival or annihilation”?

How can “the weapon of foreign aid” lead to anything else except war? Aren’t such policies but phases — and phrases — of the cold war which, itself, arises from the workings of the market economy (i.e., the commodity society)? Inexorably, international conflicts of interest result in war when they reach the explosive stage. Such “weapons” may be consummated in annihilation by one or the other of the imperialist camps.

Are you deceiving yourself that the alternatives of survival or annihilation have any meaning in terms of “Communist” Russia and the “Free World”? The alternatives confronting mankind today are: socialism (survival) or capitalism (annihilation).

3. Mr. Buttinger is correct in condemning Lederer and Burdick for neglect in producing any evidence in support of their contentions. But can he produce any shred of evidence to demonstrate that American foreign policy is a matter of concern to the American socialist movement and worthy of support? Can he show how capitalism — which he does support — can be administered in the interests of society or of the workers?

AUGUST 8, 1959

[A letter to Rab from Frank Marquart. There is more information about Marquart in the Chapter Note for pp. 74—75; much more can be learned about him from An Auto Worker's Journal, and his papers are to be found in the Walter P. Reuther Library of Labor and Urban Affairs at Wayne State University, Michigan; look in the Manuscript and Records Collections for the "Frank Marquart Papers."]

Dear Rab:

This is going to be a difficult letter to write because I want to inquire about something and I am not sure that I can convey exactly what it is that I want.

So let me attempt to give you the general idea; if I don't succeed you can write and let me know; if I do succeed, maybe you can give me a clue as to where I can find what I want.

Where can I get hold of an article or a pamphlet or a book or even a chapter in a book which goes somewhat into detail on human relations at the point of production?

I would like to make a study of unionism in this context. Many books have been written about collective bargaining, which, as you well know, deals with hours, wages and working conditions.

But such books are superficial because they accept the social relations at the point of production as given. They do not analyze these social relations in order to show the limitations of collective bargaining within the framework of those relationships.

Workers are divorced from the means of production. Unions function to offer workers some protection within the limits of this divorcement. Therefore unions do not and cannot give workers an opportunity to have a real say in the vital processes of our society; unions, like the workers who compose them, are cut off from the roots of social processes.

I hope this will give you a clue as to what I am looking for. If I say any more I'm afraid I will only search for words which will say the same thing in a different way.

Surely someone must have written on this theme before, some socialist, maybe in the *Standard* or some other paper. Maybe Mattick has, or knows of someone who has.

Much is being written about unions these days, but not from the standpoint I mention here. You read about new dimensions in collective bargaining, about the role of government in collective bargaining, about racketeering, about labor's political action program — but you don't read about the real meaning of exploitative work relationships at the point of production — or relationships on the job.

Any helpful ideas will be appreciated.

Please give my best wishes to your family (particularly your wife and daughter, the sensible members of your family) and to the book merchant Gloss.

As ever,

Frank

AUGUST 25, 1959

My dear Frank:

.Speaking for myself, it seems to me that there are sections in William Morris' *Factory Work, As It Is And As It Might Be* that are relevant. Also, I can recall references by Kropotkin dealing with the attitudes of workers among themselves, and making a comparison with the behavior of capitalists among themselves.

Another thing: I anticipate a pitfall in dealing with "human relations at the point of production." After all, "point of production" is not synonymous with "*mode* of production." The point of production is not a social relationship of production but a basic facet of this social relationship. The pitfall lies in "economic determinism" answers, i.e., equating behaviors with the means of production. Social relations among humans are not limited to the point of production, even though the only source of surplus value production is to be found at the point of production.

That said, however, many evidences of solidarity and militancy can be observed in times of stress, in wildcat strikes, etc., at the point of production.

The real key to "human relations at the point of production" lies in the examination of the class struggle.

NOVEMBER 7, 1959

[This next letter was written to my then fiancé, who was in England (as described in Chapter Five above).]

My very dear George:

I'm the world's champ in procrastination in writing letters. It takes an urgent matter (to me, at least) to get me to the typewriter. Not that I'm not genuinely concerned about the personal interests and problems of comrades and close associates but, somehow, it is difficult for me to thaw out on such matters unless someone takes me to one side as a confidant or as a "father confessor." I suppose that's one reason that for me to be a conversationalist or correspondent is a difficult proposition when it comes to small talk.

Another factor is that I'm the ex-champ hen-scratcher of hieroglyphics. Until your letters started coming, I had undisputed right to the title. I acknowledge my defeat to a better man. Because of my atrocious handwriting, I resort to a typewriter. Even on this score I'm both a poor and a slow typist. (Incidentally, I suggest you get a cheap portable typewriter for the benefit of those having to read your manuscripts.)

So, I'm the last person in the #62 domicile you should expect a letter from — this speaks volumes for my very special regard for you.

I'm particularly interested in dealing with your comment on "inflexibility" in socialist parties of the stamp of the WSP. I am well aware that there is an element of truth in your impressions. There are occasions when the attitudes expressed surely give such an appearance.

If I didn't feel that you were sympathetic to the socialist case, I'd not bother writing these comments.

There is a distinction between "inflexibility" meaning rigid conclusions retained despite the weight of evidence, which is dogmatic sectarianism, and "inflexibility" meaning holding to and fighting for conclusions based on the corroborations of evidence.

Another way of saying the same thing is to realize that open-mindedness and broad-mindedness are not synonymous terms, though both have the connotation of "flexibility." You will admit, I trust, that broad-mindedness is far from being a virtue. The earmark of broad-mindedness is tolerance for all sorts of superstitions, quackery and nonsense. (This has nothing to do with the democratic right to express views, which is basic and for which we always fight.) Your liberal intellectual is a good example

of broad-mindedness. He has the serious limitation of lacking convictions, merely straddling all sides of all questions. Especially in today's world of confusion worse confounded by the prevailing political ignorance, we find the broad-minded acceptance of untenable apologetics for poverty, war, patriotism and a welter of notions in support of the status quo. Many "profound" thinkers on radio and TV panel discussions stubbornly ignore the lessons of experience. (In a sense, they are the real "inflexibles" in the name of "flexibility.")

On the other hand, in the context of these remarks, there is hardly a virtue greater than open-mindedness. The open-minded person does *not* close his mind to evidence. If unfolding developments prove his conclusions untenable, he has the courage to discard those conclusions. He is not loyal or religious concerning his views, come hell or high water. This applies as well to socialism. If the socialist case proves to be all wet, it would be a serious reflection on us to cling to it. On that score, suffice it to say that science, truth, and social necessity [are] on the side of socialism.

Enclosed you will find a copy of an article I wrote for *Forum*, the discussion journal for SPGB members to thrash out moot matters. This very journal itself is evidence that socialist parties are not inflexible. Note well the title of my article: "Is There Room for Differences of Opinion in a Socialist Party?"

I was a little too long-winded on the subject of inflexibility.

I enjoy reading your comments on shows, entertainments and reading. It is a pleasure to see you taking advantage of a full life culturally. This way your experiences become really meaningful. When you return to the environs of Boston, I'm looking forward to discussing your experiences with you — personal, literary, experiences and observations.

I'm especially happy that you were able to spend some time with such as Gilmac, Hardy, D'Arcy and Kersley. There are others also.

I'll be able to swap impressions with you regarding London and England. Should you get to Glasgow or Burnley before you return, give McPhail and Holt my best.

Unfortunately, I do not have your letter in front of me, so I'll reserve any other comments for another day.

By the way, the newspapers in Boston are on strike. This includes yours truly. One thing stands out: when the chips are down, the only weapon the workers have is the strike, and when they are determined, no alleged "leader" can sidetrack them.

NOVEMBER 27, 1959

Dear Fellow Worker Frank Marquart:

As per your request, I'm enclosing the November 1959 *Socialist Standard* with its comments on the British elections. (The new format and policies may induce you to renew your expired subscription.) The recent British Labor Party campaign, coupled with the recent pronouncements of the German Social-Democrats and the Australian Labor Party renouncing Marxism and the class struggle, which received such worldwide publicity, should make it abundantly clear how bankrupt of socialist objectives these alleged "socialists" are. The popular fad of the day is that recent developments within capitalism have repudiated the socialist analysis. Both "Left" and "Right" maintain that Marxism has been proven wrong, and that modern capitalism merely requires wise statesmanship freed from the "obsolete theories" of Marx. Capitalism, they insist, *can* function in the interests of progress and mankind. For the sake of the record, this is nothing new for the Social-Democrats and Laborites. They never did give more than lip service to the Marxian analysis. Actually, the experiences of these so-called socialists are in no sense demonstrations of the "failure" of the Marxian point of view.

Similar views come with far better grace from avowed defenders of capitalism, such as Adolf Berle. Too often Marxism is identified with Russian state capitalism, which only beclouds the issue.

The only genuine concern of either the Laborites or their comrades, the admittedly bourgeois supporters of the *status quo*, is to do "a better job" of administering capitalism.

The utter fallacy of this, based on evidence from the real world, is exposed by listing a few prevailing characteristics of the present scene:

- The inexorable "moral decay" (to use their phrase) that flows from the commodity dog-eat-dog jungle.
- The exploitation of the workers through the extraction of surplus value out of the sweat and hide, the brain and brawn of the workers — the big, all-pervading robbery that is so completely ignored and which puts to shame the petty crooks so much in the news.
- The worship of "success" with the widespread acceptance of cheating and lying. The Congressional investigations reveal that

the real crime is: getting caught. What a shining illustration of the truth of the old cliché: the one word that typifies capitalism is “hypocrisy”!

- Juvenile delinquency.
- Ever-increasing mental breakdowns, largely tied up with increasing fears and insecurities.
- Lack of meaningful leisure, especially with material security.
- Inability to harness the marvelous potential in the tremendous strides of technology.
- The economy is geared to defense spending on a fabulous scale. The Big Powers fear the economic consequences of peace.

These will suffice.

All this serves as a background for my comments on your article in *Dissent*.

I liked it very much. It was meaty and contained a great deal of important information. My criticisms are not concerned with what you said, but with what you did not say. It is no defense, in my book, to say that the subject is so broad that you could not cover the whole field. Your topic was: “New Problems for the Unions.” All you did was to present the facts that constituted the raw materials for making some conclusions. You were content to list the problems. Such an article as you wrote could have appeared in *Fortune Magazine*, or in some economic or sociological journal. In such a magazine as *Dissent* claims to be, it was expected you would go further.

Of course, it is fine that you pointed out the limitations of unions being confined to a “job-oriented framework”; the use of rhetoric relating union goals to “national interests”; conflicts between membership and “bureaucracy” and the anti-working class interests of many union procedures. Much of all this is well known, and admitted with remorse and regret by the very unionists caught in the trap of functioning as a “stabilizing force.”

We have an overproduction of such “analytical” articles. What is needed is articles coming to grips with “So, what about it?” The nearest you come is: “... by a labor movement I mean an association of trade unions — more important, of trade unionists — who.. .feel that in some sense

they are committed to a vision of ... a more selfless and devoted life than can usually be provided by our commercial society.”

Not one word do you say about unions as the economic phase of the class struggle; the inherent strength of unions when banded in solidarity for common interests; the need for political action for social change, or any similar observations that constitute meaningful problems for present-day unions.

I cannot resist the temptation to note that your article does indicate your earlier exposure to socialist influences. You went a little further than the other contributors to the issue in stating that the “new problems” should be met with “purpose with strength, spirit with the flesh.” As in the quote above on the vision of life, you become lyrical when dealing with things that are really close to your heart. You are not really happy in the company you are keeping. The pessimistic and gloomy tone of your conclusions is readily understandable to me. Here is *Dissent*, a journal whose concerns include advising the U.S. Government on better ways of conducting their foreign policies, and a primary interest in smoother operation of capitalism that they describe as “the socialist approach.” *Dissent* policy is far more concerned with the evils of Russian dictatorship than with the evil of poverty amidst potential abundance. Because they think only of practical measures within the framework of capitalism, socialism appears a long way in the distant future.

The advantage of a socialist is that he has the knowledge and understanding to think *outside* the framework of capitalism. That is why a socialist can be an optimist on the basis of historic necessity, truth and science. The answer to that question: “So, what about it?” is WHAT IS NEEDED ARE SOCIALISTS. Hindsight is always brilliant but it is far more difficult to understand the times you live in. It is later than you think.

I also enjoyed Widick’s article on “The UAW: Limitations of Unionism.” There is no teacher like experience. They learn from their mistakes, especially when they make their own mistakes. Workers, under pressure of circumstances, do act. The descriptions of the day-to-day experiences and behaviors of workers in the Detroit auto factories hint at what workers will do when they wake up to the facts of life. Of one thing you can be sure, when workers find out the real score, they will act intelligently in their own interests. Woe betide the “friends” and “advisors” of workers who finally understand the social forces at work in society. (Note well, the silence on this phase of the subject in any of the *Dissent* articles.)

Finally, please find enclosed a copy of the latest *Boston Typographical Bulletin*. It contains my advice to my fellow members to read this issue of *Dissent* devoted to Workers and Their Unions. The information is important for unionists to read, even if it doesn't go far enough. I have had several items in the *Bulletin*, such as: "Is Labor the Cause of Inflation?"; "Wages and Prices; Who Are the Featherbedders?" and reprints from *The Western Socialist*. So, you can see I'm not commenting from any ivory tower or in an academic sense. Let me tell you, the really serious limitation — far more serious than the limitations of unions, themselves, as adjuncts of capital — is the behavior of those alleging to have socialist views inside unions.

[Marquarts' response, on a card postmarked Dec. 1, 1959:]

Dear Rab — Just a word to thank you for the best thought-provoking letter I've received from you since my convalescent days in Rochester. Actually your letter provides an outline for a sound talk on socialism, and thanks for the plug in your union bulletin. Mighty glad to get the Darwin issue of SS. Yes, when I return to Detroit at end of Jan. I will subscribe again. How come Gilmac did not talk in Detroit? Why didn't the deadheads arrange a meeting?

DECEMBER 15, 1959

My very George (Gerell),

Some time ago I mailed you some copies of the *WS* having articles on Canada. Not being sure if you had something specific in mind, I sent a few issues. Not only that, but I pulled a fast one by taking advantage of your good nature to send you complete issues, instead of just clipping out the specific articles. I'm trusting that you might find other articles that might prove interesting, if not inspirational to you. (Sneaky of me, eh?) To hell with the expenses of extra postage, says I.

I got a real thrill out of the fact that our first letters to each other crossed in the mails. This shows where our thoughts were, independent of each other. By the way, that includes Ella; and I want to tell you about Ella — she has some wonderful qualities. I say that not because I'm prejudiced, but on the basis of some 43 years attachment. First of all, she underestimates herself and is the acme of modesty. She is free of any sham of any kind. When necessary, she can be brutally frank, yet very considerate for the feelings of others. She has a remarkable way of sizing up people. (Personally, I'm very naïve and I tend to judge people at face value. I've often been disappointed but, in the long run, I'd rather not be too quick to misjudge or condemn.) She has been a significant influence on her children, in exposing them to socialist concepts and viewpoints. Note the distinction between "exposure" and "duress." She is a wonderful mother and grandmother.

One recent development gave me a real pleasure. In past years, there used to be boys clubs, science clubs, and party activities that exposed a generation of young people to a socialist outlook. Now that generation have become parents themselves. They realized that they were not helping their own youngsters to formulate healthy viewpoints about the world they live in; and they were becoming nervous and conscious-stricken about those youngsters being exposed to patriotic, religious and similar environmental forces (which cannot be avoided). So, on their own, they organized a science club for their youngsters that meets every Sunday. They have had field trips to study nature; sometimes they visit museums; they get movies, do scientific experiments, hear talks by the members or by the parents, etc.

I'm enclosing a copy of a letter I wrote to Frank Marquart of Detroit. He is a contributing editor of *Dissent*. I don't know if you are acquainted with

Dissent or not. It is similar in some respects to *Universities* and *Left Review* of London. It is an intellectual journal written by and for intellectuals and the academic world of the universities. It claims to be rooted in socialist approach. It is a quarterly, and its last issue was devoted to "Workers and the Unions." It had several interesting articles by about a dozen writers on that topic. Marquart wrote me to send him any comments I might have had on his article, which accounts for the enclosed. A word about Marquart. He was confined to a consumptive hospital [*i.e.*, a *TB sanitarium*] in Rochester, N.Y. for some time, many years ago. Out of a clear sky, I received a letter from him telling me that he was in my everlasting debt for having introduced him to socialism and making a socialist out of him. I couldn't even recall him. He mentioned how he met me on a park bench in Grand Circus Park in Detroit and we struck up a conversation which changed his whole life. (One thing I'm proud of is the number of seeds I've sown that have taken root all unbeknown to me. You have no idea how many times I've been approached by strangers thanking me for arousing their better concept of society and the world we live in. Over the years I've contaminated plenty.) At all events, he asked a series of questions and asked me to correspond with him. I first met him over 40 years ago and he contacted me about 25 years ago. Marquart can write, he has an excellent style. He has been educational director for the United Auto Workers Union and an editor for union papers. He has been in and out of both the WSP and the SPA at least twice. In 1947, he represented the WSP in its debate with Scott Nearing on Russia. He was superb. His one handicap is that he lacks both a formal academic background and a trade of any kind, which means his choices of work commensurate with his abilities are limited, especially since he has no "business acumen." So he finds himself in the awkward position of having to compromise with his better knowledge on the jobs he has had as educational director and editor. At times, he has really shown amazing courage when the chips were down. (He is troubled with a conscience.) But the pressure of events and the nature of his associations have told on him. He floundered on questions of reforms and so-called "sectarianism" and "dogmatism" of the companion parties. He is never sure of himself (which is OK as far as it goes) but he seems always swayed by the last book he has read. He usually writes me for analyses on current items, such as Keynes, for example, or for material for articles he is writing. As an illustration, after receiving the criticism of his *Dissent* article, he just wrote me: "Just a word to thank

you for the best thought-provoking letter I've received ... Actually, your letter provides an outline for a sound talk on socialism." Yet, the letter I wrote him did not contain anything basically new, only a restatement of the very points he has rejected for some time.

.I believe you may find that this letter to Marquart has a strong bearing on the primary purpose of this letter: what constitutes the nature of a socialist party.

The nature — the very heart and core — of a socialist party is that it is NOT *for* the workers .The party is not going to emancipate the workers or do anything for them. *There is no dichotomy or separation of the workers and the party.* Whilst Abe Lincoln was on flimsy ground when he spoke of "government of the people, by the people, and for the people," because all governments are rooted in antagonisms of interests, it would be quite valid to say that the socialist party is the party of the workers, by the workers, and for the workers. (Note well that I spelled "socialist party" with lower case letparties that may call themselves "Socialist.") The real socialist party cannot be apart and distinct from the working class; it has to be comprised of the whole human community. That is the general nature of any socialist party. Without in any sense implying that quoting *The Communist Manifesto* is, of itself, proof of anything, nevertheless, the *Manifesto* phrases this matter very well: Section II starts off that (the party) "always and everywhere represent the interests of the movement as a whole" and ends with "the first step in the revolution by the working class is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class, to win the battle of democracy."

In other words, the work of emancipation, the transformation of capitalism into a socialist society, the transfer of the means of living from the hands of the parasites into the hands of society as a whole, is the conscious, majority, and political action of the working class — the socialist party. The state does exist; it is the central organ of power. Title and deed to its ownership rests in the political control by the ruling class. The state is the instrumentality of class control. When the workers finally wake up, they will use their party to change the "*civitas*" of propertied society into the "*societas*" of communal society. Today, working-class understanding is at a very low ebb, therefore the membership in the party is puny. It is fantastic to think of a rivalry between socialist parties competing to emancipate the workers. Should another genuine socialist party appear

on the scene, immediate steps would be taken to merge. Herein lies the emphasis of my letter to Marquart on the distinction between “socialist” in quotes and SOCIALIST in its scientific, revolutionary context. In fact, the thing that distinguishes the companion parties from all other alleged “socialist” parties is that *we stand alone on being organized exclusively for the abolition of capitalism by the workers.*

(In passing, let me mention that not all socialists are members of the companion parties. There are many, many socialists who are not attached to any socialist party. But this has no bearing on the historic nature of the socialist party. There are innumerable factors to account for individual socialists not being members of a socialist organization, but to focus on this out of its context is only to confuse and confound the understanding of the nature of a socialist party.)

You are very correct that there have been ups and downs in membership, in enthusiasm, and in organizational work. Many of these situations can be traced to personality clashes, personal problems, disappointments leading to discouragement, and the fact that we are all human beings with human failings and limitations. Possibly the biggest factor is that we are few in numbers and turn in on ourselves, instead of outwards in much-needed organizational and propaganda activity ... Situations do arise because of emotional stresses and strains. Differences have assumed paramount importance.

As you must know from reading my article on “Is There Room for Differences of Opinion in a Socialist Party?” I certainly do not condone heresy hunting. But I stand far from alone. The New York comrades, after reading my article, pointed out the tyranny of words as tools. No one in the companion parties really disagrees with the sentiments I expressed. You should remember that the companion parties are democratically controlled by the membership. They are genuinely democratically constituted parties on the basis of their principles. The objectives of socialism itself are reflected in the very nature of our organizational procedures, in much the same way as the other “socialist” parties’ organizational procedures reflect their concepts of leadership, dictatorship, etc. This is the salient item to bear in mind: there is a justifiable fear of emasculating scientific, socialist principles, based upon the evidences of the real world. Were the doors opened wide to mere sympathizers and well wishers, or those with non-socialist or even anti-socialist concepts, *we*

would soon cease being a socialist party. Above all else, it is mandatory that a socialist party be made up of socialists. The criterion of what constitutes a socialist is very simple. One does not have to be a Marxian scholar to be a socialist. Recall my definition in the article I sent you on what constitutes being a socialist. (It might be well to reread it right now.)*

So much for this, for the present, at least.

The interesting thing is how small the memberships of the other so-called revolutionary parties are. It makes shambles of the misconception that the WSP is small because of our procedures. The Socialist Party of America, the CFF in Canada, the Trotskyites, the Commies, the SLP the Laborites, and so on, all have serious declines in membership. It was not due to lack of activities, or intolerance of really unsound, untenable ideas, or any of the favorite criticisms of the WSP; it was not for being “dogmatic and sectarian” that they lost members and influence. This is a historic and social phenomenon. Mainly, I would ascribe it to a public apathy that arises when high hopes raised by social reform programs only lead to disillusionment. The “socialist programs” advocated by the “socialists” of the Left were incapable of solving the problems confronting society, because they never even came to grips with the root causes of those problems. (To do so would require a real socialist analysis.) The appeal of the “socialist programs” was easily adopted by the Tories and Conservatives. All the “socialist” organizations bemoaning that the capitalists were stealing their programs only accentuates disgust and apathy with politics and politicians. It has become obvious that such programs are bankrupt of any accomplishments except winning a chance to administer the *status quo*.

On the other hand, the workers *never* (or hardly ever) hear the socialist case. Funny, on those rare occasions whenever they do, it often makes sense to them. A ferment is at work. What used to be nonsense is beginning to make sense. Socialist ideas are rising into view — not so much because of socialist propaganda but because of the lessons of experience. It is notorious indeed that more and more books, more and more articles

* “[A] socialist is one who recognizes and realizes that capitalism can no longer be reformed or administered in the interest of society or of the working class; that capitalism is incapable of eliminating poverty, war, crises, etc.; and that the times call for arousing the majority to become socialists to inaugurate socialism, now possible and necessary.” — I. Rab

appear constantly to refute Marxism (and I don't mean the Russian distortion). We even find the so-called "socialists," ever looking for sheer votes, joining their bourgeois comrades in opposition to Marxism.

You see the angry young men. These are healthy signs of groping, even though it is groping in the dark. You see growing signs of refusing to be conformists, of resentment and resistance. I'm not going to belabor the obvious awareness on the part of many, if not most, that something is rotten in society. But you don't see them joining up with the socialist movement.

.Our strength is the necessity of socialism; our weakness is our own limitations. I, for one, am well aware that if we did a hell of a lot more work, we would see a great deal more encouraging results. But, this much is sure: Experience is the great teacher. Marx put it beautifully: 20 years go by and you seem to make but the progress of a single day, then comes a day in which are crystallized the experiences of 20 years.

That is where you come in! That is where the youth come in! The only really useful thing that makes life worth living is to spend it in convincing your fellow youth that it is about time to put an end to poverty and insecurity in a world of potential abundance. Life fit for human beings is possible HERE and NOW. The most inspiring task in all history lies on your young shoulders. It is, at long last, possible to put an end to the evils of modern society because man has become the master over nature, potentially, if he would only free himself from the shackles of the commodity society — the dog-eat-dog jungle.

I close this portion of the letter with two quotes:

The first one is from Victor Hugo: "There is one thing stronger than all the armies in the world, and that is an idea whose time has come."

This dedication is in a new book of poems: *Of Dust and Stars*, by Vernon Ward, Exposition Press, N.Y., 127 pp., \$3.00 (An anarchist)

"I shall not enslave myself
I must be free
To see with unprejudiced eyes,
To speak the truth fearlessly.
I must not be deflected from my course,
My life, my living, my idling, my wandering

Are for one purpose:
To know the truth and speak it,
To see beauty and reveal it.”

Please don't expect another letter like this from me in a long time. This is not my forte. The spirit is willing but not the body. However, don't ever hesitate to write on any specific problem or question that might be of concern to you.

With deepest affection,

Rab

PS. Not one word about the contacts you met in London! I envy your associations with the likes of Hardy, Kersley and the rest. You might do well to continue this discussion with them, if the mood strikes you.

FEBRUARY 17, 1960

[This next letter is in response to a question George had asked about the WSP's position on violence.]

My very dear George:

First of all, to answer your question: On Violence and Marx. (You're a wise guy, you know how to get me to write.) Speculations on future events in specific details always impress me as crystal-ball gazing and are actually irrelevant to the validity of scientific socialism. Especially is this true when such speculations are raised to the dignity of a principle ... In applying this attitude to your question, two things become revealed.

1. Of prime importance is to come to grips with social processes that give rise to social changes and revolutions. The general nature of the social transformation of capitalism into socialism is democratic, i.e., conscious, majority, and political. (Only in this context does the expression "inevitability of socialism, barring a catastrophe," make sense.) The specific details of this democratic change will depend on the conditions and circumstances that exist at the time. Though I personally feel it is most unlikely that there will be any need for violence, I cannot dictate to history what to do. Especially do I find it difficult to visualize a violent revolution, just because socialism does require majority consciousness, yet who can foresee the rise of unanticipated and unavoidable circumstances. Socialists will know what to do in special circumstances and what they do and how they do it will be determined by the prevailing conditions. Suffice it to say that socialists do NOT advocate violence; further, a majority does not require violence but the final resort of a minority must be to violence. The WSP advocates the ballot.

2. Antonio was not off the beam when he said, "The devil can cite scripture for his purpose." The same with Marx. I would go a step further and say that to quote Marx as proof and court of last resort would be dogmatic. This is especially obvious in the many Bolshevik emasculations of Marx, many of them taken out of context. The essence of the Marxian analysis is summarized in the paragraph above. A case in point is the *Communist Manifesto*. The last chapter of the *Manifesto* is possibly the most quoted reference for rooting an advocacy of violence in Marx: "The Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their ends can only be attained by the forcible overthrow of

all existing social conditions. Let the ruling classes tremble at a Communist revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Working men of all countries, unite!”

To quote this magniloquent peroration while utterly ignoring of the emphasis in the Manifesto, itself, especially in Section II, is inexcusable. The classic message of the Manifesto is: “All previous historical movements were movements of minorities. The proletarian movement is the self-conscious, independent movement of the immense majority,” and “We have seen above that the first step in the revolution by the working class is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class, to win the battle of democracy.” Ironically, the very quote cited by the advocates of violence (who are also advocates of minority action and vanguards) is not of much comfort to them, really. Consider the force (not a synonym for violence) of numbers, the force of necessity, and above all, social forces in the essence of Marxism.

Whether resort be had to violence lies in the lap of history, but I’m optimistic enough to have faith that mankind (including many capitalists) are becoming aware of the necessity — the urgent necessity — for socialism, and that the inspirations of socialism spread like wildfire when the inadequacies of wars, poverty, national sovereignties and the capitalist jungle become all too obvious.

Would that I had the pen and power of a poet!

I note that you are soon to visit Holland. Do me and yourself a favor. Contact the North Holland Publishing Company in Amsterdam. They are a well-known firm and you won’t have any difficulty locating them. They are the publishers of Pannekoek’s *Anthropogenesis*. Will you please ask them for Anton Pannekoek’s home address and visit him, if at all possible. I’m not sure if he’s still living. He must be over 90, now. He is one of the greatest scholars you’ll ever meet. In fact, when Harvard celebrated its Tercentenary, they honored the 39 greatest scholars with special honorary degrees. Pannekoek was one of them for his work on astrophysics at the University of Leyden (I believe). He wrote *Marxism and Darwinism*, which is one of the socialist classics. He does not agree with us on the question of the ballot. He thinks the industrial workers will organize Workers’ Councils and take and hold industry and introduce socialism. But on Marxian economics, reforms, and especially the question of leadership, he is crystal clear. When he was in Boston to get

his Harvard degree, he preferred the WSP environments to his Harvard intellectuals. He gave us the most inspiring talk on Russia I've ever heard. It was impossible to get in the hall; people were in the hall and stairs. His Socratic method of dealing with the Russian patriots was superb. "Is that not so?" Lenin, in his *State and Revolution*, deals with Pannekoek, who opposed the Bolsheviks at the very beginning on the basis of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat vs. democratic majority. Be sure to make a special visit to him and please give him my regards, also the Boston Comrades and also give him greetings from Paul Mattick, in Boston. By the way, did you notice my reference to Pannekoek in my article on evolution in the *WS*? That reminds me, bring him a copy of that article, it will serve as a real introduction.

MARCH 29, 1960

[The letter to which this is a response is available in the WSP archives. It is Watkins's formal request to join the WSP(US). (Watkins, a Canadian, lives near Vancouver, British Columbia.)]

My very dear Comrade Roy Watkins (Vancouver Local, SPC) (Hello, Mrs. Watkins, Here's my hand.)

I enjoyed your letter very much. I liked its spirit and admired your gifted style of writing. Unfortunately I do not have it with me, as Comrade Morrison is to reply to it. But I've got to stick my two bits worth in. Lest I forget to mention it, your facile pen should be harnessed for the *WS*. We need humorous articles that can use satire a la Anatole France and Will Rogers. In my opinion it makes effective propaganda. Also, your letter brought back fond memories of our brief meeting together in Boston, and I mean the both of you.

It is thrilling to observe the socialist enthusiasm in your letter. I have been associated with the fringes and heart of the socialist movement all my life. Away back in 1893, my father was a member of the Socialist Labor Party, then he jumped with the other Kangaroos into the Socialist Party of America when it was formed in the 1899 - 1900 period. In the 1919 period he became a charter member of the Communist Party, to which he belonged until his death. I was far more fortunate. I joined the Socialist Party of America in 1909 and was a member until 1916. Luckily, in Detroit, I came into contact with so-called slackers escaping military service in Canada and England. They changed my whole point of view from reformism into revolutionary socialism. These comrades from the SPC and the SPGB wielded a great influence in Detroit with their study classes and street meetings and public lectures. When the WSP was organized in Detroit, Comrade Adolph Kohn and I sent out the post cards inviting those interested to form the WSP I am the sole charter member still remaining in the organization, since its inception in 1916. All this just to tell you that, in spite of trials, tribulations, disappointments (and there have been many, many of them) I have never lost my enthusiasm. I am often called "the eternal optimist," by those who have become cynical and lost their enthusiasm for socialism because of discouragements and disappointments. It might even be said that to retain your enthusiasm is an acid test of your socialist understanding. It is so easy to fall by the wayside because something happens to dampen one's enthusiasm for

one reason or another. The fact still remains: There is no other solution except socialism. Who can deny that socialism is in harmony with social necessity, and the evidence of unfolding experiences?

Now to come to grips with your desire to form a Vancouver local of the WSP. For convenience I will number the points I wish to make.

1. Not because it is contained in the *Communist Manifesto* or because it was written by Marx and Engels (either reason for quoting would make us not only authoritarian but dogmatic sectarians) but because it summarizes the very nature of socialist political parties, the following paragraph in Section I of the *Manifesto* is very pertinent:

The working men have no country. We cannot take from them what they have not got. Since the proletariat must first of all acquire political supremacy, must rise to be the leading class of the nation, must constitute itself the nation, it is, so far, itself national, though not in the bourgeois sense of the word.

Stop to think of the predominant objective of all our activities: arouse the workers to vote for socialism. Immediately, we are barred from the ballot because we disqualify ourselves because we are an international group on the political field and not a Canadian political party. This does not mean that we aren't essentially and basically an international party but we are compelled for "democratic" reasons to be companion parties rather than an integrated whole. There is no other alternative, if only to register the growing sentiment for socialism via the ballot.

On this score, I have a strong hunch that in due time the names of the companion parties will be changed to World Socialist Party of Canada, World Socialist Party of Great Britain, etc., etc. Already, in several conferences of the SPGB this proposal has been discussed with a seemingly growing sentiment in its favor. I seem to sense a ground swell in that direction. But, let me emphasize, this is a matter of opinion and not a basic principle whether the name should be changed or not. It would be no cause for a schism, as it were. After all, there is room for differences of opinion in a socialist organization. Thinking is no violation of principles, nor a violation of discipline.

Furthermore, how can there be two separate socialist parties in the same country with the same socialist principles? We are not competing with anybody for the privilege of inaugurating socialism. Should circum-

stances see another genuine socialist party appear on the scene, the first thing on the agenda would be steps to merge together. We do not root ourselves in leadership or in personalities, either.

2. Let me refresh your memory on an important matter that you know as well as I do. I'm not telling you anything you don't know. Nothing is more democratic than a socialist party. The very organization of a socialist party brings into being procedures that flow from its socialist understanding. Its organization reflects its principles. Consciously and deliberately, every socialist party is controlled by its membership. (That is why so much emphasis is placed on the Application Blank, so as to assure a socialist membership.) No party conference has the power to make motions (other than purely procedural ones) that are not first submitted to a referendum of the membership for acceptance or rejection. That is why we in the WSP changed the name of our central committee from National Executive Committee to National Administrative Committee — in order to emphasize that the national office only carries out the wishes of the membership; it merely administers the work of the organization between conferences and referenda. In every sense of the word: the majority rules. There is NO obstacle standing in the way of the Vancouver comrades to affect any procedures or policies they desire in the Socialist Party of Canada, providing they convince the majority.

3. As a statement of historic accuracy, the Socialist Party of Canada was reorganized in 1933. [*NB: Rab is in error here; the SPC was reorganized in June 1932. — KDR*] At no time has it ever supported Russia or reforms. It should not be held responsible for the earlier history of the SPC. However, I, for one, speaking for myself only, pay tribute to the earlier SPC. There were a lot of confused and unsound statements in the old *Western Clarion*, but they established a real tradition of socialist work. They were the products of peculiar social circumstances which made it possible to carry on a great deal of valuable socialist work that was very inspiring indeed. There was a hodge-podge of all kinds of rubbish permeating through elements in the old SPC, but the valuable work of revolutionary socialists still dominated the scene and we owe a great debt to them. We should pay tribute to the groundwork they laid down. It has left its mark on Vancouver.

4. In the last two conferences of the WSP, I presented as an agenda item that the SPC be urged to initiate a referendum of their membership

to establish the procedure of sending delegates every year to the annual WSP conferences. There are matters of joint and mutual concern that do not affect only the U.S. I refer most especially to the *Western Socialist*, which is a joint publication of both parties (and that is to the good). Yet the WSP, alone, decides on vital policies, etc. A case in point: the WSP is right now running off a second referendum on such an important question as to whether non-members may write for the *WS* (Personally, I favor it.) To my great regret, the conference voted against my motion on the grounds that such a procedure is not feasible at this time on account of distances and expenses involved. Incidentally, I also wrote to individuals in the SPC on this matter. I'm going to bring it up again at the next conference, for I consider it important; but in one way, such an item should emanate from the Canadian comrades. However, I mention it because it falls in line with your thinking.

I had never intended to be so long-winded. I want to close with this thought for your consideration: The best interests of the socialist movement would be served by the organization of a healthy, active local in Vancouver-- the sooner, the better. It would be inspiring and encouraging indeed to socialists everywhere, to see young blood with enthusiasm and eagerness for work following in the footsteps of what there is of revolutionary socialist traditions in Vancouver.

Enclosed you will find a copy of this letter for you to show the comrades in Vancouver — Roddy, Ahrens, the new comrade in Vancouver (I hate to admit that his name escapes me, I owe him an apology) and various and sundry of those concerned in socialist propaganda and education.

MAY 7, 1960

[Like Roy Watkins, John Ahrens was a member of the SPC.]

My dear Comrades the Watkinses and Ahrensens:

Your letters touched me deeply. Here's a hug and kiss for all of you. I'm looking forward to the day when I can deliver them in person. I hope none of you will be offended by my writing a joint letter to all of you, but I must because of pressure of time.

First of all, let me review the reasons why the WSP changed its name. Not once, mind you, but twice. At the birth of the Party in Detroit in July 1916, there was no such thing as a genuine socialist party in the United States. There was, however, a well-known and influential organization calling itself the Socialist Party of America. In our naïveté, we called ourselves the Socialist Party of the United States to demonstrate that, at last, there had appeared on the scene a real socialist party in the United States. Within three months the SPA challenged our right to the name. They even produced evidence that, on occasion, they had used the SP of US title. We simply had to change our name. We made a grievous error because we should have realized the inevitable confusions that were bound to develop. The membership voted on several alternative names and settled on Workers' Socialist Party of the United States.

Time marched on and in the '30's the Trotskyite Socialist Workers Party emerged. For years, we were confronted with bewildering confusions, let alone embarrassments. Even our own members (myself included) meeting pressures of having to identify ourselves at street meetings would refer to our organization as Socialist Workers Party through a curious slip of the tongue. (One thing, at least, the U.S. Attorney General knew the distinction. At no time had he ever put us on any subversive list.) An interesting sidelight, I once met a disgruntled Trotskyite who told me that at the organizational inception when the proposed name was discussed, they were advised not to use the name they selected because of our existence. They pooh-poohed us with sneers and adopted the Socialist Workers Party name. After all, their stock in trade is strategy and conspiracy. When you consider that their emphases are on infiltrating unions and other organizations to gain control, to foster and participate in all and any public demonstrations, to prate on fantastic immediate demands and to critically support the "Degenerate Workers State" in Russia, we had NO alternative but to again change our name, this time to World Socialist Party of the United States.

No happier selection could have been made. The irony of events beyond our control brought forth the title which truly expresses in a few words both our object and our policy: the global nature of socialism as a social system and the working-class political victories to inaugurate socialism.



My purpose in reviewing the history of the WSP name was to indicate that, in my humble opinion, there is NO immediate or urgent need for changing the name of the Socialist Party of Canada. Let me emphasize that if I thought there was, I would add my voice in favor of such a move, here and now. But more on this topic.

You stress that there have been experiences under the banner of the SPC which are very embarrassing for socialists. Specifically, you refer to the 1920 and 1944 Manifestos; to the lack of encouragement by Winnipeg to inspire young blood; and the greater receptivity to our movement in Vancouver that would ensue from a change in name.

As for the Preface to the 5th edition of the SPC Manifesto, I agree with you wholeheartedly. In fact, I would go much further and condemn the 4th edition preface as worse, because of its emphasis on concepts such as “peaceful revolution” as being illusory. I am not condoning the Russian slant of the 5th edition preface BUT most basic to socialist science is the democratic nature of a conscious, majority political revolution. The socialist majority has no need for violence. We surely do NOT advocate violence. There are interpolations in the text of the 1920 Manifesto that are bad, also.

I can appreciate your feelings that it would have been advisable for the preface to the 1944 edition of the SPC Manifesto to have made some clarifying statement on the limitations of the 5th edition. They didn't. But this was an error of omission, not one of commission. What your observation does reveal is the obvious need for a clarifying statement by the SPC explaining the events and background of the history of the SPC and its offshoots, etc. Such a statement would make inspired reading and would redound to the credit of the socialist pioneers who stimulated and stirred socialist consciousness in the early days and whose ideas have PREDOMINATED over the long run to the greater glory of the SPC. It would also explain the reasons for the quarrels and confusions, etc., in the immature soil of those days.

In this connection, I can think of a few fellows who could collaborate on such a task: Price of the SPGB, a real old-timer in Canada; there is Jack McDonald, Jack Kilgour, Fred Evans of the WSP; there are many

old-timers in Winnipeg; there is Devore of Edmonton (see the enclosed *WS* article of his in No. 1 - 1959 issue); and a host of others. Pity that we missed the opportunity of harnessing old Bennett of Mexico, who died recently at 92, he had the most remarkable and accurate memory of anyone, he had a real flair for writing with a marvelous sense of humor. And do you want to hear something surprising, Lefeaux. In spite of his "practical measures" nonsense, he has a soft spot for the real, genuine socialist movement. On occasions he lets the cat out of the bag. I suspect he not only knows better but regrets getting caught in a dilemma. Once one is bitten with the virus of revolutionary, scientific, Marxian socialism, one never really discards it, in spite of themselves [*sic*]. They are like those who, having become convinced of Darwinism and organic evolution, really never accept Genesis, in spite of all their apologetics. That is the latent strength of the SPC.

Another thing, you betray emotional feelings (and we all have them!). You state that unless Winnipeg is receptive, you are helpless. Think this over very carefully. Winnipeg is helpless if the majority does not see eye-to-eye with them. NONE of the companion parties can be dominated by any committee.

Your problem is not Winnipeg, by any means. We have comrades in the U.S. who make the Winnipeg comrades appear as whirlwinds, in comparison. In fact, they have a very stultifying effect on me because of their pessimism, lethargy and cynicism. Actually, in contrast, our Winnipeg comrades who, under great odds, do attempt to hold lectures, do hold regular DEC meetings, do write articles, do get *WS* subs impress me as "vital, dynamic and energetic," to quote your words. Of one thing I'm sure, if they were to witness a surge of socialist activities in Vancouver, they would really be thrilled and inspired. I can see, in my mind's eye, volunteers from Winnipeg, straining at the leash to rush to your aid. A team of wild horses couldn't restrain them, if I know the Winnipeg boys.

Which reminds me, after interminable delays by our printer — (we come first for him after all his other accounts, we are constantly in debt to him but happen, at the moment, to be in the most favorable financial position we have been with him in years, thanks to using the Earl fund to pay him \$750.00 recently) — at last he is getting around to finishing the 100,000 leaflets we ordered. There are 10 leaflets and we ordered 10,000 of each. Each one of them are superb, succinct, effective leaflets for popular distribution. They are worthy of concentrating our efforts as they constitute replies to popular superstitions.

On the matter of personal antipathies, antagonisms, etc., a word at this point might not be amiss. The socialist movement is made up of individuals who are a cross section of mankind, such as they are. They (I should say “we”) are products of the workings of the capitalist milieu: victims of the vicissitudes and tribulations of life. Yet, it is amazing that, in spite of all, when the chips are down, bitterness evanesces. I’ve seen this happen many times. (There are exceptions, of course.) There is a BOND that ties us together closer than one realizes: the inspiring nature of our objective. Our task is to be a catalyst, the triggering agent that transforms majority ideas from bourgeois into revolutionary ones. What more glorious task faces mankind than forever putting an end to poverty and privilege. And all the time, we have a powerful ally: capitalism itself provides the lessons of experience.

When I was a youngster, my mother used to tell me: Behave so as not to reflect on the movement, everyone is condemning socialism because of the behavior of socialists. She had a powerful impact on me but still she was not quite correct. The validity of socialism does not hinge on the behavior of socialists by any means. But I found that, somehow or other, their very socialist understanding DOES affect socialist behavior in ways that anticipate the coming socialist society — as social human beings. I say this in spite of some very sorry experiences.

As long as I’m rambling off the subject of this letter, there is another thing to consider. As the movement gathers momentum with the resulting increased socialist activity and growth, personalities will become less noticed and less important.

Now, to return to the matter at hand. Socialist parties are not exempt from making serious mistakes. The socialist movement ... is a LIVING organism. Members become impatient at the slow growth, disappointed with results of hard work, disgruntled with behaviors and reactions towards their pet proposals, discouraged with prospects, etc., etc. They become enamored with lures of “short cuts” and royal roads to socialism. Every socialist party has skeletons, as it were, in its closet. (And there is no assurance that changing the name will prevent more of this in future.) (Enclosed I’m including an article I wrote for the SPGB *Forum* on this very topic, entitled: “Is There Room for Differences of Opinion in a Socialist Party?” The *Forum* has not been published for some time because of lack of funds. After all, propaganda activities take precedence.)

The overriding consideration is to bear in mind that the companion parties for socialism have been consistently sound on the general principles of socialism. We can boast that — over the years — history, the real acid test, has corroborated and confirmed the analyses presented in the *Socialist Standard*, *The Western Socialist* and the party literature. Especially in Canada, when the SPC is mentioned — in spite of the things you mentioned — it is immediately associated with the SPGB, WSP, etc. On this very score, Comrade Luff, of Victoria, has some interesting information that I believe he has conveyed to you.

All of you emphasized that your prime concern is for a closer cohesion. You don't stand alone. This very correspondence and the general interest engendered in the Vancouver potentialities speaks volumes for this common concern for closer cohesion. Thanks to Roy's "cut through the red tape — damn the torpedoes" letter, he has stirred us all.

You ask me not to be hesitant about writing and criticizing your letter. I'll do better than that. Let me emphasize the positive things that I earnestly believe are of prime importance. To my best knowledge, there are not less than six comrades who already form the nucleus of a vigorous local in Vancouver. In addition, there are, on tap, comrades and sympathizers only waiting to be harnessed for socialist work. (That hodge-podge journal, *Prose*, with all its emotional confusions and straddling all sides of every question, seems to indicate the soil is ripe for a genuine socialist local in Vancouver.) Can you fancy the James Kings, the Ralph Browns, the many other convinced socialists in Vancouver standing aloof just because of the party name?

Finally (the clincher, I hope), Local Vancouver should give serious consideration to sending a fraternal delegate to the WSP conference in Boston, next Labor Day weekend. There are so many matters of common concern to be discussed and thrashed out: The *Western Socialist*, editorial, circulation, advertising, distribution, financing, format matters; ways and means of improving propaganda; review of the experiences and lessons of the past few years; the question of the party name and other referenda items that might arise from the conference for the consideration of the SPC. In fact, the last NAC meeting voted to invite Winnipeg to send a fraternal delegate to the next conference.

Dixi et meam animam salvi,

(Marx's letter to Bracke)

(I have spoken and eased my mind)

February 4, 1961

62 Woodcliff Rd., Newton Hlds. 61, Mass.

Dear Bob Calese:

To answer your interesting letter *seriatim*, as it were:

I have written your friend Normal Rush regarding a Kerr edition of *Mutual Aid*. I forwarded your personal regards to him. Does he deal in radical literature?

Your sub to the *WS* has been referred to the circulation department. I received a copy of the *World Labor News*. I imagine it was forwarded to me through your good graces. There has been a delay in getting out the #1 - 1981 *WS* due to the printer having been rushed to the hospital and the resulting havoc created in his shop. However, it now is ready for mailing and will be in your hands within a week. You will note an improvement in the cover; it gives more room on the cover to feature the contents and we hope it will increase store sales.

We are indeed encouraged by your kind words. The mail we have been receiving speaks volumes for the growing influence and prestige of the *WS* as an organ for revolutionary, scientific socialism. To me this is a healthy indication of the ferment going on in men's minds. You may recall Engels' statement in the last section of *Socialism, Utopian and Scientific* that a revolutionary situation develops when mankind becomes aware that its unquestioned, accepted ideas no longer hold water. The gap between the established ideas of revolutionary socialism and the accepted ideas of capitalism is closing up. The imperceptible social forces at work are the great ally of socialism, convincing the great majority of the historic necessity for socialism — else extinction. My short item in the last issue of the *WS*, "Two Straws in the Wind," had for its theme that the necessity for a sane world fit for human beings is now an established concept. On some level, the vast majority recognize that what seemed sensible is no longer as sensible as they had thought.

It goes without saying that not only *Views and Comments*, but anyone desiring to do so, always have the right to reprint items from the *WS*. In fact, the *Industrial Worker* has done so many times. Our only concern is for revolutionary socialist knowledge and understanding to be spread as widely as possible. No vanguard has a monopoly on socialist concern. The work of emancipation is the job of the entire working class, not of

any party or organization. Our whole position is rooted in the understanding that the WSP is but the party of the working class — in the sense of the *Communist Manifesto*. The WSP is not going to do anything for the working class except to arouse their fervor, determination and enthusiasm for socialist objectives. The aroused class-conscious workers will use their party as the lever of emancipation. (I'll go into this more in some brief comments on Bakunin and Marx, later.)

I was happy to see your note that Harry Faunce had sent you a stack of back copies of the *WS*. Thinking of Faunce reminds me of the importance of persistent, patient, uncompromising work for socialism, regardless of any disappointments and discouragement. There is no instrument I know of for measuring the results of our work. By keeping on keeping on, we sow seeds that fall on both sterile and fertile soil. Our friend Faunce symbolizes the fertile soil. How often we find unexpected evidence confirming the importance of persistence, realizing that the acid test of experience confirms the validity of the socialist case...

Realizing as I do that thrashing out the merits of the issues often leads to clarity, I'm sure that a discussion contrasting the positions of *Views and Comments* and *The Western Socialist* would prove valuable. As for the WSP's attitude, we are primarily concerned with issues, not personalities. *Ad hominem* arguments are meaningless and prove nothing. But such discussions develop normally out of certain situations. Should you find an analysis in the *WS* that you believe should be repudiated, we would welcome the opportunity to come to grips with your criticism. In fact, most issues of the *WS* contain an invitation to critics to submit their criticisms to us.

Incidentally, I was amused by a slip of yours, namely your being enraged at Ashley Montagu's plagiarizing "Kropotkin's idea of mutual aid." You are not falling into Herbert Read's category of British nobility, are you? Since when are Anarchists devotees of private property and copyright laws? The very essence of the book *Mutual Aid* is the recognition of social contributions to knowledge. Accumulated knowledge is not a personal prerogative. Are you saying that if it were not for Kropotkin there would be no mutual aid? That is like saying that if it were not for Darwin, there would be no organic evolution, or if it were not for Marx, there would be no scientific socialism! Although there are variations of ability among human beings, evolving knowledge is the social product of unfolding

social evolution. The Great Man theory belongs in the limbo of outworn superstitions. But then, you know that as well as I do. I don't have to convince you that the ideas expressed by Darwin, Marx or Kropotkin were the products of their times. Conditions were ripe for their expression even if Darwin, Marx and Kropotkin had never lived.

I can sympathize with your dilemmas of a home life immersed in Catholicism. However, inflexible, rigid Catholicism is not one whit worse than flexible, wish-washy, Unitarianism with its cowardly, shame-faced "materialism." At one time, I had the very great delight of into being asked to a non-public debate with a Jesuit priest in the Sacred Heart church in Newton on Catholicism vs. Socialism, and as a result, two of the parishioners left the church and joined the party.*

I would advise your contributor, Harold Henry, to read Wm. Bongers' *Criminality and Economic Conditions*. In my opinion, this is the classic development of the socialist analysis of crime. It argues that crime is, basically, a violation of property rights. Surprising as it seems, Bongers, who was a Dutch scholar in the field of criminal law, was commissioned to write this volume by the American Institute of Criminal Law and Criminology. It can be obtained in the public library. Harold Henry's article seems to stress that crime is the result of mental disturbances. I'm sure that *Views and Comments* knows better.

Now for the Borkenau quote comparing Marx and Bakunin. Borkenau's basic misunderstanding of Marx is made clear by his statement: "Marx viewed progressive capitalism as including parliamentary and political action 'within' capitalism for purposes of administering capitalism." This is a complete misinterpretation of Marx's writings. Re-reading *The Civil War in France* and *The Gotha Program* will reveal that Marx made a distinction between the revolution overthrowing feudalism and establishing capitalism, and the revolution overthrowing capitalism and establishing socialism.

Historically, socialism arises out of the conditions of capitalist development. Capitalism was a necessary stage in social evolution. Thus, in the conditions of the early and mid-19th century, when Marx was writing, it was in the best interests of workers to support the speedy introduction and development of capitalism. Capitalism was to transform handicraft

* The parishioners referred to were sisters, Margie and Cathy Sullivan, both active members of Boston Local whom I remember well from my childhood.

and individual production into the gigantic socialized machine of today, thereby creating an economy of (potential) abundance. It was capitalism's market economy, its drive for profits and its exploitation of labor, that made possible the shrunken economic world of today, with its rapid communication and transportation, and its high development of literacy — the very material conditions that give rise to the grave diggers of capitalism: the class-conscious proletariat.

“Within” capitalism, is another question entirely. The capitalist state is the central organ of power in the hands of the capitalist class. (Marx called it “the executive committee of the ruling class”). Whether we like it or not, at this point in time, the state is the club that keeps us in submission. It can never be administered in the interests of the proletariat, or of society as a whole; it can ONLY be administered in the interests of the capitalist class. It is true that counterfeit socialists (including social-democrats and the 2nd International), holding attitudes of gradualism and reformism, have sought to administer capitalism in the *name* of “socialism,” but what has this to do with Marx? “Nothing could be more foreign” to Marxism than to administer capitalism. (Refer to *The Civil War in France*.) Borkenau has missed Marx's point altogether.

Possibly what causes Borkenau's confusion is his failure to distinguish between “parliamentarianism,” in the sense of using the parliament for the purposes of administering capitalism, and the Marxian contention that the class-conscious proletariat must capture the state machinery for the purpose of transferring the means of living from the hands of the parasites into the hands of society as a whole. This is the socialist revolution: the working class, organized consciously and politically, conquering the powers of government and transforming this instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and overthrow of capitalism. There is no implication anywhere in Marx's writings of the nonsense of parliamentary action “within” capitalism as alleged by Borkenau. With the socialist revolution, the capitalist state will disappear, and in its place the people, democratically, will establish an administration of affairs appropriate to socialist society...

Yours for a world fit for human beings,

Rab

MARCH 4, 1961

My dear Larry (Nathanson):

It is understandable why some comrades are so concerned in making sure that a new member is a convinced socialist. And being a convinced socialist does not mean being a Marxian pundit. It really boils down to the fact that a genuine socialist party, because of its objective and principles, is, and cannot be otherwise, controlled democratically by its membership. As I shall try to illustrate below, its bond of comradeship and unity is rooted in the barest minimum of socialist principles which may be summarized as: socialism is a product of social evolution; the socialist revolution is inherently democratic because of its nature of being conscious, majority, and political; and that socialism is based on the social relations of a community of interests between all the members of society and society as a whole. There can hardly be any compromise on these three general principles. Further, a socialist is one who recognizes and realizes that capitalism can no longer be reformed or administered in the interest of society or of the working class; that capitalism is incapable of eliminating poverty, war, crises, etc.; and that the times call for arousing the majority to become socialists to inaugurate socialism, now possible and necessary.

There exists the danger that if membership were extended to confused sympathizers, alleged socialists, even non- and anti-socialists, then the party could easily become transformed into such expressions as seen below. This will illustrate, I hope, the validity of the fear that the WSP would cease being a genuine socialist party. (Incidentally, there is a book review in the next issue of the *WS* by Comrade Milne of Winnipeg dealing with the history of the Socialist Party of Canada which is quite pertinent and revealing.)

1. *The 2nd International*. Under this category is included the parties of Social Democracy — the Labor Parties and “Socialist” Parties in Europe, Asia, the Antipodes, etc. Tolerance of every kind of confusion typifies these parties. In common, they are all things to all men. In the acid tests, when the chips are down, they are revealed as supporters of wars and willing administrators of capitalist governments. In a very tragic sense, they have diverted the workers from socialism and been the cause of so much disillusionment with socialist “futility” because avowed capitalist parties “stole” their programs. These “practical” parties have hindered the growth of the socialist movement. The “Tory Socialism” of Churchill and the “creeping

socialism” of Truman and Kennedy proved more practical in successfully accomplishing the goals of such organizations as the British Labour Party and the Socialist Party of America. And in these parties, policies are decided by conferences and executive committees, rather than by referenda of the membership. The Companion Parties for Socialism can never grow so large that they will not be governed by the membership. They delegate administrative and procedural work to committees, but the membership, as a whole, pass on motions of conference dealing with principles and policies (not routine matters), which are always submitted to referenda. We don’t have leaders, only spokesmen and administrators.

2. *The 3rd and 4th Internationals.* These Bolshevik groupings, including the Communist Parties over the world, the Trotskyites, and all the various splinter groups, usually revolve around personalities and “leaders.” They are dominated by the concept of a vanguard of “professional revolutionists.” It is the responsibility of the vanguard to guide and lead their followers. They have the appeal of being conspiratorial in nature. They stir the emotions with their “grass roots” activities of organizing demonstrations and protests on any and all questions, ranging from cheaper milk, lower taxes, etc., to riots, etc., that will serve the interests of China or Russia.

Their concepts of the “Dictatorship of the Proletariat” and the “Transitional Period” are reflected in what they call “Democratic Centralism.” The control of the organization is from the top, who inform the membership of “the line.”

3. *The Socialist Labor Party.* Prior to about 1903, the SLP was a true socialist party. However, around 1903, DeLeon made the “discovery” that the Industrial Union is not only a more effective type of economic organization for the workers, but that it is a revolutionary weapon and the nucleus of the new society, socialism. Up until that time, with some minor and relatively moot exceptions, the SLP was sound on political action, reforms, and Marxian economics. But this Industrial Union concept altered their concept of socialism and of the socialist revolution in a way that is not borne out by either evidence or analysis.

(Note that prior to about 1903, there would have been no reason to establish a WSP in the United States. The World Socialist Party is not in competition with other organizations for the privilege of inaugurating socialism, and the SLP was such an organization until then. Should there ever appear, at any time, an organization dedicated to socialism,

we would immediately make overtures for combining forces. How can there be two socialist parties in one country? We recognize that it is not the WSP, but the working class itself that will use its political victory to overthrow capitalism. It is the politically organized conscious socialist majority that will use the World Socialist Party as their instrument. As the Communist Manifesto emphasizes: it is the party of the working class. Note above the bond that binds us together.)

For purposes of this letter, let it suffice to say that the socialism the present SLP envisages is but an extension of capitalist relations, even though they retain the language of a "classless" society, much as do the Bolsheviks. No wonder Lenin praised DeLeon's "contribution" of Industrial Unions as the basis for the "Soviets." Their socialism is the Industrial Republic of Labor and they have a blueprint (the famous wheel) to illustrate its operation. The outstanding historic factor that lays the groundwork for socialism is that socialism is based upon abundance made possible by the strides in the means of production: technology. This very technology is no longer industrial but overlapping and integrated into a cohesive whole; production is socialized, in almost a literal sense, today. Socialism is not confronted with problems of the organization of production, but rather with problems of leisure, full lives and conditions worthy of human beings. (How far superior and more scientific is the Marxian projection of socialism.) The present SLP and the WSP do not have the same objective.

Further, this misconception of socialism arises from their viewing the Industrial Union as the revolutionary weapon. It can be conceded that the industrial union has advantages as economic organizations of resistance for workers within capitalism over craft and trade unions. But the SLP goes on to project the industrial union as a revolutionary weapon: "The ballot is as weak as a woman's tears unless backed up by the economic might of the workers." This splitting of the workers into two sections presumes that the majority of socialists who vote for socialism will support capitalism in their economic activities. In spite of some fine SLP pamphlets on the nature of the state, they have forgotten that whoever controls the central organ of power, the state, gains control of economic power, by the same token. Peculiarly enough, they have confused economic bases, economic influence, etc., with economic power. It is the development of economic-social relations that gives rise to the state, but it is state power that gives rise to economic power. In order to get economic power, the new rising social class must first get in possession of the state powers. (The classic illustra-

tion, of course, is the revolution from feudalism into capitalism.) (Also note that no two revolutions are the same, but here we are dealing with the Materialist Conception of History.)

Here is another distinction between the SLP and the WSP. It can truly be said that the SLP is dogmatic and sectarian. Thinking is a violation of SLP discipline. Try to attend one of their classes as one interested in socialist theory and see what happens. In about six weeks, you will be told you are no longer welcome unless you are sympathetic to their views. Try to get the floor in discussion at one of their lectures. They will only allow questions that they approve. (It is true that they do not object to questions obviously opposed to socialism.) Arising out of their theories, like the Bolsheviks, they drop members for the most peculiar reasons, and the organization is dominated by the central body. They have for years refused to debate the WSP, though they did in 1918 and in 1936 or thereabouts, but will no longer. They even refuse to exchange publications.

I had no intention of going into this in such length; I intended only to indicate the bond that ties us together, and why we exist as a party. Now, I'll return to the main purpose of this letter.

The object of the Application Blank is common agreement, in the light of unfolding evidence, on the validity of the socialist case. Like any written document, there is always room for refinements in phrasing. This applies to our Declaration of Principles as well, and to all scientific writings. In the case of the WSP and its companion parties, such matters are and have been decided upon by a referendum of the membership. (Another reason for assuring ourselves of a socialist membership.)

I do want to differentiate between specific statements and general analyses. We can often get involved in specific speculations, reservations, quibbles, etc., and then raise them to the dignity of a principle. As an example: we emphasize that the ballot is the lever of emancipation. We do this just because the conscious, socialist majority takes political action in order to be in a position to transfer the means of living from the hands of the parasites into the hands of society, as a whole. The ballot symbolizes the nature of the socialist revolution. We advocate the ballot because we cannot visualize the need for a socialist majority to use violence. Violence does not symbolize the socialist revolution. However, we can get all tangled up in speculations of projecting possible contingencies that may exist in a future event. History may make liars out of us in predicting the

workings of social forces based on scientific analyses. When we say that socialism is inevitable it always implies: barring unforeseen catastrophes such as astronomical collisions or the wiping out of the human race. However, given capitalism and its laws of motion, the next stage in social evolution is socialism. That is why I enjoyed Lennie's emphasis on the attitude in answering questions on the Application Blank.

This leaves two more items: civil liberties and reforms; and H-Bomb protests. We fight for civil liberties, i.e., free speech, etc., because it strengthens our opportunities for socialist propaganda, and not as a reform of capitalism. To call civil liberties for the propagation of socialism a reform is a far cry from our point of view. The vital distinction arises from the objectives and not from the thing itself. Our opposition to reforms and reformism are just because their objectives are palliative in nature and are fought for in order to make the system function more smoothly. Though we do not advocate reforms nor fight for reforms, that does not mean that we refuse to accept reforms, as though we could if we wanted to. Historically, reform activities have dissipated the earnest energies of so-called socialists from doing any socialist work, whatsoever. The need for reforms is an all-time job. There is no end to ever-present pressing emergencies that need immediate attention. A very conspicuous characteristic of capitalism is "burning issues."

Likewise with H-Bomb marches, etc. They are, understandably, worried about the alternative facing mankind: survival of the human race or extinction, which translated into their language means: abolishing atomic weapons. But note well, if you please, their utter failure to realize the alternative that really exists, in point of fact. There is no (and let me emphasize, no) assurance that capitalism can function without war — and the conditions for war existing, atomic weapons are in the cards. Wanting a "sane" nuclear policy, they imply they are opposed only to the present insane one. Note that the activities are not directed against war, as such, or against capitalism that breeds war. (Confusion, worse confounded.) If they are fighting for the "peaceful" uses of atomic energy, then they are fighting for the market economy with its production of commodities for profit. The "peace" they are supporting is the struggles over conflicts of interest that breed wars.

To summarize: All such activities still leave the job left to be done, the only job worthwhile and meaningful: making socialists!

Here we see the basic reason why we are small today. The great mass of the workers never hear the socialist message. Had all the enthusiasms and energies of the past fifty years been harnessed for the spread of socialist knowledge and understanding, imagine how much more advanced the revolutionary movement would be today. The history of the “practical socialists” sneering at the “impossibilists and theoreticians” finds them landing in the camp of capitalist politicians. There is no short cut to socialism, short of socialist determination. Our latent strength lies in the fact that science, truth, and above all, necessity is on the side of the scientific, revolutionary socialist movement.

There are encouraging signs on the horizon. The latest news from Ireland and British Columbia are inspiring, indeed. And even if the immediate prospects were gloomy, what other course of action lies in front of us? Socialism cannot be rammed down the throats of the majority against their wishes. We have the glorious task of arousing our fellow workers to speedily introduce socialism. The alternative facing us is: socialism or chaos. We'll keep on keeping on despite disappointments and discouragements, aware that, in the long run, socialism is invincible.

MARCH 13, 1961

Robert S. Calese
17 West 100th Street
New York 25, N.Y.

Dear Rab:

Friday my source of info showed up and gave me one copy of I.F. Stone's *Weekly* which contained an article on the alert incident. I'm enclosing a typewritten copy, and I'm sending another copy along to Harry [Morrison, of the *WS* Editorial Committee] directly. So far it's all I have, although I looked up the *Times* article at my branch library today. I'm going to get the two Washington papers at the Newspaper Division of the NY Public Library. Also I'm going to check it in the *Guardian*, and also the *National Guardian*, which I understand ran some info on it between November 15 and December 15.

So far I'm disappointed, because from the way I had originally received the story (and the way I passed it on to you) the high level alert went in, and there was exactly ten minutes left before our planes crossed the fail-safe point. My source assured me that that is the way the *National Guardian* wrote it up.

I'm going to do a good deal of research on this deal, and I'll forward carbons of all the articles I dig up so that you can see them. On second thought, I'm pretty sure that all these papers are available in the Newspaper room of the Boston Public Library, so it might be faster for you, if you're in a hurry, to check them yourself. I'll send the carbons along, anyway, unless I hear specifically from you that you've gotten them in Boston. In that case I won't bother.

At our last business meeting I gave a two-hour, hysterical dissertation on how lousy our magazine was — going over it page by page. Then I handed out your current issue and went over that page by page as an example of what a good radical magazine could be like, and what ours is god damn sure going to be like. I'm going to reprint your flier on "Charity" in either this issue or the next issue — giving proper credit of course. I think those fliers are a wonderful idea, and they're extremely well done. Oddly enough the one I probably enjoyed the most was the one on the Labor Party, which I was not going to order in the first place. My opinion on that subject is substantially in agreement with Sam Weiner's in his article

in the August issue of *Views & Comments*. Lo and behold you people take an identical position in that flier. I had expected that you'd endorse such a party, and instead you denounce it just as we do.

Keep plugging, because time is fast running out. I don't figure us for having ten years left.

Bob

MARCH 15, 1961

Dear Bob (Calese):

Talk about timing: Just as I'm sitting down to type you a letter, the mail man rings the door bell and a letter from you is among his deliveries! You will find enclosed a letter from Gonzales in Havana asking for information about the Libertarian League and *Views and Comments*. Please return the letter to us after you have noted its contents.

Our National Administrative Committee decided not to forward your address to him without consulting your organization. We feel we have not got the right to forward your address since we have no real knowledge about Gonzalez and his position in the Cuban regime. There is the possibility of reprisals on your Havana comrades. This may be an unwarranted assumption on our part, but the history of the Commies — like all patriotic nationalists — is far from clean. It could not be otherwise, rooted as they are in the theory of the vanguard of “professional revolutionists” and the so-called “Transition Period” with its “Dictatorship of the Proletariat.” Incidentally, neither of these concepts is Marxian (in spite of Lenin's emasculations of *The Gotha Program*, etc.). Actually, the new, native nationalisms spreading throughout Asia and Africa — including Cuba — are but examples of emergence from feudal or tribal social relations into those of the industrial revolution and capitalism, in much the same way that the social system emerging in Russia and China is state capitalism and could be no other. (More on this score anon.)

I think you are unnecessarily harsh with your criticisms of *Views and Comments*. It so happens I'm a member of the International Typographical Union and know a little about layout, etc. I happen to have right at my elbow your No. 39, August 1960, V&C. You should be proud of the fine craftsmanship in the VOLUNTARY labor that produced it. It is, in a sense, reminiscent of William Morris — a great printer and artist in so many varied fields. You can tell it was a labor of love. (It just goes through my mind that Paris Commune Day is in the offing. We remember the Paris Commune partly because it demonstrates the untapped capacities of mankind when they are released for the common interests. The reactions of the bourgeoisie indicate that this first striving for a sane society struck fear into their hearts.)

However, *Views and Comments* — in my view — does deserve criticisms for confusing “economic power” by the workers within the framework of capitalism with “lever of emancipation,” which it is not, viewed scientifically as a process of transformation. This flows from a failure to realize the nature of the state. (Unfortunately, I must drop this letter at this point, as I must take a nap before going to work. I work nights.) But the contrast of the “Labor Party” leaflet and the “Labor Party Illusion” article in *V&C* No. 39 will serve as a useful means of clarifying our differences.

In a few days I will resume this letter with a more extensive development. Suffice it to say, for the nonce, that the workers do not have “economic power” as long as they are wage slaves. Economic power has no meaning when it is confined to just withholding your labor power from production, which still leaves economic power in the hands of the masters. Economic power flows from having political control of the state machinery. Remember: in spite of all their growing economic influence, prestige, and advantages, the rising bourgeoisie were choked by the control of the state by the feudal aristocracy. The success of the bourgeois revolution (capture of the state) transferred economic POWER into the hands of the new rising bourgeois class.

I see I’m continuing in spite of myself, so until I resume this letter,

Rab

MARCH 20, 1961

Dear Rab:

Your letter arrived like a *deus ex machina* because of the Gonzales enclosure. We had a private debate with the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, and I read that letter as a minority viewpoint attacking the official Libertarian League position. Also, I sent Gonzales the last two issues of *V&C* so that he could read our views on Cuba. Evidently he writes to all the publications on the left, because M.S. Arnoni, editor and publisher of *Minority of One* was present at the debate at my invitation. He glanced down at Gonzales' letter and said, "I think I know who that's from. He writes to me all the time, and I recognize the handwriting." As it happened I didn't get Gonzales' address from Arnoni, though, but rather from another fellow to whom I mentioned the existence of a critical letter from Havana — without even mentioning the source mind you, and the guy said, "I bet I know who it's from," just like that. The whole situation struck me as unique — everybody seemed to know who he was without even hearing or seeing his name.

Back to Arnoni. He will be speaking at the Community Church in Boston on the 24th, so you might take it in if your own meeting doesn't conflict. Here too was a series of ironies. I had heard that he was going to be in New York, and that he was somewhat of an Anarchist. Thus I invited him to our private debate on Cuba, and as it happened we had him chair the meeting. When I phoned him, however, he mentioned that he would be with a couple from "Boston" and wanted to know if they could come with him. Naturally I agreed. Later I got to talk to the "Boston" couple, their name was Chatouris. When you're away from New England, of course, you describe yourself as a Bostonian even if you live in Springfield, it seems. Anyway I inquired where exactly they lived, and it turned out that they lived four blocks from my mother's house in Somerville. Oddly enough, at the time my own wife was in Framingham visiting her sister who just had a baby. All in all it was an evening of remarkable coincidences ... especially with Arnoni scheduled to speak at the Community Church where I was married by Mr. Lothrop five years ago.

Re *V&C* again, the No. 39 issue which you cite, is the one issue that we had to hire a printer to run off — after we'd had the plates made up saying "all labor donated" — more irony. I'll reread your and our views on the Labor Party. Have you read the Wobbly stuff on the General Strike? They don't want to withhold their labor power, but rather take over with a stay-in strike. Remember in the 20's the Paris trainmen struck by continuing to work but not charging fares — winning their demands immediately.

— Bob

MARCH 21, 1961

[In the Archive is a letter to Rab from Benjamin Spector, M.D., Coordinator of Anatomical Material for Tufts Medical School, to which Rab donated his body as an anatomical gift. It is apparently in response to a letter from Rab which is no longer extant. Excerpted here is the paragraph of Dr. Spector's letter to which Rab responds.]

.. Once a body is sent to the Medical School by the Coordinator, then the Medical School uses the body for the promotion of anatomical science ... One statement [in your letter] bothers me namely, "I do not object, however, to having a socialist message being given in place of superstitious rituals." Would you be good enough to tell me what you had in mind by the phrase, "superstitious rituals" and the phrase "socialist message."

[To which Rab replied:]

Dear Dr. Spector:

The key sentence in your letter, for me, was: "...the Medical School uses the body for the promotion of anatomical science." This is an excellent description of my desires.

.Like a true scientist, your bump of curiosity has not been dulled by the vicissitudes of life. It is a credit to you. On an accompanying sheet you will note what I had in mind by the phrases: "superstitious rituals" and "socialist message."

Sincerely yours,

I. Rab (I. Rabinowich)

SUPERSTITIOUS RITUALS

The tremendous strides in science, flowing out of the industrial revolution, have revealed, on the basis of evidence, the physical-material nature of existence. At long last, man has become aware, for example, that, biologically, he is the product of organic evolution; that life itself is but a more complex organization of the inorganic; that the earth had its origin in the sun, etc., etc.

No longer does man, that remarkable animal with his brain capable of generalizations, require such hypotheses as are found in Genesis, with its Adam and Eve story; its mythological explanations for the origins of life

and the earth, etc. It can be said, almost axiomatically, that the scientific method, has become established as the valid approach to get meaningful answers. This is so, in spite of the fact that most people have not accepted scientific conclusions in their rationalizations. It is significant, indeed, that no one is religious any longer about the things he KNOWS. His religion is confined to his beliefs (such as the awesome, the mysterious, the UNKNOWN). It has been aptly said that with every step forward scientific knowledge takes, religious superstition retreats. This is a relatively new phenomenon. The history of religious opposition and resistance to such concepts as the round world, the heliocentric theory, the germ theory, the theory of evolution is well known. But, in the acid test of corroboration on the basis of unfolding evidence, science emerges vindicated. The traditions of the past die hard. Men's ideas do not keep an even pace with newer understanding, but eventually, they do catch up.

In your field of medicine, especially, has this become obvious. Dr. Dooley described the medicine of Laos, prior to his arrival, as "necromancy, witchcraft, clay images, sorcery and betel juice." But how do you distinguish the Laotian medicine from Christian Science healing by absent practitioners, the power of prayer, the Mary statues and Saint Christopher medals, the banishing of evil spirits, a throwback to the bloodletting cures? Black magic still serves the role of medicine. It is amusing to observe one religion sneer at the practices of others. Jews ridicule the "Immaculate Conception" and the "Trinity," while themselves subscribing to the "Angel of Death" and Rosh Hashonoh (the latter particularly untenable in light of modern geology).

This week's *Time Magazine* (March 17,1961) has two powerful illustrations of the current shamefaced materialism of so many churchmen, today. It quotes : Episcopal Bishop James A. Pike and his "counterpart" (*Time's* description) in the Roman Catholic Church who find it difficult to reconcile the supernatural with the findings of modern science. They are caught in the dilemma of apologetics.

SOCIALIST MESSAGE

In order of social evolution, a new social system — socialism — now is looming on the horizon. Yesterday's handicraft tool has become transformed into today's gigantic socialized machine. The profit motive and conflicts of the market economy cannot be adapted to the requirements of the potential productivity of the new strides in technology. Abun-

dance for all is now possible. It can hardly be denied that wars, poverty, insecurity, and crises arise from the social and economic relations of a commodity society. The primary consideration of commodity production must be SALE. No sales no production.

Capitalist society was a necessary and useful stage in social evolution. It sped up the introduction of literacy, it fostered rapid communication and transportation, it hastened the growth of science, it laid the groundwork for the solution to the problem of production.

Now the conditions are ripe for producing for the needs and wants of mankind. Abundance has become the order of the day. Cooperation based on the harmony of interests between all the members of society and society as a whole has become possible and necessary. The alternative to socialism is chaos and possible extinction.

Socialism (not a brainstorm, a scheme, nor a utopia) appears on the scene because the conditions of existence have made the times propitious for a world fit for human beings based on cooperation and brotherhood. By nature, *homo sapiens* is a gregarious, social animal. If he weren't, he could not have survived against the adversities of nature. (The September 1960 issue of the *Scientific American* is MUST reading for a review of the latest findings on the evolution of the human species in every field of investigation.)

Socialists appreciate such manifestations of inspiring social thinking and behavior as is manifested by the MEMORANDUM.* It also indicated that outworn ignorance and metaphysical fears of "life after death" are giving way to enlightened understanding. Similar projects would have been inconceivable in the past because of the predominance of superstitions.

The very attitude implied in the MEMORANDUM is a forecast of how wonderfully human beings will behave when the social environment is favorable.

* "Memorandum" refers to the documents he needed to complete to finalize the anatomical gift.

JULY 10, 1961

[Rab wrote this letter shortly after George and I officially joined the SPC.]

My very dear comrades and grandchildren:

Two very close bonds indeed! What a joy when they intertwine. Either could stand on its own as is, but lucky indeed am I to be so "rich" (to borrow an unfortunate vestige of traditional thinking), in what counts.

Which reminds me. I am still working in the cellar and came across two items of interest to you. One was a letter my mother wrote on the limitations of school education in her days. Her theme was that the school system is not geared to the best development of children. It was written in 1906. She described the limitation of the mother with her problems, of the poor with their difficulties, and the schools with their failure to develop the child's capabilities. Shall I send it to you?

The other was a paper I wrote when I was at Ohio Northern University on Agricultural Societies. I based it on my concept of socialism at that time. It was written when I was in the SPA and before I had any genuine glimmer of scientific, revolutionary socialism. If you want to see it, I'll send it to you.

I wrote Brodie — he is the SPGB member who lived in Montreal for four years before he had just recently moved to Toronto. I asked him if he had any names or persons I might contact by phone while I was in Montreal. I gave him your address for his information.

I am looking forward to seeing you both when I arrive in Montreal for two days July 27 and 28. I am anticipating the pleasure of Max and Jennie's smiling faces, as well as chatting with Motel, i.e., Mark.

By the way, I expect to arrive in Montreal about 11:00 AM Thursday, July 27.

GEORGE! Please give me street directions from my entry in the outskirts of Montreal to 4555 Draper Ave. To take a bus would be foolish, being too time-consuming with bus schedules being what they are. Besides, I'd enjoy a leisurely drive to Montreal. I really appreciate very much your concern for me!

By the way, if it wouldn't inconvenience you, could you phone Abramovitz, if he knows Massé's and Peggy Cassidy's phone numbers. I just might phone them while I'm in Montreal. Time will not permit my visiting anybody, as you can well realize.

On the Judge Parker and Mary Worth comics, Ella is mailing them to you regularly. I'd suggest you first check the dates on the cartoons for the sake of chronological order. Chubbi asked me why don't I give you a sub to the *Globe*. Chubbi is staying over for a couple days.

I imagine you will hear from others about the picnic. Everyone seemed to have a swell time.

Must close now, as I'll have to take a nap. Can you hear Ella hollering: "When are you going to sleep?"

AUGUST 4, 1961

[This letter is addressed to an old Montreal contact with whom Rab had reconnected on his recent trip there.]

My Dear Sam (Abramovitz):

A note of appreciation for a kindred spirit. I'm looking forward to seeing more of you in the future, both in Boston and in Montreal. One thing I can't promise is to be a good correspondent. This is my great weakness, neglect and procrastination in writing. The intent is there but not the execution. Only when the situation demands, do I write. It is because I'm so favorably impressed with you as a human being, that I am here at the typewriter.

What tricks mental lapses play on us. When you showed me Jungk's *Brighter than a Thousand Suns*, I was thinking only in terms of a book on theoretical physics. It so happens that Paul and I were discussing some recent books, such as *The Strange Story of the Quantum*, by Barresh Hoffman, which he recommended highly, that my mind was working cockeyed. The minute I started reading the book on the plane, I remembered reading it when it first came out. I also had read another book by the same author on his visits to various inaccessible high priority research centers. It was a remarkable book of keen reporting and significant observations. I can't recall the title of the book. I consider both books important documents of the times. After letting Harry Morrison look through it, I shall mail it to Karla with your compliments.

As long as I'm at the typewriter, I can't resist a few words on that much-abused word, "clichés." In a very real sense it belongs in the same category as "dogmatic" and "sectarian." These are the favorite clichés that are applied to Marxism, in general, by the hosts of bourgeois critics of Marxism, the intellectual dilettantes, the reformers and do-gooders, the progressives, the Labor Parties, and the "leftists." Not that I'm tagging you as a bedfellow of these schools of thought. These labels are the favorite criticism of those who consider themselves as being practical and realists. Ironically, these "practical realists" are impractical as can be in coming to grips with the social problems of the day and, especially, in knowing what to do about them. The word "cliche" has become a shibboleth hurled against Marxist thought.

From your use of the phrase "Marxian methodology" I realize you are but echoing the theme of one train of thought I developed in my talk.

Recall, if you will, my emphasis that socialism is not a matter of belief or faith; that socialism is a matter of knowledge based on a scientific understanding of social forces, and that if the evidence of unfolding events repudiates socialist analyses and fails to corroborate socialist conclusions, it should be discarded.

In my talk I also mentioned that I felt it essential to establish a sound understanding of the nature of capitalism as developed from socialist knowledge, in order to make an intelligent appraisal of the New Party nonsense. Yet, these New Party supporters fancied themselves as well acquainted with Marxian clichés, of which they really had no inkling.

Another aspect of the same general import: When scholars really come to grips with scientific problems and they search for objective answers, they reach Marxian conclusions, whether their fields are in the exact or in the social sciences. No longer is it possible to get meaningful answers without recognizing the physical-material nature of existence, which is the heart and core of Marxism. Thus we see the greater strides in the exact sciences than in the social sciences. Capitalism does not fear the truth in the exact sciences because of the very needs of capitalism itself.

Note, on this score — how this applies to Marxian economics, in particular — I'll make the unqualified statement that nothing has taken place in recent developments during the past 20 years that has even remotely repudiated the wage-labor and capital basis of 1961 capitalism. This also applies to the following: the prime object of production is the production of commodities to be sold on the market with a view to profit; that the accumulation of capital is accompanied by and concomitant with the production of surplus values; that there does take place a class struggle both economically and politically; that the transformation of ownership from entrepreneurs to gigantic combines and state ownership still finds a class whose members are the "eaters of surplus value," even though they may be government bond holders, bureaucracy or a party. The general analyses of Marxian economics even on problems of inflation, money, gold, etc., have not been found invalid. But, we have seen, time and time again, new fads in modern economics come and go, popular today and forgotten tomorrow. Keynes is a good example.

All of which brings me to the thing that really concerns me, most of all.

What is the task of those dedicated to arousing their fellow workers to become socialists? It is first of all to help uproot superstitions and to spread knowl-

edge and understanding. Only the workers can emancipate themselves. The only factor in all the material conditions of today that I can see standing in the way of socialism is the political ignorance of the workers. Socialism is possible, necessary and practical today the moment the great majority become conscious of their interests. The notion that the workers are dumb is plain hogwash. They are confused, especially the "friends" of socialism, speaking in the name of socialism. It still remains the case that, aside from the feeble voices of the World Socialist Movement, the great mass of the workers are not exposed to socialist fundamentals.

Our task is hard enough as it is. But despite the discouragements and disappointments, it takes a heap of understanding to realize the forces working for socialism. The greatest ally we have is capitalism itself. The greatest teacher of all is experience. Eventually, all the groping and mistaken diversions into futile efforts of reforming and administering capitalism will run their course. People learn from their mistakes. Necessity is the latent strength of socialism. Truth and science are on the side of socialism. Nothing is stronger than an idea come of age. (These are not just trite clichés.) It is easy to be cynical and sneer at socialist efforts. But, with mankind facing the alternative of socialism or chaos, you don't have to be a Pollyanna to realize that we are on the eve of significant social changes. Already, you have seen indications in this direction in the thinking of men everywhere. But I had no intention of writing any such letter as this. I got immersed in this train of thought.

When you can, send me your Cuba article.

SEPTEMBER 29, 1961

My dearest Karla and favorite George:

I'm all alone in the house and this will enable me to concentrate a bit on rambling remarks as they occur to me. This will be an unofficial answer to various and sundry matters of interest. So, overlook any incoherencies or illogical (irrelevant) non-sequiturs.

First of all, I love you both and miss both of you very much. Besides, I'm proud of you both, On my trip to Detroit and Chicago I was tempted on several occasions to brag about you both but refrained because I didn't want to interfere with proud parents and grandparents' moments of glory. All I ever said was that my children were socialists and as for their accomplishments let their works speak for themselves. (How was that for restraint.) (I don't distinguish generations when I think of my children. Believe it or not, I've always felt as being of the same generation; slightly less so in the case of Denise and Karl but definitely so in your case.)

I'm hastening to answer your letter that just arrived about an hour ago. One healthy and wonderful improvement in headquarters work resulted from the recent Conference. Every Monday and on an occasional Friday there are members working in headquarters on clerical details. We are having a Party business meeting tonight and your requests for pamphlets, etc., will be turned over to them for immediate processing. You got the circular letters all right? I'll tell them to rattle off an extra 100 for safety's sake. I assume you received the first batch.

Incidentally, somehow I had a sneaking suspicion that Boom might make a surprise visit to the Conference. I did send him, c/o you, a copy of Hardy's article in the latest *SS* on the Khrushchev promises. It should be very helpful to him in clarifying the confusions. I can really understand how a literal acceptance of the Khrushchev statements could be very thrilling, if they are taken at face value, instead of being understood in their context. I'm only hoping that this article proves useful.

I listened to my Montreal tape and to Gilmac's six short talks on Dialectical Materialism, M.C.H., Labor Theories of Value Before Marx, Value and Price, Money, and Surplus Value. They are all short — between 20 minutes and a half-hour. They are gems of clarity and brevity. (Make my tapes sound very inferior). Billie is going to make two copies of Gilmac's tape for general distribution: one Down Under and the other throughout

Canada. What a valuable means of conducting a meeting for educational and propaganda purposes! What a help in those areas where just such tapes are especially needed. As for my Montreal tape, I was satisfied with the contents but very unhappy with my sloppy manner of talking. It seemed to me that the contents rose above the delivery and made them useful, in spite of the speaker. If results count, the talk was well worthwhile only because the subject matter treated made it worth listening to and it was obviously well received. Witness just two reactions: the spark plug of the New Party, Alex, who personally told me of his impressions (and I don't believe he was just spoofing in the circumstances), and what you say about Trevor Goodger-Hill's interest in the Party.

Which reminds me: Application blanks for Montreal must be obtained from the SPC. Write J. Milne, 601 Garwood Ave., Winnipeg, Manitoba ... Incidentally, Jim Milne has not only fond but vivid memories of you as a little shaver. Let's hope one result of the Montreal meeting is a local.

It was wonderful to read your letter describing the work you and, especially, that dynamo George, are doing on behalf of the Montreal Gilmac activities. Mail your bill for expenses direct to the NAC c/o Harry Morrison. I don't think it would be fair to bill Winnipeg because our treasury is in the best shape in years on account of some good donations. And, after all, we are really one organization, except for national considerations for organizational procedures and political activities.

I have 2 copies of *Anthropogenesis* in the house. One may be George's. At all events, I shall mail it to him under separate cover.

On the Toronto TV, it so happens that Comrade Edith Canter in Detroit has a friend in Toronto connected with a radio station who may be of help for getting Gilmac a hearing. She has written the Catts but I don't know what has resulted as yet.

I was hoping that Gilmac might have an opportunity to see something of New York. And he still can! I don't see why he must return to Boston on the 12th. He can return on the 14th just as well. This may work out very well. For, I know Gilmac puts Party first, last and always. However, as long as he is in New York, he should see the Museum of Natural History, Bronx Park, top of the Empire State Building, and other things he will never have another opportunity to see. At all events, I'll take it up with the local Party meeting tonight and get their reactions. If they agree I'll write Sam Orner pronto.

Incidentally, I had two letters from England, from Hilda [*Gilmac's wife*] and Harry Young. They both emphasized "take good care of Mac, he is priceless." The Youngs have friends in Norwalk, Ct., and are thinking of coming to the USA next year. By the way, he is a school teacher and one of the better SPGB speakers. Unfortunately, you did not meet him in England. He just came back from guiding a group of American school teachers through Europe. He has the same impression of Spain you had. He writes an interesting letter, as does Mrs. Young. They sound like a wonderful couple. He writes under the pen name, Horatio, in the *SS*. Her letters speak volumes for her concern and understanding, and she has a mind of her own and is not afraid to think and express her views. She usually writes on behalf of Harry, because he has my negligent habits in correspondence.

By the way, when you see Sam Abramovitz, remind him I'm looking forward to getting the French magazine with the article he referred me to. Also we got a letter from Peggy Cassidy in Montreal. Have you met her yet? If not, try to contact her. We are trying to cooperate with her in getting information about her parents as you may have seen in the last NAC minutes.

A word on the Detroit-Chicago tour. In Detroit, there was organized a Discussion Group. It seems that it will succeed in filling a gap that exists in Detroit today. There is no activity worthy of the name taking place in any of the so-called "radical" organizations. There was a desire apparent for just such an activity by the WSP. Two committees were elected, to get a permanent hall, and to get furniture for the hall. (Ask Gilmac about Detroit.) Edith Canter is going to arrange socials and entertainments. In fact she had a good folk singer at this organizational meeting with his guitar and working-class and revolutionary songs, besides a buffet lunch and social time at the Glicmans'. But you can have Gilmac fill in the details.

Mardon was down to two of the four meetings in Detroit. She told me that she has really missed WSP contacts. It was a pleasure to see how she desired closer associations with real work. She has problems, as you know: four sweet children and housework and school teaching and other time consuming tasks. If you remind me, I have interesting news to tell you of a personal nature that I'm proud to have been a factor in straightening out but this can wait until another time.

You will be amazed to see the real planetarium that Dalton is building. The Museum of Science helped him out with some discarded equipment and junkyards furnished other material he needed. You know how intri-

cate and complex such an instrument is. He is building it for Joe Lyle, who has an idea of showing it at schools, 4H clubs, Boys' Clubs, etc...

As for the Chicago phase of the propaganda tour, that Sam Orner and I carried out. We did get 4 newsstands to display the *WS*. These were all stands that featured out-of-town papers. (This is an idea for Montreal both *SS* and *WS*. What do you think about it? If it impresses you, let me know and I'll give you further particulars.) Sam was interviewed by newspaper reporters on the basis of his Taxi union activities. On the University of Chicago and Roosevelt University campuses we got encouraging responses in the sense that eyes lit up at the mention of a socialist meeting. I got one sub on campus and three came down to the meeting. (I forgot to mention, we got a new member in Detroit and laid the groundwork for reviving the Detroit local.) In Chicago, we have two good prospects for new members. We have a lot of spade work to do in Chicago, for we never did have any activity there. Next year we are thinking of going to Philadelphia and Baltimore.

Now for more personal matters. I changed over your closet into a linen closet. I built 5 shelves in it plus making the bottom drawer really work. Besides, I used the backboard of the hutch that Ann had hand decorated for a leaf extension on the radiator cover for the telephone. It always looked like a nice piece of furniture, now it really looks unique. Ann was the designer and I was the artisan.

Dr. Friedberg was here for a visit from Miami, as you may have heard. It seems that, all unwittingly, we were very callous with him. We really did not realize what his object was in coming. He wanted to get into the Home for the Aged and we were not aware of this. We all feel terrible about this. Especially cruel was that the relative that invited him (she shall be nameless, you don't know her but it was one of Becky's relatives) was anxious to send him right back to Miami and complicated matters. We got a scorching letter from Mashie in Miami, berating us as fine examples of socialist behavior. To tell the truth, I don't blame him for it has all the appearances. It only proves what I've always contended: It is easy to condemn. I've been called "Jesus Christ," so often for being "naïve" and "trusting" and so forth. We always assume we know, and more often than not, we really don't know the true facts. It is very easy to assume a position of judging. Unfortunately we ask "logical" questions why and how do you explain, etc. I call such questions, district attorney

questions. Another thing, we have lost that very precious thing: sympathetic understanding. It is a pity! I didn't mean to get off on this tack but I'm just taking advantage of you to unburden myself. Better not mention anything about this! I can't help but say that one of the severest indictments of capitalism is what it does to human beings.

I'm surprised that George objects to his instructor who understands the Christian basis of ethics, society, literature and what have you. He must be one of those damned atheistic materialists. What kind of guy did you marry? All joking aside, here's wishing him the best in his school work, if he can be involved in worthwhile studies, all the better! I see you are now working in the McGill library. Maybe you can squeeze in some extra "educational" credits, or am I out of order? If so, just overlook it.

I'm coming to the end of the page, and I've been a couple hours on this letter (that's the kind of typist I am), so I'll close now. I warned you it would be an incoherent jumble of rambling thoughts.

With all my love to you both,

Comradely and affectionately,

Rab

PS Denise is arranging a talk by me at Weeks Jr. High.

ocTQBER 13, 1961

11 Faneuil Hall Sq.,
Boston 9, Mass,

My dear Comrade Mike (Stimac):

The National Administrative Committee (as you already know) has approved your membership in the World Socialist Party of the United States. Here's my hand! Especially since I had the thrill of witnessing at close hand your enthusiasm and devotion to socialist aims and activities.

There are two items in your Application Blank that could be misunderstood by those who did not have the opportunity to speak with you personally as, Comrades Orner, Gilmac and myself did.

The NAC has instructed me to write you about these two points and to enclose another Application Blank for you to fill out for the records only.

Both items appear in your answer to Question 5: "Must we have leaders to obtain our object?" Your answer was "Yes. to educate the workers politically and economically towards socialism and community government."

The primary objective of this question was to discover if the applicant believes that we must have leaders (great men) to direct their followers (blind supporters) into a socialist society. Otherwise, this question has no significance.

Teachers are not leaders any more than writers or speakers are leaders. Their function is to spread knowledge and understanding so that the workers, the conscious majority, may emancipate themselves. Quite a different story, is it not? (In the interview with you at the Glicman meeting in Detroit hearing your answers to the Application Blank you gave an excellent explanation on this very point, so we are well aware of your understanding of this matter. It was only the poverty of language that is involved in the answer you wrote down.)

The other item was the "community government" quoted above. The word "government" is often confused with the word "administration." It is a very common misconception, until one realizes that "government" is but a synonym for the "state," that is, rulers and ruled; governors and governed. (Although all governments have a secondary function of administering social affairs, it is a secondary function that is subordinate to its primary function of ruling society in the interest of the ruling class.)

Where the social relationships of private property exist, there is a need for state machinery (a government) to keep the people in check and under control, as well as to protect the national ruling class interests against the rivalries of foreign "enemies." Thus, we have had governments in chattel slave, feudal, and capitalist societies. Primitive tribal societies were typically administered communally and had no governments, as such.

Socialism is a classless society, *without rulers and ruled*. a genuine democracy where there exists a real community of interests between all the members of society and society as a whole. It is a social administration of affairs where everyone cooperates in the common interests according to his abilities and desires; where human beings live useful, interesting and meaningful lives.

In this connection, Question 3 on the Application Blank has special significance. It asks: "To establish socialism, must the workers first gain control of the powers of government through their political organization?" It is the recognition that the state is the central organ of power in the hands of the capitalist class. By gaining control of the powers of state, the socialist majority are in a position to transfer the means of living from the parasites, who own them, to society, where they belong. This is the only function or need the working class has of the state/government. As soon as the revolution has accomplished this task, the state is replaced by the socialist administration of affairs. There is no government in a socialist society.

Yours for a world fit for human beings, here and now.

OCTOBER 13, 1961

[The following note was enclosed in the same envelope as the above letter to Mike Stimac. Rab ran out of room at the bottom of the page. KDR, 2006]

Dearest George and Karla:

I made an extra copy of this for you, with malice aforethought. It is an object lesson that it is not necessary to be Marxian pundits to be qualified for membership. I wish you could meet the comrade. He could be a symbol of the common conception of an “average, overalls worker.” He oozes genuine devotion to socialism in every pore of his body. He is a far cry from a scholar, but a worker eager and anxious to do what he can for socialism. *And* he has a real understanding of what it is all about. But he is not “literate” in the scholastic sense. Over the past nine months he has bought all kinds of literature to read, leaflets to distribute, a lifetime sub and made substantial contributions. He reminded me of George, in the sense of being a dynamo, but he lacks George’s skills and finesse. It is the Mike Stimacs who are the backbone of the movement, when the chips are down. Even his very name seems to fit him. If one were to write a novel of a factory worker, the name “Mike Stimac” seems to fill the bill. He worked hard to push the Detroit meetings, but he is no George Gerell — that is a matter of variation of ability.

Bob Nathanson had another heart attack. He was rushed to the hospital, but he is back home recovered, as it were. He told me that Larry was offered the chief resident physician job in Stanford University Hospital. He was very flattered to receive such an offer but he prefers to settle around Boston or the East Coast, at least, and turned it down.

Will be seeing Gilmac Sunday and will get all the news. For the nonce, I’m really in the dark as to what transpired. You (Whoa! I see I must stop here.)

Papa Rab

[I wrote this to Rab from Montréal in response to the letter on the previous page. The rest of it is rambling and personal.]

Oct 18, 1961

Dear "Papa au Chocolat" -

(French for Chocolate Grandfather, of course -)

It's always so heart warming to get a letter from you! I warn you, I'm going to publish your collected letters (as many as I can find of them) someday, in lieu of the book you really ought to write!

You asked me to tell you all about Mac's visit, but since you have him with you now, I guess he's already done that by himself...

(By the way, when he was here, he mentioned that he wanted very much to see Cape Cod, so if he hasn't gotten there yet, why don't you try to make some arrangement.)

About a Montreal local.
(And this is not for HQ, but

November 12, 1961

[A letter regarding the new discussion group in Detroit.]

Dear Comrades Kobus and Edith Canter:

Please excuse my delay in writing you concerning your questions about the Detroit Discussion Group. Even before I could answer, I had to consult the NAC for their opinions. On top of this, I was involved in an avalanche of work: the time-consuming work of the *WS* editorial work with Comrade Morrison on editing, proofreading, revising, laying out dummy, etc. Then the job of transcribing Gilmac's talk on tape on Dialectical Materialism for the *Western Socialist*. (It is in the new issue about to appear.) I had to do a little research for a talk and an article on Africa. So, please realize that it was because of pressures of time, including working for a living, that was responsible and not neglect or unconcern.

I trust you found Comrade Catt's letter helpful for the discussion group procedures. Special efforts should be made in Detroit for new subs for the *WS* and *SS*, especially the *WS*. Also efforts should be made to get more newsstands.

I looked through the periodical, *Correspondence*, that Comrade Orner forwarded to me. (It was Vol. V Oct. 1961.) I had never seen it or heard of it before. I would like to have met them when I was in Detroit. Speaking only for myself, I have an empathy (not sympathy) for the Wobblies, anarchists and similar groups. Their "instincts" are genuinely proletarian. I have a sort of a bond for them. From the issue I saw, I have an impression that their thinking is along such lines. When the chips are down, as they were in Spain, their activities were neither pro-Russian nor pro-liberalism and patriotic. They are not in the camp of capitalism, at least not consciously, in the same sense as the Bolsheviks, Social Democrats or social reformers.

Just because of their misunderstandings of Marxian science, their grasp of the social forces at work is limited. In spite of their "instincts," they do spread serious confusions, as noted in their critical attitude to the political nature of the socialist revolution: the highest expression of the class struggle.

As soon as time permits, I hope to write a letter to them briefly summarizing my criticisms, such as: James Boggs's view that "everybody in the U.S. should have a right to a job." Or "all the proceeds of American productivity and taxation should go to these purposes (education, medical

care, etc.).” What socialists oppose, above all, is jobs, the very badge of slavery and exploitation. Under socialism, the social relations are those of common right of access by all men to satisfy their needs and wants. Jobs are not “rights” except in a bourgeois sense. As for taxes, they are essential to the maintenance of the capitalist state. In fact, in the long run, the workers don’t pay taxes, which are based on property ownership. All that happens is that the workers function as transfer agents via withholding taxes, sales tax and the like, resulting from the quarrels among the various sections of the capitalist class to shift the burden of taxation. As far as the workers are concerned, these “taxes” are but a reduction in wages.

Then there is Frank’s report on Cuba. I liked it very much. It was objective and he can write. We could use his abilities and style in the *WS*. But, he sees a “socialist humanity” in Cuba. I only wish it were true. What he actually saw were encouraging signs of growing maturity and evolution of thinking as well as indications of what can take place when an idea comes of age.

The dilemma of Cuba and of the new “independent” native nations of Africa and Asia is their belated emergence into capitalism in a shrunken world already ripe for socialism in the mid 20th century. They are too late for capitalism and too early for socialism. They can only function as new state capitalisms with all kinds of state “economic planning.” These new “independent” nations, tied as they must be to the major powers for aid, trade, economic needs, etc., soon develop their own native ruling classes and native bureaucracies. All this, mind you, in the name of “socialism” and with “socialist” leaders.

In particular, let us not forget the great damage to the revolutionary socialist movement by the Russian Revolution. The energies and enthusiasms for socialism were dissipated and diverted from socialism. Disillusioned by Russian developments of the validity of the socialist case, superstitions now develop concerning mixed economies and fascist or new types of capitalisms appearing on the historic scene and other new “profundities.” Socialism has been retarded many years by the erroneous concepts of Russia in the sense that it weakened Marxian organizations, fighting and agitating for socialism.

It still remains true that, in spite of appearances, the Russian Revolution was not a socialist one. A socialist revolution there, in the absence of a socialist revolution in the West, was not as yet possible in 1917. This lesson should be borne in mind in respect to Cuba, Africa and Asia.

On second thought, you are at liberty to show these rough notes to *Correspondence*, to be used as a "Reader's View," if they wish. I honestly don't know when I'll be able to get my desk clear to tackle it the way I would like to.

To Kobus: special regards to Mary. Give Stimac a special shake of the hand. I was very impressed by his enthusiasms for socialist principles and for WSP policies. He is the genuine article. The Stimacs are the real backbone of the movement.

To Edith: Special regards to your daughter. Give my very best to all those I met in Detroit.

Here's my hand to both of you!

TANUARY 12, 1962

[Anther letter regarding the new discussion group in Detroit.]

My dear Comrade Edith (Canter):

At long last, and after several starts, I've set everything aside to answer your last letter (a very thrilling one to me). I've just completed the dummy pages of the new issue of the *WS*. I believe you will like the new issue. It will contain an excellent article on the John Birch Society, especially worthy of review in the discussion group because of some prevalent confusions regarding American "fascism." It is amazing the many immediate and "burning issues" that constantly crop up to divert "revolutionists" and "leftists" from socialism, as though anything could be more current than socialism itself, which is the real burning issue. The realization that Russia had put back socialism many years gave rise to my article on the "Dilemma of Africa" in the new issue. It is tragic to observe the excitement of so many sincere devoted partisans of Cuba, Africa and Asia for the growing "socialism" (translated: state capitalism) taking place. Unwittingly, these enthusiasms are obstacles and hindrances to socialist work. It is about time that friends of socialism realized that socialist work is: socialist organization, socialist education, and socialist fervor. In its place they are working for administering and reforming capitalism, which is choking society, no matter what form it takes. In this connection, this fellow, Devore, of Edmonton, Canada, has a swell article on Catch Phrases and Slogans. All in all, this is one of our better issues and should prove to be very helpful to the Detroit comrades in clarifying the issues involved. The great pity is to see this refusal to learn the lessons of experience and to observe the persistence of "socialist" superstitions that merely echo the old clichés of "practical realism." It is amusing to listen to the scorns and sneers directed against "dogmatic sectarians" by those who cling to proven futilities in spite of the evidence of the workings of social forces. I trust that 11 Faneuil Hall Sq. sent you the back issues containing our criticisms of the New Democratic Party in Canada that you requested.

Enclosed is a copy of a letter I sent to *Correspondence*. It will have to substitute for a personal discussion for the time being. By the way, it is interesting to note that *Views and Comments* (Anarchists, mind you, who are critical of Marxism) have a better grasp of Cuban developments than does *Correspondence*. Weiner, editor of *Views and Comments*, has a well- docu-

mented article in a recent issue of the *Industrial Worker* (IWW) quoting from original sources in Cuba on the relations between Castro and the Cuban rebels. It is very revealing reading, especially in view of the characteristics that distinguish a socialist revolution from bourgeois insurrections.

It is a pity that circumstances thwart the active participation of comrades from other places, to be side by side with the three Detroit stalwarts. Under the circumstances, you are doing valiant work. The important thing is that, through your efforts, *many who would not otherwise be exposed to socialist influences* are becoming aware of the socialist case. Here we see in action, socialism in practice. Note well, you cannot separate socialism in practice from socialism in theory. The very essence of socialist theory is democracy — the conscious, majority, political nature of the socialist revolution. Socialism is not the result of blind faith, followers, or, by the same token, vanguards and leaders. Nothing is more repugnant to socialism than clever strategy and conspiratorial tactics. Socialism is not possible without socialists. What makes socialist work stirring and inspiring is not that there are short cuts and royal roads, but that there is nothing else worth a tinker's damn. The seeming failures, the disappointments and discouragements, the slow growth, only indicate that socialist work is not an easy task. Our satisfaction is that the latent strength of the movement is that it makes sense, and when the great majority wake up and socialist ideas come of age, then socialism, a world fit for human beings, becomes invincible.

I enjoyed your descriptions of the Discussion Group activities. It was an objective report. It reminded me of the past. It recalled to memory the picnics, concerts, dances, singing, socials of bygone days in the movement. The growth of a social life and *esprit de corps* tied to socialist emotions and determination is a true barometer of growing maturity. The eve of socialist revolution will be dominated by such thrills. When rooted in the drive for socialism, it becomes an indomitable force. The great indictment of the Bolshevik fever and its counterparts today is just this. It diverts the growing fervor for socialism into channels alien to socialism. I attended socialist Sunday school from 1899 to 1907. I joined the SPA in 1909. I have seen ups and downs in socialist emotions. Just recently, I skimmed through a volume of Wm Morris' letters and noted the sentiments for socialism expressed in many ways, one of which was a concert at which there were readings, music, recitations, community singing with Eleanor Marx, Edward Aveling, Belfort Bax, Wm Morris, George

Bernard Shaw (in his earlier days) and many others participating. We had it in Boston during the Hayward Place days. We had it very inspiringly in Detroit in the 1915 - 1918 period.

Your jazz musicians and their unassuming love of each other and their cooperative behaviors are normal for human beings; even capitalism has not been able to uproot man's gregariousness. What capitalism has done to human beings makes it unworthy of any support, especially in 1962 when conditions are ripe for socialism. You may be surprised to learn that our Dock Square headquarters was the place to go if you wanted real jazz. Three jazz musicians became members of the party. Nat Hentoff attended our study classes.

Finally, as for the next Party Conference. Personally, I'm all for holding it in Detroit, as you will note in the NAC minutes. There is a serious drawback and that is the difficulty of key workers in the detail and administrative phases of the party work going to Detroit. Milne in Winnipeg would go to either Detroit or Boston. The Catts would go to either city. I suspect that Karla and George Gerell from Montreal would prefer Detroit, only because of her reaction to your letter. (You remember Karla? She married a Montreal comrade and they are both members of the SP Canada. She visited us over the holidays.) I'm afraid that British Columbia comrades would find it difficult to attend. The decision will be made by the majority vote of the party referendum and I would not be surprised if the vote was for Boston.

My affectionate and comradely greetings to Kobus and Stimac.

Remember me to all friends and acquaintances.

February 3, 1962

My dear Comrade J.H. Williams:

Greetings and salutations! Here's my hand! Welcome to the ranks of the revolutionary socialist movement. The past few weeks have witnessed a minor breakthrough. Several youngsters have manifested an aroused interest in the socialist movement, whose only object is the inauguration of a sane world worthy of human beings which has at last become possible, practical and necessary. May it gather momentum.

Just this week still another young fellow wrote in:

".. I'm a student in a state teachers' college and your publication stimulated my hope that there remains in the Western Hemisphere a party advocating true, democratic and scientific socialism . I have learned that "socialist" parties are all too often either archaic hero-worship cults or mere appendages of the "Democratic" Party. Judging by the Declaration of Principles of the WSP, however, the WSP is a modern, intelligent working-class party and one that merits the support of every socialist ... I'd like to get in contact with the nearest local or nearby member ..I would like to learn more about the WSP and the international movement of which you are a part ... Allen E. Fineberg, 76 17th Ave., Paterson 3, N.J."

Maybe you'd like to write him. This "influx" is indicative of a growing maturity of scientific understanding coupled with revolutionary fervor. All of the new contacts were the products of the *WS* and their other reading rather than the results of personal associations and discussions — usually the more productive source of new recruits. It is reminiscent of one of Marx's comments: "20 years go by and you don't see the progress of a single day and then comes a day in which is crystallized the progress of 20 years."

As long as I'm writing to you, I'm enclosing some correspondence with *Views and Comments*. Because of your comments on *Views and Comments*, I thought you'd find them of interest. Please return them when you are through with them.

I'm a poor correspondent. It takes something "mandatory," to get me to the typewriter (I'm a slow, incompetent typist and an excellent hen-scratcher; "illegible hieroglyphics" would be a compliment). However, should you ever desire to come to grips with some problem of theory or any other matter, do not hesitate to write.

Must close now, yours for socialism,

Rab

P.S. Socialists are always optimists.

JUNE 1, 1962

[Written as a Letter to the Editor, Boston Globe.]

Dear Sir:

NUCLEAR WAR SOLUTIONS

Uncle Dudley (Friday, June 1, 1962) asks very meaningful question: "At a time when man is seeking the mastery of space, it is well to have reminders from time to time of earth hazards. But what do such reminders teach?"

Uncle Dudley notes that the Physicians for Social Responsibility organization urge "an energetic search for new solutions." Then, he adds that "surely, in many fields outside medicine there is need for such a quest."

Wonderful, as far as it goes! However, solutions require examination of causes. The basic cause for modern wars — including nuclear war — is capitalism, with its production for sale and its accompanying conflicts of national economic interests.

Conditions are now ripe for socialism, i.e., production for use and where all mankind cooperate in the common social interests. In a sane world fit for human beings the social forces breeding wars disappear. It is time for a breakthrough to a society in harmony with the tremendous technological developments of the last 100 years.

TUNE 7, 1962

[The young man to whom this next letter is addressed was the recipient of a letter from Rab welcoming him into the WSP in a letter dated Feb 3, 1962 (above). After a few months, the young man resigned from the Party.]

Dear Comrade Jim Williams,

Needless to say, we are reluctant to accept the resignation of a comrade whilst he is coming to grips with the fundamentals of socialist analyses. Thinking and re-examination are not violations of socialist discipline. It is no question of “heresy” that is involved, rather a matter of examining the evidence and basing our ideas and attitudes on this evidence.

In this letter, I will attempt to establish what is a socialist, and what are the qualifications for membership in the WSP

A socialist is one who understands that capitalism can no longer be reformed or administered in the interests of the working class or of society; and that capitalism is incapable of eliminating its inherent problems of poverty, wars, crises, etc. Further, a socialist recognizes that since the material conditions — with the single exception of an aroused socialist majority — are now ripe for the inauguration of socialism, socialism can offer a viable solution for those social problems.

The WSP is made up of socialists who share a unity of agreement on the above simple generalizations. Note that we are not engaged in a competition with other organizations in a contest to emancipate the workers, because we recognize that the workers are fully capable of emancipating *themselves*, once they become socialists. Just for the above reasons, it is quite unlikely that there ever would ever be two socialist parties in any one country. The WSP would have no other alternative but to merge with any other group of real socialist workers appearing on the scene organized for the same purpose as we are.

On the other hand, we do oppose all the so-called working-class parties which compromise with capitalism and do not uphold the socialist case. When the workers become socialists, they will not need a vanguard party to lead them. They will organize consciously and politically to emancipate themselves.

As to any fears that there is no room for differences of opinion in a socialist party, this simply isn't so. Socialists have varying opinions on

matters of a speculative nature, on interpretations of current events, on attitudes on music, painting and other cultural matters, specific aspects of science, even on projections of the actual workings of a socialist society. To cite a few examples: Socialism will (or will not) come in our lifetime; atomic wars (*not* wars in general) can be avoided by capitalist governments; trade unions (*not* unionism) are anti-working class today; and a host of others.

On the other hand, here are some items on which all members would agree: The conscious, majority, political nature of the socialist revolution; the material nature of existence; Marxian science on Materialist Conception of History; the Law of Value; the Class Struggle; attitudes on leadership, reformism, and religion; the general nature of socialism as a system of society.

It would be wonderful, indeed, if circumstances could permit you to be in Boston for the Conference. You would find a congenial socialist environment.

JUNE 14, 1962

My dear Bob (Calese):

Your letter, draft manuscript and \$5.00 check arrived OK. The spirit of your letter spoke volumes for you as a person. I admired your attitude very much. Incidentally, the validity of socialism or the socialist revolution does not hinge on the character of individual socialists. The acid test of the soundness of the socialist analysis can only be assayed in the crucible of the unfolding of social forces, themselves. This is why I, personally, avoid any *ad hominem* attacks or arguments because they prove exactly nothing. You know, one can be an "angel" and be dead wrong and vice versa.

On my way to work, I delivered your letter to Harmo (Harry Morrison) so that he might correspond with you directly on details for printing your criticism in the *WS*.

It goes without saying that your letter should be printed in the *WS*. The thrashing out of issues can lead to greater clarity of understanding. Although we are not primarily a debating society or discussion group, we are aware that the actions and activities we engage in reflect the quality of our knowledge and understanding. Our primary object is to change the world. The great obstacle to the socialist revolution, today, is ignorance, compounded by confusion and superstition. Who can deny that the historic conditions are ripe for socialism? Lest we forget, the job of emancipation is the task of the great majority, the working class. That is why we do not rely on leaders, intellectuals or vanguards.

The only matter I would emphasize to you is the need for your final draft to be about 1,500 words. This will allow about 3,000 words for your criticism and Harmo's reply (about 5 full pages in the *WS*).

AUGUST 11, 1962

(A letter to his sister Dinah with a statement on the futility of reformism. The event at Newton South High School referred to in this letter was arranged by Martin Smith, one of Comrade Len Feinzigs nephews.)

My dear Dinah,

Enclosed are three recent issues of the *WS*. I earnestly trust you to glance through them, especially the checked articles. You would be amazed at the growing impact and influence of the *WS*. Two incidents will suffice: the dean of the Univ. of Wash. wrote us that he finds the *WS* indispensable for his classes, and the head of the Sociology Dept. of Colby wrote for bundles of *WS*'s to give to his students. He also mentioned that he has made a display of *WS*s on his bulletin board to illustrate the real case for socialism.

Forgive me if I seem unduly impatient with you! It is becoming increasingly apparent — from that old master teacher, the experiences of life — that do-gooding reformism, “community” efforts, even the mistaken resistance of real heroes like the anti-segregationists and anti-bomb demonstrators, are all futile in coming to grips with the problems that concern them. The “practical” men all turn out to be merely utopian visionaries. The times call for socialist enthusiasm, fervor, and determination to speedily put an end to the chaos and dire effects of today’s world. The nonsense of the propaganda hokum: “You never had it so good!” is becoming only too obvious for all to see. *Socialism in 1962* is the only live issue of the day!

Also find a clipping sent me from the Newton South High School paper. There were 125 kids in the lecture hall and the response to the socialist case was good to see, especially the grilling given to the Conservative.

Above all, it would be wonderful if you would take in at least one of the items of the conference, listed on page 2 of No. 4 - 1962 *WS*.

Affectionately yours,

Ike

OCTOBER 10, 1962

My very dear Bob Calese:

Just as I was about to write you, in comes the mailman with your marked copy of the latest WS, with your critical comments on Har-mo's treatment of your views. As soon as I see him, I'll give them to him. As long as I'm writing you anyways, a few thoughts that occurred to me:

In my eyes, you are in a dilemma because you are riding two horses running in different directions. Your Pacifist horse is all "het up" with the burning issue of eliminating the horrors of nuclear war, tantamount to mitigating the workings of a vicious system. Your Socialist horse is genuinely concerned with a revolutionary change in society, eliminating the cause of all wars, including the nuclear one.

My dear Bob, the sad thing here is that the lessons of the past 75 years and more are lost on you. If there is one generalization that could be applied to the Bolsheviks, Social Democrats, those Anarchists who supported World War I on the issue of Fascism vs. Democracy, and those "Socialists" who supported both World Wars, it is that they stood for their pet "burning issue" *and* socialism. Recall the phrases: "Immediate Demands" and "Ultimate Demands." We used to be told and are still being told, that "in the meantime" we must fight for some "priority" issue and you revolutionary socialists should join our ranks to recruit for socialist objectives.

Observe the net result: Capitalism is being administered by "social-ists" and, in many cases, in the name of "socialism." There it is, in all its stark nakedness.

Had all that wasted energy (devoted, sincere, sacrificial as it may have been) been harnessed for socialism, what a movement — or society — we would now have! It is easy to forget that human beings are also part of the material conditions and that they play the active role in social change.

It is ironical that, in spite of your healthy revolutionary instincts (and there are hosts like you herein lies the latent strength of the socialist movement), you find yourself compelled to rationalize your defense of pacifism, and having to be in a camp that I fear is dis-tasteful to you because of the views of the majority of its partici-

pants, granting that there are many who have courage, dedication and deep sincerity.

As for your desire to write your criticisms of the WSP, it goes without saying that we welcome criticisms. The *WS* is primarily concerned with the most important work of agitating, educating and organizing for socialism. With our limited funds, we can only get out a 24-page paper. So, if you have several matters to thrash out, why not take one topic at a time? Incidentally, you'll be glad to hear we had to increase the last issue to 4,000 copies.

OCTOBER 12, 1962

[This letter is to Paul Mattick Jr. See Chapter 5 of the biography for insight on Rab's relationship to the Mattick family, and why Mattick Jr. is addressed here as "Otto. "]

My dear Otto:

Just a few comments on your school paper: "From Philosophy to Social Theory." I am very grateful to your father for his kindness in loaning it to me. If you ever have a spare copy, I'd greatly appreciate your giving it to me.

This essay gave internal evidence of your having really digested your significant reading. Your knack of selecting just the right quote, with the precise shade of meaning, illuminated your analysis.

You succeeded in placing Marx where he belongs: not as the creator and architect of scientific socialism, but as a brilliant thinker who drew general conclusions about the developments of his time. Note your statement: "*The Essence of Christianity* (Feuerbach) could be followed only by *The Communist Manifesto*." Again, your recognition that the evolving analyses by Kant, Fichte, Hegel, Feuerbach, the early Engels, and the young Marx were conditioned by the social and economic forces of the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Plus, your comment that what was lacking in the work of the pre-"Marxists" (my phrase), such as Hess, Stein, and the utopian socialists, were the discoveries (to use your language) of the role of the proletariat as the revolutionary principle, and that capitalist society, itself, is the agent of its own transformation. In a word, scientific socialist theories were ripe for expression.

Just as the young Marx, in the historic period of emerging materialist understanding of the new social theories, later developed into the mature Marx of revolutionary organization for social change, so I look forward to the young Mattick, a product of the period crying for a revolutionary change in society, becoming transformed into a participant in the actual introduction of a socialist society, a world fit for human beings, at long last possible, practical and necessary *today*, here & now.

In closing, is not the outstanding lesson of the past 75 years and more that the only meaningful and worthwhile task today is arousing our fellow workers in their mighty numbers to unite for socialism? Is that not tantamount to "unite for survival"? Your present concern with the "burning issue" of stopping nuclear wars (with the distasteful associates lined up

with you in this effort) is but an echo of other “burning issues” through the years. There have been so many who wanted Reforms and immediate demands (and the ultimate goal: *socialism*), or Democracy (and socialism) instead of Totalitarianism; Colonial freedom (and socialism), etc. Now, note the net result of all that energy spent on “burning issues” while real socialism stays on the back burner: capitalism is being administered by “socialists” and in many cases in the name of “socialism,” but we still don’t have socialism! The anti-Fascists have turned into Fascists, and the pacifists have turned into warmongers. The evidence is all standing there stark naked, in the history of World Wars I and II. What a movement or society we might have today, were it not for “burning issues.” Lest we forget: Human beings are also part of the material conditions and they must play the active role in social change.

December 4, 1962

[I do not know the identity of the person addressed here. Stuart Hughes, referred to in the letter, ran as an Independent for seat in the U.S. Senate vacated by J.F. Kennedy's election as President. His campaign was largely based on his opposition to nuclear warfare. — KDR]

Dear T.A. Ostrow,

Your prompt reply to my notations on Hughes's campaign circular speaks volumes for your concern for a peaceful world. This concern you share with the vast portion of mankind, including even the heads of state who may find themselves in the midst of a war they do not desire or want. The essence of these few remarks is: The obstacle to a peaceful world is the existence of a piece-full world (pieces of the *markeP*. pieces of territory, spheres of influence, raw materials, trade routes and other phases of capitalist society).

I am sending you, under separate cover, the following items: the *Communist Manifesto*, 10 leaflets, and 2 past issues of the WS. These are unmarked, but I would lay special stress on the running theme, as it were: elaborations of the distinction between nationalism and the class struggle. I trust that you will realize, after reading them, that the distinction between "we" and "they" is not a mere quibble, nor an exercise in mental gymnastics

Have you seen the 17-page mimeographed "A Platform Statement by Stuart Hughes"? Its theme is, in Hughes' own words, "an all-out nuclear war will destroy *American democracy*." (My emphasis.) This defense of U.S. capitalism emphasizes where Hughes really stands. He is not opposed to the sham counterfeit of a democracy, i.e., "American democracy." There were counterparts of Hughes — equally sincere, equally courageous — voicing quite similar convictions in England, France and Germany prior to both World Wars I and II. They were disturbed mightily with the "burning issues" of human destruction. With the outbreaks of war, because of their nationalism and patriotism ("we"), they became supporters of their countries on grounds of new "burning issues," such as the Kaiser and Hun brutalities or Hitlerian Fascism and Japanese treachery. These shining examples of pacifism included anarchists and "socialists."

As for the "internationalist" views of Hughes: his internationalism is not a socialist world without national sovereignties. Hughes's internationalism is but worldwide state capitalist alliances.

It is far easier, far more intelligent, far more in harmony with the world of 1962 to work and fight for socialism than to expect capitalism to function without wars. What is capitalism? That is the key question! Capitalism is a commodity society where goods are produced to be sold in the market with a view to profit. Capitalism is rooted in the social relations of production revolving around exploitation: capital/wage labor. The *Wall Street Journal* is more astute than the pacifists in observing that "War is nothing but business at an explosive stage."

After you have had an opportunity to read these items I sent you, I will be delighted to spend time with you exploring further this vital question of our times: the alternative facing mankind is Socialism or Chaos.

DECEMBER 27, 1962

[Davis, to whom this letter is addressed, was one of the old-time New York comrades.]

My dear Comrade Charlie Davis (and Hello, Ruthie, my love):

.. I have not read either *The Tangled Bank* by Stanley Edgar Hyman or *The Marxists* by G. Wright Mills. You may be perfectly correct that they misuse the word, "Marxists," in their books, which I most certainly will try to get. In fact, I'm inclined to believe that they *do* misuse the term. However, this does not vindicate your conclusion that they "point up the fallacy of adhering to the Marxist title." Here we are facing the problem of language as a living thing. An excellent case in point is the new, completely changed (not just revised, but starting from scratch) Merriam Webster dictionary. You must have seen some of the many reviews of this edition in the literary columns. The new edition is revolutionary. You would be amazed at some of the new definitions and the inclusions of so many "vulgar" and other words, hitherto considered beyond the pale. Such are the changes taking place in frankness — rather than hypocrisy — in moral concepts. This new edition is raising havoc in the publishing field because of its emphases on new usages, making obsolete so many of the accepted grammatical procedures. Just one item that it will take years to adjust to: the breaking of words.

Haven't we, from time to time, pointed out the misuse and *manhandling* of such words as: Materialism, Dialectics, Value, Capital, and a host of others? To us, a scientifically valid definition is a key item! Merely substituting other words for "socialism," "wealth," "Jew" (that arch example of distorted definitions), and so many more illustrations I could mention, does not solve the problem. However, there is no substitute for scientific definitions that relate to the analyses and understanding of processes and relationships. All that is accomplished by changing new words for old is that the substituted word, in its turn, becomes subjected to the same abuses that the original word was subjected to. There is no question of the connotation of "Marxism," in the scientific, let alone the historical, understanding of the word, in spite of its "friends" and "enemies."

Now, a word on your criticism of Gilmac's "Russia Puts the Clock Back" in the June 1962 SS. Ask yourself these questions: Can you deny that the Russian Revolution did have a corrosive effect on the World Socialist

Movement everywhere, especially in the period from 1917 - 1935? Is it Sunday Supplement stuff that the Russian Revolution *did* stir and inspire large segments of our own members? Have you forgotten the sneers and scorn heaped on us by those who should have known better because we "did not recognize a socialist revolution when it took place"? In light of developments, which revealed a healthy "instinct" (groping) for a society, Gilmac was, in my humble opinion, more than justified in saying that the World Socialist Movement would be a far greater force and factor today had it not been for the wasted energies and illusions of the Bolshevik counterfeits as far as a genuine socialist revolutionary movement is concerned.

TANUARY 8, 1963

My very dear comrade Aime' (And a hug and kiss for Virginia):

It came as quite a surprise to me to learn from Comrade Don Poirier that, some time ago, you had written a letter to headquarters that you were considering continuing your membership in the party. No one else can recall such a letter. Of course, we would have entered into correspondence with you on this matter. And we would have respected your final wishes.

Your letter must have been lost in the mails. A common complaint in the Boston Postal District is the notorious service. Just recently a friend told me of some experiences of his that seem incredible.

Since no action was ever taken or discussed regarding this matter, you are at liberty to reconsider whatever impulse may have triggered your letter, in my opinion. All of us are creatures of sudden actions. The effects of disappointments and discouragements do leave their mark when it seems that all is in vain. But the validity and urgent necessity of a socialist majority to inaugurate a socialist society — a world fit for human beings — is the driving force for us to keep on keeping on. Socialists are basically optimists because they realize that people are not dumb and morons but only confused. Can it be denied that socialism is practical and necessary here and now if man is to survive? I've coined a slogan: The obstacle to a peaceful world is the existence of a pieceful world! This says it all, in the sense that capitalism can neither be reformed or administered in the interest of society or of the working class.

Having so recently received two inspiring letters from Virginia impels me to urge you to write the NAC on your present reactions and intentions. It is tough enough getting new members, without losing old ones. The next NAC meeting will be on Jan. 20, 1963.

Once one has become convinced of the socialist case on grounds of understanding, and not mere belief, it is difficult to be sold a bill of goods, such as genesis, flat world, and the host of superstitions, including "socialist" ones. In this vein, I just got a significant letter from Comrade Betty (Hoffman) Hennebury in key West. You must remember her from the old days. She wrote: "...I am sending a small check. Although the children's toys seem so important at this time, I know that this is the best present I can give them ..My political convictions have never changed and I doubt they ever will." All this after a very long silence. This is the latent strength of the socialist movement.

Incidentally, you would be intrigued with Vincent Hennebury (Betty's husband). He is a full man, in the William Morris sense. He is a sculptor whose modern "junk" sculpture has been featured in a magazine article; an artisan who built his own coastwise boat and sailed it from Boston to Key West; a poet of sorts and a really great guy. He is sympathetic to the WSP but has never really been exposed to WSP environments.

JANUARY 10, 1963

To the Editor of *The Boston Herald*,
300 Harrison Ave.,
Boston, Mass.

Dear Sir:

FRAZIER AND THE PRINTERS' STRIKE

"AT MY EXPENSE the man is grabbing for glory and yet he refuses to speak to me," complains George Frazier in the *Boston Herald*, Jan. 8, 1963. In his typical malicious manner, he attacks the printers in the New York newspaper strike: "After all, it is my business if I must spend three dollars a month (in Newspaper Guild assessments). There must be a better way to do so than to build up Bertram A. Powers.* I'm a working man too, for God's sake!"

Even *Time Magazine*, in its Jan. 4, 1963 issue, described Frazier as "possibly the most despised man in Boston ... with the habit of erecting insults on the very borderline of libel."

Let's take a brief glimpse at the basic issues involved in the New York newspaper strike. The membership of Local 6 (Big Six), New York Typographical Union, was faced with obstinate publishers who demanded that newspaper printers accept a pattern established by the publishers. The door was closed to negotiations. When the patience of the New York printers was exhausted, they voted overwhelmingly to strike. Even at that, they struck only five of the nine New York newspapers. Four of them were at liberty to continue publication, if their *real* concern was "the public interest." It is not because of the printers that New York City is without newspapers, despite the hypocritical preachings of the sanctimonious moralists with their "public-be-damned" attitudes arising from their workers-be-damned point of view.

Condescendingly, Frazier claims he "loves labor" whose endeavors have given us "the better way of life." But when labor seeks to obtain a better way of life, Frazier opposes it for not being "reasonable." Labor had to fight every inch of the way to gain what little it has. Only by resisting the

*Bertram A. Powers was the president of Local #6 of the New York Typographical Union, which was often referred to as "Big Six." The 114-day strike he led against the city's seven daily newspapers was ultimately successful.

pressures of unsatisfactory working conditions, too little pay, too long hours and other hardships did labor achieve any results. Frazier proposes as a cure-all that "labor and management sit down and not arise until both sides have accomplished working conditions without woe." He overlooks that his proposal does not eliminate the woes. There is a basic conflict of economic interests. Employers must be concerned with lowering labor costs; employees must be concerned, at the minimum, with a sufficient wage to support their families. It is as simple as that. This fact of life is what gave rise to unionism in the first place.

Smug Frazier purrs that "the labor movement was created for the comfort, not the distress of the working man." Thus he reveals his ignorance of the history of unionism. The labor movement was not created by philanthropists. The International Typographical Union was organized 'way back in 1848, making it the oldest, continuous union in the United States. It arose because of the solidarity of union men in their common interests. This very solidarity gave rise to democratic procedures. Especially is this true of the ITU. Every clause in the ITU Book of Laws had to be submitted to referendum; no assessment can be made without a referendum; no action can be taken without the approval of the membership. The members are watchdogs, constantly on the alert for abuses of sound unionism. The union is controlled by its members and not by any officialdom.

To paraphrase George Frazier, there are better ways to protect the interests of labor than by sniping at those deeply involved in the struggle to improve their economic conditions. His griping over his \$3.00 monthly assessment approved by the members of the Newspaper Guild only indicates that he is not in sympathy with his brother members, especially those on the picket line in Cleveland fighting his battles for him.

I. Rab
Member of Local #13,
Boston Typographical Union.

TANUARY 15, 1963

[This is another letter to the Editor regarding the New York newspaper strike of 1963. Unfortunately it is damaged and partially illegible.]

Dear Brother Jim Higgins:

If space permits, the following may be suitable for the next Bulletin.

AUTOMATION AND THE PRINTERS' STRIKE

Business Week, in its Jan. 5, 1963 issue, contained a story on the New York Newspaper strike and lockout that went to the heart of the bitter dispute. The theme of the article was that it wasn't merely a strike over wages, but that the printers see their jobs menaced by automation. It pointed out the threat in the immediate future of the teletypesetter, and farther in the future of facsimile tape and other innovations.

Said *Business Week*:

"Now is the time for a show of strength, they [*the printers*] feel, to remind the publishers who they are and what they are and what they can do while they can still do it. Now is the time to administer such a dose of militancy that win, lose or draw, a publisher will think twice before deciding to introduce job-cutting machinery. At the least, he'll understand that he must negotiate the terms of its introduction, and that the price will be high."

And that the printers are justified in their fears is seen by other articles in the same issue, for example, that "two newspapers are using RCA 301 computers virtually to automate the process of typesetting," and several other new developments — among them this item on the *Palm Beach Post Times*. At present, this is the only paper using teletypesetting in the Perry Publications chain and still requires a typist to produce the finished tape, but eventually this system. [*The letter becomes illegible at this point. KDR, 1991*]

This system, observes *Business Week*, "saves about 40% of the time needed to convert copy to print and may add job security fuel to the blazing newspaper labor troubles."

(requires no signature)

February 15, 1963

My dear Gene (And, believe me, I sincerely mean this.)

“That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to affect their Safety and Happiness.”

I can well imagine your reactions if you did not know the source of this quote. It is the very heart and core of the opening section of the Declaration of Independence. An even milder statement stirred you to “report me to Higgins,” as per your first reaction, when you first spoke to me.

I hold no ill will against you because I’m only too well aware that, like many millions of others, you have preconceived and predigested notions about socialism. Most people have never had access to what socialists, themselves, say, only to what others claim that socialists say. In fact, you told me that you did not even care to find out what we had to say by reading anything I might offer you.

Nothing could be more alien to genuine socialism than the sham and counterfeit of Russian and Chinese state capitalism. Socialism has nothing in common with police-state dictatorships, in spite of the lying, hypocritical claims of the Bolsheviks that they have established socialism. You are blissfully unaware that goals influence actions. The Commie goal is class rule over the people. The socialist goal is common ownership and democratic control of the means of living by and in the interest of society as a whole. Thus, the basic action of socialists is geared to the understanding that socialism can only be brought about by a conscious majority, through the ballot, voting for what they want: socialism. There is no other way. A majority of determined socialists is invincible because an idea come of age is more powerful than the strongest armies. Though this may surprise you, it is the people, not leaders (as distinct from representatives and spokesmen, who are really not leaders), who will introduce a sane society fit for human beings to replace today’s dog-eat-dog jungle, with its depressions, wars, nervous breakdowns, crimes and corruptions.

The encouraging thing is that men (including you, Gene) do learn through the lessons of experience. People are losing many of the superstitions and

preconceived notions that they once took for granted without question. One example of that is the assumption that man is by nature selfish, grasping and pugnacious — which has become discarded because of the latest findings of anthropologists (see Father Hubbard's work among the Eskimos, as an illustration) that man is, basically, gregarious. Mutual aid and cooperation is so deeply rooted in human behavior that even capitalism could not eliminate it. Mankind is also outgrowing national sovereignties in the rapidly shrinking modern world, which has become inextricably interrelated economically. Poverty amidst plenty no longer makes sense when abundance for all is, at long last, potentially available. In all these areas, men are groping for answers and what to do about it.

This is enough. I had no intention to be so longwinded. This letter only indicates my high regard for you.

MARCH 22, 1963

My dear Comrade Ahrens:

At the very outset, let me say that I anticipate a vital, inspiring Vancouver local will soon see the light of day. I base this hope on such factors as your own tape recording, which spoke volumes not only for your concern but for those comrades who are members-at-large and others on the sidelines. To which I would add the influence of Victoria local and its experiences; the enthusiasm and drive of fellows like George Jenkins and Don Poirier; and the traditional "rebellious" spirit in the Vancouver air with its impact on the memories of old-timers and their heirs. I say this with knowledge of the limitations of much of Vancouver's past.

Whether there is or there isn't a "legal" Vancouver local is only an academic question, in my book. Were it not for the "illegal" locals over the years, the groundwork for a sound, revolutionary socialist movement would have suffered immeasurably. We have two locals in the WSP that have become reduced to less than 5 members, but have persisted in spite of little or no activity to preserve the skeleton for socialist organization. We cannot always afford the "luxury" of "legal" locals when the all-essential consideration is to keep on keeping on, despite difficulties, disappointments and discouragements.

.. Suffice it to say for the nonce that thinking is no violation of socialist discipline. Further, we should never stop reexamining our policies, procedures and even our socialist analyses in [the] light of experience and unfolding events. The acid test of socialism is found in the workings of the real world. The bond that makes us as one and inspires us is the recognition that capitalism can no longer be reformed or administered in the interest of the working class or of society, and the understanding that conditions are now ripe for socialism, which is the solution for society's problems. All that is lacking is a socialist majority. This says it all! This is the essence of our principles.

Let's take two observations in your taped message on "approach" and on "unions" to see what happens when differences of opinion are raised to the stature of "principles" or "position," and are given an importance and emphasis they do not deserve.

There is no golden rule for a good approach or a correct approach; it is a question of judgment, only. Of course, there are many ways in which

we can improve our propaganda methods and writings. Methods of “approach” are well worth discussing and applying. BUT the acid test of socialism is not the type of approach the party uses. The smallness of the party is not the result of using wrong “approaches.” Critics within the party have resigned on just such grounds. Opponents of the party have stressed our alleged “dogmatic, sectarian” approaches. Critics, sympathetic to the party have stayed out of the party because of our “erroneous” approaches. Lest you misconstrue my remarks, I am well aware of your attitude on this question. I’m merely indicating that so many of us have dignified opinions and differences as “principles” or “positions,” which they really are not. In my opinion, one of the most abused words in the socialist vocabulary is “position,” used on every conceivable subject matter.

On unions. The class struggle is one of scientific socialism’s three great contributions to knowledge. Unions deal with the economic phase of the class struggle, not its political phase ... The realization of the class struggle leads to the understanding that the “politically awakened working class will vote for” socialism. (See my article on the N.Y. newspaper strike.) We advocate unionism — the economic phase of the class struggle, but we certainly cannot support much of union activity. Opposition to “unions” is not a disqualification for party membership.

On Speakers Tests: It is the word “speakers” that confuses this matter. There is only way that I know of a socialist becoming a speaker [and that] is by speaking at every opportunity he can. Waiting to become an official speaker before speaking for the party would really hamstring socialist work. Every effort should be made to *develop* speakers. The object of what is called the Speaker’s Test is to assure that those speakers who represent the party in debates and in major addresses — as well as those who serve on major committees, such as national committees or editorial committees — have the necessary knowledge to serve in such capacities. Years ago, the WSP changed the name of “Speaker’s Test” to “General Knowledge Test,” so that there [would] be no confusion on the object of the test.

On uniformity of party forms and party rules: This is in the cards, as far as I can see. Already the SPC and the WSP executive committees are discussing joint conferences. More than likely, the proposals for joint annual conferences will be submitted to joint referenda, in time for the next Labor Day conference in Boston. We have been informed that the SPGB is sending Comrade Grant as a fraternal delegate to the next Labor Day conference.

This closer cohesion is making our conferences more international in character. These developments lead to standardization of Application Blanks, Dues Forms, Party Rules, and General Knowledge Tests, etc. I can think of two reservations for national purposes, e.g., WSP historical questions on the Frontier and the Civil War and SPGB historical questions on the Repeal of the Corn Laws on the Speaker's Tests.

On the Election Manifesto: I cannot conceive of anything more unworkable than a referendum on an Election Manifesto. The time-consuming discussions of specific wordings would prevent the publication of such a document in time for the elections. . .

I wholeheartedly agree with you that socialist work is as much emotional fervor as it is understanding. What could be more stirring than putting an end forever to poverty and insecurity by working to introduce a world fit for human beings? Socialism couples the head and the heart. Socialist bonds make shambles of the sham "fraternalism" of the professional do-gooders. The attachments of the comrades are revealed in conference times at socials and in the exchange of photos, etc. As for pictures of comrades in our periodicals, if it happens spontaneously on account of some special circumstance, it may be OK, but as a deliberate policy, I would question its merits. If you want to see real comradeship, it becomes visible in most unexpected moments, as I have witnessed many times.

MARCH 29, 1963

[Written for the "Readers' Views" column of Correspondence.]

Dear Fellow Workers:

There are too many ways of classifying human beings to list them. But, when it comes to separating people into *classes*, the only reference that makes sense is to social-economic classes. "Class" in this sense is determined by how individual human beings stand in relation to the produced wealth of the world. Social-economic classes are *not* separated by color, sex, religion, etc.

All propertied societies, from the warrior chiefdoms of the early nomadic tribes to chattel slavery, right down to modern times, have consisted of various social-economic classes.

Today, in modern capitalism, there are but two classes remaining: the *working class* and the *capitalist class*. The working class, regardless of color, sex, religion, etc., do not have access to the wealth produced by society as a whole. They are property-less, in the real sense of the word. They obtain their main source of income from selling their labor power (muscles and brains) for wages. They are the vast bulk of humanity, even in the now-emerging new African and Asian countries. On the other hand, the capitalist class derive their income by virtue of their ownership of the means of producing and distributing wealth. They, therefore, are the ruling class.

I'm not speaking here as a "radical" or as an "intellectual." Both appear to me to be bankrupt of understanding today's world. I'm speaking as a revolutionary socialist who recognizes the class nature of capitalist society; its dog-eat-dog jungle with its vicious conflicts that permeate its every fiber. It keeps workers divided into warring camps with "patriotism" and "national loyalties." The concept that the Negro worker is exploited by the white worker is but another form of that nationalism that contaminates modern society.

The great need of our times is working-class solidarity to overthrow capitalism and establish socialism. The inspiration of the Red Flag of socialism is a symbol of the red blood that courses through the veins of all human beings. We are all members of one species, *Homo sapiens*.

MAY 18, 1963

Mr. William R. Cloud,
Editor, *The Typographical Journal*,
P.O.Box 2341, Colorado Springs,
Colorado.

Dear Brother:

KENNEDY AND COPE

The primary objective of unionism is the fight for improving wages, hours and shop conditions. It is the urgent need of the workers to resist the encroachments of capital on their economic interests that produced the unions in the first place. The inspiring history of the early struggles of unions demonstrates that our strength lies in solidarity and militancy. We just saw anew how this was confirmed to the hilt in the recent New York newspaper strike. Can anyone question that Big Six never would have won their major demands without resorting to the strike?

In the May 1963 *The Typographical Journal*, there are two items that are significant in light of the above comments.

1. C.F. Schempp's justifiable letter in *Vox Populi* condemning President Kennedy's "double cross" of the ITU demonstrates again the untrustworthiness of Labor's "friends." Sooner or later, we will recognize that we can only depend on ourselves and not on our "friends."
2. There also appears an appeal for COPE in the same issue. Is COPE really worthy of our support? Let's see. The roster of those congressmen in both houses who voted for measures such as Taft-Hartley and Landrum-Griffin only demonstrates how some of our "friends" really think, when the chips are down. It is a fallacy to expect "liberals," with their abstractions of "justice," "progress," "the good fight," etc., to grasp Labor's problems. In fact, the ITU's opposition to arbitration is rooted in our realization that these "broad-minded, impartial" arbitrators examine "both sides" without understanding the issues involved. Real progress can only come when we fight our own battles.

MAY 31, 1963

[Written as a "Letter to the Editor" of *The Wall Street Journal*.]

THE APPEAL OF COMMUNISM

Your lead editorial, May 31, concludes that "in an honest competition of ideas, communism wouldn't stand a chance against the free society." In the spirit of "an honest competition of ideas," let us examine this editorial.

1. Just where in Marxian writings will you find the contention that communism is "the theory of equal sharing regardless of ability"? The goal of communism (a synonym for Marxian socialism) has always been: "From each according to his ability, to each according to his need."

Marx, dealing with this very question in the *Gotha Program*, points out that the concept of "equal rights" is a bourgeois one. It arises out of "the exchange of commodities, as far as this is an exchange of values.. in the exchange of commodity equivalents a given amount of labor in one form is exchanged for a given amount of labor in another form."

In contrast to the market economy of capitalism, communism/socialism is the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of society as a whole.

2. By equating Russian state capitalism with "communism," you have erected a straw man, which is alien to "an honest competition of ideas." True enough, there is a bitter competition between the USSR and the USA. It is a power struggle over markets, trade routes, raw materials, spheres of influence and domination, which eventually may culminate in a hot war.

Note the similarity of accusations each of the powers hurls at the other: "Imperialist bandits," "dictatorial and totalitarian," "war mongers," "slave societies," etc. And they are both telling the truth. Both sides support satellite dictatorships. Both use foreign "aid" as a weapon in the cold war. Both have racial problems and discrimination. The populations in both "worlds" live in fear and insecurity. Both face the same dilemmas of poverty, crime and corruption. Above all, in both camps there is an exploited working class and an owning ruling class. Despite their different labels, in both camps we find commodities, capital, money, wages, surplus value and all the other appurtenances of capitalism, whether corporative or

nationalized. Even their propaganda campaigns to arouse national patriotism for the looming war are similar. One calls it “A Free Communist World”; the other calls it “A Free Society.”

In both powers, there is the same basic problem: Capitalism has become outmoded because of its own tremendous strides in technology, creating a potential abundance that cannot be harnessed for the benefit of mankind as whole. Both can only thrive on waste. Both powers have no alternative but a war economy and fear of the horrors of peace — closed factories and lack of markets for goods.

The competition of ideas between capitalism and communism/socialism revolves around the issue: capitalist production for profit vs. communist/socialist production for use, i.e., Chaos or Socialism.

The appeal of communism/socialism is: A world fit for human beings.

JUNE 20, 1963

Dear Fellow Worker Bob Calese:

As I was about to write you, in comes your request for 10 copies of #3 - 1962. It is always gratifying to receive favorable responses to the efforts to spread a clearer grasp of what's to be done to get rid of the mess we're in, and, more importantly, to introduce that kind of a world — because it is possible and practical here and now. There are many signs of stirrings, groping and confused as they may be: the Negro crystallization, even with their serious limitations of racial consciousness and chauvinisms; the stop-the-bomb movement, especially the section of it that stirs you so very much; and the underground evidence that ideas are catching up with the material social conditions of the mid-20th century, such as the compulsions on the Church to alter their tenets — actually from weakness and futility of their dogmas, not from strength and profound convictions. Yet, these stirrings still do not consciously reflect socialist fervor and matured understanding, which are in process of being crystallized. (Lest you misinterpret: the Church is not and cannot be socialist.)

Enclosed you will find your copy of *Spies for Peace*, the exposure of the Regional Seats of Government plans for the British Government. Coincidentally, the June 1963 *Socialist Standard* just arrived with 3 comments on the *Spies for Peace*, pages 98, 96 and 88. I'm enclosing a copy for you in place of the comments that I was going to make. In general, the point of view expressed is the same as my own. In relative importance, I would stress the attitude developed on page 98.

Thanks for the *The Bomb, Direct Action and the State, Direct Action Pamphlet No. 7*. Regarding its reference to the SPGB as being unaware that Parliament is not the real seat of power, and that the Parliament is only a facade for the real rulers: Question: what is the central organ of power used by the "real rulers," if it isn't the state itself? The state has demonstrated its function as the executive committee of the capitalist class. You will never hear the syndicalists, at any time, mention just what is the seat of power of the ruling class! It only points out incidents, in a vacuum, out of context of the workings of the state, such as the Richard Acland comment of the Atom Bomb debate in Parliament. They can't deny that the final decision must be determined in Parliament, when the chips are down, just because modern capitalism cannot function with military dictatorships as a process.

That is bad enough, but it compounds the felony by asserting (page 8) that the SPGB is seeking to be returned as a Parliamentary majority.

Where did the SPGB, ever, at any time, agitate such a program. We are uncompromisingly opposed to any leadership policy or principle! We urge the socialist majority to vote for socialism, and socialism alone. If the workers depend on the SPGB or the WSP, the SPGB or the WSP may sell them down the river. Nothing could be more repugnant to the SPGB and the WSP than the idea of voting for the SPGB so that the SPGB might do something for the workers.

On page 13, a distinction is made between “direct action” and “political action,” which is called “indirect action.” The key question is “Action for what?” We are organized for action to change the world from capitalism to socialism. We are not concerned with the problems of administering capitalism. Capitalism cannot be administered in the interests of the working class or of society as a whole. Nor are we primarily concerned with the economic phase of the class struggle (unions) ... although we are always prepared to fight the economic struggles between the wage slaves and their parasitic masters over the division of the wealth produced by the workers. We are also always prepared to fight for civil liberties. Workers who are scissorbills as satisfied, contented slaves are poor prospects for socialist revolution. The fight for civil liberties is basic, just because democratic forms are powerful tools for socialist victory. The work of introducing socialism is *the* work of the working class. Socialism is democratic both in objectives and means. Our end (or objective) of socialism — which is real democracy — shapes our means, which can only be democratic. This is socialist action — real “direct action”!

Now glance at the Syndicalists. If they have the majority convinced of socialism, the weapon in *existence* for the majority to use is the ballot, ready at hand. The trouble is not the franchise, but the political ignorance of the workers, who support capitalism. But the Syndicalists fancy that socialism is a working-class society in which the social setup is a syndicalist one — sort of an industrial union government. Their thinking is far removed from a socialist society. If society is faced with a problem of how to carry on production, it is not yet ripe for socialism. The historic mission of capitalism was to solve the problem of production with modern highly technological developments. In a socialist society, leisure and interesting, useful lives are the concern of mankind. Socialism is a classless society, in which the state has been superceded by an administration of affairs.

TULY 24, 1963

Dearest Karla and George:

Enclosed is a statement I wrote for the next NAC meeting, I hope both of you can attend so you can take part in the discussion.

Lovingly, Papa Rab

MY VIEWS ON THE NEGRO DEMONSTRATIONS
(FOR 7/28/63 NAC)

The Negro demonstrations arose from the resistance of the colored rank and file to their humiliations and discriminations. In my opinion, these demonstrations are not the result of a Negro bourgeois conspiracy. The uprising was the consequence of a boiling point having been reached. If anything, it demonstrates the power of an idea come of age.

The socialist analysis of the situation should recognize and emphasize the serious limitations of racial and nationalist views, even while sympathizing with colored people's reactions against second-class citizenship. This, in my opinion, is the socialist position. This is not "support" of the Negro confusions and patriotic attitudes. The success of the demonstrations will merely find the Negro worker "enjoying" the privileges of his white wage-slave brother. The economic beneficiary will be the Negro bourgeoisie.

SEPTEMBER 26, 1963

My very dear Comrade Larry (Nathanson):

It was a delight reading the note accompanying your *WS* renewal. It spoke volumes for your concern. Your offer of cooperation — within the limitations of the pressures of your other obligations — is most welcome.

However, the object of this note is just a matter of “definitions.” Let me define what we mean by reforms. They are efforts to introduce measures into the legal machinery of the state for smoothing out the operation of capitalism. The difficulties that arise from the irreconcilable contradictions of the system require “remedial” measures. Thus the advocacy and fight for reforms, such as nationalization, social welfare, tax relief, and the host of proposals as can be found in the programs of all the “socialist” and “communist” parties that are geared to the amelioration of the conditions of life with a view to a better administration of capitalism.

What confuses this question is when such activities as resistance to the encroachments of capital and the fight for civil liberties are equated with reforms, as though they were synonymous terms. Just two illustrations will suffice for the nonce: 1. Workers going out on strike over wages, hours, shop conditions, etc. Their objective is to resist increased exploitation. This is not a reform activity. Or 2. Socialists fighting for civil liberties, the right to speak on street corners, distribute circulars house to house, equal time on TV, etc. The strength of the socialist movement is that it is the task of the vast majority. Democratic procedures are the essential conditions for the social change we are working for; they themselves are the special products of the material conditions of the 20th century. Civil liberties are revolutionary weapons in the hands of socialists and the socialist majority. This is not a reform activity. The fight by workers for their economic interests within the framework of capitalism is the *economic* phase of the class struggle. The fight for civil liberties within the framework of capitalism is a manifestation of the highest expression of the class struggle, its political phase. The acid test: *neither of these two illustrations have as their objective legislative enactments to administer capitalism*. Reforms have no significant meaning in any other context.

There is some excellent writing on this very topic. One of the most effective brochures is Rosa Luxemburg’s *Reform or Revolution*. I have it at home, if you wish to read it.

November 22, 1963

My very dear Comrade Landis:

I couldn't live with myself if I delayed any longer replying to your letter. I get pangs of conscience for my neglect of your correspondence. It is only because of pressures of the moment that I keep putting aside writing you "until tomorrow."

You have always represented to me one of the stalwarts of the movement whose concern is for the abolition of capitalism and the establishment of socialism. You have had a long history of such concern. We may place differing emphases on vital aspects of the revolutionary change, but it is not on the question of compromising with capitalism; on adjusting to this chaotic system; or of trying to reform it.

For me, the emphasis must be on class-conscious political action, just because this is the thermometer for measuring the fervor and determination to get rid of this system. A majority of socialists will know what to do about introducing socialism and will take the necessary steps. The strength of the capitalists is not only in their control of the state machinery; but they also have all the advantages on the economic field, especially with the slave status of the working class. The workers are weak, indeed, economically. Unfortunately, political revolutionary action has become confused with parliamentarianism; lick-spittles of capitalist interests. The two have nothing in common!

Also, I would emphasize the materialist basis of existence, rather than our opposition to the Church or anti-clericalism. Our struggle in the battle-field of ideas is against superstitions — which includes the whole gamut of confusions which prevent the workers from seizing power. The Catholic Church is no worse and no better than the liberals, progressives, "bourgeois materialists," etc. In actual fact, the Catholic Church is far from an inflexible organization, as witness the current ecumenical discussions. The advances of the 20th Century are compelling the Church's adaptations to "progress." Note well: you can put your finger on the Catholic Church. There it is! But far more insidious are the deceptions of the "friends of socialism." Like Hearst, you know where his papers stand — but the *N. Y. Times* (and *Progressive*, *Nation*, etc) are honest in little things and thus, they effectively side-track us on the big things that really count.

As for "Fascism" gaining ground, the great superstition of the present day is the concept that the Free World is democratic. Capitalism is always pre-

pared to resort to repression. Witness the history of the past 200 years! The *menace* we face is capitalism! In the name of anti-fascism we had World War II. Both World Wars were fought on behalf of "Democracy." (Incidentally, you will be interested in seeing the 2nd article on Vietnam in the *WS* about to come off the press in about a week.) Democratic forms have nothing to do with democratic social relationships. These democratic forms conceal the mailed fist! Even in Hitler's Germany, Mussolini's Italy or Stalin's Russia, propaganda and public support was essential for their terrorism and brutality. In these times of rapid communication and transportation and spread of literacy, democratic forms are vital to capitalism. Those who wonder that Germans and Russians fell for dictatorial fascism should see the nonsense swallowed by advanced Americans.

Personally, I am not pessimistic about the working class. They are not morons or idiots. It is easy to become contemptuous or to underestimate the capacity and intelligence of the workers, but who else but the workers carry on the activities of society?

Experience is the great teacher. The follies of all the efforts to make present-day society work in the interests of all humanity are making their impressions on the minds of this generation. Science, truth, and above all else, *necessity*, is on the side of the socialist revolution. The alternative facing society is becoming more obvious, as witness the undercurrent of disillusionment as expressed in movies, novels, intellectuals even in the findings of the Foundations' reports.

One lesson of the Materialist Conception of History is that mankind, facing the alternative of socialism or chaos, will not choose chaos. Having no crystal ball, it would be rash to specify dates. But we live in a period of social change in which the social forces are in the direction of socialism. Only a socialist can be an optimist in these dire times.

NOVEMBER 29, 1963

[Carl Senna belonged to the WSP briefly during the Sixties.]

Dear Comrade Carl (Senna):

The sentiments expressed in the letter just received from you touched me deeply. To your credit be it said that your “withdrawal” from the party was not a withdrawal from the inspiring goals of socialism. You phrase it: “I must commit myself to work in something I feel is most effective in bringing about the goals we commonly hold as right. In short, there must be total commitment of self, myself specifically, without any reservation as to the effectiveness of the organization, to whose goals I am dedicated.”



Your implied quandary: Where are the socialist masses? This lack of results must be due to ineffective organization. There must be something wrong with the tactics and strategy of the WSP, if it has failed to rouse the mass of workers for socialism.

For the past 75 years we have witnessed the “success” of a procession of practical efforts to rally workers to socialism by clever policies. We have seen the transformation of these advocates of socialist goals into supporters of the status quo — rebels who have been converted into adjusters of the system. Their trademark has become reforming, improving and administering capitalism. Need I cite the list, ranging from Social Democrats to Bolsheviks, from Cuba to the new Afro-Asian nations? Question: Where are the convinced socialists they were going to make?

Two very striking experiences in your own short lifetime may be useful in illustrating lessons to be learned:

1. Peace and Anti-Bomb Demonstrations. The ardent fervor, the stirring emotions and dedicated struggles have proved incapable of either preventing the production of nuclear bombs or of establishing peace. They cannot even claim that the Test-Ban Treaty was the result of their efforts. Many sections of the peace movement are now having sober second thoughts that their energies should be directed to examining the social causes of war. (See the brilliant retrospective hindsight on their mistakes in *Peace News*,

London, the leading journal of the peace movement. This is indicative of the latent strength of socialism: it is later than you think.)...

2. The Negro Explosion. When the colored masses started demonstrating against their humiliations and discriminations, the concept of color-blindness came of age. All strata of society rallied to the support of the Negro. We found the “leaders” of all shades climbing on the bandwagon. Unfortunately, most colored workers are primarily concerned with the serious limitations of national and racial thinking and with “jobs” and “freedom,” rather than with socialist goals. (Though there are instances of groping for socialist answers. Again: it is later than you think.)...

Here’s how I see these developments. If you want to see evidence that socialism is practical and possible today, see what modern capitalism is compelled to do in order to function. With all the “socialist” aspects of highly developed capitalism, it has not and cannot do away with the private property aspects of its inherent relationships. The very transformation of capitalist private property forms from owners, intimately and directly associated with products and their production, into the gigantic private property forms of today — which are more or less typified by varying aspects of state capitalism and absentee ownership — describes the process satisfactorily enough. Especially note that state ownership, as well as cartels, monopolies, huge corporations and other highly socialized *appearances* of ownership are but factors of a system in which the proceeds of that society (surplus value, in the last instance) belong to the “eaters” of surplus value. What I would emphasize from the observations of incipient socialism that you stress is that here is evidence that men are social beings and can cooperate in their common interest. Even in capitalism, observe how human beings can function. More particularly, we see increasing demonstrations that the highly developed technologies, the tremendous productive processes, the shrunken globe, the present-day problems of management and needs of efficient production bring into being the introduction of vast social measures. Most important, we see the conclusive proof, as it were, that the change from capitalism into socialism is a relatively simple matter, rather than requiring intricate, complex involved measures. In fact, haven’t we always maintained that if capitalism had not developed the technology for producing potential abundance, the conditions would not be ripe for socialism? The evolutionary changes laying the groundwork for socialism have already taken place within capitalism.

November 30, 1963

Dear Bob (and Phyllis) Calese:

It is always a great pleasure to receive your meaningful letters. Your last letter was of special interest.

A word on your plea for solidarity. Solidarity is the very heart and core of revolutionary socialism. Every issue of the *WS* urges that the "Workers of the world UNITE FOR SOCIALISM! You have nothing to lose but your chains." All the Companion Parties insist that the work of emancipation is the work of the working class itself, and not of leaders nor even of the parties. Should any other organization or group appear on the scene dedicated to the proposition that the working class must organize consciously and politically for the sole purpose of getting rid of capitalism and to inaugurate socialism, we would have no excuse for separate existence. Immediate overtures would be made to merge with such a group.

Had you said that a socialist does not necessarily require a sound grasp of Marxian economics and, specifically, the distinction between "labor" and "labor power," I would agree with you 100%. Understanding this distinction is no acid test of whether a person is a socialist or not! (However, it is true that there is a distinction between these two terms when it comes to describe the nature of capitalist exploitation.)

In my opinion, the acid test of socialist convictions hinges on such factors as: Capitalism cannot be reformed or administered in the interest of the working class or of society; Capitalism, as a social system, is in the interest of the ruling class (albeit that capitalism, historically, is an essential stage of social evolution); Socialism is the solution to the social problems and irreconcilable contradictions of capitalism; Socialism cannot be rammed down the workers' throats against their wishes; The socialist victory hinges on the fervor and enthusiasm of the determined, conscious socialist majority. These are the characteristics of a socialist; a coupling of the head and the heart, theory coupled with action.

Thanks for the *Peace News*. It is a very interesting paper. We are reprinting the Buick letter you marked for our attention. Have you seen *Change Over*, edited by Virginia Naeve (A Swallow Paperbook)? It has several quotes from *Peace News*. Unquestionably, fellows like George Clark realize that the more pressing need for "freedom from poverty, equality, justice, etc." is more essential than the policies of the CND that he criti-

cizes. For his guts and convictions (including his more severe “panning” [your description] than the SPGB’s of the CND), all credit to him. But for your charge that I “owe him an apology” I am bewildered. For what? Your point is that it is the job of “radicals to pull the civil rights movements (and the CND) to the left.” Some questions: How do you define a “radical”? In my observations, radicals are a host of strange bedfellows, some of them avowedly pro-capitalist, others avowedly pro-socialist; also some vociferously anti-capitalist, some others vociferously anti-socialist. (Are these the elements for your “solidarity”?) How can these “radicals” pull anyone to the “left”? I’m assuming that by “left” you mean socialist. But, then we find the word “left” another muchly misunderstood term. “Left” is a catch-all for all kinds of dissidents, from dictatorial Bolsheviks to humanitarian anarchists. Am I right? Sooner or later, the lessons of social development will reveal that the *real* alternative is socialism or chaos. There is no short cut or royal road to socialism. Experience exposes the folly of all these distractions from revolutionary socialist answers, based on knowledge and the evidence of unfolding events.

The World Socialist Movement never claimed a monopoly on socialism. All that it claims is that at this moment it stands alone in the fight for socialism now, as the first and only objective. We are making every effort to rally everyone, including “radicals” and “the left,” for this objective. This is the solidarity we seek!

I think you will enjoy the new issue coming off the press in a week. We have an article on Uncle Sam and the new Vietnam regime. In light of the “Marxist” assassin of Kennedy, we will have a short statement on Marxism vs. assassination. We genuinely appreciate your approving appraisal of the *WS*. It is gratifying that we see increasing influence of the *WS* in such contrast to our few numbers and small number of printed copies (3,250).

Here’s my hand in personal attachment.

December 13, 1963

Dear Socialist sympathizers Shosh and Hank Fine:

Though I am aware that you receive the *WS* regularly, I am taking the liberty of sending you a marked copy of the latest issue.

Of course, your statement that gradualism precedes the socialist revolution is correct, but not in the context you put it. The culmination of the social changes taking place gradually within the framework of capitalism [is that] the ground is laid for the transformation into socialism by the socialist revolution. For superb development of this social evolution into socialist revolution read three classics: *Communist Manifesto*, Preface to *Capital*, and *Socialism, Utopian and Scientific*. Proof, *par excellence*, of the fallacy of this gradual evolution into socialism by “socialistic measures and practical efforts” is in the result of 75 years of just such efforts on the part of the British Labour Party, the European and Down Under Social Democracies, and today in the new “socialist” countries of Africa, Asia Minor, and Asia. Rebels become transformed into administrators of capitalist states, recruiters for capitalist wars, etc. Success? Question: Where are the socialists they have roused to abolish capitalism and institute socialism? Was it not “Socialist” governments in France and England who shot workers on strike?

On Israel: Have you seen Abraham Friend’s “Israel: A Political Portrait” in the latest *New Politics*? It is an objective study of the Arabs’ plight in Israel; the capitalist-relations contamination of the *kibbutzim*, of the strikes and the worsening of workers’ plight in Israel. Like Russia, Israel can only operate capitalistically, in spite of any socialist terminology. You can’t blame them for that. But you can condemn those who deceived and sidetracked the workers by raising false hopes and diverting enthusiasms, emotions and fervor away from socialist work.

Finally, the irony is that the conditions of life are ready for socialism *now*, today. The *need* today is for socialists! There is plenty enough confusion as it is without contributing to it.

1964 (UNDATED LETTER)

[The following letter is undated, but was sent to me in the same envelope as some other items which indicate it must have been written in early 1964. — KDR]

Dear Comrade Mike (Lamm):

Happy as I am to see you doing your own thinking, I must point out the unsoundness of your views on Vietnam in light of the economic and historic factors involved.

First of all, let me stress that capitalism breeds wars; they are part and parcel of capitalist social relations. This applies, with a vengeance, to the Vietnamese War (and it is a war, despite the apologists). Long before the wholesale murderous attacks by Uncle Sam on peasants, villages, children, women, etc., when the French were defeated at Dienbienphu, the United States stepped into the vacuum that resulted from the French withdrawal. The history of the American intervention since that time is an open book. The violation of the Geneva agreements, the control of the synthetic, manufactured South Vietnam with its succession of dictators demonstrates American policies of safeguarding its interests in Southeast Asia, especially against its imperialist rivals, termed the "Communist Menace." (Reminiscent of the "Huns' Menace" of World War I; and the "Fascist Menace" of World War II.)

Above all, there would not be and could not be any Vietnam crisis, were it not for the internecine conflict of interests engendered by capitalist national sovereignties and power interests.

One thing that I admired so much about you was your determination not to become a member of the armed forces, yet you unwittingly leave yourself open for participation in a war on Vietnam on behalf of the peasants. On the concept that it was a different kind of war, social democrats, radicals, pacifists, commies, etc. rallied to propaganda appeals of brutality, humanity, freedom and whatnot to both World Wars, the Spanish Civil War, etc., by the recruiting sergeants. In a very real sense, the only ones who can boast their hands were clean in this respect is the World Socialist Movement.

Finally, can't you see duplications of Vietnam in all corners of the Globe, ranging from the Far East through Asia Minor, on to Africa and Europe, crossing the seas to both Americas on to the Pacific?

I earnestly trust that I may have contributed some awareness of the real issues involved in Vietnam, when the chips are down!

Here's my hand, as ever.

TANUARY 27, 1964

[The following is a letter Rab wrote shortly after her birth (on Jan. 21) to his great-granddaughter, who was named after his mother Sarah Friedberg Rabinowich. The letter is a little garbled, since Rab could think faster than he could write, but I think the meaning is clear. — KDR]

My dearest Sarah Rachel:

One day you will read this message from your great grandfather. He is leaving it in the loving care of your two wonderful parents — endowed with such genuine characters and fine intelligences.

They have just experienced one of the greatest joys of life: working together in loving cooperation in bringing you into this world and, what's more, are now starting to share this loving companionship with you. You are blessed and fortunate in the special environment to which you will be exposed.

They named you Sarah for a very special reason. Had you been a boy they would have named you William Morris for the same special reason. These two pioneers had the same inspiring vision in common: a cooperative society, full of love and brotherhood in the midst of useful, interesting lives, worthy of all the little Sarahs everywhere, in place of today's dog-eat-dog jungle, where men's lives and work are separated — where men work for their living instead of living for their work.

The knowledge that you are in the fifth generation (starting with the earlier Sarah) and in the revolutionary tradition stimulated by William Morris may serve to arouse you to take your place in the one task really meaningful and worthwhile today in your generation — on the basis of your own understanding rather than on any blind acceptance or mere faith.

With all my love,

Papa Rab



The photo above, taken in 1965, shows four of the five generations of socialists Rab refers to in the foregoing letter. Clockwise from the top you see Len Feinzig, Ann Rab Feinzig, Rab himself, his wife Ella with the baby Sara on her lap, and Karla Rab.

FEBRUARY 6, 1964

My dear Comrade Eve (Goodman):

Your sketch was most delightful. I can anticipate George and Karla's joy at seeing it. (Just a minor correction, little Sarah Rachel is the fifth generation.) She was named Sarah for my mother. She was the pioneer revolutionary socialist in the family. She never fell for the Russian bug, nor for Jewish confusions. She was free from religious superstitions, unqualifiedly. Both Comrades Kohn and Baritz visited my parents in Boston, while I was still in Detroit. It was my father who had originally convinced her of socialism while they were still in Russia, but in his later years he became enamored of the Russian bug and the Jewish "problems." He never swallowed the religious nonsense, clarity on this was too deeply ingrained. My father went through these phases: in 1893 he joined the SLP; in 1899 he became a charter member of the new SPA; in 1921 he became a charter member of the CP. An amusing incident: the CP gave him a banquet in celebration of his 75th birthday and 50 years in the movement. They promised to allow me to make a few remarks, but shunted me aside. Tell me, how could I make a stink about it?

Had the new baby been a boy, they would have named it William Morris for the same reason they named it Sarah: a pioneer in revolutionary traditions.

When I spoke to Sarah, the other day, she told me not to rush her. She would take the WSP speakers test, when she got around to it.

I was about to forward the enclosed reply I drew up in response to many requests for my views on the Referendum issue, when your welcome air mail letter arrived. Remember me to one and all.

MARCH 2, 1964

Dear Comrades Gilmac and Eve Goodman:

Being a lazy guy and limited in time, plus being a slow typist, I'm going to answer both your letters thusly. There is much overlapping in the contents.

Dear Eve, I couldn't agree with you more. Socialist pressures on their children do often create resentments and resistances. There is no substitute for "exposure" rather than persistence. I've been fortunate in having very favorable advantages, such as being able to organize and direct boys' clubs and science clubs when the kids were young. My emphasis was on "making ideas fit facts" rather than on "making facts fit ideas." This is effective in creating the healthy attitude for hearing the socialist case. At no time was the "heart" divorced from the "head," but the coupling of the "heart" was on the groundwork of the "head." Then, of course, there was Ella, without whose enthusiasm and support there would have been no results. In a word, I had the lucky breaks and no special credit for superior wisdom is really involved.

To both Eve and Gilmac: We have received letters from comrades, everywhere, bewildered picturing a serious schism in the WSP. We were asked, what is going on in Boston? We were roundly criticized by many. The NAC, involved in so few doing so much, carrying on party work, had no spare time to clarify the "facts" which would have diverted us from genuine socialist work. We are all voluntary workers, who have to work for a living, and the pressures of more important work — like getting out the *WS* as one instance — deter us getting involved in "proving" the inaccuracies of allegations.

At all events, Comrade Davis of New York local and a member of the NAC, wrote us a scathing letter saying that we should proceed to act democratically. We immediately contacted Comrade Davis to come to Boston and attend the next NAC session. Comrade Davis attended the NAC yesterday (March 4, 1964) and now understands the situation.

I'm the first to recognize that inefficiencies are bound to creep in when we are drowned in so much detailed work; the wonder is that there are so few errors and boo-boos. It would take a staff to handle all matters in a fashion that reaches perfection. So much for that! I had no intention of devoting so much space to this.

Within 5 days, we have received 3 letters from prospective visitors to Boston. In addition to you, Mac, there is A.L. Buick who desires to come during July-September if he can get a job in Boston, and Steve Ross who expects to visit Canada and the U.S. in June. To all three: I read an item in the papers recently of the price war between the Iceland airline and the big 3 airlines. Apparently, the regular fares on the Iceland line are cheaper than even the excursion rates on the others. Why not inquire at the London office of the Iceland lines and get all the facts for the information of all comrades? Incidentally, they could meet the Reykjavik sympathizers at the same time. I recently got a letter from there urging me to advise one and all to go via Iceland and have comrades drop in on them to say hello.

DECEMBER 18, 1964

My dear Sophie: [*This would have been Sophie Levin, a member of the Democratic Socialists of America.*]

Please accept my apologies for poking you with my fingers in emphasizing the points I was making. I was totally unaware of my actions. I don't recall having done this on any previous occasion.

The only extenuating explanation I have is that, in front of me, I saw the personification of the futilities of the radical friends of socialism. I don't mean this in any ad hominem sense. You epitomized to me the prevailing popular notions of Marxism among the "profound" socialist thinkers of our times.

Prior to writing to you, I had prepared notes reexamining your premises in light of unfolding events, especially to document the important consideration that in the mid-20th century the times are now ripe for socialism.

Then I recalled that you told me, one time, that you knew my oversimplifications and generalizations as well as I did. They were very elementary. So I decided not to impose on your good nature by including that material in this letter. However, I'm hoping against hope that you might welcome a reasoned, objective review of the limitations of your present views concerning the socialist activities so essential today.

For the nonce, let it suffice merely to note that much of today's criticism of Marxian revolutionary socialism proceeds from poorly-digested reading of the Marxian fundamentals, such as the Materialist Conception of History and economics, on the one hand, and relying on second-hand interpretations and commentaries, on the other. This situation can only result in half-knowledge and misconceptions. Marxism is the science of social evolution in much the same way that Darwinism is the science of organic evolution.

What disturbs me, especially, is the function and role of the Social-Democrats as *obstacles* and stumbling blocks to the spreading of socialist class-consciousness. In the name of building up a socialist movement among the masses, they have emasculated and compromised socialist principles. When elected, they have actually administered capitalism in the only way it can be administered, in the interest of the capitalist class, even to the extent of supporting capitalist wars and crushing workers

on strike. They have complained that capitalist parties have stolen their planks (as though any capitalist party could steal a socialist program). Look at the net result. Where are the socialist masses? As far as numbers are concerned the Social-Democrats are not much better off than the WSP. Their practical, realistic policies have proven worse than illusory. They have failed to make socialists! Yet they continue to heap scorn and sneer at the World Socialist Movement for our small numbers. With smug omniscience, they dismiss the WSP as "ivory tower utopians," "dogmatic sectarians," "impossibilists," etc. The real question is: — Who have ignored the lessons of experience?

Contrast the record of the Social-Democrats with that of the WSP, which has carried on socialist work, patiently and persistently. The WSP have never become so cynical as to fancy that the "average man" is not a rational being. They realize that socialists are not superior intellects. The only distinction of a socialist is that he has become emancipated from bourgeois confusions and misconceptions. Would that that could be said of many SPAers! The essence of socialism in action is: the work of emancipation is the work of the working class. Thus the ranks of the World Socialist Movement can never be greater than the number of convinced revolutionary socialists. Our task today is to carry on the work of spreading socialist knowledge, in order to speed the day when the conscious majority can take political action to introduce socialism.

Finally, who are the real humanists? Is it the SPAers concentrating on joining with fellow "humanitarians" to fight for crumbs and palliative measures? Or is it the revolutionary socialists who are involved in that most inspiring and emotionally stirring task of putting an end, forever, to poverty and this dog-eat-dog society which has outlived its usefulness? If it is socialism you want, then your place is in the ranks of those dedicated and organized for that objective. How can there be two socialist parties in any one country who have the same objective? Should there appear on the horizon another party determined to fight for socialism and socialism alone, the WSP would immediately take steps to merge with that party for its common objectives.

Dixi et meam animam salvavi,

DECEMBER 29, 1964

[This letter is addressed to Dave Butterfield, an older brother of Steve Buttrfield. It contains an interesting account of some of the events in Chapter 3 of the Biography.]

Dear Comrade Dave:

It so happens that I am on a 2-week vacation. So, what better way of spending it than doing socialist work? I'm relieving Comrade Harry Morrison of one job, at least, by answering your inspiring letter.

Unfortunately, your letter arrived on Monday, a day too late for the NAC meeting. The next meeting takes place on Jan. 10th.

I'm one guy that really realizes your feelings: "One begins to need the moral support of fellow socialists." It is no cinch being a lone voice for socialism. For seven years, I kept plugging away at socialist work in Boston (1921-1928) before finally a second member was recruited. A short year later, four more joined the ranks (including Eddie Siefert, whom you have met). During these years, as an individual, I conducted classes, gave lectures, even directed boys' clubs — looking forward to crystallizing a local. At first, the reaction was: "Who does he think he is, trying to organize a new party; he wants to be a big fish in a little pond, etc." No one in Boston had ever heard of the SPGB or the SPC. Eventually, as a result of the classes, both the SPA and the CP asked me to conduct classes for them. This is hard to credit but they looked on me as a sincere but posted crackpot. I did agree to conduct classes in their halls, but not under their auspices. They agreed to those terms. One thing I would not do is to emasculate socialist principles. You should know how many fakers got their "Marxian" training from me. Even to this day, once in a while a spokesman for the CP or SPA will express gratitude to me. Even though it could be said that I trained the "enemies" of socialism, a scattered few were recruited for socialism. In fact, even after the local was finally organized, an innocent front group for the Trotskyites asked me to conduct the "economics" section of their "Social Studies Seminar," composed of university professors, etc. They billed me as the "leading Marxist in New England." (That was nonsense.) The local granted me permission on the grounds that it was not being done under the auspices of another political party.

It is so easy to get discouraged and disappointed at the lack of results. (And all the time you are sowing seeds, unbeknown to you.) There is no

substitute for keeping on keeping on. It takes a tremendous amount of socialist understanding to withstand the fear that you are wasting your time or that there must be something wrong with the socialist case when adherents to socialism are conspicuous by their absence. We have lost many, many members who were impatient and reconsidered their views on the grounds that the policies and practices of the socialist movement were fallacious. (Yet I doubt that very many of these have forgotten the socialist message.) Let me emphasize: There is always room for bettering and improving propaganda methods. That is an entirely different story. I'm talking about the socialist case, as such.

After all is said and done, what is more inspiring or emotionally stirring than instituting a world fit for human beings — which has, at last, become practical, possible and necessary. History, science, truth are all on our side. Our greatest ally is capitalism, itself, which is making our case for us.

As you say, "I'm outgunned by professional organizers." And such fellows are imbued with leadership and vanguard attitudes. In light of the sound judgment you displayed by noting that "the work for socialism must stress our views on capitalism, poverty and socialism," my best advice to you is to play it by ear. You have indicated that "ha-ha, they can't get around me" means your task is to expose the futilities of rent strikes, pressures on city hall, and the host of reforms advocated by CORE and the Young Democratic Socialists. Let me tell you that you will be confronted with sneers and scorn by those who fight for something "in the meantime" and who are actively participating in the "workers' struggles." The lure and fascinations of protest demonstrations and making demands is very attractive. (In a sense, it indicates how deep-rooted discontent with capitalism really is, and it demonstrates the latent strength of socialism once the masses wake up to the need for changing the system instead of adjusting to it.) *But* — and this is the vital point — these activities are not in harmony with the immediate needs of our time: the making of socialists. The lack of socialists is all that stands in the way of socialism, *now*.

You can put these guys on the spot by asking: Where are the socialists you have obtained by your efforts? Their vaunted "fresh approaches" prove to be very stale indeed. For over 75 years their antecedents — the Fabian socialists with their gradualism, the Labor Party with their enthusiasms, the Bolsheviks with their "revolutionary" programs — actually gained victories

on such policies and programs. On their hands is the recruiting of workers for capitalist wars and the crushing of workers on strike. All those “socialist governments” merely wound up administering capitalism for the capitalist class. And that is all that CORE and the Young Democratic Socialists will be able to do if they gain their objectives. I remember old Whitey (one of the legends of the real socialist movement) who when heckled by one of these activists answered: “If it is action you want, take a physic!”

As to specific things you can do: Your idea on obtaining newsstands has proven workable in the past. You can do as a Vancouver Comrade does: leaves back issues of the *WS* in barber shops, Laundromats, and busses. Sid Catt in Toronto has the best idea. He goes down a block of houses one week giving a free sample *WS* to each tenant, telling him to read it and he will return the following week. When he returns, he asks how they liked it and gets into a discussion. He has got several subs that way. In your case, your best bet is to let your voice be heard — and you are already doing that. Your idea of reprinting outstanding articles from the *WS* and *SS* with Judy’s cooperation on the duplicating machine is superb. (See enclosed more on this below.)

Just one word of comradely caution: use judgment. Work for socialism, that is the only task really worthwhile; but do not jeopardize your school-work unnecessarily. Remember, a fight for free speech is not a fight for a reform. Free speech is a valuable socialist tool.



In place of your article submitted to us, I believe you will find the enclosed extract very timely and effective for the purposes you have in mind. It scores the very points you wished. You made a couple of economic errors in your article, e.g.: “If the capitalist pays the worker high wages the selling price is high; if he pays him a low wage the selling price is low.” Just the reverse is true. Rising prices causes rising wages and vice versa. Wages is a commodity, like all other commodities, and sells at its value in the long run. Also you omitted altogether that the worker is exploited through the mechanism of surplus value (unpaid labor time), and *that* is the cause of his poverty. Of course your statement that the cause of poverty is class ownership is correct. But the secret of his poverty is disclosed through understanding the mechanism — that was Marx’s contribution. Many non-socialists are aware that class ownership gives rise to poverty,

but they cannot explain how. And as for cost of production, that can only come out of previously accumulated capital, which itself is extracted out of surplus value. I was happy to read that you are studying Vol. I of *Capital*. Just for the hell of it, look through the index for these particular items: surplus value, value, prices. Be sure to question me about any problems that arise. In the meantime, I'm having Karla look through the *WS* index for articles on Value, especially that gem: The Market Place.

There are two opposing views about the *WS* held by comrades and critics alike. We have had hot sessions at some WSP Conferences on that subject. There are those who claim that the *WS* is too scholarly and over the heads of the average worker. Then there are others who hold that the *WS* is too simple and elementary. They can't both be correct.

My own view is that neither is correct.

The first group fancy that the average worker can't grasp theoretical questions. But how wrong they are! Just look at popular magazines, and the newspapers. Even such magazines as *Saturday Evening Post* and *Life* have serious literary criticism, scientific articles and art analyses; even the Hearst press, pandering to scandal and the races, have pundits and columnists as well as complicated do-it-yourself articles and sport reviews that are gibberish to a non-posted reader, but require a brain. These organs, despite their slanted news and trashy conclusions, use 50C words if they pertain to the subject and there is no substitute, and 5d words when they are apropos. These media cannot be accused of writing down to their readers. If the expression "using the workers' language" has any meaning it applies here.

The second group, in some, but not all cases, consist of "intellectual snobs," to coin a phrase. Their stock in trade is "profundity." They assume that a clear-cut development without footnotes and "scholarly" treatment à la *Dissent* and the professional society journals is elementary. The true mark of the master of a subject is his ability to reduce it to clear language free of frills.

The writing in the *WS* can never be superior to the writers themselves. Every effort is made to cull out the best articles, rewrite whenever necessary, and put out the best product we can, within our limitations. Some of the writers are really gifted; others, like myself, are lousy. One strange thing I've observed about sympathizers on the fringes of the movement: When I hear a comment like: "Gee, the last issue of the *WS* was a dandy."

it is evidence to me that, at last, that sympathizer is becoming conscious of what socialism is all about.

Finally, as a suggestion to you: Why not write an article on campus activities, or on some clipping in the newspaper — or, write a review of a book you are reading, or of a significant movie or play you saw? Just to start the wheels turning in your cranium.

JANUARY 3, 1965

Dear Comrade Brownrigg:

I have an idea for a very useful article for the *WS*. If I were not faced with so many uncompleted projects, left hanging in the air, I'd tackle it myself. I don't want to approach those now writing for the *WS*. Nor do I want to ask the *SS* Editorial Committee to suggest a writer for this in view of the difficulty they now have in getting volunteers to rewrite the *Religion* and *Racism* pamphlets. A light dawned on me as I was puzzling what to do: Why not Brownrigg?

Your valued comments and suggestions for the *WS* indicate to me that you are just the fellow for this task. In case you might say: "I can identify a bad egg but I can't lay one," all I can reply is: "I hae me dubts," as our Glaswegian comrades might say.

I have just ploughed through the almost 1,100 pages of Ayn Rand's *Atlas Shrugged*. Because she is being widely discussed on the campuses and in the press, I wanted to read what she had to say.

To summarize her views: The looters — government bureaucrats and coniving, cheating entrepreneurs, phonies, as it were — are leeches. They do not contribute ideas, inventions, or brains to production. They want profits without earning them. They preach the public good, unselfishness, brotherhood — all meaningless double-talk — and practice greed and a thoroughgoing hypocrisy. Their practices can only lead to the ultimate decline and ruination of the economy. The only reason they remain in power is because the genuine, legitimate capitalists consent to be governed by their rules. The real brains should withdraw their participation from the present set-up and let the inevitable consequences of the illogical, brainless activities of those in power destroy the whole economy as it exists at present. Then a new regime becomes necessary. The brains will come into their own. Free trade and free minds will predominate. Real values will be traded. Honest values will prevail. There will be no limit on profits because they will have been earned. Men will be guided by reason. All the relativistic thinking will give way to absolute thinking: $A = A$.

Should you be stimulated to tackle this article (as I earnestly hope you are), *Atlas Shrugged* is a Signet paperback selling for 95¢. Let's hear from you.



The trials and tribulations of the Socialist Movement arise, really, out of concern with the soundness of the movement, or with disappointment with the seeming lack of concrete results. It still remains true that socialist work does remain the only task really worth-while — thus socialist organization is vital to spreading socialist understanding and knowledge. This is the bond that rises to the surface to consolidate our efforts. There are hosts of socialists outside our official ranks. With the march of time and events, these will rally to the inspirations and fervor of the socialist objective: inaugurating a world fit for human beings. This is our latent strength. In the meantime, we keep on keeping on!

What more can I say?

TANUARY 7, 1965

Dear Comrade Steve (Butterfield):

Comrade Harry Morrison and I just went over some manuscripts for the forthcoming *WS*. He brought over your letter dealing with your views, just received this morning.

No one could quarrel with a member who desires "to call the principles of his own life a religion." That is his right and prerogative, if he prefers some special personal definition of the term "religion" that satisfies him.

However, there is a question of semantics that enters the picture. There are commonly-understood and commonly-used definitions of this term. You recommend that "the party stop defining religion as a system of belief including the concepts of god and an afterlife." But we find that just this definition of religion is most generally current. Especially, we find the following:

The classic 11th edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* devotes 15 pages to the question of religion, ranging the entire gamut from primitive to higher religions. More than one page introduced the subject by analyzing what is meant by religion and its historical background. It refers to ancient writings and ends up with recent studies, especially, E.B. Tyler, Max Muller, Herbert Spencer, Grant Allen, J.G. Frazer and others. In fact, it pays tribute to the study of comparative religion for paving the way to the science of anthropology.

This introductory development stresses: "By all means let universal characterization be attempted." And, with favor, it quotes Tyler ("...a minimum definition of religion is the belief in spiritual beings") and Frazer ("By religion is understood a propitiation or conciliation of powers superior to man which are believed to direct and control the course of nature and human life"). Interspersed throughout this analysis are such expressions as: "belief in ghosts," "worship of the dead," "magic," "totemism," "souls," "fetishism," "animism," and so on.

I'm enclosing the SPGB pamphlet, *Socialism and Religion*. I treasure this copy, so please return it when you're finished with it. The two most pertinent chapters are "Socialism and Ethics" and "Socialists and the Religious Conflict."

My impression of what you are saying is: "If by religion you mean a system of belief including the concepts of God and an after-life," then

you do not subscribe to such views. *That is all that is necessary to state.* Obviously you do not agree with any mystical, magical explanation for the physical-material phenomena constituting the universe and existence. And you do not need to go beyond that. After all, religionists and religion are not synonymous terms. Reformation theology was not free from religious superstitions, but reformation theologians acted socially in response to the conditions of their times. Religion, as defined above, is hostile to scientific socialism — religionists are affected by their experiences and can become socialists, when they lose their superstitions.

Appreciative of the spirit of your letter,

Also, yours for a strong WSP

[Rab responded to this undated letter from George Jenkins (SPC) on Jan. 14, 1965. I have reproduced here the holiday card referred to in Jenkins's letter, which was created in 1964 by Louise Gloss (daughter of WSP member George Gloss) and which has been in use intermittently ever since. — KDR, 2008]

Dear Comrade Rab,

Thanks for the card and greetings and unbounded enthusiasm. The card was nice in that it is seldom we see a Socialist greeting card, altho one of the Comrades here wondered why the picture suggested piracy.

I have been intending to do up a greeting card or two for several years now & still haven't gotten round to it. We have the duplicator here now too, which would handle black & white stuff & color too if more money was spent on it.

Our study group session for last nite was cancelled, not enough were able to show up. We have a new member coming up, Dave Ross, well educated formally, who may be able to give us a lot of help with grammar, writing, speaking, etc.

The WS this last trip was a good one. Regards to you and the rest of your family and the comrades in Boston,

Comradely,

George



TANUARY 14, 1965

Dear Comrade George Jenkins:

Thanks for your cooperation in notifying me so promptly of your receipt of the 4-track WSP 1964 Conference Good & Welfare tape. In time, tapes will come into more general use for party propaganda, official communications and correspondence. Note the recent SPGB motion to set money aside for tapes; the Vancouver intention of taping your meeting with them on the controversy; and the pioneer work on tapes by the WSP

I'm writing Vancouver that you will forward the above tape to them when Victoria is finished with it. I've also asked them to let me know when they receive it and I'll then let them know where to forward it, in turn.

Eventually, there will be improvements in handling tapes. At all times, there will be need for efficient cooperation in circulating tapes. Which reminds me that the reason why you have not received the list of tapes you had requested some time ago is because we are revamping our inventory of tapes and our clerical work procedures. Incidentally, I've just listened to two tapes: Buick on "Historical Analysis of Bolshevism to Present Time" — this is a scholarly presentation and really worthwhile — and my own on "American Foreign Policy," which is informative on current matters, even though the delivery is poor and there are a couple bad spots on the tape.

It was good to read of another prospective nail in the coffin of capitalism: Dave Ross. The WSP has a minor influx of such nails, ranging from 16-year-olds (3 high schoolers) to post graduate college students. One, in particular, Dave Butterfield, who has a teaching fellowship, is doing good socialist work on the University of Cincinnati campus. Four of these younger comrades now write for the WS: Stan Blake, Bill Jerome, Lamm, and Giano. Lest I forget, Toronto was very enthused about Dennis Grieg (trusting my memory on his name) of Vancouver, who visited there last summer.

Speaking of Vancouver and speaking only for myself: I'm hoping that the bond of socialist objectives intimately tied up with socialist organized activity prevails in Vancouver. These controversies, to me, indicate genuine concern for sound socialist organization. They reflect three fears: emasculating socialist principles; reactions to the seeming appearance of "heresy hunting"; disappointments in slow growth of membership with

apprehensions that something is wrong with our policies and practices. Other factors also enter the picture: the god-damn system affects individual socialists; personality problems and resentments arise; differing attitudes are rationalized as “principles,” etc.

BUT the place for socialists is in the organization for socialism. This takes priority! After all is said and done, all the parties in the World Socialist Movement have no alternative but to operate and function democratically and this democratic procedure always rises to the surface, in spite of hell and high water. This is inevitable because our very objective, itself, affects and influences our behavior as an organization.

It is true that there are more socialists outside of the various parties than in them (and I mean socialists in our understanding of the term). This can be seen in the ex-members who are sound on theory; on many of the hangers-on in the fringes; and in the sympathizers who could pass the Application Blank test. However, what cannot be lost sight of is: Socialism also requires ACTION to change society the organized socialist movement.

Just a thought: If you could succeed in designing a series of inspiring socialist greeting cards, you would satisfy a real need internationally.

TANUARY 8, 1965

[Below is a letter to Rab from Adam Buick, later to become General Secretary of the SPGB.]

Dear Comrade,

Thanks for the things you sent me on the ITU [*International Typographical Union*] — as a matter of fact, Lipset, Coleman's and Liow's book is on my sociology reading list. I just finished reading it over the Christmas Vacation. Quite interesting but what I don't understand among academics is the way they attribute to Robert Michels the theory that "organization means bureaucracy and a new ruling class." This is an anarchist theory which Michels consciously notes!

The real reason why I am writing is that one of our comrades who is interested in William Morris would like to read George [Gerell]'s thesis on him — he wants to know the exact title, date, university, etc., so that someone can acquire a copy for him. Did you say Gilmac had one?

I was interested to see that a local of the SPC was formed in Toronto, was that a result of your visit? How was Ron suddenly "unconverted"? [*This would be Ron Yurkowski. KDR, 2006*]

I see Harry Morrison has got you to draw up a letter on Violence for our EC. I hope you've not got the wrong end of the stick as to what the discussion is about. It is not a repeat of your Canter controversy. The official party position is — and always has been — "peaceably if we can, forcibly if we must." At the last conference, Paddington branch presented a resolution which said that "the very nature of socialism precludes the use of violence," etc. which was taken to be a demand for a revision of the party position. I hope Harry doesn't see any affinity between his position that the ballot is the only way and that of Paddington branch (which was, you will remember, a hot-bed of Turnerism which was against all political action!). Paddington branch maintain that conditions will have changed so much as a result of the spread of socialist understanding that the question of violence will be more or less superfluous.

Incidentally, I haven't heard from Bill [Jerome] (though I've been meaning to write to him). How are things going with Bill and Joni?

Fraternally

Adam

Give my greets to the other comrades.

January 16, 1965

Dear Comrade Adam: It was good hearing from you!

Comrade George (Gerell) is not sure whether Comrade Grant or Comrade Gilmac has his thesis on William Morris. He is anxious that the thesis be returned to him when they have finished with it. It has not been published and he will need this copy, eventually. Our comrade in Oxford is welcome to borrow it. Is he a member of the Oxford group of the SPGB?

Before commenting on chitchat news, two matters interest me. 1. The question of violence and 2. Michel.

You are mistaken in assuming that Harry Morrison got me to draw up the letter to the SPGB-EC on violence. Let me quote the 11/22/64 NAC minutes. (If you would like to get these minutes regularly, why not write to headquarters.) "The sec'y read his draft letter to the EC of SPGB on subject of their statement on violence. The letter stated that although we find nothing in the opening paragraph to disagree with — it being a statement of fact — that we would prefer that an official party position on violence contain no conjecture, even 'reasonable conjecture,' of what will happen in the days immediately following the mandate by a majority of the population to abolish capitalism and introduce socialism. That there seems to be no unanimity of opinion among the members on this point and that we should stick to a simple statement on our attitude to the question of violence, a statement of fact. The WSP, be it noted, took the following position as a result of a referendum in 1953: *We advocate the ballot as a means of attaining socialism and anyone who advocates violence as a means of attaining the socialist victory cannot be a member of the WSP!* Motion: the letter be sent to the EC. Carried."

Now, for my personal views: I cannot agree with you that the "official party position is — and always has been — 'peaceably if we can, forcibly if we must.'" No word is more abused in the socialist vocabulary than the word "position." How can we take an unqualified, positive position on some specific, detailed event in the future? The very conjecture belies that it is a position. There are very few indeed statements that we make that can be dignified with the description: "position." We do have a position on the socialist victory, all right enough. It is: The socialist revolution is political in nature and it will be accomplished by the conscious, socialist majority. And that is sufficient. The reason we always emphasize

the ballot is clear. The ballot is the symbol of the politically conscious, socialist majority.

The trouble is that, unfortunately, “force” and “violence” are not synonymous terms. When they are used as substitute terms for each other they lead to quibbles, such as seen in your letter. By “force” in the context of the socialist revolution, is meant the power to accomplish our objectives, and this force includes social and economic forces (developments). I would recommend your rereading of Engels’s *Anti Duhring*.

The Communist Manifesto, p. 80, SPGB edition: “Political power, properly so-called, is merely the organized power of one class for oppressing another. If the proletariat, during its contest with the bourgeoisie, is compelled by force of circumstances, to organize itself as a class, if by means of a revolution it makes itself the ruling class (by winning the battle of democracy, p. 79) and, as such, sweeps away by force the old conditions of production, then, it will, along with these conditions, have swept away the conditions for the existence of class antagonisms and of classes generally, and will thereby have abolished its own supremacy as a class.”

And hereby hangs a tale, the horror of the bourgeoisie that the *Communist Manifesto* advocates violence with their hypocritical condemnation by quoting, out of context of the Manifesto itself, the final paragraph of the historic document: “They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions.” (Note the last three words.)

While we are at it, Engels’s comment in this preface (p. 56): “The practical application of the principles will depend, as the *Manifesto* itself states, everywhere and at all times, on the historical conditions for the time being existing...” does not apply to the analysis of force but does apply to the so-called “peaceably if we can, forcibly, if we must,” as a principled “position.”

Finally, Paddington’s “ballot is the only way” is as good a way as I know of stating the essence of the class-conscious socialist democratic nature of the socialist revolution. This is not telling history what it must do. It emphasizes that we advocate the ballot. Turner’s opposition to all political action merely lines him up with the anarchist spokesmen who say the same thing, but find themselves involved in political actions, despite their theories, when the chips are down.

Now, for Michels. I confess that I'm bewildered by your reference to Robert Michels. Maybe you are assuming that I'm acquainted with Lipset, Coleman and Shaw(?)'s work on sociology. I'm not. However, as a strange coincidence, I'm in the middle of reading *The Anarchists*, edited by Irving L. Horowitz. Dell, Laurel edition 0131, 95c. On my recent birthday, Karla and George made me a present of two paperback books. The above was one of them. Horowitz has several references to Michels, which I looked up on account of your comment. His summary on him was: "Robert Michels, who along with Max Weber, was the father of the general theory of bureaucracy, was an anarchist and makes his criticisms from the point of view of the psychological insights gained from sympathies with (and ultimate rejection of) anarchist ideology."*

So far, I've found this work very worthwhile. It is reminiscent of the *SS* articles on anarchism during the late teens and early twenties when the anarchists were a very vocal force. Like the *Standard*, he emphasizes that there are many schools of anarchism; he deals pretty thoroughly with seven of the schools. The old *Standard* once said that there are as many schools of anarchism as there are anarchists. Also, like the *Standard*, he pointed out that most schools of anarchism are really bourgeois in essence. His introduction indicates the dilemmas arising from their conflicting views and their limitations in analyzing social forces. However, like myself, he has a strong sympathy for their "spirit," as it were. I phrase it: they err on the right side.

I don't hesitate in recommending you to go through this work. It could be helpful to you. The other book that Karla and George gave me was Isaac Deutscher's *The Age of Permanent Revolution: A Trotsky Anthology*. I've only read one chapter dealing with Trotsky's visit to the U.S. in 1917. He visited Detroit in 1917 while I lived there. But Deutscher did not mention it.

It would not be wrong to assert that our visit was a strong impetus to the organization of the local there. At present moment, it is the white hope. Judging by their minutes they are carrying the Jimmy Higgins work that is bound to bear fruit. As for Ron [Yurkoski], after reading Keracher's *How the Gods Were Made*, he became satisfied with the validity of our stand.

* According to Wikipedia, Robert Michels "was a German sociologist ... who moved from the Social Democratic Party of Germany [which he left in 1907] to the Italian Socialist Party, adhering to the Italian revolutionary syndicalist wing and later to Italian Fascism, which he saw as a more democratic form of socialism." Source: http://wikipedia.org/wiki/robert_michels.

Bill Jerome recently became the father of a baby girl. Why not surprise him by dropping him a note of congratulations. His address is: 14 Buswell St., Boston, Mass. 02115. Bill is now both local and national treasurer.

I'll give Louis Peters your regards, as well as all the other comrades, who often mention you.

Karla just passed her comprehensives for her master's degree. She eventually will get her licence to practice. (That's a joke, comrade.)

I suppose you will see Lennie, Abe and Ann at the Easter Conference.

Incidentally, do you know your plans, as yet, for next summer or fall? Needless to say, we are all interested in them.

Give my best to the Oxford comrades.

As ever, Yours for socialism,

Rab

TANUARY 21, 1965

Dear Comrade Mike (Lamm):

Just got your letter and hasten to reply.

A word on the Negro question: First of all, the fight for civil liberties, which includes free speech fights, house to house canvasses, selling periodicals on the streets, etc., is not a reform. Socialists have participated in just such demonstrations in the past and will again in the future, when the occasion arises. After all, civil liberties are important socialist tools and weapons to carry on socialist education and propaganda. Note well, our attitude has always been that we will march side by side with others but never under the banner of others. We will not be identified with non-socialists. This has happened in London on occasions, even, on May Day celebrations.

Let me define *reforms*. They are measures that require legislative action by the capitalist state to improve the operation of the system, or at least that is their object. This typifies the Negro movement generally. This can be seen by the emphasis on establishing equal social position of Negro and white capitalists, as well as equality of rights for Negro and white workers. You will observe the constant emphasis that this constitutes "good Americanism" and is the highest patriotism. What have we in common with the prevailing confusions, superstitions and aspirations (essentially, bourgeois) of Negro and white supporters of the system? Socialists are, literally, color blind! Our sympathies are with the exploited of all colors.

If you recall, my "quarrel" with the objections to my article on the Negro question was that a few comrades wanted me to eliminate my comments of sympathetic "support," as it were, for the civil liberty phase of the Southern Negro resistance, a spontaneous demand of the colored workers that had overwhelmed the Negro spokesmen. These "leaders" found themselves followers who were led by a historic demand that had come of age. But this no longer typifies the situation. This can clearly be seen in the concentration on bourgeois demands being made by the Negro organizations. They have become respectable. Like the "successful" victories in Asia and Africa, they are only concerned in a "better administration" of capitalism.

FEBRUARY 1, 1965

[William Davenport, to whom this letter is addressed, is mentioned frequently in Chapter 2 of the Biography.]

Dear Comrades Bill (and Vivian, is my memory correct?):

Many a time and oft, my memory roams nostalgically to our memorable associations in Detroit in 1915 - 1921 and then in Boston, soon after. A great deal of water has passed under the bridge since those days.

But first, the reason for this letter arises from a request for Jack London's autograph — which could be helpful for party funds, *if we could locate it*. I've already written George Ramsay, likewise, in case his memory might help. As you recall, London's letter to the newly organized WSP in 1916 was addressed to you as our first national secretary. It was reprinted in the *Socialist Standard* and later in the *WS*.

There are now five generations of socialists in the family, starting with Ella's and my parents, whom you had met, and ending with my one-year-old great granddaughter, Sara Rachel. In 1893, my father was a member of the SLP in Boston, and previously, my father and mother were involved with socialism in Russia. As you know, Ella's father was an organizer for the SPA in the 1903 period in Wyoming, Colorado and other western states, arranging tours for Debs and other SPAers. My father ran the gamut from SLP to SPA to CP. My mother had a better understanding of genuine socialism than my father (as you may recall). From 1902 - 1907, I was a member, with my brother and sister in the Boston Socialist Sunday School. Pity there are no such things anymore. One of the highlights was the massive Moyer-Haywood-Pettibone parade of labor unions and other organizations. The Sunday School led the procession and I was the proud chief marshal, in 1906. Later, in 1909, in order to get a Roxbury SPA local going, I was given special permission to join and serve as secretary, despite my age.

It might even be possible for you to revisit Boston and reminisce on the old Detroit days with the three younger generations, as well as with the Boston comrades who are now carrying on the one task that really counts. The only time I met your wife was when she dropped into a Party Conference in New York, some years ago. I vividly recall my impressions of her as a sincere, genuine human being — even though we had differing views of what should be done for advancing the socialist case. She had a good mind and made some valued comments to the Conference.

As you know so well, I'm a poor correspondent. It takes a pressing matter to get me to the typewriter (and there are always many of them — creating the illusion of my being a prolific correspondent).

I would appreciate news of you and yours.

FEBRUARY 1, 1965

Dear Comrade Dave (Butterfield):

Sorry to have delayed my reply but this is the first opportunity I've had the time to do justice in coming to grips with your inquiries.

I can very well appreciate the confused dilemmas that seem to arise when considering the socialist attitude on reforms, civil liberties and I'm adding "trade unions," for that is also bound to arise. We have realized for many years that we need a pamphlet on reforms. Comrade Felperin, the logical writer on this topic, is willing enough but personal circumstances have interfered. He has made a special study of this question.

Let me start by defining what we mean by "reforms." A reform is legislative action by the capitalist state to institute measures that will make the system operate more smoothly. Usually, the appeal is made on the basis that these measures will "improve the lot of the workers" within the framework of the system, in the meantime. There have been two excellent studies made on this topic: Rosa Luxemburg's *Reform or Revolution* and Wm. Liebknecht's *No Compromise—No Political Trading*.

The Negro question serves as a useful illustration. There we can see the distinction between reforms and a fight for civil liberties.

1. Generally speaking, the Negro movement concentrates on fighting for legislation to establish and maintain equal social conditions for both Negroes and whites, capitalists and workers alike. For the Negro capitalists, the objectives are equal privileges and social status with the white exploiters. For the Negro workers, it means equal job opportunities and wages with their white brothers. Always, the emphasis is on good American patriotism. Their efforts are devoted to enforcing constitutional provisions and compelling compliance with the laws. They support capitalism and share the same confused superstitions and bourgeois aspirations as the majority of their white counterparts. They think in terms of race and color — a people apart (similar to other forms of nationalism). The goals of the Negro movement are reforms, and not a change in the social structure. Socialists are distinct from this movement since they are colorblind on the Negro question.

2. Coincidentally, there also exists the fight for civil liberties aspect of the Negro efforts. The fight for civil liberties, as such, is not a reform. What is meant by civil liberties in the socialist vocabulary, as it were? First of

all, the socialist revolution is the conscious majority obtaining political power in order to transfer the means of living from the parasites who live off our backs to society, as a whole, where it belongs. Such measures as free speech, house-to-house canvassing, selling periodicals on the street, removing restrictions from the franchise and similar activities strengthen the *revolutionary weapons* to get rid of capitalism — and have nothing to do with reforming the damn system. You may have noted the statement on the Negro question in No. 6 - 1965 *WS*: “As to the extension of the franchise and civil liberties, generally, we naturally welcome improvements that occur in these.”

We have participated in the past in free speech fights, May Day parades, etc., but never under any other banner but our own. We insist on retaining our identity and not being associated with any United Front efforts with those who are not dedicated to our Object and Declaration of Principles.

The economic phase of the class struggle, unionism, is sometimes mistakenly referred to as a reform. It is undeniable that many unions do engage in reform activities. But unions and unionism are not synonymous terms. The only thing that the workers, as a class, own is their commodity: labor power. The quarrel over hours, wages and shop conditions has nothing to do with reforming capitalism or improving the lot of the workers. The workers are compelled to organize into unions by the very conditions of capitalism, i.e., the division of the new value produced by the workers into its two component parts: variable capital (the workers' share) and surplus value (the capitalists' share). Through the mechanism of unionism, the workers, over the long run, sell their commodity, labor power, at its value. *Value, Price and Profit* is invaluable on this question. One quote will suffice: “They [the workers] ought not to forget that they are fighting with effects and not with the causes of those effects; that they are retarding the downward movement but not changing its direction.”

The above may suffice to indicate the replies to your specific points. If not, I'd be only too happy to elaborate.

Now, for your economic questions.

No different from any other branch of science, Marxian economics makes no claim to give explanations of every specific action and occurrence in the economic sphere. Like all sciences, it attempts to outline the general laws of motion at work and outline the processes at work. That is sufficient.

Selling prices are not related to wages in the sense that high or low prices reflect high or low wages occurring in the production of these commodities. The most effective refutation, of course, is that the history of prices shows no such correlation. In fact, just the opposite is true. Higher wages accompanied by greater productivity resulting in reduction of labor times incorporated in commodities generally results in lower prices. The best indicator is that old standby of the official “economists,” Steel. It just shows the power of the propaganda used by the press, urging the workers not to strike for higher wages, it can only mean higher prices and the continuation of that bugaboo: the spiral of wages and prices. In spite of all the hogwash, the law of value is still true: commodities sell at their value, in general (with all the admitted exceptions).

It is amusing, the consistent refrain of the bourgeois economists from Marx’s time to date: You were correct yesterday but you are wrong today. Both in the “simple” capitalism of Marx and the complex “monopoly” capitalism of today, prices cannot be arbitrarily fixed for any length of time, not even by national capitals. In spite of iron controls and legislative actions, yes, and executive edicts, the competition of new processes, new sources of power, new synthetic materials and what not are at work intensifying international competition on a gigantic scale, even leading to war scares. It is easy — *but false* — to ignore that the only thing that matters is the accumulation of capital itself. Fluid capital is ever seeking new avenues of investment. Capitalism remains capitalism, with its economic laws of motion, despite Keynes and the rest.

The SLP and the SPA are fond of describing socialism as a society in which the worker gets the “full product of his toil.” This is an erroneous concept. “Full product” is only another expression of the bourgeois “equality and justice.” There is no class of workers in a socialist society. There are only citizens, members of society, who receive according to their *need*. If everyone got the full product what would be left for the common administration of the affairs of the whole community? For a superb annihilation of the Lasallean “full product” concept, Marx’s refutation of the Eisenachers in the Gotha Program is a gem of analysis. It is worth reading.

I can well appreciate that you don’t have much time for letter writing. I’m no good as a correspondent. The only time I write is when it becomes mandatory. There is no need for any reply to this communication. However, *never* hesitate to ask questions, and if I can be helpful, I’m only too willing.

FEBRUARY 23, 1965

Dear Comrade (Mike) Lamm:

At the NAC meeting on Sunday, Feb. 21, 1965, I took the liberty of urging the NAC to table your resignation until March 21. I asked for permission to correspond with you on the matter. It was gladly granted. It is hard enough to gain new members (nails in the coffin of capitalism) without making special efforts to retain those who are distressed with qualms and reservations.

For a time, the SPGB had an internal party journal, *Forum*, to thrash out differences of opinion among party members on theories, procedures, activities and other matters of common concern. In the June 1953 *Forum* appeared an article I wrote on "Requirements for Membership." I should like to quote some pertinent items for your serious consideration.

[Rab's article on "Requirements for Membership" is reprinted in full elsewhere in this book, so I am not including the excerpts Rab chose from it here. His letter to Mike Lamm continues:]

Has the group you mentioned in your letter any statement of their views? I would like to see it, if it has. (I don't have your letter at home; it is in headquarters.) If it should prove that their real concern is to make socialists, it could result in an interesting discussion leading to strengthening the socialist movement in the U.S. The great need is for consolidating those who want to work for socialism. It is only too true, that he who merely sits and waits does not serve the cause of socialism.

"Socialist Activists" have had impressive "successes" and "victories" in every field except one. The lessons of experience and history have proven beyond any shadow of doubt that they have not remotely convinced the workers of the need for socialism. From the activities carried on in the name of socialism, the one thing conspicuous by its absence has been any mention of the socialist case. In common, the efforts of "socialist activists" — ranging from anti-bomb demonstrators, through fighters for equal rights, to the administrators of both the social-democrat and "communist" varieties — have been geared to an attempt to reconcile the irreconcilable contradictions of capitalism. With contempt, they sneer at the dumb workers and their backwardness. Such groups have been guilty of disillusioning the workers about real socialism. The great indictment of these activists is that they divert the workers from the genuine

socialist movement, and have hampered the growth of socialism by many years. Were all that tremendous energy and enthusiasm harnessed in the genuine socialist work of making socialists, how much more the movement would have been advanced! The “practical realist” has proven to be an impractical utopian; the “activist” has proven to be the occupant of an ivory tower.

Dear Comrade Mike, I’m fully convinced that your main concern is socialism. Isn’t your place in the ranks of the organized revolutionary socialist movement, with all its limitations, disappointments and frustrations, fighting within the party for those improvements that will strengthen our common socialist endeavors?

Here’s my hand!

april 22, 1965

Dear Comrade Mark Gioni:

There are really no extenuating excuses for my long delay in greeting you into the comradeship of the Party. I feel very guilty about it. What could be more inspiring than to witness another teenager taking a meaningful step in the direction of speeding up a world fit for human beings! Here's a shake of the hand from the oldest WSP member to one of its newest and youngest recruits.

Taking advantage of this opportunity to make a suggestion: This letter is being typed on the back of a form letter [*an invitation to an event at the Boston Headquarters*], with malice aforethought. A similar letter might be useful for the New York comrades in trying to get schools and colleges to hear socialist speakers. Next to the *WS*, our greatest efforts should be directed to getting a hearing of the socialist case by youths. The times are ripe for the hearing of the socialist analysis.

I'm particularly delighted that you are so concerned about the problems of socialist propaganda. We should always be on the lookout for improving our procedures. Also, it is noteworthy that you are not afraid to think for yourself. After all, thinking is no violation of socialist discipline...

Without getting involved in your current correspondence on Religion, I'll take the liberty of an old-timer to make some personal comments of my own.

First of all, I agree with you that Marxian socialists are not militant Atheists (capital "A") killing gods. Such an attitude makes no contribution to any understanding of the question of religion. Several articles in the *WS* have made a distinction between Atheists and atheists. The former are, speaking generally, bourgeois materialists. Their conclusions are based on mental exercises and logic gymnastics, in a vacuum. Their refutations merely emphasize the "nonsense" of the God theory in a manner that is a far cry from a scientific analysis. In contrast, the latter are materialists who grasp the social forces which gave rise to the concepts of gods, souls, etc. Religion began as the science of its day. Religion was not maliciously created for the purpose of deceiving people.

Secondly, I would like to call your attention to such men as the Blanquists of the Paris Commune days, who were Anti-God. They were Anarchists who glorified the Rights of Man and the philosophy of individualism.

Essentially, they were the vestiges of the spirit of the French Revolution and bourgeois revolutionaries in their fight against the Church and clericalism, i.e., they were anti-religious. Note well how the anti-religious revolutionaries, once they were in power, re-established the respectability of religion in defense of their new control of the state — including the USSR. (Read Plechanov, LaFargue and Mehring.) Their prior anti-religion was rooted in resistance and defiance of the aristocracy and the status quo, in which the Church was a major partner. (Incidentally, personally, and speaking for myself alone, I've always had an empathy for the Anarchists, in spite of Anarchism being the philosophy of capitalism, merely because, in the main, they are found on the right side of the fight when the chips are down, e.g., Paris Commune, Spanish Civil War, etc., even though they act for the wrong reasons.)

Next, there are the rationalists and agnostics, as well as many freethinkers. Very aptly, Engels describes them as “shamefaced materialists.” In all their arguments and explanations, they use the materialist analysis. But they leave the door open for “contingencies” despite the overwhelming evidence for the validity of the physical-material explanations for the origins of life, geology, etc. Unfolding new evidence only confirms the fallacies and futilities of metaphysical, supernatural concepts and corroborates the scientific conclusions on the God theory. Question: Who are the dogmatists?

A much more serious item, however, is the question of religion being a private matter. There are a host of issues that socialists can disagree on, but religion is not one of them. Unlike so many other items, religion is not merely a matter of personal opinion. How can the religious explanations of existence be reconciled with the materialist conception of history? But that alone would not justify us in denying that religion a private matter. The overriding reason why religion is not a private matter is that religion, today, is a social force standing in the way of socialist objectives. Here's just one question to mull over: Besides ignorance and confusions, what other obstacles are there to a socialist transformation of society?

Ironically, nobody is really religious any longer, simply because religious explanations no longer make sense in the modern world. Note that religions today emphasize rationalizations rather than blind faith. Also note the emphasis on ethics and morals. It is amusing to read the recent writings of theologians on even the God concept, itself. Take almost any issue of

Time Magazine and read the Religion section. The rulings of the Ecumenical Councils would have been inconceivable a few short years ago. But the traditions of the past weigh like an Alp on the minds of the living, as Marx said. (And that is true, whether Marx ever said it or not.)

The religious teachings of humility, servility, obedience, faith, with its teachings of “Work and pray, live on hay, you’ll get pie in the sky when you die” are social forces also, in the same category as patriotism. Herein lies the fallacy of the SLP. Two of their minor flaws are: glorifying the founding fathers, and religion being a private matter. (Incidentally, this has caused them embarrassments on more than one occasion — a conspicuous one being having to retract an article by a spiritualist member in the *Weekly People*.)

I must close now. To sum up: just like reformism, religion stands in the way of socialism. The latent strength of socialism is that it makes sense and harmonizes with the lessons of experience. What inspires our young friends is the inspiration of socialism: From each according to their ability and to each according to their need. Religions no longer can “stir men’s souls” the way socialism does, once they lose their superstitions. If man is to survive, socialism is the answer!

Comradely greetings and welcome to the ranks.

UNDATED, 1965

[This was written as a Letter to the Editor of the New York Times Magazine; to my knowledge it was never published.]

IS THERE A NEGRO REVOLUTION?

Letter to the Editor:

At the massive Rev. Reeb Memorial Demonstration on Boston Common, one of the speakers asked the question: "What are you going to tell your children when they ask you what did you do during the Negro Revolution?"

More likely, our children will ask us: "What did you do during the socialist Revolution?"

In the 1960's we are witnessing the coming of age of the general recognition of and determination to alleviate the social plight of the American Negroes. But we are not witnessing anything that does away with this social plight. All we see are legalistic measures being enacted, which require coercion and duress for their enforcement. And, in the diplomatic arena, the driving force behind the official support of the Negro "equality" movement is admittedly the necessity of creating a favorable image of American "freedom and democracy" in the Asiatic and African continents with the reactions on European chancelleries.

Negroes of the South, would you see your future? Just go up North and ask your brother Negroes about the alleged blessings of Negro "equality and freedom." The passage of civil rights measures and the so-called abolition of discriminatory practices have not, in any way at all, altered the predominant social relations.

The primary characteristic of a social revolution is to change the social relationships. The social revolution called for in the historic conditions of the 1960s is to supplant production for profit (capitalism) with production for use (socialism).

Inherently, capitalism breeds prejudices, bigotry and hatreds. Kenneth B. Clark, in *The N.Y. Times Magazine* (4/4/65), bemoans the "Delusions of the White Liberals." Unfortunately, both Negro and White liberals, as well as Negro and White reactionaries, suffer the same delusions. This very concept of "race" is a fallacy, speaking scientifically. Negroes and Whites are essentially social categories, as can be seen by examining dif-

fering behaviors and attitudes throughout the globe. *Homo sapiens* is but one species.

Capitalism is a class society, despite the apologists and pundits. The Negro and White capitalists have common interests, and the Negro and White workers have common interests. It is an illusion that Negro capitalists have common interests with Negro workers, any more than White capitalists have common interests with White workers.

Arthur Robinson

APRIL 24, 1965

Dear Comrade Mike (Stimac),

You couldn't have been admitted to a finer school than U. of C., Berkeley. Have you made up your mind on what your major is going to be? Your selection has an excellent reputation as a superior school of learning and information. Note that I did not say "education." To me "education" implies more than a host of specifics and details, *per se*. Education includes an understanding of how the storehouse of information is tied up in their interrelationships, and in a process of growth and development. In the final analysis, science is not only accumulated knowledge, but the methods of acquiring this knowledge. There is but one science, it is an integrated whole (in spite of all the vast gaps in our knowledge and our colossal ignorance). But there are branches of science galore: astronomy, chemistry, physics and the other so-called exact sciences as well as history, economics, sociology and the so-called social sciences. They all overlap and none of them exists independently, in a vacuum. Unfortunately, universities must be geared to job training as their major objective, rather than education, as outlined above.

However, with the march of time, more and more emphasis is being placed on correlations. This is true of M.I.T. and may also be true of U. of C., Berkeley. It is a significant sign of the times.

Peculiarly enough, brash though it sounds, socialism is the science of generalizations, i.e., it is the science of processes. Really, only the socialist is capable of viewing science objectively, without moral reservations and ethical compunctions, when the chips are down. What is more inspiring and emotionally stirring than socialism and the fight for socialism — yet it is not rooted on merely ethical, moral, or philosophical considerations. This is because our historic task is not only to understand the world, but, more importantly, to change it! The distinction of socialism is that it is materialistic rather than metaphysical. What distinguished the early Marx from the mature Marx was just this. The dilettantes and intellectuals emphasize the "humanism" and "alienation" of Marx's Hegelian youth and ignore his basic contribution of historical materialism. Not that Marx forsook his condemnations of the inhuman and alienating features of capitalism. But there is more to it!

Heartiest congratulation on your efforts at the San Francisco rally. Yesterday, 3 comrades gave away many thousands of leaflets (and not one was seen thrown on the ground) at Martin Luther King's parade and rally on Boston Common.

TUNE 12, 1965

Dear Comrade Mark (Gioni),

Yes, I agree that a belief in a supreme being does not, *necessarily* (your emphasis), prevent an *individual* (my emphasis) from opposition to capitalism. (Note: I omitted your adjectives, “complete” and “effective,” because they are absolute terms.) Of course, an individual religionist may become a revolutionary socialist, despite his superstitions. But, this is not true of religionists, as a whole. In this context, please reread my last letter contrasting the religious and materialist views of social phenomena.

Also, I cannot quarrel with your other statement that no new member of the party can be expected to have a “complete” grasp of Marxian science. And this applies most emphatically to all members of the party. For that matter, I know of no one who has a complete grasp of any science. (Your absolute adjective, again.)

However, like you, I do believe we should avoid abusive harangues (as distinct from good satire à la Anatole France or Mark Twain, a most difficult type of writing). Diatribes, as such, merely antagonize rather than convince. And I do believe you seldom see harangues or diatribes in the *WS*, despite our serious criticisms of anti or non-socialist confusions.

Finally, the strength of the socialist case is that it harmonizes with the lessons of experience, as it unfolds in its historical development. The socialist case is far easier to grasp than the unquestioned beliefs that so many blindly accept. (It is important to realize that today, religion is only accepted — but no longer ESTABLISHED — as the explanation for the beginnings of life or the beginnings of the earth. Even religious seminaries are compelled to give materialist explanations for those two phenomena, despite their rationalizations and apologetics.) Bourgeois economics proves to be sheer gibberish and is difficult to make sense of when examined on its own merits. The reason why Marxian science appears to be “profound” is because it is not frequently taught and thus sounds strange. Just examine some of the strides being made now in the elementary schools in teaching the new mathematics and science, which has exploded many preconceptions on the matter of “learning.”

Modern technology is compelling new methods of teaching “profound” subjects in schools in order to produce efficient slaves for exploiting. And the class nature of capitalism has succeeded in creating the illusion that

the workers are dumb and cannot grasp real understanding, and must have leaders (as distinct from teachers) to tell them what to think.

I trust, very earnestly, that I may have been of some help in clarifying those items that disturbed you.

May the day come sooner than you anticipate when you can visit Boston.

As ever, here's my hand!

AUGUST 13, 1965

[This letter is written to William Z. "Red" Miller]

My dear Comrade Miller:

As promised, here are my comments on your excellent essay on *Race: The "Term" and the "Myth."*

From their inception, the Companion Parties have repudiated the myths of racism. They have denied the alleged innate superiority of one group of people over another group of people. They have emphasized that the interests of workers the world over are to abolish capitalism and establish socialism. They have urged workers to do away with the barriers of nationalism and the prejudices of racial superstitions.

The Racial Problem: A Socialist Analysis, a 78-page pamphlet published by the SPGB in 1947, describes the "term" and the "myth" of race in its Chapter I, titled "What Is Race?" as follows:

.All this shows one thing, the absurdity and futility of trying to put forward rigid theories about race ... Nobody denies that differences exist between peoples, yet immediately we try to lay down any hard and fast theories from this fact, we land ourselves in difficulties ... It is not surprising, in these circumstances, to find that certain scientists are in favor of dispensing with the word "race" altogether. Huxley, for example, suggests that the term "ethnic group" is a more correct scientific alternative, and the American anthropologist, Franz Boaz, has put forward the word, "population." Such methods of overcoming the problem are obviously doomed to failure. No harm results from a scientist's use of the word, "race," because he has full knowledge of its meaning and uses it accordingly. But, if he thinks that by using a different word, he will materially assist in ridding the minds of the majority of false ideas about the subject, he is sadly in error. Even if either of these two terms was to become of general use in preference to "race," these would, in turn, become subject to the same misuse as the word they were meant to supplant.

Chapter I closes:

To summarize briefly.: Firstly, race is a scientific term used to signify the possession by a group of the human species of a certain set of inherited physical traits. Secondly, that though it is obviously possible to draw broad physical distinctions between people of the world, sci-

entists are still unable and, most probably will always be unable to fix rigid lines of demarcation between them. They can do little more than acknowledge and accept the overwhelming difficulties that confront them in investigating such a subject. What we emphatically repudiate are the doctrines of racialism, which deliberately ignore or misuse the findings of science, and seek to convince by clothing themselves in a mantle of scientific jargon and primitive emotionalism.

Possibly, the most serious and objective study yet made on this and related topics is "The History of Mankind, its cultural and scientific development." The work was sponsored by UNESCO. It was the collaborative product of the best scholars in their respective fields. Unwittingly, this work gives a hint of the future when objectivity, truth and the common interests will be the considerations for scientific study. (This is even true today in the exact sciences only because of the needs of the commodity society.) Two unusual features of this study were: 1. Whenever a moot question arose over interpreting the evidence, the varying attitudes were presented, and 2. The social and economic summaries seemed to be influenced in large measure by the Materialist Conception of History. This reflects that Marxian science has become established as valid, even though it has yet to be accepted. (Reminds me of Boudin's comments on this phenomenon.)

It can be said that physical anthropologists agree, in general, that there is but one species, *homo sapiens*, and that within this species, there are groups possessing broad, general physical distinctions, called "races" or "ethnic groups." We can recognize that there is a valid use of the word "race," also. This is merely a caution on the poverty of language.

A word on the use of words as propaganda weapons and head-fixing tools. Notable examples are the diatribes against "materialism," "dialectics," and "value," à la Marxian economics, etc. Some years ago, a WSP Conference had to discuss the merit of changing the term, "socialism," to some other term, such as "cooperative commonwealth," "world society," and other suggestions, because of the confusions on "socialism" and "communism." It was agreed that we do not repudiate our scientific terms just because of the bombasts hurled at them or because they are misused. Our job is to define and explain our terms. It was to the credit of the SPGB that the last chapter in their Race pamphlet was devoted to the definition and explanation of the term "race."

What we condemn in no uncertain terms are the doctrines of racism. And that is where you entered the picture. You tied up the social system, the educational institutions, the hysteria, and the fallacies of the racial contentions, through an exhaustive research of the documentary evidence. In my humble opinion, you have an obligation to have your exposures of the racial nonsense published in the *WS*.

Finally, as you may remember, I fought for eliminating the word "race" in the D. of P. There are other changes I would like to have seen, e.g., changing "common ownership" to "common right of access." This ownership business is but a projection of capitalist concepts into socialism. But, I've come to the conclusion that the D. of P. is a satisfactory-enough generalization of the socialist case. The World Socialist Movement is closely intertwined. To get involved now would divert the few active comrades away from our all-essential work. Such as it is, the D. of P. symbolizes the solidarity of the aroused working class when they wake up to their common interests.

In substance, my comments on your essay will be on these lines, when I discuss your essay when it reaches the floor of the Conference.

Affectionately and Comradely,

Yours in Revolt

(Reminiscent of the "Letters of a Rebel"

I wrote for *The Clarion*, & signed as above.)

AUGUST 14, 1965

My dear Comrade Miller:

I find I neglected to include these remarks on your "Foreword."

You recognize and do not deny that there are hereditary physical characteristics. You point out material factors that gave rise to them, and that they are the "end product" of the conditionings taking place in the environment. *You are on sound ground here!*

But, are you trying to infer that there are no interrelationships between biology and the environment? I want to warn you against oversimplifications when dealing with physical anthropology. You weaken your own case. The great strength of socialism is that the findings of science corroborate the socialist case. You have more than enough documented evidence to expose the bigoted superstitions of the racists and their "scientific" apologists and supporters without having to repudiate the science of physical anthropology in the same breath.

I most earnestly hope that I may have been helpful to you. Above all else, I want to avoid getting involved in a polemical battle over semantics.

Dixi et meam animam salvavi.

AUGUST 16, 1965

Dear Comrade Miller:

In this morning's mail, I received unexpectedly a "Contribution to the Discussion on 'Race'" from Comrade Gilmac. I was surprised to get this, as we never communicated on the matter. Here it is:

The only reason anthropologists wish to discard the use of "Race" is because of the misconceptions that are attached to the word. Putting forward "Ethnic Group" as an alternative will not help matters as the misconceptions will simply be transferred to the new phrase. It is not the word that is the cause of the trouble but the mistaken attitudes, which will still persist. Getting rid of the word won't get rid of the social background. On the same grounds we should abandon the word "socialism" because of the misconceptions attached to it.

The strongest proponent of abandoning the word "Race" is Ashley Montague, who is in favor of replacing it within the cultural connection by "Caste" (*Man in Process*, p. 134.) Yet he uses the word "Race" on occasions. For instance:

"The truth would appear to be that an individual's mental endowment or inheritance at birth consists of no more than certain broad psycho-physical dispositions which are common to all mankind without distinction of race or sex." (Man in Process, p. 144.)

Montague distinguishes "four major groups of mankind: the Negroid, the Mongoloid, the Archaic Caucasoid, and the Caucosoid. These major groups number a large variety of different physical types, which are better called 'ethnic groups' rather than 'races.' (*Man in Process*, p. 34). On the basis of his definition of "ethnic groups" (p. 132) what is wrong with continuing to call them races, as long as it is understood that it has no reference to mental endowment, and, in the long run, only refers to temporary stopping places, like inns, on the highways of time.

Arising out of his conception of the oneness of mankind Ashley Montague has this to say:

"Had the religion of Christ been faithfully brought to the people instead of the cults and dogmas, spiritual prevarication, bigotry, intolerance, and auto-da-fe which have to so large an extent served in the past, Western man could never have fallen into the spiritual uncleanness in which he finds himself today." (p. 123)

“The craving for decency, justice, and social stability cannot be achieved without love. We know that now. Christianity has always known it, and science has at last demonstrated it. More than anything else man not only wants love, but he wants to embrace the whole world within his interest and to extend everything in it his love and his understanding. Heartened by the support for this knowledge which has come from the wholly unexpected quarter of science the Church must go forward in the renewed faith in its principles.

“Devotion to human ideals, love, sympathy, understanding, justice, and the embodiment of these values in human relations is the true religion of man. Failure to practice this faith is the only real atheism.

“Today, and hereafter, the Church, in leading mankind toward the practices of this faith, will have the support of many allies: the social scientists and particularly the anthropologists. Let us, then, join head, heart, and hands and go forward together.” (p. 130)

Who was it that said: “I come on earth to bring a sword; to set a man at variance with his neighbor”? Christ.

Who produced the atomic and hydrogen bomb? The scientists.

I have only concentrated on Ashley Montague’s book because Comrade Miller recommends it in his essay.

Incidentally, in spite of what I have said, I think Montague’s book contains some excellent material and is well worth reading — but critically.

Gilmac

Need I say more? Only the socialist is the genuine scientist in the sense that he correlates all knowledge in all its interrelationships just because he is a monist who sees all things in a constant state of motion. It is easy to fall into the trap of dualism and absolutism à la Montague without the background of Marxism. (Note Pannekoek vs. Montague.)

Again, may I warn you against repudiating the findings of the science of physical anthropology. The trouble is not physical anthropology but the physical anthropologists. (They are not Marxists.)

It boils down to the realization that man is still colossally ignorant. There are far more gaps in our knowledge than actual information. But the great contribution of Marxism (notably Dietzgen): at long last, we realize that when answers are found they are always physical-material ones. There are no unknowables, only unknowns.

Here's my hand!

Rab

P.S. I just happened to think of how much more sound is Kropotkin than Montague in spite of Montague's justifiable tribute to Kropotkin. Kropotkin was largely influenced by Marxian science. Note in particular his *An Appeal to the Young*. We printed a section in the *WS* recently. If you ever meet a good prospect among university students, there is no better introduction to scientific socialism.

SEPTEMBER 24, 1965

Dear Comrade Brownrigg:

Going through my pile of unanswered letters, I came across yours of June 1st. So, I'll take advantage of you by sounding off on a pet claim: There is a growing ferment for socialism going on today. Many comrades deny this on the basis of the "facts." They contend I have no "proof" or "evidence," in view of the small membership of the World Socialist Movement. Unfortunately, such reasoning only takes account of superficial appearances. One can't ignore the imperceptible social processes at work.

The lessons of experience impress themselves on men's minds long before they reach their lips. (How often new members and sympathizers have said they have always been socialists even before hearing of us.) Long before the "round earth" and "organic evolution" theories were finally ACCEPTED, they had already been ESTABLISHED in men's minds. Louis Boudin, in his *Theoretical System of Karl Marx*, has a tremendous development of this point. That the socialist analysis has become ESTABLISHED can be seen in many of the newer novels, plays, movies, etc. Even politicians like Eisenhower (in his United Nations speech) indicate that the socialist point of view makes sense. Current trends in sociology and social psychology demonstrate that when the universities come to grips within their fields, they reveal that what there is of any scientific value in their analyses are Marxian. Even the ecumenical councils reveal radical changes in established understandings. I'm not saying or implying that any of the above is socialist. Both Marx and Engels had pertinent things to say on this score: Marx's "Twenty years go by and you don't seem to make the progress of a single day, and then comes a day in which are crystallized the experiences of twenty years." And Engels's that when concepts that had been taken for granted as reasonable become obvious nonsense, the conditions for a socialist revolution have become propitious. To me, one quite significant phenomenon is that when the socialist case is presented to almost anybody without mentioning the word, "socialism," rarely will you get an argument. Just try it yourself and see. (It is the WORD that the head-fixing industry [*education*] uses as a means of propaganda.) It's significant that the IDEA of socialism makes sense. The head-fixing industry is fighting a losing battle in spite of the confusions, superstitions, and opposition to socialism by the majority. To summarize: This is the MCH at work!

.. We do have a manpower problem in headquarters. We have always been short of manpower. But, with the advertising we've been doing, there is an increasing influx of mail requiring immediate attention. There are an increasing number of complaints over errors and failure of prompt attention. The records are behind, etc. We really require a fulltime or at least a part-time office worker to take care of details. The Monday Night Work Crew is no longer adequate. We do not have the funds for a paid worker. We do have comrades available who are willing but lack the experience for competent clerical handling of details. It's a wonder that we get the work done that we do.

Finally, let's hope that Comrade Milne's trip to Toronto may have desirable results. The good of the movement should take precedence over all other considerations, taking for granted common agreement on socialist fundamentals. We decided not to discuss the SPC situation at the recent Conference, trusting to the SPC to surmount their present difficulties. The Conference was fairly successful. Let's hope the day is not far distant that the SPC have annual conferences! Every effort should be made in that direction. (The road is open for combining SPC/WSP Conferences with sessions set aside for autonomous matters.)

There is no need for any reply to this letter except if the mood strikes you. In closing, all honor to those in the WSP who disagree with my views on "ferment." They keep on keeping on, patiently and persistently, despite disappointments and discouragements because of their socialist convictions and determination!

OCTOBER 25, 1965

[The following letters is addressed to Eva A. Speare.]

Dear Mrs. Guy E. Speare:

Your welcome letter received with great pleasure. I would appreciate the opportunity of reading your booklet on New Hampshire Indians.

Have you ever run across Lewis Henry Morgan's *Ancient Society*, published in the mid-1870's? It is the classic study of the "lines of human progress from savagery through barbarism to civilization." Morgan was professor of anthropology at Yale. He was the first American anthropologist recognized in Europe as a first-water man in his field. He spent 40 years with the Iroquois and was adopted as a blood brother by one of the tribes. The Indian Museum in Albany, N.Y., pays tribute to him. He was a member of the National Academy of Science. Like his contemporary, Joseph Henry, the first secretary of the Smithsonian, he has become somewhat forgotten for the present but both are destined to become universally recognized for their contributions to human knowledge.

As for your recipe for old age, "being active in mind and body," may I add an additional ingredient: living in the present.

I'm very optimistic about the young generation. We live in a period which has seen tremendous strides in technology and science. Already society has — potentially, at least — solved the problem of production. The present problem is the failure of social relationships keeping in pace with the revolution in technology. No longer can anyone say the reason people are in want is that we can't produce enough. It is so easy to condemn the "juvenile delinquents" and the "criminals," instead of the system! Our bodies are in 1965 but our thinking and minds are in 1865. We live in the midst of a welter of confusions. We take our assumptions for granted and never question them.

Suffice it to say, the vast majority of mankind have become divorced (alienated) from their work. They don't live for their work, but only work for their living — at whatever job becomes available (and these jobs are becoming less available, especially for youngsters). With the increase in automation, at long last, human beings could enjoy their leisure doing interesting and meaningful work according to their talents, tastes and desires. Biologically, there is no such thing as a lazy man. Human beings have energies they must expend, be it only whittling wood or fishing in the streams.

NOVEMBER 27, 1965

Dear Comrade Red Miller (Hello, Gertrude):

At long last, I got the information I promised you last September. (By the way, I trust this letter finds you in improved health!

Prof. Wm Bascom, director of the Robert H. Lowie Museum of Anthropology at University of California, Berkeley, and physical anthropologist, vociferously disagreed with Coon's racial theory that "the Negro race is at least 200,000 years behind the White race on the ladder of evolution." in a panel discussion over Channel 2, Boston.

He was not able to reply to my letter earlier. He has just returned from a trip to Africa.

Prof. Bascom sent me a review of Coon's *The Origin of Races* that was written by Prof. Morris E. Opler of Cornell University; and referred me to two other sources:

1. "A Four-Letter Word that Hurts," by Prof. Morton Fried of Columbia University in the *Saturday Review* of Oct 2 1965.
2. Prof. Sherwood's presidential address to the American Anthropological Association, entitled: "The Study of Race," presented by the special request of the Executive Board of the Association. This was printed in *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 65, 1963.

The major criticism of Coon revolves around his contention that all living "races" of man do not descend from *Homo Sapiens* origins. Instead he traces "races" of man as products of descent from *Homo Erectus*. They point out that "the probability that the same species could evolve five times from a genus substratum are slim to the vanishing point." And "even with the five-fold scheme there are a lot of loose ends." Then they list some of these loose ends.

The concluding paragraph by Opler is worth quoting: "Coon is essentially a technician. He is at his best when he is describing the physical characteristics of tarsier or the latest Australopithecine find. In spite of a breezy style and abundant self-assurance, he cannot convincingly write human history, even racial history. He will have to acquire more knowledge, more compassion, and more humility for that."

This is convincing evidence of the fallacy of "race" superstitions.

DECEMBER 26, 1966

Dear Comrade Vrooman,

Comrade Aaron Smith, Local Los Angeles, forwarded your very interesting letter to WSP headquarters in Boston. We regret the delay in replying. This letter is written in the same spirit of sincerity and objectivity manifested in your inquiries.

I have listed seriatim, the six questions you asked:

- How to achieve the transition to socialism?
- What is the form of government under socialism?
- Isn't it necessary for the working class to "organize into a nation-wide Socialist Industrial Union in *addition* to the political organization necessary to vote out capitalism and to vote in socialism"?
- Isn't it true that "without industrial might and organization behind us, our political vote will be nothing more than beating the wind of capitalist reaction?"
- Why does the WSP "favor the continued use of the political *state* (your emphasis) by the working class when you recognize that socialism is a classless and stateless society (as per your Paragraph Six of your Declaration of Principles)?"
- How would you convert the historical organ of class rule to an instrument of emancipation? (With the addendum: "Are you Leninists?")

I earnestly trust that the following comments clarify the questions you raised. However, they will not be answered in seriatim order. Before proceeding to the replies, one important observation — on the surface, it would appear that there are so many basic points of agreement between the Socialist Labor Party and the World Socialist Party that there is really no justification for two socialist parties in the United States, both of whom claim to be Marxist, revolutionary and scientific. Both parties agree on the futility of reforms and on the validity of the Law of Value and the economic lessons it teaches. Both organizations accept the Materialist Conception of History and the Class Struggle.

Granted, there are some differences between the two parties. The WSP holds that socialists are materialists and cannot be religious, at the same time. We do not regard the founding fathers of the United States with the same high esteem as the SLP. We consider Russia to have the social

relations of state capitalism, and that the material conditions in 1917 were not ripe for any socialist characteristics; and the World Socialist Movement has taken this position ever since the Bolshevik Revolution.

But the basic and primary distinction between the two organizations is that we have different *objectives*. If both the SLP and the WSP had the same goals, there would be no valid reason for the existence of the World Socialist Party in the United States. Up until the early years of the 1900s, the SLP was the voice of Marxian socialism in the United States. DeLeon's "What Means This Strike?" is a classic of socialist analysis.

The object of the World Socialist Party is "The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of society as a whole."

The object of the Socialist Labor Party is "To inaugurate the Socialist Republic of Labor."

In this Industrial Republic of Labor, workers cast industrial ballots for a gradation of councils from a plant council, to a local industry council, to a national industry council, and finally to an all-industry council, the socialist Industrial Union Congress, composed of manufactures, public service, construction, food supply, lumber, farming and transportation. It also includes wages of a sort, in the form of checks which represent the "full" product of their toil.

The concept of socialism held by the companion parties of the World Socialist Movement is a social system which is possible, practical and *necessary* today, here and now. Due to the workings of capitalism, mankind has already solved the problem of production. Potential abundance prevails today. If this were not so, the material conditions of existence would not be ripe for socialism. Socialism is not a blueprint or a utopia, but a product of social evolution. The times are now propitious for a harmony of interests between all members of society and society as a whole. It is now possible for everyone to live useful, interesting and meaningful lives where everyone gives to the best of his abilities and receives according to his needs. The real problem of socialism will be not the organization of the productive process, but the enjoyment of genuine, meaningful leisure. Socialists, as social beings, will come to grips with problems as they arise democratically, because all are imbued with the common interests. Socialism is an administration of affairs by the members of society.

Unwittingly, the SLP projects the extension of capitalist relationships into its socialist society. The separate branches of industry of the 1904-1905 period no longer typify the closely interrelated *socialized* technology and production of 1966. I'm a printer and already the IBM 360 — now functioning in many plants — has tied in transportation (and communication), manufacturing, lumber and public service as adjuncts of the graphic arts. The SLP chart, like so many other plans, has been bypassed by the march of events. But equally sad is their stress on Labor in a socialist system. You correctly emphasized that socialism is a stateless society. It is also a classless society. Labor, as such, is a meaningless term in describing socialist relationships. The discovery of the Industrial Republic of Labor proved to be merely a matter of sounder union tactics within the framework of capitalism and nothing more. (In fact, the craft graphic arts unions are in a bind on account of the over-lapping of the new processes, which are driving them into union mergers.)

It is no wonder that the SLP has never really described the economy of Soviet Russia. For a long time, they maintained a critical but friendly attitude to the "socialist" nature of the Bolshevik Revolution. Later, because of unfolding events, they branded Russia as "bureaucratic statism," and other similar terms, none of which described the social relations. At no time, up to the present, have they recognized that the system that prevails in Russia is state capitalism. This attitude flows from the similarity of the SLP's concept of the industrial union basis of the "Socialist Republic," and the Russian Soviets' form of the "Dictatorship of the Proletariat." Thus, your queries on the Transition Period.

You yourself formulated one of the finest descriptions of the transition period that has ever come to my attention: "The political organization necessary to vote capitalism *out* and to vote socialism *in*." (My emphasis.) Question: What stands in the way of socialism, today? It is not the limitations of technology, nor of the material conditions of existence (with one exception). It is not the lack of literacy, scientific information or democratic forms. The only material condition lacking is a majority of class-conscious revolutionary socialists determined to inaugurate the new social system ... [Building that majority] is the task of the socialist movement. Our great ally is the workings of capitalism and the lessons of experience. That is the latent strength of socialism. Once the workers wake up and the ideas of socialism spread like wildfire, they have the tools ready to hand — the ballot. All that the capitalist class can do is to

submit to the inevitable. (Significant, isn't it, that there is no reference in any *major* work of Marx and Engels to the "Transition Period.")

This gives me the opportunity to come to grips with some popular bugaboos (really superstitions) concerning the working class. For example: "Without the industrial might and organization, the political vote would be nothing." Can you conceive of a worker being a socialist in the factory and not, at the same time, a socialist in the voting booth, or vice versa? (And strange to relate, the proportion of workers in production is growing less.) And just what strength has the worker got industrially? He has two alternatives: either starve or be driven back to work by the armed forces. What gives title and deed to ownership of the factory? It is the state, the central organ of power! As you surely know, the highest expression of the class struggle is the political phase. Do I have to stress the limitations of the essential economic phase of the class struggle? Is this not the *leitmotif* of the Marxian analysis? (I'm curious to understand how you misconstrued Paragraph Six of the D. of P to mean that the WSP "favors the continued use of the political state by the working class.")

The first step in the socialist revolution is to capture the powers of the state for the sole purpose of transferring the control of the means of living from the hands of the ruling class to where it belongs, the hands of society. (Your voting capitalism *out* and socialism in.) However, socialism cannot exist in one country alone. Should a socialist victory take place in one country, the workers will use the Telstar and all means of communication in their hands to send greetings to their fellow workers everywhere: "We have seized power here, seize power in your country and come to our aid." The very same forces that inspired the socialist victory in one country will exist everywhere else also. Lest we forget, there is no fear that a *socialist* victory will be overthrown at the next election. A *socialist electorate* will have elected Socialist candidates, not on promises, but because they wanted a wageless, moneyless, profitless, classless, stateless world!

You asked, "What form of government exists under socialism?" In the context of Marxian science, there is no such thing as government in socialist society. This is not a semantic quibble over words due to the poverty of language. "Government" implies *governors* and *governed*. With the abolishment of the property basis of class societies, the necessity of *governing* vanishes and is replaced by the administration of affairs by the members of society.

The only question that remains unanswered is “Are you Leninists?” In the context of this letter and from the articles you have read in the WS, I think the answer should be obvious.

I have made every effort to answer your queries in the same spirit of sincerity and objectivity as motivated you in the first instance.

I am looking forward to your reactions.

TANUARY 29, 1968

Dearest Karla:

Enclosed self-explanatory items for your file. I've overlooked some items recently.

With love and affection, Rab

[A letter to his sister, Leah Nathanson, upon receipt of her (belated) birthday gift to him.]

Dearest Leah:

I'll never forget two admonitions mamma impressed upon me. Even though experience and unfolding understanding have revealed their limitations, nonetheless the essence of her urgings made a deep impact on me at the time and ever since. (Mamma and I were very close.)

1. "Remember, never behave so as to reflect on the socialist movement!" This arose from her constant exposure to constant condemnations, such as: "Look at so-and-so's behavior — and he calls himself a socialist!" Years later, I came to realize that she had not completed the sentence with an essential qualification: "...but the validity of socialism does not depend on the behavior of socialists."
2. "Never forget that you came from a long line of self-immolators." Of course, this was not literally true, merely family exaggeration. At the time (I must have been about 12 years old), I believed it and felt proud of such heritage. However, she was correct in an historical sense of the long line of martyrs for truth and humanity — throughout the ages — in the history of revolutionary thinkers and doers for social changes. (I lay no claim to such a role.)

You can understand why Karla, a dedicated socialist, became inspired to name her firstborn, "Sara."

All this just to thank you for your most-appreciated birthday gift. In mamma's memory, I donated your gift to the *only* task really worthwhile today!

Affectionately yours,

[He didn't sign the carbon he gave me, but probably signed the original "Ike".]

[Comrade Larry Nathanson (Leah's son) and his wife Anna were by this time parents themselves.]

My very dear Larry (Hello Anna, and the boys):

I was going to write you anyhow on the *Fortune* article (Feb. 1968, p. 130), so I decided to write a long-deferred letter to Leah with a copy for you at the same time.

Of course, I realize the article "The New Attack on Killer Diseases," is not news to you. However, it is a demonstration of an important object lesson. Socialism and preventive medicine are, essentially, synonymous terms. The restrictions of capitalism — concerned as it must be with palliatives for immediate "remedies" — cannot come to grips with basic necessities. It permeates all aspects of life. The bond between socialism and preventive medicine is genuine science — the study of processes and interrelationships in a constant state of motion.

Last night, I listened to an interview (I forgot the doctor's name) on Channel 2 on "Heredity: Life's Biggest Gamble." The title does not reflect the interview but it would attract listeners. The speaker, like so many doctors and scientists somewhat socially conscious, a sign of the times and an omen for the future, was encouraging in his comments. But two things are worthy of calling to your attention:

1. The interviewer was troubled by "moral" considerations: "Who is going to decide on making the suggested genetic changes in human beings?" The speaker was very good in explaining that human beings are basically social, gregarious and intelligent. He did not mention that one indictment of capitalism is what it does to human beings.

2. The speaker was worried about the "population explosion" — and this was his one weakness. He does not realize this is a strata (class) society that gives the illusion of "overpopulation" dilemmas. Within the confines of capitalism, the emphasis on "eugenics" *truly* raises the question: "Who is going to judge the judges?" Here again is illustrated the contrasts confronting mankind today.

As ever, yours for socialism,

[Again, unsigned in the carbon.]

[All three of these letters were in the same envelope and so I have reproduced them all together here. — KDR]

DECEMBER 12, 1968

[Excerpts from a letter to Carl Senna.]

.Your piece in last Sunday's *Globe* (12/1/68) was nostalgic for two reasons: 1 — Our past associations, and 2 — My early days (especially 1902- 1913) in the area from Mass. Ave. to Vernon St. and from Columbus Ave. to Hampden St.

It was reminiscent of the close association I had with Wm. Monroe Trotter for a long period .. We had a bond of common attachment, yet had many theoretical differences ... Not only did I spend time in his store, but I also accompanied him on his walks doing errands on behalf of *The Guardian*.

Because of my parents' friendships and discussions with a coterie of inspiring persons in the neighborhood (including Trotter), I spent time with such persons as *[lists individuals and where they lived or did business]* ... Then there was Mr. Cook. He was practically a member of the family. But when Marcus Garvey loomed on the horizon, he became an ardent supporter of *[Garvey's]* cause. You can picture the discussions. But in no way did it interfere with personal relations. They had one thing in common: genuine human beings.

I should have mentioned that my father had a tobacco store on Washington St., just across Ball St. He also supplied small stores with their tobacco needs. I used to go over the route to take orders and to deliver bundles. His store was a gathering place for discussions. My parents would preach socialism to the customers. I should mention the reverends (several Black and one Catholic) who joined the discussions. One Black reverend took me as a special project — to convince me of my errors and to save my "soul."

Incidentally, my father was boycotted by religious Jews for opening his store on "sacred" holidays because of their superstitious nature. And strange to say, he was regarded as an authority by the same Jews on the Bible because of his youthful studies. His great advantage was his evidence of the fallacies.

There was only a small sprinkling of socialists, such as they were, in the neighborhood. There was a mixture of Black and White socialists; sufficient to organize a local of the old SPA in Roxbury, in Appel's tailor shop on Washington St., near Sterling St., in 1909. I was only 16 years old at

the time. The National Office in Chicago gave me special permission to join and I became its first secretary. We held several meetings in small halls on Tremont St. and had a few colored speakers (of the stamp of Randolph of the Porters' Union). One especially was a powerful speaker. The meetings were poorly attended, however.

This reminds me of the Socialist Sunday School on 88 Charles St. They had wonderful, inspiring teachers (two of them public school teachers). It lasted for about 8 years (1899 - 1907). One highlight was when the Sunday School kids headed the parade down Charles St. to a monster mass meeting on Boston Common, organized by the Boston Central Labor Union on behalf of Moyer, Pettibone and Haywood — convicted members of the Western Federation of Labor on a framed-up charge of murder and testified to by perjured witnesses before a biased jury and a judge, reminiscent of the Sacco-Vanzetti case. (The one basic indictment of the system is the Class Struggle, which underlies, in the final analysis, the radical conflicts of our times. The primary conflict is not between Blacks and Whites. It would be difficult indeed to classify common interests of Blacks, as such, and Whites, as such. But it is apparent, even on a superficial glance, the common interests of Black and White capitalist masters vs. Black and White wage slaves.)

Oh yes, I quite forgot an interesting item ... I went to Dearborn School as well as to the Aaron Davis School. In the 6th Grade, I was expressing "radical" views to a bunch of kids. It was not long before I was brutally attacked by a gang of enraged kids in Orchard Park because of my remarks on the Church and patriotism. The favorite remark: "You goddam Jew, you killed Christ!" (And all the time this was going on, I felt sorry for their ignorance and superstitions and didn't hold any grudge against them.) To this day, I hold with Einstein on this one point, anyhow: "The poison that contaminates the human race is Nationalism." To which I would add this applies to Jewish nationalism, Black nationalism, American nationalism, *ad nauseam*...

Yours for a world fit for the Carl Sennas of today,

Here's my hand!

april 14, 1969

[Rena was a daughter-in-law of Sam Orner and the wife of Sam's son Merwin, also a comrade.]

Dearest Comrade Rena:

Let me be the first to welcome you to the ranks of those organized in the World Socialist Movement for the purpose of spreading socialist knowledge and understanding so as to speed the day when sanity replaces the present "insane world." It is not the World Socialist Movement that will emancipate mankind from the shackles of outworn capitalism, which has outlived its social and historic usefulness. Rather it is the vehicle, whose principles will be the inspiration to the vast conscious majority, and *they* will use [it] to introduce a world fit for human beings, where the interests of all individuals will be in harmony with the interests of society as a whole. To paraphrase the Communist Manifesto: The World Socialist Movement is the movement of the working class. And the work of emancipation is the work of the working class.

Here's my hand to you in comradeship and affection.

APRIL 20, 1969

[I do not know who "The Old Mole" was.]

The Old Mole, Dear Fellow Worker:

We would welcome a dialogue with you at one of our Sunday night sessions in which you present your views as expressed in Old Mole.

We are not concerned with a philosophical discussion or with quibbles over ideological differences. Like Marx, we are not only concerned with understanding the world, but in *changing it*.

While appreciating your determined courage and organizational ability in your struggles to ameliorate the inexorable workings of capitalism and your revelations of certain facets of the nature of the system, which you share with many others, nevertheless, the times call for the struggle to awaken the conscious determination of the great majority to establish socialism, which has now become the prime order of the day. The fact is that the very workings of capitalism itself have impressed themselves on the minds of the living so that there is a growing chorus of just such voices as your own. These are significant signs of the times.

The crying need today is to spread socialist knowledge and understanding. This is the missing ingredient in all the activities being carried on. It cannot be denied that the one thing lacking is a majority of class-conscious, revolutionary, Marxian socialists to introduce socialism: the immediate, practical goal.

There is enclosed, herewith, a copy of the latest *Socialist Standard* (March 1969). This is the official organ of the Socialist Party of Great Britain and the World Socialist Party of Ireland. It contains two pertinent articles: "Special Powers in Northern Ireland" and the World Socialist Party "Election Statement" in the just completed elections there. Also please note the ad on page 48. It is encouraging to observe the caliber of the new, young comrades joining the SPGB.

May we look forward to your presenting your views very soon at one of the Sunday night sessions.

I. Rab, on behalf of the Activities Committee

PS. Kindly let me know the source of the "Old Mole" quote from Marx.

PPS. May we ask you to put the following notice in your "Happenings" column: "Every Sunday night at 8:30 PM, talks, discussions, an occasional film, taped message or social at World Socialist Party Hall, 295 Huntington Ave., Room 212, Boston. Listen to our radio programs every Sunday at 12:30 on WCRB 1330 AM and 102.5 FM. The *Western Socialist* is on sale on many newsstands.

JULY 15, 1969

My dearest Dina:

For many years, I've been only too conscious that we've not been very close. Yet, I always got the emotional reaction that there was a strong empathy between us when we got together. I plead guilty of being remiss, as we all have been, but it was not for lack of attachment, despite all appearances to the contrary.

The trials and tribulations of life do exert their pressures in today's jungle world. I still work for a living. In addition I'm engaged in the one meaningful task: Arousing concern for changing the world. Almost a 24-hour day — how often Ella hollers up the stairs, at three o'clock a.m., "When are you going to get some sleep?"

I refrain (with exceptions) from standing in judgment and condemning individuals, because I have sympathetic understanding of the "frailties" of human *behavior*, as distinct from human *nature*, which is inspiring — as behavior is also, on innumerable occasions. This applies to vicious "criminals" and compassionate "angels" alike. By nature, man is social and gregarious, despite the popularity of the notion that man has uncontrollable "aggressive instincts." Herein lies one of the major indictments of capitalism: what it does to human beings!

Human behavior, such as it is, reflects the predominant conflict of interests that characterizes all propertied societies, capitalism especially. Yet so deeply rooted is human nature, that capitalism cannot uproot it. Look around you, see the overwhelming evidence of how human beings can and do act, despite the system. The driving need for a sane world today is reflecting itself in greater and greater efforts for a world of brotherhood and cooperation. Witness some of the objectives of the youth. It is an encouraging sign of the times.

I'd be grateful if you would let me have Judy and Wayne's address, when you get it. I feel especially guilty in my seeming "neglect" of them. They are two of my favorite people and I have been meaning to visit them.

Affectionately and devotedly,

With love, Ike

FEBRUARY 25, 1970

[This was written as a Letter to the Editor of The Typographical Journal; it may never have been published because of its length.]

Vox Pop,
The Typographical Journal,

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON SOUND UNIONISM

Boston Typographical Union #13 has just completed its negotiations with the Boston newspaper publishers. The primary lesson, of course, is that the Union is the ONLY weapon we possess for improving our wages, hours and shop conditions. And when the chips are down, the strike becomes necessary as a last resort. But that is not the whole story.

Experience has shown that *we have to fight just to break even*. As it is, even though Local Boston succeeded in winning, we believe, the highest ITU wage scale in the country, the raise was only 7%, at a time when the cost of living had gone up 10%! (Boston has one of the highest cost-of-living figures in the country and the scale committee used this fact effectively in the negotiations.) Now, just imagine what the result would have been without the union. Without resistance by workers in their unions, the tendency of capital is to reduce labor costs to the very bone in the interests of their profits. Invariably, capital, including the publishers, cry "poverty," despite what the real facts might be. (And the scale committee produced the real facts on that score.)

There is a conflict of interests between capital and labor because, in the final analysis, a reduction in wages results in an increase in profits. Conversely, an increase in wages results in a decrease in profits. Inexorably, wages are determined by the cost of existence of the workers. It is the rise in living costs that compels the fight for higher wages. In 1949, I had a documented article in *The Typographical Journal* demonstrating this very point. The superstition that a rise in wages causes a rise in prices is nothing but brainwashing propaganda on the part of capital. Here, again, is revealed the workers' basic NEED for unions.

There are other lessons. It was sad to hear comments by a few members criticizing the original proposal of the Boston Scale Committee because of its "ridiculous, unreasonable" demands that "made no sense." The scale committee was on solid ground. Who should decide what is "reasonable"? Certainly, not the employers.

I have spent vacations throughout the United States and Canada. I've visited over 20 local unions and chapels. I have walked in the picket lines in Tucson, Los Angeles, Toronto, and with our French-speaking brothers in Montreal. In Toronto, I marched in the huge mass meeting in Queen's Park on behalf of the Toronto strike. (Pity that the other unions forgot their pledges of solidarity with the printers.) Toronto was — and is — a living proof of the conflict of interests between capital and labor. For many, many years the Toronto Local had most congenial relations with the publishers, without a single strike. But, at long last, capital revealed its true colors. For over a year, the publishers had not been negotiating in good faith with the union. They were training rats to replace the unionized composing room. One fine day, they posted new Office Rules, violating the ITU Book of Laws. They locked out our members.

As has been recognized in ITU conventions and in our journal, there is a great need for a merger of the various graphic arts unions. With all the overlapping of jurisdictions arising from the new processes, the conditions prevailing today emphasize that such a merger is the best interest of sound unionism.

We can be proud of the democratic nature of the ITU. Not only does the membership control through its referenda procedures, but its scale committees are subject to the decisions of the membership. When the membership is apathetic, it handicaps the scale committee (and the publishers sense it). No scale committee can be stronger than its membership. The sure guarantee for an effective scale committee is a concerned, determined membership seeing to it that their representatives carry out their wishes. That is genuine union democracy.

A word on the new permissive legislation enabling reopening contracts for reproduction considerations. Personally, I earnestly hope that Local Boston does *not* abandon our present reproduction practices. However, if the majority decide to sell reproduction, we should not sell it cheaply. The MINIMUM should be: a 27-hour week; more holidays; limiting the amount of tape; severance pay; wage increases that are not below the cost-of-living index; and the other demands we have been asking.

Yours for sound unionism,

I. Rabinowich

MARCH 5, 1970

[The following letter was written to Rab by Frank Marquart]

Dear Rab:

Nietzsche had a curious cyclical theory of history, according to which history repeats itself recurrently in cycles. Well, my history is being repeated. In the summer of 1919 I attended a class in *Wage Labor and Capital* given by a young man named Rab. It was held in the old Auto Workers Hall. And now again, fifty-one years later — fifty-one years, Good God! — I am with a group of SDSers who are taking a class in *Wage Labor and Capital*, using the fat “Marx Reader” put out by International Publishers, and containing selections from Marx’s wide range of writings.

As I sit in this class I ask myself: “Will these young radicals (and others like them throughout the country) find a way to advance the cause of socialism more effectively than my generation did?”

Thanks for the names and addresses of the two socialist contacts in Phoenix and Tucson. I will more than likely take a trip out that way and will try to look them up.

By the way, has your *Western Socialist* in any of its issues (or the *Standard*) contained an article giving your party’s views about the U.S. Government’s role in Vietnam? If so, could you please send me the article? Thanks.

Kind regards to your fine family, and especially to Ann. (In 1947 I did not understand her view of Unions and disagreed with it violently; today I not only agree with that view, but believe Ann did not then realize *how profoundly* correct she was.)

Frank

SEPTEMBER 6, 1972

[On this date, Rab responded to the following letter from Oakley C. Johnson, which is dated July 26, 1972]

Dear Rab:

.Y o u ask what I plan to do with the data I am seeking. What I want is to do an essay on the events of 1919 and the role of the Socialist Party of Michigan (Keracher, Batt, O'Brien, et al.). I do not agree fully with the SPGB or the WSP, but agreement is not important at this moment. I do want to do as objective and complete a study as I can. I intend to quote considerably from W. Jerome's historical article in *The Western Socialist*, May 1966, especially the sentence beginning: "In particular, the Michigan section of the S.P.A. came under the influence of the S.P.G.B. ... collective action." I shall also quote (p. 4) the sentence: "*The Proletarian* adopted the Declaration of Principles of the SPGB as its platform."

I fully accept the point on page 3. I also accept the statement on page 4, but I would like confirmation that the *Proletarian* actually quoted the Declaration of Principles word for word! Is that true? I did have (haven't any longer) a complete file of the *Proletarian* to 1925, but I confess I don't recall this particular point. I can't explain why I *don't* recall it!

If you have access to such a file, can you send me a Xeroxed copy of the editorial page, showing the statement to be a fact? I will certainly accept your own personal confirmation, and I trust you will give me such an assurance, especially if the Xerox effort doesn't work out.

One other point: Who is "W. Jerome"? What has he done or written? Even if he is writing under a pseudonym, you could still tell me about him in general. . .

My articles, some of them, have appeared in the *Centennial Review*, a quarterly published by Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan. One that appeared in the *C.R.* (Spring, 1966) referred briefly to Adolph Kohn (John O'London).

Faternally,
Oakley C. Johnson

[to which Rab replied:]

Dear Fellow Worker Oakley Johnson:

The cause of my delayed reply was the problem of finding all the first 12 issues of *The Proletarian* (1918 - 1919). I did find issues Nos. 1, 2, 3, 5,

8, 11, and 12. They were yellowed, torn and very brittle. Just handling them, they fell apart. Pity that I couldn't locate the missing issues. Should they be found, I hope they are in better condition and especially that the issue you were interested in will be among them.

Thus, I must trust a faulty memory. One of the missing issues had the top half of one page devoted to a tribute to the SPGB and its Declaration of Principles. I can visualize it in my memory. I will not say that it reprinted the Declaration of Principles word for word; I am hazy on that point.

As you know, at that period there were many members of the Proletarian Party who were still members of the SPA, including its State Secretary, John Keracher. The Proletarian Party had not yet been organized and the hope was to transform the SPA into a genuine socialist party. The British and American comrades (slackers from the armed forces) congregating in Detroit in those days had had a powerful impact with their classes and open air meetings cooperating with the "Reds" as distinguished from the "Yellows" in the SPA (of which I, a "Red," was one). A group of 19 SPA members resigned from Local 1 (English-speaking branch) to organize the "Socialist Party of the United States," our first name, which only lasted a short time under that name before we changed it to the Workers' Socialist Party. This was in July of 1916.

With the advent of the Russian Revolution in 1917, we were all stirred with the outbreak of events. (I could regale you with anecdotes of Keracher and myself during those days insofar as the Russian Revolution was concerned.) However, we differed on our interpretation of the Russian Revolution. Our emphasis was that the only hope for the Russian Revolution was if the West came to their aid with a proletarian revolution of class-conscious socialists, since the material conditions were far more propitious for such a revolution, there. (And events have borne that out.)

Time marched on and there came the organization of the Third International. What now distinguished the WSP and the PP was the interpretation they respectively made of Marx's *Civil War in France* and Lenin's *State & Revolution*. To summarize:

Marx, in *Civil War in France*, stated that the working class simply cannot lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for its own purposes. This was followed up by Lenin's amplification that Marx's idea was that the working class must *break up and smash* the "ready-made state machinery" and not confine itself to merely laying hold of it. This was

far from being a quibble but a fundamental recognition of the power of a class-conscious majority.

As for Comrade Jerome, he is a Boston product who volunteered to write up the historic section of the anniversary issue of the *WS*. He passed through the whole gamut of higher "education" in the universities. Independently of his studies, he arrived at Marxist conclusions. He had never heard of us, but had decided to investigate all the organizations that claimed to be Marxist before joining one. Eventually, he found that, in his opinion, the WSP had the sound socialist position. He recognized that one has the need to do something about his convictions.

Here's my hand in spreading socialist understanding, the *sine qua non* for the socialist revolution.

SEPTEMBER 16, 1972

[This is a short excerpt from a lengthy correspondence between Rab and Comrade William Z. ("Red") Miller on various theoretical matters. More of the correspondence is available in the WSP Archive.]

Dear Comrade Bill Miller:

I also do not wish to engage in any polemics on [the word] "inevitably," primarily because there is nothing really involved. There is no dispute on the question.

When and where have you ever seen a statement in the *WS* that "socialism is inevitable"? ... There is no design in nature and everything in existence is in a constant process of motion and change. Absolute statements are foreign to scientific analyses. Further, things do not occur in response to "scientific laws" — scientific laws, rather, are our explanations for things, and are subject to the corroborations of unfolding events. That is the acid test.

You accuse me of having a mechanical view of history. All I said is, material conditions give rise to socialists working for socialism. Who in hell ever urged passive sitting on the sidelines waiting for the inevitable?

The sentence you quoted reads: "It (socialism) is only possible when the great majority of the workers become socialists." You may conceive of some other society than socialism following capitalism. To me, the obstacles to socialism are ignorance and confusions, and — barring physical developments such as atomic bombs (and I can't imagine mankind committing suicide), geological or astronomical disasters (and they are possible), — Socialism is the inevitable product of social evolution. This is amply demonstrated by the lessons of M.C.H., all things being even.

November 4, 1972

[Another letter to Rab from Frank Marquart.]

Dear Rab,

My apologies for not addressing my letters to Rabinowich. I've always known you as Rab. In fact I believe if I had heard someone refer to you as Rabinowich I would not have known who he was talking about! Hell, "Rab" is an institution in the socialist movement! Yes, I know you belonged to the old UAA & VW How well I know it! I know it so well that in my memoir I tell about that class I attended in that Union's hall, conducted by one I. Rab!

To think that you have kept your faith all these long years, ever since I first met you in 1919! I envy you.

You say, "The hope is more unionists become socialists." I used to share that hope. But in my experience I have seen all too many socialists turn pure and simple unionists, especially when they became union pork-choppers — then they denounced socialists much more than did unionists who never professed to having been socialists.

Writing my memoir was a painful experience, for it was no less than painful to recall the role that former socialists played in the union once they got pie-cards.

But such is life, I guess. This is why I have so much respect for people like you and our late mutual friend Al Renner. You fellows stuck to your guns.

If the WSP were running a candidate for president I would vote for him. Of the two "socialists" running, I will vote for the SLP candidate; I would never vote for a Trotsky totalitarian.

The UAW COPE people in Detroit are in a state of dismay and disarray! They are trying so hard to swing the "blue collar" vote in favor of McGovern. But those workers — notably those who live in the suburbs — consider McGovern "TOO RADICAL!" Now if I were Davenport I would ask you, "Is that what Marx meant by the historic mission of the working class?"

But I know those workers will learn the hard way what it's going to be like to live under "Nixonomics" during the next four years.

What a pity Canter had to go so soon in his life! His “Concerned Unionists” would be putting out their mimeographed bulletin, telling the auto workers what Nixon *and McGovern* stand for, and why really it makes little difference which one wins.

Thanks for the \$\$. Am enclosing check. Will be interested to read what the \$S has to say about the so-called “new left” freaks. Two years ago I offered to conduct a class on “Class Struggles in America” for the SDS here on campus. I gave up. They were *impossible*.

Kind regards to you and your family,

Frank

NOVEMBER 11, 1972

[This letter is to Lawrence Leight, of Tucson, AZ, whose father Samuel had joined the WSP when he emigrated from Great Britain, where he had belonged to the SPGB.]

My dear comrade Larry:

Your contribution was gratefully received. And your Application for Membership was a welcomed surprise. In due season, you will hear from headquarters.

This is a personal letter expressing my views. For my benefit, please explain what you mean by “educational value of various institutions within the capitalist system.” Educational for a socialist understanding? Educational for revealing how capitalism works? You mention unions, anti-war and feminine groups.

It is true that unions represent the economic phase of the class struggle but they are limited to hours, wages and shop conditions. Socialists can do good work in unions and many do, but they still have to learn that the highest phase of the class struggle is the political struggle. The issue-oriented antiwar and feminist groups are good sources for recruits to socialist consciousness but, in themselves, they are liberal and “radical” and have yet to learn that the issues they address — War and Man’s World — are products of capitalism, which cannot be solved within the framework of that system. Socialists can do valuable work within such groups carrying on socialist propaganda. Ironically, the same can be said of any groups of workers, not excepting hard hats and reactionaries.

If anything has been amply demonstrated within the last 75 years, it is that “reforms” by “socialist” parties have not been able to change the real conditions of the working class. These “practical realists” with their “in-the-meantime” activities have sidetracked the movement from what is truly meaningful. All those dedicated energies have diverted overwhelming numbers of workers from genuine socialism. Had all these efforts and all that enthusiasm been devoted to socialist education, just imagine how much further advanced and inspiring the movement would be today. What is encouraging is that, in spite of them, we see many signs of the times that workers are waking up!

A final word. Working for free speech, removing property restrictions and qualifications for voting and getting on the ballot, etc. is not in the

same category at all, nor is struggling for the right to sell socialist literature on the street and pass out leaflets, etc. Such activity, although many reformers support it, does not have the object of making capitalism run more smoothly. These measures are essential to carrying out socialist work. In the recent election, I voted for some referendum items on the above issues. They were the only items on the ballot worthwhile. You might be surprised to discover that there have been articles in socialist journals stating that if a socialist candidate were elected by a majority of *socialists* in a single area, he might vote for a measure that would benefit workers — knowing that the voters back home *didn't* support reforms and were aware that socialism only could solve mankind's present problems.

Comradely yours,

Rab

P.S. I also voted for S. Leight on WSP ticket for President.

February 9, 1973

[Rab is responding to a letter from WSP Comrade William Z. ("Red") Miller, which states in part:]

"Dear Comrade Rab:

... [You] failed to answer my questions. If socialism is inevitable as it is claimed, does it really matter whether we bother about carrying on propaganda for scientific socialism? As socialists we are not like the theologians..."

Dear Comrade Miller:

I'm afraid you paid no attention to what I had written you. I emphasized that I *never* said socialism was inevitable without qualifying the word "inevitable." What I did say was that socialism was inevitable *given capitalism*, and *barring catastrophes*, which is another kettle of fish. If one ignores these significant qualifications, it is easy to build a case that I maintain a belief in "designs of nature," "fatalism," or any other teleological nonsense. Essentially, you are tearing out of context the word "inevitable" to prove a case that is foreign and repugnant to my views ... Socialist propaganda is essential to scientific socialism.

FEBRUARY 20, 1973

[On February 3, 1973, Adam Buick (writing as Acting Overseas Contacts Secretary for Haringey Branch of the SPGB) wrote to the WSP's NAC: "... Our branch has been in contact with a student from the Flemish (Dutch) speaking part of Belgium. His name is Dirk Wouters... He is, to all intents and purposes, a Socialist and at the moment is ploughing through the collected works of Anton Pannekoek with a view to comparing his ideas and ours. I remember when I visited you some years ago Comrade Rab telling me that Pannekoek knew your Party well and in fact, when over for a scientific meeting in 1937 or 1938, instead of hob-nobbing with the bourgeois scientists came to address a meeting of the W.S.P. It occurs to me that anecdotes like this and any surviving correspondence between Pannekoek and WSP members could be very useful to Dirk Wouters. I wonder therefore could we ask you to write to him on this subject. The article he is writing, by the way, may eventually appear in the Socialist Standard if it is suitable." Following is the letter Rab wrote to Wouters.]

Comrade Dirk Wouters:

Comrade Adam Buick asked the WSP-NAC to send you information about Anton Pannekoek since you are comparing his views with those of the World Socialist Movement. He also mentioned that you were writing your thesis on the World Socialist Movement. Coincidentally, Comrade Huard *[of the SPC's Montreal group]* wrote me that you were contemplating a journal in Dutch publicizing our principles and policies...

Pannekoek was a scholar as well as a Marxist, in the best sense of that term, and his *Anthropogenesis* is a classic that could only have been written by a Marxist. He well understood the interrelationships of *[different branches of]* science. Both he and his colleague, Paul Mattick, have written articles for the *WS*. We were very close in our views on most matters, except on Workers Councils and on the ballot.

His views on the ballot arose from his Workers Councils concepts. To him the road to socialism was *via* the economic organization of the workers. He stressed that the State was an organ of the ruling class. It could only function as the central organ of power. The ballot was a deception, merely a democratic form and not democratic essence.

However, he overlooked that it is not the economic phase that is the highest expression of the class struggle, but the political phase. The economic phase by its very nature is limited to working within the frame-

work of capitalism. It is the fact that State power is in the hands of the ruling class that stymies workers from revolutionary changes. Titles and deeds, the military forces, etc., are in the hands of the ruling class *through its control of the State*.

The essence of Marx's writing (from the *Communist Manifesto* on) was consistent in stressing the need for political action; and this view has stood the acid test of unfolding events.

Just because the state *is* the central organ of power, it requires the political action of a resolute, determined class conscious majority to accomplish the transfer of the means of living from the hands of the parasites to the possession of society, as a whole. That is socialist political action.

What confuses the question is the activities of social democrats and the Bolsheviks, who call themselves "communists." Their political activities are confined to administering the capitalist state, and instituting reforms for the smoother operation of capitalism.

No wonder Lenin attacked Pannekoek in his *State & Revolution*.

Here's my hand in comradeship.

TUNE 8, 1974

[“Rowland” is Rowland Paul Benjamin, a young member of the SPGB who visited the U.S. (Boston and New York) for a few weeks in the mid-Seventies.]

Dear Comrade Rowland:

Excuse the delay. In addition to being constantly diverted, I’ve been mulling over in my mind just how to reply to your interesting and important letter.

I’ll confine myself to three items: 1. “What a socialist can do in a union” as symbolic of socialist activities in general; 2. My impression of *“Libertarian Communism No. 5*; and 3. Who are the sectarians and ivory-tower inhabitants?

But first a generalized summary:

Members should not fear to express opinions. We should not discourage reexamination and questioning. We should bend over backwards to gain and retain members, allowing for differences of opinions (not differences on principles). We should be narrow enough to exclude all who are not socialists but broad enough to include all who are. (I believe there is no quarrel among us on what constitutes a socialist.)

Of course, it is understood that a representative of the party, speaking under party auspices, states the case as agreed upon by the majority and makes it clear whenever he expresses his own personal opinions.

[*The paragraphs above are taken directly from “Is There Room for Differences of Opinion in a Socialist Party?” which can be found in Selected Writings, pp. 440-442.*]

As to the first item: The enclosed documents on what a socialist can do in a union — for that matter in any non-political organization he or she may be associated with — will indicate the many socialist activities we should engage in. Also please note ad clipped from the *WS* under heading “What Can I Do?” They make clear that the SPGB and its companion parties are all “activists” in the *meaningful* use of that term!

Secondly: In *“Libertarian Communism No. 5”* appears this statement that confuses me: “We should be free to participate in any struggle or to join any working-class organization which does not have anti-socialist objectives.” But how does one define an “anti-socialist” objective? The

Third-world countries all call themselves “socialist,” as do Israel, and the social-democratic countries. This also applies to many liberals, progressives and radicals. I fear that “anti-socialist” is quite an ambiguous term. Is that not so?

The circular distributed at the recent SPGB conference, titled: “Revolutionary Socialism: What does It Mean Today,” contains a serious *non sequitur*. When did the SPGB ever state or imply that the class struggle limited attempts to defend living standards, separate from the struggle for socialism? What they have pointed out, time and again, over the years, is that the *political* phase of the class struggle (its highest expression) is the struggle for introducing socialism, whereas the *economic* phase of the class struggle is involved with the resistance of the workers to the encroachments of capital.

Thus, the conclusion that the SPGB is sectarian is sheer logic-chopping. With the same reasoning, you could say Marx’s statement on the limitations of the economic phase is also “sectarian.” (The above refers to pages 20-22 of No. 5, *Libertarian Communism*.)

In your article titled: “Socialism, Anarchism and Anarcho-syndicalism,” you recognize that there is no school of anarchism. (Incidentally, I was favorably impressed with your capability in writing.) If there is one *leit-motif* that distinguishes most anarchists it is the emphasis on “individualism.” The one shining exception is Kropotkin. His *Mutual Aid* and his *An appeal to the Young* are gems. In it, he speaks of the Socialist Movement and refers to himself as a socialist.” It is as fresh today as it was when he wrote it.

The two classic writings on the contrast of Socialism and Anarchism are Plechanov’s work under that title and Adolph Kohn’s articles in the *SS* during the Twenties or thereabouts. Kohn demonstrated that, essentially, the individualism emphasized by so many anarchists really is a bourgeois concept. Personally, I have empathy with many philosophical anarchists. Especially I admire the Anarchists’ actions in the Spanish Civil War. In contrast with the Bolsheviks, the Nazis, the great powers, and their dupes who used the situation to test their military armaments and strategies under the guise of “fighting for democracy,” the Spanish anarchists were really stirred by the goals of genuine democracy. Nevertheless, “Anarchism” & “Socialism” are not synonymous terms.

That is why I disagree with your assertion: “To link socialists and anarchists into one category to build up a sizable revolutionary organization to oppose the forces of capitalism must expand their propaganda output and develop a *total critique*.” (What does that mean?)

The third issue to be dealt with is: Who are the sectarians and ivory-tower inhabitants? Even a superficial examination reveals how sectarian are the bourgeois experts and authorities. Their analyses and activities have proven to be the result of ignorance and confusion of the nature of capitalism. Their “remedies” constantly prove to be futile. This also turns out to be true of the *practical realists* of both the New and the Old Left, together with the social democrat activists. If the experiences of the last 75 years demonstrate anything, it is that these “activists” are actually running around in circles getting nowhere, when it comes to increasing socialist understanding. If anything *they* are the ones who symbolize “Ivory-Tower inhabitants.”

If success is measured in numbers, most of these Leftist groups — with all their activities — are not much better off than the Companion Parties of Socialism. Note their continuous “self-criticism” articles bemoaning their mistakes of yesterday.

The complaints of the many splinter groups of the Left, both new and old varieties, arise from disappointments and discouragements at their lack of results, despite their sincere and dedicated “activism.”

One important factor is their feeling of being “leaders” and “professional revolutionaries,” even if this is not stated overtly.

I can vividly recall when there was a great stirring in the depression days of the Thirties, especially in Detroit. The workers in the auto industries — without leaders or agitators — spontaneously wanted to organize into unions. The ambitious careerists and the Commies were taking credit for organizing the workers into unions, through their efforts. (Also there were squabbles among these “heroes” for credit.) It was as though they were taking credit for the rising of the sun.

Marx’s comment in the Preface to the *Critique of Political Economy* (paraphrased) is pertinent: It is not ideas that make material conditions but material conditions that give rise to ideas. Supplement this with Victor Hugo’s famous quip: “Nothing is more powerful than an idea come of age; it is stronger than the strongest armies.” While I’m at it, here’s another cliché: “He who only waits does not serve the cause of socialism.”

In conclusion: The World Socialist Movement is far from being sectarian or living in an ivory tower. It is a realistic, practical movement with a scientific analysis of what's to be done which has stood the acid test of being corroborated by unfolding events — the one thing that counts.

The latent strength of the SPGB and its companion parties is its democratic framework, free from administrative bureaucracy but governed by the majority of its membership.

It is a pity that we no longer have the *Forum*, where this letter properly belongs.

Dear Comrade Rowland, here's my hand in comradeship & affection.

TUNE 11, 1974

[These next three letters are correspondence between Fred Thompson (of the IWW) and Rab regarding Rab's Introduction to How the Gods Were Made. The text of the Introduction can be found in Selected Writings, pp. 449-455.]

Dear Comrade and Friend Rab:

Burt Rosen tells me you will be doing a biographical sketch of Keracher for a new edition of *How the Gods Were Made*. Glad to hear it.

I happened to be reading something of the struggles within the Finnish Socialist Federation, and the attacks after the 1907 Iron Range strike on the Finns for being godless. The Socialist Federation of course responded that "religion is a private matter." It reminded me of the old discussion in socialist circles on that question: SPA taking the position that religion is a private matter and welcoming those of various faiths; I believe SPGB took the position that since religion is a social fact it is not a private matter, but part of the enemy's arsenal. The anarchy syndicalism IWMA [*otherwise known as the First International*] in its statement of principles "declares itself atheist." The IWW sings of pie in the sky, but has steadily taken the position that a union should not attempt to dictate a member's politics or religion, etc.

I was wondering whether it might not be interesting, in case you have the documents handy, to put in a few sentences about this discussion on religion within the ranks of the radical movement, and the various views that have been held.

A lad working with Friends Service Committee — can't think of his name — told me he is from Boston and that you told him to give me your regards. Hope to get better acquainted with him.

Yours,
Fred

JUNE 18, 1974

Dear Fellow Worker Fred (Thompson):

(Copy to Burt Rosen)

It is my intention to summarize the issue of “religion as a private matter” and its contrast with “religion as a matter of social concern.” Note, not primarily as a part of “the enemy’s arsenal,” even though it is also that. The latent strength of socialism is its scientific analysis, which is in harmony with an understanding of the social forces at work in society. Its generalized conclusions are confirmed and corroborated by unfolding events. That is the *acid test*. This is great merit of Keracher’s *How the Gods Were Made*.

Regarding John Keracher, I intend to praise his contributions to socialist understanding. Also, I will be critical of his “Dictatorship of the Proletariat” confusions and his support of the Soviet Union.

I agree with you that religion is not a union matter. It could not be otherwise, given that Unions are primarily involved in the economic phase of the Class Struggle. Enclosed you will find examples of what a socialist can do in a union, i.e., emphasizing sound unionism and presenting the case for socialism. Incidentally, I’ve been active in the union on committees, and “Jimmy Higgins” tasks; but I’ve always declined nominations for administrative offices because to hold a union office would put me under obligation to carry out the instructions of the union membership: supporting COPE, urging buying of bonds, etc. To me, *democracy* in a union is paramount. To my surprise, I was given a special party by my union Local at my retirement at age 80 — independent of the regular retirement rituals.

I forgot to mention that in the Introduction, I’m thinking of mentioning our personal relationships. Despite any differences of opinions that developed after the Russian Revolution we remained fast friends. In fact, when visiting Boston to speak for the Proletarian Party, he stayed with me at my home.

As ever, yours for a sane world here and now.

P.S. I’m still as optimistic as when we had our conversation in Chicago many years ago. We even thought of collaborating on “Signs of the Times” indicating the trend to socialist convictions.

TUNE 24, 1974

Dear Rab:

Thanks for a chance to read the interesting clippings that I am returning. Glad to see you use your union prestige to get folks thinking about socialism. I expect our difference there is that I see socialism, or the ending of exploitation, as the full flowering of unionism, or the struggle to abate exploitation, while you tend to see them as efforts on rather separate planes. For integrating them, theoretically, I have the backing of such statements as Engels's "Socialism is the expression in thought of the class struggle in fact." More practically, I mean by that in practice, I'd like to see union papers explaining that prices the world over (except in controlled economy where subsidy has been used to avoid the price rise) have risen chiefly because too many of our class have been assigned by our masters to different work than the work we should be doing, so that our pay and the profits made on our labor from such work gets offered for a more limited supply of the needs of life, and that the basic remedy is for unions to start reckoning what work we should be doing instead, and pushing for that — and to certainly do something different than press for the right to do harmful and vicious work such as armament.

Yes, I could probably have taken for granted without writing you, that in an introduction to *How the Gods Were Made* you would mention the different views that have been expressed within the socialist movement regarding religion and the relation of the socialist movement to it. That is good. When we first reprinted *The Pullman Strike*, I was disappointed that we had not added at least a page or so to give the main facts of the strike and to suggest what books say what about it. Since then in our reprints we have tried to be helpful to a wide range of readers, by adding informative rather than polemic introductions, and this has helped the working stiff reader who digs history on his own account, and has got a much wider class room use for the various books. *The Right To Be Lazy* coming out now has a life of Lafargue, very brief, but hard to come by otherwise; and some explanation of the circumstances under which he wrote it, and notes on the folks he talked about. I think it will be a better educational tool that way. With so few people knowing anything about Keracher, an account of him will not only make the book something plainly written by a real person, but also tie its debunking use to constructive social effort. How about a listing of five or six books one could recommend in the same field?

Burt tells me he has so few copies, he would like to turn it over to printer. The *Introduction* need not be long, in fact it shouldn't be: primarily to tell who Keracher was, what sort of a fellow, his prime interests or concerns. He did that well for Engels, and I hope you can do it as warmly, but more briefly for John Keracher. Certainly no harm [in mentioning] that you could be friends and argue in a friendly way about the difference in evaluating the Russian revolution, etc., but of course not going into the pros and cons of the arguments. I expect you, he and I all see the movement as bigger than its sundry organizations and parties, and consequently the need for the solidarity of a varied left, a differentiated left, capable of intelligent discussion of its differences. Some of my young friends today, I regret, do not seem to see this need.

Best wishes,

Fred Thompson

JULY 30, 1974

["Comrade Stefan" is currently a member of the WSP(US). Originally from England, he is now a New Englander who contributes regularly both to the Socialist Standard and to WSP(US) literature. — KDR]

Dear Comrade Stefan:

I remember you well, both in Boston & London. This letter will be brief. I'd like to make it longer but pressure of work will prevent. I'll confine my comments to your 4 points and ignore the rest.

Point 1. Yes, Socialism does mean "the conscious democratic self-activity of people in control of the means of life." Socialism is a social system. This is not an "ism." No contradiction exists between "In socialism people live in such a way" and "Socialism is living in such a way" (your emphasis). That is mental gymnastics ... The seed of socialism is laid in the womb of capitalism. It is a process transforming capitalist thinking into socialist thinking by human beings.

Point 2. Just where does the SPGB say (or imply) that SPGB socialism "therefore is a change in formal property rights achieved by legal enactments." The distinguishing characteristic of the socialist revolution is that it will be — for the first time in history — a majority revolution in the interest of the majority, which has become historically necessary. It will use the state machinery to transfer the means of living from the parasites to society as a whole. This is not an abstraction.

Point 3. This comes from substituting "human activities" for "socialist activities." I'm encouraged very much by the "human activities" we are seeing. They are signs of the times. Material conditions are giving rise to socialist ideas. My personal opinion is that socialists should work — side-by-side — for such objectives as civil liberties. (By no stretch of the imagination do we fight for them as reforms — but as socialist weapons in the struggle for emancipation.) But we should refrain from becoming part and parcel of such groups. The lessons of experience have demonstrated this conclusively. The ecology protesters, the communal practices, the neighborhood groups, the sincere, dedicated humanists with their social concerns are good prospects for socialism, but they lack socialist class consciousness, and when the chips are down they are steeped in non-socialist concepts. That is where we enter the picture — spreading socialist understanding. As for militant unionists, workers councils and

the like, many are on the right side for the wrong reasons. No-one has been more active than myself in union activities. (See Comrade Rowland for examples of the socialist work I've done in that field; also articles in the WS.)

Let me define what I consider a socialist. It is not how scholarly he may be in Marxism and the sciences. He may never have read a word of Marx or socialist literature. He simply needs to realize that: 1. Capitalism can no longer be administered or reformed in the interest of the working class or of society. 2. Capitalism is incapable of eliminating poverty, wars, crises, etc. 3. Socialism can solve the social problems confronting society today, since the material conditions are ripe for socialism, save the lack of a socialist majority.

[The letter ends here. It is very unusual for Rab not to end with some kind of closing ("Yours for a world fit for human beings, " "Here's my hand, " etc.) followed by his signature. I think there is a page missing from the letter as we have it.]

[Trevor Goodger-Hill, a former member of the SPC's Montréal Local, sent the following letter (excerpted here) to Rab, undated. Rabs reply to it follows.]

Dear Rab,

I guess, Rab, I didn't make my request too clear, or else you feel that I may be on the side of reforms and amelioration of society's problems. Rab, I was well schooled by you and others in the party and there is no way I would bother to write and print anything that I felt would not contribute to people understanding capitalism better, and trying to persuade them to eliminate it. Some of your and my words may be different, and maybe our methods (I no longer believe a political party serves a useful function), but I have and intend to spend every available moment of energy left to me by capitalism to overthrow it by changing people's ideas. Never, Rab, would I ever ask for your, or another socialist's energies, for anything other than fighting capitalism. Certainly not to help get out of paying some tax bill.

Incidentally we paid the tax because I came to realize, partly through your letter and partly through reading through part of the civil code on payments of debts, etc. (supplied by a lawyer friend) that the argument I was trying to work into the letter wouldn't work. In this particular booklet I am preparing, my purpose is to publish correspondence between the school commission, who arrogantly order Lise to send her son to school, and letters from Lise (written by me) in reply, confronting them with a different view. While it's not by any means a piece of socialist analysis, I am trying to point out to people that they are responsible for what they do and the type of society they create — a fact that comes out nicely I feel in the juxtaposition between the tone of the school commission and our letters. The correspondence is not yet finished, and I intend to write a short introduction to the booklet, pointing out a few other salient facts.

Once we have the booklet finished, we intend to distribute it to newspapers, radios, teachers, etc. and get a bit of a controversy going, since it could temporarily embarrass the government a little. It won't for sure bring down the government or capitalism, but if the publicity and reading of the book itself makes a few people stop, think and comprehend a little, and hopefully leave them with the feeling that they can fight back, then we'll be satisfied. We'll certainly send you a copy for your criticism or applause.

Best regards to everyone. My silence doesn't mean I don't think often of you all. And we really wish George, Karla (or anyone else who could make it) would visit.

Best ever,

Trevor

AUGUST 13, 1974

My dear Trevor and companions:

You have your problems and headaches with your cooperative farming as have your predecessors through the years. They will be honored for their efforts. At least you have the satisfaction of doing useful work for its own sake and not for the cash nexus. In a real sense, you are a forecast of the future when human beings will be living meaningful, useful lives doing the things they love and enjoy doing.

It is good news that you are now “ready for the next bout of work which should continue until next fall.”

I can't resist the temptation to say a few words on your feeling that “a political party does not serve a useful purpose.” Without belaboring the matter, the *one* basic problem today is the prevailing ignorance, confusions and superstitions. Just as soon as the vast majority wake up and become convinced of the *necessity* for socialism (and not sooner), they will take steps to introduce socialism. Only a conscious majority can accomplish that. The spreading of socialist knowledge and understanding is the function of a socialist political party. To transfer the means of living from the parasites to society as a whole requires political action. The central organ of power for the capitalist class is the state machinery. I trust you don't believe that human beings are incapable of understanding their own interests. It is simply not true. By the very nature of things (biologically) human beings are not, speaking generally, idiots or morons. The fact is that they have been brainwashed by the head-fixing industry.

There are many signs of the times, such as the communes being established, the great dissatisfactions with the status quo, even the songs, movies, plays, etc., indicating that wheels are churning in the brains but have not yet reached the lips. (How's that for a mixed metaphor?) But, these signs are significant.

But you know all this as well as I do. You yourself say: “I have and intend to spend every available amount of energy left to me by capitalism to overthrow it by changing people's ideas,” and: “They will learn to fight back in the only possible way by getting rid of capitalism.” You recognize that your booklet will “temporarily embarrass the government a little. It won't bring down the government of capitalism.”

I'm looking forward to receiving a copy of your booklet.

The family and comrades send you their regards.

Wishing you all the best.

ocTQBER 27, 1974

Dear Frank (Marquart):

Coincidentally, just as I was about to reply to your inquiry: "Isn't there something *new* about this (inflation) problem today?" in comes the latest issue of the *SS* (Sept. 1974). It will save me the headache of coming to grips with the gobblygook of the radical pundits' analyses of the *new* causes of inflation today. I couldn't do anyways near as good a job.

However, it gives me an opportunity to deal with socialists as *generalists*, i.e., as scientists. The common characteristics of Marx, Darwin, Morgan, Einstein, and others, were their generalizations. They have stood the acid test of corroboration and confirmation by the one thing that counts: the unfolding of events. They were all generalists dealing more with processes, interrelations and the common characteristics than with specifics and particulars. (All of them made serious errors, so far as detailed specifics are concerned.)

I can't think of a better example than the cause of capitalist wars. No two wars have identical factors giving rise to them. All the literature on wars emphasize a multiplicity of causes for capitalist wars. Yet, when the chips are down, all capitalist wars are the consequence of the market economy with its commodity relations and can't be understood by ignoring it. (I was disturbed by *Dissent's* constant concern for the "correct policy" by the U.S.A. in its foreign affairs, as I wrote you at one time.)

Above all, socialism is the science of generalizations. See enclosed chart I drew up in the mid-1930s to illustrate the point.

Don't misunderstand me. Of course we should deal with current events. That is important and essential! But we view them through scientific eyes, i.e., revolutionary eyes, rather than subjective eyes with a view to "practical, realistic" strategy and tactics. The "theorists" are the realists and the "realists" are actually "impractical theorists."

As ever,

Yours for the one meaningful task today: Socialist Work!

NOVEMBER 14, 1974

[This is a letter Frank Marquart sent Rab, after reading the Introduction to How the Gods Were Made.]

Dear Rab

Congratulations. I think your introduction is very good. It brings back memories. I remember that in 1919 you conducted the first class I attended. And I have a hazy recollection that one Sunday morning Beardsley led the class. He was some kind of musician and had a sharp mind.

And of course I remember Kohn — his quick wit, sarcasm, and wide range of knowledge. I recall a crack he made: “The trouble with Batt and Keracher is that they try so hard to be Marxists and Bolsheviks at one and the same time.”

Rab, was there a Workers’ Socialist Party in Detroit in 1919, 1920 and later years? I remember attending meetings at the Electrical Workers Hall on Adelaide, but I’ve always been under the impression it was a loose Marxian group called the Detroit Socialist Education Society. It’s been so long ago, I can’t be sure.

I’ve always regretted that I never had the good fortune to meet and get to know Moses Baritz. From what I heard about him, he must have been a colorful character, brilliant, aggressive, well educated ... and in addition an accomplished musician.

Imagine the SLP still claiming that “religion is a private matter”! They should go to Mexico and learn how the Catholic Church strives to keep the peasants and poorer sections of the working class in ignorance. Women are told to bear lots of kids. Private matter indeed!

I was amused at your reference to Jesus freaks. They have quite a number of them on the University of New Mexico campus. I talked with some of them. Their thinking is weird. You are so right: they seek a “spiritual way out” of the pressing personal problems stemming from this insane system. Many people these days grope for “inner consolation” and turn to consciousness raising, Yoga, Meditation, Zen and a host of other such occultisms.

Rab, would the young readers today know what a Jimmie Higgins is. Maybe a brief footnote should tell them.

Again, you did a good job. I hope the pamphlet comes out soon.

Yours for socialism,

Frank

Ever hear from Tom Bolt?

TANUARY 5, 1975

[Robert Barltrop was a member of the SPGB who sometimes wrote for the Socialist Standard under the name "Coster." He has also written several books on various subjects, including an anecdotal history of the SPGB called The Monument.]

Dear Comrade Bob (Barltrop):

Under separate cover, I'm mailing you a copy of the new edition of Lafargue's *Right to Be Lazy*, published by the Kerr Co. I believe that is worthy of review in the SS. The Introductory Notes by Fred Thompson covers the history of socialist experiences during the 19th century, especially as they were connected with Paul Lafargue. One item was the accusation against the Marxists of being "impossibilists."

A word on Fred Thompson. In his younger days in Canada (the '30s) he was a member of the SPC. Later he became involved with the IWW. He was the editor of their journal for many years. (Fred Thompson is reminiscent of Gilmac, a lovable fellow, with his charm, patience and character.) In the '40s, the party sent me on a propaganda tour to the Midwest. Fred did valiant service in arranging meetings, hiring halls, having two debates contrasting WSP & IWW in Chicago and Detroit, obtaining hospitality for me in Milwaukee and Chicago.

As an aside: in my tour of the Midwest U.S.A., I mentioned to Fred my optimism on the "Signs of the Time." His response was that he was considering a pamphlet on that very topic, and reeled off to me what he was going to include in it: examples in plays, films, novels, magazine articles, popular expressions. He asked me if I would collaborate with him on the book. I agreed but nothing came of it. Being 1,000 miles apart plus both of us were busily engaged in other things, and it proved impractical.

Just recently, Lennie (Fenton) invited me to accompany him to a stationers' convention in Chicago. It gave us an opportunity to consult with the Kerr Co. on details of the new edition of *How the Gods Were Made* and to meet Fred Thompson. Needless to say, Comrade Lennie (my son-in-law) was impressed with Thompson. I'm sure you are aware of the arrangements for a joint publication of that pamphlet. The Kerr Co. wrote the NAC asking if I would write the Introduction, to which I agreed.

Speaking of the 2nd edition of the *HTGWM*, Fred enabled me to hurdle an obstacle in writing my Introduction to the pamphlet. The Kerr Co.

has a board, consisting of a couple of [comrades from the] old Proletarian Party, which had owned the Kerr Co. for many years. Also on the board are Fred Thompson and Burt Rosen, determined to rescue the Kerr Co., with its publications, from extinction. The Proletarian Party is now extinct. But the two old-timers objected to my Introduction because they thought I slanted it on behalf of the WSP. Actually what I did was to contrast the pre-Russian Revolution Keracher (who was a Marxist supporting the SPGB's D. of P.) with the post-Russian Revolutionary Keracher, who supported Leninism. (In fact, the WSP had several debates with the Proletarian Party on the matter.) I refused to compromise. But Fred Thompson cut the Gordian knot. He suggested I shorten my Introduction and explain why Keracher and I parted company on this issue, which served the same purpose.

SEPTEMBER 5, 1975

[Elbert did attend the 1975 conference, as Rab urges him in this letter; but unfortunately he was not in a position to accept Rab's nomination to the NAC that year.]

My dear Comrade Ronald (Elbert):

Did I ever reply to your most interesting and significant letter of January 20, 1974? I would feel guilty if I hadn't. I can't conceive of my neglecting such a communication. My backlog is accumulating faster than I can keep up with it. This morning I decided to go through it. Believe me, it was a four-hour task. In the process, I uncovered your letter. Suffice it to say, its contents did my heart good. It thrilled me to see your excellent grasp of the fundamental aspects of the socialist case.

I've been associated with "socialism" all my life. Both my father and mother were "revolutionary socialists" in Russia before they emigrated to Boston in 1893. In fact, my father joined the SLP in Boston the same year they arrived in this country. (In 1893, the SLP was sound. It was in the early 1900's that DeLeon "improved" on Marxism with his "Industrial Unionism" concept of socialism.) My father was a charter member of the SPA in 1900 and a charter member of the Communist Party in 1921! Myself, I joined the SPA in 1909 and was a reformist until 1916 when I resigned from the SPA in Detroit to become a charter member of the WSP. My mother was far sounder than my father. Although she was inspired by the Bolshevik Revolution, she was skeptical that it would introduce a socialist society. So you see, I don't deserve credit for being a socialist; but the Elberts of the movement do. You became aware of socialism despite the fact that you were not exposed to socialist environments.

One thing that became obvious to me after reading your letter, is that you have a natural ability for consistently writing socialist articles in a clear, logical and effective presentation.

This means you might also have the ability to help solve one problem we have in the WSP: so few do so much! Might I suggest you write Comrade Harry Morrison, volunteering to assist him in replying to correspondence and other items? He is overloaded with tasks that he could delegate to others.

I'm taking the liberty of nominating you as outside member of the NAC. The NAC is made up of 7 members, 5 from Local Boston and 2 from outside Boston, who are consulted on specific questions which would require

serious consideration. Nominations for national officers are made at the annual conference and then submitted to a vote of the membership. It would be wonderful if circumstances permitted you to attend the Conference in Boston October 11-12-13. We will have theoretical discussions, radio programs, videotapes of our TV programs, serious party agenda, social events and camaraderie, plus hospitality. You will meet comrades from out of town.

Here's my hand in comradeship.

DECEMBER 1975

[The letter from Rab dated Dec. 8 is in response to this undated letter from the two top officials of his union, the International Typographical Union.]

Dear Pensioner Member:

The Boston Typographical Union at its regular meeting held on November 23, 1975, unanimously voted for a motion made by Brother Chris Pauli, Chairman of National Press Chapel, authorizing this local to send a letter to all pensioners requesting information as to the extent the reduction in fraternal benefits has affected them in order that this local can better assess their plight. The return letters to go to a committee of pensioners appointed to make recommendations and offer information and assistance in securing aid. This union is now in the process of appointing the committee and formulating the program. As soon as this is completed, the officers will notify you. Please express your opinion on the above stated action so that we may prepare an evaluation of the effect that the reduced pension benefit has upon you.

Henry Vitale

President

John McManus

Secretary-Treasurer

DECEMBER 8, 1975

Boston Typographical Union

Dear Brothers:

Some years ago, a close friend of mine who is a professor in the economics department of Northeastern University (and an advisor on income tax problems on the radio for the CPA organization) asked me about the ITU pension plans. After reviewing them, he suggested I make an appointment for him with Stan White (at that time president of the Boston Local) to discuss the weakness of our pension plans, especially in light of the pension plans prevailing in other unions. Stan said at that time that his hands were tied and that it was a matter for the Executive Council. In a way, I blame myself for not making an issue of the matter then.

In reply to the question how I'm personally affected by the reduction in pension benefits, I'm fortunate in that I receive the maximum social security benefits on account of my age, 82, and my length of service; but I'd get that anyhow.

A real and serious dilemma confronts many pensioners. Should they give priority to their own serious plight, or to the union and its active members who are adversely affected by the shrinking membership and decreasing available funds? Only the individual pensioners involved can answer this.

I've had several letters in *The Typographical Journal* dealing with what constitutes sound unionism, and with socialism.

Regarding unionism, I've emphasized that it is *not true* that there is a harmony of interests between the union and the publishers. Publishers are concerned with profits and labor-saving devices, while we union members are concerned with wages, hours and shop conditions. The idea that we should be "reasonable" and consider their side as though we were one happy family is a snare and an illusion. When the chips are down, it becomes apparent that there is a conflict of interests involved. I've emphasized also that the *membership* is the real union, not the officers and committees. I made the point that the craft unions, with their internecine battles over jurisdictions, etc., never served the interests of the workers as well as industrial unions do. The ITU, in its early days, was a Graphics Arts union, i.e., one of the first industrial unions. In spite of today's ever-greater recognition of the need for an industrial union

merger, steps in that direction are extremely slow, largely due to concern for specific provisions. This problem arises from the notion that we need “good leaders.” What we need is good, sound *members*. That the membership is the union cannot be emphasized too much.

On the subject of socialism, I’ve emphasized that the chaos and insanity of our dog-eat-dog jungle society, capitalism, poses serious economic problems for everyone. In 1975, with our highly developed technology and science, nobody starves because we can’t produce enough food. Yet many people *are* starving because food (like other commodities) is produced only for profit, not for the satisfaction of human needs. The time is ripe for a sane society based on the common ownership of the means of living by and in the interest of all members of society. Our heads are in 1875; let’s bring them up to 1975 where we live today.

Yours for a world fit for human beings.

TANUARY 17, 1976

[This is a response to a letter from a new Canadian contact.]

Dear Martin Beck:

I'm more than delighted to learn that you are 13 years old! It brought happy memories of my own childhood. I was fortunate that my parents were revolutionary socialists from Russia. From my birth in 1893 I was exposed to socialist ideas (including freedom from religious superstitions)...

I'd really enjoy having conversations with you, if the opportunity presented itself.

As for the Proletarian Party, it went out of existence about 6 or 7 years ago. It had an irreconcilable contradiction: it wanted to be both Marxist and Bolshevik at the same time. The WSP had many debates with the Proletarian Party in Boston. Keracher remained a close personal friend. The first time he came to Boston, he stayed in our home, to the dismay and disapproval of the P.P. members. He never repeated that blunder, which is understandable. He hosted my son, Billie, when he won a prize to go to the World Fair in Chicago. And as to the Introduction I wrote for *How the Gods Were Made*, it was approved by the Editorial Committee. The obstacle is fear of lack of enough sales to warrant the investment. We are obligated to buy 2,500 copies. The NAC is now in the process of surveying the companion parties and others as to how many copies they estimate they would order. We don't want them to remain on our shelves.

As for DeLeon, up until he "discovered" his "Industrial Republic of Labor" he was a sound, revolutionary, scientific socialist. During the 1890s, there would have been no reason for a WSP in the USA. Stated briefly, there will be no working class in socialism, requiring workers' control. The *WS* has had numerous articles dealing with the SLP. Socialism is classless and has common ownership. Note Lenin's praise of DeLeon for anticipating Soviets.

APRIL 27, 1976

[From Frank Marquart to Rab.]

Dear Rab:

The Spring number of the *WS* is very good. I hope "Bicentennial Hallucinations" gets read far and wide. What a welcome antidote to the hoary cliché-ridden bicentennial speeches one hears over TV! Ren has all the makings of a good historian. And I found your "Panorama of Evolution" most interesting. Have you ever thought of contacting high school science teachers about giving that talk on evolution to the students? You should explore this avenue.

Yes, I will ask Penn State Press to send you a review copy, especially since Rab is mentioned in the book.

About George Ramsay. One Sunday morning in 1919 I attended a class taught by George in the old House of the Masses. I can't recall the title of the text but it was a blue, hard-cover Kerr book, one of the many socialist classics they published in those days. I guess like everybody else who met George for the first time, I was impressed by that big, well-built Scotsman (Nils Akerval once referred to George as "an Olympian figure."). Soon after that Sunday, George took a job on a boat; he was a seaman in those days.

When he returned to Detroit again, he worked in an auto body shop as a dingman, in those times a highly-skilled, well paid craft. Eventually, as you know, he "went into business for himself" — and made good!

During the twenties he often soap boxed, along with Cohen, Thorpe, myself and others who belonged to our group (followers of the SPGB). Unlike some soap boxers (Thorpe for instance) George was not flamboyant; he spoke in a calm, straight-forward style, more like a teacher than an orator. I also recall that he attended a class taught by Tom Bolt, and George always made a contribution by elaborating on points raised during the class discussion. I remember a humorous incident. It was on a Sunday and our group returned from a day at Cass Lake in time to soap box in the evening at Michigan and First Streets. The Proletarian Party speakers held forth on the opposite corner. Joe Brown opened the meeting for us; he was followed by Red Robinson who, after speaking for about 15 minutes, was followed by Ramsay. A chap named Bill Witt spoke for the PP. George's talk was particularly interesting that evening because he

drew on examples from places around the world to which he had sailed — Australia, France, British Isles, etc. Witt was losing his audience and George's talk attracted more and more people. In despair, Bill Witt took his bugle out of the case and started to play "Come Feather Your Nest"! George told the crowd that the song was the PP's revolutionary Anthem. But Witt blasted away so long and so loud that we had to discontinue our meeting and return to "the club," as we called our headquarters.

By the way, Red Robinson and George were very close friends and if you have not already done so you should write to him for background info about George. I assume he is still in New York. George rose out of the proletariat to become a fairly prosperous businessman, but he always remained loyal to the SPGB. He was not an intellectual type, say, like Cohen, but he was solid, quite well informed, a down-to-earth level-headed person.

What a pity Davenport is no longer around. Both were Scotsmen, both socialists (later Dave lost all faith in socialist activity), both married to sisters (in fact, the two families lived in the same house for some time during the twenties). Yes, Dave could really fill you in about George. George Ramsay belonged to a breed that has all but vanished. Few are still around and won't be around much longer. Jack London immortalized the breed in *Martin Eden*. Self-educated sons of the working class, grounded in socialist classics, able to present the case for socialism in an intelligent manner. Please send me a copy of what you write about him.

Yes, by all means, yours for a sane world! — Frank

MAY 24, 1976

Dear Frank (Marquart):

Due to the pressure of priority duties* I put aside replying to your letter of April 27th. This turned out to be a lucky break. In the interim, I received two letters that will be of interest to you. My first impulse was to quote from them but I decided to photocopy them for you.

I'm grateful to you on two counts: 1) Furnishing me useful information on Ramsay. It stirred many memories. Comrade Robinson passed away in N.Y. City about a year ago. He was a member of the WSP and had visited one of the Party annual conferences in Boston. Joe Brown and I were close pals. I recall his first arrival in Detroit and his enthusiasm for Scott Nearing, who was instrumental in introducing him to socialist ideas in Toledo. Also Davenport and Glicman. Davenport and Marie lived in Boston while he was working for a radiator company. Later, on a trip to Florida, I visited them in Deland. They were neighbors. There was quite a contrast between Davenport and Glicman, and likewise between their wives ..I don't need to describe Davenport, you knew him. But Henry Glicman was still very enthusiastic about socialism from the point of view of philosophy and theory (not in socialist activity per se). Marie, Mrs. Davenport, was an ardent commie but free of commie viciousness. She is an intelligent, concerned person, imbued with enthusiasm for Russian

* The NAC has co-opted me to serve as headquarters assistant to take care of routine matters: opening the mail, processing the contents, requests for information about our principles and policies from various sources (school teachers, students, listeners to our radio programs, readers of the WS, etc.) filling orders for literature, and similar items. I was only too happy to comply. Comrade Harry Morrison, our National Secretary, member of the Editorial Committee and NAC, and general factotum, had a part-time job nights and the Party paid him a small stipend for his expenses. He got a full-time job days from the same hospital where he had been working, which was an irresistible incentive: for years he has been involved in writing a novel based on his observations on the socialist movement over 40 years. He is a fluent writer with a facile pen. I envy his ability to write so clearly and effectively. I sweat blood even writing a letter, not to speak of serious articles, etc. I rewrite several times and then it is not always satisfactory. Luckily the comrades on the Editorial Committee are competent critics. I'm especially proud of how the comrades rose to the occasion. Comrade Lenny Fenton [Feinzig] is now National Secretary; Comrades Billie Rab, Karla [Gerell], Mike Phillips, Joe Lyle, and Eddie Seifert have instituted new procedures, as alternatives to NAC meetings in NY and Boston, etc.

“socialism.” She subscribed to many left-wing magazines and you could have a discussion with her. On the other hand, Mrs. Glicman was antagonistic to Glicman becoming involved or even discussing socialism. He, however, got a thrill out of joining the conversation and *scoring points*.

2) Arranging with your publisher to forward us a copy of your memoirs with the object of reviewing it in the *WS* ... Judging from Fred Thompson’s letter, you made no reference to the existence of the WSP in the old days. You surely were aware of the “tea drinkers” and their HQ. You surely were aware that Comrade Tom Bolt, to our surprise, joined the WSP when he became convinced on his own of the validity of its position on Russia. And he was Keracher’s closest friend. It was a tribute to his integrity that he put principles first. Then you had read my Introduction to the Keracher pamphlet on how the WSP and the Proletarian group parted company over the Russian issue and how we, both of us, had collaborated prior to the Russian Revolution, realizing the situation that existed (Keracher’s influence in the Michigan SPA). Both Kohn and I wrote articles for *The Proletarian*, who endorsed the SPGB and its Declaration of Principles. They even printed a special announcement published by the WSP because we were not in a position to have our own journal. I’m perplexed how come you disregarded the WSP, which played such a significant role in those days in Detroit.

I earnestly trust you don’t view the following two incidents as brash braggadocio. On two occasions I, *unwillingly*, cooperated with the Proletarian group in dire emergencies. Davenport and I happened to drop into the HQ of the Proletarian group in the afternoon when they had received, for the first time during the war years, a permit to speak at First and Michigan. This was very unexpected. They applied weekly and were always refused. There were no bigwigs available on short notice, and they pleaded with me to open their meeting. I explained to them that I would *not* endorse their attitudes. Then they put me on the spot: How can you not take advantage of an opportunity like this to assert the basic necessity of street meetings to spread socialist understanding?* In spite of Davenport’s insistence on not

* [This sentence is garbled in the original letter; I have taken the liberty here of putting it into more recognizable English. In the original, Rab wrote: “Are you going to desert the importance by not taking advantage of the opportunity of the basic necessity of street meetings to spread socialist understanding?” This, coupled with the postscript to the letter dated June 2, which follows, seem among the earliest signs of the disease that afflicted Rab during his last decade. He used to say, smiling: “There’s nothing the matter with my memory, but my forgettery is working overtime.” — KDR]

speaking, I knew I'd feel like a heel if I refused. This, in spite of an unusual circumstance which I had explained to them. Arising out of a suggestion I had put in a box provided for such purposes, I was called into the main office [at work] and was told that I was appointed to head the project at a fabulous raise in pay, *on condition* that I did not speak on the streets. You remember the "Service Department" in the Ford plants. I actually had conducted a small class during the lunch period in the plant. It was a very successful meeting. But when I went to work the next morning, I got fired and was told: "You can't be trusted!"

The other occasion was just after the Russian Revolution. The Proletarian group had arranged a mass meeting in the House of Masses. The hall was crowded. Keracher, Renner and Batt were held up in a meeting out of town. It was getting late and the audience was getting restive. The chairman came to my seat and pleaded with me to fill in the breach. I told him I was opposed to the very object of the meeting. I asked him to remember I would not defend their stand. He agreed. I did speak on the necessity of political power in the hands of the working class, as a class, à la Paragraph 6 of the Declaration of Principles. I must have been effective because of the thunderous applause.

You might drop a line to Fred Thompson for a copy of his review of your memoirs when it appears in *The Industrial Worker*.

.. .Incidentally, would you like to receive the NAC minutes? If so, why not drop a line to the National Secretary of the WSP, Len Fenton, at HQ? None of the companion parties have secret meetings or are engaged in conspiracies. Our files are open to anyone desiring to see them. We have been on no subversive list to my knowledge. However, the CIA have ample references to me and many of our comrades as revealed by member inquiries. And, strange to say, their information was accurate. We plead guilty to advocating a socialist revolution.

TUNE 2, 1976

My dear Frank:

Out of the blue sky it occurred to me that I intended to attach a PS. to my last letter in which I was quite critical of you. It completely escaped my mind when I mailed the letter to you. I wanted to tell you that if I was doing you an injustice because your book may have been written prior to your seeing my draft of the Introduction to Keracher's pamphlet; memory plays tricks on *all of us*. And it was par for the course to overlook relevant items.

Now, I've salved my conscience.

As ever, comradely and affectionately,

Rab

TULY 23, 1976

[This letter is addressed to Ray Richmond, who had been a member of the Vagabond Club.]

Dear Ray:

Like you, I've got a backlog of unfinished items. Much as I would love to, I fear that I might get tangled up in semantic problems, trying to clarify my terms.

The heart and core of my letter was: What earthly reason is there for workers to take pride in their work and be disciplined? If you succeeded in installing this pride and discipline in the workers, I fear they would be fired for holding up production. You know damn well that the capitalists, *as a class*, are not concerned about quality (except in their ads) and that the things that count are profits and increased sales!

Remember, you are speaking of workers in today's factories!

And as for the workers not being "ready for socialism," all you are saying is that the World Socialist Movement is small — and you are correct. You do not say that the World Socialist Movement is wrong in its principles, but that we are not practical realists.

You can total up all the so-called socialist/communist parties and you will find that these "practical realists," being almost as small in numbers as we are, aim their tremendous activity towards reforms and practical measures. When elected, they support capitalism. In their concern for successful results, they always lose sight of socialist objectives, except for lip service given on special occasions.

The WSP and the rest of the World Socialist Movement say that no longer can capitalism function in the interest of the working class or, of society as a whole!

The practical, realistic "socialists" are dogmatic and sectarian, out of harmony with the urgent needs of our time, while WSPers are the revolutionary, scientific and practical realists when it comes to solving social problems today!

Affectionately yours,

Rab

P.S. I should add that the socialist revolution must differ from all previous basic changes in social relations in one important way: It will be the

first time in history that revolutionary change will be in the interest of *the vast majority*, instead of being a transfer of power from one ruling class to another ruling class. Today, this basic change in social relations has become necessary. Socialism cannot be imposed on the majority against their wishes. Socialism is inevitable, barring astronomical disasters, self-destruction by atomic warfare, etc. In the long run, it is not ideas that give rise to material conditions, but material conditions that give rise to ideas. It is the greatest contribution of Marxism to recognize this, and that is also the latent strength of socialist movement! That is what you heard from me 45 years ago.

AUGUST 2, 1976

[This was a long, chatty letter which I have excerpted here — KDR.]

My Dear Comrade C. Skelton:

One of the great indictments of capitalism is what it does to human beings, including both victims and beneficiaries. The system affects capitalists as well as workers. You will find bastards and angels in both classes. We don't hate the capitalists as individuals, but we hate the damn system, and the primarily socio-economic relationship of its two classes. Individuals are products of both the material conditions that surround them and of inherited biological factors. No baby was ever born with any ideas — these are all acquired after birth — but all babies are born human beings, and part of their inheritance is a social, gregarious instinct.

Despite the feminist movement, capitalism has been largely a man's world, and still is. But technological strides are diminishing the sex factor to a large degree. Incidentally, a socialist woman for whom I have a high regard, my mother, once said, many years ago in 1908: "a wife is a slave of a slave." She had a point at that time.

You will be receiving a copy of Asimov's book in the mail soon. I'm mailing it with my compliments for a dedicated socialist. As for the minutes, you will continue to receive them. It so happens that it is my job to mail them. I've yet to collect for the postage, so it costs the party nothing. The total cost is only a little more than \$10.00. Again, I admire you for your thoughtfulness and consideration of party funds. It happens that I'm party treasurer, so no one is aware that postage [for minutes] is not included in my disbursements. We do not subdivide postage expenditures into categories.

A word on Comrade Bob Nugent. He and I are bosom pals; although we live far apart, I've visited him in Madison, NY, and he just recently wrote to me to take a vacation and visit him again. He is a scholar, in the best meaning of that word. There are phonies galore claiming to be scholars merely because they have degrees stating so. Bob never went to college. He is self-taught and has done much research in many fields. His occupation: a handy man doing odd jobs — a proletarian scholar, who puts to shame all the "experts" and "authorities" who are so honored by all the media. Above all, he is a wonderful human being.

(There are some socialists of whom I could not express that same sentiment. A socialist is not to be judged on the basis of his character.)

Here's my hand in comradeship.

AUGUST 8, 1976

[Rose was an old friend and sympathizer from the 1940s.]

My dear Rose (Goldstein):

Superficially, it seems that the workers are dumb. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that they are never exposed to socialist ideas — certainly not by the so-called socialists, radicals, liberals, commies, etc. These sincere, dedicated “rebels” are primarily concerned with “in the meantime” problems. Their focus is on winning elections to accomplish reforms; and if they win at the ballot box, they are too involved in administering capitalism or too busy fighting actively for futile reforms destined for failure (as far as the conditions of the working class is concerned), to think of “socialism” except on special occasions. They all scorn *us* as being “dogmatic sectarians.” The question is: Who are the dogmatic sectarians and who are the practical realists? Ironically, these so-called activists don’t realize that it is later than they think. It cannot be overemphasized that capitalism can *no longer* be reformed or administered in the interest of the working class, or of society as a whole. Conditions are already over-ripe for socialism. I’m very optimistic about some significant signs of the times which can be seen in current novels, plays, and movies; these show that a ferment of socialist ideas is going on. The wheels are churning in peoples’ minds even though the ideas have not reached their lips.

The latent strength of socialism is that the lessons of experience corroborate the validity of the case for socialism, and repudiate the illusion that reformist activity actually does anything for the workers. What we need today is not activist leaders (“blind leaders of the blind,” as Arthur Morris Lewis put it), but understanding and fervor for introducing socialism, here and now.

Yours for a world fit for human beings.

AUGUST 26, 1976

[This letter is addressed to Fred Thompson. It should be noted that there is a small error in it, which was pointed out to me by Peter E. Newell in a personal communication dated 5/23/2008: "Rab quotes Oakley Johnson as writing that Charles M. O'Brien was elected on the Socialist Party of Canada ticket, as a member of the Alberta parliament in 1909, for the Crows Nest Pass coal mining constituency. He was actually elected, at a by-election, on March 22, 1909, for the Rocky Mountain constituency ... O'Brien was elected with 555 votes (37.83% of the total votes cast)."]

Dear Friend:

A friend made a copy for me of an article on the origin of the Proletarian Party by Oakley Johnson, in the Communist magazine *Political Affairs*, for December 1974. If you can get hold of that issue in some library there [*Chicago*] I think you will find the article of interest, and I judge, fairly well in accordance with the facts if viewed from the CP perspective.

It says of the Michigan socialists:

The top man was John Keracher, born in Dundee, Scotland, Jan. 16, 1880, one of seven children, and educated in the public schools there. His father owned five retail shoe stores in Dundee, and the making of shoes was thus the background of the son's life. Keracher came to this country in 1909, joined the Socialist Party in 1910, and began to study Marxism. He set up his own shoe store in Detroit, and proceeded to hold evening classes in the back of his store. Out of these small study classes grew the Proletarian University, an ambitious dream, realized only briefly. Taking an active part in party politics, Keracher soon displaced state-wide socialist leaders.

Is this accurate information to include in that life of Keracher if we ever get it off the ground?

The article speaks of Dennis Batt, Charles M. O'Brien "who in 1909 had been elected on the Socialist Party ticket as a member of the Alberta parliament for the Crows Nest Pass coal mining constituency."

Most of the article is an account of how Keracher had been much influenced by the SPGB, but not sharing their appraisal of the 1917 revolution — how his intention to launch a communist party avoiding reformism without first trying to capture SP, resulted in the other fission between CP and CLP [*Communist Party and Communist Labor Party*]. Expect you

will find it interesting. I'd like your reaction to it, your estimation of its inaccuracies. It is more detailed than Draper's account.

I enclose a notice of a book the IWW is publishing this fall, though I fear it will be closer to Oct. 15 than to Sept. 15 when we have any on hand.

Got a pamphlet *A World To Win* from a SF group of libertarian socialists who surprise me how they sound like WSP. They give only a P.O. box: Box 1587, San Francisco, CA 94101, no name, but you could address it to Harry Siitonan, a fellow ITUer. [*International Typographical Union*].

[*The note to me, below, is stapled to a carbon copy of the above letter to Thompson.*]

Dear Karla:

I regret I failed to make a copy of my reply. And I'm too lazy (too busy) to copy it.

I dealt with a half-dozen groups that sound just like the WSP. I mentioned that I was encouraged by them, but that if any group appeared on the scene that agreed with us, we would make overtures to consolidate. We are not in competition with anyone to emancipate the working class. Only a convinced majority of class-conscious revolutionary socialist workers can capture the state machinery to introduce a socialist society. Where we part company with these groups is in our recognition that capitalism cannot be reformed or administered in the interest of the working class or of society, as a whole.

I dealt in detail with Batt, Charlie O'Brien and with Keracher along the lines of my first Forward to *How the Gods Were Made*.

As for Charlie O'Brien, I dealt with his experiences in Canada 1905—1918. He was a powerful socialist orator and got elected to the Alberta parliament. We had an article in the *WS* about 35 years ago dealing with the agitation for socialism in Western Canada up to the Yukon. I told him if he wanted a copy of it I would get it for him.

I also told him of my reactions to Marquart's book on the United Auto Workers' Union, with classes and lectures in its earliest years. I gave a talk at one of his classes. He did effective work as far as he could go. He had problems and some Detroit associates were unhappy about his compromises; I don't think he could avoid them. I'm unhappy because there was not one word in it about his socialist convictions. He was silent about his membership in the WSP and his debate with Scott Nearing in Boston.

This will suffice for my letter.

Oh, I forgot to mention Oakley Johnson. I wrote Thompson about his correspondence with me about 6-7 years ago on the history of the WSP. He is a writer on "left" history.

Also, I regret not making copies of letters to Brian Cottingham and Ronald Elbert, two recent recruits to the WSP. They are serious about their socialism and are doing a lot of reading. Brian goes a little further, he spreads the word among his friends. Elbert has had about 8 articles in the *WS* during the last 6 issues.

NOVEMBER 3, 1976

Day after Election Day, the day that
Harrington urged his fellow “socialists”
to vote for the “lesser of two evils” — Jimmy
Carter. Is history going to make him look “fuzzy”!

My dear Frank (Marquart):

Several times I’ve started to write you re: your book [*An Auto Worker Remembers*]. Unfortunately, every time I started, I had to drop it for a priority item. But this time I’m determined to stick to my guns. You deserve no less! . . .

George Gloss says he will be pleased to display your book. George has just been released from the hospital. He had a heart attack and must take it easy. His son, Kenneth, is managing the store.

I’m disappointed, that in your book, you hardly mentioned your role as a socialist. That is integral to your union activities, is it not? In my humble opinion, your socialist concern was exemplified in your debate with Scott Nearing — a highlight in your career — and also in the article you had in the *WS*, April 1947, based on your *Local 212 Voice of Labor*. Please, don’t take offense; I’m not critical of what you said in your book, but I regret what you didn’t say! I fear you were hesitant to associate yourself with socialism.

On top of that, I was very surprised that in speaking of Davenport and Canter, you made no mention of either man’s association with socialism.

You must remember that Bill Davenport was the first Secretary of the WSP in 1916. In that capacity, he wrote the Manifesto on why we organized into a *socialist party*. You yourself wrote of Davenport’s connection with the Jack London letter that appeared both in the *ES* and *WS*. The truth is, the first act of the WSP was to circulate the Manifesto Davenport had written to all interested parties — including Jack London and the Socialist Party of America. As soon as the SPA received their copy, they wrote back that they had already registered the name “Socialist Party of the United States” according to their comrades in Kansas — so, immediately, we changed our name to the Workers’ Socialist Party. (Later, we changed our name to the World Socialist Party because we were being confused with the Socialist Workers Party, especially when we had platforms on Boston Common. As an aside, in New York City and Detroit

around the 1920s, some members called themselves the Socialist Education Society, but we were still the Workers' Socialist Party.)

Canter had also been a National Secretary of the WSP, in the 1950s. Your description of Canter's activities in the Detroit labor movement is not only inspiring but accurate. He is to be admired for his guts and his sound convictions. Canter spoke my language in the role of socialist in a union. He was not only a militant member, but he emphasized the members of the union and the corporations are not one big happy family, but involved in a basic conflict of interests. He played a similar role to mine in the ITU. My articles in the *Typographical Journal* not only featured the meaning of sound unionism — a far cry from the policy of the ITU along the lines of craft unionism, patriotism, the COPE etc., but they printed my articles on *sound* unionism, emphasizing that the members are the union, not the officers, as well as my articles explaining the case for socialism. I was the eyesore of management, calling them on their violations of contracts. (Incidentally, I refused nominations for local offices and serving on committees because to me, my allegiance to democracy would necessitate my carrying out motions passed by the membership, such as urging supporting COPE, selling war bonds and patriotism, etc.) The one satisfaction I had was that the members (largely Irish Catholic bigots) with only a very few exceptions, were supporting and agreeing with me and were fast friends.

Here's my hand in comradeship! Despite my criticisms, I'm aware that when the chips are down, you know better.

NOVEMBER 23, 1976

[To Peter Furey, Socialist Party of Australia]

Dear Comrade Furey:

In my discussions with comrades and sympathizers, I've always emphasized that, as long as you base your case on the broad generalizations, interrelations and processes, you are on solid ground. It is when you get involved in particulars and specifics that you can get into hot water. (I do not deny it is unavoidable to deal with them.) I need only use three giants (Marx, Darwin and Morgan) for illustrations. Marx's MCH and Law of Value. Unfolding history has shown that Marx made errors in some of his speculations and interpretations, especially of current events. One thing I like about the *Socialist Standard* is their frequent reference to Marx as not being infallible. It has laid to rest the idea that we are worshippers of Marx, endorsing his every statement.

I once wrote an article on "How sure can we be of our knowledge?" It repudiates the importance of "facts" in a vacuum. This reminds me of an unusual experience I once had. I was called for jury duty and was in no position to claim sickness or my work. I was working at that time in the City Printing Plant. The judge addressed us venire men, emphasizing that our job is to find a verdict on the "facts" beyond a reasonable doubt. When my name was drawn, I immediately spoke to the bailiff and requested an interview with the judge. He refused, saying it had never been done. I insisted. The judge agreed to see me. I said I wanted to know what a "fact" is. He looked at me as though I was an idiot. So I said: "if I was harassing and irritating you and in your anger you hit me in my face, wasn't my irritating you just as much a part of the 'fact' as you hitting me was?" He asked, "Is that what is bothering you?" I said, "Yes." All he answered was, "Well, go back to your room." The next morning when I returned to court for my jury work, the bailiff stopped me. "What are you doing here, you were excused from jury duty last night!"

Did you happen to get a copy of the recent Report of the SPNZ's annual Conference? It included a dispute between the Auckland and Wellington branches on the use of the words "workers" and "people" on their election leaflets. I took the liberty of sending a joint letter to both branches expressing my views. Quibbles over semantics often arise. Emotions were aroused because the leaflets referred to "New Zealand people" and not

to “New Zealand workers.” The reason I’m mentioning this is there is an important lesson to be learned.

It is no violation of principles, nor any compromise, to use the term: New Zealand people. None of us would deny that the socialist political victory is in the interest of the working class and, at the same time, in the interest of society as a whole. True enough, the highest expression of the class struggle is the class-conscious, revolutionary socialist majority at the ballot box. But insisting on “workers” as mandatory on a leaflet gives the impression of “sectarianism.” The people are workers, the vast majority of them. Besides, we do have capitalists who are damn good socialists both in the WSP-US and in the SPGB.

DECEMBER 19, 1976

My very dear Comrade Bill Pritchard:

I believe you will be very pleased with a short note I just received from fellow worker Fred Thompson indicating a great respect and admiration for you.

If I'm not mistaken, I may have written you about Fred Thompson in the past. He is a genuine scholar (in the best sense of that word) and a wonderful person. In his youth he was a member of the SPC in Nova Scotia. However, he soon afterward became enamored of the IWW. Just to show the merit of the guy, many years ago when I was on a propaganda tour of the Midwest USA, he was of inestimable service, arranging meetings for us in Chicago and Milwaukee besides arranging two debates on the contrasts between the WSP and the IWW in Chicago and Detroit. In fact, we were going to collaborate on a pamphlet on the encouraging signs of the times, indicating the wheels are turning in the heads of the workers (though not on their lips) for socialism. Many comrades in the WSP ridicule that concept on the basis of statistics — what they call “evidence,” really seeing only the trees but not the forest.

At all events, I mailed Thompson your comments on the contemplated book by a professor in Dalhousie University in Halifax, in re the early days of the Canadian socialist movement. Here is the note he wrote back:

Many thanks for the letter from Pritchard, which I shall treasure as well as transmit via Xerox, and for the article reminiscing on old SPC veterans. I believe I met only Gribble, Lester, Mackenzie. Gribble's arrest got me acquainted with the SPC. In Vancouver, a plumber who read economics, can't recall his name.

In three days will be my 83rd birthday. Enclosed is a copy of the invitations for a surprise party my family had for me on my 80th birthday. Please return it to me. A few weeks after the event, I found it (and saved it, and treasure it). I had some suspicion of something going on (living in the same house) but was not sure. I'm sorry they did not confide in me. There were close personal friends in the shop [*the Hearst composing room where Rab worked*] who had subscribed to the *WS* and read socialist literature that the family only knew of through my conversations, but they did not know the names or addresses. (I never mentioned this to

them, and, as it was, the house was jammed like a can of sardines.) It was a memorable and unforgettable experience. There were so many I'd not seen for years. It was rewarding to hear remarks like "I'll never forget what I learned from you."

Enough of this braggadocio,

As ever,
Comradely and affectionately,
Rab

P.S. Did you know that Comrade Gribble joined the WSP in Detroit in the 1917 - 1918 period? He was elected as a WSP Organizer.

DECEMBER 20, 1976

[To Erica Liss, then 12 years old]

My dear Comrade Erica:

Congratulations on becoming a member of the World Socialist Party. To the best of my recollection, you are the youngest member ever in the Party and I've been a member ever since its inception in July 1916. It's not age that counts, but knowledge, understanding and fervor — and that is what the letter accompanying your application exposed!

Enclosed is a copy of our Constitution. For your information, the dues are \$2.50 monthly. Anyone not in a position to pay dues may apply for exemption from dues.

Here's my hand in comradeship and affection,

I. Rab, Local Boston Treasurer

P.S. Looking forward to greeting you at Karla's house for a meeting on Sunday, Jan. 2.

DECEMBER 20, 1976

Dear Fellow Worker Dubuls:

Please find, under separate cover, some interesting reading matter having a strong bearing on your views as expressed in the *Boston Sunday Globe* of December 19, 1976.

You are quite correct “that the capitalist mode of production in South Africa is the foundation, indeed the motor that keeps that racist, vile system of white privilege strong and alive, while the black people, we who continue creating the wealth of that country, continue to live in sub-human bondage.”

On the other hand, you maintain “the struggle of my people is one for *national self-determination* (my emphasis) in a land that has always been ours.” On the surface, that appears to be correct. In a *historical* sense, it once was correct!

But this is 1976, almost 1977. Today’s tribal society in Africa is a far cry from African tribal society before Europe and also America invaded African soil. Africa has gone through quite a metamorphosis in the last 250 years. The major difference is that where once, African tribal society was based on a community of interest of the whole population of the tribe, today it is based on the property interests of a ruling section within the tribe — a significant difference. Anthropologists, generally, recognize this distinction. It can be traced to the different social relations in *tribal* society and those in a modern capitalist *nation*. Unwittingly, you recognized this difference by speaking of “national self-determination.” You cannot name any country that does not claim to be the representative of the whole population, but you know better, as you put it so well in your first point, above. Let me emphasize that this is no quibble!

All native African countries today are but neo-colonial satellites of one or another great power. There are only three countries left on the globe — Russia, China, and the USA. They all have their satellites. USA has as its satellites: the NATO nations, Canada, Australia, etc. Russia has its, to a significant extent much of the Third World; and so does China, especially in eastern Asia. And all three share satellites in Asia Minor and Africa.

Would you be surprised to learn that today “countries,” as such, are almost obsolete? We live in a shrunken globe, speaking economically. It is closely interrelated with the same customs, clothes, architecture, litera-

ture, music, etc. We live in an international world. When we watch TV telecast programs, we cannot be sure what country we are looking at, and we see it live from all corners of the globe when it is happening. What we do have are about 130 nations, members of the United Nations, who are faced with a dilemma — the contradiction between being “a nation” and being “united.”

Yours for a world fit for human beings.

DECEMBER 30, 1976

[Below is a letter from Frank Marquart to Rab, dated Dec. 23, 1976. Rab's response, dated Dec. 30, follows.]

Dear Rab:

I mislaid your last letter and kept hoping it would turn up, but it didn't as yet so I am writing to ask you two questions: 1) Did the Western Socialist do an obituary of George Ramsay, and if so, could I get a copy? 2) Did the WS review my book, and if so could I get a copy?

I recall that you said something in your last letter about George Gloss's book store. Has George, or his son, contacted the Penn State Press about a discount rate on my book? Boston is one place where the book should sell... Rab, I just don't know why I overlooked sending you a copy of the manuscript when I finished writing it and before it was published. I did send a copy to Davenport and asked him to offer any needed corrections. But the manuscript was returned, with the P.O. stamp: "Moved, address unknown." It was a bad oversight not to send the MS to you.

I want to subscribe for one year to the WS. Bill me and payment will promptly follow. . .

My best holiday wishes to all the Rabs...

Frank



Dear Fellow Worker Frank:

To answer your two questions:

1) An obituary for Comrade George Ramsay did not appear in the *WS*. In fact, I did write an obituary and, if I'm not mistaken I sent a copy to Martha [Ramsay]. However, it did not appear in the *WS*. I've not been on the Edit. Comm. for a few years. After 35 years of being continually on the Edit. Comm. the comrades relieved me from serving on that committee. However, they had asked me to continue proofreading the *WS*, which gives me an opportunity to make suggestions regarding articles. I do not attend Edit. Comm. meetings — the reason I'm not on the committee is that I'm involved in routine matters. I open the mail, process subs, mail literature orders, and handle many details, such as answering minor inquiries, as the factotum of the party office. This, on

top of my Treasurer duties and my personal correspondence, not to mention reading books and [party] correspondence. As you can see, I'm busy. That explains how come the Ramsay obit did not appear in the *WS*. I made no issue over it. After all, they had a backlog of good articles which took priority. Besides, they only knew Ramsay from my comments. He never communicated with HQ. One exception: Comrade Serge Huard of Montreal — a human dynamo — publishes *Socialisme Mondiale*, our French journal, which has a good circulation in Italy, France and other European countries. It is printed by the Victoria, BC, comrades. Huard wanted some information about Michigan and wrote George Ramsay. George was wonderful; he cooperated with him...

2) As to George Gloss and your book, I gave Comrade Gloss all the particulars. You can appreciate that Gloss's physical reverses have been serious. However, I suggest you write him a letter — it will give him a kick — and suggest that his son write the Penn State Press for information about displaying your book in his shop. (And who is there in the publishing business who has not heard of George Gloss?)

Regarding your book, I regret that you did not let me go over your MS; I might have made useful suggestions. Incidentally, when asked by Fred Thompson for my reactions to your book, I *praised* it as a Union analysis and document. But I was disappointed that you did not say anything about the role of a socialist in a union, which should have been an integral part of your book. I got the impression you were avoiding that phase deliberately. (I'm not ignoring your wonderful classes. I'm aware of the problems you had!)

I'm sending you some recent issues of the *WS*. You will note three generations of Rabs in these issues. There are now a total of eight members of the Rab family in the party. In *WS* #5 - 1975, my son-in-law has an article "The Sanity of Socialism"; in Spring 1976, he also had articles "Ideology I & II," and the patriarch great-grandfather has one, "Asimov on the Future" in Fall 1976; my granddaughter has one called "Feminism Is Big Business," and in Winter 1976 my grandson-in-law has a top-notch article: "The New Messiah," dealing with Jimmy Carter.

I am sorry to report that Ella, the matriarch of the family, is confined to a wheel chair. She had a stroke some time ago. But she retains her charming, sweet disposition. . .

Finally, the holiday season reflects the human nature of gregariousness and sociability. Not even capitalism could uproot it.

MARCH 4, 1977

[To Trevor Goodger-Hill]

Dear Comrade Trevor:

You are far from being the only one who has complained about a lack of articles picturing the details of a socialist society. One thing is sure, however: neither we nor anyone else is capable of predicting details of the workings of socialism. Let me emphasize that socialists (once they have become the vast majority) will know what to do, based on the prevailing circumstances at the time (i.e., material conditions). The best we can do for now is to give a general picture of what socialism is all about.

There are a couple of novels that deal with socialist society, such as William Morris's *News from Nowhere* and Cameron's *The Day is Coming*. My criticism of Cameron is just that I don't agree with some of his illustrations...

Many articles imagining socialist society have appeared in the *WS* over the years. Enclosed you will find a few illustrations in recent issues . . . The best illustration is #5 - 1975 *WS* which has a transcript of our TV program called "The Sanity of Socialism." Also read my article on Isaac Asimov, which begins on page 13 of the Spring 1976 *WS*. I like Asimov's conception of people's behavior after what he calls "the fourth revolution." He is not a socialist, but no socialist would argue with his conceptions. I consider this another sign of the times. I'm most optimistic, though many comrades disagree with me.

The most significant and important thing to stress when picturing socialism is that every member of society will enjoy a common right of access to the means of life.

One more thing, every issue of the *WS* expresses your very excellent description of outworn capitalist relationships: "state ownership, reform legislation and labour party spur-of-the-moment solutions." What better demonstration can be given of the necessity of socialism! Who can deny that capitalism's inability to prevent wars, unemployment, crises, inflation, etc., indicates that the times are ripe for socialism? We in the World Socialist Movement stand alone, in that other organizations give lip service to this (which is all to the good) but ignore it in their "practical, realistic" programs.

I am not blessed with an encyclopedic brain, nor am I a “scholar” in the real meaning of that word. But I’ve been fortunate to have been exposed to the socialist classics through some top-notch socialist educators, such as Kohn, Baritz, Hardy, Gilmac, and others who were my tutors. And the one thing they all emphasized is the necessity of studying the socialist classics. Two words of warning: 1. You can be a damn good socialist without ever having read one word of Marx. All that is necessary to be a socialist is to understand what socialism is, and to realize that capitalism cannot be reformed or administered in the interest of the whole social community. What is needed is a vast, fervent majority of class-conscious workers using the powers of the state (the central organ of capitalist power) to transfer the means of production and distribution from the capitalist class to the members of society, as a whole.

To me, the backbone of the socialist movement are its unsung heroes, members who are not necessarily speakers nor writers. Their names are not familiar to the general membership but they do the Jimmy Higgins work: cleaning up after meetings and affairs, speaking to their fellow workers and friends, distributing leaflets, keeping stores supplied with our journals, putting leaflets in barber shops, laundromats, etc., selling literature at outdoor meetings, attending study classes, etc.

2. However, at the same time, for those want to engage in propagandizing with their voices and with their pens via lectures and articles, etc. there is no substitute for studying the classics. I’ve marked out on the enclosed literature list some books and pamphlets that I especially recommend to you. (Of course there are other valuable books, as well.) If you come across some passages that puzzle you, don’t hesitate to consult me. I don’t guarantee I’ll know the answer, but I’ll give you my best opinion. You will note two books that I marked in ink for you: (*Anti-Dühring* by Engels and *Theoretical System of Karl Marx* by Louis Boudin. Both of these are out-of-print, unfortunately, but I’ve got copies in my home library that I’ll be happy to lend you because of their great merit. Not only are they very important, but also they contain the gamut of basic scientific socialism. The wonderful and amazing thing is they are still as fresh as if they had been written in 1977. These two books have stood the acid test of time: unfolding history and developments have corroborated and confirmed their analyses. In addition, I’d recommend Engels’s *Socialism, Utopian and Scientific*. They are 3 chapters out of *Anti-Dühring* but the Introduction by Engels is as important as the text. It is as fine

a development of the socialist views on philosophy as you will ever see. And while you are at it, get Gilmac's pamphlet on *Historical Materialism*. It is on the Literature List.

Now, on the subject of Russia: the pamphlet *Russia 1917— 1967* in the literature list is worth getting, besides several recent issues of the *SS* dealing with Russia. I would also recommend you get a copy of the latest *Fortune Magazine* (February 1977). As you may know, *Fortune Magazine* is the bible of Finance Capital. The February issue contained a well-documented article showing that Russia is only second to the USA in being an international capitalist power, having banks, corporations, and all kinds of agencies and financial institutions in countries all over the globe. Coincidentally, the same issue has a lead article demonstrating that the USA does not have a "free enterprise" system. No one can consider Russia to be a socialist country after reading this article. The SPGB has several copies of the *Russian* pamphlet *Soviet Millionaires*. Write them for a copy. This documentation will stun your Russian defenders of Russia. The same applies to China, and the 3rd World "socialist" countries, which are only neo-colonial possessions of one or another capitalist world power.

On barter: the best quote I can give you appears in Chapter 2 of *Capital*, the chapter on Exchange (Vol. I, p. 100, Kerr Edition.) Condensed, it says that barter is simply an early form of commodity exchange.* The difference is that barter does not require money. The exchange does not yet have a universal measure of value (money). Commodity exchange requires a general social equivalent. It can take many forms from cattle to gold. Barter is very primitive and was never a social system. Primitive people did not have barter, despite the school textbooks. Two examples: When the white man first contacted the Eskimos, they were surprised they had no words for "mine" and "thine" in their vocabulary. An Eskimo had the use of his spear but it was not his property. Morgan emphasized the communal nature of the American Indians before they were

* [The text referred to here is: "The direct barter of products attains the elementary form of the relative expression of value in one respect, but not in another," where Marx distinguishes between "use value" and "exchange value," and goes on to explain that use value predominates "in a primitive society based on property in common, whether such a society takes the form of a patriarchal family, an ancient Indian community, or a Peruvian Inca state. The exchange of commodities, therefore, begins [as barter] on the boundaries of such communities, at their points of contact with other similar communities, or with members of the latter."]

contaminated by the European invaders. What distinguished primitive men was COMMON OWNERSHIP. Later, after they discovered agriculture and herding, the concept of bartering arose. It can be seen in the bible stories of Genesis. Barter has existed in chattel slave, feudal and even in capitalist societies but never [was] of any important consequence as a social system.

MARCH 21, 1977

Dear Comrade W Jacee:

It's a pity that circumstances beyond your control prevented you and your wife from visiting Boston. I note that Comrade Murphy is now turned 80 and that the two of you were shipmates on the Australian coast for over 50 years. That makes the three of us in the same age bracket. I'm 83 years old, and still as active as ever.

I can recall the First World War days, when British seamen from the SPGB carried messages back and forth; and more especially the American comrades escaped to Mexico and Canada (one comrade, Fred Evans, was protected by an Indian tribe in Canada). Who will forget the experiences of Comrade Baritz in the Antipodes? One interesting anecdote is when Comrade George Ramsay of Detroit and Moses Baritz met at a street corner in New Zealand, neither realizing that the other was not thousands of miles away. Baritz was an unusual fellow. He was a scholar and a musicologist, he had the most unusual memory of anyone I knew (we were very close). Above all, he was an outstanding class instructor and socialist propagandist. He was either admired or despised by comrades. He had the limitation of acting irresponsibly at times. I believe there are more anecdotes about Baritz than any other Comrade, including Fitzgerald, in the early years of the SPGB.

It was a Baritz class that made a revolutionary socialist out of me in 1915, in Detroit. Shortly after that, Comrade Adolph Kohn, another exile from army service in England, joined Baritz there. A quiet, scholarly person, Kohn was the opposite of Baritz (but generally admired by Baritz and *everyone*). It was noticeable that Baritz was very careful when he made remarks in Kohn's presence. It was Kohn and I, in July 1916, who sent out notices to announce the organizing meeting to form the WSP in Detroit. In the interim, Baritz had gone on a notable propaganda trip to Canada, which, at that time, was a hotbed of large meetings held in theaters, and the publication of the *Western Clarion* in Vancouver. Today I'm the only charter member of the WSP still in the party.

Incidentally, I had previously been a member of the Socialist Party of America, from 1909 to 1916. Among the 42 comrades who attended the organizing of the WSP, 19 of us were members of the Branch 1 of the Detroit SPA who resigned in a body ... John Keracher, secretary of

the Michigan Socialist Party, was a member of our class and supported the SPGB — in fact, the first issue of *The Proletarian* featured his support of our Declaration of Principles. Keracher even succeeded in getting the SPA-Michigan to officially adopt the SPGB position on religion and reforms. His mistake was in imagining his group could work from within the SPA. (We remained staunch friends; when he came to Boston to address the Boston local of the Proletarian Party, he stayed in my house to the consternation of their members. At that period the Boston Local of the P.P. and the Boston Local of the WSP had held a few debates. *The Proletarian* was then an anti-Communist Party [journal], but supported the Russian Dictatorship of the Proletariat...

Comrade Alf Murphy will not be forgotten by the Boston comrades. His letters to Comrade Morrison were always read at NAC meetings with great pleasure, and more for their contents than for his generous donations. We were impressed by his dedication and devotion to the movement. When you next write him, tell him that the Boston comrades have fond memories of him. It is typical of him that he still talks socialism and looks optimistically to the future. Please give our address to his niece so she can keep us informed about his progress. You can bet your bottom dollar, were I ever to visit England again — which is very doubtful — I'd visit and tell him his optimism is justified. In spite of everything, it is becoming more and more obvious that capitalism cannot be reformed or administered in the interest of the working class.

In a way, it is no tragedy that the Australian comrades were forced to change the name of the party. As I wrote recently to Comrade Furey, the name "socialist party" has become a shame and disgrace to genuine socialists. And you are correct that either the so-called communists or the social democrats could "steal our Object and Declaration of Principles." If they did, that would hasten the socialist revolution!

APRIL 15, 1977

My dear Comrade Bob (Barltrop):

Congratulations on your book *Jack London, the Man, the Writer, and the Rebel*. The title really summarizes the theme of your story. In my humble opinion, it will prove to be the classic definitive biography of Jack London. (I note that the Signet edition of *The Sea-Wolf* lists all previous biographies.)

Your concise comment: "Though not understanding the principles he endorsed, he was imbued with a working class viewpoint," is a comprehensive epitaph for London. It says it all.

I enjoyed your final chapter especially. Your analysis of what constitutes "literature" hit the nail on the head. In that connection, I believe you will find "Tears Are Not Enough" in the Spring-1977 issue of the *WS*, soon to come off the press, fits your description of "literature." Rarely do *WS*, *SS*, and other party journals contain such things. There are two outstanding exceptions: The *SS* article on the coronation of a king, and Mackenzie's articles in the old *Western Clarions*, published in Vancouver prior to and during World War I. They were gems that are still reprinted on occasions in our journals. I would say both of the above belong to the Jack London type of literature, and in the same category I would place Trevor Goodger-Hill.

Jack London's comments on the Klondike reminded me of an interesting article in the #7 - 1959 *WS*, which I'm mailing under separate cover. It deals with our comrades in British Columbia, Yukon and Alaska. You will recognize some of the names, I believe.

Our Comrade Fred Evans (now deceased) escaped the American Army by going into the wilds of Western Canada. He met a tribe of Indians who protected him all during the First World War. He won their friendship by relating to them Morgan's account of primitive tribes.

Pity that you and I were not in contact with each other when you first started on the Jack London book. How long ago was that? We had many contacts in San Francisco who knew or knew of Jack London. The only one left who might have been of help is Comrade Al Pearce. He was a pal of Jack McDonald who conducted a study class in San Francisco. He was one of the best writers for the *WS*, a clear thinker and was quite convincing. By the way, Al Pearce symbolizes, for me, the backbone of the movement. He is not a speaker or a writer, but a dedicated worker for socialism: my ideal socialist. To this day, he sends money to the party almost weekly.

Comrade Lennie [Feinzig] was quite impressed by the understanding and energies for socialist work — both in H.O. and outside H.O. — of the young members of the SPGB he met in London. And I can appreciate that. Nothing could be more encouraging or important. I was especially pleased at how Lennie talked about their attitude. From his description, I believe they speak my language. Did I ever send you my essay called “Is There Room for Differences of Opinion in a Socialist Party”? Some comrades feel that the essay is a compromising viewpoint, and further, that I’m straddling the fence. If you haven’t already seen it, please let me know. I consider [it] the most important thing I ever wrote, as a lesson of experience covering 61 years in the WSP and 9 years previously in the old Socialist Party of America. If I hadn’t arrived in Detroit in 1915, and met Comrades Baritz and Kohn, I doubt I’d ever have become a genuine socialist. Believe it or not, I consider Baritz a superior class instructor to Kohn. Baritz put you on your mettle, while Kohn merely questioned you and then merely gave you the answer. I remember to this day how angry I was when the class gave a watch to Kohn and ignored Baritz. One humorous comment, Baritz was very careful not to make any boners when Kohn was around. Kohn was the better scholar by far, but not as good a teacher. You must have heard many anecdotes about Baritz. He was a character, and he also was very talented as a musicologist. I’ll just tell you one example: Detroit had a mushroom growth due to war supplies. The bourgeoisie were anxious to have a synthetic culture. They invited three leading grand opera companies in the USA and they all refused. There was a third-rate opera company that agreed to perform, and the newspapers played it up. One of the leading papers hired Baritz as a critic with instructions to praise the production to the sky, to which he agreed but, lo and behold, he exposed their incompetence in the review he wrote of the opening night. The second night he invited me to be his guest. When we came into the theater, the usher barred the door to us. Baritz raised holy hell, shoved the usher aside, and dragged me in with him. Nobody could unseat *him!* But enough of this twaddle.

I’m making a motion in tomorrow’s NAC meeting to order 15 copies of your Jack London book.

MAY 26, 1977

Dear Comrade Furey:

This will be a rambling letter dealing with your general inquiries, beginning with your question about my name.

My name is Isaac Rabinowich, but ever since my school days, my nickname has been "Rab." In the movement I've always been known as Rab. Comrades are surprised to find out my name is Rabinowich, not that I conceal it, but such were the circumstances. My son, Billie Rab, had his name changed legally. I never wanted to do that, because I've always had an emotional reaction to the cowardice and hypocrisy of the so-called Jews who change their names for "practical" reasons. They are the very ones who fight against anti-Semitism and boast how superior they are to the "goyim" — the Christians and all others — in brain-power, scholarship, business, and what not; and yet, ironically, there is actually no such thing as a Jewish "race"! What distinguishes the Jews from others is their *religion*, not their ancestry. Like every one else, they are mongrels. Their ancestry cannot be traced to the ancient Hebrews, who also were mongrels. It is laughable to call Israel the homeland of the modern Jews. What meager evidence there is suggests the descendants of the ancient Hebrews are limited to the few "Spanish" Jews who traveled through Egypt and the Mediterranean, North Africa and southern Europe; and they constitute a very small percentage of the so-called modern Jews. The Russian and German Jews are all the product of conversion to Judaism starting in the 10th century AD. Even the Jewish encyclopedias admit this. At the time of capture of Jerusalem by the Romans, many Romans adopted the Jewish religion (it was the custom of those times to adopt the religions of captured peoples), and that cut off a big slice of the Mediterranean "Jews"... Sammy Davis, Jr. and Elizabeth Taylor are Jews because of having been converted to the Jewish religion. So it has been a matter of principle to me not to bother changing my name, in protest against the cowardice and hypocrisy of those patriot racists.

As for my immigrant parents: They arrived in Boston in August 1893. I was born in Boston in December 1893. So I was conceived in Russia. They lived on the border of Russia and Poland, in a village that sometimes flew a Russian flag, and at other times a Polish flag. My parents were not only bi-lingual; besides English and Russian they also spoke a smattering of other Slavic tongues; plus Yiddish; Hebrew (the Latin of the Hebrews), and German. I was very fortunate in my parents. They had already become

atheists and socialists in Russia. The first thing my father did after coming to Boston was to look for a socialist group. He soon discovered there was a branch of the Socialist Labor Party in Boston, and he joined it. In fact, in those days the SLP was a genuine socialist party, and if they had continued with the same principles and policies, there would have been no reason to organize the WSP. It was not until nine years later that Daniel De Leon formulated his "Industrial Republic of Labor," in which the workers democratically will operate the factories — assuming there will be a working class in socialist society.

My father and mother were very vocal in expressing their views. He eventually opened a tobacco shop and my mother, especially, always talked socialism to the customers, while my father liked to expose the nonsense of religion. He was very well posted on the Bible and enjoyed quoting the Bible. It so happened the store was in an Irish Catholic neighborhood and my father had interesting discussions with the parish priest, who used to visit him often. My parents kept the store open on Jewish holidays, and on one occasion, the pious Jews (there were many Jews in the neighborhood) stoned the store and broke the windows. You can see I deserve no credit for being a socialist.

The socialists in Boston organized a socialist Sunday school in Boston around 1897. It lasted until 1906. One highlight of that Sunday school happened in 1906. After Moyer, Pettibone and Haywood were found guilty of killing the governor of Colorado, at the time of the famous strike against the Rockefellers, because of his brutality against the Federation of Miners and burning up their tents, the many labor unions throughout the USA organized demonstrations. In Boston, a monster parade was arranged in which all the labor unions participated. The socialist Sunday School was picked out to head the parade, and I was selected as chief marshal.

I will say my mother was more sound a socialist than my father. When the Socialist Party of America protested against the sectarians of the SLP, my father became a charter member of the new Socialist Party, joining in with Eugene Debs and Morris Hillquit. My mother disagreed with his action. Later, at the organization of the Communist Party in Boston, my father joined it, and again my mother disagreed with him. By that time, I was in WSP, and wrote her my own reactions. She agreed with me. An interesting incident: both Moses Baritz and Adolph Kohn met my parents in Boston. I was in Detroit and was happy to hear that news.

Here's my hand in comradeship and affection.

TUNE 1, 1977

[This letter also, like so many written in 1977, is rambling almost to the point of incoherence; I have included only a few excerpts from it. I remember how excited Rab was about those new Russian editions (referred to in the first paragraph).]

My dear Comrade Johnny Roberts:

As for socialist reading matter, every issue of the *WS* contains a list of valuable pamphlets and books. In addition, the next issue of the *WS*, due to be mailed next week, will contain a list of Marx and Engels pamphlets and books recently published in the USSR which, unlike earlier Soviet editions of these works, have not been tampered with. These editions are priced much lower than the same items published in England and the USA.

As for pamphlets and books written by me, I've been very remiss in that respect. One of my greatest regrets is that I didn't keep a diary. I'm the only charter member still in the Party. My memory is faulty and the history of the Party, including companion parties would be of great interest. As to writing, I've confined myself to articles and personal letters dealing with socialist principles and policies, and also "Letters to the Editors" of newspapers, magazines, and my Union journal.

A SAMPLE OF RAB'S WRITINGS

Rab's forte was as a speaker and a teacher, rather than as a writer. Nevertheless, he did leave a good number of published writings, and also some written to be published which for one reason or another never saw light. I have selected only a few for this publication. As with the Letters, these writings are presented in chronological order.

—*Karla Doris Rab*

From The Western Clarion, August 1918.

PROLETARIAN LOGIC

The starting point, or rather, the pivotal centre of our logic is the conception of the universe as being a oneness, a unity, an eternal, absolute truth, all embracing, infinite and unlimited. It is impossible to conceive of anything outside the universe. To attempt it would not only be useless, but folly. The parts composing the universe partake of its infinite nature, i.e., of existence. A mahogany chair has the characteristics of all chairs, regardless of where it is found, on earth or in the heavens above. Yet, at the same time, it is finite. The chair is built, wears, breaks and decays into other forms. We cannot know all there is to know about the mahogany chair. We can analyze and dissect it to the smallest particle, but still there is more to find out about it. However, we can know its classification and function. Though the intellect does not fathom all, yet it is true understanding. We know that it is a chair, not a bed or a table. Still further, we know it is a mahogany chair, not an oak or an ash. All things existing are attributes of the universe, each one being infinite and true but not the whole truth. They are all relatively true, i.e., parts of truth; but only the universe itself is the absolute truth — the whole truth. Within this absolute universe, everything is interrelated and in a process of change, e.g., the evolution of the earth from its original gaseous mass, unable to support life, to its present form with its “wonderful civilization.” The early materialists of the 19th Century strove at understanding by cause and effect. Dietzgen well illustrates the limitations of this theory by his example of the stone. When

we throw a stone in the water, ripples result. Were these ripples caused by the stone hitting the water? The elasticity of the water is just as much a cause, for were the stone to strike the ground, no ripples would result. But a knowledge of the general and particular nature of the water and the stone explained the phenomenon. By using the apparatus of the mind correctly, we come to understand that the world unity is multiform and all multiformity a unity. Dietzgen admirably states the proletarian character of modern logic in the concluding paragraph in the 11th of his 24 "Letters on Logic" to his son Eugene. Our logic, which has for its object the truth of the universe, is a science of universal understanding. It teaches that the interrelation of all things is truth and life, is the genuine, right, good and beautiful. All the sublime moving the heart of man, all the sweet stirrings in his breast, is the universal nature or universe. But the vexing question still remains. What about the negative, the ugly and the evil? What about error, pretense, standstill, disease, death and the devil? True, the world is vain, evil, ugly. But these are mere accidental phenomena, only forms and appendages of the world. Its eternity, truth, goodness and beauty is substantial, existing, positive. Its negative is like the darkness which serves to make the light more brilliant, so that it may overcome the dark and shine more brightly. The spokesmen of the ruling classes are not open to such a sublime optimism, because they have the pessimistic duty of perpetuating misery and servitude.

From The Socialist, 1929 (the second issue of that journal).

OUR PRACTICAL PROGRAM

What practical program do you fellows propose? What are your demands? Such comments have been made concerning our first issue.

A perusal of the contents of that number ought to have cleared away this confusion regarding our position. The similarity of the concluding statements of many of the articles is striking: "Whenever a majority of the workers understand and decide to do it — to establish Socialism." "The moral is obvious. UP WITH SOCIALIST EDUCATION." "Our immediate task is to arouse a Socialist understanding, to the end that we.. may .. establish Socialism." In a word, a Socialist revolution first must take place in the heads of the workers; then will follow the conquest of political power, overthrow of the capitalist system and the establishment of Socialism.

Certain characteristics distinguish the Socialist Revolution from all previous revolutions. For the first time has a social revolution become possible and necessary in the interests of the great bulk of the population, the working class. The revolution can not be rammed down the throats of the workers against their understanding or desire. A Socialist working class, conscious of its position in society, has no need for special program or blueprint plans. Whatever measures are dictated by the particular social forces then operating will be adopted by a Socialist proletariat. The socialization of production, together with the concentration of capital, has already laid the economic foundation for Socialism. Political ignorance, rather than the lack of schematic policies, is our major difficulty. "The best laid schemes o' mice and men Gang aft a-gley." Historic circumstances tear up plans and programs like so many scraps of paper.

Our "practical program," if you please, is clear and definite. It is predicated upon the scientific analysis of capitalist society. Let our Declaration of Principles shout it out from the housetops: — "The working class must organize CONSCIOUSLY and POLITICALLY for the conquest of the powers of government."

In order that we may the more readily see the limitations of practical programs, let us briefly review such measures as are advocated by the alleged Socialist organizations.

1. The so-called Socialist Party of America is not a Socialist organization. Even the cloak of Socialist appearances was shed at their last convention,

when the clause subscribing to belief in the class struggle was dropped from their application for membership form. Their capitalistic character was brazenly flaunted during the mayoralty campaign just ended in New York City . . . We found Norman Thomas urging (comrade) La Guardia, Republican, to quit in his favor because of their "unity of purpose." (*New Leader*, Nov. 19, 1929.) Need more be said? Thus we see the pitiable consequences of thirty years of the "practical" policies of that most practical S. P. of A.

2. Not to lag behind their foster-mother, the Workers (Communist) Party exceeded the S. P. of A.'s most fantastic antics by proposing 102 demands in the last presidential campaign. So involved was their practical program that it required 64 pages, "The Platform of the Class Struggle," to state these demands. A little comment on but a few of these "revolutionary" gems will serve as an object lesson in the pitfalls of a "practical program." Of course, one must bear in mind that every Tuesday and Friday calls for a new line of action by the Communist Party. It gets one dizzy trying to keep pace with their constant appearance of seeming to shift positions.

(a) On page 21 we find demanded the "immediate enactment of a Federal law . . . for a . . . forty hour, five day week . . . and forbidding all overtime." As the industrial process increases the productivity of the workers, the masters see to it that the working time is reduced. It requires not the demands of the C.P., but the needs of capitalism for the inauguration of shorter hours with, incidentally, fewer workers. This is a measure that helps capitalism run more smoothly, and is a favorite palliative of capitalist reformers. Observe Ford and Hoover.

(b) On page 24, we must "struggle against the speed up system." Just as reactionary was the resistance of the cotton workers in England to the introduction of machinery, and their smashing of the machines.

(c) It is further demanded, on page 40, that an independent, federated Labor Party, composed of trade unions and labor organizations, be formed. This measure does not support the working class. A political party is an expression of class interests. The varying programs of the different units composing this proposed federation are inimical to Socialism. There can be no unity of policy based upon such a hodgepodge. Unity can only be based on a common understanding of the need for Socialism. A revolutionary scientific, working-class party is hostile to all parties which serve to deceive and side-track the workers.

(d) Another pearl of wisdom appears on page 45. Here is demanded the abolition of all indirect taxes. The Communist Party does not tire of demanding. Unless you have power to enforce them, demands are meaningless verbiage. Inasmuch as the working class does not pay taxes, whose battle is the Communist Party fighting, anyhow? Their program is not based upon working-class interests, but, like that of their foster-mother, of disreputable memory, suits the needs of the petty, cockroach capitalist.

(e) On page 48 is demanded a 5 year moratorium on farm mortgage debts, including debts on chattels (and farm hands, too, I suppose). The working class, of course, is "burdened" with mortgages!

But why continue with these demands ad nauseam, such as "propaganda against alcoholism," "fixing of low rents" (presumably so that wages may be reduced). Remember, there are 102 demands by these practical people. If all this activity resulted in the arousing of revolutionary understanding there might be some justification, but sorry experience has shown that it only results in apathy because of the false hopes raised, then dashed.

3. We are now confronted with Cinderella, the neglected twin sister of the Communist Party, i.e., the Proletarian Party, "more communist than the Communists," which has discovered that the Soviet is the transitional form of the proletarian state! (*The Proletarian*, p. 10, Jan. 1926) A Soviet is merely a council. Applicable to the historic circumstances of developing Russian capitalism though it may be, no evidence is forthcoming that, in highly developed countries like England, U.S. and Germany, such special machinery will be needed to accomplish the proletarian revolution.

The Proletarian Party, too, has a "practical" program. They "call for the unfaltering support of the class-conscious workers everywhere" to "the movement of Anti-Imperialism among the backward nations," because they "fight ... the Imperial Capitalist Class." A travesty on Marxism, indeed. The class conscious workers, everywhere, have nothing in common with the nationalistic struggles of backward nations. What lies behind the developing national consciousness of China, India, Nicaragua, Arabia? — the economic interests of different sections of the bourgeoisie. Countries like China, India and the rest, are blossoming out into capitalist countries on their own hook. No longer are they merely sources of raw materials and markets for the disposal of commodities.

The newly rising bourgeoisie in such backward countries find the ideological expression of their economic and political needs in movements of nationalism. They are anti-imperialist only whilst being choked by the capitalist imperialism of England, the U.S., and the rest of the great powers. They aim at monopolizing for themselves the natural resources and the opportunities for profit by exploiting the workers of their respective countries. A pity it is that such befuddlers should seek to enlighten the workers on Socialism.

4. Finally, we have the Socialist Labor Party. In their letter, "The Socialist Labor Party and War," addressed to the parties affiliated with the "Socialist International Bureau," is stated officially their practical program: — "Not a 'general strike' of the workers but a 'general lockout' of the Capitalist Class is our slogan. And this can ONLY be done by organizing the workers, industrially, to take and hold the means of production." Of course, "only" eliminates any other means. On page 10, of the SLP Manifesto of 1921 is stated flatly: — "the MIGHT of the Working Class lies on the economic field AND THERE ALONE" (emphasis theirs). The lip service the SLP have always paid to what they term the "political arm of labor" is seen here in its true colors. A study of history will show that control of economic resources is only made secure by control of the State. For example, with all their economic influence the rising capitalist class in France and England were economically and politically shackled by feudalism and the absolute monarchy. It was necessary for them to achieve political supremacy in order to make secure and extend their economic power, as the French bourgeoisie did in the French Revolution. It is impossible for the working class to take and hold industry as long as the state is in the hands of the capitalist class. All the industrial unions in the world are powerless in face of the armed forces of the modern states with their machine guns, bombing planes and poison gas. Moreover, this power is placed in the hands of the capitalist class by the workers themselves. To expect these workers to do two diametrically opposite things simultaneously, is going it a bit too strong.

On the economic side the working class is weak. They are propertyless. They own nothing but their ability to work, which they must sell to the capitalist class in order to live. The objectives of a union are confined to questions of hours, wages and conditions, problems within the four walls of capitalism. A union, regardless of type, to be effective today must depend primarily on numbers rather than understanding. Ever

changing productive methods as well as the continuous introduction of new industries, make unions powerless to cope with even their immediate problems. Their view that the industrial union is the ONLY means of taking and holding industry, is but the pipe dream of the SLP

In the light of this review, it should be apparent that our concern is not what "practical" measures to advocate. The Declaration of Principles on the last page states our position. Our task at the moment is to carry on the work of socialist education. The capitalists rule today because the workers sanction and uphold the existing form of property relationships. "The possessing class rules directly through universal suffrage. For as long as the oppressed class, in this case the proletariat, is not ripe for its economic emancipation, just so long will its majority regard the existing order of society as the only one possible ... On the day when the thermometer of universal suffrage reaches its boiling point among the laborers, they as well as the capitalists will know what to do." (Engels, *Origin of the Family*, p. 211.)

This article appeared in the June 1953 Forum, an internal discussion journal published by the SPGB, though companion party members frequently contributed to it. In 1961 it ceased publication for lack of submissions.

REQUIREMENTS FOR MEMBERSHIP

What should be the minimum requirements for membership of a Socialist Party? They should be broad enough to include all who are Socialists. There is no justification for barring Socialists from membership. They should be narrow enough to exclude all who are not Socialists.

Since the criterion for membership is based on whether an applicant is a Socialist or not, it becomes necessary to define what is a socialist.

Broadly speaking, a Socialist is one who understands that Capitalism can no longer be reformed or administered in the interests of the working class or of society; that Capitalism is incapable of eliminating its inherent problems of poverty, wars, crises, etc.; and that Socialism offers the solutions for the social problems besetting mankind, since the material developments, with the single exception of an aroused Socialist majority, are now ripe for the inauguration of Socialism.

This is the Socialist case. It is not difficult to grasp. Membership in a Socialist organization does not require being erudite pundits or profound students. There is a unity of agreement among us that the above is the minimum requirement of being a Socialist.

However, there is a justifiable fear that there is a danger that we may open the doors to confused "Socialists," non-Socialists, or even anti-Socialists. This fear exists because a Socialist party is democratically controlled by its membership. An influx of such elements could transform a genuine Socialist party into its opposite. Therefore, we must summarize the barest minimum of Socialist principles upon which all Socialists agree and upon which there is no compromise. The principles that weld us together with a unity of views may be stated as follows:

SOCIALIST PRINCIPLES

Socialism has three aspects, viz., a science, a movement, and a system of society.

As a science, it is materialistic. It recognizes that everything in existence is interrelated and in a constant process of change. (In a very real sense, it might even be considered that Socialism is the science that integrates all

branches of science into a correlated whole.) Specifically, it explains social evolution and, more particularly, the nature of Capitalist society.

As a movement, its very essence is to exert all its efforts to arouse the working class and all others to become Socialists so that the majority become conscious of their interests and institute Socialism. The Socialist revolution is majority, conscious, and political. Such a revolution is inherently democratic.

As a system of society, it may be concisely described as a social relationship where the interests of every member of society and society as a whole are in harmony; where everyone cooperates by giving according to his abilities and receiving according to his needs.

On these Socialist principles, there is no compromise. On these Socialist generalizations, it might be said we are dogmatic. Our dogmatism applies to processes and scientific analyses. (On the other hand, we do not have any authoritarian dogmas or creeds. See E.W.'s splendid comments on the Bolshevik behavior, in this respect, in the April 1953 *Socialist Standard*.)

Further, we do not compromise with the Capitalist system. We oppose it and are organized to get rid of it. Nor do we compromise in our defense of the Socialist case and Socialist principles.

Finally, the above Socialist summary is what distinguishes us from all other parties claiming to be Socialist. No other party, outside the companion parties for Socialism, holds these views. That is why it is unlikely that there would be two Socialist parties in any one country. Should another Socialist organization appear on the scene, steps would be taken to merge — we are not engaged in a rivalry to emancipate the workers.

THE SOCIALIST ATTITUDE

The Socialist attitude should be one of constantly re-examining our position and activities, especially in the light of unfolding events. *Forum* is a healthy and sound demonstration of such a Socialist attitude. It is a valuable asset in illustrating the fact that thinking is not a violation of Socialist discipline. Socialists must not be afraid to think or express opinions lest they be brought up on charges. To those who view the companion parties as being rigid sectarians, *Forum* is a living refutation. In a socialist party there is plenty of room for differences of opinions.

Whilst it might be said that Socialists are dogmatic, in the scientific sense, on fundamental Socialist principles, i.e., on generalizations and processes, they should not be dogmatic on specific details. We are on solid ground as long as we confine ourselves to scientific analyses of processes. The moment we become specific in telling history what it must do, what it can only do, etc., history can make liars out of us. Speculations are useful and interesting but not fundamental. Also, we can be sadly mistaken in laying down formulas to be adhered to for all types of problems and situations. Witness the quarrel in *Forum* regarding the printers' union (strike-censorship issues).

Illustrative of my point is A. Turner's article in the March issue. It does not take much imagination to hear some rumbling that Comrade Turner has "repudiated" the class struggle and should be brought up for charges. Can anyone argue that the Socialist revolution is in the interest of all mankind, including the Capitalists? We become dogmatic (in the Bolshevik-Catholic sense of authoritarian dogma) to consider Turner's viewpoint as anti-Socialist.

Still more effective illustration is the article in the April 1953 *Forum* suggesting (horror of horrors) a "revolutionary" revamping of our Declaration of Principles. Comrades can hold such views and still be members of a Socialist party; for, are they not Socialists?

One additional word regarding what is a Socialist. He is not only one who understands and agrees with the Socialist case *but also does something about it.*

From The Socialist Standard, August 1954.

A ROSE BY ANY OTHER NAME

We are all “socialists” now. Let us witness the parade: The Churchill Tory socialists, the French Radical Socialists, the totalitarian “socialist” governments including the black, brown and red shirts, the New-Deal-Fair-Deal creeping “socialists,” the Labour Parties of Europe, the Asiatic “socialist” and “communist” governments as well as those in Africa and South America, the colonial “socialist” groups, the various alleged socialist organisations throughout the world such as the Social Democrats, Trotzkyites, the Communists parties, syndicalists, I.W.W., Socialist Labour Party and the Companion Parties for Socialism in Great Britain, Ireland, Canada, U.S.A., Australia and New Zealand. Then there are the anarchists, Christian “socialists,” pacifists and a whole host of others. By no means have we exhausted the list of marchers in the “socialist” parade.

No wonder M. Rubel in his dilemma: “The Uses of the Word ‘Socialism’” in the Winter 1954 issue of the American magazine *Dissent*, would prefer “to abandon the word socialism” and would substitute some other word for it that would “save the conceptual content once attached to this term.”

It is significant of the times we live in to see every stratum of society and the entire gamut of conflicting and opposing interests express themselves in terms of socialism. They must in order to rally support. Even though socialism is NOT accepted by the world, it has become recognized and established as the hope of mankind.

M. Rubel describes very well the general nature of socialism that stirs and inspires everyone: “A society from which exploitation would be banished and in which the unfolding of each individual would be the condition of the freedom of all.” This is the basic appeal of socialism as an ultimate objective which serves as a rallying cry to muster support for the various groups marching in the parade of “socialism.”

Let us suppose that some other word came into use to express the very essence of socialism, its “conceptual content.” This new word would then be subjected to the very same difficulties. The old word “socialism” would lose its meaning and significance. The new word would become abused in the same manner as the old one. Changing the name would not solve any problem for it doesn’t come to grips with the real situation.

Rab wrote this obituary for Fred Jacobs, which was printed in the Western Socialist for Sept-Oct 1958.

FRED TACQBS

Word has just been received of the death of Comrade Fred Jacobs in San Leandro, California, on August 30, 1958. He was about 77 years old.

He was first and foremost, a rebel against capitalism. In the days before World War I, he was a Wobbly (IWW). Comrade Jacobs knew the experience of having his head bashed by police clubs during an antiwar demonstration in Boston, in 1919, in the name of "democracy." Ironically, this same police force, two years later, went on strike in the famous Boston Police Strike. Many of these police strikers learned invaluable lessons on the nature of the Class Struggle and the function of the State. Only a meager handful were ever rehired, on the grounds that the police never have the right to strike against the government.

Having arrived at a socialist understanding, Comrade Jacobs did yeoman pioneer work in the difficult job of laying down the groundwork for the organization of a Boston Local, WSP. He cooperated in getting classes going, in carrying on street meetings, arranging propaganda meetings and debates and making our views known during the period of 1922-1929. Comrade Jacobs's steadfast devotion to socialist activity in these trying circumstances is a great inspiration to all socialists.

In the late '20s — in the absence of a Boston Local — he joined up with some New York comrades who adhered to our principles (the Socialist Education Society). Closer contact with New York comrades speeded up the organization of Boston local and the reorganization of the Workers' Socialist Party. In 1929, the persistent socialist work that was carried on by Comrade Jacobs and others took root and a Boston local finally appeared on the scene. It wasn't long before Detroit comrades organized a local so that the first convention of the reorganized WSP was held in New York City on December 13, 1931.

The birthplace of Local Boston was in Comrade Jacobs's picture frame store. He served as its first secretary. His store had often served as the meeting place for propaganda activities during the years.

Comrade Jacobs's forte in Local Boston was ever that of the unsung hero: routine work, taking care of literature, street meeting stands, all kinds of assignments, arranging for halls, committee work, etc. He was self-

effacing. He rarely missed a Party activity. He was no public speaker nor was he very vocal at party meetings. But, when he did speak, everyone listened, for he had the rare faculty of only speaking when he had something to say and he made his comments brief.

He wrote occasional articles for the *WS*, which were usually written in a simple style and dealt with basic problems and experiences of workers.

He loved to paint. He was usually seen at Party outings with his easel, canvas and brushes. Many of his canvases were auctioned off for Party funds. About ten years ago, he had to move to California to live with his sister on account of advancing age and poor health. His socialist interest did not lag, by any means. He kept in touch with the California comrades and visited the comrades in San Francisco whenever he had an opportunity. He kept hounding the NAC to get out leaflets. To him, the written word was of paramount importance. In this connection, he was never known to go out without having old copies of the *WS* to hand out to pedestrians, on street cars and in subways, or wherever he met workers.

We extend our sympathies to his sister and brother. Comrade Jacobs will be missed.

IS LABOR THE CAUSE OF INFLATION?

Union Bulletin

Vol. LII, No. 11

September 1959

The balance sheet of United States Steel for the past year is very revealing. It shows that in the 1958 - 1959 period the company made a profit of \$4.345 per man-hour for every worker on the payroll. This indicates that \$2.28 for every man-hour worked during this period has gone into the treasury of the steel trust. This is the best financial report in the history of this giant corporation. The next best was in the previous year when \$3.047 per employee was garnered by the trust.

Yet the company harps upon the subject of "labor inflation." They produce phony figures to show that high wages are the main cause of inflation. A study of economics shows that wage increases, instead of being the cause of price increases, are a belated response on the part of the workers to catch up with the soaring costs of the needs of life.

A spokesman for U.S. Steel told the press: "We don't mind paying higher wages if the labor we buy for the wages is improved and increased." What a generous public-spirited character this fellow is. He is saying that if you contribute another dollar to the take, they'll gladly refund you an extra 25^.

Right now, there is a drive by Big Business to destroy unions. For the past two years, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Fortune*, *U.S. News and World Report*, *Business Week* and others have been reporting on a series of conferences by representatives of steel, oil, rubber, automobiles, electric manufacturing, railroads and others, including publishers, about reducing labor to the status of mere adjuncts of the big companies. The general opinion of these worthies is that unions are flying too high and must have their wings clipped.

Steel, being one of the largest and most powerful, was selected to make the test.

In the present strike, the steel workers are as well equipped as a union can be to put up a fight. They have a healthy treasury, enthusiastic members, and have been promised financial support by other unions. They are engaged in a test of strength. They are fighting our battles as well as their own. Our sympathies are with the steel workers out on strike — the only weapon we have, when the chips are down.

In this concerted drive by capital to smash unions, we must keep our heads clear. We should not fall victims of the propaganda that the danger to our economy is the selfishness of labor who, by their greed and feather bedding, cause the inflationary spiral of higher prices.

Rab, Record-American Chapel

This article appeared in the March 1960 Forum (Vol. 2, No. 5).

IS THERE ROOM FOR DIFFERENCES OF OPINION IN A SOCIALIST PARTY?

First of all, let me emphasize that “opinion” and “principles” are not synonyms. By “principles” I refer to the acceptance of the Declaration of Principles as a satisfactory generalisation of the socialist case. There are certain socialist principles upon which we do not compromise, especially in light of unfolding events.

Our organisations are democratic, i.e., controlled by the membership. Therefore, it is essential that the membership be socialist. In *Forum*, June 1953, I defined a socialist as:

Broadly speaking, a socialist is one who understands that capitalism can no longer be reformed or administered in the interest of the working class or of society; that capitalism is incapable of eliminating its inherent problems of poverty, wars, crises, etc.; and that socialism offers the solutions to the social problems besetting mankind, since the material conditions, with the single exception of an aroused socialist majority, are now ripe for the inauguration of socialism.

The emphasis of socialists is on our common agreements. There are relatively few items on which we take an uncompromising position. All the companion parties stand together — as one — on such questions as: the conscious, majority, political nature of the socialist revolution; the materialist nature of existence; the Materialist Conception of history and the generalisations of Marxian political economy; the resulting implications of the above on such issues as leadership, reformism and religion; and on socialism, as a system of society.

The difficulty comes in frequently raising an opinion to the stature of a principle. In contrast to principles, relatively few in number, there are innumerable matters upon which socialists may have all kinds of opinions. Opinions may be formed regarding: speculations on details of the future; events and factors in the current scene; attitudes on any number of things; even conflicting anticipations projecting detailed workings of a socialist society.

One of the most abused words in the socialists’ vocabulary is “position.” We do have positions on principles but, unfortunately, the word “posi-

tion" loses its significance when applied in an absolute and arbitrary sense to any and all situations and problems. For sake of illustration, here are a few "opinions" that are not "principles" or "positions":

"Socialism will come in our lifetime."

"Socialism is a long time in the future."

"Hydrogen bombs make actual military wars unfeasible for capitalism."

"Trade Unions, today, work against the interests of the working class."

Alas, how can we take a "position" on the disagreements among physicists, biologists, medicine, etc.? (We do have a position on materialism. We clash with scientists who are opposed to materialism.)

It is to be doubted that every single comrade sees eye-to-eye on all phases of socialist problems with his fellow members. *Forum*, the internal party journal of the S.P.G.B. itself, is an excellent demonstration that there is room for differences of opinion within a socialist party.

The autonomy of several companion parties reflects the recognition of this understanding (aside from the fact of national problems of each party). For example: Would it be anti-socialist or unprincipled to allow authorities, having something to contribute in their specialised field, such as mathematics, Africa, art criticism, or whatnot, to speak at a party meeting, provided that we tied it up with socialism? Not all the parties agree on this procedure. Was it a violation of socialist principles when *The Western Socialist* published valuable socialist articles by non-members of the party? (Incidentally, experience has convinced me that we should have made it quite clear the writers were not members and were not speaking for the party.) Those items are matters of opinion and not of principles.

It is very pertinent to observe that, over the years, the many conferences and referenda of the companion parties have made many changes in policies and procedures (some well-advised and some ill-advised). They all were, in the main, matters of opinion, were they not?

An unailing guide to distinguish between opinions and principles is to bear in mind: socialist principles deal with processes and generalisations, whereas, usually, opinions deal with specifics and details. We may be sadly mistaken on particulars but are on invincible grounds on the generalisations of socialism, which are based on scientific analyses and are not blueprints.

Members should not fear to express opinions or to speak out lest there be dire consequences. We must avoid an atmosphere that discourages reexamining and questioning. We should bend over backwards to gain and retain members, leaving wide room for individual differences. We should be narrow enough to exclude all who are not socialists yet broad enough to embrace everyone who is.

It is understood that a representative of the party speaking under party auspices states the party case and that he makes it clear whenever he expresses his own personal opinion.

Rab, W.S.P

(This is not a new question, by any means, but it is an important matter to thrash out. Your comments are eagerly awaited. Those interested may reply through the columns of *Forum* or by writing me personally at 62 Woodcliff Road, Newton Highlands 61, Mass., U.S.A.)

From The Western Socialist, No. 5—1962

A LETTER NOT FIT TO PRINT

Letters to the Editor,
N. Y. Times,

THE ANGRY RESERVISTS

Such is the title of your lead editorial for August 8, 1962. In its context you bemoan the fact that:

“The bitter complaints and generalized recriminations by many metropolitan Army reservists now returning to civilian life after active duty during the Berlin crisis are now deeply disquieting.”

Their sergeants, you contend, are concerned about a “lack of realism, a self-centered arrogance, a blindness to the dangers of the cold war and to their duties as citizens.” You are disturbed because “some reservists promise ‘revenge’ at the polls in November.”

You go on to emphasize that the reservists should be concerned about the “real worry that Mr. Khrushchev’s attack upon a free Berlin and our legitimate interests (that) might lead to war.”

And you conclude with the admonition about

“The Wall across the city with its bitter reminder of imprisoned millions of broken lives and divided families and the sidewalk monuments to those who have died simply in the search for freedom.”

In my view, it is indeed encouraging that many reservists did NOT confine their gripes to the typical complaints against “leadership, training, equipment and duties.” You do not object, of course, to this sort of complaint but see it as “disheartening” (that) many of the men went far beyond . . . to condemn all and sundry for their call-up, to characterize the Berlin crisis as ‘Kennedy-manufactured’ with a purpose to ‘impress the public.’”

With the march of time and the unfolding of events, it is becoming increasingly evident that the Russian and American imperialists both tell the truth — when they condemn one another. One has to be blind indeed, not to see that the present cold war (and tomorrow’s hot one) is over conflicting “legitimate” economic and social interests, which have nothing to do with differences in ideologies about the “Free World and

Democracy” or “Totalitarian Communism.” The United States is not a democracy, nor is Russia communist.

There are two questions your readers might ponder:

1. In the following statements which country is being described? (A) It is necessary to marshal our forces because of direct and present threats. (B) We must take every step possible that will serve as a deterrent to the outbreak of war. (C) We are continuously being harassed by the enemy.
2. Where does this situation not exist? Constant reminders of broken homes and divided families and fears of expressing unpopular views because of fears arising from insecurity.

Your “angry reservists” are actually to be commended, even if they are not entirely clear in how they fix the blame for their predicament. Old Abe Lincoln was right. “You can fool some of the people all of the time; all of the people some of the time; but you can’t fool all of the people all of the time.” The time will come when the real enemy — world-wide capitalism — will be recognized and abolished.

Irving Robbins,
Boston, Mass.

From The Western Socialist, No. 5—1962.

OBITUARY FOR MANLIO REFFI

It is with a feeling of deep sadness that we record the passing of Manlio Reffi in Boston on August 26, 1962, at the age of 65. Reffi, the only name by which he was known during our long association with him, was not a member of the World Socialist Party, nor could he be said to be in agreement with all of our attitudes and aims. Yet Reffi cheerfully contributed prodigious efforts on our behalf during the years since October of 1939 when the *Western Socialist* was moved from Winnipeg to Boston. For this old-time linotype operator and all-around printer supervised the printing of our journal, giving of his knowledge and abilities far beyond the call of his professional duties. If *The Western Socialist* has maintained a high standard for such journals, if it has indeed improved through the years in appearance and in lay-out, much of the credit must go to Reffi. He knew his job and performed it well — in fact he regarded good workmanship as essential to life.

Not that Reffi always followed the old bromide “Shoemaker, stick to your last.” He has been known to intervene, on his own, in the alteration of a title or the change of a word. Whenever challenged on this, he would reply: “Every good printer has the right to interfere in such matters when he feels it is for the good of the journal.” He understood what our writers wished to convey, he sympathized with us and shared with us the satisfaction of seeing each new issue born — the satisfaction, he would say, that a mother must feel on the birth of a baby. All of us who knew him will miss him.

From The Western Socialist, No.1 — 1967.

A NEW APPROACH TO CRIME

The *Washington Post*, Sept. 11, 1965, editorially chided President Johnson for “permitting his enthusiasm to run away with his judgment (in his pledge) not only to reduce crime but to banish it.” We must have a “new approach to crime,” wrote the editor. And he quite properly pointed out that:

Crime is not committed in a vacuum. It is only a product of the environment which this generation and its predecessors have created. The crime commissions are likely, therefore, to find themselves *wrestling* (our emphasis) with the basic social problems of the age.

One would assume, then, that “the new approach to crime” would wrestle with “the basic social problems of the age.” Modern society is a class society, where the ownership of the wealth produced by the vast portion of the population (the working class) belongs to (is the *property* of) the relatively few owners of the means of wealth production (the capitalist class). We live in a property society whether it be privately or state owned. The *sanctity* of property rights is the holy of holies. Basically, crime consists in violations of these property relationships in their many and various aspects. (An exception can be made for the relatively few pathological “crimes.”) Possibly the classic treatment (in the scientific sense) of crime can be seen in Bonger’s *Criminality and Economic Conditions*:

While most authors who have published studies upon the question have thought it unnecessary to give an exposition of the economic system in which we live, or perhaps have given a little attention to it along with other social conditions, I shall begin by setting forth the present economic system “as that upon which the other parts of the social life rest.” These I shall treat in their turn in so far as they are connected with criminality ... Then I shall investigate the question of how far criminality, under its different forms, is the consequence of the condition we have found. (page 246)*

In a particularly interesting observation, Bonger stated that “the theory of Marx and Engels results in our having a method of investigation

* The American Institute of Criminal Law and Criminology commissioned the noted criminologist, Professor William Adrien Bonger of Amsterdam, Netherlands to make a definitive study. The work was published by Little, Brown & Co. 1916.

already marked out." His detailed, documented study ranged over the entire field of specific crimes. It would take a column of this journal just to list the various categories he analyzes. Of special interest to our readers would be his observation on militarism:

But the army serves not only to act against the foreigner, it has equally a domestic duty to fulfill. In the cases where the police cannot maintain order the army reinforces them. The army most especially is active at the time of great strikes, when so-called free labor is to be protected, that is, when employers are trying to replace the striking workmen with others who, in consequence of their poverty, or their lack of organization, put their personal interests above that of their comrades.

Our present militarism is, therefore, a consequence of capitalism. The double duty of the army proves it; for its function is to furnish the bourgeoisie with the means of restricting the proletariat at home, and of repulsing or attacking the forces of foreign countries. (p. 375)

A "NEW" APPROACH?

In the name of a "new" approach, the *Washington Post* editor trots out the old, discredited theory that no one "can be seriously expected to devise means of correcting all the deficiencies in human nature that lead to violations of the law." Just what does he mean by deficiencies? "Greed," "selfishness," devil-take-the hindmost "callousness," "criminality," "brutality," and other "sins"? These are but descriptions of human behavior. Given class relations and property interests, such behaviors are the consequences. In a dog-eat-dog society, dog-eat-dog behavior results.

No responsible criminologist any longer gives credence to the theory that "criminal types" are responsible for violations of the law. "Human nature" and "human behavior" are not synonymous terms. "Human nature" refers to the biological nature of man. We inherit human characteristics, such as our highly developed thinking apparatus and our gregariousness, etc., which distinguish us from our ancestors in the animal kingdom. Humans do have "instincts" (unconditioned responses) triggered by physiological, unconditioned stimuli. Such instincts as rage, fear, love are traceable to biological evolution. These physiological emotions are transmitted through the genes in our chromosomes. However, there are *no* hereditary carriers of moral concepts or ethical values. These can only be acquired in our environment. The things that enrage us, the situations we fear, our loves, etc. are conditioned in our environ-

ments. Our concepts are obtained in the world in which we live. Human behavior is the product of the milieu to which we are exposed. To project human nature as the cause for the violation of laws is to forget that laws are man-made and are constantly subjected to changes and amendments in response to changing requirements in society.



The editorial urges the President to “convert the idea of punishment into the protection of society and the rehabilitation of the offending individuals.” Protection of whose society? Present-day society is governed by a ruling class whose interests are in conflict with the vast portion of the population. In fact, capitalist society is typified by conflicts of interest on every level. Inherent to such a society is the need for punishing offenders of those in power. To quote Bonger: A crime

is an act prejudicial to the interests of those who have the power at their command ... Power, then, is the necessary condition for those who wish to class a certain act as a crime. (p. 379)

And to compound the confusion, what is meant by “rehabilitation”? Rehabilitation to insecurity, frustration, fears of poverty, etc. which confront all sectors of society? To a world in which success is measured by your cash resources? How you get it is unimportant, providing you do it legally or don't get caught.

Finally, truth will out. Even the *Washington Post* must recognize it. This same editorial acknowledges: “*Crime is not committed in a vacuum. It is the product of the environment which this generation and its predecessors have created.*”

Yet the editor advised the President that we cannot *banish* crime on account of “human nature.” Socialists do not rely on either the President or the *Washington Post* to banish crime. That task is ours, the workers of the world.

— RAB

This was written in 1974. It is noted in the WSP Conference Report for 1974: "With reference to Com. I. Rab's Introduction to Keracher's How the Gods Were Made, the Editorial Committee hopes that this pamphlet will be issued as a party publication. Negotiations are now in progress [with the Kerr Company] with the goal of purchasing 2,500 copies of our own edition." However, it was never published prior to its inclusion in this book. (I do not know whether the problem was lack of NAC approval, or some other cause, such as that it is much longer than what had been asked for.)

AN INTRODUCTION TO TOHN KERACHER'S

HOW THE GODS WERE MADE

John Keracher was born in Scotland in 1880. He spent the early years of his adulthood in England, where he was exposed to the ideas of the Social Democratic Federation. Thus, his entry into the Detroit Local of the Socialist Party of America in 1910, soon after his arrival in the United States in 1909, was a natural outgrowth of his background.

As a human being, Keracher was full of lively wit and good nature; his calm manner went unruffled by obstreperous opponents, critics, and hecklers. I can readily attest from personal experience that to those seeking personal advice or enlightenment on socialism, he was like an oasis in the desert, a quenching cactus. He was uncompromising in his principles but refrained from *ad hominem* attacks, and confined himself to the issues as he saw them. He relied on the logic of his arguments to counter critics.

Throughout both periods of his career, as identified later, Keracher always retained the same admirable qualities — both with me and with others, alike when we agreed and when we disagreed. In addition, he was an outstanding organizer, lecturer, and writer; and one always willing to do his share of the "Jimmie Higgins" tasks.

This introduction to the 2nd edition of *How the Gods Were Made* describes his valuable participation in the American socialist movement until his death in Los Angeles in 1958.



It is significant and encouraging that the demand for Keracher's pamphlet *How the Gods Were Made* necessitates a new edition. Its great merit lies in its presentation, in clear and understandable language, of the evo-

lution of the idea of God in its basic essentials as well as of its role in modern society.

For years there has raged a continuing controversy between two schools of socialist thought on the significance of religion. One school would avoid any discussion of religion as though it were a plague, insisting that religion is a private matter for every individual to decide for himself. It holds that any other view only antagonizes prospective socialists and keeps them from joining the socialist movement. The other school maintains that religion is a matter of social import, both practically and theoretically.

In *How the Gods Were Made*, Keracher demonstrates that religious beliefs, in any of their forms, are incompatible with an understanding of socialism, both as a science and as a movement.

The apologists for outworn religious superstitions emphasize that religion is, primarily, concerned with moral and ethical principles. But, despite these nebulous explanations, it cannot be denied that the essence of all religions is the service and worship of God or the supernatural. Actually, man made God in his own image, in spite of the contention of religionists that the reverse is the case. No longer can religion be justified on its own terms.

It is true that there are many gaps in our knowledge, but whenever we get answers they always prove to be physical, material ones. This applies to the social sciences, including morals and ethics, as well as all other branches of science. Science has made tremendous advances in the last hundred years. It might be said that as our knowledge and understanding have advanced, religion has retreated.

The growth during the '60s and the '70s of mysticism, new religions, "Jesus Freaks," etc. only reflects the sad plight of living in capitalist society and the resultant search for happiness by psychological adjustments to the immediate environment.

Keracher shows how religion diverts workers from realizing their primary class interest: to get rid of the wage-slavery of capitalism, and to inaugurate socialism, which is practical and necessary here and now. Quite relevant is the old "Wobbly" song:

You will eat bye and bye,
In that glorious land in the sky.
Work and pray, live on hay,
You'll get pie in the sky when you die."

Socialists do not go out of their way to attack and kill gods. They are not professional Atheists but rather, atheists in the scientific sense. At one time in history, because of man's lack of knowledge, religious explanations of natural phenomena were the only possible ones. Today, the Materialist Conception of History together with modern science points up the fallacies of religion, as Keracher amply demonstrates.

How did Keracher become involved with the necessity of exposing the dangerous illusions of religion? The answer is best found in his own introduction to this pamphlet. More generally, the following background describes the nature of his long political activity.



Detroit became a boom town from the years 1910 to 1918. Because of the growing automobile and other industries, it attracted hosts of workers seeking "good-paying" jobs. An added stimulus was the advent of World War I, with its cost-plus government contracts for heavy and light military supplies.

Among the influx of workers to Detroit were Canadian socialists from across the border, who had been active in carrying on socialist work. They were soon followed by Canadian and British "slackers" running away from British conscription.

Contemporaneously, the Detroit Local, SPA, was involved in a bitter internal controversy between the large majority of "socialist" reformers and the small minority of socialist revolutionists opposing the principles and policies of the Michigan Socialist Party. Most conspicuous in this dispute was Comrade Keracher on the side of the Socialist Revolutionists.

Two other factors existed at this time: the publication by the Kerr Cooperative Publishers of (a) their *International Socialist Review* with its many Marxist articles and (b) the Marxian classics and other pamphlets. They served a useful purpose in stimulating the reading of meaningful socialist literature. Subsequently, when the Proletarian Party purchased the Kerr Company for the purpose of perpetuating the supply of socialist literature, Keracher, in turn, made an excellent administrator and a valuable contributor.

The combination of these circumstances led to the establishment of a noteworthy Marxian study class in Duffield Hall — a highlight of the period. Comrades Moses Baritz and Adolph Kohn of the Socialist Party

of Great Britain were the instructors, with Keracher playing a leading role in this class by enlarging it to include debates and lectures. The class proved invaluable in spreading an understanding of Marxian science and the validity of the principles of the SPGB.

In July 1916, 43 members of the study class, including 19 members of Local Detroit, SPA, of whom this writer was one, decided it was time to organize a genuine socialist party in the United States along the lines of the SPGB. The Workers' Socialist Party of the United States resulted. Worthy of note is that Keracher defended the members of the new party who were being heatedly criticized for resigning by members of the Detroit Local, SPA.

By this time, Keracher had become state secretary of the Socialist Party of Michigan. He was deeply involved in advocating that the next state convention of that party supplant reforms to patch up capitalism with a plank for revolutionary socialism. He also urged that the Party's position on religion be changed from being considered as a private matter to one of social concern. He and his supporters were successful in changing the constitution of the Socialist Party of Michigan to conform with basic socialist objectives. At the time, this was a bombshell!

Under these circumstances, it was understandable that he was unable to participate in the organization of The Workers' Socialist Party. Whilst recognizing the need for a new genuine socialist party, he was unable to join it. Instead, conditions being what they were, he, together with the socialists remaining in the SPA in Michigan, organized an educational group within the Party to disseminate socialist ideas. Thus was born the Proletarian University, soon followed (in May 1918) by its publication *The Proletarian*, which was in harmony with SPGB principles.

In the columns of *The Proletarian* could be found articles by Kohn (signed John O'London) and one by this writer titled "Letter to a Wage Slave." In addition *The Proletarian* published an official statement by the National Secretary of the Workers' Socialist Party, Lawrence Beardsley, with its endorsement. At that time, the Workers' Socialist Party was not in a position to have its own journal.



There were two Kerachers — the pre-Russian Revolution one and the post-Russian Revolution one. Beyond question, the pre-Russian Revolu-

tion Keracher was a Marxist. This cannot be said unqualifiedly of his post-Russian Revolution position.

On November 7, 1917, came the startling news of the Russian Revolution. Distinct from the earlier Kerensky Revolution, it spoke the language of Marxism. It issued proclamations, the most stirring being the Appeal to socialists in Germany and elsewhere: "We have seized power in our country, take power in yours and come to our aid." It aroused emotional fervor and inspired the hope for international solidarity for the socialist revolution! However, despite the previous pledges of the Second International that, in the case of war, comrades on opposite sides would not fire on each other, but would shake hands across the lines with the greeting, COMRADE! — events proved that the professed "comrades" were patriotic nationalists, not socialists.

Had a genuine socialist movement been predominant in Europe, there might have been a different story to tell. In the absence of a socialist majority, a socialist revolution was impossible, both in Russia and the rest of the world. Certainly the material conditions in Russia were not ripe for socialism in 1917. Lenin himself put it very well: "Reality says that State Capitalism would be a step forward for us. If we were able to bring about in Russia State Capitalism, it would be a victory for us." (*The Chief Task of Our Times*).

Arising from Lenin's emphasis on the importance of establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat during the transition period between capitalism and communism which Lenin called "socialism," the Proletarian University became enthused with this doctrine and joined in the efforts to organize a communist party in the United States in support of the Bolshevik regime.

In contrast, the SPGB and its companion parties maintained that the material conditions in the highly developed capitalism of 1917 were ripe for socialism, except for the lack of socialists. Further, they contended that "socialism" and "communism" are synonymous.

Shortly after the Third International was organized on March 4, 1919, a referendum was initiated in the Socialist Party of America by the supporters of Soviet Russia calling for quitting the Second International and joining the Third International. This referendum was sponsored by three groups: the Left-Wing group, the Foreign Language Federation, and the Michigan group. The referendum was carried by a majority of ten to

one. However, the Executive Committee of the SPA vetoed the referendum on the grounds that the result was “fraudulent.”

According to Theodore Draper in his *Roots of American Communism*, soon after the veto of the referendum, “in April 1919 a call was issued for a national conference of the three groups to formulate a national declaration of principles and to conquer the Socialist Party of America for revolutionary socialism.”

On May 24, 1919 the charter of the SPA-Michigan was the first to be revoked on the grounds that it had “amended its constitution to repudiate legislative reforms.” In short order, both the Foreign Language Federation and the Left-Wing were expelled.

In the ensuing meetings of the three groups, differences between them made it difficult to organize a communist party to represent America in the Third International. The Michigan group could not fit in with any other group but was tolerated on a technicality. To its credit, it had refused to accept any office or to affirm any responsibility for the programs that were adopted. It was finally settled by orders from the Third International in Moscow, to the exclusion of these factions as groups, who should constitute the Communist Party in the United States.

In January 1920, the central committee of the Communist Party ordered that the Proletarian University become a party institution under its supervision. The Michigan group refused to accept this decision and chose to leave the Communist Party for good. In June 1920, the Proletarian Party was organized by Keracher and his comrades. Draper describes it as a “small, self-satisfied sect.” Obviously he was no sympathizer of either the new Proletarian Party or of the SPGB and its companion parties. However, the factual accounts in his *Roots of American Communism* are historically accurate.

The post-Russian Revolution Keracher was a Leninist-Marxist, caught in the dilemma of two “socialisms” — Marxian socialism as a system of society, and Leninist “socialism” as a transitional dictatorship of the proletariat. Yet, when the chips were down, Keracher’s Marxist background interfered with any blind conformity to Soviet dogma.



The reader of *How the Gods Were Made* may be inspired to read other Keracher pamphlets, as well as other socialist literature. As of September

1, 1974, the Kerr Publishing Company has produced altogether eight Keracher pamphlets, of which three are now out of print. It is hoped that one of them, *Economics for Beginners*, may be reprinted in the near future. The three Keracher pamphlets now in supply are: *The Head-Fixing Industry; Frederick Engels*; and *Crime, Its Causes and Consequences*.

It is impossible to present fully the various facets of the socialist case in these necessarily brief pamphlets. They serve the important function of introducing the reader to socialist thought and encouraging further study in the classics.

Keracher was not only an organizer and propagandist for socialism, he was a pamphleteer in the tradition of Tom Paine. His clarion call to the working class was to get rid of the bedlam of outworn capitalism and to replace it with the sanity of socialism. His pamphlets attempt to disseminate socialist knowledge and understanding — essential ingredients of the socialist revolution.

— Rab

Newton, Mass., 1974

From WS #5 - 1975.

THE FACETS OF SOCIALISM

There are three facets of socialism — as a science, as a movement, and as a social system.

As a science, it is called the Materialist Conception of History. It traces the broad outlines of the social evolution of mankind from its early beginnings up to date. It indicates the processes by which primitive man advanced into tribal society; thence into warrior chiefdoms and chattel slavery; later into feudalism, and now into capitalism, with socialism on the horizon. It describes the social forces within an earlier society that gave rise to its successors.

As a movement, it is the class-conscious organization of the working class to spread socialist knowledge, understanding and fervor to introduce a socialist society — which has become possible, practical and necessary here and now. The tremendous strides within capitalism of technology and science have laid the groundwork for socialism. The alternative facing mankind is socialism or chaos. The lessons of experience have amply shown the futility of all the efforts to reform or administer capitalism in the interests of the working class, or of mankind as a whole, for that matter. Nothing is more inspiring than participation in the one meaningful task today, establishing a world fit for human beings.

As a society, socialism is common ownership and democratic control of the means of life by and in the interest of all society. Everyone gives according to his abilities and receives according to his needs.

Capitalism is a commodity society, in which the drive is for profit and accumulation of capital. The Law of Value reveals the economic relations of capitalism. It also gives rise to the Class Struggle between Capital and Wage-Labor.

Finally, in capitalism, there is a *need* to measure economic values in order to “quantize” costs and prices of commodities. Such needs are nonexistent in socialism because there is common property to take whatever is available for everybody to take whatever their hearts desire.

In socialist society there will be no such things as banks, money, commerce, etc. Nor will there be such things as police, armies, courts, jails, crime, poverty and the other manifold effects of the conflicts of interest at every level of capitalist society. These are all earmarks of property relationships, whether they are private or public properties.

July 1975.

[The following was sent to Frank Marquart for publication in an unknown journal]

THE MISSING INGREDIENT

Nothing can be more basic than the realization that socialism is, by its very nature, a classless society. It is not composed of workers, as such. This concept is a carry-over from capitalist social relationships. Such a view is alien to the social relationships of socialist society, and gives rise to such expressions as “workers’ councils” as features of socialism, which typify several “democratic, libertarian, socialist” journals.

Can it be denied that the socialist revolution has for its object: the establishment of a system of society based on the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution of wealth by and in the interest of society *as a whole*?

It is not a quibble to emphasize both that the socialist revolution emancipates not only the working class but all mankind from the chaotic limitations of outworn capitalism, and also that the revolution must be the work of the working class.

Nor can it be denied that the immediate goal, today, of class-conscious and revolutionary socialists is to gain political power in order to transfer the means of production from the parasites to where it belongs, the new socialist society. The capitalist class is powerless when confronted by a determined, overwhelming majority of socialists. It is an illusion to think that the workers in the factories can institute socialism while the political machinery remains in the hands of the capitalist class. The revolutionary political struggle for power is not to be confused with parliamentary efforts to reform the effects of capitalism.

The very essence of scientific, revolutionary socialism is that the political struggle for power is the highest expression of the class struggle.

If this be dogmatic sectarianism, I plead guilty.

I. Rab

A member of the World Socialist Party of the U.S.

CHAPTER NOTES

For parts of this biography, I have drawn on oral histories done during the 1990s and 2000s with Ann Rab Feinzig, Bill Rab, Bob Weisberg, Ralph Roberts, Bella Wheeler, Caroline Rab, and Hank Faunce. All of these are available in the WSP Archive (presently located in Somerville, Massachusetts) on audiocassettes; most, but not all, have been digitally transcribed as well.

These chapter notes draw in part on the oral histories, in part on other material in the WSP Archive, in part simply on my own memories (for Chapters Five, Six and Seven), and some of them derive from other sources, including Wikipedia and Google.

—*Karla Doris Rab*

Notes for Chapter One



The photograph above was probably taken sometime in the 1890s. The three couples (left to right) are Sheppie and Sarah Rabinowich; Nachman and Becky Friedberg; and Mayshe and Rose Friedberg — aka Sheppie and Sarah Mutter;

Uncle Nachman and Auntie Becky; and Uncle Mayshe and Auntie Rosie.

p. 4 Sarah Friedberg's two brothers, Nachman and Mayshe, also immigrated to Boston; it is not clear to me whether this was before or after Sheppie and Sarah did. Neither of the brothers had any descendants.

Mayshe was an active Zionist, spending a good deal of time and energy as a fundraiser for the State of Israel. After his wife Rosie died, he retired to Florida where he became very well known as a supporter of Israel, selling Israel bonds door to door.

Nachman (sometimes called Nathan) was a dentist; he and Becky lived in the Back Bay neighborhood where he had his office. Becky's family had also immigrated from Navaradok.

This oil portrait of Sarah Friedberg Rabinowich was painted by her daughter Leah. The date is unknown. It hangs in the home of Leah's son Larry Nathanson, who was kind enough to allow it to be photographed for inclusion in the present book. (The original is in color.)



Notes for Chapter Two

p. 14 “Kerr’s International Socialist Review” is a reference to the Kerr Publishing Company, owned by Charles H. Kerr. All during the period of this chapter, the Kerr Company was the world’s leading English-language radical publisher. It represented a current in the American socialist movement. Openly and uncompromisingly revolutionary, sympathetic to the proletarian socialism of the Industrial Workers of the World and intractably opposed to militarism, the Kerr Company vigorously opposed the war, both before and after U.S. entry. As a result, the *International Socialist Review* was banned from the mails under the infamous Espionage Act. Repression, splits in the Socialist Party and the decimation of the IWW all took their toll and, by 1928, Charles H. Kerr retired from the company which he had directed for 42 years, turning much of the operation over to John Keracher and other members of the Proletarian Party.*

p. 16 **John Keracher.** According to Ann Rab, Keracher had kept company for a time with Ella Riebe before Rab came to Detroit. (There is more information about him in the note for page 20.)

p. 19 Olga Rivkin remained a lifelong friend of the Rab family. The only image I have of her can be found on page 70.

* Source: <http://www.charleshkerr.net>

p. 20 ff SPGB-type socialists in Detroit at this period included (besides Rab himself):

Moses Baritz and Adolph Kohn, members of the SPGB. More information about each of them can be found in *The Socialist Party of Great Britain*, by David Perrin, and also in *The Monument*, by Robert Barltrop.

Bill Gribble, referred to by Rab as the Party's first organizer. This is probably the same person referred to as "Wilfred Gribble" in Peter E. Newell's *The Impossibilists: A Brief Profile of the SPC*. Wilfred or "Wilf" Gribble is described by Newell as "an ex-sailor in the British Navy" who, as a member of the SPC, was "a popular street-corner speaker."

Bill Davenport, who had been active in the labor movement in Scotland, and had come to Detroit by way of Canada in 1914.

Bob Reynolds and his sister Martha, who had come to Detroit from Bay City, Michigan, looking for work.

Walter Green, who had come to Detroit from New York, looking for work.

Tom Bolt, who was among Keracher's closest friends. Rab comments (in a letter dated May 24, 1976) that "Comrade Tom Bolt, to our surprise, joined the WSP when he became convinced on his own of the validity of its stance on Russia."

John Keracher (1880 - 1958), who never joined the WSP, although he was certainly influenced by the SPGB comrades he met in Detroit. Keracher eventually launched a statewide party education program based on study of the classics of Marxism which culminated in the "Proletarian University of Detroit," within which Keracher himself was the most notable and popular teacher. (See also the Chapter Note for p. 41, re: "Proletarian Party.")

p. 25 This period also saw the famous Winnipeg General Strike of 1919. An excellent account of this is to be found in Newell's book, and more information is also easily available online.

pp. 25 — 26 By 1921, when Rab left Detroit, members of the Detroit SES included all those mentioned earlier, except for Keracher (as explained) and Baritz, who by that time had already left Detroit. Bill Davenport was later to become an Assistant Director of the UAW Education Department. Morris Field, Davenport's father-in-law, also in the SES, was later a director of the UAW Education Dept. Other members of the Detroit SES included

Nils Akervall, Frank Marquart, and Gordon Coffin. When Coffin died in 1960, Marquart wrote the following reminiscence in a letter to Rab: “I first met Gordon [Coffin] around 1921. I recall the event clearly; for it was the day I made my maiden soap box speech at Hillger and Jefferson Aves. I recall that [Walter] Green, [Tom] Bolt, and, I believe, Thorpe were there too. Green followed me on the soap box, after my short, nervous talk ... Gordon in those early Twenties used to attend classes at the Detroit Socialist Education Society ... During the Depression he was one of the active guiding spirits among a group who conducted a forum, which drew large attendances in those dark days ... He taught classes back in the Twenties.” The Detroit SES and the New York SES got started around the same time, and for the same reasons.

p. 26 Anna Hope Rabinowich, my mother, was born on April 18, 1920. She changed the spelling of her first name several times over the course of her long life, and I have honored her by reflecting this in the spelling used in this book. All during her childhood, she was “Anna” but as a young woman, an artist and a vibrant revolutionary Socialist, she became “Anne.” All the reports she wrote as Secretary of Boston Local are signed *Anne Rab*, as are some of her paintings and sketches (except for the ones she signed “ARab”). Later, settled into the quiet routine of a housewife, she dropped the “e” and became “Ann.” (The checks she wrote are signed *Ann H. Feinzig*.) In her second childhood, she became “Anna” again — or, affectionately, “Annushka.”

p. 27 Moses Baritz left Detroit before Rab did. He spent some time lecturing in New York, then went to New Zealand and Australia, continuing his socialist teaching. After being deported from New Zealand he was in turn deported from Australia to his native England, where he remained for the rest of his life.

As for Adolph Kohn, here is an excerpt from an unsigned obituary printed in the *Western Socialist* for February 1945:



With a small band of stalwart socialists he [Kohn] stood against the current of confusion caused by a false understanding of ^{my photo was taken} ~~around the time Rab and his young family left Detroit.~~

the nature of the Russian Revolution. He vigorously advanced the socialist analysis that, in the absence of a high degree of industrial development and the lack of a socialist conscious working class (inside and outside Russia), Socialism was impossible; that a capitalist economy existed in Russia and was in the process of expansion, regardless of the socialist pretensions on the part of those in control of the government.

As a Detroit comrade writes: "Many of us would have gone haywire on the Russian Revolution if it wasn't for Kohn. If it were not for the continuous listening to Kohn's analysis and patient explanation, I along with others would have been worshipping at the Moscow shrine."

Notes for Chapter Three

p. 31 New York SES, c. 1923

When Walter Green moved from Detroit back to New York City in 1923, there was already a branch of the SES in New York, Moses Baritz having visited there after leaving Detroit. Alf White, known as Whitey, another SPGB comrade who had been in Detroit earlier, was part of the New York group until he returned to England in 1932.* SES comrade H. Scott Frampton, a native New Yorker who later would serve as Secretary of the WSP's National Executive Committee, had heard "an attack which Baritz launched against the S.P. of A., in a [Socialist Education Society] branch headquarters in Brooklyn."** Frampton's wife Jean was also an active member; she served a term as Secretary in 1932. Besides the Framptons, there were Bill Coombs, Charlie Davis, Sid Felperin, Edward "Taffy" Brown, Fanny and Ben Cosor, all in New York City.

Sam Orner, a resident of New Jersey, was also involved in the New York SES. A former IWW organizer, he was the central figure in the 1934 Taxi Cab Drivers Strike. During the strike, drivers had to fight not only the bosses, but also a Mafia-controlled Teamster leadership. Orner's pre-eminence in the strike was used by Clifford Odets in a 40-minute play about it, *Waiting For Lefty*, to dramatize the class struggle at a dark time for the working class. In fact, Orner is said to have narrowly missed a mob assassination through quick action by other WSP members, where Odets had Lefty dramatically murdered offstage: Lefty (like Godot) never arrived at a strike planning meeting, but the cab drivers went ahead and struck anyway. Orner remained a very active WSP member until his death in 1973.***

* Sept 9, 1932 letter from Sid Felperin to Fred Jacobs.

** Letter from Frampton to Nils Akervall dated Nov. 7, 1932.

*** Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Waiting_for_Lefty.

Other members of the NY SES who lived out of state were Evelyn and Bob Housely, in Atlantic City, NJ; and Jack Kilgour, a Scottish seaman with an amazing repertoire of sea shanties and a rousing tenor voice to sing them, who lived in Stroudsburg, PA.

p. 32 Friedberg's Lock and Electric Shop



Rab and Mayshe Friedberg in the shop

pp. 33 - 34 Sacco and Vanzetti

The paragraph cited is from an unsigned article in *The Western Socialist*. I claim artistic license to have included it here, but it is the kind of thing Rab might have said.

“Wobbly” is a term for a member of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW)..

p. 34 Hecht House

In the late 1800s, before radio and television, one means of socialization in America for the thousands of Jewish immigrants pouring into Boston from Eastern Europe (particularly from Lithuania, Russia, Rumania, and Poland) were groups, clubs, settlement houses, and organizations. The Hecht House (named for Lina Hecht, who was instrumental in its early development) was one of several educational and recreational clubs which served Jewish boys and girls. With Hecht's financial resources, there in the West End, the clubs were reconstituted as the Hecht Neigh-

borhood Houses, rented several locations, and invited the participation of both girls and boys. Even after Lina Hecht's death in 1920, the Hecht House, at the top of the hill on Lorne Street in Dorchester, continued its social services well beyond the middle of the Twentieth Century.*

pp. 34 - 35 and passim: The Vagabond Club



This photo of the Vagabonds was taken c. 1927 or 1928, very shortly after Rab took charge of the club. Rab is towards the center of the group, the smallest man there. In the back row, the second man from the left is Ralph Ober. Next to Ober is Kriggy, and to his left is Max Kutzer. I cannot identify the next man, but after him is Red Wolf. In the third row, the second man from the right (with a mustache) is Louie Shapiro. The man on the extreme left in the second row is Ed Seifert. I think the second man from the left in the front row is Jonah Goldberg, and the second from the right is Ray Richmond.

The eight Vagabonds who later joined the WSP were Jonah Goldberg, Nathan Krigman, Max Kutzer, Ralph Ober, Edward Seifert, Louis Shapiro, Louis Spiegel and Maurice "Red" Wolf.

Krigman ("Kriggy") is mentioned often in Bill Rab's oral history. He became Bill's business partner after WW II and remained active in the WSP until his death in 1950. (There are images of him on pp. 35, 54 and 446.)



Jonah Goldberg, who served for a time as the Secretary of Boston Local, married Rab's sister Dina (with whom he is pictured, left). He later changed his name to Jon Gilbern. He did not remain very active in the Local after his marriage but was a sympathizer.

(There is another photo of him in the note for p. 104.) He died in the 1960s.

* Source: Angelfire.com Web site.

Max Kutzer joined the WSP and became an official speaker for Boston Local by 1935.

I have little information about Ralph Ober, except that he was an older cousin of Ralph Roberts (a WSP comrade referred to elsewhere in this chapter, who mentions him briefly in his oral history), and a brother of Doris Ober, also a member of the Party who died in 1939 and whose name I was given as a middle name. (Doris Ober is mentioned frequently in Ann Rab's oral history, and also that of Bella Wheeler.) Ralph Ober was a charter member of Boston Local in 1932.

In the photo to the right, the man with a cigarette in his mouth is Louis Shapiro. Behind him is Ralph Roberts, who was not a Vagabond but was in the WSP. (I cannot identify the woman.)



Louis Spiegel was active for a time in the Boston SES and was a charter member of Boston Local. (The Spiegel family, Louis's parents and siblings, were the Rab family's upstairs neighbors on Capen Street.)



“Red” Wolf (left) was formally a member for only a few years, but he remained in close social contact with Boston Local as a sympathizer and friendly critic until his death.

Ed Seifert was a very active member of the Party throughout his life, as was his wife Ruth.

Seifert, Wolf and Kriggy were all close family friends (whose children were my childhood friends).

Other members of the Vagabond Club included James Clark, Allen Fishman, Fred Freedman, Sidney Goldstein, Bernard Gould, H. Hannington, Sidney Kalish, Julius Levowich, Samuel Nitkin, Sam Pitkin and Ray Richmond. The only one of these who remained in close contact with Rab was Richmond, who moved away from the Boston area after completing his education but was a frequent visitor to our home over the years and, along with Wolf and Seifert, attended Rab's 80th birthday celebration.



Above is a group shot of the Vagabonds. In the front row, far left, is Kriggie; next is Max Kutzer; then two boys I cannot identify. In the middle row, fourth from the left, is Ralph Ober, and on the far right is Rab. In the very back row, I think that's Ed Seifert and Rab's son Billie (who did like to hang out with the Vagabonds).

On the right, Rab climbs a pole on an outing with the Vagabonds.

p. 37 Below are two photographs of Billie Rab at Camp Nitgedaiget.

p. 41 **Proletarian Party and John Keracher.** (See also Chapter Note for p. 20ff) Keracher's "Proletarian University," which at first appeared to endorse the principles of the SPGB, had become more



aligned with the Bolsheviks and was expelled from the Socialist Party of America (SPA) in May 1919. The ostensible reason for the expulsion was the Michigan section's vehement antireligious stance, which was contrary to the Party's statutes. That September, Keracher participated in the founding of the Communist Party of America in Chicago. However, unlike most of those who were joining the Communist Party at this time, Keracher did not believe in an imminent Bolshevik Revolution in the United States. He opposed the Communist Party's "underground" work and the formation of Left unions. In January 1920, Keracher's Michigan group was expelled from the Communist Party and formed the Proletarian Party.

Keracher moved from Detroit to Chicago in the 1920s, moving to Los Angeles in the 1950s. He remained involved in the Proletarian Party until his death in 1958. The Proletarian Party finally disappeared in 1971.

John Keracher was the author of countless easy-to-read basic pamphlets, including *How the Gods Were Made* as well as others on Marxian economics.*

For more about Rab's personal relationship with John Keracher, see Selected Letters, p. 390.

pp. 45 - 46 **The SES becomes the WSP.** Enough SES members-at-large lived in Detroit to allow them to form a new Local on October 19, 1931, hinted at in Babe Green's letter of April 9th on p. 44. These included Gordon Coffin, Joe Brown ("close pals" with Rab and a Sheet Metal Organizer for the AWU [AFL precursor of the UAW]), Nils Akervall, Henry Glicman and W. Ashton.



p. 47 This is a sketch that 12-year-old Anna Hope Rabinowich drew of her mother, Ella, around the time the family moved to 198 Walnut Avenue.

* Source: MIA: *Encyclopedia of Marxism* — Glossary of People.

Notes for Chapter Four

p. 57 Leonard Feinzig graduated from Bentley College on June 15, 1938.

pp. 59 - 60 The Mass Meeting described here was the first of three. By the following year, 1939, the WSP's official organ was *The Western Socialist*; on p. 65 of the November issue, it is announced: "On Sunday, Oct. 22, 1939, with 'War and the Working Class' as the topic, Local Boston held a successful mass meeting at the Old South Meeting House. An attentive audience of about 200 workers was present."

By 1940 it had become a tradition. The Nov/Dec issue of the *WS* reports: "The third annual Mass Meeting was held in historic Old South Meeting House on Nov. 10. The subject was 'Lest We Forget'..."

p. 63 For more about the transfer of *The Western Socialist* from Winnipeg to Boston, see *The Impossibilists: A Brief Profile of the Socialist Party of Canada* (pp. 225-226), by Peter E. Newell (Athena Press, London; available through Amazon.com).

Aldino Felicani (1891 - 1967), an Italian-American anarchist, typographer, editor, printer and publisher, had been the treasurer of the Sacco & Vanzetti Defense Committee. More information about him is available on the Web.

p. 67 Aime Martinat (right) was an active member of Boston Local, but by the time I became involved in socialist activities *per se*, he had moved to Ann Arbor, Michigan. He attended the 1950 Conference, which was held in Detroit, as a member-at-large. This photograph of him, which was given to me by his daughter Tani, shows him as I remember him appearing in the mid-1940s.



(NB: To the best of my knowledge, neither Aimé nor anyone else helped Rab conceptualize the Man's Eye View of Evolution chart, two incarnations of which are reproduced opposite.)

pp. 70 - 71 A few years after Rab's visit in 1947, Olga's daughter Harriett married a fellow WSP comrade named Mike Cooper; she was Harriett Cooper during most of the time she was in Detroit Local. The couple

long after that, however, he resigned from the WSP, at least in part on account of the Anne Rab controversy. For more insights about Frank Marquart, see Selected Letters, pp. 195-197. There are also references to him in the Index.



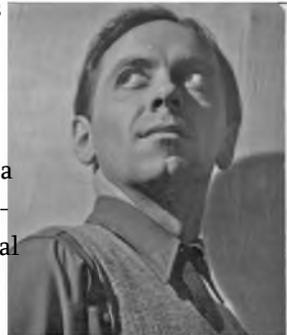
The photo above shows Marquart with striking UAW workers sometime during the 1930s. Marquart is 3rd from the left, counting the cop.

p. 74 **“Anne Rab had lost interest in being a member.”** Yet Rab was to write years later: “When the chips are really down, Ann shows where her innermost devotions really lie: with the socialist movement. For instance, in spite of an alleged ‘antipathy’ to the WSP, she does manifest concern for real socialist work done by the party. With all her ‘quarrels’ she is really only ‘quibbling.’” (from a letter dated November 30, 1960, not included in the Selected Letters, but available in the WSP Archive.) *[I made the sketch of her shown here in 1957, based on a photo taken in 1956.]*



p. 75 Harry Morrison had first come to Boston (via Canada and California) in 1939, when he was about 27. On that visit he met and married Sally Kligman, who was already a member of Boston Local, then continued his travels until 1947, when he settled in Boston permanently. Morrison, a frequent contributor to the *Western Socialist*, used the pen name “Harmo” in his writings. There are many references to this active and assertive comrade in the Index of this book.

The visitor from Montreal was Alex Primeau (right), a close sympathizer in the movement for a long time, though he considered himself an Anarchist. He was also an accomplished artist in several different media, including photography. While staying with the Rabs during the WSP Confer-



ence in 1947, he made pastel sketches of both Rab and Anne. Primeaux also took the photograph that appears on page 101 in Chapter 5.

Notes for Chapter Five

p. 87 **Gloss and the Brattle Book Shop:** See also the note for p. 127.



p. 92 This is a photograph of Mardon (Coffin) Cooper and Anne Rab, taken in the back yard of 62 Woodcliff Road sometime in the 1950s. Her father, Gordon Coffin, was one of the early members of the organization in Detroit. Mardon had visited Boston in 1945-46, where she formed very close personal ties with the Rab family. She and my mother considered themselves sisters, and Mardon began her letters

to my grandmother with “Dear Mother Ella.” She has maintained her strong, wise and continuous support of the WSP(US) from her first visit to Boston until the present.

p. 93 It may not be exactly fair to say that *Introducing the World Socialist Party* was never published. It was published as an article in the *Western Socialist*, and reprinted later as a short (three double-sided pages) leaflet held together with one staple. (This leaflet, for the record, includes the controversial sentence just as Canter originally wrote it.) A leaflet, however, is not the same as a pamphlet; for one thing, it has no cover.

p. 95 Pictured at right is Comrade Sam Orner (referred to in the Notes for Chapter Three), as he looked in the 1950s. Orner was a key figure in the organization of the New York Local; but his home was in Tenafly, NJ. At different times, he was a member of NY Local or a member at large. He was “out of sync” with most of the New York comrades, whose revolutionary fervor by the 1950s paled into frustrating insignificance beside his (or Rab’s). Rab and Orner were very close.



p. 96 Faunce was a radio personality in the Boston area until his retirement in the early years of the 21st Century. During our oral history sessions, he recalled the music and musicians at the Dock Square headquarters as well as the study classes. He said he considered Rab his mentor. Hank Faunce is not a joiner, but he has a clear understanding of the WSP's principles, and has probably "planted more seeds" of socialism than most members have, especially on the "Jazz and Commentary" program he hosted for many years on WMFO-FM radio.

p. 98 "Gloucester Crowd"

Here are some comments about the Gloucester crowd, spoken by Bob Weisberg in his oral history. (Weisberg had connected with the Rabs back in Capen Street days, and was one of those close sympathizers who were sometimes dues-paying WSP members, sometimes not; but always knowledgeable about the socialist position.)

The Gloucester crowd belonged to one of the left-wing groups, but I don't remember which one ... The Gloucester crowd had members. If you were a member, you paid so much a year. If you weren't a member, and you wanted to spend some time there, you paid so much a day, so much a weekend. It was very little money, because nobody had much. And they used to have a manager who, at the time we used to go, was Sam Levin, who handed out the chores. You had to take a chore. Sylvia [*Bob's wife*]/loved to cook ... If you cooked, you didn't have to do anything else. If you set the table, you didn't do anything else. If you washed the dishes, you didn't have to do anything else. Somebody else cleaned up the table... Somebody would be sweeping. Well, that was it for the weekend. You didn't have to do anything else. It was a good system. But they always had a good dinner on Sunday. And they bought a big turkey. And anybody that was left, that didn't go back to the city on Monday to go to work, they would eat the leftovers.

p. 99 Gilbert McClatchie's wife, Hilda Kohn, was the sister of Adolph Kohn (who had been instrumental in introducing Rab to socialism in 1916). Gilmac was Kohn's brother-in-law.

p. 104 More photographs from the wedding of Karla Rab to George Gerell (not his real name, at his request), on December 18, 1960:

This first one shows guests arriving; my mother is kissing Comrade Mel Braveman



(one of the musicians who had joined the WSP in the Forties) while Gerell shakes hands with Mel's wife Gloria, who is talking to Helen Wolf (wife of Red Wolf, who took the picture). Behind Gloria is Bob Weisberg, who was around the Rabs since he was a child on Capen Street, Dorchester.



The next one shows me welcoming more guests: in the doorway are Paul Mattick, Ruth Seifert, "Otto" Mattick (giving me his gift) and his mother, Ilse. In the foreground watching is Dorrit Gloss (wife of George Gloss).

Fast-forward to several hours later, to this picture snapped by Bill Rab of two old Vagabonds who hadn't seen one another for years before the wedding: Jon Gilbern (on the far left) and Red Wolf. I'm in the middle having changed out of my beige wedding dress and into the suit I wore to drive away in; behind me are Helen Wolf and Lennie. The other two women are Rab's sisters, Dina and Leah.

p. 107 Steve Butterfield, 1965 (right)

*pp. 108 - 110 Report of
Boston Local to the 1966
Annual Conference*

"Local Boston has had an active year, highlighted by several 'special events' in addition to our regular activities.

"Local business meetings are held the last Friday of every month.

"The Party buys time on local radio WCRB FM, every other Friday and Saturday. On Fridays, there is a one-minute spot announcement. The Saturday evening radio broadcasts have



proven one of our best sources for new contacts. These broadcasts consist of a 5-minute talk on some aspect of the socialist case, delivered by Com. Karla Rab, and an advertisement of our other activities, including the *Western Socialist*, delivered by the WCRB announcer [Dave MacNeil]. This year, some of the topics covered included: Vietnam; the class struggle; buying and selling; the socialist society; and many others. (Note: most of these talks have been either written by K. Rab or adapted from such sources as the WS and the SPC leaflets. We are most eager for comrades, particularly those who are geographically isolated from other socialist activity, to contribute radio scripts — 4.5 minutes or 2 typewritten pages in length.) The radio activity elicits quite a large response from WCRB's listening audience, about half of it negative — this is addressed to the station — and the rest sympathetic, or at least curious. We receive an estimated 4 or 5 requests for information each week. On one occasion we received a letter and a \$15.00 donation from a listener in New Hampshire who later came down to one of our meetings...

"The heart of all our local efforts here in Boston is the regular propaganda meeting at Headquarters, where an average of 4 or 5 Party members meet from one to several new contacts each week. These meetings were held on Fridays until recently, but in May they were transferred to Sundays, in order to take better advantage of the Saturday evening radio exposure. The meetings are planned in advance by the LAC and a typical month might include: a lecture or panel discussion by Party members; a film showing followed by a discussion period; a program of tapes from Com. W.K. Rab's tape library; and an informal social. During the past year, we had panel discussions on 'Automation' with Coms.



The LAC, pictured here in October 1964, consisted of (clockwise from the tall man standing up in the middle) Steve Butterfield, Bill Jerome, Connie Butterfield, Karla Rab and George Gerell. Bill's wife,

Fenton and G. Gerell, and on 'Alternatives to Capitalist Society' with Coms. G. Gerell and Jerome. Com. Morrison spoke on 'Slavery, Old and New'; Com. I. Rab spoke on 'A Socialist at the Smithsonian Institute'; Com. Fenton on 'Power Potential' and 'Automation'; Com. K. Rab on

'Human Nature'; Com. G. Gerell on 'The Paradoxes of War'; [and there] was 'A Symposium on Socialism' in which four comrades gave very brief talks: H. Morrison on Economics, K. Rab on our indictment of capitalism and reforms, W. Jerome on Russia and on the socialist society, and I. Rab on materialism. Just recently, we were lucky enough to have visiting SPGB comrade Anne Young address us on conditions in Britain.

"All these events have been part of our regular weekly program. From time to time during the past year, chiefly through the agency of Com. H. Morrison, the local has been able to reach a wider audience.

"On Oct. 13, Com. Morrison presented the case for socialism for several hours over WNAC-AM radio, on the 'Comment' show with Fred Gale; and — as a bonus — the station later aired excerpts from the program as an advertisement of how exciting the Fred Gale show is.

"Again on Nov. 8, Com. Morrison participated in a radio debate with Ed Lemansky of the Progressive Labor Party, and our views gained a wide exposure.

"At the Vietnam protest march on March 26, several members of the Local distributed socialist literature in front of the Arlington Street Church, where the march ended. Special mention should be made of the work done by Com. Joe Lyle and by one of our close sympathizers, Alan Zimble.

"Less than two months later, on May Day, the Party got inside this same church, or at least its parish hall, where Com. H. Morrison addressed the Arlington Street Church Singles Club on "Capitalism and Socialism." There was an audience of about 125 people, and Com. W.K. Rab made a tape of the proceedings.

"Finally, again through the efforts of H. Morrison, SPGB comrades Phyllis and Arthur George spoke on socialism over WNAC radio, on Aug. 24, on the Palmer Payne program, from 6:15 to 8:00 PM.

"Traditionally, Boston Local has always had some social, as well as purely propaganda, activity. This year saw two socials:

"The first one was held New Years Eve at the home of the Rabs and Fentons in Newton. This was a great success from every standpoint: a good time was had by all and the Party netted \$ 150.00.

"The annual May Day social, this year at the home of the Gerells, was a low-budget affair not intended to raise money, but to provide an environment conducive to socialist conversation...

“The biggest news in this report, of course, is our move from 11 Faneuil Hall Square to our present address at 295 Huntington Ave. This brand-new Headquarters has not yet really been put to the test, but we face the new season confident that our central location and pleasant meeting rooms will enable us to make many new contacts and, just as important, to hold the interest of these contacts, so that next year we can report some new members.

“Respectfully submitted,

“Karla Rab, sec’y, Boston Local”



p. 113 Chubi, néé Jenny Kligman, also sometimes used the name Rebo. This photo of her, visiting me when my daughter Sara was a toddler, was taken in 1965.

p. 114 The WSP Conference Report for 1971 contains a 3-page proposal by W.K. Rab which prophetically recognizes that the WSP is turning into an organization of members at large, and that Boston Local comrades are incapable of handling the

resulting work. WKR suggests that LA Local from now on handle getting out Conference Reports after each conference, that NY Local handle all correspondence resulting from ads, that Com. Nugent be put in charge of keeping the members at large in touch, and giving them activities they can do from where they are, etc., so that the administrative work is effectively distributed among the membership. The following year (during which no action was taken on Billie’s proposal), Rab himself introduced “the question of how interest in the movement might be maintained by isolated members-at-large.” Again, no action was taken.

p. 114 — 115 In 1971 Rab attended the SPGB’s Easter Conference and renewed many friendships and acquaintances. While there, he also spent time in Paris with Georges Valentino, who had been a supporter of the WSM since coming across the SPGB in the 1960s. Valentino liked to recount how he and others in his unit, sent as conscripts to fight in

Algeria, used to fire on their officers' command posts rather than at "the enemy," with whom they recognized they had no quarrel. (An obituary for Valentino appears in the May 1996 issue of the *Socialist Standard*.)

Notes for Chapter Six

pp. 119 - 120

This is a picture of some members of the Rab family who were at his 80th birthday party. Len Feinzig is in the upper left-hand corner. Ella and Rab (his arm is around her shoulder) are there towards the middle. Between Rab and Ella, the face of Dina, his younger sister, is just



visible, and to her left (behind Ella) is her younger daughter, my cousin Judith. To Rab's right in the photo is his son Bill, with his wife Carrie; Rab's sister Leah is next to Carrie; then Rab's brother Nat and his wife Mary. Continuing clockwise, I am sitting on the floor in front of Nat, next to Ann Rab, my mother. Bill's daughter Denise is to the left of Ann in the picture, with her arm around her brother Karl. George Gerell is between Karl and Lenny. There were other family members present who didn't get into this very informal photo, including Nat's son Leon Rabin, and Leah's son, Com. Larry Nathanson.

A **Tribute to Ilse Mattick (1919 - 2009)**, as printed in *The Brooklyn Rail*, September 2009, can be found on-line at <http://www.brooklyn-rail.org/2009/09/express/a-tribute-to-ilse-mattick-19192009>. (I am grateful to June Roberts, widow of Ralph Roberts, for bringing it to my attention.)

pp. 125 - 127 During the period when Ella was wheelchair-ridden, Rab needed cataract surgery. In those days, that involved a long recovery

period during which the patient must avoid various activities that would put too much pressure on the eyes (e.g., bending over to tie their shoes). Rab spent about three weeks in my home during his recovery, then went back to Woodcliff Road, where almost immediately he bent over and had to be re-hospitalized — so he came back to my place again, and this time remained for six weeks. During this time, he read to Sara and Adam, and played with them. I cannot express how grateful I am that we all had that time together before he began the descent into Alzheimer's that began with Ella's death.

A few days after Ella died, in December 1979, I asked him if he would like to come live with me permanently. His response was, "I would like to do that, but it would hurt Anna's feelings."

p. 127 Harry Morrison wrote three book manuscripts while "in retirement" from the WSP. The first, *The Socialism of Bernard Shaw*, was published in 1989 by McFarland & Company and distributed by the WSP until it was out of print. Morrison was never able to find a publisher for either of the other two. One was on the subject of the author Jack London; the other on millionaires in the USSR.

George Gloss developed medical problems that interfered with his ability to work full-time at the bookstore; his son Kenneth entered the business in 1973, dropping out of a doctoral program in chemistry to help his ailing father. There is a great deal of fascinating material on Gloss and the Brattle Book Shop readily available on-line. One example among many is "A Bookseller to Remember," which informs the reader that "during his reign at Brattle from 1949 until his death in 1985 the bookshop moved or was displaced 7 times. Each time the shop moved Gloss gave away his entire stock on the final day" * — which is, of course, an exaggeration: Gloss was far too shrewd a businessman to give everything away while living under capitalism.

pp. 127 - 128 Bill's and Carrie's reminiscences here (as elsewhere) are from their respective oral histories.

p. 133 **Rab's death.** Like Ella before him, and like Ann and Lennie after him, Rab had donated his body as an anatomical gift "for the pro-

* Retrieved from www.bookpatrol.net/2007/08/george-gloss-bookseller-to-remember.html in March 2008.

motion of anatomical science” (to be used to instruct medical students). See his 1961 letter to Dr Benjamin Spector.*

Notes for Epilogue

p. 137 In 1973 Elbert had joined the WSP while studying Spanish law at the University of Madrid, in an ultimately unsuccessful attempt to earn a degree in comparative law. Under the pen name of “Roel,” he had written many articles for *The Western Socialist*, and attended several Party conferences in Boston (where he usually stayed with the Rab Juniors on Floral Street). On at least one of these occasions, he met Rab, who was impressed with his ability as a writer and corresponded with him during the 1970s: “[Y]ou are a natural. You have ... a clear, logical and effective presentation.” Elbert remembers Rab taking him on an energetic walking tour of Boston during this period, and Rab thought highly enough of him so that, in 1975, he nominated Elbert to serve as one of the two NAC members from outside the Boston area.**

After Ron and I became life-comrades, it didn’t take too long for us to find ways to collaborate in working for socialism. With technical support from Bill Rab and moral support from SPGB comrade Steve Coleman (who visited Boston in the early 1990s and stayed at our house in Somerville), we made a 30-minute audiocassette tape called “Introducing the World Socialist



Party.” Distributing this tape via ads in various magazines proved very successful, and everyone who requested the tape also received a copy of a “World Socialist Catalogue” that we created for the occasion. A few years later, we produced a series of three tapes having the same title, combining some of the old five-minute WCRB radio talks with appropriate music.

Both of us liked to write, and we had already discovered that when we edited one another’s work, the result was often more effective than the original manuscript. As a joint effort, we wrote a front page for the “World Socialist Catalogue,” intended to be a brief overview of what the WSP is all about:

* Selected Letters, pp. 229—231.

** Selected Letters, pp. 385—386.

The World Socialist Party of the United States publishes this catalogue.

Our goal is world socialism: the establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments of producing and distributing wealth by and in the interests of society as a whole. Free access to what everyone needs, independently of whether or how much individuals may spend their time “working.”

Socialism is possible, practical and necessary right now — in fact, the need for it has never been more urgent.

The only thing standing in the way is the lack of a conscious political majority of the world community who understand it and want it and have organized to achieve it. A majority is necessary because socialism cannot possibly be imposed on an unwilling populace by even a well-intentioned minority.

Besides, only a majority of the world’s population can definitively establish that socialism actually does represent the rudiments of a social organization capable of meeting the needs of all human beings. Élités separate from society, armed with nuts-and-bolts theories, can only organize production to suit their own ideas.

The majority has to be conscious of what they want so that they can make it work. All of us together can make socialism work.

The majority for socialism needs to be political because at the turning point, the socialist revolution, we will need to organize politically to take over the machinery of the state and immediately convert it into a genuinely democratic administration of the affairs of the new society. We all have the basic intelligence needed to understand this: no coterie of leaders is required to guide an ignorant majority through a lengthy “transition period.”

For the time being, our work is not “political” in an institutional sense. We do not run candidates for office, since, at best, the outcome of an electoral victory right now would be simply the opportunity to administer capitalism.

Our role is educational: to argue the case for socialism in a period when the simplicity of the idea has become mired in the most varied forms of ignorance and confusion. Many people have confounded it with efforts to make capitalism work better. But capitalism, no matter how radically reformatted, can never serve the interests of the whole

human race. It can only work for the capitalist minority who live off the active working abilities of others. Even the Bolsheviks never got around to advocating the immediate abolition of the wages system.

Nothing less is worth working for. We are tired of seeing efforts to ameliorate specific problems within capitalism take up so much time and energy that no one is working on the only real solution: to get rid of capitalism itself once and for all.

So — order from this catalogue. Read what we have to offer. Listen to our tapes.

Nothing is stronger than an idea come of age. With your help, we can have socialism by the year 2000 — and remember, that's probably the only way to ensure a viable planet for the generations of the next millennium!

Periodically, we have issued new editions of the Catalogue, reflecting changes in the items the WSP distributes. Several years before the millennium, we regretfully changed “by the year 2000” to “by the year 2012.” Being optimists, we hope that with your help, revolutionary change will come in time to establish that human intelligence can indeed solve the problems which it has been instrumental in creating.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

H.O. Head Office (SPGB)

ITU International Typographical Union

MCH Materialist Conception of History

NAC National Administrative Committee

SES Socialist Education Society(1921 - 1931)

SLP Socialist Labor Party

SPC Socialist Party of Canada

SPGB Socialist Party of Great Britain

WSM World Socialist Movement

WSP Workers' Socialist Party (1916 - 1921, 1931 - 1947);
also World Socialist Party (1947 - present)

For more information about the current movement for World
Socialism, the reader is invited to visit *www.WSPUS.org*
or *www.worldsocialism.org*.

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